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### Taking a stand in times of violent societal changes: Belgrade and Zagreb feminists' positionings on the (post-)Yugoslav wars and each other (1991-2000)

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### Biographical differences and similarities

The data which I use in this chapter has been extracted from the not withdrawn interviews with the main Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist (eight and seven, respectively) and so-called nationalist feminists (four and seven, respectively). I also had obtained during the fieldwork some biographical data from the additional and external respondents in order to understand also their societal positions and better grasp the overall picture. However, due to my focus on the main self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminists, that data has not been included in this chapter. As I have already indicated in Chapter 1, the conclusions which I draw in this chapter should be seen as only concerning the main producers of the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminist positionings, and not extrapolated to all Belgrade and Zagreb feminists.

I begin by contrasting two aggregated categories: all (ie from both clusters) Belgrade respondents with all Zagreb ones. This comparison allows me to show that Belgrade and Zagreb should not be treated as interchangeable locations since there are some substantial biographical differences between the feminists from the two cities. I proceed to compare the self-declared antinationalist feminists with the so-called nationalist feminists within each city, first in Zagreb and then in Belgrade.<sup>225</sup> I explore there the biographical differences and similarities between the feminists who were based in the same city but employed different war-related positionings and struggled with each other for legitimacy. More precisely, I examine the ways in which the biographical characteristics are related to the war-related positionings. With these two comparisons I also demonstrate the importance of using both geographical (contextual) and political markers – ie markers of positioning – in the analyses since it is only then that one can secure less homogenising and more accurate findings.

However, before I present the three comparisons, I need to address three characteristics which had been initially intended to enter the succeeding text: age, ethnic background (ie ethnicity of the respondents' parents) and motivation for engaging with feminist activism. I eventually left them out because of the absence of significant differences among the respondents on those points, which means that the three characteristics in question appear to be unrelated to the war-related positionings.

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225 See my explanation of the choice to begin with Zagreb in the opening part of Chapter 2.

Since the scholarship did not provide any information on the possible relation between one's age and one's participation in one of the clusters, I was curious as to whether any such relation existed. Three respondents voiced this possibility in the interviews. Zagreb9AN and Zagreb20EXT, two Zagreb self-declared antinationalist respondents, commented that when the Zagreb group Women's Help Now had split in two in 1992 (see Chapter 3) there had been an obvious difference in average age between the activists who had ended up on the opposite sides. In a somewhat different manner, the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminist Belgrade15N saw her age – and the resulting knowledge – as the reason for the dissimilar war-related positionings between her and the much younger feminists from the other Belgrade cluster (see Chapter 6). Nevertheless, this research was unable to confirm that in either city the war-related divisions had been in any way related to the age factor.

The percentage of respondents with parents of the same ethnicity resembled in all comparisons that of respondents with ethnically-mixed parents. In the latter cases the combinations were diverse, although there were no respondents with a partially Albanian or Bosniak ethnic origin. Next to the dominant ethnicity – Croat in Zagreb and Serb in Belgrade – the mixed composition (partially) contained the Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Jewish, Montenegrin, Polish, Serb and Slovenian ethnicity (in Zagreb) and the Croat, Czech, German, Italian, Jewish, Montenegrin and Slovenian one (in Belgrade). Even in the Zagreb so-called nationalist cluster which strongly emphasised the Serbs as perpetrators of war crimes there were feminists of mixed Croat/Serb origin, just like in the other Zagreb cluster.

As to the motivation for feminist activism, the respondents spoke about being driven by the need to end injustice, the power imbalance between women and men in society, and the discrimination and (sexual) violence against women. Some articulated their wish to alter the traditional gender roles in the family, create space for women and women's experiences in the social sciences and humanities, and contribute to women's liberation, independence, self-determination and freedom of choice. There were also those who – after initially visiting a feminist group or lecture – had become inspired by the sense of community of equal and mutually supporting individuals, or the realisation of the societal extent of the problems which up to then they had seen only as their personal ones.

Only three self-declared antinationalist respondents – two from Belgrade and one from Zagreb – made a connection between their motivation for feminism and the war violence, and even their motivation was not uniquely caused by the new reality. While also being fascinated by the principles on which the work on the Belgrade SOS Hotline had been based and the non-hierarchical relations among the members

regardless of age or class differences, the first Belgrade respondent, Belgrade5AN, said to have chosen feminism because it had offered the best response to nationalism and the war violence. The other Belgrade respondent, Belgrade6AN, had become involved in feminism during her residence abroad, but professed to have joined Women in Black because of the war. The Zagreb feminist Zagreb12AN had also been introduced to feminism while residing abroad, but was pushed into direct action by the sexual war violence against women and the situation of the refugee women in Croatia. That the remaining feminists did not link their motivation for feminism to the war situation had to do with the timing of their activist beginnings. The majority had become active in the 1980s or at the latest in the early 1990s, but before Yugoslavia's violent disintegration.

### **The Belgrade and the Zagreb feminists compared**

The educational qualifications of the Belgrade respondents were higher: all of them had at least a first university degree, whereas there were some Zagreb respondents with only a high school diploma. There were, however, no significant differences between the feminists from the two cities regarding the area of study. Most of the degrees in each city were in liberal arts, and the other degrees were equally diverse.

Many more Belgrade respondents were atheists. The single Belgrade non-atheist respondent, Belgrade16N, described herself as a spiritual person who accentuated people's biological sameness and prayed in all places of worship, regardless of their denomination. The Zagreb non-atheist respondents spoke about worshipping different female deities, being a Catholic, having a non-sectarian spiritual affiliation or feeling attracted by some aspects of different religions and beliefs.

