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**Post -Yugoslav memories as a resistance strategy and the political
significance of Yugonostalgia**

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Post-Yugoslav memories as a resistance strategy and the political significance of Yugonostalgia

Embracing the social-constructivist concept of the past, as introduced by Maurice Halbwachs (Assmann, 2008, p. 55), my research takes an interdisciplinary approach to nostalgia, bringing together political science and cultural memory studies. Valuing the importance of emotions (Nussbaum, 2013; Hassner, 2015) in the political field and acknowledging the ascent of contentious politics (Tilly, 2006; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001; Tilly, 2008), in a world where official memory discourses are constructing and reconstructing history, this thesis conceptualizes nostalgia as another contentious expression.

The last decade has seen an increase in interest in the history of the socialist period in Yugoslavia. This interest in Yugoslavia and in particular, any positive reflection on the Yugoslav experience, was immediately marked as Yugonostalgia: *a catch all phrase for any non negative reference to Yugoslavia*. With the dissolution of the country, what was once the hegemonic socialist Yugoslav memory narrative was replaced with a new “democratic” post-socialist anti-Yugoslav memory narrative: *the revisionist mainstream public discourse*. In the (post)Yugoslav space, within the generation of the last pioneers, reminiscing about Yugoslavia became viewed as subversive, and Yugonostalgia as a refuge for post-socialist subjects’ cognitive dissonances.¹ Understanding Yugonostalgia as a multidirectional (post)Yugoslav narrative searching for the future through the past the main research question is as follows: *What does Yugonostalgia mean for politically active last pioneers and how does it dialogue with their political identities?*

My primary object of research are the narratives of the generation of the last pioneers (born between 1974 and 1982), in three (post)Yugoslav countries: Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. Starting with a topic of interest – Yugonostalgia of politically active last pioneers – I dived into the data collection, through political ethnography, interviews and participant observation. Through purposive snowball sampling, over the course of 2017 and 2018, I interviewed 62 political actors within the following parameters: understanding “political activism” as wide and comprehensive as possible, whilst drawing a line at taking part in concrete activities within an organized group for 6 months or longer. Methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Schiller, 2003), which asserts that nation-states are the only units of analysis and a natural form of community, was avoided. Nevertheless, data analysis within the Constructivist Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) took into account the specific country context whenever results showed divergences, while allowing us to outline the convergences, along generational and the political lines.

Departing from the analysis of the childhood memories of the last pioneers, we unravel what it means for them to be *children of socialism*. Apparently more politically socialized within their families than within schools, the last pioneers depict a concept of a Yugoslav family, understood in a much larger sense than the “mixed” marriage: encompassing not only the ethno-national diversity, within both nuclear and larger families, but also religious and political diversity, and social mobility. For the right-wing interviewees, their political

¹ Cognitive dissonances were first conceptualized by Leon Festinger (1957), an American psychologist, describing a situation when we face contradicting attitudes, beliefs and behaviors – in our attempts to achieve consistency we implement various strategies to lower the mental discomfort that appears through altering some of those attitudes, beliefs and behaviors,

socialization is always evidently linked with their paternal heritage, including the awareness of one's ethno-nationality. Other than a few examples, the interviewees have recollection of neither their own awareness of ethno-nationality nor any interethnic tensions between the communities. Their childhood memories, besides being unanimously depicted as happy childhoods, paint the diversity and the richness of various experiences, groups and communities as the biggest value; symbolizing a secure environment, providing possibilities and abundance, not solely focused on consumption. The concept of '*a normal life*' is colored by the idea and the faith in progress and security, provided by the functionality of the state.

The dissolution of the country confronts the last pioneers with a sense of a sudden loss, leading into the unforeseen overnight rupture of their lives, an overarching trope appearing in all narratives. The narratives on the interethnic relations slowly appear. Discrimination against assigned ethno-national communities or parents' professional association with JNA (Yugoslav People's Army) becomes a reality, most notably in schools. Shared memories in all three countries are marked by everybody leaving and, in a number of cases, with the interviewees leaving their homes and becoming refugees. The war trauma brought confusion and meandering attempts by the interviewees to understand these identitarian shifts, often within family quarrels, familial divisions and disrupted friendships. A new normality of violence is recalled vividly, marking the memory on the 1990s. The difference in contexts within the three countries gains traction. As memories of the decade in Slovenia refer to the rest of the Yugoslav wars, for Croatia they are identified with the war and, in Serbia, the whole decade of the 1990s is a marker for wars and the political and economic destruction of the country. Still, all the interviewees were minimizing the traumatic experiences through assertions that, '*it was not that bad*'.

Discussing the dissolution and the wars, the last pioneers become more prone to adhering to the revisionist hegemonic discourses. Reflecting upon the reconciliation and rehabilitation mainstream discourses, the last pioneers recognize the need for dialogue and debate but also demand a balanced discussion, which avoids both revisionism and banal nostalgia, as they understand it. For the generation of the last pioneers, ethno-nationalisms and the war were imposed top-down by the then political elites and made possible by a large number of various factors, including the global circumstances of the fall of communism and foreign powers' interests in the region. Acknowledging the new memory politics that were introduced with ethno-nationalisms, the last pioneers take upon two paths: first, resolution of cognitive dissonances and ambivalences through the narratives of singularity, with understanding their experience as exceptional, particular and unique; second, recognizing the political strategic and instrumental use of the term Yugonostalgia.

Finally, the last pioneers (re)construct the Yugoslav space, which they continue to feel as their (only) home with the Adriatic Sea being its most prominent symbol. Yet, the feeling of home is largely embedded in the linguistic proximity, leaving Kosovo mostly outside. Without questioning the cultural and economic aspects of the (post)Yugoslav space, a shared perception of the negative present and the consequences of transition transpires in the three countries and across the political spectrum, even if among the center and right-wing political actors some of the explanations rely on the concepts of Balkanism and anticommunism. While Yugonostalgia is perceived as equally producing and obstructing creativity in the present political struggles, Yugoslavism is understood as an important element of the re-imagining of the political space in today's world - acknowledging without hesitation its spatial and cultural elements.

Yugonostalgia of the last pioneers primarily serves the purpose of resisting the imposed discontinuity, becoming a collective and a political phenomenon. Generationally changing the location, it finds itself engendering the political potential notably for the new left-wing movements and political parties. The rise of the left-wing movements throughout the (post)Yugoslav space, and their enhanced cooperation, is embedded in investigative reflection into how 'it was once' in order to establish the new political ideas for how it 'can be once again'. Rehabilitation of the socialist ideological positioning often finds itself in parallel with the almost automatic denial of Yugonostalgic views, simultaneously repoliticizing nostalgia, whilst also emancipating from the Western ideological heritage through embracing the Yugoslav one. Nostalgia forges generational communities who are transforming into political generations, transforming the memory of the Yugoslav cause into a memory with a (post)Yugoslav cause (Rigney, 2016), bringing back the idea of progress and hope into the political field of (post)Yugoslavia. As the right-wing and center political choices remain embedded in the concepts of nation-states and ethno-national vision of the world, the new left-wing positionalities turn to internationalist Yugoslav reflections.

Understanding generation as a key variable, I have established that the generation of the last pioneers shares a sense of a generation, displaying an existing shared consciousness in all three countries and showing stronger influence on memory narratives than political positionality. The narratives of a *lost generation*, and the shared sentiment of helplessness in the past and in the present appear in all of my interviews. They clearly delineate themselves from the generation of their parents, for whom they believe that they were given the best years of the Yugoslav past, and their children, whom they believe, do not share the same Yugoslav values. In spatial terms, they believe their generation indeed exists beyond the borders of the newly created nation-states, representing the still existing (post)Yugoslav space. Given the fractures between personal memories and mainstream memory politics, the political shifts into (unsuspected) places of everyday life, cultural attachments, intimate friendships and relationships. Showing the strength of political socialization within families over the experience of war and, further on, the strength of the everyday experience across the borders of new nation-states and ethno-national communities through stable emotional networks and connections, within and outside the families – friend or professional networks and traveling. This thesis helps further understand the important influences on our memory narratives and our political positionality within contentious regions and histories; without providing a final definition of Yugonostalgia, this thesis shows the instrumentality of the term and its use as a discursive strategy for obscuring the Yugoslav past and any Yugoslav future, especially regarding left-wing ideologies.

The Yugonostalgic memory narratives of the last pioneers demand an identitarian continuity and make the heterogeneous communities again imaginable, while *searching for their own truth* about the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Politically productive categories manifest through numerous activities: transmission of basic values to one's children as much as through establishment of cooperation networks between political parties in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, based on the ideological orientation of the parties and movements in question, rather than on the basis of ethno-national communities. These new solidarity channels represent an important political intervention in the (post)Yugoslav world. Another important element of activism appears as opposition to the hegemonic discourses through commemoration events or the public discourses of the political actors.

The thesis shows how any attempt to categorize nostalgia fails; and not because it evades our capacity to understand the multitude of layers and meanings it comprehends, but because we try to deny its political character. It is precisely through the political subjectivity of the nostalgic, who colors his/her nostalgia by its contents, that we can identify the nature of nostalgia. Instead of discarding nostalgia as apolitical, we need to reinstate it as the political and thus expand our own understanding of the political field in the 21st century. The (post)Yugoslav memory narratives of the last pioneers give us an insight into new and unexplored political imaginaries of the (post)Yugoslav space that could be summarized as “No state, no nation – one space, one identity” and the future possibilities of the left-wing imaginaries.

Keywords: memory studies; post-Yugoslav space; generations; Yugonostalgia; post-socialism

Postjugoslovanski spomini kot strategija upora na primeru študije političnega pomena jugonostalgije

Z uporabo socialno-konstruktivističnega koncepta preteklosti, kot ga je uvedel Maurice Halbwachs (Assmann, 2008, str. 55) in spojem politične znanosti ter kulturno-spominskih študij, se moje delo osredotoča na interdisciplinarno raziskovanje nostalgije. Disertacija tako konceptualizira nostalgijo kot enega izmed izrazov spornosti, na podlagi ovrednotenja pomena čustev (Nussbaum, 2013; Hassner, 2015) v političnem polju in priznavanja vzpona politik spornega (Tilly, 2006; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001; Tilly, 2008) v svetu, kjer uradni spominski diskurzi konstruirajo in rekonstruirajo zgodovino.

Zanimanje za zgodovino obdobja socialistične Jugoslavije se je v zadnjem desetletju povečalo. To zanimanje, še posebno vsaka pozitivna refleksija o jugoslovanski izkušnji, je bila nemudoma označena za jugonostalgijo; to *vsezajemajočo frazo za vsakršno nenegativno sklicevanje na Jugoslavijo*. Ob razpadu države je tisto, kar je bilo nekdanji hegemon socialistična spominska pripoved Jugoslavije, zamenjana z novo "demokratično", postsocialistično in antijugoslovansko spominsko pripovedjo: *revizionističnim mainstream javnim diskurzom*. S koncem drugega desetletja 21. stoletja v (post)jugoslovanskem prostoru, znotraj generacije zadnjih pionirjev, postane spominjanje se Jugoslavije subverzivno ter jugonostalgija izvor kognitivne disonance² postsocialističnih subjektov. Na osnovah razumevanja jugonostalgije kot večsmerne (post)jugoslovanske pripovedi v iskanju prihodnosti skozi preteklost, sem glavno raziskovalno vprašanje oblikovala takole: *Kaj pomeni jugonostalgija politično aktivnim zadnjim pionirjem in v kakšnem odnosu je z njihovimi političnimi identitetami?*

Moj glavni predmet raziskave so pripovedi generacije zadnjih pionirjev (rojenih med letoma 1974 in 1982) v treh (post)jugoslovanskih državah: Sloveniji, Hrvaški in Srbiji. Začenši s temo mojega zanimanja – jugonostalgija politično aktivnih zadnjih pionirjev – sem se poglobila v zbiranje podatkov, skozi politično etnografijo, intervjuje in opazovanja z udeležbo. Z namenskim vzorčenjem sem tekom leta 2017 in leta 2018 intervjuvala 62 političnih akterjev, upoštevajoč naslednje parametre: razumevanje koncepta "političnega aktivizma" čim bolj široko in razumljivo, ob čemer sem ga opredelila kot udejstvovanje pri konkretnih aktivnostih znotraj organizirane skupine za obdobje 6-ih mesecev oz. dlje. Obenem sem se izogibala metodološkemu nacionalizmu (Wimmer & Schiller, 2003), ki trdi, da so nacionalne države edine enote analize in naravne oblike skupnosti. Ne glede na to, sem s podatkovno analizo v okviru pristopa Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014) upoštevala specifične kontekste držav, ko so rezultati pokazali na divergenco, s tem, da sem omogočila oris konvergenčnih rezultatov, po generacijski in politični črti.

Spomini na otroštvo zadnjih pionirjev so bili izhodišče za analizo, na podlagi katerih razkrijemo, kaj zanje pomeni biti *otrok socializma*. Očitno politično bolj socializirani znotraj

² Kognitivne disonance je prvič konceptualiziral ameriški psiholog Leon Festinger (1957), ko je opisal situacijo, v kateri se soočamo s protislovnimi stališči, prepričanji in vedenji – v naših poskusih doseganja skladnosti vpeljujemo različne strategije za zmanjšanje mentalnega neugodja, ki se pojavi s spreminjanjem nekaterih od teh stališč, prepričanij in vedenj,

njihovih družin kot znotraj šol, zadnji pionirji razumejo koncept jugoslovanske družine veliko bolj širše od "mešanega" zakona, ki ne zajema zgolj etnonacionalne raznolikosti, bodisi znotraj nuklearne ali razširjene družine, temveč tudi religiozne in politične raznolikosti ter družbene mobilnosti. Za desničarske intervjuvance je lastna politična socializacija bolj očitno povezana z dediščino staršev – vključno z zavedanjem o posameznikovi etnonacionalni pripadnosti. Razen teh nekaj primerov, se intervjuvanci ne spominjajo niti lastnega zavedanja etnonacionalnosti, niti medetničnih napetosti med skupnostmi. Zadnji pionirji, poleg tega, da soglasno priklicujejo spomine srečnega otroštva, kot največjo vrednoto izpostavljajo tudi raznolikost in bogastvo izkušenj, skupin in skupnosti, s katerimi simbolizirajo varno okolje možnosti in obilja, ki ni zgolj osredotočeno na potrošništvo. Koncept *normalnega življenja* je obarvan z idejo invero v napredek in varnost, ki jo zagotavlja funkcionalnost države.

Razpad države zadnje pionirje sooči z občutkom nenadne izgube, kar vodi v nepredvidljivo zarezo v njihovih življenjih in vseobsegajoč trop, ki se pojavlja v vseh pričevanjih. Počasi se pojavljajo pripovedi o medetničnih odnosih; diskriminacija zoper predpisane etnonacionalne skupnosti ali vsled političnim zvezam z JLA (Jugoslovansko ljudsko armado) postane resnična, še posebno v šolah. Skupne spomine v vseh treh državah zaznamuje odhajanje: intervjuvanci v številnih primerih zapuščajo svoje domove in postajajo begunci. Vojna travma je prinesla zmedo in poskuse »ovinkarjenja« intervjuvancev, da bi razumeli identitetne premike, pogosto z družinskimi prepiri, razdeljenimi družinami in načetimi prijateljstvi. Živo se spominjajo nove normalnosti nasilja, ki zaznamuje spomine v devetdesetih letih, pri čemer razlika med konteksti znotraj treh držav pridobiva na pomenu. Spomini na desetletje v Sloveniji se nanašajo na preostale jugoslovanske vojne, na Hrvaškem se poistovetijo z vojno; v Srbiji se celotno desetletje iz devetdesetih označuje z vojnami ter političnim in ekonomskim propadom obeh držav; s hkratnim minimaliziranjem travmatičnih izkušenj s trditvami, kot da *'ni bilo tako slabo'*.

Skozi razpravo o razpadu in vojnah so zadnji pionirji bolj naklonjeni temu, da se držijo revizionističnih hegemonih diskurzov. Ko premišlujejo o ideologijah sprave in rehabilitacije, ki jih vodijo mainstream diskurzi, zadnji pionirji prepoznavajo potrebo po dialogu in debati, a obenem zahtevajo uravnoteženo razpravo, ki ne bi vodila niti k revizionizmu niti k banalni nostalgiji, kot jo razumejo sami. Za generacijo zadnjih pionirjev so bili etnonacionalizmi in vojna vsiljeni od zgoraj navzdol s strani političnih elit, omogočale pa so jih številne vrste faktorjev, vključno s svetovnimi okoliščinami, kot so padec komunizma in interesi zunanjih sil v regiji. S priznavanjem novih politik spomina, ki so bile uvedene z etnonacionalizmi, zadnji pionirji ubirajo dve poti. Prva se nanaša na, razrešitev kognitivnih disonanc in ambivalentnosti skozi pripovedi o singularnosti – njihove izkušnje kot izjemne, posebne in edinstvene. Druga pot pa sledi priznavanju politično strateške in instrumentalizirane uporabe izraza jugonostalgija.

Naposled zadnji pionirji (re)konstruirajo jugoslovanski prostor, ki ga še naprej doživljajo kot njihov (edini) dom, z Jadranskim morjem kot najprepoznavnejšim simbolom. Vendar je občutek doma močno vpet v jezikovno bližino, pri čemer se Kosovo večinoma pojavlja zunaj njihovega občutka doma. Brez dvomov o kulturnih ali ekonomskih aspektih (post)jugoslovanskega prostora, si skupno dožemanje negativne sedanosti in posledic tranzicije delijo vse tri države vzdolž političnega spektra, četudi se med sredinskimi in desničarskimi političnimi akterji nekatere razlage naslanjajo na koncepte balkanizma in antikomunizma. Medtem ko se jugonostalgija dojemata hkrati kot tista, ki ustvarja in zavira ustvarjalnost v sedanjih političnih bojih, se jugoslovanstvo razume kot pomemben element pri

(ponovnem) zamišljanju političnega prostora današnjega sveta – brez zadržkov pri priznavanju njegovih prostorskih in kulturnih elementov.

Jugonostalgija zadnjih pionirjev predvsem služi namenu upora zoper vsiljene diskontinuitete, s tem, ko postaja kolektiven in politični fenomen; pionirjem generacijsko spreminja lokacijo ter novim levičarskim gibanjem in političnim strankam ustvarja politični potencial. Vzpon levičarskih gibanj širom (post)jugoslovanskega prostora in njihovega okrepljenega sodelovanja je vpeto v raziskovalno refleksijo tega, kar 'je enkrat bilo', z namenom vzpostavljanja nove politične ideje tistemu, kar 'bi enkrat lahko zopet postalo'. Rehabilitacija socialističnega ideološkega pozicioniranja se pogosto znajde vzporedno s skoraj avtomatičnim zanikanjem jugonostalgčnih pogledov, hkratnem repolitiziranju nostalgije, ter obenem tudi z emancipacijo odnosa do ideološke dediščine Zahoda ter s sprejemanjem jugoslovanske. Kljub vsemu nostalgija oblikuje generacijske skupnosti, ki se preoblikujejo v politične generacije; s preoblikovanjem spomina za jugoslovanski namen v spomin z (post)jugoslovanskim namenom (Rigney, 2016) ter povratkom ideje o napredku in upanju v politično polje (post)Jugoslavije. Ker desničarske in sredinske politične izbire ostajajo vpete v koncepte nacionalnih držav in etnonacionalistične vizije sveta, se novo levičarsko pozicioniranje obrača v smeri jugoslovanskih internacionalističnih refleksij.

Z razumevanjem generacije kot ključne spremenljivke sem ugotovila, da generacija zadnjih pionirjev deli občutek za skupno razumevanje generacije in s tem prikazuje obstoječo skupno zavest v vseh treh državah ter kaže svoj večji vpliv na spominske pripovedi kot na politično pozicioniranje. Pripovedi o *izgubljeni generaciji* in skupen občutek nemoči, v preteklosti in sedanjosti, se pojavljajo v vseh mojih intervjujih. Intervjuvanci se jasno razmejujejo od generacije svojih staršev, za katere verjamejo, da so jim bila dana najboljša leta jugoslovanske preteklosti, ter od svojih otrok, za katere verjamejo, da ne delijo istih jugoslovanskih vrednot. V prostorskem smislu verjamejo, da njihova generacija vsekakor obstaja onkraj meja novonastalih nacionalnih držav, kar predstavlja še vedno obstoječi (post)jugoslovanski prostor. V danih prelomih med osebnimi spomini in mainstream spominskimi politikami se politično premika v (neslutene) prostore vsakdanjega življenja, kulturne nezavezanosti, intimnih prijateljstev in odnosov. S prikazom moči politične socializacije znotraj družin vsled izkušnjam vojne in vsakodnevnih izkušenj onkraj meja nacionalnih držav in etnonacionalnih skupnosti, pričujoča disertacija pomaga nadalje razumeti pomen vplivov na naše spominske pripovedi in našo politično pozicioniranje znotraj sprtih regij in zgodovin. Disertacija brez dokončne definicije jugonostalgije pokaže, kako instrumentalnost omenjenega termina in njegova uporaba v diskurzivnih strategijah zakriva jugoslovansko preteklost in kakršnokoli jugoslovansko prihodnost, posebno z ozirom na levičarske ideologije.

Jugonostalgčne spominske pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev zahtevajo identitetno kontinuiteto ter preoblikovanje heterogene skupnosti v zopet zamišljene, pri čemer sočasno *iščejo lastno resnico* o razpadu Jugoslavije. Politično produktivne kategorije se kažejo skozi različne aktivnosti – prenos osnovnih vrednot na posameznikove otroke predstavlja element aktivnega političnega življenja; prav tako z vzpostavitvijo mrež sodelovanja med političnimi strankami v Sloveniji, na Hrvaškem in v Srbiji, ki temeljijo na ideološki orientiranosti tozadevnih strank in gibanj in ne na osnovi etnonacionalnih skupnosti. Ti novi solidarnostni kanali predstavljajo pomembno politično intervencijo v (post)jugoslovanskem svetu. Še en pomemben element aktivizma se pojavlja v nasprotovanju hegemonim diskurzom skozi obeleževanja dogodkov ali z javnimi diskurzi političnih akterjev.

Pričujoča disertacija pokaže, kako neuspešen je vsak poskus kategorizacije nostalgije; ne zato, ker se izogne našim zmožnostim, da bi razumeli multitudine pomenskih slojev in pomene, ki jih vsebuje, temveč zato, ker se trudimo zanikati njen politični značaj. Ravno skozi politično subjektiviteto nostalgika oz. nostalgičarke, ki s svojimi vsebinami obarva nostalgijo, lahko prepoznamo naravo le-te. Namesto, da zavržemo nostalgijo kot apolitično, jo je potrebno repolitizirati ter s tem razširiti naše lastno razumevanje političnega polja v 21. stoletju. (Post)jugoslovanske spominske pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev nam dajejo vpogled v nove in še neraziskane politične imaginarije (post)jugoslovanskega prostora, ki bi jih lahko povzeli kot »Brez države, brez nacije – en prostor, ena identiteta«.

Ključne besede: spominske študije; postjugoslovanski prostor; generacije; jugonostalgija; postsocializem

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List of used abbreviations and symbols

AFŽ	<i>Antifašistički front žena</i>	Women's Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia
AVNOJ	<i>Antifašističko veće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije</i>	Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia
BDZS	<i>Bošnjačka demokratska zajednica Sandžaka</i>	Bosniak Democratic Union of Sandžak
BiH	<i>Bosna i Hercegovina</i>	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis	
CGT	Constructivist Grounded Theory	
CPE	<i>Centar za politike emancipacije</i>	Centre for the Politics of Emancipation
DEMOS	<i>Demokratska opozicija Slovenija</i>	Democratic Opposition of Slovenia
DS	<i>Demokratska stranka</i>	Democratic Party
EU	European Union	
FNRJ	<i>Federativna narodna republika Jugoslavija</i>	Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	
GT	Grounded Theory	
HDZ	<i>Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica</i>	Croatian Democratic Union

HR	<i>Hrvatska</i>	Croatia
HSP	<i>Hrvatska stranka prava</i>	Croatian Party of Rights
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia	
JNA	<i>Jugoslovenska narodna armija</i>	Yugoslav People's Army
KPJ	<i>Komunistička partija Jugoslavije</i>	Communist Party of Yugoslavia
MAZ	<i>Mreža antifašistkinja Zagreba</i>	Antifascist Network of Zagreb
MP	Member of Parliament	
NAM	Non Aligned Movement	
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization	
NDH	<i>Nezavisna Država Hrvatska</i>	Independent State of Croatia
NGO	Non Governmental Organization	
NOB	<i>Narodno oslobodilačka borba</i>	People's Liberation Struggle
SABA RH	<i>Savez antifašističkih boraca i antifašista Republike Hrvatske</i>	Alliance of Antifascist Veterans and Antifascists of the Republic of Croatia
SD	<i>Socialni Demokrati</i>	Social Democrats
SDP	<i>Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske</i>	Social Democratic Party of Croatia
SDPS	<i>Socijaldemokratska partija Srbije</i>	Social Democratic Party of Serbia

SDS	<i>Slovenska demokratska stranka</i>	Slovenian Democratic Party
SDSS	<i>Samostalna demokratska srpska stranka</i>	Independent Democratic Serb Party
SFRJ	<i>Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija</i>	Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia
SLO	<i>Slovenija</i>	Slovenia
SMC	<i>Stranka Modernega Centra</i>	Modern Center Party
SNV	<i>Srpsko narodno vijeće</i>	Serbian National Council
SNS	<i>Srpska napredna stranka</i>	Serbian Progressive Party
SPO	<i>Srpski pokret obnove</i>	Serbian Renewal Movement
SPS	<i>Socijalistička partija Srbije</i>	Socialist Party of Serbia
SR	<i>Srbija</i>	Serbia
SRS	<i>Srpska radikalna stranka</i>	Serbian Radical Party
SVM	<i>Savez vojvođanskih Mađara</i>	Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians
UDBA	<i>Uprava državne bezbednosti</i>	State Security Administration
UN	United Nations	
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force	
WWII	World War Two	

1. Introduction

A map of the world that does not include Utopia, is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias.