In both cities there were respondents with at least one more highly placed parent in the Yugoslav society (eg an army official, a diplomat, a governor of a correctional facility, a head of an academic institution, a judge, a manager of a large company, a surgeon or a university professor), but that was much more often the case with the Belgrade respondents. They had further less often a personal or family history of grievances inflicted by the partisan and/or communist authorities during World War II and Yugoslavia's existence, respectively.

The Zagreb histories of grievances included instances of fathers losing their jobs because of belonging to the bourgeoisie before World War II or criticising the actual implementation of the proclaimed communist ideology, or being sent to prison for not choosing Tito's side during the split between him and Stalin in 1948. Zagreb13N

linked the three traffic accidents (two with lethal consequences) in which members of her family had been hit by a car with her family's criticism of the communists' practice of silencing their political opponents. The lawyer Zagreb15N had been incarcerated in the 1970s due to her participation in the Croatian Spring and defence of 40 members of this political initiative. Finally, Zagreb14N recalled two such episodes. The first one concerned her uncle's narrow escape from being executed – despite being a minor – by the partisans in World War II because of his alleged collaboration with the fascists. The second episode was her personal experience of not being allowed to pass a language exam. She saw this incident as an instance of human rights violation:

When I was making entry for an exam at the university, I had to write down [the name of the language as] 'Croato-Serbian' or 'Serbo-Croatian' [the two official names of the language during Yugoslavia's existence]. I wrote down 'Croatian' and I was sanctioned because of that. I live in Croatia, I speak Croatian, I neither speak Croato-Serbian nor Serbo-Croatian...I deem that I should be allowed to freely pronounce and write its name. That is my basic human right (interview with Zagreb14N).

Only two Belgrade respondents reported situations which resembled those of the five Zagreb feminists. Belgrade14AN talked of her father, who had been degraded and sent to the Yugoslav gulag Goli Otok because of disagreeing with the party's imposition of one correct way to look at Tito's break with Stalin. The other Belgrade feminist, Belgrade5AN, spoke of being unfairly treated by the League of Communists. She had lost her job as the editor-in-chief of a student magazine and risked imprisonment as a consequence of her critical political views.

In line with the previous findings, many fewer Belgrade respondents spoke about being underprivileged in the former state, ie not having very (financially) secure lives. This better status in the Yugoslav society also corresponded with the fact that the Belgrade respondents had reported much more often to have felt affiliated with Yugoslavia. Besides those with an explicitly declared affiliation, one Zagreb and two Belgrade feminists alluded to a partial one. The Zagreb respondent, Zagreb16N, recalled being passionate about the Yugoslav concept of self-management and the youth labour actions.<sup>226</sup> Belgrade16N, the first Belgrade respondent, praised

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226 The youth labour actions 'involved mass-scale voluntary labor on the part of young people with the goal of implementing projects for the common good. On an ideological level, the Yugoslav communist party used...[these actions] as an instrument to construct a youth that would create, support, and live the principle of "brotherhood and unity" as part of a reconciliation program in Yugoslavia after the Second World War' (Popović, 2010:279).

Yugoslavia's modernisation project and politics of non-alignment, while the second – Belgrade6AN – talked of having developed multiple affiliations due to her life in different countries. Whereas all Zagreb respondents who recalled it spoke of this affiliation as having ended with the end of the country in 1991, that was the case only with a half of the corresponding Belgrade ones. For few Belgrade respondents some affiliation with Yugoslavia still existed even at the time of interviewing (2009 or 2010).

Another striking dissimilarity between the feminists from the two cities was that the Belgrade respondents were those who spoke of Yugoslavia's disintegration also in connection to the pain they had felt because of it. Only one Belgrade respondent – the one who felt affiliated with several countries – explicitly said not to regret the end of Yugoslavia per se, but only its violent character. Such statements regarding the disintegration of the former country were much more common among the Zagreb respondents and there were also respondents from that city who were ambivalent about that historical occurrence. Zagreb13N expressed this ambivalence in the following way:

The fact that people [in Croatia] have decided in the parliamentary elections [sic; it was a plebiscite] that they wanted their own state, ie that the majority has decided [that], was for me obligatory. I said immediately: 'OK. If the majority has decided that, it will be so and I can remain living here or leave if I do not like it'...Then the war happened and I made the decision not to go away from my country under any circumstances.

The Belgrade feminist Belgrade11AN commented upon Yugoslavia's disintegration in a quite different manner:

I try not to come back to it. I have barely managed to get myself out of it. I found it horrible. I was really among the last ones to believe in it. When it was happening in front of my eyes, I did not believe it. That had nothing to do with any reasons of state or identity, but precisely with my view that Yugoslavia had been a good attempt and a good opportunity to solve the conflicts caused by the differences; that it [Yugoslavia] was some kind of space in which we were able to communicate more easily. I had somehow the impression that it [Yugoslavia] was the rational choice, whereas its dissolution was based on totally irrational passions and nationalism.