Oscar Wilde, Soul of Man Under Socialism, 2009, p.27

As the first quarter of the 21st century is slowly coming to its end, today's societies seem to be deprived of barely any new master narratives on the future, regardless if we embrace or not the theories of "the end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992). Without the future, narratives on the past are becoming more and more prominent. The object of memory, as trans-disciplinary as a phenomenon can be, raises interest across the fields and has become an important element of understanding our present political realities and identities. In the political field, memory can be an instrument of nation building processes: a key argument within ideological discursive battles; a traumatic founding stone of a political group; and much more. Yet certain memories induce feelings of fondness and warmth. The bittersweet character of nostalgic memory appears as: a trope in literature and art; an object of research in cultural studies; and for some, a confusing phenomenon in (post-socialist) societies. Why has nostalgia come to my interest?

1.1 Motivation and interest for the research topic

Memory studies have been a flourishing field in the last decades. Nevertheless, memory has been at the centre of the search of one's self, from Greek philosophy to the very day. Leaving aside cognitive sciences and psychology, the search to understand memory travels from: John Locke's understanding that we are what we remember being (1689); Nietzsche's insistence that oblivion is essential for one's happiness in life (1874); to more recently, Paul Ricoeur's conception of narrative identity (1992) and Maurice Halbwachs, who is considered the founding figure of memory studies and the concept of collective memory (1968); and beyond. Through the concept of "cadres sociaux" (social frameworks), Halbwachs introduced the social-constructivist concept of the past (Assmann, 2008, p. 55), and this represents the epistemological approach I adopted for my research and this thesis. No memories are cast in stone, no identities are unalterable and they always reflect an outcome of the many continuous

dialogues and negotiations; memory remains a glimpse into one moment's articulation of a narrative.

Since Halbwachs's seminal contribution of conceptualizing memory within the collective and social reality, the interest in memory rose yet once again since the 1980s. Pierre Nora's (1997) introduction of the importance of memory narratives for nation building reignited the interest of social scientists for further endeavours. Nevertheless, the objects of political science research in the post-socialist countries remained largely focused on transition, democracy, and/or interethnic relations and the rise of nationalisms (e.g. Linz & Stepan, 1996). Memory is more often approached from a public policy perspective, whether looking into the official memory politics, commemoration practices and/or concepts and practices of transitional justice. Bringing political science into dialogue with cultural memory studies, I have embarked upon my research wishing to add another layer of meaning to the object of (Yugo)nostalgia, a label applied in numerous ways to a large range of phenomena differing in time, space and sociological criteria, while also providing an insight into the understanding of a complex reality of post-socialist societies and the multitudes of "post-socialist subjects".

Nostalgia as a phenomenon emerged in most, if not all post-socialist countries. Nostalgia started appearing through private commemorations, popular culture, and memorabilia being sold as tourist souvenirs. In the media, positive memories on socialism were considered as common melancholia of the old generations mourning for their youth, or at its best, a reaction to the economic insecurities and impoverishment of the poorly qualified populations, the ones "not used" to a free market economy.

The phenomenon of nostalgia in post-socialist countries raised the interest of numerous researchers across the social sciences (Boym, 2001; Todorova & Gille, 2010; Lankauskas, 2006; Velikonja, 2010; and many others). Political sociology did look into the attitudes and values of citizens of post-socialist countries, but nostalgia itself was largely left to cultural studies. Understanding the link between memory and identity, and thus nostalgia and identity, as well as introduction of the narrative as a substitute for ideology, I wanted to look further into nostalgia and its relationship with (political) values and identities of the citizens.

During my research, while Ostalgie (Dale, 2007; Barney, 2009; Clarke & Wölfel 2011; Chauliac, 2018; Offenstadt, 2018; etc.) and post-Soviet nostalgia (Yurchak, 2006;

Alexievitch, 2013; Morenkova Perrier, 2015; etc.) were already well established in literature, arts and research, in public discourse we started hearing more references being made to the nostalgic sentiments influencing political developments also in the “Western” world. In the case of Brexit (Barber, 2018; Byers, 2019), the EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier claimed: “Brexit was caused partly by “nostalgia for the past” that served no purpose in politics” (Rankin, 2019). A while earlier, we came across similar analyses in regards to the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States of America (Brownstein, 2016; Arnade, 2017). As diverse as these phenomena are, all were labeled as nostalgic and sometimes too easily dismissed as irrelevant and banal. Without fully uncovering the multitude of elements within, we cannot claim a profound understanding of the political events in today’s world and contemporary societies. This thesis argues that political science needs to take nostalgic accounts seriously in order to be able to further understand our societies. In 2018, Bertelsmann Stiftung conducted and published a study under the name “The Power of the Past – How Nostalgia Shapes European Public Opinion” (de Vries & Hoffman, 2018) concluding that “nostalgia is a powerful political tool”.

Many different approaches, many different explanations of the place of nostalgia in the political sphere were and are being developed as we speak. In the case of nostalgic sentiments appearing in the “Western” world they are perceived as one of the roots of the rise of the right-wing populism. In the case of post-socialist nostalgia Alexei Yurchak in his work “Everything was forever, until it was no more – the last Soviet generation” (2006) rightfully notes that even scholarship has largely fallen into the trap of simplistic dualism: proclaiming Soviet socialism as “bad” and “immoral”, leaving any nostalgia as a portrait of the “Soviet citizens [as] having no agency” (Yurchak, 2006, p. 4). Indeed, the Orientalist gaze since 1989 hastened to bury the post-socialist societies as some marvelous and bizarre theatre, in the existential rush of “catching up” through the transition towards the one and only possible just society: a capitalist democratic one. Pop culture quickly followed, turning the cultural heritage into a retro brand commodity. All this took place without much in-depth reflection of the phenomena blooming in front of our eyes, nor acknowledging the complexities of the never-ending transitions, nor listening to the multiple autonomous voices of the post-socialist subjects.

In a pursuit to get to the core of the complex phenomenon of nostalgia and its apparent upsurge in the contemporary epoch, Andreas Huyssen believes it is, indeed, in our times of “time-space compression” that we are witnessing as “destabilized modern subjects”, nostalgia being a result of our attempts “to secure some continuity within time, to provide some extension of lived space within which we can breathe and move” (Huyssen, 2011, pp. 433-434). In the so-called end of history and the so-called end of ideologies, the utopian idea of progress and the horizon of the future are more often found in the past.

Many present-day political phenomena are difficult to understand without valuing the importance of emotions (Nussbaum, 2013; Hassner, 2015). The ascent of contentious politics (Tilly, 2006; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001; Tilly, 2008), along with the decline of participation in the institutionalized democratic processes (i.e. parliamentary elections), seem to be part of global political advances. The era of fake news and the postmodern condition, boosting identity politics and nationalisms, doubtlessly set a scene for memories to become pivotal to our sense of continuity. While official memory narratives are constructing and reconstructing history, nostalgia becomes another contentious expression. Discursive battles between the official memory politics, collective and individual memory are well considered as political struggles, to which nostalgia joins.

Within the last decade, interest in the history of the socialist period in Yugoslavia has increased. A new wave of research (Duda, 2014), along with a number of exhibitions, cultural events, theatre plays, literature and movies, spread with a new generation of (post)Yugoslavs. But what did appear as an initial problem was that any interest in Yugoslavia or even more, any positive reflection on the Yugoslav experience was immediately marked as Yugonostalgia. All of a sudden, Yugonostalgia became *a catch all phrase for any non negative reference to Yugoslavia*.

When one is coming from a (post)Yugoslav³ country, the topic of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav wars cannot be avoided. I will further discuss my positionality in the

³ « (Post)Yugoslav » in this thesis is used as a location – as I believe Yugoslav space remains to exist in terms of a locus; post herein refers to the temporal aspect without negating the continuity of the space. It comprehends all seven states that were created as a result of the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo* and North Macedonia. Its omission from the title of the thesis is due to a demand from the University of Ljubljana which has changed the title,

methodological section of this thesis, but it was the very basic experience of my intimate reality that brought me to choose Yugonostalgia as a topic for my masters thesis research in 2010/2012: Yugonostalgia within a specific generation, my generation – a generation that I named “the generation of the last pioneers” – born in the 1970s and the 1980s; coming-of-age in the 1990s and entering the full adulthood in the 2000s.

Following the *pioneer* research at the time identifying Yugonostalgia as a subversive, a productive and an analytical category (Velikonja, 2010; Petrović, 2012), in my masters thesis I concluded that the Yugonostalgia of last pioneers seemed to perform as a political demand, against the newly reinforced nationalisms and/or neoliberal economic policies (Popović, 2012). Yet, with my masters thesis I felt like I had only scratched the surface. I wanted to take a step further, towards understanding the true role and impact of Yugonostalgia on the political identities and realities of the (post)Yugoslav last pioneers. While understanding political identities as “always, everywhere relational and collective” (Tilly, 2002, p. 61), taking upon the path to identify the significance of Yugonostalgia for the present (post)Yugoslav societies and the potentiality of Yugonostalgia to perform as a resistance strategy, it was necessary to dive into the narratives of the politically active last pioneers of Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, the choice of which will be further elaborated.

At the end of the second decade of 2000s, in the (post)Yugoslav space, within the generation of the last pioneers, Yugonostalgia appears as a multidirectional (post)Yugoslav narrative searching for the future through the past, through “retro-utopian” lens (Buden, 2012, p. 203). Becoming distinct from “simple” memories on Yugoslavia, Yugonostalgia and its many contents perform as resistance strategies against the mainstream discourses erasing the Yugoslav past, while aiding the traverse of one’s own cognitive dissonances.

1.2 Contextualization and definition of the problem

The (post)Yugoslav memory narratives are created and re-created in the context of the mainstream anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist discourses - the main ideological stance of the elites in power since the dissolution of the country. Manifestations of such discourses are omnipresent: from the constitutional ban on forming any new Yugoslav (or even Balkan)

alliances in the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (2010, Article 142)⁴; renaming streets and public spaces (Radović, 2013; Rihtman-Auguštin, 2000; Jouhanneau, 2007); demolished and/or neglected monuments from Yugoslav times (Horvatinčić, 2015; Buble, Kikaš & Prug, 2017); or revisionism in history schoolbooks (Stojanović, 2010; Pavasović Trošt, 2018) etc.

Memory struggles are continuously taking place and appear across the (post)Yugoslav space. The erasure of the Yugoslav past emanates through many various strategies, one of it being the silencing of the name of Yugoslavia. The name of Yugoslavia has been replaced by “neutral” signifiers, sometimes referring to a wider or a narrower space than the precise (post)Yugoslav space: South Eastern Europe; the Western Balkans; the Region; or the introduction of new idioms like Yugosphere, as coined by journalist Tim Judah (2009). On one side, the decision of the City of Ljubljana to re-name one of its streets ‘Josip Broz Tito’ in 2011 was annulled by the Constitutional Court of Slovenia asserting that “Tito symbolizes a totalitarian regime” (Flere & Klanjšek, 2017). Also in 2011, *Delo*, the major newspaper in Slovenia, undertook a survey to establish the position of public opinion amongst their readers and found that 83 percent of the respondents were against erasing the street names named after Tito (Radović, 2013, p. 135), declaring their respect for the continuity of the Yugoslav heritage as an integral part of Slovenian history. All the while, Tito’s monument in a Slovenian city, Velenje, remained untouched in the city’s centre since 1977, without being torn apart by either city authorities or citizens, and Tito’s square in Koper, a coastal town, still stands proud. In neighboring Croatia, Tito’s square in Zagreb kept its name all throughout the 1990s and even after 2006, when the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia declared the Yugoslav regime in Croatia from 1945 to 1990 as totalitarian (2006)⁵, only to be changed in 2017. In the meantime, Belgrade was left without any toponyms referring to Josip Broz Tito since the 1990s, through a sequel of street name changes, yet is a home to the only Museum of Yugoslavia in the whole of the (post)Yugoslav space.

As we will see further through the mnemonic politics in the (post)Yugoslav space (see Chapter 7), the mainstream discourses are ideologically embedded in anti-communism

⁴ Ustav Republike Hrvatske, NN 85/2010,

⁵ Deklaracija Hrvatskog sabora o osudi zločina počinjenih tijekom totalitarnog komunističkog poretka u Hrvatskoj 1945-1990, NN 76/2006,

andanti-Yugoslavism. Erasing the memory of Yugoslavia represents “the key ideological tool” (Stojanović, 2010, p. 232) used by the political elites in the (post)Yugoslav space. Yet, often memory politics in the (post)Yugoslav states differ less between newly created countries, than they do from case to case, from individual to individual. These contradictions suggest that memory narratives in the (post)Yugoslav space are intensely complex and abundantly multilayered, and our scientific attempts in generalization often obscure more nuanced realities.

The political elites’s narratives were selectively anti-Yugoslav and/or anti-communist, in continuous shift since the 1990s. An example is Tito’s bust that remained in the Croatian presidential office during the entire process of the dissolution and the wars, only to be removed in 2015 by the then President of the Republic of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović (“Kolinda izbacila Titovu bistu s Pantovčaka”, 2015). The Serbian nationalists like to mourn the Yugoslav period as Serbia’s dark ages’ prison, yet in 2016, the then Prime Minister of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, claimed that during his mandate, more roads and infrastructure was built than during the age of Tito (“Vučić: Tokom ovog mandata više puteva nego za vreme Tita”, 2016). The ambiguous relation towards Yugoslav and Tito’s heritage continues.

Through these strategies, mainstream discourses, in attempts to erase any neutral or positive references to the Yugoslav past, revise history. What once was the hegemonic socialist Yugoslav memory discourse had to be replaced, after the dissolution of the country, with a new “democratic” post-socialist anti-Yugoslav memory discourse. This is what I refer to within this thesis as *the revisionist mainstream public discourse*. Revisionism, representing a perfect example of a zero-sum game memory politics, is reflected in many forms: the erasure of the socialist heritage and any modernizing aspects of the Yugoslav state; the representation of Yugoslavia as an aberration and a specific state “experiment” in the world history; the classification of the Yugoslav socialist regime as totalitarian or a communist occupation; the truth and reconciliation policies between conflicted parties in the Second World War narrative; the ethnification of anti-fascist Partisan struggle; the silence on the revolutionary character of the Partisan struggle; and the alleged hidden crimes of the socialist regime. And within this zero-sum game, there is no space for any positive memory narratives on socialist Yugoslavia; any Yugonostalgia or any Yugoslavism; regardless of occasional conflicting narrative events like nationalization of anti-fascism heritage of the Second World War.

As a response, people who still largely remember the Yugoslav era create their own counter narratives, their counter-memory (Boym, 2001) or what Jan Assmann would call counter-identities (Assmann, 2008, p. 180). While the names of the streets can be easily substituted, memories seem to be far more resilient. In this framework, reminiscing Yugoslavia became subversive and Yugonostalgia a refuge for post-socialist subjects' cognitive dissonances,⁶ as this thesis will further develop. As Svetlana Boym defines it, counter-memory is precisely the memory created in public spaces without the control of the state and escaping the control of the dominant discourses promoted by political elites (Boym, 2001). Memory narratives on one's life in Yugoslav era opposing the mainstream discourses, and sometimes the discourses of one's own political positionality, demand creation of a space within which we can reconcile those narratives. Yugonostalgia often appears as that space, asserting the benignity of the cultural and the private. Yugoslav artefacts – Tito's pictures, Yugoslav maps and flags, small sculptures or even just tourist postcards - were never thrown out of homes, sometimes not even during the conflicts. Even if they might have been put away in the attics or garages during the 1990s, they slowly reemerged after the wars. Yugoslav music can be heard not only in the privacy of people's houses, but also in regular bars and kafanas. Same movies are watched and appreciated throughout the (post)Yugoslav space. A common reference during European and World Championships, notably in basketball and waterpolo, is *imagining how we would be invincible if Yugoslavia still existed*. Since 2000s, the emotional space of Yugonostalgia also transferred often into a commodity and a brand. Bars and cafes under the name of Tito and Yugoslavia multiplied. „Ex-Yu music“ parties are organized by student and youth organizations, and by a variety of nightclubs. T-shirts with Tito can be bought right next to the t-shirts of new nationalist leaders and/or war criminals. A number of people, though relatively few, gather in Kumrovec (Tito's birthplace) or at Tito's Mausoleum in Belgrade for the most important anniversaries of the Yugoslav times (the 25th of May, the Day of the Youth and Tito's birthday and the 29th of November, the day of the constitution of socialist Yugoslavia in 1943) and those are the pictures represented in media as the key Yugonostalgic spaces.

⁶ Cognitive dissonances were first conceptualized by Leon Festinger (1957), an American psychologist, describing a situation when we face contradicting attitudes, beliefs and behaviors – in our attempts to achieve consistency we implement various strategies to lower the mental discomfort that appears through altering some of those attitudes, beliefs and behaviors,

If we understand the past as a social construct, the main contribution of Maurice Halbwachs, just as Berger and Luckmann understood the reality itself as socially constructed (Assmann, 2008, p. 55), we can understand how in communicative memory, while the participation is difused, everyone is considered equally competent (Assmann, 2008, p. 63). Once the revisionist discourse diffuses “mixed messages”, memory becomes a primary tool of understanding of one’s experiences, of both the past and the present. Yet, the name of “Yugonostalgics” is used in derogatory terms, by the media and the mainstream discourses; “Yugonostalgics” (sometimes named in Croatia even “Yugochetniks”) are represented as enemies of the state(s), transition losers, or simply the old generations who do not understand the progress of new, democratic and (neoliberal) capitalist societies. The first mentions of the term Yugonostalgia come from Croatia in the 1990s, as one of the key terms of nationalist propaganda. It was Franjo Tuđman in 1997, for example, stating: “We shall not allow these Yugo-communist leftovers, political dilettantes, mindless chickens who do not realize what is actually at stake in Croatia and the world, with all sorts of regionalist plans” (Dolenec, 2013, p. 143), resuming the discursive strategies assigning the name of Yugonostalgia in public discourse since 1992. In an article in the weekly *Globus* in Croatia, the five anti-nationalist woman writers and activists, the famous “five witches”, were accused of being “Marxist feminists, communist and postcommunist profiteers, daughters of communists and Yugonostalgics” (Kolsto, 2014, p. 766).⁷ The origin of the term was silently *forgotten* and continued to nominally be imbued with widened meanings, yet remaining negative.

As Dubravka Ugrešić, one of the most prominent authors from Croatia and one of the accused “witches”, rightly put: when memories are erased, nostalgia can become a dangerous and a subversive category, independently of its *triviality* (2008).

Interest in Yugonostalgia has been on the rise over the past ten years, among (post)Yugoslav and foreign scholars. Exhibitions and artistic creations are flourishing, even outside of history museums; movies and TV shows are being filmed; books are being written. In 2010, it was difficult to imagine that the Croatian national TV in 2015 would broadcast a TV show under the name „Black and White World” (Crno-bijeli svijet), the title of a popular Yugoslav pop song, depicting the life in Croatia in the 1980s, yet currently it is filming its fourth season, due

⁷ The title of the article was „Croatian feminists rape Croatia“. The five accused activists were Jelena Lovrić, Rada Iveković, Slavenka Drakulić, Vesna Kesić and Dubravka Ugrešić. Three of them left Croatia,

to its success. New private museums opened – in Zagreb, the 80s Museum; in Dubrovnik – Red History Museum, etc. Whether it is about further commercializing the nostalgic sentiments or branding the communist history for the Balkanist gaze of the tourists, the nostalgic industry is most certainly on the rise.

Besides the research on Yugonostalgia done among the general populations (Velikonja, 2010), there has been qualitative research among the working class (Petrović, 2010, 2012; Kojanić, 2015, 2017; Bonfiglioli, 2019). I did not so far come upon work which has been focused on nostalgia among the politically active citizens, civil society and non-institutional political actors, or Members of Parliament and members of the leading political parties. Providing the empirical data from the interviews with the politically active representatives of the generation of the last pioneers gives new insights and new information in the field of research of Yugonostalgia and (post)Yugoslav memory, especially given that my interviewees come from the whole of the political spectrum (from far right to far left). My interviewees, drawn from Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, belong to the generation of the last pioneers, today in their 30s and 40s, and are active participants in the political life of the (post)Yugoslav space. They constitute a political generation, sharing common experiences and a common outlook of having grown up in a country which does not exist anymore, but whose heritage and values still strongly resonate within their generational and political culture even if for them, the year represented as the beginning of unification of Europe, 1989 and the Berlin Wall “crumbled down upon their heads” (Štiks, 2010, p. 92).

There would not be sufficient space within the scope of this thesis to present the large research which has underlined the importance of memory narratives for the political identities, or the use of memory in the political space. Researching life narratives of political actors stems from much needed bridge between political sociology and memory studies. If we believe that political actors play a significant role in creating the majority of the content of public discourses and official memory politics, understanding their own narration and re-narration processes, gives us an insight into the creation of public discourses and the link between the individual memory narratives and collective memory discourses. Even if not the only mnemonic agents, their role remains significant for the memory struggles in the public arena, memory being one of the backbones of nation building and production of national

cultures, “contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it” (Hall et al., 1992, p. 293).

The generational approach has brought into light important contributions. Zala Volcic (2003) looking into the generation born between the mid 1960s and mid 1970s in Serbia, outlined that Yugonostalgia can sometimes hide a discursive tactic to distance oneself from the war crimes and atrocities committed during the wars in the 1990s, within the Serbian context. Monika Palmberger further noticed that “the concentration on pre-war memories also includes a strategic silence of more divisive topics, such as the war” (Palmberger, 2016, p. 223) and looking into different generational positionalities towards the past, nostalgia performs as a discursive tactics. Tanja Vučković Juroš well argued how the anti-Yugoslav hegemonic narrative had limited influence, and how most of the respondents of the two generations she researched, born in 1981 and 1991, had a positive outlook on Yugoslav past, referring to greater solidarity, equality and sense of community (Vučković Juroš, 2012, p. 142).

The aim of this thesis is to show how and why Yugonostalgia is not a trivial political and social phenomenon, despite in and thanks to its multitude of layers and meanings in the social world. The intricacy of Yugonostalgia and its multiple forms led me to believe that it is a phenomenon that can be found all along the political spectrum, at various points in space and time. It is highly dependent on the context in which it emerges and for which aims the subject turns to nostalgia. The dissonances created between the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives, remembering how it was, and the mainstream discourses, erasing how it was and remembering what it wasn't, demand the creation of Yugonostalgia to return to consistency. Depending on the generational and the political positionality, forms of Yugonostalgia transform within generations and the political spectrum. Depending on which narrative conforms more to our political positionality, the dissonance either remains seemingly resolved in “banal” Yugonostalgic space or transforms into a more articulated resistance strategy, becoming collective and political.

As I concur with Tanja Petrović, calling upon Hugh Raffles (2002, p. 332), arguing the need for the “re-signification of contaminated language rather than its rejection” (Petrović, 2017, p. 24), I have used the term Yugonostalgia, in my research and in my thesis. Seeing the importance of Yugonostalgia as a counter-narrative “in which some of the central concepts of a dominating discourse can be appropriated and given a new meaning” (Eyerman, 2011, p.

306), I delved into the discussion on the meaning of Yugonostalgia with my interviewees. This thesis will not dwell on the mainstream revisionist narratives or the material emanations of Yugonostalgia, but will aim to demonstrate how they dialogue and are being interwoven with the memory narratives of the politically active generation of the last pioneers in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. In an anti-Yugoslav and an anti-communist social atmosphere, the last pioneers are constructing their own generational past and the present, resolving the present's problems through looking into the past solutions in order to secure a future.

Generational positionality is crucial to memory and nostalgia as temporal phenomena. As Yugoslavia has changed throughout the time, these shifts most certainly had an influence on memories of those differing eras. For each generation, there is a different Yugoslav experience, a different Yugonostalgia. When the European Fund for the Balkans conducted research in 2011 (Kačarska, 2012) comparing Yugonostalgia between two generations, one born in 1971 and the other in 1991, the majority of the young generation has shown to believe that the life of their parents in Yugoslavia was better than their lives in the (post)Yugoslav states, with the two exceptions of Croatia and Kosovo. Respondents from both generations cherished good relationships with people from other (post)Yugoslav countries. A number of similar studies have been done over the years and will be presented throughout this thesis. Beyond being used for the bombastic media titles, these studies further show the multiplicity of (generational) Yugonostalgias.

My focus is on *the generation of the last pioneers*, born between 1974 and 1982 in Yugoslavia, positioned within a variety of diverse historical events which they have shared and which have then constituted them as a generation. In order to define the generation of the last pioneers I took, as a point of reference, the event of adhering to the Yugoslav pioneers: the last generation of adherents was born in 1982. On the other side, 1974 marked the adoption of a new and the last Constitution of the socialist Yugoslavia which strengthened the decentralization and federalization processes, and that same year Tito was proclaimed as a lifelong president. Jane Pilcher (1994) reformulates Karl Mannheim's understanding of the key constitutive point for a generation: "youth experiencing the same concrete problems may be said to be part of the same actual generation; while those groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different and specific ways, constitute separate generation units" (Mannheim, 1952, p. 304). The Yugonostalgic

memory narratives of the last pioneers are then being represented as „a second-hand nostalgia“ (Blacker, 2013, p. 174), diminishing their subjectivity and often claiming the impossibility of their nostalgic sentiments..

Certainly, memory does not transform only through the generational lens. It is vital not to forget the role of class: blue collar workers in Serbia might have different memory narratives (Archer, 2018) from the intellectual elites in Slovenia, for example. The intersecting categories within a generation, like class and gender, constitute specific generation units indeed, but in this thesis the focus remains on the generational and the political positionality of the interviewees. Being the last pioneers, and being political actors, have been the two key variables for constituting the sample, which I will elaborate further in the methodological sub-chapter and Chapter 4. Continuous negotiation between personal childhood memories, both direct and indirect ones from their parents and their closest environment (Halbwachs, 1968); collective memory; post-memory (Hirsch, 2008), the memories inherited from their parents and grandparents; contradictory hegemonic discourses; all these elements weave the memory of a generation.

A number of public opinion polls have looked into the Yugonostalgic narratives, beyond the generational lens and across the (post)Yugoslav space. If we look at the data from 2011 provided by agency Ipsos for the project “Strategies of symbolic nation-building in West Balkan states” (IPSOS, 2011), when asked if they regret the break-up of Yugoslavia, citizens mostly responded positively – 70,9% in Serbia; 68,2% in Bosnia and Herzegovina; 63,1% in Montenegro; 45,3% in Macedonia; 18% in Croatia and 5% in Kosovo. And when in 2016 Gallup conducted a poll asking whether the disintegration of Yugoslavia was harmful or beneficial for their country, the responses had a Yugonostalgic echo. In Serbia, 81% of polled citizens said it was harmful; in Bosnia and Herzegovina 77%; in Montenegro 65%; in Macedonia 61%; in Slovenia 45%; and in Croatia 23% and in Kosovo 10% (Keating and Ritter, 2017). As could easily be noted, the data from Croatia and Kosovo show a different reality. While Slovenia could still be considered as part of more “Yugonostalgic” (post)Yugoslav countries, Croatia and Kosovo most certainly cannot. The different transitional trajectories and war experiences, along with historical heritage, are another important element to add in the analysis – which led me to choose Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia for my research - which will further be elaborated in the methodological chapter.