My question about respondents' ethnicity more often than not caused uneasiness among the respondents in both cities, and the answers to it were usually supplemented by clarifications and comments. Nevertheless, there were more Belgrade

respondents who did not at all declare themselves ethnically. Moreover, the designation 'Serb' was for the Belgrade respondents much more laden than the corresponding 'Croat' for the Zagreb ones. Among the Zagreb feminists who did describe themselves as Croats, there were those who stated not to give much importance to ethnicity; for some this declaration resulted from their feeling of being at home in the Croatian language or context, while for others it was simply a consequence of being born in Croatia or of Croat parents. Unlike these Zagreb feminists and their use of 'Croat', even those Belgrade respondents who spoke of being connected to Serbia through citizenship or language fully avoided the use of the word 'Serb' for describing themselves. Neither was the word 'Serb' employed easily by the three Belgrade feminists who (eventually) declared themselves so. Belgrade16N uttered it only after my explicit probe, while Belgrade2N and Belgrade12N simultaneously distanced themselves from this declaration by mentioning their affiliation with Yugoslavia. In addition, Belgrade12N described herself later as surpassing ethnic or state identities.

While the Zagreb feminists usually began earlier with feminist activism, most of the respondents from each city had at least some pre-war experience with working on the respective SOS hotline against male violence against women. The preponderance of this particular form of feminist engagement is very important since the work on the hotline was based on the premise that men are the perpetrators of the (sexual) violence against women. It was, thus, with this gender-based and ethnicity-free positioning that the main producers of the Belgrade and Zagreb war-related feminist positionings had entered as it were the warring 1990s.

One of my questions related to the outbreak of war violence in 1991. I was interested in whether there were differences between the respondents in terms of having close family members or friends who had been drafted or otherwise in direct danger because of eg living in the war zones. More Belgrade than Zagreb respondents answered this question affirmatively. In addition, there was a difference in the reported sort of threat due to the then contextual differences between Croatia and Serbia. Since at that time there had been no direct war violence in Serbia as opposed to Croatia and the Serbian constitution of 1990, different from the Croatian one, had not allowed conscientious objection to military service,<sup>227</sup> the Belgrade respondents foremostly shared their experiences of shielding their sons and/or (former) partners who had been at risk of being drafted due to the large conscription actions. Belgrade6AN described this period in the following way: 'All of us were in a difficult situation. Not only I in my family, everybody around me was hiding men, nobody [no man] slept

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227 See footnote 168.

in his own house. There was a large resistance in Belgrade. 80% [of the called-up men] did not respond to the draft notices.' To this group of respondents belongs also Belgrade12N, who was intensively personally affected slightly later and for a different – but, nonetheless, war-related – reason. In 1992, due to the lack of medicines which was caused by the international sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, her daughter passed away only a week after being born.

The Zagreb feminists commonly spoke of family members, friends and relatives who had been mobilised or lived in areas which had been directly exposed to the war. There was also a feminist – Zagreb14N – whose underage son had voluntarily gone to the battlefield and two feminists who had feared for their fathers' lives. The father of Zagreb7AN had to go to a hospital regularly for dialysis, even if the air-raid sirens would go off, which potentially made him look suspicious in the eyes of the Croat militaries. Zagreb12AN's father received threats because of being of Serb ethnicity and a retired military staff member of the Yugoslav People's Army. One respondent, Zagreb24AN, enlisted herself voluntarily because of feeling that her home and life, as well as the lives of her underage child and parents, had been endangered to such an extent that she had to take a proactive role in their defence. After bringing her child and parents to safety she entered a military unit and remained in it for two months. Her move is unique among the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists.<sup>228</sup> In addition to these respondents, Zagreb1N, another Zagreb feminist, had also considered volunteering in the military because of being taken aback by all the destruction in Croatia. Eventually she did not do it because of not wanting to leave her underage child.

In both cities there was one group with explicit publicly stated war-related positionings which gathered a big part of the respondents from the respective city after the beginning of the war violence.<sup>229</sup> Most of the Belgrade respondents had been in Women in Black, but two of them – Belgrade15N and Belgrade12N – had stayed in it only for a short time because of disagreeing with its positioning on perpetrators and victims. Slightly more than a half of the Zagreb respondents had been active in the Antiwar Campaign Croatia. Similarly to the situation in Belgrade, one of these respondents had left the group shortly after its establishment. Zagreb16N had

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228 See the short analysis of this act in Chapter 6.

229 The indication '[a group] with explicit publicly stated war-related positionings' is needed because of the situation in Belgrade. The Belgrade Women's Studies Center also gathered a large part of the Belgrade respondents (including all so-called nationalist ones), but it did not appear in public with such pronounced war-related positionings as Women in Black. Therefore, one's participation in the former group did not represent such a clear marker of a positioning as that in the latter. See the analysis of the Belgrade Women's Studies Center in Chapter 4.



objected to the way in which the war in Croatia was referred to in the group's public announcements.

The last point of comparison which I present here concerns the respondents' participation in feminist groups at the time of interviewing. In addition to the fact that more Belgrade respondents were still active, the two cities further differed in the level of functioning of the groups the feminists were engaged in. Whereas all still active Belgrade respondents worked in fully operational groups, in Zagreb that was the case only with some of the still active respondents. The remaining feminists were involved with groups which had significantly reduced their activities.

### **The Zagreb feminists compared**

More self-declared antinationalist respondents described themselves as atheists. The remaining feminists from that cluster were one Catholic and one with a non-denominational spiritual affiliation. Among the so-called nationalist feminists there were those who believed in female deities and one who felt partially attracted to some religions and beliefs. Nonetheless, regardless of the cluster, even those respondents who expressed a religious or spiritual affiliation criticised the treatment of women in organised religions.

There were no significant differences in educational level between the two Zagreb clusters. In each cluster, the majority had obtained at least a first degree of university education. However, the respondents differed in terms of their parents' societal positions in Yugoslavia. Slightly less than half of the self-declared antinationalist respondents, but none of the so-called nationalist ones, had at least one parent with a higher societal status. The dissimilarity between the clusters in the experienced grievances from the partisan and/or communist authorities was even greater: No self-declared antinationalist and a majority of the so-called nationalist respondents reported such episodes. In fact, all experiences of grievances which I listed in the first comparison as being recollected by Zagreb feminists belonged to so-called nationalist ones.