As vague and dependent on the context Yugonostalgia can be, we can clearly see the potentiality of Yugonostalgia to be used for various discursive purposes. Public opinion polls make grandiose titles, even if they require an in-depth analysis of methodological soundness, - the exact question asked, the sample itself, - in order to be understood as an accurate depiction of the state of affairs. The high numbers of citizens of Serbia lamenting harm from the country's dissolution do not necessarily reflect any Yugonostalgia, but they might mark the nationalist dissatisfaction that "Serbia lost Kosovo" and "all Serbs do not live in one country anymore". The case of Serbia further reflects the confusion of the mainstream discourses, as during the 1990s, Slobodan Milošević created a fictional Yugoslavism, claiming that his destructive and nationalist actions were "in defense of Yugoslavia", still naming the country Yugoslav even if it consisted of only Serbia and Montenegro, up to 2003.⁸

In any case, these and similar polls depict a general atmosphere of a certain heightened sense of loss among the (post)Yugoslav citizens. The need for a continuity of an identity, an attempt of the subject to make a link between the past and the present, among many ruptures of time and space that are particularly marked by shifting borders and violent conflicts, brings Yugoslavism as an important feature of what is denoted as Yugonostalgic in the mainstream narratives.

The idea of Yugoslavism (Panslavism of South Slavs) existed since the beginning of the 19th century (Rajakovic, 1992). While various versions of Yugoslavism existed throughout history, embedded in cultural and linguistic proximity, as well as anti-colonial and emancipatory struggles of the South Slav peoples, Yugoslavism has not been recognized as an empirical phenomenon and a legitimate identity ever since the dissolution of the socialist Yugoslavia. Despite a complicated stance of the Yugoslav Communist Party towards the national question throughout its existence (Haug, 2012), in 1981 census data highlighted that "more than 1,200,000 people (5.5 per cent of the population) declared themselves as 'Yugoslavs' (as distinct from a 'constituent nation or nationality'), in comparison to just 200,000 Yugoslavs in 1971, when this option first became available" (Dević, 2016, pp. 30-31; Woodward, 1995, p. 28). While Susan Woodward believes that the numbers were further rising, according to partial data for 1985 (ibid.), Sergej Flere noted that in 1987, a survey led in Zagreb and

⁸ Serbia and Montenegro remained in a state union until 2006 under the name of „Serbia and Montenegro“,

Belgrade showed that incidence of Yugoslav identity was even larger among youth: “more than 16 per cent of the population aged below 30 declared themselves as Yugoslavs, while close to 40 per cent stated that ‘Yugoslav identification would be preferable to them’” (Flere, 1988, p. 440). Analyzing this and similar data, Eric Gordy adds that “the nominal number of declared Yugoslavs should not be our only reference – many people did not declare themselves ethnically at all” (Gordy, 1999, p. 5).

In his work, Gordy further criticizes the ethnic essentialist theories of the conflict in Yugoslavia which claimed the long-standing hatreds among Yugoslav citizens and high ethnic distance among them throughout the Yugoslav era, while duly recognizing that “younger, urban and more educated people were more inclined to identify as Yugoslav” (ibid.). Yugoslavism is an invisible element of everyday life, emerging through different layers - as a meta-national layer of identity, compatible and aligned with other national or ethnic identities – one can be a Croat, Yugoslav and European simultaneously. Understanding Yugoslavism as one of many nationalisms would be a misleading path – or, as Božidar Jezernik, in his book on Yugoslavism from the beginning to the creation of the socialist Yugoslavia, well noted: “...the problem of Yugoslavia was not in its surplus of nationalism, but in its lack of it” (Jezernik, 2018, p. 6). Even more importantly, Yugoslavs are not only the children of “mixed marriages”. Linguistic proximities, experiences of residence in different part of Yugoslavia, and family connections throughout the (post)Yugoslav space strongly influence identity formation. As (post)Yugoslav memories cross the borders of the (post)Yugoslav states, at the same time they create their own borders – not the ones identified by the promise of a new supranational organization or another (multi)nation state, but the ones obtained through temporal travelling, borders that have once existed.

While Yugoslavism strongly echoes in Yugonostalgia, and the other way round, they remain distinct phenomena. Yugoslavism is created through the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives and out of a need for a continuity of identity, in opposition to the ethno-nationalist mainstream discourses and remains more dependent on the generational than on the political positionality. Looking at the sociological data presented above and to be further discussed, the generations of parents of the last pioneers and the last pioneers have been Yugoslav more than any other. Yet, Yugoslavism does not necessarily oppose the anti-communist element of the

mainstream discourses, while Yugonostalgia always contains resistance towards the anti-communist discourses.

Often conflating the understanding of (post)Yugoslav memory narratives, Yugoslavism, Yugonostalgia, and even Yugoslav history as such, in the mainstream discourses Yugonostalgia is primarily a discursive strategy for erasing Yugoslavia.

In theory, Yugonostalgia has two main perceptions as previously noted. The first one perceives Yugonostalgia as a phenomenon incapable of generating a political movement or programme (Horvat & Štiks, 2015). The second one argues the subversive and emancipatory potentiality of Yugonostalgia (Velikonja, 2010; Velikonja, 2011; Petrović, 2012; Buden, 2012).

Srećko Horvat and Igor Štiks in their book “Welcome to the Desert of Postsocialism” deny any productivity to the phenomenon of nostalgia and claim its incapability to generate a political movement or programme (Horvat & Štiks, 2015), while others beg to differ. Mitja Velikonja, throughout his work on Yugonostalgia from different perspectives (2010, 2012, etc.) proposes that nostalgia can be a motive for activism. Boris Buden claims that nostalgia is being denied its political potential and significance through the “repressive infantilization” of the post-communist citizens (Buden, 2012, p. 41). Tanja Petrović asserts that today’s revisionist and banal understanding of Yugonostalgia is actually denying individuals any possibility to be properly understood (Petrović, 2012, p. 13). The scholars herewith enumerated believe that denying political potential to Yugonostalgia represents a discursive strategy of denying political subjectivity to Yugonostalgics. Acknowledging the political element in Yugonostalgia would require accepting its potential as a “retroutopia” (Buden, 2012), one of the new ideas for political mobilizations. Distinguishing passive and active-emancipative nostalgia, Velikonja understands the main characteristics of emancipative nostalgia as following: social criticism, defense of the past, openness to the outside world and political action (Velikonja, 2013, p. 359). Whether it is more specifically researched as Titostalgia (Velikonja, 2010), visually also observed in a film by Želimir Žilnik (1994), or seen as part of contemporary activist practices leaning on the Partisan heritage like antifascist choirs appearing throughout the (post)Yugoslav space (Hofman, 2016), Yugonostalgia’s object of longing seems unable to always be identified as it relates to different social, cultural and political aspects of different Yugoslav periods.

To understand that the nostalgic narratives are not inherently resistance oriented, yet strongly dependant on the generational and political positionality, I herewith understand the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives through Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory, beyond the singularity of identities. Or, as Rothberg himself explains: "Memory emerges from unexpected, multidirectional encounters – encounters between diverse pasts and a conflictual present, to be sure, but between different agents or catalysts" (Rothberg, 2010, p. 9). He argues that mnemonic communities come into being "in a dialogic space" bringing "new visions of solidarity and new possibilities of coexistence" (Rothberg, 2014, p. 654).

The (Post)Yugoslav last pioneers create mnemonic communities, based on solidarity, resonating within intimate, artistic, cultural and political spaces – as "noeuds de mémoire" – spaces exceeding present territorial and identitarian reductions (Rothberg, 2010). A nostalgic turn to Yugoslavia goes beyond any nation state ideology: it reflects people's identities, continuity in life narratives, and an in-depth contemplation of Yugoslav history and socialist Yugoslav ideology. It provides a space where we can bring the ambivalences and inconsistencies together into a coherent private narrative. If the creation of memory and nostalgia are understood as meticulous, yet ambivalent, visions of the world, through dialectically charged dialogues of the nostalgic subjects, perceiving nostalgia as one dimensional would not do justice to the phenomenon at hand. Mnemonic communities of the last pioneers who are simultaneously political actors of the (post)Yugoslav space show how memory narratives are influenced by generational and political positionality; how we resolve cognitive dissonances created by the mainstream discourses and personal memory narratives – even if nominally we belong to the political elites' creating the mainstream discourses; and how nostalgia can be used as a discursive strategy of both promoting and disparaging the socialist Yugoslav heritage and thus, socialist and left-wing ideologies. Seeing Yugonostalgia as a potential political outlook, both towards the present socio-economic regimes and the political identity; a myriad of questions, to be asked and to be looked into, arise.

1.3 Research questions

Yugonostalgia, as other nostalgias, can be approached from various perspectives – phenomenological, psychological, philosophical, cultural, artistic, economic or political. In this thesis I aimed to understand the phenomenon of Yugonostalgia from a political

perspective. A number of initial reflexions have been leading my research. What does Yugonostalgia mean for the politically active generation of last pioneers? What is the relationship between Yugonostalgia and the political identities of the (post)Yugoslav political actors? Is Yugonostalgia nostalgia at all?

The generation of last pioneers experienced the same Yugoslav upbringing: the dissolution of the country; the war trauma; and the transition into the democratic neoliberal capitalist societies. Certainly, there was a diversity of trajectories of the countries in question – Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia – and each personal experience constituted different generational units; but another trait that brings them together, within my thesis, is their political activism. I wanted to discern the common elements and the differences of their (nostalgic) mnemonic community of the generation of last pioneers and today’s politically active (post)Yugoslavs.

Due to my own positionality, and given the danger of falling into the “common sense” knowledge through my personal memories and exposure to the mainstream discourse, but also previous research in the field and abundant literature on the topic, I have decided to use the approach of Grounded Theory – which will be further detailed in the chapter on methodological framework. I wanted the field to speak for itself and build the concepts “bottom up”.

Certainly, we never engage with a research topic without certain preconceptions or questions in mind. Memory finds itself in the centre of the power battles of different actors around *the legitimate definition of reality* (Bourdieu, 1989). Given the context of the historical revisionism and media banalization of Yugonostalgia that I already touched upon and will further detail, I wanted to know what constitutes the nostalgic counter-memory. How do the last pioneers remember their childhood and Yugoslavia? Do they, and if so, how do they, reconcile their memories with their political identities, and subsequently the mainstream anti-Yugoslav discourse?

Given the academic approaches of labeling Yugonostalgia as yet another political myth of Golden Age (Girardet, 2000), or as another one of the nostalgias taking place in today’s world, like Austronostalgia (Baskar, 2007), do the last pioneers own their memories, their nostalgia, their identities? In the literature the relation between the alleged subversive and the political potential of Yugonostalgia and its real impact on the political positioning of

(post)Yugoslav citizens remained unclear (Velikonja, 2015). The transitologist approach looks into the European integration factors rather than Yugoslavism; Tim Judah understands primarily the mere pragmatic regional and economic cooperation to be at the centre of creation of a Yugosphere (Judah, 2009).

Further reflexions on the topic could inquire even beyond. Is there any Yugoslavism left and, if so, what does it mean today? What is the relation between Yugoslavism and Yugonostalgia for the political actors of the generation of the last pioneers? How do Yugonostalgic memory narratives influence political identities?

All these numerous questions fed into my theoretical and methodological framework, and data collection research design. Without setting up the initial hypotheses, while fully aware of a large part of existing literature and (scarce) qualitative research in the field, I have let the data speak, and went back and forth between the field and the development of concepts. But to define one single research question that has led me from the beginning till the very end of my research, it could be articulated as follows: *What does Yugonostalgia mean for politically active last pioneers and how does it dialogue with their political identities?*

2. Theoretical framework and basic concepts of the research

Before engaging with the field and using the data to build the concepts from below, it is important to clarify within which theoretical framework my thesis stands, being at the intersection of the three key concepts of memory, nostalgia and generation, each of which is researched within the political field through the political positionality of the interviewees. I wish to outline my initial understanding of the three concepts at play. Understanding memory, including nostalgic, narratives in continuous creation and re-creation, and putting the generation within various social frameworks which influence it, I have adopted the constructivist approach as my epistemological positioning. Given that my starting point was that memory narratives influence our identities, affecting our political identities; interpretive approach to life narratives imposed as a qualitative methodological choice for my research.

2.1 Generation of the last pioneers

'Traumas acquired in the formative years are never forgotten', says my friend V.K. and adds: 'Some people call that nostalgia.'

Dubravka Ugrešić, 1998, p. 174

Why is the generational approach important? Looking into a generation outside the “usual (nostalgic) suspects” seemed a worthwhile undertaking. Neither old, nor young, the last pioneers today are the generation constituting the majority of adults in the (post)Yugoslav populations. Also, discerning memory and nostalgia has a distinctive temporal aspect: beyond the simplistic cohort timelines, different generations remember different political eras, and Yugoslavia from the 1950s was most certainly not the same as Yugoslavia from the 1980s. Approaching this variety of experiences and memory narratives, while focusing on a specific generation, largely helps our interpretative aims.

A generation, as I understand it in this thesis, constitutes a form of collective identity, or as Todor Kuljić would put it, a generation is marked by “participation in the same events, real and constructed ones” (Kuljić, 2009, p. 5). I am basing my understanding primarily on the work of Karl Mannheim and his understanding of a generation as a social group, “a location

which is following the life's biological rhythms of human existence" (1952, p. 290). Yet "the location itself contains merely potentialities" (ibid., p. 303) – people born between 1974 and 1982 in Romania, Austria and Italy – even if just sometimes a couple of kilometers away – do not constitute the same generation, as they have not experienced the same historical and social circumstances. Extensive research confirms that different political socializations create different political generations, distinct in their values and behaviors (Tilley, 2002; Grasso, 2014; Neundorf and Niemi 2014; etc.). The festive day of adherence to the pioneers – the important "rite de passage" for Yugoslav children – still vibrates in their memory (see Chapter 6). The Pioneers' association in Yugoslavia, founded in 1942, was an organization to which all children adhered during the first seven grades of primary school. On every 29th of November – the Day of the Republic - during the first year of their schooling, the young pioneers gave a pioneers' oath, received a blue bonnet with a red star and a red scarf. Although the message of the socialist republic and the pioneer's oath changed over the course of different Yugoslav periods (Duda, 2015), the fundamental values that were promoted resonate strongly in Yugoslav memories among the last pioneers.

The results of my master's thesis have shown that the generation of the last pioneers does not consider themselves nostalgic: they do not demand a new Yugoslav state, but they do wish a recognition of the fact that Yugoslavia existed and had both positive and negative sides. When articulating their reflections on the Yugoslav past, they demand the continuity of their Yugoslav identity and the reconsideration of socio-economic policies which existed in Yugoslav times (Popović, 2012). The last pioneers reflect their Yugoslav memories through the experiences of their growing up in the 1990s and their adult lives in the transitional (post)Yugoslav space, constituting a specific generational outlook on the Yugoslav past.

In order to demarcate the generation of the last pioneers, whom I decided to take as a variable ahead of ethno-national and religious principles and as an autonomous social phenomenon (Perica, 2012), it was required to take a starting year of birth. I have opted for 1974, an important year in Yugoslav history in which the last Constitution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia⁹ (1974) was adopted. Tito was proclaimed lifelong president of SFRY while the Constitution strengthened the decentralization and federalization processes of

⁹ Ustav Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije, Službeni list SFRJ 9/1974,

Yugoslavia. This Constitution is in historiography and political analyses often perceived as one of the many beginnings of the end of Yugoslavia. The era between 1974 and 1990 is the last period of Yugoslav history, and simultaneously it was the era in which the generation of the last pioneers was born and started growing up. Overnight, their childhood and adolescence were interrupted by the dissolution of the country and the accompanying wars. Their space shrank, and some of them and/or their families became refugees. In the formative age when one is discovering and establishing an identity, everything changed. As much as the generation of the last pioneers is marked by the socialist Yugoslav value framework, they are also the generation who witnessed its disintegration, and growing up in such turbulent times made a specific context for the political socialization of the last pioneers. This is the generation that was exposed to starting their adult and professional lives during the period of transition within newly founded (post)Yugoslav nation states. It marked them as a generation that grew up with the promise of a very different life than the one it faced.

Starting from Maurice Halbwachs and his theory of collective memory, memory is always created in relation, and in opposition to, other memories and the position that “in reality we are never alone” (Halbwachs, 1968, p. 2). In this *impossibility of a strictly individual* memory (ibid.), we find a space of dialogue between intergenerational memories and public discourses, including the revisionism of the political elites. The last pioneers were exposed to a cacophony of all these narratives.

Childhood memories are often explained as indirect memories, which we interiorize through the narratives of our closest environment, and of course, most significantly the narratives of our parents (ibid.). In this continuous articulation, the memories of their parents and grandparents fed into their own memory narratives as “post-memory – distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 22). Hirsch further acknowledges that the “generation after” remembers “only through means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up” (ibid., p. 5). It is an imaginative investment, a project, and a creation (ibid., p. 5) which builds this post-memory; encompassing what Jan Assmann would call communicative: biographical and factual, that can be transmitted across three to four generations (Assmann, 2008, p. 32). Aleida Assmann correspondingly believes that age and generations are essential to our understanding of memory – “age separates us in an existential way due to the temporality of

experience” (Assmann, 2006, p. 214). In this interplay between post-memory and communicative memory with collective memory, which Aleida Assmann claims to be just an umbrella term that has replaced the notion of ideology (ibid., p. 216), I find the specificity of memory and nostalgic narratives of the last pioneers. The memory of the last pioneers builds itself upon all of these elements: the post-memory of the Second World War transmitted by their grandparents; the communicative memory of earlier Yugoslav epochs transmitted by their parents; and the ideological framework of memory politics of the present.

The generational approach has been scarce among published studies. The studies conducted have brought into light important contributions. Monika Palmberger in „How Generations Remember – Conflicting Histories and Shared Memories in Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina “, published in 2016, focused on the city of Mostar¹⁰ and the relationship towards the past and in relation with the hegemonic narratives of three generations that she named: the First Yugoslavs, the Last Yugoslavs and the Post Yugoslavs. Palmberger looked into different generational positionalities towards the past, using distinctive discursive tactics. Besides identifying Yugonostalgia in all three generation’s narratives “and as such a representation of the past that at time serves as a vision for the future” (Palmberger, 2016, p. 14), Palmberger rightly depicted how memory is not purely being transmitted between generations, but yet re-narrated by each and one generation (calling upon Welzer, 2010), contributing to my notion of the dialogical multi-directional (post)Yugoslav memory. As Palmberger herself concludes, and I tend to agree, Welzer's concept of re-narration and Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory correspond to my understanding of the generational memory.

Palmberger introduces another important concept for my research: “generational positioning”, which explains the weight of the present life on creating an individual’s narrative on the past (Palmberger, 2016, p. 9). It is not only an experience of an event that constitutes a generation but “rather the interpretative act of making sense of it” (Palmberger, 2016, p. 9). The generation of the last pioneers has gone through the traumatic events during their formative

¹⁰ A city in Bosnia and Herzegovina, once considered to be one of the most „Yugoslav “ cities, today part of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entity, with most of the population considered ethnically Serb that have left the city; and the city remaining even today divided between the populations considered ethnically Croat and Bosniak (Muslim),

years, but is also today being faced with precarity, arising from austerity measures of the neoliberal world, and a rising sense of insecurity, along with a general descent of trust in the democratic liberal institutions and institutionalized politics. All these realities affect their relationship towards the past, and the future.

As Yugonostalgia manifests across different generations (Palmberger, 2006, p. 14; Vučković Juroš, 2012), it seems that anti-Yugoslav mainstream discourses did not achieve their aims of full erasure of Yugoslav memories, or identity.

In a comparative generational study conducting the analysis of discourses of two generations in Croatia, one born between 1978 and 1981 that she called *transitional*, and the other between 1989 and 1991 called *post-communist*, Tanja Vučković Juroš argued convincingly how the anti-Yugoslav hegemonic narrative had limited influence, and how most of the respondents of the two generations had a positive outlook on Yugoslav past (data collected in 2008-2009), referring to greater solidarity, equality and sense of community (Vučković Juroš, 2012, p. 142).

Values, attitudes and beliefs established at a young age tend to persist (Grasso, 2016, p. 34). Unless erased as a result of serious traumatic experiences, our memories are reinterpreted according to our value systems, and our value systems are largely developed in our early years, to be later intertwined with our political positionality. As Grasso believes that the most “political impressionable years” are mid-to-late adolescence (15-25 years of age) (ibid., p. 40), our last pioneers were from 8 to 16 years old when the dissolution of the country started and 18 to 26 when the new millennium arrived. While the foundations for their value systems might have been laid in their childhoods, their most politically impressionable years were the years of chaos and overnight rupture. It all influenced their memory narratives and their generational and political positionality. Elaborate research identifies how political orientation is influenced through various socialization agents like family, friends, teachers, and media (Braungart & Braungart, 1986, p. 209). There is no political socialization without transmission of memory narratives, re-narrated within these social frameworks, and always being further reinforced by “the durability of social bonds and frames” (Assmann, 2010, p. 111). Our political socialization, fueled by our mnemonic socialization, thus creates political generations.

2.2 Memory and identity

From Greek philosophy, through art and literature, whether we look to Proust or Blade Runner, memory has been a recurring object of research, creation and inspiration. In one of the most comprehensive readers on Collective Memory, edited by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy, published in 2011, the authors note in the introduction: “The decline of utopian visions supposedly redirected our gaze to collective pasts, which served as a repository of inspiration for repressed identities and unfulfilled dreams. Without unifying collective aspirations, identity politics proliferated” (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi & Levy, 2011, p. 3). And looking at post-socialist societies, and a possible reason behind why memory is so prominently being staged in research and real life, it does seem that once a communist utopian vision vanished, a retro-utopian nostalgic gaze gained attractiveness. One could say that once the dream of a socialist Yugoslavia was dispersed, the only ideologies we were left with were the ethno-nationalisms.

As I have argued above, Halbwachs introduced the concepts of collective memory and social frameworks of memory, pointing towards the impossibility of inherent autonomous individual memory (Halbwachs, 1968). Individual memory does exist, but it is always recreated and reconstructed; re-narrated each and every time. The past is continuously being rewritten, in our memories and in our narratives. Consistency and continuity of ideas might remain, but each time we “re-play” a memory, whether in our mind or through a re-telling, memory, at least slightly, changes. To paraphrase Halbwachs’ point on individual memory being only a point of view on collective memory (*ibid.*, p. 33): every time we reconstruct a memory it becomes a new point of view on our own individual memory, and our own changed positionality in time and place. And in this reinterpreting continuum, memory reflects the diversity and the breadth of various groups to which we belong and depend on, at diverse levels and various manners of attachment. In that sense, my thesis brings a snapshot of 2017-2019 Yugonostalgic memories of the politically active generation of the last pioneers in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. These might not have been their memories in the past, and these might not be their memories in the future.

There are a number of different classifications of memory, notably referring to individual and collective memory. Jan Assmann distinguishes between cultural and communicative memory.

Astrid Erll comprehends cultural memory as collective/social memory (Erll & Nünning, 2010) claiming that “the attribute ‘cultural’ is a metonymy, standing for the ‘socio-cultural contexts and their influence on memory’ and on the second level refers to the symbolic order, the media, institutions, and practices by which social groups construct a shared past” (Erll & Nünning, 2010, p. 5). Aleida Assmann distinguishes four memory formats: individual, social, political and cultural memory (Assmann, 2006, p. 211). Generational aspect being crucial for social memory, understanding individual and social memory as embodied and intergenerational; Assmann sees political memory as transgenerational and mediated. She further claims how social memory has been rather researched by social psychologists focusing on the remembering of historical events by individuals; and political memory by political scientists “who discuss the role of memory on the level of ideology formation and construction of collective identities that are geared towards political action” (Assmann, 2006, p. 215). This thesis exactly brings the two together, aiming to show the interplays between social and political memory; through the cultural memory category – nostalgia. As for Assmann, cultural memory stores “caches of information” (Assmann, 2006, p. 220), between remembering and forgetting, Yugonostalgia stores cognitive dissonances between social and political memory and through these interplays influencing our identities.

Assmann further asserts that memory has the “power of transforming our relationship with the past and the ability to revise former values and attitudes” and a possibility to “create new frames of action” (Assmann & Shortt, 2012, p. 4). Founding themselves in between their individual memories and the top down memory politics, the political actors of the generation of the last pioneers throughout the interviews revise their reflections on Yugoslav history and continuously re-narrate their memory narratives in dialogue with their political identities.

Martha Nussbaum stresses the importance of political emotions and why it is wrong to consider emotions as irrelevant for the political field while giving memory a key role in this process (Nussbaum, 2013). Emotions and memory narratives strongly influence our societal and political values. Along with Paul Connerton (1989) who puts remembering and forgetting in the centre of struggles for political identity (Connerton, 1989, p. 16), I believe that memory narratives are one of the fields within which we (re)negotiate our political identities, considering these narratives inherent to our very deepest sense of belonging to a specific political ideology. As individual memory narratives are framed by our closest environments,

such as family and close friends, they constitute a part of our political socialization. Memorial legislative frameworks, as commemorations and official memory politics, will not be in the focus of my thesis, but do necessarily create an overall context within which my research takes place. Vučković Juroš has noted that official memory politics in Croatia did not seem to successfully influence the two young generations she researched (2012), a conclusion that has been adopted also in recent edited works by Sarah Gensburger and Sandrine Lefranc: “A quoi servent les politiques de mémoire” (What is the purpose of the memory politics?), the conclusion that memory politics do not (always) bring intended results (Gensburger & Lefranc, 2017, p. 109).

The complexity of the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives reminds us that renegotiation between conflicting narratives, in essence, represents an ideological power redistribution, an ideological negotiation among power actors. So how do collective memory and history interact? As the mainstream discourses act through the historical “truth”, the “regime of truth” in Foucault’s terms, the political changes always bring along historical revisionism. Howard Zinn refers to Karl Mannheim’s distinction that “while *ideology* is the tendency of those in power to falsify, *utopianism* is the tendency of those out of power to distort” (Zinn, 1990, p. 52). Myth and invention going hand in hand with the identity politics (Hobsbawm, 1997, p. 7), history and memory continuously lead ideological struggles for establishing the truth, and within that truth, our own political identity.

The most common simplification is that the political elites decide upon mainstream discourses and thus the collective memory, while individuals, as *conscious or unconscious dissidents*, create counter-memory and nostalgia. Such a simple dichotomy is what prevents us from fully comprehending the complexity of both mainstream and counter-narratives and to see that revisionism and nostalgia find their place within both narratives and both groups in the myriad of dissonant voices. As my aim within this thesis is not to dive into a deconstruction of power, but to understand these ambiguous and ambivalent movements of the memory narratives in the (post)Yugoslav political field, I believe this research gives us also a glimpse of the dialectical creation of the mainstream discourses themselves, between nostalgia and collective memory. Political elites consist of the political actors, notably the ones participating in the institutional politics. Researching political actors’ memory narratives gives us a better

insight into the creation of both the mainstream discourses and counter-narratives; in this case specifically revisionist anti-Yugoslav discourses and Yugonostalgia.

Being produced in the (post)Yugoslav context, the counter-narratives herewith can be understood as a response created against the revisionist memory politics, the anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist stances. Their mere opposition has earned them the label of nostalgia and it is one of the key elements of seeing how nostalgia can also simply be used as a term to discard any opposition to the mainstream “truth”. Roy Eyerman, American sociologist, well argues: “While discourses are exercises in power and empower those rightly positioned, narratives can provide means for a “counter-story” for a minority or an oppressed group, in which some of the central concepts of a dominating discourse can be appropriated and given a new meaning” (Eyerman, 2011, p. 306). These counter-narratives appear as the tool of the mnemonic subjects in the memory struggles for the historical truth, their intimate sense of continuity and their political identities.

A Yugoslav approach to research on (post)Yugoslav memory narratives is an important element of my thesis. (Post)Yugoslav societies have been widely approached through the ethno-national identity politics lenses, through the implementation of methodological nationalism. Methodological nationalism has been introduced as a concept by Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller (2003) as a research approach in social sciences that understands nation-states as the only units of analysis and a natural form of community. Methodological nationalism and ethno-nationalism, seen as “gate keeping concepts” (Appadurai 1986), have been the frameworks mainly used in scholarship over the last decades (Archer, Duda & Stubbs, 2016, p. 3). My thesis intends to take a different turn, and as previously noted, I consider this research to be rather a research for congruences rather than differences in the (post)Yugoslav space. Acknowledging the mainstream discourses of the (post)Yugoslav space to be the building blocks of the (new) ethno-nationalisms, how do we see anti-nationalist counter-narratives emerging through Yugonostalgia?

Since the seminal Ernst Renan’s conceptualization of a nation, memory has been in the centre of its foundation – as Renan would define: “the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together” is what constitutes a nation (Renan, 1992, p. 19). Further on, Benedict Anderson’s concept of nations as imagined communities is supported by Ernest Gellner’s claim that: “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where

they do not exist” (Gellner, 1964, p. 168). As memory narratives constitute an inseparable element of ethno-national identity building, re-narration and reconstruction of memory narratives makes possible the invention of nations. In the case of the (post)Yugoslav space, the 20th century efforts of entangling and building Yugoslav memory narrative had to be dissolved over night. Without creating a Yugoslav nation in the traditional sense of the 20th century, but allowing Yugoslav identity to grow and develop as I have pointed out earlier and I will further develop (see Chapter 8), Yugoslavism became a meta-national identity, difficult to grasp within our traditional concepts of nation.

Today Yugoslavism does not represent an ethno-national community nor demand a nation state to be (re)created, yet persists as another layer of people’s identities. Monserrat Guibernau researched the concept of nations without states considering them as “cultural communities sharing a common past, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, and wishing to decide upon their political future which lack a state of their own” (Guibernau, 1999, p. 1). The (Post)Yugoslavs can indeed be considered as a cultural community, sharing a common past while being attached to a clearly demarcated territory, but without any wish to re-create a state. I consider this to be an important element of contemporary Yugoslavism and its progressive nature. As the newly imposed ethno-national identities of the new nation states are strongly embedded in the mainstream discourses, the Yugoslav identity is emanating from counter-memory narratives in the (post)Yugoslav space, transgressing current political imaginaries of the conceptual understanding of the nation.

The meta-national character of Yugoslavism falls within the understanding of identities by Stuart Hall as “...never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions” (Hall & du Gay, 1995, p. 4). Even accepted and interiorized ethno-national identities are not singular, nor founded in singular and monolith memory narratives. Eric Hobsbawm pleads that “we cannot assume that for most people national identification – when it exists – excludes or is always or even superior to, the remainder of the set of identifications which constitute the social being” (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 11).

Memory narratives, as an inseparable element of political socialization, influence our political identities. Usually it is understood that the memory narratives follow one’s political

positionality, as Alon Confino claims that “Memory cleavages reflect political differences constructed beforehand” (Confino, 2011, p. 199). This thesis partially contradicts Confino’s claim. Political positionality influences the role of (nostalgic) memory narratives and their interpretation, but does not necessarily change them, and memory narratives have the capacity to influence political positionality as well. Equally, as identities demand seemingly coherent memory narratives, the subjects successfully slalom between the narratives, as they shift between their identities. Ambivalences and dissonances do not necessarily demand a resolution: they are accepted as a part of life or tucked away as *Yugonostalgia*.

Narratives uncover the “stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)” (Andrews, 2007, p. 9), including who they are as political subjects. As we define our own positionality within the framework of the social world around us, we also define our political positionality that can be narrated – explained and justified – through asserting our deepest value systems, and our memories how we became who we are and why we believe in what we believe. Memory narratives, our life stories, give us an opportunity to be differentiated within larger groups from the others, without denying our belonging to the group. Previous research has shown the variety of the strength of family influence in political socialization (Cutler, 1976; Jennings et al., 2009; Zerubavel, 2011). Family narratives intersect with mainstream discourses – master cultural narratives (Fivush & Merrill, 2016), providing for a large number of influences on the creation of our life narratives and our political values and attitudes. Memory narratives, as Misztal further elaborates calling upon Goffman, change “with majors social shifts that affect entire mnemonics” (Misztal, 2010b, p. 87). Researching the memory narratives of the political actors of the generation of the last pioneers provides rich material for understanding how early Yugoslav socialization and war years have influenced their political identities, through their memory narratives and the concept of *Yugonostalgia*. The complexity of collective memory imposes a demand to research into the individual narratives as to understand how this multidirectionality of memory, in temporal, spatial, and identitarian senses, brings world outlooks and feeds into the political positionality. Even the most material emanations of memory narratives like commemorations are multivocal, “about a shared space... a shared time, or a shared text that carries diverse meanings and thus can be peopled by groups with different interpretations of the same past... “ (Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2011, p. 375).

Understanding memory narratives through false dichotomies of being counter or not - strict anti-Yugoslavism and anti-communism and Yugonostalgia; hegemonic mnemonic agents and *the rest* - obscures the multiplicity and instability of the memory narratives, collective and individual ones. Researching only public memory politics, official commemorations and legislative memory frameworks does not provide a sufficiently deep insight into the memory narratives of a society. The intervention against these binary dichotomies that this research also aims to achieve is embedded in the understanding of multidirectional memory, capturing “simultaneously the individual, embodied, and lived side *and* the collective, social, and constructed side of our relations to the past” (Rothberg, 2009, p. 5). To understand the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives we need to acknowledge their multidirectional character: memory on socialist Yugoslavia cannot be discerned without memory on the post-colonial legacy in the Balkans; the pan-Slavic movements; the monarchist (First) Yugoslavia; the Second World War; the Holocaust; the global anti-fascist struggle and the socialist revolution; or the globalized capitalist societies of the twentieth century. Through these entanglements, we can understand how Yugonostalgia emerges, resolving the cognitive dissonances and as an intervention into the mainstream discourses in the (post)Yugoslav space, bringing new political dialogues, alliances and solidarities. This thesis contributes to the identification and understanding of these entanglements. The memory struggles emanating from these entanglements in the (post)Yugoslav have been approached through three main objects of research: the revisionist mainstream discourses and ethno-nationalism studies; transitional justice and reconciliation with the past; and nostalgia. Taking nostalgia as a starting point, but with an aim to enlarge its conceptual meaning, I try to build upon a number of previously cited scholars that have identified the subversive potentiality of the phenomenon of Yugonostalgia (Velikonja, 2010; Petrović, 2012; Buden, 2012; Kirn, 2019; etc.).

2.3 Nostalgia

... but in the end there is always a bit of space that cannot be shared, a bit of life that cannot be translated, an experience which marked the shared life in a particular country, in a particular culture, in a particular system, at a particular historical moment. This unshareable layer in us is activated by a Pavlovian bell. And we salivate unfailingly, without really knowing why. That unknown space in us is something like a shared 'childhood', the warm territory of communality of a group of people, a space reserved for future nostalgia. Particularly if it should happen that this space is violently taken from us.

Dubravka Ugrešić, Confiscation of Memory, 1996, p.28

Rarely can one today read a text on nostalgia without coming across an inevitable reference on Svetlana Boym and her seminal work "The future of nostalgia" (2001). Boym decrypted the unattainability of the object of nostalgia and produced an important reflection on its nature, proceeding to distinguish two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia turns towards the tradition, historical reconstruction and the establishment of truth found "in the newly created practices of national commemorations in aim to reestablish social cohesion, sense of security and the relation of obeisance with the authority" (Boym, 2001, p. 42). Reflective nostalgia is presented as seeing "the past as a value for the present, a meditation on history and the passage of time" (ibid., p. 49). Every nostalgic narrative could take both forms, depending on its aims. Without entering the many different nostalgias, of which some have been evoked in the introduction, this thesis focuses on the phenomenon of Yugonostalgia.

What differentiates Yugonostalgia from (post)Yugoslav memory narratives as such? Yugonostalgia most certainly represents a segment, one of the forms of (post)Yugoslav memory narratives, always referring to the positive recalls of the socialist Yugoslav times, and standing in opposition to the revisionist mainstream discourses. What we call the revisionist mainstream discourse and memory politics often reflects features of restorative nostalgia. Nation-building exercises in the (post)Yugoslav space usually recall pre-Yugoslav times, seeking the establishment of the "thousands of year's long aspirations" of peoples in question for their own independent states. Reconciliation discourses, either between Ustashas and Partisans (Croatia), Chetniks and Partisans (Serbia), or White Guards and Partisans (Slovenia), aim to reestablish the social cohesion of ethno-national societies. Interestingly enough, those discourses are never named as nostalgia – they are *the truth*. Given the mainstream discourses establish this truth, any narrative appearing as a counter-memory

becomes denominated as Yugonostalgia. This is how the mainstream discourses control the contents of nostalgia, implementing a discursive strategy in the memory struggle for truth. As an emanation of a counter-memory, Yugonostalgia arises as a continuous struggle against “the confiscation of the memory” (ibid., p. 52) and is taking place in oral histories narrated between friends and family, and diffused by unofficial networks (ibid., 61). Revisionist memory politics “protect the absolute truth”; while Yugonostalgia “calls it into doubt” (Boym, 2011, p. 453).

Svetlana Boym further assigned a prospective element to nostalgia, asserting that “fantasies of the past, determined by the needs of the present, have a direct impact on the realities of the future” (ibid., p. 452). As I previously conceptualized Yugonostalgia as a multidirectional (post)Yugoslav narrative searching for the future through the past, we can see how this conceptualization opposes Boym’s definition. While Boym believes nostalgia represents “fantasies”, I believe Yugonostalgia leans on the interpretations on the past and factual narratives: it is the mainstream discourses that assign the distortion to Yugonostalgic narratives, regardless of its true contents. As Dominic Boyer rightly said: “Accusations and acceptations of nostalgia are never neutral” (Boyer, 2010, p. 21). But the interplay between the past and the future remains. The discursive battles over historical readings and ideological interpretations of the Yugoslav past act as ideological anchors of today’s political actors, expressing legitimate demands towards the present and the future.

The political elites in government of the (post)Yugoslav countries, largely nationalist and neoliberal (and often both), have given the name of Yugonostalgics to all those who are freely expressing their critical positions against the new anti-Yugoslav mythologies (Velikonja, 2009, 2010), as I will further elaborate in Chapter 7. Vjekoslav Perica and Darko Gavrilović claim that: “We say that Yugoslavia created an artificial nation, but the successor nations are even more artificial; constructions effectuated by small groups and imposed on the masses by wars, invention of hatred and hostility against people close in ethnocultural sense, by ethnic cleansing and myth creation” (2011, p. 2). Once the nationalist paradigms started entering the political field, the Middle Age mythologies and the Golden Age myths provided the foundation of the new nation-building. Yet it was not considered nor framed as *nostalgia*, but as a legitimate cause for ethno-national awakening. Such mythologies were based in anti-Yugoslavism and any opponent reflections ended in being called *Yugonostalgic*. Dubravka

Ugrešić explains what is hidden behind this attribution of meaning to the term of Yugonostalgia (1998, p. 36):

Precisely because of the elusive nature of nostalgia, the authorities in the new states of former Yugoslavia have coined the term *Yugonostalgia* and given it an unambiguous meaning. The word is used as political and moral disqualification: the Yugonostalgic is a suspicious person, a ‘public enemy’, a ‘traitor’, a person who regrets the collapse of Yugoslavia (and hence the collapse of communism, and communism is ‘Serbo-Bolshevism’!), a Yugonostalgic is the enemy of democracy. The term ‘Yugonostalgia’ belongs to the new terminology of war.

Seeing politics in the (post)Yugoslav space unravel as *continuation of war by other means*, Yugonostalgic memory narratives become “by definition, subversive, anti-system and emancipatory” (Velikonja, 2011, p. 92). Positive recollections on the socialist Yugoslav times contradict the mainstream narratives and as such, represent a contentious expression of another memory and another history.

Understanding that Yugonostalgia is primarily used as an instrumental term is crucial. Throughout this thesis, I try to elucidate the contents of Yugonostalgia for the generation of the last pioneers, showing its most important characteristic of obfuscating legitimate political and ideological reflections on the past. Feeling a tingling sensation when taking a sip of Cedevita¹¹ is most certainly one thing; listening to the music in a language we understand and/or consider our mother tongue is another thing; and discussing access to health care is a completely another issue. Aiming to shove all those meanings, actions, interactions, reflections and ideas under one rug, the Yugonostalgic one, is a pure political strategy and methodological nationalism in its own way. As Aleida Assmann (2011) has already identified collective memories as ideologies - in a continuous struggle and dialogue – it is the anti-nationalist socialist Yugoslav ideology in struggle and dialogue with the nationalist neo-liberal ideologies that we are witnessing, to put it as succinctly as possible. Drinking Cedevita or attending concerts does not necessarily influence one’s political views – a Member of Parliament from HDZ *confessed* to us that he regularly goes to Đorđe Balašević’s¹² concerts. What is rather at play is the fact that it might have influenced his willingness to participate in the research, and yet it does not change the fact that in the public he prefers to hide it. It is the

¹¹ A popular instant drink produced in Croatia,

¹² A popular Yugoslav singer from Novi Sad in Vojvodina, Serbia,

interplay of shown and hidden, of *private and public*, and of intimate and performed. Within this thesis, we show these ambivalences within the memory narratives of the political actors – their internal discursive strategies to abridge cognitive dissonances and ambiguities of their life narratives with their political positionalities.

This thesis does not look into: commercialized material memorabilia; lieux des mémoires; commemorations; public discursive battles over the street names and public monuments; Yugonostalgic parties and popular culture; artistic projects; music, TV and cinema production; literature and literary festivals. It also does not approach Yugonostalgia from the point of view of an existing Yugosphere (Judah, 2015), nor look specifically into Titostalgia (Velikonja, 2010). While understanding memory as both an individual act, but also a form of social interaction (Kuljić, 2011, p. 51), and assigning Yugonostalgia as a legitimate object of a political study, this thesis brings us closer to the understanding of multilayeredness and multidirectionality of Yugonostalgia and the full range of its contents. Being a qualitative research, this thesis does not intend to “measure” Yugonostalgia among the last pioneers. It also does not understand politics exclusively as voting patterns or elections’ program; nor do I believe interconnectedness between Yugonostalgic memory narratives and political identities requires explicit Yugonostalgic statements by the political actors. As Clifford Geertz (1998) explained, ideology compensates the emotional chasm between the present situation and the desired situation. Nostalgia finds itself in this ideological role, resolving the cognitive dissonances and translating the memory on the historical progress into a possibility for future progress. As Stef Jansen has already rightly noticed, Yugonostalgia does not demand a new common state, is not always an expression of adherence to Yugoslavism and is not always an anti-nationalist resistance against the new regimes (Jansen, 2005, pp. 222-225). Even if important observations, given that Jansen conducted his research in the early 2000s, we have to acknowledge that Yugonostalgia has since evolved. Indeed, Yugonostalgia still sometimes represents *only* a retro brand, the transition aiming at selling everything. For a price as high as 230 Euros (more than a half of a median Serbian salary), an entrepreneur from Belgrade has put on sale, through an ad on Facebook, refurbished original armchairs which were once property of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. When I have made an inquiry about the origin of their acquisition the response I have received was: “We were lucky, we don’t know exactly” adding, “We found it at a friend’s place.” Obviously feeling a sense of unease about my inquiry, he tried to finish the conversation quickly. The

acquisition of these armchairs could not have taken place in a fully legal way. The (Post)Yugoslav transition allowed massive theft of common property, once belonging to all Yugoslav peoples. The capitalist individualist society sells the foregone socialist common ownership, creating consumption of “the past in the form of glossy images”, as Fredric Jameson would put it (Jameson, 1991, p. 287).

Juxtaposed against the commercialized Yugonostalgia, stand the scholars investigating the activist, subversive nostalgia. “Nostalgia, as a discursively constructed set of ideas, should be seen and interpreted as part of an ideology that enables individuals and groups to establish and argue their positions and status in a given social and historical circumstance”, claims Tanja Petrović (Petrović, 2010b, p. 132). Petrović shows the dialoguing nostalgic narratives, linking Yugonostalgia to both the idea of progress and the European belonging: as one of her respondents assessed “We were much more a part of Europe in socialism than we are now” (ibid., p.141). The silencing of these, strongly political, narratives within the mainstream discourses takes place through their naming of Yugonostalgia. More discursive strategies have been assigned to Yugonostalgia. Zala Volcic (2003), who looked into the generation born between the mid 1960s and mid 1970s in Serbia, claims that Yugonostalgia can sometimes hide a discursive tactic to distance oneself from the war crimes and atrocities committed during the wars in the 1990s. Seen from the frames of transitional justice this could be identified as avoidance of collective responsibility. Another way to understand it could be as a clear example of memory screens, in Freudian terms, a memory covering a trauma. Monika Palmberger noticed that “the concentration on pre-war memories also includes a strategic silence of more divisive topics, such as the war” (Palmberger, 2016, p. 223). Whether understood as a “memory without pain” (Velikonja, 2017, p. 8), or an imperative framework when discussing memory discourses and practices of (post)Yugoslav citizens (Petrović, 2017, p. 24), or only nostalgia for consumer socialism without any utopian imagination (Dimitrijević, 2017, pp. 30-31); Yugonostalgia keeps floating as a signifier of many different interpretations.

I have decided to use the term of Yugonostalgia, accepting the multitude of meanings and discursive strategies behind it. In this thesis, Yugonostalgia is understood both as a category of analysis and a category of practice. Yugonostalgia, being part of (post)Yugoslav memory narratives, comprehends all non negative references to the Yugoslav past, including the

material emanations of personal and collective positive recollections, participation in the (post)Yugoslav cultural space and demand or acceptance of the identitarian continuity – serving as an intimate tool of reconciliation of cognitive dissonances between individual memories and public discourses on the Yugoslav past. It encompasses generational Yugoslavism, remaining distinct, yet collective and it expresses its political importance through contentious understandings, statements and activities in the public as resistance strategies of, in this case, the last pioneers – in continuous dialogue with their political identities.

3. Methodological framework

The methodological path I have chosen was guided by my primary research question “What does Yugonostalgia mean for politically active last pioneers and how does it dialogue with their political identities?” and my social-constructivist epistemological stance, as has been outlined before.

In my attempt to conduct a pan-Yugoslav research, I have chosen three (post)Yugoslav countries: Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. As much as I would have loved to have had an opportunity to include all seven (post)Yugoslav countries, it was an unrealistic idea in the practical terms for one PhD thesis. The choice of the three countries in question stemmed out of a number of reflections: the first Yugoslav state was indeed called the The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes; all three had cardinal roles in the dissolution of Yugoslavia; and during and after the dissolution they had diverse transitional trajectories, and different levels of economic development. In Chapter 5, I outline a brief historical overview and a current analysis of the three countries in question, in the aim of providing a clear contextual framework within which my research was conducted.

This thesis explicitly avoided a strictly divided analysis along the borders of the three countries in question, opposing methodological nationalism as I have elaborated before. As the generation of the last pioneers is (post)Yugoslav, as much as are their memory narratives; I believe the analysis had also to follow. Taking into account the specific country context within my data analysis when results showed divergences, my approach also allowed for outlining the convergences of my research results.

Developing the methodological framework for my research, I found Karl Mannheim’s concept of sociology of knowledge useful. As nostalgia is considered as a both an individual and a collective memory phenomenon, it has to be approached from both sides. As Mannheim puts it (Mannheim, 1936, p. 2):

The principal thesis of the sociology of knowledge is that there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscured. It is indeed true that only the individual is capable of thinking. There is no such metaphysical entity as a group mind which thinks over and above the head of individuals, or whose ideas the individual merely reproduces. Nevertheless it would be false to deduce from this that all

ideas and sentiments which motivate an individual have their origin in him alone, and can be adequately explained solely on the basis of his own life-experience.

If we understand memory and nostalgia as forms of knowledge, as much as they might not be absolute or precise, it is “knowledge none the less” (ibid., p. 76). Given that I see nostalgia as embedded in generational and political positionality, following Mannheim, my research looks into these diverse intersections of collective and individual. Acknowledging that the interpretivist research, situated in the sociology of knowledge and a comparative approach, requires parallel top down and bottom up perspectives, my primary object of research were the last pioneers’ narratives, inherently containing the mainstream public discourses. Since 2015, I have followed on the daily basis the mainstream discourses of the political parties and organizations of my respondents (official programs; press statements; websites; different publications), mostly through web research, collection of different materials in the field and observation. Data analysis of this material was conveyed throughout the thesis, as I was continuously comparing it with the last pioneers’ memory narratives. The most important segment of data collection were the semi-structured in-depth interviews, which I will detail in the following subchapter. My main study population was the generation of the last pioneers, and moreover, those who are actively politically engaged.

My data collection methodology can also be inscribed in political ethnography, as my fieldwork experience, or what Baiocchi and Connor called “ethnographic gaze” (2008, p. 2), included ethnographies of political actors and the lived experience of the political (ibid., p. 11). The importance of multi-engagement sociology has been underlined by H  l  ne Combes (2009) when one is researching social movements and political parties, like my study population. As much as my research was ethnographic in its partial nature, there was a significant challenge of providing the ethnographic insights of the conducted interviews, without endangering the anonymity of the interviewees. Simply changing the names of the interviewees with even as few data as the year when they were born, their sex and the precise political organization they belong to would already uncover their identities given the size of the (post)Yugoslav countries and their political environments. I have thus tried rather to provide the ethnographic details about the interviews themselves, than the interviewees. I have opted for Grounded Theory as a main tool for data analysis due to a number of reasons. Some have been explicated above, but above all are my own positionality in regard to the research question and the openness that Grounded Theory provides for articulating new concepts and

possible theories coming from the field. Discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992) has certainly remained as one of the underlying approaches in my data analysis, yet I finally found the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) not to be fully appropriate. Interviews in Slovenia were conducted in two languages: the interviewees would often speak in Slovenian while I would use Serbo-Croatian, or they would be using Serbo-Croatian at a limited level. This rendered the precision required for discourse analysis difficult. Nevertheless, CDA was important for me in order “not just to describe discursive practices, but also show how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief” (ibid., p. 12).

Following Assmann’s understanding of collective memory as a new term for ideology (Assmann, 2006, p. 216), I also in this work understand ideologies through Norman Fairclough’s understanding of ideology as “significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities), which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 87). Thus, uncovering the ideological interplay found within and around Yugonostalgic memory narratives was one of the key aims of this thesis.

3.1 Grounded Theory and reflexivity

Grounded Theory (GT) approach provided me with a possibility to fully immerse in the field, while trying to shed off preconceptions and my own positionality, attentively listening to the data emerging from the field itself to further build codes, categories and concepts. Being involved and being creative were the principles I followed. By Patton’s understanding of creative approach to research: “Creative fieldwork means using every part of oneself to experience and understand what is happening. Creative insights come from being directly involved in the setting being studied” (Patton, 2002, p. 302).

Following further the principles of Grounded Theory, I was largely conducting a literature review in parallel to the fieldwork, and afterwards (Corbin & Strauss, 2012, p. 17), even though given that I have been researching the topic for ten years and my previous master thesis (Popović 2012), I was already acquainted with a large part of the existing scholarship. The interview guide I have used in my interviews was continuously adapted as the research

moved along, while keeping the main structure in place. I kept my notes, and journals, and memos and made sure to be in touch with my own processes on a daily basis (ibid., p. 16).

Starting with a topic of interest – Yugonostalgia of politically active last pioneers – I dived into the data collection, through political ethnography, the interviews and participant observation. Beginning not with a hypothesis but with a research situation, I officially initiated my fieldwork in 2017 by initially spending a month in each of the three countries. I wished to first familiarize with the field, more spontaneously inquire for possible interviewees and relevant contacts who could provide me with interviewees; but most importantly to understand the discursive interplays in the field, beyond accessible media. Every morning I would check the three media outlets in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia (N1 and Dnevnik in SLO), as well as numerous social movements', political parties', different news and political pages on Facebook, so that I could follow the general political atmosphere and look for specific Yugoslavia and Yugonostalgia related news. Throughout years, I have gathered more than 2000 bookmarks of different significant posts.

Upon my arrival and throughout my fieldwork, when possible, I would attend political and activist public gatherings.¹³ In the beginning of 2017, I also made sure to map and understand the political movements in the three researched countries, so I could come up with a sample for interviews. I opted to have two main groups of interviewees, one consisting of the current Members of Parliaments, and the other one consisting of various political actors, members of political parties but not MPs, members of social movements and/or various political initiatives.