A related and equally telling disparity, which also indicates the existence of pre-war grudges among the (future) so-called nationalist feminists regarding the feminists from the (future) self-declared antinationalist cluster, was observable in the accounts of (under)privileged life in Yugoslavia. With the unexpected exception of Zagreb15N, the feminist who had been imprisoned in the 1970s because of political dissidence, all remaining so-called nationalist respondents recalled being underprivileged compared

to the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist (feminist) activists. The former saw the latter as belonging to the 'red bourgeoisie' – ie the communist elite – and having, therefore, more financial means, larger political freedoms and easier access to employment opportunities. A partially resembling account of having an outsider's position was communicated only by one self-declared antinationalist respondent. Zagreb23AN compared her life with that of the established feminists from *Woman and Society*:

Back then feminism repelled me; I envied those feminists for their freedom in the head and the body, their safety and self-confidence. I was 22, 23 years old, with a small child and without money, a subtenant, with unfinished studies, and my marriage was falling apart. A total chaos...They were all university professors, journalists and self-confident students. They looked glamorous, talked about a certain America and books to which I could not relate because it was too theoretical and too abstract for me to talk about philosophers and analyse them from a women's perspective while living in some hole and not knowing what would happen to me the next day.

Another self-declared antinationalist respondent, herself a daughter of an army official, addressed the existence of privileges, too, but in a different manner. Zagreb12AN recollected her ex-husband's comment that had he caused such an accident as she had in which a portrait of Tito had been burned, he would have probably ended up in prison, unlike her who was protected by her father's partisan background and employment in the military. One more respondent from this cluster mentioned her own privileged position. Zagreb11AN did not relate her status to her family background, but to her work as an established journalist at a prestigious newsmagazine which brought her popularity and provided her with many opportunities to travel and attend events. No so-called nationalist respondent spoke of being in any way privileged in Yugoslavia.

While these findings would lead one to expect that the so-called nationalist feminists would less often speak of having felt at least partially affiliated with Yugoslavia, the opposite was the case. The clusters resembled one another, though, in the fact that all respondents who had felt at least some attachment to Yugoslavia had stopped feeling it when the state had (violently) ceased to exist. Besides feeling such an attachment less often, the self-declared antinationalist respondents were also less inclined to declare themselves ethnically. This means that among the Zagreb respondents the absence of adherence to an ethnic collective did not necessarily include attachment to Yugoslavia (and vice versa). In addition, contrary to what the designations 'antinationalist' and 'nationalist' may evoke regarding these respondents, the affiliation with Yugoslavia did

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not automatically imply the use of self-declared antinationalist positionings (and vice versa).

Some of those who refrained from expressing an ethnic affiliation – including one so-called nationalist respondent – added that they found it very problematic that in Croatia since 1991 declarations of Croatness were often used for excluding the ethnic Others, ie those with a (partially) non-Croat ethnic background. There were also respondents who did not declare themselves ethnically, but said to feel related to Croatia by virtue of being its citizens or being most familiar with its context or language. For example, the self-declared antinationalist feminist Zagreb9AN explained the following:

I would not define myself ethnically. My parents are Croats. I write that I am a Croat...I have a Croatian passport and even before in Yugoslavia I wrote that I was... [presumably, a Croat]. My parents are Croats; that did not have any additional connotations to me...I cannot escape the fact that I speak and write Croatian and that I feel at home in the Croatian language. I recognise Serbian as something else. Not that it is a foreign language to me...but it is somewhat different from Croatian. I see those differences primarily through language...I am quite certainly not a Croat in a political sense, in the sense that the ethnic determination would be exceptionally important to me, but there are elements I cannot do away with. I find the issue of language fascinating.

In a similar manner, there were feminists (from both clusters) who did declare themselves as Croats, but said not to attach much or any meaning to it, saw ethnicity as simply resulting from their parents' ethnic origin or softened their statement by eg commenting that they had felt connected to Yugoslavia as well. One so-called nationalist respondent who declared herself as '100% Croat' only after my explicit probe seemed to feel the need to excuse her non-mixed background. Immediately afterwards Zagreb16N added: 'We simply come from those kinds of cities where there were no other possibilities [meaning: no ethnic Others]':

The so-called nationalist respondents had generally a longer record of participation in feminist initiatives, including the more theoretical engagement in *Woman and Society*. Therefore, these feminists' heretical war-related positionings should not be understood as coming from activists who were newer to feminism. Also significant is that all Zagreb so-called nationalist respondents – compared to a majority of the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist ones – had been active before the wars in combating male violence against women by working on the SOS Hotline. Although not very large, this variation is counterintuitive because of the former's

quick abandonment of the gender-based positioning on the war rapes and the latter's continuation of it.

That continuation also does not seem to fit the fact that many more Zagreb self-declared antinationalist respondents, including the one who had voluntarily become a soldier, reported to have been personally affected by the war in Croatia. One thus cannot say that the feminists who had been more hit or threatened by the war employed by definition so-called nationalist positionings. Correspondingly, the feminists who had been less menaced by the war did not necessarily use self-declared antinationalist positionings. For example, the so-called nationalist respondent Zagreb13N did not allow her partner to voluntarily join a military unit. She did not, apparently, consider herself that endangered to support his wish to take up arms.