For the MPs, the procedure was quite straightforward – I would make lists of all MPs belonging to the generation of the last pioneers from each of the political party present in the parliament and then contact their parliamentary groups in order to set at least one interview from each of the parties. The variety of the Members of Parliaments belonging to diverse

¹³ Gay Pride in Zagreb 2017 and 2018; 1st of May demonstrations in Belgrade 2017; Jaz bom nosil rdečo zvezdo (I will wear a red star) in Ljubljana 2017 and 2018; AFŽ YU (Antifascist front of women) parties in Belgrade 2017 and 2018; Protiv diktature (Against dictatorship) demonstrations in Belgrade 2017; Zagreb je Naš (Zagreb is Ours) demonstrations in Zagreb 2017; etc. I also attended the Congress of Levica in Ljubljana in 2018, as the only internal political party meeting I was invited to throughout my fieldwork,

political options and coming from different regions was then determined by their own willingness to participate in the research which is the key element of snowball sampling.

For the second group of interviewees, first I had to establish my understanding of being “politically active”. There are various definitions of political activism, some of them starting at the level of activities such as bare political discussion (Almond & Verba, 1963). Inglehart proposes a comprehensive categorization of political activism: elite-directed activities (voting; party membership; other party-mediated activities; union membership) and elite-directing or elite-challenging (Inglehart & Catterberg, 2016) activities (political discussion; participation in new social movements and protest activities such as demonstrations; boycotts; signing petitions; occupations; unofficial strikes; etc.) (Inglehart, 1990, pp. 335-336). Going beyond political discussion, I tried to keep my definition of “politically active” as comprehensive as Inglehart’s, concurring with the attention Donatella della Porta brings to social movements so as to move the focus beyond elites when researching politically engaged citizens. She defines social movements as “(1) informal networks of individuals and organizations, based on (2) shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about (3) conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various forms of protest” (della Porta, 2014, p. 19). These conceptualizations, by Inglehart and della Porta, led me through the process of identification in the fieldwork of possible interviewees among the generation of the last pioneers.

Given the approach of GT, I considered myself as “an active sampler of theoretically relevant data, not an ethnographer trying to get the fullest data on a group” as Glaser and Strauss pointed out in their work *Status Passage* (1971, p. 183). I have opted for both purposive and snowball sampling. I was searching for interviewees “purposively selected to represent rich knowledge about the research questions” (Beitin, 2012, p. 222). In case of life narratives as the main object of research, the interest of the interviewees to participate in the research was necessary as to assure their initial openness to intimate disclosure of their lives and their memories – purposive sampling (Guest, 2015, p. 234) on the basis of established criteria, which I will further elaborate. Second element, snowball sampling was used for the access to various political parties, groups and movements. Snowball sampling is used when members of specific groups/movements/parties are not known; there are no established or easily accessible lists of these members. Given the size of the countries researched, and the fact that majority of the political actors know each other, this proved to be the most fruitful approach in acquiring

a sizeable sample. I included fieldwork visits to cities other than the capitals, but I also made an effort to obtain interviewees from the whole of the political spectrum, from far right to far left (see full list of political parties, organizations and movements interviewed in Appendix A). In this thesis, the term “political actor” is used for the entire sample, including interviewees that are Members of Parliaments and political party members, as much as members of local political parties and initiatives, NGOs, and social movements.

In-depth qualitative interviewing has been long confirmed as particularly suitable for Grounded Theory. My own positionality, as much as sometimes a challenge which will be further discussed in the discussion on reflexivity, also served as an excellent starting point – an approach of “starting where you are” (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). My own contacts and the network of people I knew that were politically active, given that I have been born and grew up in Yugoslavia, served as a starting point. Purposive, snowball sampling helped me gather substantial insights while remaining within the researched target group, right until the theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), when the codes started clearly re-appearing and repeating themselves sufficiently, confirmed the identified codes, concepts and categories.

Over the course of 2017 and 2018, I conducted a total of 67 interviews, making approximately 111 hours of interviews, which translated into app. 2000 pages of transcripts. In Slovenia I obtained 21 interviews and then 23 for each of Croatia and Serbia. In Croatia all of the interviewees fully corresponded to the criteria; in Slovenia three interviews were left out for analysis purposes due to age and political activism unsuitability and in Serbia two¹⁴. In the

¹⁴ In Slovenia, there were two cases of far right interviewees who were not active at all – not in a political party, not in an NGO, not in a social movement or any of the activities described herewith, except for their personal interest in politics, thus not corresponding to the sample requirement of political activism. An interviewee in Slovenia was also questioning the duration of her political activism, but I decided not to discriminate against – everyone involved in the political field for minimum of 6 months was considered eligible for the interview. In Slovenia and Serbia, three interviews had to be excluded as they did not belong to the generation of the last pioneers. What is particularly interesting is that besides two cases of misunderstandings, one was a case of a person born in 1986 who lied about being born in 1982. This person from Serbia played along the whole interview, for two hours, describing events in which they could not have participated. Thankfully to the social networks and common acquaintances, I have discovered the true age of birth after the interview. I did not engage in further discovering the rationale behind this act, although I would be curious to know. In one case in Slovenia, the interviewee unfortunately had so little time (with many important insights) that we could not finish the interview (and sadly enough, no other time slot was available) but given the quality of the dialogue, I have decided to include the short interview in my analysis,

non-institutional sector of political activism, there were sometimes various levels of degree of self-understanding as political actors, but those were all interviews that I decided to include as long as the interviewees did participate in different events/demonstrations/petitions in cooperation and closely linked to other activists within a certain political group. Even if with clear political articulations and actively participating in the political life, some respondents from NGOs were ambiguous to understand themselves as “political actors”, but that is yet a question for a whole another research and analysis of the (post)Yugoslav societies. At the end, the final number of interviews accepted for analysis, meaning fully corresponding to my criteria of the generation and political activism, was left to 18 in Slovenia, 23 in Croatia and 21 in Serbia -a total of 62 interviews. I have provided an in-depth analysis of my sample in Chapter 4.

Given the topic of my research, the easiest access was expected among the left-wing groups and the left-wing political parties. And indeed, the most difficult political party to access was HDZ (the right-wing Croatian Democratic Union), along with other right-wing political actors in Croatia.

The mere implementation in terms of setting up the interview dates and times proved to be easier with the Members of Parliaments than non-institutional political actors¹⁵. MPs, even if they would sometimes cancel in the last minute, were more diligent in sticking to the schedule. The non-institutional political actors, whether due to the less structured lifestyles or the overall more relaxed appointment culture in the Balkans, made it trickier to have a strict interview schedule - which was crucial given my limited time (and budget) in the field.

Given the topic of my research, my methodological and theoretical approach and my own positionality, as previously highlighted, reflexivity had to take a significant place for assuring validity of the research. Pierre Bourdieu called the researchers’ positionality an “intellectualist bias” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 39) and demanded that “the academic act of constructing knowledge needs to be examined” (ibid., p. 40). I understood ‘positional

¹⁵ Interesting to note was the easiness of my access to the parliaments. Setting an appointment with an MP was enough, security was routine and there were no special clearance procedures that I had to undertake – for all which I am thankful and I assign to the size of the researched countries in question and a general good security situation (i.e. low to none terrorism threat levels),

reflexivity' (Macbeth, 2001, p. 38) as reflecting upon where one is positioned in society in terms of class, gender, ethnicity; as well as questioning fixed binaries, such as insider vs. outsider, powerful vs. powerless. Understanding our own positionality is crucial for understanding how do we produce knowledge, as Guy Enosh and Adital Ben-Ari would say, through three perspectives: researchers', participants', and the research encounter. Direct experience is transformed into constructed, new knowledge through negotiation of the facts, myths, labeling, interpretations, and meanings (Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2016, p. 582). Knowledge created in these liminal spaces (ibid.), where both researcher's and participant's positionality are in interplay, represents the data for analysis. Participants' reflexivity is understood as why participants decide to take part in the research: it could be for a desire of self-understanding, for personal development or for self-presentation, or some combination thereof (ibid., p. 580). Looking at my research participants, a level of benevolence towards participation in the research was high. This certainly influenced the data, which will be further reflected in the results' discussion chapter. Yet, as above noted, some interviewees might have been only doing a favor to their colleague/friend; some might have seen an opportunity for political promotion but majority did seem to be keen to *tell their Yugoslav story*.

The level of trust by my interviewees was surprising at first. As I was recording all of my interviews, I always announced the recording to the interviewee and gave assurances that all the interviews will be anonymous and solely used for research purposes. Not a single interviewee ever asked for a signed document or any additional guarantees: my word was enough. Given that many of my interviewees are well known political and public figures, such a high level of trust raises questions whether we can accredit it to a general trust atmosphere in the (post)Yugoslav societies (which might seem counterintuitive), or to the low level of importance given to research and PhD students (which was a comment made by one of my colleagues) or a high level of trust among the (post)Yugoslav citizens – more precisely, the generation of the last pioneers. My estimate would be that all three elements have played a role, and I remain eternally thankful for this trust that I hope this thesis will manage to justify.

My own positionality has certainly played a role – my title of a PhD student; my age (and sometimes supposed age); and my gender. For the very initial contacting, I cannot help but wonder if the difficulty of establishing contacts with the right-wing political actors in Slovenia and Croatia was also partly due to the fact that, for better or for worse, I have an

extremely typical name and surname which would be considered to be Serbian. On the other hand, this could have played to my advantage in Serbia by the nationalist actors. This unchosen identifier that I carry since my birth is part of the research conducted – as one of my respondents explained the events at the brink of the war - we became Serbs, Croats, Slovenes (Bosniaks etc.) over night. I also wondered if some of my interviewees, in this digital age of ours, googled me and upon reading my previous research, consciously or unconsciously adapted their responses accordingly, what would be apprehended as the interviewer effect (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017, p. 2). Given the snowball sampling approach, the previous knowledge of the interviewees on the interviewer does represent an element in the knowledge creation and as such, it has been taken into analysis.

For implementing a reflective course in the research, the continuous memo taking plays an important role. I have written field notes, throughout my field research – but even before and after. Field notes were very useful primarily for sorting out my own thoughts, and assuring that I know where I am and how to plan the future steps. They also sometimes turned into a very intimate diary, almost life-saving for my own emotional and mental health throughout the process. The first months of exploring my field felt like a delicate balancing act, between understanding the environment I knew from my personal perspective and now from a researcher’s perspective; and observing rather than immersing into it as an active subject.

The position of a “reflexive interviewer” requires continuous criticality. This is the position I tried to maintain throughout my fieldwork, my research and my data analysis. The key task was developing an identity as a researcher (Noh, 2019, p. 331). Even insider researchers encounter challenges due to differences in class, education and social status while conducting a research in their home countries (ibid., p. 332). Being an in-betweener, maintaining my identity as a researcher felt as the most important component of my field presence, even if it was not always a straightforward task to fulfill. Another overwhelming element of the experience has been the fact that my positionality as an “in-betweener” led me to *always be in the field*. Everywhere I went, as soon as I would say that the reason of my stay was my research and what the topic of my research is, people wanted to talk and to start sharing their memories and their thoughts. It helped to approach this occurrence also as part of my epistemological understanding of social constructivism, attentively paying attention to my positionality. Or, as Berger and Luckmann would claim: “As soon as one refers to phenomena

that are specifically human one enters the realm of the social. Man's specific humanity and his sociality are inextricably intertwined. Homo sapiens is always, and in the same measure *homo-socios*" (1991, p. 51), accepting my social world as part of my research process. This hybrid and in-between position (McGhee, Marland & Atkinson, 2007, p. 338) remained important throughout my fieldwork and my data analysis, always conducting an internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017, p. 2).

Being a part of the same generation, I believe, enhanced the trust between me and my interviewees. Being a (post)Yugoslav, belonging to the generation of the last pioneers, speaking the same language – and sharing the same memories – often helped in the interviews, whether for launching the conversation or encouraging the interviewees to share. As I considered in-depth interviewing as a shared creation of knowledge, when required to keep the conversation flow, I shared my own memories with my interviewees. I tried that none of my interventions would anyhow be “leading the answers”; something we can never be fully sure of.

The insider part of my status equally means that I share the traumatic memory narratives with my interviewees. I tried to make sure that I am following my own reactions to the fieldwork and sometimes, my own retraumatization processes. The question of how much are we as researchers and PhD students always prepared to such experiences remains. Luckily enough, out of all these 67 interviews I have had only one unpleasant interview. Making sure not to be provoked, I went with my interview questions till the end and managed to finish the interview successfully enough to include it in my data. All other interviews were either kindly indifferent (in minority), either positively and pleasantly surprised, and respondents were interested in the research itself, my thesis, the other interviewees, the date of my thesis defense and expressed many comments such as “I was unprepared”, “You made me nostalgic”, “You made me think”, or “I have now actually to rethink my positions”. Sometimes the interviewees would send me emails/messages after our interview, with additional memories that emerged in the aftermath of our interview. One interviewee, from a right-wing political party in Croatia, kindly asked me to send him the recording of the interview because he appreciated the return to his (post)Yugoslav memories and he expressed a wish to keep the recording as a souvenir – a materialized object of his memory narrative. All of these “post-interview” effects lead me back to the question of how much is the researcher

participating in the construction of the social reality s/he researches, which I tried to observe during my data analysis. Given the “prolonged observation” (Cefai, 2010, p. 7) I have conducted, my position in the field also changed throughout the time, as my positionality shifted through the continuum – I began to be “known” as the PhD researcher on the topic.¹⁶

Researching memory narratives and political identities, demanding the trust between the researcher and the interviewee, also demands a capacity to listen. “Listening is hard work, demanding as it does an abandonment of the self in a quest to enter the world of another; and it takes time”, Molly Andrews claims (Andrews, 2007, p. 15). In order to understand the construction of political identities of my interviewees through their memory narratives, I have listened to the stories they had to tell - about their childhoods in Yugoslavia; about their Yugoslav memories; about their formative years during the dissolution and the wars; and about their own political positionality and understanding of Yugoslav heritage in the present (see Appendix B for the interview framework). As my analysis was partially discursive, and as a narrative inquiry, I tried to understand why the story was told in a particular way, how the social frameworks have influenced my interviewees’ memories and how their present generational and political positionality influences their narratives. My data analysis was based on detailed transcripts and conducted by outsourced colleagues who were not given the names of the interviewees but coded numbers and were obliged to immediately return the recording in case they recognized the interviewee.¹⁷ The transcribers signed the non-disclosure agreements (see Appendix C); and were in any case assigned interviews from the country other than their country of residence. All the interview transcripts were transferred into Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software, which provided technical support for the coding processes and further data analysis.

Grounded Theory allowed me to analyze the “fluid positioning, not fixed roles, (that are) used by people to cope with the situations they find themselves in” (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999, p. 17). Given my epistemological position and the constructivist conception of the interview, I have positioned my work between phenomenological interview, inquiring the

¹⁶ A funny anecdote relates to the train route Ljubljana-Zagreb that I often used for commute, when one of the border police guards recognized me and asked how my PhD is going,

¹⁷ There were no such cases,

lived experience, and the hermeneutic interview, looking into the interpretive meaning of the lived experience (Roulston, 2010, p. 11).

Following the foundational work of Glaser and Strauss, Kathy Charmaz (2014) developed Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT), which I applied in my data analysis. As Charmaz pointed out: “The pragmatist foundations (of GT) encourage us to construct an interpretive rendering of the worlds we study rather than an external reporting of events and statements” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 339). What has been essential was to internalize the approach of “not forcing data into theoretical accounts” (Timonen, Foley & Conlon, 2018, p. 5). I aimed to achieve progress “towards constructing categories, and spelling out links between them, with the view to achieving conceptual clarity” and “to deepen existing theoretical insights” (ibid., p. 4).

Corbin and Strauss explain the principal purpose of the GT: “As analysts, we are interested in the interplay between micro and macro conditions, the nature of their influence on each other and subsequent inter/action, and the full scope of consequences of that results, then how those consequences feed back into conditions that become part of the situation and subsequent inter/action or emotional responses” (Corbin & Strauss, 2012, p. 6). In order to attain a scheme explaining the emerging concepts, the full data analysis in GT rounds up only after multiple rounds of data analysis, resulting in clear categories born out of codes, and ideally the relationship between categories and developed concepts. Continually comparing the data, I undertook three rounds of coding. From the established codes, I have grouped them into emerged categories (see Table 9.1 in Chapter 9) and developed the main concepts of the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives of the last pioneers; which were of course further conceptualized and reconceptualized with every new round of writing and editing.

Notwithstanding the Grounded Theory approach and my carefully embedded reflexivity, I believe that “writing is never an innocent practice” (Denzin, 2001, p. 23) and analyzing an interview requires acknowledging that it is “an active text, a site where meaning is created and performed” (ibid., p. 25). Despite the best intentioned efforts, as in all research, there are certainly limitations and continuous reflection in validity that I had to undertake.

3.2 Limitations and validity of the research

Research validity in the GT and qualitative research, such as the one I have conducted for this thesis, relies upon a number of different methods: “prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field”, “triangulation”, “using peer review or debriefing”, “negative case analysis”, “clarifying researcher bias”, “in member checks”, “rich think description” and “external audits” (Creswell, 1998, pp. 201-203).

Spending two years in the field, 2017-2019, including the time I have spent in Belgrade (Serbia) during the write up of my thesis, would qualify as “prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field”. The inductive-deductive interplay within the GT meant that I continued to closely follow political developments and public discourse of the political groups and movements that participated in the research, including most of the interviewees; even during the final write up phase.

My strong focus on reflexivity aimed at fulfilling the criteria of “clarifying researcher bias” as previous subchapter argued while in the same time, there always remains a danger that my own positionality influenced the approach to, the outlook on and the analysis of my research data.

My data were triangulated and analyzed together with numerous quantitative studies on the topic of Yugonostalgia and other literature in the field, as argued in the previous chapters and taking into account the GT approach where the existing literature in the field is regarded as data, being included in the analytical process.

Through participation in a number of doctoral seminars and conferences, alongside the contribution of my mentors, I was honored to receive feedback from my colleagues inside and outside of the field. The feedback that I have received was precious to help me shift direction, sometimes abandon ideas and refocus my research.

I regret that I was not able to include all of the (post)Yugoslav countries in my research – Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo. Notably Kosovo might have been a “negative case”, given that most of the general quantitative studies show the low responsiveness to positive sentiments towards Yugoslavia – fully comprehensible given the historical context of Kosovo and their path towards independence; but as explained this was unfeasible given the resources I had.

As there might have been most certainly further insights, if the fieldwork has been more comprehensive from both spatial and generational perspective, I believe it nevertheless enriches the conceptual understanding of Yugonostalgia and nostalgia in general, providing a specific generational approach to the memory narratives and their ideological anchoring through generational and political positionality of political actors in the (post)Yugoslav space.

4. The last pioneers – understanding the sample

Before everything else, who are our last pioneers? The generation of the last pioneers, as presented in this thesis, certainly does not represent the whole generation and it most surely only scratches the surface of as many generation units as one can imagine. Given the methodological approach of snowball purposive sampling, this thesis does not, under any circumstances, claim generalization about the whole population of the three countries researched; nor the whole of the generation of the last pioneers; nor the whole of the politically active last pioneers. But, I hope, it does give us an insight into the experiences and the life stories of a number of people who grew up during a certain period of time, who shared same milestones in their growing up, same school programs, TV programs, music hits and similar environments – who shared Yugoslav culture and and who share today Yugoslav cultural memory, and hope to shape the political future of the (post)Yugoslav space. As the stories are being told, memories become more and more memories of the stories being told and less and less memories of the experiences that we describe in our stories (Assmann, 2011, p. 162). But no autobiographical memory would exist, without becoming a narrative told to someone else; without becoming social and reflecting our generational and political positionalities in the present.

As already outlined in the chapter 3 on methodology, the fieldwork I have conducted in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia resulted in 62 interviews that were finally included in the analysis: 18 in Slovenia, 23 in Croatia and 21 in Serbia. In Slovenia of app. 2 million citizens, Croatia of app. 4 million citizens and Serbia of app. 7 million citizens, my small sample of politically active last pioneers yet reflects some realities (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Sample by country

	Number of interviews	Number of discarded interviews	Final sample
Slovenia	21	3	18
Croatia	23	-	23
Serbia	23	2	21
SUM	67	5	62

The gender structure of my sample reflected the overall low representation of women in politics. The sampling was purposive without aiming to provide generalization so I did not make any conscious changes in this regard. It resulted in interviews with 42 male interviewees and 20 female. In Slovenia there were 22,23% female interviewees; in Croatia 34,45% and in Serbia 38,1%. Looking into the proportion of women in parliaments of respective countries, as Inter-Parliamentary Union data suggests for 2018, the situation was following: there were 24% of women in parliament in Slovenia, 19% of women in parliament in Croatia; and 34% in Serbia (IPU, 2020). In Croatia and Serbia the participation of non institutional political actors was larger – the participation of political actors from nongovernmental organizations and diverse social movements influenced the gender rate. The sampling of the interviewees reflected precisely the gender disparity regarding women's participation in political activism (see Table 4.2).

Looking at the citizenship of the interviewees, while in Slovenia and Croatia there were only one in each with double citizenship (Slovenia-Croatia and Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina), in Serbia there were six interviewees with double citizenship (three Bosnia and Herzegovina;

two Croatia and one Hungary). Regardless of their ethno-national¹⁸ identification or mixed family backgrounds, citizenship status does not always follow. Seen from the current perspective, any EU passport for Serbian non-EU citizens is always a welcome improvement in the quality of life and possibility of life choices. Also, family origins from Croatia influenced the Serbian citizenship picture. Refugees from Croatia largely used the opportunity of obtaining the Croatian passport, in spite of difficulties imposed by the Croatian state. Slovenia does not allow double citizenship in the cases of naturalization (Deželan, 2012, p. 233) and Croatia became almost an ethnically homogenized state since the Operation Storm (Oluja) in 1995 – while in 1991 12,2% of the population declared as Serbs, in 2001 there were only 4,54% (Koska, 2012, p. 201).

What is important to note is that during the socialist Yugoslavia, citizens most often would not change their citizenship of one of the republics, regardless of where they would actually live and work. This created a number of legal and political repercussions during the dissolution and the wars. It also created the situation in which citizenship today does not necessarily reflect the reality of ethno-national entanglement of personal identities, but rather the historical consequence of top down citizenship policies.

¹⁸ In this thesis, I have used “ethno-national” term as a reference to ethnic identity as to differ from “nationality” as a reference to state citizenship,

Table 4.2 Gender and citizenship

	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Citizenship</i>				<i>TOTAL</i>
	male	female	Slovenian	Croatian	Serbian	double citizens	
Slovenia	14	4	18	-	-	1	18
Croatia	15	8	-	23	-	1	23
Serbia	13	8	-	-	21	6	21
SUM	42	20	18	23	21	8	62

By ethno-national self-identification, when asked how do they self-identify, only in one case an interviewee undoubtedly identified as Yugoslav. Yugoslav identity was mentioned another four times as a possibility: an option they have reflected but not as of yet acted upon, or the interviewees claimed they intend to declare Yugoslav in the future. These hesitations in self-identification have most certainly been encouraged by the topic of the interview itself, but as they came up in the beginning of the interview – they do show us internal conflicts and contemplations. Yugoslav identity was raised more often when referring to the unofficial situations other than census: understanding oneself; describing one’s own cultural background; understanding one’s culture etc. Two times in Serbia and two times in Croatia the interviewees mentioned the idea of being Yugoslav but declared otherwise.

So, what is the ethno-national self-identification of my interviewees? Sixteen of the interviewees were hesitant to declare themselves, quickly adding an explanation, or what could almost sound like a justification. Some would feel a need to assert that their ethno-national self-identification is only a result of their citizenship or country of residence; some that it is an irrelevant issue for them; some would feel the need to immediately emphasize their “mixed” origins. Some would quickly add that they have already decided to stop

declaring themselves ethno-nationally in the future. Ethno-national identity remains a contested identity among the last pioneers. Seen as the main vehicle of nationalism, the generation of the last pioneers feels a need to distance them of what has been presented as a main cause of wars and suffering in the (post)Yugoslav space in the 1990s.

Eight interviewees have stated that they do not ethno-nationally declare themselves – four in Serbia; three in Croatia and one in Slovenia. It is interesting to note the strongest anti-nationalist stance in Serbia, as could be understood as a response to the war legacy and the legacy of the anti-war discourses. Two interviewees declared as Bosnian¹⁹ in Slovenia and in Serbia two interviewees declared as Bosniak (from Sandžak region). The only (post)Yugoslav minority declared in Croatia were two interviewees declared as Serbs.

¹⁹ Bosnian (and Herzegovinian) refers to a national of the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, surpassing ethno-national divides. Bosniak refers to the historically Muslim community in Yugoslavia, throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia,

Table 4.3 Ethno-national self-identification

	Slovene	Croat	Serb	Bosnian	Bosniak	Hungarian	Yugoslav	Does not declare
Slovenia ²⁰	9	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
<i>with reservations</i> ²¹	6	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Croatia	-	12	1	-	-	-	1	3
<i>with reservations</i>	-	5	1	-	-	-	-	-
Serbia	-	-	11	-	2	1	-	4
<i>with reservations</i>	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-
SUM	15	18	15	2	2	1	3	8

Another important characteristic of my sample is that the majority of the interviewees belong to higher social and economic class. Given that the political activism was a central variable – just like gender, the socio-economic status was not a controlled variable. Thus, it reflects the situation regarding the politically active generation of the last pioneers in the three countries in question. In scholarship, it has been already well established that citizens belonging to higher socio-economic classes are more politically active, and that higher education levels encourage political participation (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 125; Dalton, 2017, p. 44). Accepting

²⁰ The total number in the table is 19, as one interviewee declared as both Slovene and Croat,

²¹ This line refers to those interviewees who would declare themselves as belonging to an ethno-national group with a “but” following – elaborating that it is not important to them; declaring as two ethno-nationalities; not declaring but explaining that due to citizenship/place of residence they do feel as the ethno-national identification well; explaining that it is complicated and/or that they come from mixed marriages,

this reality, I was careful to take this element into account while conducting my data analysis, without changing the sample.

An overwhelming majority of my interviewees has higher education – whether BA, MA or PhD level - as much as 90% of the interviewees (see Table 4.4). It certainly depicts the incidence of the low participation of the lower educated classes in the political field throughout the (post)Yugoslav space which assuredly has larger repercussions that go beyond the scope of this thesis.