There was further a marked dissimilarity between the Zagreb clusters in terms of involvement with the Antiwar Campaign Croatia during the war years. The (non-) participation in this group – which supported, inter alia, the military conscientious objectors in Croatia – turned out to be one of the major differences between the two Zagreb clusters. All self-declared antinationalist respondents had been active there. Zagreb16N, the only so-called nationalist respondent who had participated in this group and even been among its initiators, terminated her involvement soon after the intensification of the war violence in Croatia. She disagreed with the group's definition of the war.

At the time of interviewing the clusters resembled one another in the sense that there were more respondents who had withdrawn from regular participation in feminist groups than respondents who were still active. Nonetheless, there was also one significant difference between the clusters on this point. The groups of the still active self-declared antinationalist respondents functioned normally, whereas the groups where the still active so-called nationalist respondents were involved operated in a very limited way. This suggests that the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists were more successful in networking and obtaining funds (also) for non-war-related activities, and that they possessed better skills than the other Zagreb cluster for adapting to the new and more bureaucratic grant procedures and organisational formats which came into place after 2000. One so-called nationalist respondent looked at this issue with a considerable amount of self-criticism:

We turned out to be *utterly incapable* of catching up with what is demanded from the civil organisations to be able to apply for money. They [the other Zagreb cluster] were always ten steps ahead of us when it comes to that. I do not know to this day how to write a project proposal. I manage to write it, but... The idea can be brilliant,

but I always mess up something so that I cannot... They know how to do it and they receive money without problems (interview with Zagreb6N, emphasis in the original).

### **The Belgrade feminists compared**

All Belgrade respondents were atheists, with the exception of one so-called nationalist feminist who described herself as a spiritual person. While all respondents from this city held a first university degree, the educational qualifications of the so-called nationalist respondents were significantly higher: Most of them were university professors. At the same time, more self-declared antinationalist respondents came from better-off families with at least one parent who was more highly societally placed. In each cluster there was one respondent who was an exception to this rule. The so-called nationalist feminist Belgrade15N had a father who had been awarded the Order of the People's Hero after World War II and held a high military rank in the Army. Opposite was the case of the father of the self-declared antinationalist feminist Belgrade14AN. Despite having fought with the partisans from the beginning of the armed resistance, he was sent to a prison camp for having criticised the way the League of Communists had dealt with the conflict between Tito and Stalin.

Two self-declared antinationalist feminists were the only Belgrade respondents who said to have been exposed to injustices which had been committed by the Yugoslav authorities. The first was Belgrade14AN, whose father had been sent to a gulag. Belgrade5AN, the other respondent, elaborated on the degrading treatment she had received from the university branch of the League of Communists she was a member of. Two years after her appointment as the editor-in-chief of a student magazine, she had been replaced and almost imprisoned because of her editorial policy of critically speaking of the decaying socialist system and calling for its improvement. Belgrade5AN referred to that experience as 'social death', but did not compare her disadvantaged position in any way with the lives of her later fellow feminists.

Belgrade14AN, the self-declared antinationalist respondent with an imprisoned father, and the so-called nationalist respondent Belgrade16N did compare – as the only ones – their underprivileged positions with those of other (feminist) activists. Belgrade14AN recalled the great poverty she had grown up with. Because of it, and different from other feminists, she had to work already as a student in order to sustain herself and be able to travel. Still, unlike Belgrade16N below, Belgrade14AN

did not bring her resentment of the societal position and some attitudes of those middle-class activists in connection to their later war-related positionings:

I belong to a family of the intellectual proletariat. We did not benefit from any regime. Many of those who are middle-class intellectuals or of these who are antinationalists – whatever you want to call them – are, in fact, children of the very highly positioned former communist class who have kept *all* the privileges of the former position and, on the top of that, received new privileges as champions of freedom, democracy and so on. I have nothing to do with that (interview with Belgrade16N, emphasis in the original).

There were two self-declared antinationalist feminists who addressed the privileges which they had enjoyed in their lives. On account of her parents' work, Belgrade6AN could live in foreign countries, attend good schools and have enough money to travel regularly. Belgrade3AN praised the skills she had acquired during her 17 years of work in the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The experience of writing high-profile political documents (including speeches for prominent party officials), personally witnessing the decision-making and negotiation processes, and organising conferences had greatly benefited her later feminist activism and work as a journalist and a writer.

It is quite telling that all but two respondents (one per cluster) declared to have felt affiliated with Yugoslavia, and even those two who did not deny this affiliation fully. Belgrade16N, the so-called nationalist respondent, said that she was not nostalgic about Yugoslavia, but still thought of it as a serious country with a good project of societal modernisation and an excellent ideology of non-alignment. The respondent from the other cluster, Belgrade6AN, explained that ever since she had been a child, her life had been taking place between three countries and languages. Being unable to develop an affiliation with a single country as her parents could with Yugoslavia, Belgrade6AN defined herself 'as a globalist, a citizen of the world, not out of ideological reasons, but because of the reality' who was 'missing the second and the third part' wherever she was.

Whereas the self-declared antinationalist respondents were typically those who had decidedly left the attachment to Yugoslavia behind, in each cluster there was one respondent for whom this attachment was still vivid. The self-declared antinationalist feminist Belgrade4AN explained this by her enormously mixed ethnic background (she jokingly referred to herself as having 'a multinational background, like a multinational company'), while for the so-called nationalist feminist Belgrade15N the whole of Yugoslavia was her homeland that she still cared for dearly. The remaining

two so-called nationalist respondents stated only implicitly that they still felt affiliated with Yugoslavia, even though less than before. Belgrade2N commented: 'I was very strongly attached to Yugoslavia. Now I am more rational because after all this [the violent disintegration] you realise that some things just do not function anymore, partly because of internal and partly because of external factors'. Belgrade12N mentioned first that she had a Yugoslav identity, but corrected herself afterwards by saying that she was beyond all those identities and that she felt as a cosmopolitan, especially because of her mixed ethnic and religious background.

The self-declared antinationalist respondents who referred to their affection for the (post-)Yugoslav region and its inhabitants in the past tense gave the following reasons for this discontinuation: such an affiliation became pointless after the country had ceased to exist, its expression became problematic for somebody from Serbia because it was understood as hegemonic Serb nationalism, or it had to be abandoned in order to communicate one's clear disagreement with the Serb hegemonic and unitarist politics. In the words of Belgrade5AN, those who had remained 'Serb pro-Yugoslavs' were manipulated by Milošević and contributed, thereby, to the suffering of the ethnic Others.

This means that although all Belgrade respondents had had at least a partial attachment to Yugoslavia, in terms of explaining (the end of) it, the two clusters were not homogenous. It was also not the case that everybody within the self-declared antinationalist cluster linked the affiliation with Yugoslavia after 1991 to Milošević's politics. Among those who did, there were both those with a more reactive positioning (ending the affiliation because of the reactions to it) and those whose positioning was more proactive (ending the affiliation to express opposition). Unlike these respondents, no so-called nationalist one made an explicit connection between this affiliation after 1991 and Milošević's politics.

Another telling difference between the clusters concerned the expression of one's ethnicity, although all respondents resisted this expression in some way. All self-declared antinationalist respondents emphatically refrained from declaring themselves ethnically. Some saw it as a non-feminist act, others simply rebuffed the use of such a (repressive) classification, and yet others found it impossible to do so because of their ethnically-diverse background and/or life trajectory. The few who recounted some connection to Serbia – through citizenship, language or the felt responsibility for the deeds which had been committed by Serbs in the name of all Serbs – were careful not to describe themselves at any moment as Serbs. With the exception of Belgrade15N, the so-called nationalist respondent who declared herself a Yugoslav, the other respondents from this cluster (eventually) professed to be Serbs. However,

each qualified her statement by communicating a broader identification. Immediately after declaring themselves as Serbs two of them proceeded to express their (partial) affiliation with Yugoslavia. The third, Belgrade16N, appeared to be even more concerned with taking a distance from her Serb ethnic origin. She initially depicted herself as a Belgradian from the city centre or a Terrestrial who was terrified by the, as she put it, Serbisation of the city and the accompanying loss of its former ‘Yugoslav and cosmopolitan’ character. It was only after I had explicitly inquired about her ethnicity that she described herself as a Serb.

More self-declared antinationalist respondents had worked against male violence against women on the SOS Hotline. In general, the respondents from this cluster had become involved in feminist activism slightly earlier than the so-called nationalist feminists. So, just like in Zagreb, the Belgrade feminists who would abandon the gender-based positioning on the war rapes were those with a longer record of using a gender-based positioning on violence, whereas the feminists who maintained it had by then employed it for a shorter time.

The so-called nationalist feminists spoke somewhat more often of close family members or friends who had been directly endangered after the outburst of the war violence in 1991. With the exception of Belgrade12N, the so-called nationalist feminist who had lost her child in 1992, the rest of the Belgrade respondents, regardless of cluster, commonly stated their active involvement in helping their (former) partners, sons or other draft resisters and deserters not to go to the battlefield. Nonetheless, there was one obvious difference between the clusters on this issue. Dissimilar to the so-called nationalist feminists, some self-declared antinationalist ones had not provided this support only privately to people to whom they had been related through familial or friendship ties. They had expressed an even greater dissent by also offering free (legal) advice – in the antiwar groups in which they were active, too – to anybody who wanted to become or support such a conscientious objector. In addition, these feminists had publicly stated their support for those men. This was also the case regarding the conscientious objectors during the NATO bombing and the war in Kosovo in 1999.

I posed to the Belgrade respondents a supplementary question on the NATO bombing in 1999. Since the whole population had been potentially endangered then, I was wondering whether they had had family members or friends who had been in particular danger. Only four respondents (two from each cluster) shared such an experience, and I was unable to detect a pattern in their answers. The so-called nationalist feminist Belgrade12N – whose husband was enlisted for defending Belgrade, but never summoned – said approvingly that had he been called up to fight in Kosovo, he would certainly not have done it. By contrast, Belgrade15N, the other



respondent from this cluster, commended her son's decision to report to his unit immediately after the bombing had started, given that the country was under attack. In turn, the self-declared antinationalist respondent Belgrade11AN spoke of her fear due to her son's dangerous work as a camera operator in charge of filming the bombing, while the other – Belgrade3AN – recalled helping a friend's son to leave the country. This was a respondent who was considered a nationalist by some feminists from the same cluster due to her positioning on the NATO bombing.

An activist engagement in Women in Black – a group which also supported the conscientious objection to military service – formed a clear dividing line between the two Belgrade clusters. All self-declared antinationalist respondents had this experience (albeit to a different extent), as opposed to half of the so-called nationalist ones. Moreover, the latter had not remained in the group for a long time because of disagreeing with its positionings which did not take into account the Serb victims and non-Serb perpetrators. Lastly, at the time of interviewing the majority of the so-called nationalist respondents was publicly involved with feminism mainly through academic work, while more self-declared antinationalist respondents were still engaged in feminist groups. Unlike in Zagreb, however, all feminist groups functioned actively.