Higher education expanded rapidly in socialist Yugoslavia, as access to education was one of the key development policies of the socialist regime. Yugoslavia advanced “from one of the lowest ranking countries – 26th – in 1921, with ninety-three students per 100,000 inhabitants, to eighth rank in 1971 (1,272 per 100,000)... among European countries, only Sweden (fifth) and Finland (seventh) fared better” (Duller, 2018, pp. 172-173). Being the last generation of pioneers in Yugoslavia, my interviewees have benefited from the expansion of the education system in Yugoslavia and moreover, the social mobility provided to their parents. The educational landscape of the last pioneers’ parents is much more varied, while remaining within high percentage of higher education. In six cases, parents of the last pioneers have obtained only primary education, majorly gender influenced as mothers are concerned in four cases (with the highest incidence in Slovenia). Secondary and tertiary education parental backgrounds are almost equally divided – 53 to 55. As social mobility of their parents is acknowledged, it is not a variable that strongly influenced the last pioneers’ responses.

Table 4.4 Education levels and background

	<i>Education of the interviewees</i>				<i>Education of the parents</i>						
	Sec. ed.	BA	MA	PhD	Primary		Secondary		Tertiary		unclear
					mother	father	mother	father	mother	father	
Slovenia	3	10	2	3	4	1	5	6	6	8	1
Croatia	3	11	3	6	-	1	10	11	12	10	1
Serbia	-	14	5	2	-	-	12	9	8	11	1
SUM	5	34	10	11	4	2	27	26	26	29	3

Regarding my last pioneer's place of residence, there is a diverse sample (see Table 4.5). About a half of the interviewees live in the capital cities of each of the country in question (Ljubljana²², Zagreb, and Belgrade), while other half is distributed among cities and towns below 300,000 inhabitants. The diversity certainly depicts the structure of each of the country – in Slovenia, the interviewees are distributed either in the capital either in smaller towns below 100,000 inhabitants. Mobility resonates highly among the interviewees – many have moved into larger cities during their studies and then returned to their home towns, notably in Slovenia.

²² Even if Ljubljana has the population below 300,000 inhabitants, given that it is a capital it was included with the other capital in the categorization of the place of residence of the respondents.

Table 4.5 Place of residence and city population

	Capital ²³	>100,000	20,000 - 99,999	1,000 - 19,999	<1,000
Slovenia	9	-	5	4	-
Croatia	10	7	2	2	1
Serbia	12	5	4	-	-
SUM	31	12	11	6	1

Regarding the political activism of the last pioneers, the landscape is as follows: about a third (32,26%) were Members of Parliament²⁴ and an additional 14 were political party members but not MPs. This means that more than half of the interviewees were members of the political parties acting at the national level. Outside of national level politics, 8 interviewees were involved in local level political parties/initiatives/movements that do not exist on the national level nor aim for national level representation, which has in some cases changed since the time of the fieldwork. Further on, outside of institutionalized party politics, a third of the interviewees were activists of diverse NGOs, trade unions and other politically engaged movements. In Serbia, we could notice a stronger division between institutionalized and non-institutionalized politics – the large majority of non MP interviewees were actually political actors within social movements and various initiatives. Given the high incidence of parliamentary elections, the landscape has changed by the time the thesis was written as all of the three countries had elections.

²³ One resident of the Croatian capital Zagreb and two residents of the Serbian capital Belgrade reported double residencies,

²⁴ At the time of the conducted fieldwork, meaning 2017/2018,

Table 4.6 Type of political activism

	Members of parliament	Party members, not MPs	Local movements and political parties	NGOs and trade unions
Slovenia	5	7	2	4
Croatia	6	7	3	7
Serbia	9	-	3	9
SUM	20	14	8	20

The political identification was left to the interviewees themselves. Without entering the political science criteria in identifying to which part of the political spectrum my interviewees belong to, in the introductory part of the interview, they have been given a chance to self-identify. It was an important insight into their proper understanding of the classical political cleavage of right and left-wing politics as it provides an additional element to grasp their outlook on the (post)Yugoslav and global politics today, as it will be noted in data analysis further on.

Looking into the self-identification of the last pioneers, the majority of the interviewees self-identified as left-wing (58,06%). It was not an intentional aim but, I suspect, a result of the topic of the research and purposive snowball sampling approach – discussing Yugoslavia is, indeed, more welcome on the left side of the political spectrum in (post)Yugoslavia. Some of my efforts to contact the most right-wing political actors did not bear fruit, and in general establishing contact with right-wing political actors was more time consuming and demanded more significant efforts, especially in Croatia. Only 14,52% of my interviewees self-identify as right-wing.

It is important to note that for a number of interviewees it has been difficult to self-identify – some of them questioned or directly objected the left-right political spectrum division in today’s world calling it “artificial” (24-SR-1975-M)²⁵ or “retrograde” (18-SLO-1981-M). For some of the interviewees who self-identified as center, the ones on the left-wing would claim that actually they belong to the right-wing part of the spectrum, or the other way round. The ones who self-identified as left-wing could be divided into “established left” (social-democratic and socialist parties born out of the League of Communists) and “new left”, a typology made by Igor Štiks (2015) where “new left encompasses generally progressive political and social movements” and “organizations that present themselves or are labeled as the ‘radical left’” (Štiks, 2015, p. 137).

Without making a typology of my own, I have included the self-identification variable whenever it proved to be relevant for the results of data analysis – it is underlined whenever certain narratives and tropes would appear more often within one of the groups: right, center or left. What seemed moreover important to include in the analysis were the results that transpired across the political spectrum, and finally, the general rise and/or the return of leftist politics in (post)Yugoslav space since the second decade of 2000s. The strengthening of the left-wing ideas among the generation of the last pioneers is related to their understanding and memories on Yugoslav times and thus, it has been an important element that was further elaborated in the results’ discussion chapters.

²⁵ Audio recordings and the interview transcripts, in the form of raw data, are available from the author. This refers to all cited interviews in the thesis. Furthermore, the references have been anonymized and thus presented in the form “number of the interview-country-year of birth-sex”,

Table 4.7 Political self-identification

	left	center left	center/ liberal	center right	right	libertarian	unclear
Slovenia	8	3	-	1	2	-	4
Croatia	18	2	-	-	3	-	-
Serbia	10	-	2	-	4	1	4
SUM	36	5	2	1	9	1	8

Grounded Theory approach and purposive sampling led me to talk to the interviewees who fulfilled the criteria of belonging to the generation of the last pioneers and who were politically active. Obviously, it is necessary to include in the analysis another element that influenced the research: their willingness to participate in the research. Those three elements further led to the diversified sample, yet, as it can be seen, leaning more to the left of the political spectrum. As this research never pretended to provide a generalization of the politically active generation of the last pioneers, these elements have been taken into account and accepted as an element of analysis. Accordingly, these are the elements I take into account when referring to “the generation of the last pioneers” or simply “last pioneers” in the rest of my thesis.

A generation goes beyond “a mere chronological contemporaneity” (Mannheim, 1952, p. 297) – it includes participation in the same historico-social circumstances; re-narrating the family narratives, encompassing post-memory; and searching for one’s own life meaning and identity. The last pioneers, in this thesis, grew up in the sunset of socialist Yugoslavia but also in the sunset of grand ideological narratives and hopes for a different world. Another recent research also suggested that generational element played a more significant role than political affiliation regarding the understanding of the socialist past (Szostak & Mihelj, 2017, p. 8) and

this thesis supports this conclusion, showing a strong generational sense of the interviewees and their sense of demarcation from the generations of their parents and their children.

5. Contextualizing the environment

While presenting a comprehensive history of Yugoslavia, as much as the current political and socio-economic situation in the three countries researched, largely extends beyond the capacity of this thesis, it is nevertheless important to give a brief overview in order to introduce the overall context within which the memory narratives of the politically active last pioneers have been researched. This chapter thus certainly suffers from certain simplifications and generalizations, what access to the cited works might rectify; yet it was deemed necessary as we enter the worlds of the last pioneers.

Yugoslavia was constituted as a state twice, in 1918 and 1945, once as a monarchy and once as a socialist republic. Given the complex history of the Balkans, Yugoslav peoples formed into defined nations, as per understanding of the epoch, only in the 20th century. “Štokavski” dialect was most largely spoken throughout the region and then chosen as the basis of a common, Serbo-Croatian standard language by 19th century linguists and reformators (Čalić, 2013, p. 27). Different historical legacies, state regimes, cultural and religious heritage were woven throughout the (post)Yugoslav space – there was a myriad of different political entities and also a plenitude of political and ethno-national identities.

With the creation of the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in 1918, the first Yugoslav state was created. In the 19th century already, Yugoslavism emerged as an idea of the intellectual elites throughout the (post)Yugoslav space as part of the anti-colonial struggle against the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman empires, and part of the national liberation tendencies. As Čalić puts it, “different national ideologies and programmes have maybe influenced more towards creating differences among the peoples than religious and linguistic differences” (ibid., p. 64). National emancipation among the Yugoslav peoples was differently conceived in different parts of the region and by different thinkers (Rajakovic, 1992; Robinson, 2011; Djokic & Ker-Lindsay 2011). The creation of the first Yugoslavia was marked by the anti-colonial struggle of the Yugoslav peoples: linked to specific First World War aims and Woodrow Wilson’s concept of the right to self-determination. The parliamentary monarchist regime was transformed into a monarchist dictatorship in 1929, which strengthened the ethno-nationalist ideologies throughout the Kingdom. During the first Yugoslavia the approach to Yugoslavism was unitaristic – one of many conceptualizations of

Yugoslavism - but given the political troubles, it became identified with the monarchist dictatorship installed by the King Aleksandar Karađorđević in 1929 (Jezernik, 2018). The Communist Party of Yugoslavia was banned, and its members have been prosecuted and imprisoned since 1920, after a strong breakthrough in the parliamentary elections throughout the country. During King Aleksandar's dictatorship, all ethno-national and religious organizations were banned (ibid., p. 142). The economic situation was bleak: the development throughout the country was unequal, the political situation tense and the Yugoslav idea compromised. What started as a common idea of intellectual elites, Yugoslavism was hijacked by the dictatorial monarchist regime and abused for the purposes of creating a centralized country ruled by the Serbian dynasty of Karađorđevićs. Once a resistance strategy against the colonial regimes of Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, this misuse of Yugoslavism changed its meaning and value among some of the peoples.

In 1941, the country was occupied by the Nazi Germany and their allies. The only territory that was not annexed was the Independent State of Croatia (NDH – Nezavisna država Hrvatska), which was granted an independent status by the Axis Powers. NDH military forces cooperated with the Wehrmacht and collaborated with the Nazi power.

In the beginning of the World War II, there were 72 000 Jews in Yugoslavia: by the beginning of the 1950s their numbers were barely 6.500, making the Holocaust almost complete in Yugoslav territories (ibid., p. 181). The victims of Nazism included the Roma population and Slavic populations, communists, and all antifascists among the local populations. In 1941, the communists organized the anti-fascist struggle under the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party, which continued its existence within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the underground since 1920. The party and the struggle were led by Josip Broz Tito creating the National Liberation Army, the Partisans (Pirjevec, 2018). Antifascist resistance was growing quickly, with the aim of defeating the occupiers but also the Serbian monarchist hegemony, the monarchist regime and local collaborators. By 1943, the Partisans had a growing army of 300 000 people (ibid., p. 190). In 1943, in Jajce in central Bosnia, the Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) proclaimed Yugoslavia as a socialist federal republic.

Fighting the Nazi and the Axis occupation, the Second World War in Yugoslavia was an ideological and an anti-fascist war, with elements of a civil war. The fascist politics were largely using nationalist ideologies and deepening the divides among the peoples based on their ethno-national identity. Nevertheless, by May 1945, a total of 800 000 people was participating in the Partisan resistance (ibid., p. 207). The country was liberated in May 1945.

In 1946, a new Constitution of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ) was proclaimed acknowledging five constitutive nations: Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Macedonians and Montenegrins. Bosnian Muslims gained the status of a nation only in the 1960s. Six republics and two autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo) were united under the central value of brotherhood and unity. Other ethnic minorities, understood in the socialist Yugoslav times as "narodnosti" (nationalities), gained recognition as well – Hungarians, Albanians, Romanians, Slovaks, and many others. Marie Janine Čalić (2013) and Hilde Katrine Haug (2012) gave a detailed analysis and oversight of the ethno-national issues in the socialist Yugoslavia and the relationship of the Communist party of Yugoslavia towards the issue of nationalism. Throughout the existence of both the Party and the socialist Yugoslavia the communist political elites were developing different approaches to "the national question", facing various opposition figures and movements promoting ethno-nationalist values.

The new socialist state brought industrialization, economic development, social mobility, opening access to education and health services, and women's emancipation. The legitimacy of the new regime was based on the anti-fascist struggle which was autochtone and independent of the Soviets and then further strengthened in 1948, when Tito had a final split with Stalin and Yugoslavia started its fully autonomous and unique socialist path.

The independent path also led to the repressions by the regime, including the Goli Otok persecutions and some incoherent censorship policies. With additional economic support of the West, recognizing Yugoslavia as anti-Soviet, the country was relaunched towards progress and development. The progressive development of the country was steadily taking place since 1953, with the annual industrial production rise between 1953 and 1960 of 13.83% - second in the world, right after Japan (Čalić, 2013, p. 243). A hybrid socialist project established in that period, however, did not resolve all of the structural economic and social issues (Krucic, 1993).

Founding and leading the Non Aligned Movement brought wide international respect and honored diplomatic position (Jakovina, 2010). Since 1960, Yugoslavia was the only socialist state that abolished preventive censorship. In addition citizens were free to travel, tourism was on the rise; and economic development continued (Vučetić, 2018).

The constitution from 1946 strongly contributed to the women's advancement in Yugoslavia, part of socialist policies – for the first time, for example, women were allowed to own private property. Already in the 1950s, children born in and out of wedlock gained equal rights, women were allowed to keep their surname when married, and divorce and abortion were liberalized. Average life span was prolonged from 51 in 1948 to 70 in 1981 (ibid., p. 269). As previously noted, access to education was expanding – from three universities in 1945, by 1980 there were 19 all throughout the country. In the 1960s, the economic policy implemented self-management and the state and the party were further decentralized, leading to various contradicting consequences including economic deterioration in alignment with the global crises.

The linguistic and nationalist debates flourished around the country - for example, the Declaration on the name and status of the Croatian language was published in 1967, demanding the dismantlement of Serbo-Croatian language. The world recession arrived in Yugoslavia in the 1970s. The last constitution of Yugoslavia was adopted in 1974, wherein Tito was proclaimed a lifelong president while the federation was further decentralized. The student protests in May 1968, part of the global social movement, were conceived in Yugoslavia as a demand for “more socialism” and a reaction to the deteriorating socio-economic living conditions in the country; without much success (Klasić, 2012). In 1971, the Croatian Spring, a nationalist social movement was aimed against centralist tendencies of the Communist Party at the time (Klasić, 2006). As ethno-nationalist tensions among the communist elites rose, the repression from the state grew stronger and censorship was again strengthened (Vučetić, 2016). At the same time, the country was already largely economically liberalized and having a fully hybrid market socialist system, which also meant deeply dependent upon the global market events.

In 1980 Tito died. The economy was seriously impacted by the global economic crisis, living standards were rapidly falling, and unemployment was on the rise. By 1987, the political elites were freely promoting nationalism throughout the country and Slobodan Milošević

came to power in Serbia. Marie Janine Čalić argues that the 1980s brought “a true obsession with history” and a “crisis of the memory politics” (ibid., p. 354).

From 1988, the privatization processes started further damaging the socio-economic conditions in the country. In 1989, 500 000 workers in Yugoslavia were on strike. The movement was born as a reaction to the economic crisis and capitalist transformation of the society led by IMF imposed austerity measures (Woodward, 1995). One of the most massive strike demonstrations was organized by Borovo factory workers, who violently entered the Yugoslav parliament in Belgrade. In Split 14 331 workers lost their jobs, 9 000 in Zagreb, and many, both profitable and not, companies were led to into bankruptcy (Cvek, Ivčić, & Račić, 2018, p. 77). Following the world crisis, undergoing in both capitalist and socialist world (Gligorov, 2004, p. 22), between 1979 and 1985 the numbers of unemployed young people went through the roof (Woodward, 1995, pp. 386-387). The highest unemployment rate in 1990 was in Kosovo and Metohija - 40,8% and the lowest in Slovenia - 5,2%; while Croatia had 9,3%; Central Serbia 16,6% and Vojvodina 16,9% (Obradović, 2017, p. 57).

Serbia in 1989 abolished the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo, and in 1990 Slovenian delegates at the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia left the session, never to come back. Multiparty elections were held in 1990 in all of the Yugoslav republics.

In January 1992, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fell apart. On reasons behind the dissolution of a country that existed since 1943 many different explanations were given. Jasna Dragović-Soso has effectively divided them in four main groups:

- Reasons focused on the *longue durée* (“ancient hatreds”, “clash of civilizations”, legacy of imperial rule in the Balkans);
- Reasons focused on the historical legacy of the 19th century South Slav national ideologies and the first Yugoslav state 1918-1941;
- Reasons focused on the legacy of Yugoslavia’s socialist system, its constitutional development and federal structure, its ideological delegitimation, and its economic failure;
- Reasons focused on the impact of external factors (Dragović-Soso, 2008, p. 2).

Decades later, we can conclude that a multitude of reasons led to the dissolution, entangling all four groups into a complex sequence of events. Susan Woodward's thesis was that the conflict was "simultaneously a matter of domestic transformation and of the transformation of the European and international order" (Woodward, 1995, p. 13). Indeed, just before 1989 it seemed that Yugoslavia was, out of whole of Eastern and Central European countries, the closest to entering the European Community – an association agreement was in place and Yugoslavia was a member of the European Free Trade Association. As it was already a hybrid economic system cultivating cultural, economic and political linkages with the Western world since 1948 and its break with the Stalinist Soviet Union, it was expected that the transformation to a full market economy and multiparty democracy would be somewhat smooth. What was overlooked was the difficult economic situation which, by Woodward's analysis, was largely a result of austerity measures implemented in the aim of resolving a foreign debt crisis that further led to a constitutional and a political conflict before becoming a war (ibid., p. 15). Susan Woodward believes that Yugoslavia was "held together... by a complex balancing act in the international arena and a mixed economy and political system that provided governmental protections of social and economic equality and of shared sovereignty among its many nations" (ibid., pp. 21-22). Once the international circumstances changed, the socialist world collapsed and the Cold War ended leaving any idea of a Non Aligned Movement behind, the Yugoslav hybrid economic system crumbled and the political elites took over the nationalist propaganda for fueling their particular interests. Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow claimed that "...what we see in the dismemberment of Yugoslavia is that power-seeking elites, aided by a divided military, used the opportunity structure provided by Yugoslav federal institutions to transform existing identities into political ones" (2015, p. 180).

So what was the atmosphere just before the break up of Yugoslavia? In 1985, in one of the public polls among youth, the majority declared that they primarily feel as Yugoslavs, especially among Muslim, Macedonian, Montenegrin and Serbian youth with percentages going from 76 to 80%; while the lowest Yugoslav sentiment was among Slovene youth (49%), yet remaining at almost one half of the respondents (Flere, 1988). A number of public opinion polls from the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, before the war started, showed that the Yugoslav peoples did not yet appropriate nationalism and anti-Yugoslavism as their political stances. In 1990, in Croatia, in a poll led by the Faculty of Political Sciences

in Zagreb, only 10,66% believed that Yugoslavia should further centralize, but also only 10,66% believed that Croatia should be independent; 51,66% of the population believed that Yugoslavia should transform into a confederation (Grdešić, Kasapović, Šiber, & Zakošek, 1991, pp. 199-200). Even in Slovenia, always presented a “clean” case, in the beginning of 1990, 50,6% of respondents perceived that Slovenia should be „a state within Yugoslav confederation with a large autonomy of certain republics“ and only 23,3% of the population wanted that Slovenia be „a completely independent state“ (Jović, 2017, p.46). The full dissolution of the country was not a demand of the Yugoslav populations, in the moments right before the war broke out.

Many sociological studies deny the existence of insurmountable ethno-national grievances between the peoples of Yugoslavia. In the mid 1980s, almost 90% of the population believed interethnic relations in their environment were good, while the inter-political relations at the level of republics and within the Party were bad (Goati, 1986, pp. 152-153). In her analysis, Ana Dević notes that any ethno-national divisions – primarily for economic discrimination and inequalities – became relevant in the public media in 1987-1988 (Dević, 2016, p. 33) and that more than any ethnic distancing, it was the sense of social powerlessness among the populations that marked the end of the 1980s in Yugoslavia (ibid., p. 22). At the end of 1989, 66% of Croats and 72,1% of Serbs stated that the inter ethno-national relations in their community were very or mainly good. High percentages of respondents did not consider “mixed” marriages to be more unstable than others (72% of Croats and 86,6% of Serbs) (Dugandžija, 1991, pp. 101-114 in Gagnon, 2004, p. 36)²⁶. The perception of bad relations considered only the relations between the republics – meaning between the political elites rather than communities themselves (Gagnon, 2004, p. 36). Class inequalities and the tensions between the political elites were long into June 1990 considered as the primary social cleavages in Yugoslavia, rather than any tensions between different ethno-national communities (ibid., pp. 38-45). Dejan Jović reminds us that “the introduction of the multi-party system did not necessarily equate with a desire to break away from Yugoslavia” (Jović, 2011, p. 137). Political elites, to the contrary, continued stoking nationalist tensions. Two documents stirred further fire among the elites, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

²⁶ Dugandžija, N., (1991) “Domet Nacionalne Zaokupljenosti,” in *Položaj Naroda i Međunacionalni odnosi u Hrvatskoj*, Ed. Štefica Bahtijarević and Mladen Lazić, Zagreb: Institute for Social Research, pp. 101–114,

SANU draft Memorandum leaked to the press in 1986 in two parts discussing “The crisis of the Yugoslav economy and society” and “The position of Serbia and the Serbian people” and as a response, “Contributions to the Slovene National Program” published in *Nova Revija* in 1987, discussed the possibilities for full sovereignty of Slovenia (*ibid.*, p. 94).

The period of the economic crisis and the political crisis and the ethno-national tensions among the elites was followed by the elections. The elections were held in April of 1990 in Slovenia and April and May in Croatia. In Slovenia, DEMOS (the Democratic United Opposition of Slovenia) won 55%, as a democratic anti-communist and pro-independence platform. In Croatia, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), right-wing and pro-independence party, won 41,5%; half the Serbian ethno-national community voted for the reformed League of Communists, at the time transformed into SDP, and only 13.5% for the nationalist SDS party (Gagnon, 2004, p. 35). Looking at the results, in 1990, populations in Slovenia and Croatia were not unanominously demanding independence. Woodward justly notes that “the first multiparty elections in Yugoslavia were scarcely a clear mandate for anything” (Woodward, 1995, p. 125). The political situation still had a potential to unravel in numerous directions.

Sadly enough, the events further led to the dissolution, and then the war, which could all have been avoided. Claims that Yugoslavia was an experiment and an artificial state ensued, and the discourse dismantling the ideological project of the Yugoslav state deeply rooted itself in the ethno-nationalisms.

On June 25 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared independence. A ten day war burst out with Slovenia, with total of 52 deaths on “both sides” and on July 18, the Yugoslav army retreated from Slovenia creating a de facto recognition of independence (Čalić, 2013, p. 383). In June 1991 war started in Croatia. In December 1991 Germany recognized Slovenia’s and Croatia’s independence in spite of the conflicting international positions towards the future steps in resolving the political and military crisis in Yugoslavia (*ibid.*, p. 385). UNPROFOR entered Croatian territory in the beginning of 1992 and the Yugoslav People’s Army retreated. In the meantime, the war erupted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as in December 1991 together with Macedonia, Slovenia and Croatia, BiH demanded recognition of independence. In 1995 the Croatian army “reconquered” the UN protected zone in Western Slavonia, and then the Republic of Srpska Krajina, resulting in up to 200 000 expelled Serbs (*ibid.*, p. 402). Full

civilian control and peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia in Croatia took place in 1998 (Kasunić, 2019). The Dayton peace agreement was signed in 1995 and marked the end of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During 1997 and 1998, war escalated in Kosovo and in 1999, NATO bombing of Serbia (and Kosovo) resulted in NATO and UN administration entering Kosovo and assuring its de facto independence, followed in 2008 by declaration of independence proclaimed by Kosovo parliament, although this is still not recognized by Serbia. After fifteen years of a post-Yugoslav common state, in 2006 Montenegro declared independence. In the whole of Yugoslavia, more than 100 000 people lost their lives during the wars (Čalić, 2013, p. 406) and no state bearing the name of Yugoslavia exists anymore.

While the “political, military and criminal elites made huge gains from privatizing property and companies they confiscated from the state” (Baker, 2015, p. 66), peoples throughout Yugoslavia suffered from, but also resisted, the wars. Among the less known facts is that in Serbia, upon estimations of anti-war campaigns and NGOs, between 50 and 80% of men in Serbia avoided the conscription, with possibly up to 85% in Belgrade (ibid., p. 79). Catherine Baker in her work “The Yugoslav wars of the 1990s” (2015) rightly notices that indeed scholars should understand how the memory narratives transform into action, rather than conclude that they cause wars on their own (ibid., p. 130). For Baker, “nationalism was an instrument, not a cause” (Baker, 2015, p. 129).

V.P. Gagnon in his important work “The myth of ethnic war – Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s” shows how the Yugoslav political elites created the violent conflict as a tool to politically demobilize Yugoslav populations (Gagnon, 2004). A more recent work by Mila Dragojević “Amoral communities” (2019) depicts how the Yugoslav wars were imposed top down, as a political strategy, primarily by creating borders and marginalizing the moderates and further instigating violence against civilians. Dragojević confirms that the violence did not erupt as a result of interethnic animosities, and shows how it further led to marginalization and demobilization of anti-nationalist populations. Political demobilization of antiwar voices has strongly influenced the sentiment of helplessness among the political actors at the time, but it still resonates today in (post)Yugoslav space among the politically active last pioneers, as we will see later in Chapter 8.

Hannes Grandits and Ulf Brunnbauer also reject the role of pre-existing ethnic hatreds: for them, nationalism was rather used in the institutional struggle for hegemony within

Yugoslavia (Brunnbauer & Grandits, 2013, p. 15). For them “groupness” creating conflicted ethno-national communities was a result of specific dynamics of the institutional and regime changes with the end of socialist Yugoslavia (ibid., p. 31). Once the political circumstances deteriorated and the violence erupted, the ethno-national identities gained in strength among the populations as well. An example is how the figures of the self-identified Yugoslavs in the census changed in Croatia: from 8,2% of the population in 1981, they declined to 2,2% in 1991, just as nationalist propaganda was escalating in the 1980s (Petrović, 1992, p. 7 in Woodward, 1995, p. 92)²⁷.