### **Conclusion**

The three comparisons of the biographies of the main producers of the Belgrade and Zagreb so-called nationalist and self-declared antinationalist feminist positionings revealed no significant differences between these feminists in age, ethnic background and motivation for feminist activism. As to the religious affiliation, an overwhelming majority of all respondents declared to be atheist. There were, however, many more atheists among the Belgrade than among the Zagreb respondents, and more among the self-declared antinationalist respondents (in each city) than among the so-called nationalist ones (in each city). Only one of those who did not describe themselves in that way, a Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist, expressed adherence to an organised religion (Catholicism). The other non-atheist respondents defined themselves as spiritual, believing in female deities or being partially attracted to different faiths. However, I did not come across any indication in the scholarship and the collected empirical material that the absence or presence of (a particular) religious affiliation might have been in any way connected to these feminists' war-related positionings, and I do not have any reason to suggest that either.

Most of the respondents in Belgrade and Zagreb alike had pre-war experience with working against male violence against women, which means that their initial positioning on (sexual) violence was purely gender-based and paid no attention to ethnicity. This is important to keep in mind, given the later war-induced changes of this positioning. Belgrade and Zagreb further resembled one another in the presence of one group with explicit publicly stated war-related positionings wherein many of the respondents had been active. Furthermore, both groups had lost some of their members due to disagreements regarding the war-related positionings.

These similarities between Belgrade and Zagreb notwithstanding, if the two cities are considered contextually alike and, therefore, interchangeable locations with regard to the war-related feminist activism in the 1990s, some important differences between the respective feminists escape attention. To begin with, the Belgrade respondents had higher educational qualifications, more often at least one more highly placed parent in the Yugoslav society and less often a personal or family history of grievances inflicted by the partisan authorities in World War II and/or the communist ones in socialist Yugoslavia. Moreover, many fewer Belgrade respondents spoke about being underprivileged in the former state. Actually, unlike in Zagreb, there were no serious disparities between the Belgrade feminists in terms of feeling (under)privileged in Yugoslavia. This suggests that the war-related divisions in Belgrade were much less fuelled by the pre-war differences than the corresponding divisions in Zagreb.

While being common among the Belgrade respondents, some kind of emotional attachment to Yugoslavia was communicated much less often by the Zagreb feminists. Additionally, all Zagreb respondents who spoke of having had such an affiliation said to have abandoned it when the object of affiliation had ceased to exist in 1991. That abandonment was a much more gradual process in Belgrade. Moreover, there were respondents in the latter city for whom that process was not fully completed yet and others for whom it had never begun. This variation in one's post-1991 affiliation with Yugoslavia had commonly caused tensions between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists in the 1990s.

Another point on which the respondents from the two cities differed greatly was the declaration of ethnicity, although this question turned out to be in general among the most complicated ones to answer. The uneasiness with which it was usually met – unlike the question on one's parents' ethnic backgrounds – showed that for most respondents to declare oneself ethnically was not a neutral action of stating the facts about one's ethnic background, homeland and/or mother tongue, but a deed with deep political implications. In light of the knowledge that those who were (lethally)

harmed and displaced in the (post-)Yugoslav wars were chiefly victimised because of being considered as belonging to a 'wrong' ethnic group, the respondents' uneasiness is not surprising. Even less surprising is the finding that it was easier for the Zagreb respondents to describe themselves as Croats than it was for the Belgrade ones to utter the word 'Serb' in connection to themselves. The conspicuously bigger aversion of the Belgrade respondents regarding the use of this ethnic identification is consistent with Serbia's heavy war legacy, ie its graver responsibility for the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia, as well as with its greater temporal and political proximity to the wars of the 1990s.

Even though the outburst of the war violence in the second half of 1991 did not physically take place in Serbia but in Croatia, more Belgrade respondents reported to have been personally affected by it. This, at first glance counterintuitive, finding helps clarify why some Belgrade feminists felt offended by the comments of Zagreb feminists that the former, unlike the latter, did not live in a war-affected area. The Zagreb respondents typically recalled fearing for the lives of their family members and/or friends who had been mobilised or lived in parts of Croatia which were close to or constituted the battlefields. One Zagreb respondent had felt so endangered that she had decided to directly participate in the war as a volunteer soldier. The experiences of the Belgrade feminists foremostly concerned their efforts to physically hide and otherwise help their male friends and relatives who had not responded to the draft notices – an act of conscientious objection which was criminalised in Serbia, but not in Croatia.

The Zagreb so-called nationalist and self-declared antinationalist feminists had similar educational levels, but the latter had more often at least one societally better placed parent in Yugoslavia and – unlike almost every so-called nationalist respondent – no history of injustice perpetrated by the partisan and/or communist authorities. Besides this, the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist respondents mainly did not portray their lives in the former country as underprivileged, which was exactly what most of the Zagreb so-called nationalist respondents did. Thus, while the socialist educational system has enabled the achievement of similar educational qualifications for people from more and less privileged backgrounds, the so-called nationalist feminists saw themselves as distinctively deprived of the benefits which the self-declared antinationalist feminists had acquired by virtue of belonging to the communist elite. Some self-declared antinationalist respondents had expressed their awareness of certain privileges which they had enjoyed during Yugoslavia, but these accounts of privileged life were much less common.

At the same time, more so-called nationalist respondents recollected having felt at least partially affiliated with Yugoslavia. This finding is particularly significant not only because of its seeming incompatibility with the underdog position these respondents professed, but also in view of the fact that '(pro-)Yugoslav' was a designation which they had ascribed not to themselves, but to the other Zagreb cluster and by way of criticism. Regardless of this difference, the two clusters had in common that none of the feminists who had felt such an affiliation continued feeling it after 1991. If the finding that less self-declared antinationalist feminists expressed an affiliation with Yugoslavia is compared to the finding that they were also more reluctant about stating their ethnicity, it becomes clear that when it comes to the Zagreb respondents, those who did not declare themselves ethnically had not necessarily felt attached to Yugoslavia and the affiliation with Yugoslavia had not excluded the affiliation with an ethnic group.

That the heretical war-related positionings of the so-called nationalist feminists were not positionings of less experienced newcomers is indicated by the findings that these feminists had on average participated in feminist groups for a longer time than the self-declared antinationalist respondents and had more extensive experience with using the pre-war strict gender-based positioning on (sexual) violence. Thus, even though the self-declared antinationalist respondents had been previously less at home in this gender-based positioning, they have maintained it for a longer time after the beginning of the war in Croatia, despite the fact that they appeared to have been more personally affected by that war than the feminists from the other Zagreb cluster. Even the feminist with a voluntary combat experience was a self-declared antinationalist.

There was great overlap between one's cluster membership and one's participation or non-participation, respectively, in the Antiwar Campaign Croatia. Almost as a rule, the self-declared antinationalist feminists were those who had agreed with this group's support of conscientious objection and positioning on the wars which did not consider the Serbs as the only responsible and the non-Serbs as the only victimised party. Lastly, although in each cluster the number of still active feminists at the time of interviewing was smaller than that of inactive ones, the groups of the self-declared antinationalist feminists were the normally functioning ones, whereas those of the so-called nationalist respondents were quite dormant. This finding points to a possible continuity of the difference in capital between the clusters, ie to the greater skills and larger (funding) networks to which the self-declared antinationalist feminists could appeal also in the post-war period.

Just like in Zagreb, the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists were those who came from more prosperous backgrounds, but unlike in Zagreb, there was

a marked difference in educational qualifications between the two Belgrade clusters. The so-called nationalist respondents were those with significantly higher average degrees. Further different from Zagreb was the absence of a clear relation between the participation in one of the clusters, on the one hand, and the experiences of grievances from the authorities or the accounts of a disadvantaged societal position, on the other. A minority of the Belgrade respondents spoke of such injustices, and both recollections came from self-declared antinationalist feminists. Whereas these feminists also addressed their own underprivileged position in Yugoslavia, only the corresponding account of a third respondent, a so-called nationalist one, contained implicit criticism of the self-declared antinationalist positionings of the privileged (feminist) activists. Similarly to Zagreb, there were fewer recollections – and of self-declared antinationalist feminists only – which acknowledged some of the privileges which these feminists had enjoyed in the former country.

All Belgrade self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminists spoke about having (had) at least a partial attachment to Yugoslavia, but only self-declared antinationalist feminists – in fact, the majority of them – referred to this attachment in the past tense. For some of these latter respondents the continuation of one's affiliation with Yugoslavia after 1991 meant expression of implicit support to the Serb hegemonic and unitarist politics which was carried out by Milošević. Nobody within the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminist cluster perceived this post-1991 affiliation in such a way.

A comparable (dis)similarity between the clusters existed regarding the declaration of ethnicity. Answering this question proved to be a highly uncomfortable task for all Belgrade respondents, but only the self-declared antinationalist ones vigorously refused to do so. In other words, to use the designation 'Serb' for describing oneself was not done for these respondents, not even in combination with qualifiers, as all but one so-called nationalist respondent did (the remaining feminist defined herself as a Yugoslav). This difference between the clusters corresponds to that in the war-related positionings, given that the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists were those who emphasised that the Serbs were most responsible for the (post-)Yugoslav wars and felt, therefore, the need to distance themselves from this ethnic collective.

Unlike in Zagreb, the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists were the war-related heretics in the Belgrade feminist field, but the two cities resembled one another in the fact that also the Belgrade heretical feminists were not the less experienced newcomers regarding the gender-based positioning on (sexual) violence. Different from Zagreb, though, the so-called nationalist feminists in Belgrade were

those who stated more often to have been personally affected by the war violence in 1991. So-called nationalist and self-declared antinationalist feminists alike provided diverse help to men who did not want to fight, but only self-declared antinationalist respondents – in 1999, too – expanded this support also to men to whom they were not privately related, and communicated this act of dissent publicly. Fewer respondents from both clusters recollected similar experiences concerning the war violence in 1999, and there was no clear relation between these experiences and the participation in one of the clusters.

Just like in Zagreb, the (non-)participation in one specific group overlapped to a large extent with the involvement in one of the clusters. A majority of the Belgrade respondents who were active in Women in Black were self-declared antinationalist feminists. Those from the other cluster did not stay in the group for a long time, though, due to dissimilar positionings on the Serb victimhood and responsibility. Finally, a rather clear dividing line existed between the Belgrade clusters at the time of interviewing. The feminist engagement of the majority of the so-called nationalist feminists took place chiefly in the form of academic work, whereas the self-declared antinationalist feminists who were still active were foremostly involved in feminist groups.

After these three comparisons of the biographical characteristics of the key Belgrade and Zagreb respondents, I proceed now with the last empirical chapter of this dissertation. I will analyse there the ways in which, during the interviews, the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists referred to the war-related dynamics which had taken place in the 1990s among the feminists in the respective city.