Without claiming comprehensiveness, this short historical overview aimed to point the key developments that led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the wars and the (post)Yugoslav present state of affairs – the social and economic environment in which the last pioneers were born, grew up and in which they live today. The brutality of the wars that followed the dissolution created the deep divisions among the (post)Yugoslav populations, while the elites continued reproducing new mythologies and memory narratives to legitimize the dissolution and to legitimize the wars.

The newly created (post)Yugoslav states had different trajectories, yet some similarities remain shared: the populations are impoverished; the territories are emptied; and there is low, if any, optimism for the future. When looking at the regimes developed across the region, as key causes for their lack of legitimacy Danijela Dolenc identifies the “political abuse of power and the deeply unjust privatization processes” (Dolenc, 2013, p. 7).

What initially started as equally unjust privatization processes, in Slovenia led to the fall of the first DEMOS government in 1992 and resulted in a different approach, a more social-democratic and a more gradual one, which lasted until 2004. Once the right-wing government under the leadership of Janez Janša came into power, the neoliberal approach was reinstated and led into severe consequences of the economic crisis that followed; the biggest protests that took place in Slovenia in 2012, the so-called Maribor uprisings, were a response to the impoverishment by the transition processes, the world crisis and austerity politics (Zdravković, 2016). Public opinion polls and quantitative studies conducted in recent years,

²⁷ Petrović, Ruža, 1992, „The national composition of Yugoslavia's population, 1991“, *Yugoslav Survey*, Vol. 33, no.1, p.7,

over and over again, confirm the prominence of Yugonostalgic sentiments among the (post)Yugoslav citizens. One of many examples could be regular Slovenian public opinion polls in which citizens believe their life was good, and better, in Yugoslavia (Toš et al., 1999, pp. 565, 872; Toš et al., 2004, p. 474; etc.).

Since 2013, when Croatia entered the European Union, there was a rise in violence and hate speech against ethnic minorities, notably Serbs (Jović, 2017, p. 236). The Bulletin of Serb National Council (SNV) has been monitoring the developments and noting this continuous rise – for example, in 2017, 393 cases were registered in comparison to 331 in 2016 (Srpsko Nacionalno Vijeće, 2018). The transition was bringing along numerous unexpected consequences, instead of the promised eternal peace, democracy and prosperity. In Serbia, during the transition period, 98% of industry was closed down, leaving out of jobs almost one million workers (Obradović, 2017, p. 11) while the income from the privatizations for the state, since 2001, has been as little as 3,5 billion Euros, equal of the one year of remittances (ibid.). Throughout the 1990s, Croatia and Serbia were considered as autocratic regimes led by Tuđman and Milošević. Tuđman's regime was described as “rife with nepotism, corruption, and economic incompetence, run by an egotistic ruler who was obsessed with historical injustices and worldwide conspiracies against his nation, and who was backed by an obedient party” (Kusovac, 2000, p. 57). In both Serbia and Croatia, the year 2000 brought a change in the ruling regime, which had some positive effects towards democratization processes. As Slovenia entered the European Union in 2004, and started using Euro in 2007, Croatia “successfully” implemented the transition and in 2013 became an EU member state. In Serbia the EU accession reforms were limited, and Serbia remains to be depicted as an authoritarian democracy (Dolenec, 2013, p. 188).

As the countries were and are going through the political and the economic *neverending* transition, these processes encompassed two more: the transitions from peace to war and back, and an identitarian transition (Jović, 2017, p. 72). War traumas played a prominent role in both creating an overall discourse in each of the countries, but also in individual and collective memory. Karyn Ball has provided a brilliant extensive overview of the development of memory and trauma studies depicting how the multidirectional turn in Memory Studies, brought by Michael Rothberg, has been intrinsically connected to the trauma studies (Ball, 2021). The links between trauma and nostalgia can be multiple;

nostalgia can serve as a screen memory for the war trauma, in order to resolve the relationship between perceived victims and perpetrators (Volcic, 2007), or to fill in the narrative silences between expected disagreements among different ethno-communities of today (Palmberger, 2016).

While today's political parties in Serbia do not seem still to be clearly differentiated on the left-right political spectrum, notably in terms of their socio-economic programs (Stojiljković, Pilipović, & Spasojević, 2013, p. 140); at the center of their differentiation remain identity issues (*ibid.*, p. 147). But what unites the majority of the political parties throughout the (post)Yugoslav space is the combination of the two key elements: the neoliberal economic policies and nationalism.

As the Second World War history being rewritten, whether in hiding the Ustasha's role when erecting a Holocaust victims' memorial in Zagreb in 2019 (Milekić, 2019) or in Serbia hiding any collaboration facts from history textbooks (Stojanović, 2010, p. 235), the economic situation in the present cannot be hidden. Devastating economic results of the transition are seen throughout the region: "general impoverishment, huge public and private indebtedness facilitated by a flow of foreign credit, widespread deindustrialization, social degradation, depopulation through diminished life expectancy and emigration, and general unemployment (ranging between 20 and 30 per cent and even reaching 50 per cent in countries like Bosnia and Kosovo, especially amongs younger generations)" (Štikš & Horvat, 2015, p. 2). Unemployment rates in 2014-15 were between 12-13% in Slovenia, 16-20% in Croatia and 19-20% in Slovenia (Štikš, 2015, p. 135).

In this "postcommunist condition", as called by Boris Buden, the political elites needed not only to erase the past, but to forbid it. As the postcommunist citizens were considered the children without a past, postcommunism itself became "a cultural location – culture of a lesser value" (Buden, 2012, p. 68); and a historical condition lacking any perspective of future (*ibid.*, p. 180). Buden believes that the collective mourning (Scribner, 2003), or nostalgia reflecting upon retroutopia, actually is "about the loss of society as a society" (Buden, 2012, p. 182). In a novel by the author Dejan Novačić, it is well remarked: "...all Yugoslavs are actually emigrants, because in a certain moment of time, they have all found themselves, collectively, outside the border of their home country" (Novačić, 2005, p. 32). The political and cultural elites "justified their territorial pretentions, struggles for power and armed

conflicts” (Levi, 2009, p. 14) imposing neoliberal ethno-nationalism as a dominant ideology. Yugoslavism is as dangerous today, Levi continues, as “...Yugoslavs, in the measure in which the authentic Yugoslav being is contained exclusively in the excess surpassing any codified and affirmed form like national identity” (Levi, 2009, p. 115).

As this thesis argues, Yugoslavism stands in opposition to ethno-nationalism and gives the subjectivity back to the (post)Yugoslav citizens, giving them an opportunity to reclaim their home, outside of any nation state. The last pioneers deny being Yugonostalgic, as burdened with negative meaning this term has become, while they are not denying that a number - for some in lesser, for some in greater extent – of ideological, socio-economic and political ideas, together with Yugoslavism, are the ideas they reflect upon. As they resist the revisionist mainstream discourses, building upon their personal memories and their political identities reflected in the collective memories, the last pioneers search for their meaning of Yugoslavia. The unfinished project of Yugoslavia in the past is reflected for the future, mourning the negative (post)Yugoslav present.

Moving into the results’ discussion chapters, I will first look, within Chapter 6, into the childhood memories of the generation of the last pioneers and how their Yugoslav childhoods’ memories formed their values; what memories were transmitted within their families and their most close environments; what Yugoslav heritage do they perceive as parts of their identities. Early political socialization, as narrated through our memory narratives, creates the basis of our political values and identities. In Chapter 7, I will proceed with the analysis of their life stories and the moment of rupture – the rupture of the dissolution of the country and the war; transforming their memory narratives into their reflections on the revisionist mainstream discourses of today. Political socialization continues through adolescent years – considered to be the most important phase of creation and establishment of our political outlooks. The final Chapter 8 discusses how all these narratives further feed into their understanding of their Yugoslav identity; Yugoslavism today and what meaning do they assign to Yugonostalgia – and most importantly, how does it dialogue with their political identities.

6. *Children of solidarity – from lobsters to starvation*

What unites people? Armies? Gold? Flags? Stories.
There's nothing more powerful in the world than a
good story. Nothing can stop it. No enemy can
defeat it.

Tyrian Lannister, *Game of Thrones*, Season 8, 2019

Nothing can stop stories from uniting people, a trope confirmed through human history in literature, arts and research. Narratives are fundamental to our identity. Internalizing the past as “a story with a function, as a motor of progress or a basis of continuity” (Assmann, 2008, p. 89), the internalized past of the last pioneers starts in their childhoods, their Yugoslav childhoods. Understanding the memory of a Yugoslav childhood, we understand the stories that bring together the last pioneers as one generation. As Stuart Hall noted: “...our relation to the origin is always something that has to be *told*; it is why ‘the past’ becomes available to us only insofar as it is something *narrated*, and it is also why such narration is itself always constructed partly through memory, desire, fantasy, and myth” (Hall, 2017, p. 130). In my (re)search in narrated memories, I depart our quest for the deconstruction of nostalgia, right here – in the first fleeting, blurry, scattered childhood memories.

Telling one’s story means creating one’s identity, anchoring oneself in a narrative that proves a continuity of who we are today with who we once were. We re-narrate our stories to conform them to our political positionality; our political identities in the present color our life memory narratives. Our story differentiates ourselves from the others, but also brings us closer to a community. In order to understand the nostalgic sentiments, and their relation to the political identity last pioneers adopted, in all their divergences, I found it important to understand what last pioneers mean when they say that they were the children of socialism²⁸ – a recurring figure in my interviews. What it meant to be a Yugoslav pioneer? How do the last

²⁸ Two interesting references could be made to a short-lived punk band from Slovenia, which existed between 1981 and 1986, under the name “Otroci socializma”. The band published an album with critical songs towards the Yugoslav regime in 1982 under the same name. In 1987, as part of the awakening revisionist anti-Yugoslav discourses, a journalist from Serbia, Milomir Marić, published a book under the title “The children of communism” which was aiming to dismantle the official regime historical narratives and was considered as dissident at the times of its publication. While lacking in serious and rigorous scientific basis, the book became a bestseller. Yet, the idiom “children of socialism” among the interviewees in this research carries a very different meaning,

pioneers remember growing up in Yugoslavia? Were their Yugoslav childhoods important for their (post)Yugoslav adult understanding of the political world and their political identities?

6.1 The Yugoslav families of the last pioneers

What seems to be yet common for all of the last pioneers across Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia is the stark contrast of their careless spirit in comparison to what followed. Remembering how they grew up, remembering their family environments, and all the stories they heard from their parents and their grandparents, along with scarce flashes of their own memories – all brings a breeze of *good old times*. Before Yugoslavia fell apart, the very second before the war became an everyday reality and an everlasting trauma, how did our last pioneers live and where did they actually come from? To be born in the 1970s and 1980s in Yugoslavia, meant to be born into a Yugoslav family. So what is a Yugoslav family? The first association that usually comes into one's mind is a so-called "mixed" family - a term usually reserved for families in which parents come from different ethno-national backgrounds. Yet, a Yugoslav family – the initial socialization environment for our pioneers – represents for them heterogeneity in a wider sense, much beyond ethno-nationality. It is already from here that we can see how the mere adjective Yugoslav stands for variety in a multitude of meanings.

Yugoslav families were created from different class and social backgrounds, different political viewpoints, different origins, different religions, and yes, different ethno-national backgrounds. The diversity of Yugoslav society was reflected within families as much as within the whole society. As we were sipping coffee in her apartment in Belgrade, my first interviewee, a refugee from Bosnia and Herzegovina today living in Serbia, and active in various social movements across the (post)Yugoslav space, noted: "I wouldn't even have the opportunity to have such a family if there wasn't for Yugoslavia, they were never strained by nationalisms. I really lived in a family who... we had the Christmas tree until the 14th of January²⁹, for example.... I didn't know until 1991 why it was important for us to have a Christmas tree until the 14th of January. But it was there" (23-SR-1975-F).

²⁹ In Serbian Orthodox religion, Julian calendar is still in use which results in Christmas eve being on the 6th of January, Christmas on the 7th of January and thus the New Year's eve on the 13th of January,

Yugoslav childhood is represented as a space where the diversity existed without the children knowing the reasons behind either the differences or their origins – different traditions, different dialects, different churches, and different world outlooks. These multitudes and richness were yet to be discovered for the last pioneers. War has made urgent the understanding of one's identity and family narratives. While the research shows that, in general, adolescence represents a life moment when we seek understanding of our identities through sharing family narratives, adopting and reinterpreting them (Merill & Fivush, 2016); childhood remains a moment when we are yet only discovering, without fully grasping, the world around us. "Coming into existence" of specific age groups into a society takes place always within "a certain historical and political setting" (Braungart & Braungart, 1986, p. 206). Widely conducted research on political socialization of children noticed that even children as young as 3-6 years can have certain level of awareness of the world around them and emotional sentiment of attachment to certain symbols, without fully comprehending their meaning. In this thesis, political socialization is understood as a process of learning and forming political attitudes and behavior corresponding to our societal position through various media (Hyman, 1959; Ryder, 1965). Political socialization is a dynamic process that changes throughout one's lifetime, while the generational outlook remains an important frame for these changes (Inglehart, 1977). Yet, it is considered that true political sentiments start to develop only in mid and late adolescence (Braungart & Braungart, 1986). Through the narratives of the last pioneers' memories of their childhoods we can identify how they understood their family background and their early years of political socialization. When explaining who they are, the last pioneers often refer to the values they have adopted within their Yugoslav families as values which formed them for life, even if, for some, in contradiction with their political positionality of today. It is these ambivalences that open space, the Yugonostalgic space, within the last pioneers' political imaginaries for reflecting Yugoslav history from lenses different than the one the mainstream narratives in the (post)Yugoslav space offer.

Political diversity of Yugoslav families

Beyond ethno-national diversity, the diverse political viewpoints of their parents emerged as a common mark of diversity for a Yugoslav family in the last pioneers' narratives. Through their memories these diverse political identifications of their parents did not represent a problematic aspect of their families, until the dissolution and the wars, just like ethno-national

diversity. Underlining this aspect interestingly correlates with the fact that, except for one single case, none of the married interviewees raised the issue of diverse political positioning with their current spouses and partners. While it does not necessarily mean that this does not arise, memories on the conflicted political viewpoints of their parents are represented as yet another element depicting the openness of Yugoslav society and another feature of their Yugoslav childhoods. Whether they remember their communist father and an anti-communist religious mother reconciling their disagreements through humor, as in “We often made jokes how Jesus was the first communist” (58-HR-1975-F), or the diversity was visible in the family library, as in “We have a lot of books at home. We have Quran and Bible and Tito’s biography and Marx and Engels” (18-SLO-1981-M), the last pioneers narrate this diversity as an important element which influenced their values and their perceptions in their childhoods. In a busy café near the Croatian parliament, were a number of the interviews with the MPs in Croatia took place, a Member of Parliament, not belonging to the traditional cleavage parties and proud of his independent status, coming from a family with a Marxist mother and a Christian father in Croatia explained (61-HR-1977-M):

Yes, yes, I believe that the context possibly brought me to the liberal ideas, because I was not molded in the family context in only one narrative. Mother remained a Marxist, a leftist; she was a history teacher later on. Father continued to nurture that religious dimension, Christian democracy. The two of them had to necessarily cooperate, as a family. We, as children, we have then absorbed that religious metanarrative of my father, and the other metanarrative of my mother. So we have seen what brings one and what the other. Father accepted the pioneer oath as a fact, he did not dispute it. Mother was satisfied; it was part of her cult.

Remembering a plurality of political ideas, not only within the Yugoslav society, but also within Yugoslav families, provides a counter-memory to the mainstream discourses claiming the totalitarian character of the Yugoslav state.

Early political socialization of the last pioneers

These reflections on diversity within their Yugoslav families, in last pioneers’ narratives on their childhoods, are most often followed by their attempt of understanding how the families influenced the last pioneers’ political positionality.

The last pioneers, self-identifying as right-wing, openly recognized that their ideological stances came from their fathers. One of the last pioneers’ father, who died in the war, was a war volunteer in the paramilitary troops of Vojislav Šešelj, and the interviewee explained that

for him there was no choice or question which side of the political spectrum to choose – being a right-wing radical was considered as a natural order of things, almost as defending the honor of the family. Equally in Croatia, the paternal heritage persists. A far right-wing Member of Parliament, in the Parliament’s café joyfully participated in the interview – expressively happy to tell his childhood stories and relay his ambiguities towards the Yugoslav past. Loud anti-Yugoslav in the media and public discourse, his strong voice was not even once lowered, regardless of the other visitors in a very public place surrounded by his colleague members of parliament, journalists and other visitors. Given his “mixed” experiences of his childhood in a coastal city, he was identifying how his political positionality turned to the right (63-HR-1974-M):

I remember 1980... now that we discuss this... father and I were home alone and I was playing in front of the television with some soldiers, the TV news begin and the speaker says: Comrade Tito is dead. And I already knew something, so I looked at my father's reaction... and my father half joyfully laughed and said: So, the chief has died! And the next scene... he poured himself some whiskey, or some rakija and he cheered... he was repeating: 'the chief died, the chief died'...happily.

If they were growing up in an anti-Yugoslav family, they are perceptive of how it influenced them as children and how it contributed to the formation of their political identity today. As an interviewee from Croatia explains, his family was always openly anti-Yugoslav. Family socialization he today acknowledges is confronted from his political positionality today – being an activist of, in his words, a left-wing movement. Nevertheless, his positions throughout the interview remained more anti-Yugonostalgic than the majority of other self-identifying left wing actors. In the closed and empty space of a non-governmental organization, the interviewee was reinterpreting his own childhood memories (48-HR-1979-M):

Well, once, twice a year we traveled to Austria, Switzerland, Italy, so I saw it... wow, there were so many colorful things to buy... and back home, there wasn't. It was maybe already 1989, when duty free shops arrived and it all seemed great to me. So that was a somewhat wrong perception. I thought that all we have is a stale, grey, horrible socialism... Now when I look at those times and I compare them with today, I understand that it was not really like that... but that is how I always perceived it.

Capacity for their own introspection and reflection upon the development of their childhood memories into primary values of their political socialization, and then further on their reinterpretations upon their adulthood and current political identity, interestingly enough manifests only among the left-wing and centrist last pioneers. As left-wing political actors

might have emancipated from their right-wing parents, there was not a single case of a right-wing political actor coming from a left-wing family.

It is considered that in our youth we start forming political identities, setting the stage for our political awareness and positioning. Besides the notion of cohort of the last pioneers being born within a specific time frame, the most important element that Richard and Margaret Braungart define as essential for the transformation into a political generation, following the works of Karl Mannheim, is the awareness of the cohort members on their common experience, a shared consciousness and an active political intention (Braungart & Braungart, 1986). The consciousness of the last pioneers on how their personal memory narratives and their Yugoslav past molded them into a generation is reiterated throughout the interviews. It leads us in the direction of understanding how their (post)Yugoslav memories form part of their political subjectivity and the understanding that Yugonostalgia of the last pioneers is never void of political reflection.

Political socialization within the families plays an element into the today's political positionality of the last pioneers, but one they themselves very well understand. Growing up in a Yugoslav anti-fascist family is proudly owned. In a café on the Ljubljana fortress, a left-wing interviewee from Slovenia, coming from a "mixed" marriage and with double citizenship today, Croatian and Slovenian described: "...look, in our family it was like this... we celebrated the 29th of November. We... prepared beans; and I remember Partisan movies on the TV, the whole day they would play Partisan movies, Neretva and Sutjeska, and at home, it was a given that we will watch them... and my grandfather, he was always recounting his adventures from the times when he was a Partisan, because he fought in Lika..." (7-SLO-1979-M). As towards the end of the interview, his wife joined us, they continued to convey common memory narratives of their Yugoslav past transmitting their individual family narratives into their common family today's memory narrative. Remaining in touch after the interview, I was, long after the interview, invited to the interviewee's birthday party at a café in Ljubljana named - Nostalgija.

Family being a communicative framework for memories (Assmann A., 2011, p. 21) and a social group which we did not choose to enter is also understood as our primary political socialization framework. I have chosen to pay closer attention to the communicative nature of Yugonostalgia and "acknowledge the different interpretations and uses of the same nostalgic

object at different points in the process of its production, dissemination and reception” (Mihelj, 2016, p. 240). Taking into account one’s own primary socialization group, such as a family, makes it an important departure point for our memory narratives and political identity. A Partisan movie time with family in childhood might be an initial object of nostalgia when reminiscing our childhood, but the memory on the same event has been reinterpreted throughout one’s life, at different points and through different lenses given the ever changing temporal and spatial contexts, and might have acquired another meaning by the time of narration. Allowing nostalgic memories to transform into the political reflections within one single narrative is an analytic framework which allows us to understand the polysemic nature of nostalgia and its many uses in the past and in the present. The reinterpretation of childhood memories helps provide a coherent framework for our identity without obscuring the various elements which influenced our life narrative. Even if for many interviewees, as they claim, the interview conducted within my research was the first time they have had an opportunity to discuss their Yugoslav memory narratives notably in relation to the present, they have shown a high level of insight into their own processes of reflection and a high level of awareness of all the threads memory is woven of.

Even if we can clearly conclude that most often the family political environment influenced the political view points of last pioneers, there have been cases where this has been proved wrong – a prominent political figure and even a minister in one of Yugoslav socialist governments as a grandfather did not seem to instill any socialist political ideology nor pro-Yugoslav stands with an interviewee in Serbia; yet anti-nationalism is strong. This rather remains an exception confirming the rule. More often than not, generational transmission of memory remains an important part of the constitution of life narratives, even if as only of an “implicit background narratives” (Connerton, 1989, p. 3). Celebrating Yugoslav holidays, or watching Partisan movie, or listening to the stories of struggle and hope from the World War Two - all these memories left traces, including the so-called second hand memories, that contextualize the childhood of the last pioneers and help them place their today’s values within their most intimate circles and their initial socialization space.

Specific family background circumstances sometimes were a reason to shift their perspective and the root in counter-memories and alternative memory narratives. Soaking wet from the rain that caught him on the way, showing up with a box of (Yugonostalgic) Kraš chocolates,

in a packed café of Kino Europa in the center of Zagreb, an anti-fascist activist from Croatia, seemingly upset, told his story (56-HR-1980-M):

In high school one thing happened to me... so, my mum was fired in 1996, and, of course, I already changed my opinion during war about some important ideological issues. Then in 1996 mum was fired because... as it was written in the newspapers... because she was passing judgments as per the directives of UDBA, what was not true... [they were saying so] in the couloirs where she worked... she was told that we were “Serb-lovers”, “Jugoslovenčine”³⁰... so in 1996, I radically changed my opinions... Today Yugoslavia is presented as a prison of the peoples, as a place where Croats did not have any freedom of speech and where they could not express their Croat identity... I have at home a photo from 1949. My grandfather was in the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) uniform – but because of my grandmother’s parents – both my grandfather and my grandmother stopped being religious during the People’s Liberation Struggle (NOB)... the faith stopped being... they went to war as 16 years old, as kids. In 1949, they were 24 years old and they got married in a church because my grandmother’s mum wanted so... Here we talk about the time of the Comintern...the times which are considered to be the darkest times of all, full of purges. My grandfather was in the Yugoslav People’s Army uniform next to my grandma, standing in front of the altar in a Catholic church and getting married... So whom are they telling to these stories? It was my main argument always. What are you talking about? I know that there were some persecutions and all... but the way I see it, the same would be today if I wanted to overthrow the constitutional regime, set up explosives or become a member of a guerrilla group...

Personal family memories shape our view of the world; in the narratives of the last pioneers, these intimate narratives stand in firm opposition to the mainstream memory discourses and open the space for counter-narratives. Counter-narratives then make possible reinterpretations of the whole of society, for better or worse. An experience of a country can become measured by a personal story, a photograph, a success or a failure of a family member, or an injustice done to us in a new country. As immigrants transfer their memories from their homelands to paint their old and new experiences, the last pioneers transferred their memories to the newly created (post)Yugoslav spaces. It is between the generations and families, key “media of memory” (Olick et al., 2011, p. 312), that these transfers happen, and not as a surprise, predominantly through a paternal line: it was the grandfathers and the fathers who told the family stories.

Religious diversity

³⁰ A derogatory form of „Yugoslav“,

Sometimes a personal example would be kept within a family narrative as an (almost) heroic act of standing up to (the communist) repression. Church and religion remained a significant part of personal lives of some peoples in Yugoslavia. Church weddings were not unusual, even within party members – as the previous narrative confirmed. But the religious aspect of growing up in Yugoslavia is also sometimes mentioned almost as a counter-balance to the communist past of one of the family members.

Often, the interviewees would quickly add, right after stating that one of their parents was a member of the Communist party³¹, that they never got anything out of it; no advantages; no privileges. The need of the last pioneers to distance from the “red bourgeoisie” is highly visible in their narratives.

The trope of religion and freedom of religion when reminiscing Yugoslav past appears in two cases: as opposing the mainstream discourse of complete ban of religion or as another expression of dissonant understanding of the past. Membership in the Party of a family member in Croatia notably, no matter the positive childhood memories, had to be somehow further explained and justified. On a sunny day in Osijek, in a full café, an interviewee from Croatia came to our meeting with her newborn baby and her husband. As I kindly asked for the interviewee to be only between the two of us, we launched a discussion on her (post)Yugoslav memories. She was reconciling her politically mixed family narratives with her own self-identification as a Christian Democrat, and she explained, with many pauses as she was selecting her words (58-HR-1975-F):

We went to church... interesting thing is that my father was a communist in the League of Communists, but he never got any advantages because of it... He was really an idealist, he believed in that idea... He got married to my mother in a church what was considered a scandal, it was considered incredible. They [the Communist Party] interrogated him. My dad was resolute, he told them: Where is it written in the Statutes of the Party? Where does it say that I am not allowed? ... They didn't know. So, he knew how to defend himself, he kept his position firmly, but he had his convictions...But it is interesting that he never forbade us to go to church, he used to wake us up for church.

We can notice the childhood memories meandering, opposing the mainstream memory narratives – even if the story was told that her father was exceptionally heroic for standing up

³¹ The Communist Party of Yugoslavia changed its name into the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1952. Nevertheless, in colloquial speech it was most often still referred to as „the Communist Party“ or simply „the Party“ which why I have left the reference in the original form as the interviewees would use,

to the Party, in the same time the narrator tells us that she finds it *interesting* that her father accepted her religious education. Ambivalent emotions when interpreting their childhood memories appear; trying to reconcile the mainstream discourses and their own intimate memories, the last pioneers reinterpret their life histories to make meaning of their identities and Yugoslavia itself. An important discursive strategy often appearing here is *the singularity or exceptionalism*. Their family examples and experiences are represented as an exception in the form of the lack of oppression – for which they cannot generalize because the mainstream discourses continue to claim the oppression.

None of the interviewees remember religious holidays being forbidden – if there were religious family members, the memory on religious holidays is one of the backbones of childhood memories. Depending of today's political positionality of the interviewee, these memories are shared as normalcy of Yugoslav childhoods or as some special acts of resistance. A previously quoted far right-wing Member of Parliament from Croatia gave his interpretation of his family's religious resistance in his childhood: „...we always celebrated, we always celebrated Easter and Christmas, I was always home, we considered it important. And most others, I won't say everyone, they celebrated. My mother would sing Christmas carols... I know we all sang a bit louder, even so that we could be heard“ (63-HR-1974-M).

Certainly, growing up in a religious family environment also caused in the childhood different, seemingly less serious, problems – like missing out on events important for a child of a certain age. This excerpt underlines the dissonances in the childhood socialization, depicting how at a child's age there was no conflict between watching Partisan movies and going to the mass, which today the interviewee from his political positionality would understand as an ideological confliction. Our far right-wing MP portrayed these conflicted children's understanding of the political context: “I always went to religious education and to the mass service on Sundays. And I know that one of my big traumas was, for example, the TV show “Let us talk” on Sunday mornings. All the best Partisan movies, Sutjeska, Neretva, all those wonders were playing... and I had to go to mass. I was always angry about it, then I would watch at least just for a second, and then my mother would make me go to mass...” (63-HR-1974-M). Here reminisces this dissonance from his present viewpoints, leaving us to wonder how much of the children's understanding can ever be captured without acknowledging the present lenses of the person they have become. So he continued: “I was

never explained why I had to go [to the mass], but I understood that... simply it was us... That is my family, that is us and we are like that, we are different... In the building there was a majority of communists, there was a lot of Serbs, I felt one... there was, from those people, in the building... I would say certain looks they gave us” (63-HR-1974-M).

The memory of *certain looks* is in contrast with the narratives of the other last pioneers claiming that there was no awareness among the children regarding the ethno-national or religious identity. But for the right-wing last pioneer this memory, forming the puzzle together with the family background and heritage, shapes the memory of his childhood and his outlook on Yugoslavia.

Family dissonances

Within the family framework, the newly changed context of the dissolution brought different tensions and (re-)interpretations of the past. A mother, perceived as right-wing by her last pioneer son, would still be claiming that “it was better in socialism”, and a right-wing father could be keeping as a secret the fact that the interviewee’s grandfather was a Partisan and grandmother an active member of the Antifascist Front of Women (AFŽ) – as a left-wing political actor depicts us his family environment in Croatia (43-HR-1981-M). Communicative memory “lives in everyday interaction and communication” (Assmann, 2010, p. 111). Throughout their childhood, adolescence and adulthood, the last pioneers communicated different memories within their families, within the usual span of three generations that is identified as the length of communicative memory; noticing the discrepancies and cognitive dissonances regarding memory on Yugoslavia. Most of the dissonant and *interesting* stories on family histories came from interviewees in Croatia – in Slovenia and Serbia, political affiliations of parents were not that often raised, except in the right-wing paternal heritage cases. The lack of the violent war on the ground in Slovenia and Serbia led to the lesser strength of anti-Yugoslav mainstream discourses emanating from the Yugoslav war heritage, softening the cognitive dissonances.

The role of the grandparents

In Yugoslav families it is important not to diminish the influence of grandparents’ memory narratives, true “post-memory” as understood by Marianne Hirsch “the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be

neither understood nor recreated” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 22). Besides the habitual environment in which the generation of grandparents and parents would often share the living space, and the grandparents taking care of their grandchildren while parents were at work, the importance of post-memory in the Yugoslav context also bears the importance of the memory on the World War Two (see chapter 7). Being active participants in the events of the dissolution of the First Yugoslavia and/or participants and victims of the WWII, the generation of the last pioneers’ grandparents undoubtedly represents a significant influence on the political socialization of our interviewees. Grandparents add another significant layer of intersecting memory narratives complementing the entangled memory narratives of the last pioneers.

Delineating a generation

A concept that reoccurred throughout the interviews was certain jealousy and envy towards the lives of their parents, often referred to as lives in times when future still existed as a concept. The last pioneers feel that they were promised a certain future by their parents, a future that never took place, in all three countries. Sitting in a café in Kragujevac, a central town in Serbia, a trade union activist – one of the rare interviewees openly disclosing his Yugonostalgia and not shying away from the term sadly evoked: “...my father told me ‘wait and graduate from university’...while I was still in primary school, he told me to graduate from university... well actually, finish high school, go to university. ‘You will be able with your student card to travel the world’. He told me how he traveled half the world. And I said ‘lucky you, great, I can’t wait to start studying, so I could also travel the world’.... But in 1991 already I knew that that is not going to happen” (29-SR-1975-M).

The last pioneers harbor specific relations towards the generation of their parents, oscillating between jealousy and blame, and towards the generation of their children and the youth in the (post)Yugoslav space, recognizing their ignorance on the Yugoslav past but strongly attempting to transfer them their own Yugoslav values. The last pioneers hold their parents accountable for the dissolution of the country, even if only indirectly, for not sufficiently opposing and stopping the processes that led Yugoslavia into the wars. Some among them, as an activist from Serbia, strongly believe that their generation would have reacted differently – as she put it: “I am convinced that there would not have been a war if they have only let my generation to grow up” (23-SR-1975-F); underlining the results of the numerous sociological studies conducted in the 1980s. An even stronger sentiment is that any comfort of a *normal*

life or any possibility for social mobility has evaporated with the end of Yugoslavia and for the last pioneers, yet, as they see it, their parents had *everything handed on a silver platter*. A Member of Parliament in Serbia, from Vojvodina, in her Parliament office explained this rupture between the two generations underlining the feeling of *undeserved life quality deterioration*: “During Tito’s times, they [her parents] got married, got a loan, got a property, how it could [be]... and we, the poor ones... I had an impression that everyone born after 1980... there’s no chance to do anything, like it was our fault” (42b-SR-1982-F). And a similar sentiment goes all the way to Slovenia, as I was told by a political party member on the left-wing, coming from a coastal town and a “mixed” marriage: “To talk from my own experience? I will tell you, from my own experience: my mother finished high school, for chemistry profession, in Rijeka. Within 4 months, she sent applications; she got a job in factory in Ilirska Bistrica – not for trial period of a month... a job. She immediately applied for the waiting list for an apartment... from her factory. Within a year [from graduation], she had a job, an apartment and a car. So, totally independent” (9-SLO-1983-M). It seems like it was easy for their parents, something it never was for them. Whether it refers to women’s emancipation, still resonating strongly in the memories on socialist Yugoslavia, or the right to housing, despite the critical discourses from the right-wing activists that it was reserved only for Party members, there is a perception of a reasonable possibility of a better life, and as such, a hope.

The last pioneers believe their children, today’s youth, are ignorant about Yugoslavia. On a beautiful spring day in Novi Sad, a today anti-fascist movement activist and a previous member of a political party in Vojvodina, over lots of coffee and some beer during an almost four hours long interview, explains the generational differences through a spatial dimension: “They don’t know what it is. So, now when you go to Slovenia, you have to pass the Croatian border and then the Slovenian and you go and give your passport and then they...it is normal for them. For me, it is not normal” (31-SR-1976-M). The concept of *normality* is what changes with generations, from one to another. If for the parents of the last pioneers easily finding work after graduation and having a settled life was normal, for their children the borders are the new normal. Many of the last pioneers who have children say that they make an effort to transmit their Yugoslav values to their children, to transfer the gratitude to previous generations of building their countries after the Second World War and to overcome the obvious growth of the class divisions. Despite the spatial ruptures being installed in the

form of borders, the linguistic proximity continues to surpass them. A left-wing political party member from Croatia notices: “My daughter then says: Let’s go *napolje*³²! (outside) What we never say, she got it from the cartoons, like she picks up English. So I see that the connection is strong and will not be cut so easily” (43-HR-1981-M).

Between these two generations, the generation of the last pioneers through their memory narratives constructs their meaning of Yugoslavism and Yugonostalgia, and their interplay.

Remembering class(less) society

The generational gap feels a bit stronger in Croatia and Serbia, given their bleaker economic situation today in comparison to Slovenia. Regardless of the class they belonged to, there was a sense of generational advancement, for example, between the generation of their grandparents and their parents. Basic socio-economic needs were satisfied. Different socio-economic classes were not as distanced as they are today, and they would often live next to each other. An activist from his youth, and today a Member of Parliament in Serbia, critical towards his own political party as much as the overall socio-political context, reflected upon the class issues, an issue rarely raised on the political scene in Serbia today. Having invited me to a café in Novi Sad where he lives today, he remembers growing up in a smaller town in Vojvodina: “You had there... from working class, I mean regular unqualified workers, to the CEO, where was the factory, he lived... he had a same apartment like the worker” (40-SR-1974-M). As majority of the previously cited interviewees, discussing Yugoslavia in a public space – even busy cafes, did not represent a problem, not even for the Members of Parliament. In a number of instances, including this one, towards the end of the interview, the interviewees would ask their partners or friends to join and to continue the discussion. A sense of ease and eagerness of talking about Yugoslavia, from their generational lens, was highly visible throughout my fieldwork. Almost all of my interviewees would insist on paying the coffee; and this MP insisted to take me to lunch after the interview, with his friend who joined. Most importantly, (almost) none of these conversations were aiming at recruiting me to their party or their organization. They felt like a continuation of a friendly and trustful talk,

³² „Napolje“ would be a more Serbian version, while „vani“ would be a more Croatian version of the word „outside“,

just like the interviews themselves. In these ending moments, they would always insist of keeping in touch and me sending them my thesis as soon as it is finished.

The role of class in childhood does not appear directly, but rather in the contrast with the dissolution and the wars which have brought the impoverishment and class consciousness. Only in Slovenia, when reminiscing childhood, so-called *Jugovići*³³ would claim that they were less discriminated against because they were coming from middle-class families. In the memories of *Jugovići* in Slovenia, at the end of the 1980s, being a non-Slovene from the lower socio-economic class might have experienced different realities (Mežnarić, 1986), yet none of the interviewees in my research gave specific examples or had concrete memories of such experiences.

Being raised in one Yugoslav culture and becoming adults in another (post)Yugoslav culture for the last pioneers meant facing structural conditions for which they were not prepared. Some of the last pioneers do remember the deteriorating socio-economic circumstances in Yugoslavia in the 1980s but in general, the economic crisis did not deeply mark their childhood memories. Any economic hardship memories were most often marginalized and forgotten. The crisis had gained an important place only in later reinterpretations and analysis of the causes of the Yugoslav dissolution but is disconnected from the life narratives of the majority of the last pioneers. Economic and social crisis in the 1980s, induced by the austerity measures, led to mass unemployment and impoverishment of the populations. Throughout the Yugoslav populations, the perception of inequalities was continuously on the rise (Archer et al., 2016). The situation was not influencing all families in a same way. Higher socio-economic classes, often more outspokenly anti-Yugoslav like the parents of one of our interviewees, continued to have, to say the least, a decent quality of life – sometimes by becoming high qualified *gastarbeitsers*: “He [his father] worked in Switzerland...so at some point in 1986, 1987, we were getting cash from Switzerland...I mean, it wasn’t some big money, but we could go skiing in Switzerland” (48-HR-1979-M). The understanding of “big money” already shows the class cleavages in the Yugoslav times at the end of the 1980s; the perceptions were much differed.

³³ A term used for all non-Slovenian Yugoslav peoples, sometimes as a derogatory term. In Slovenia, Bosnian (*Bosanaec*) is also used as a generic term regardless of the precise origin and as an even more insulting term – *čefur*,

The economic crisis most heavily influenced unqualified and low qualified workers who could not anymore afford even a washing machine. An interviewee, coming from a “mixed” marriage and who grew up in a small town in Slovenia, built around, in Yugoslav times successful, factory, illustrates (22s-SLO-1978-M):

In the mid 1980s, father could buy the latest Gorenje washing machine only with his one monthly salary. After a couple of years – we could not anymore buy anything, not even with a two year loan. Within a couple of months, the economic situation changed drastically...the ironwork factory almost collapsed, 2000 people lost jobs. It was an enormous economic system. Before, people came every day by buses from Croatia to work. Everyone was strongly socially connected...there in Štara during the weekend people played football, basketball, all was connected, and everyone talked to each other. And after a couple of years of economic pressure, it all changed completely. There was no one anymore on the playgrounds; all empty...We have lived on loans from month to month as best as we could and we were not the only ones. A lot of people were in such a situation... but back then, it was considered as some sort of private shame. So people, instead to talk, they withdrew into their families and...the social tissue completely changed..... All of a sudden, no one was there.

As our interviewee rushed off to another meeting from one of the more popular cafes in Ljubljana, his class social framework as much as his present activism, presented important nuances in remembrance of Yugoslav childhoods.

Economic hardship did not correlate to the anti-Yugoslav positions of a family – more often the well off families were more anti-Yugoslav. Likewise, the last pioneers who did not experience the 1980s crisis in Yugoslavia, coming from middle class families, are the ones who became anti-Yugoslav nationalists of today. The workers’ families, struggling in Yugoslavia in the 1980s, largely created a pro-Yugoslav socialization of the last pioneers. Sense of a possibility of social mobility was raised more than once – if one was to obtain a degree, one would not fear hunger. This was the main principle of safety the last pioneers refer to when reflecting on Yugoslav society – there was a stability and a social order within which people could orientate, and hard work was bringing satisfaction of basic human needs and a possibility for advancement. Despite the late 1980s when things for some of the pioneers did start to change, and moreover with the sudden poverty the war brought; today is marked with a sense of loss and the Yugoslav childhood is marked with a sense of progress.

Titostalgia

While for some of the last pioneers their first childhood memory is the day Tito died, Tito, as a political leader or an ideological guide, does not take a very prominent place in last pioneers' memory. He is indeed sometimes mentioned as an example of a strong and an intelligent leader, more from a viewpoint of understanding Yugoslav history, or as a fascinating historical personality who enjoyed life; or a couple of times as a last symbol of Yugoslavia. But for the last pioneers, Titostalgia (Velikonja, 2010) is not a strong feature of their personal narratives. Tamara Pavasović Trošt already in her research (2020) noted the diversity of appropriation, rejection or adoption of the official dismantling of Tito's personality cult in the post-1990 era, by different levels of society: the nation, local municipalities, and the civil society; underlining the importance of grassroots and local memory making. While the so-called scandalous truths on Tito's life – what is claimed to be his real identity, with dark secrets and similar suggestions, fill the cover pages of magazines, bookshelves and TV documentaries - the last pioneers do not consider these entertainment commodification attempts as relevant, for society or for their identities.

Given their generational place, it is not unexpected that Tito's „personality cult“ did not ingrain into their childhood memories. The mere idea of a personality cult is rather criticized, almost unanimously. Precisely this absence of Tito depicts us a Yugoslav narrative, much larger than the Yugoslav leader. While mainstream discourses attempt to constrict the content and the importance of the Yugoslav identity, understanding the breadth of the Yugoslav experience plays a meaningful role. Distancing themselves from Titostalgia, the last pioneers acknowledge their specific generational outlook on Yugoslavia and Yugonostalgia.

Seemingly expected given Tito's death in 1980 and the lack of direct experience of the last pioneers, out of approximately 2000 coded citations from the interviews I have conducted, barely 80 have had Tito appear. Tito is not central to the narrative of the last pioneers: when mentioned, he signifies respect, notably in the international arena, and the important figure “that held Yugoslavia together”. More often, Tito is used as an example of the bad sides of Yugoslav history, referring to the personality cult³⁴, among the last pioneers from all sides of

³⁴ It is interesting to note that the personality cult was institutionalized only in 1984 by adoption of the Law on the use of the name and image of Josip Broz Tito; all previous manifestations were rather bottom up initiatives and continuity like the Youth Baton, initiated by the citizens of Kragujevac in 1945 leaning on the tradition in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia existing since 1934, where it was initiated by the monarchists in Sarajevo and organized in the honor of the King (Radanović, 2014),

the political spectrum. The last pioneers remember writing songs for Tito, playing Tito in school plays or the scenes from life and within their family the days when Tito died. Tito was part of Yugoslav childhood scenery and rituals, and today is considered a brand. Nonetheless, only one interviewee, a left-wing activist from Novi Sad, sees a stronger symbolic in Tito's name and persona, explaining that Tito remains the "only symbol of Yugoslavia...a real, unifying one" (31-SR-1976-M) and that this is the main reason why all the street and square names in all the cities of (post)Yugoslav space are being changed. While the right-wing interviewees, especially in Slovenia, claim that *Yugonostalgia* is actually Titostalgia, sometimes it seems that they are indeed more fascinated by Tito's personality than the left-wing interviewees. Coming to a meeting with my first right-wing interviewee in Slovenia, I found him in a café in the outskirts of Ljubljana, in cheerful mood telling me how happy he was to do the interview: "My wife asked me if I wanted a beer after dinner, and I told her 'No, I am off to have a beer with a Serbian!'" Self-identifying as right conservative, a high school history teacher, another one following his paternal heritage in his political orientation, with his voice loud in a full neighborhood café he was making a significant effort to speak in Serbo-Croatian as much as possible, even if I have explained – as always – that I can fully understand Slovenian. Fervently anti-communist, yet with a strong admiration for Tito with a wide smile, elaborates: "He succeeded in everything, everything! As a politician, he was a genius. I admit that. He was a dictator and a marvelous dictator. And then when all this... then all these nationalisms, which were in a wrong way suppressed before, when they exploded; then the slaughter happened, I don't know... restless Balkans" (8-SLO-1978-M).

Brotherhood and unity

The ethno-national identity and the narratives around it come into the life story of the last pioneers only once the dissolution and the wars started. The childhood before the 1990s remained Yugoslav – not only defined in spatial terms, but rather in terms of the socio-economic environment and political and cultural values. Indeed, the diversity of Yugoslav families led to last pioneers' childhoods being spent throughout Yugoslavia, and understanding the Yugoslav space as one common family space. But Yugoslav childhoods were Yugoslav, primarily due to the openness of space, life and culture.

How was this diversity manifesting itself? From 1953 until 1981, almost all of the territories of Yugoslavia became increasingly heterogeneous. In almost all republics and autonomous

provinces³⁵, the percentage of the population that was made up by the majority ethno-national group declined (Woodward, 1995, p. 91). Between 1981 and 1991, heterogeneity increased in Montenegro, Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia but decreased in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (ibid., p. 92).

Mixing in a Yugoslav family is most often understood in terms of so-called “mixed marriages” – spouses coming from different ethno-national identities. Given that throughout its existence, Yugoslavia organized census in which its citizens had the opportunity to declare themselves ethno-nationally, the most common approach to understanding the definition of a “mixed marriage” is based on the data obtained from the census. The problem of such an approach is that the data did not account for the people who decided not to declare ethno-nationally or those who would declare as Yugoslavs, leaving us with data which do not fully represent the mixity of Yugoslav marriages. Data shows us that between 1987 and 1989, out of all marriages registered in Yugoslavia 13,1% were “mixed” – the highest percentage being in Croatia 17,4% and Serbia 12,9%, with strong variations between 4,7% in Kosovo and 28,4% in Vojvodina (Botev, 1994, p. 469 in Jansen, 2005, p. 193).³⁶ While unquestionably an important element for the understanding the structure of Yugoslav families, in the memories of the last pioneers the element of ethno-national identity between spouses is not the only one for one to comprehend their family as an expression of a diverse family background.

Through reminiscing their childhood and attempting to understand their own identity, the last pioneers juxtapose their family backgrounds and the consequences of such backgrounds – be it traumatic stories from the dissolution and the wars or as a key element with which they explain their open-mindedness. Most of the interviewees had the experience of coming from a diverse family, in the multitude of their understandings of the meaning of this diversity. Understanding Yugoslav family also requires an understanding that family in the Balkans goes beyond the nuclear family: having a “mixed” background does not have to necessarily relate solely to the parents’ background, rather it expands to aunts, uncles, nieces, and many

³⁵ Yugoslavia consisted of six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia. Serbia had two autonomous provinces: Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija,

³⁶ Botev, N. (1994), “Where East meets West: ethnic intermarriage in the Former Yugoslavia 1962-1989” in *American Sociological Review*, 59:3, pp.461-480,

other family members for which specific names in English language do not exist as they do in Yugoslav languages. More than a third of my interviewees come from “mixed” families, in all three republics almost in same numbers. When reflecting on their mixed backgrounds, the last pioneers see it as an advantage, even when acknowledging today’s new ethno-national identities: “It is not Yugoslavia today; he is Slovene, I am Serbian, but we are brothers” (28-SR-1977-M).

Overall relationship towards ethno-national identity in their childhoods was primarily characterized by a claimed complete lack of awareness of one’s ethno-nationality. A majority of the interviewees stressed that they did not know if they were Slovenes, Serbs or Croats, regardless of whether they were from a “mixed” family or not. It is important to note that this lack of awareness of one’s ethno-nationality had many different manifestations: it could have been a belief that ethno-nationality was the same as citizenship thus depending on the republic in which one was born; awareness of being Yugoslav; awareness of one’s ethno-nationality without giving it any relevance; and a dual sense of ethno-nationality being both Yugoslav and Slovene, Croat, Serb. Born in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a dual citizenship today and once a refugee, a left-wing political activist, self-identifying as communist, tells us continuously making pauses in his narrative, as if he was trying to check once again if his memories are real: „I mean, I come from a mixed marriage...dad always spoke ekavicu³⁷ wherever we would live... mum always spoke ijekavicu³⁸ wherever we would live... and somehow I did not pay attention to those things. Especially in Mostar, I really had no clue, I really had no clue...” (37-SR-1977-M).

Sometimes parents would transmit the memory on problematic inter-ethno-national relations, as in my research seen in a couple of related stories mostly linked to rural areas. But none of these family stories seem to have influenced memory of the last pioneers on interethnic relations in Yugoslavia in the times when they were growing up. At the same time, many last pioneers would recall their parents having friends all throughout Yugoslavia, or in Croatia,

³⁷ Ekavica is a dialect of Serbo-Croatian language most widely spoken in Serbia,

³⁸ Ijekavica is a dialect of Serbo-Croatian language most widely spoken in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro,

give examples of their Serbian³⁹ friends fighting on the side of Croatia. Parents have also often shared positive stories about other ethno-national groups and in the “mixed” Yugoslav family a specific kind of kinship, regardless of their political affiliation, was established with other ethno-national groups – *kumstvo*⁴⁰, a saint institution of Yugoslav culture.

An absolute majority of the interviewees claim that they were not aware of their ethno-nationality in the 1980s and that *brotherhood and unity* was not only a communist parole but that it represented for them an interiorized value: „I really felt that“ (30-SR-1980-F); „It gave results“ (43b-SR-1977-M); etc. The memories of the last pioneers confirm many sociological surveys that were conducted in the late 1980s showing the low ethno-national distance between Yugoslav citizens and scholar work establishing that the wars and the violence in the 1990s were not an expression of ethnic hatreds between the populations (Woodward, 1995; Gagnon, 2004), like it has been outlined in Chapter 5.

Mainstream narratives on the impossibility of co-ethnic existence nevertheless left traces. *Brotherhood and unity* remains one of the first associations when asked about Yugoslavia, even if the last pioneers today doubt whether these values were utopian and unachievable, given the wars that ensued. Throughout the interviews, the last pioneers in full capacity acknowledge the ambivalences of the Yugoslav system, without undermining its positive elements.

The richness of the ethno-national identities in Yugoslavia for the last pioneers is considered as a positive value, a richness of the social life in Yugoslav state rather as an obstacle for the progress of the country. These understandings are a valuable indicator of further deciphering the roots and causes of the dissolution of the country and more importantly, wars that ensued. Surrounded by other members of his movement turned political party in a café, in a coastal town in Croatia, self-identifying as center-left, an interviewee reflects upon the intrinsic values gained in his childhood that provided the strong sentiment of anti-nationalism being

³⁹ “Serbian” or “Serb” (and any other ethno-national identity of the (post)Yugoslav space) is an adjective sometimes herewith used when obligatory to use the ethno-national discourse for the clarity of the argument, based on the interviewees’ narratives, or when the narratives are being cited. In all other cases, the author refers to the residence country of the interviewees or subjects she is referring to,

⁴⁰ Godparenthood in religious terms or a wedding witness, a social institution of high relevance for Yugoslav society, establishing a kin-like relationship between friends,

reflected in his politics today: „I think that what I gained through education was the biggest value of that whole story, and that is not to differentiate people by ethno-nationality, but by their character and what they are in life. That was the biggest value of Yugoslavia: to succeed in raising people who think that way. Now...how many we were, I don't know, I was convinced that we were all like that, but in years we were less and less.“ (55-HR-1977-M). Self-identifying center and center-left interviewees, together with the rest of the left-wing interviewees, tend to assign their anti-nationalism to the political socialization in Yugoslavia through their memory narratives; even while remaining skeptical towards the Yugoslav concept of brotherhood and unity.

Asking me if I know his good friends, fellow Members of Parliament in Serbia, an institutional left-wing MP, originally coming from Istria, further strengthens this conclusion - – through commenting on my surname: „There are a lot of Popović here in Croatia. Popović are both Croats and Serbs, village next to village. My deceased grandmother was a Popović from Gospić. I know there are Serbs, but the first village next to it are Croats.“ (50-HR-1981-M). Just like in the famous photograph from the basketball match that took place at Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016, when two players – one from Serbia and one from Croatia – both by surname Bogdanović played against each other. The photograph (see Figure 6.1) was often shown in (post)Yugoslav media as an example of the artificiality of divisions between the peoples of (post)Yugoslav space.

Figure 6.1 Two players from the national basketball teams of Croatia and Serbia with the same surname



Source: “Dve zemlje, dva Bogdanovića i jedna snažna poruka”, 2016

Distorted reality was indeed the nationalist political elites’ war mongering in the 1990s and incitation of violence. The focus of the elites inciting violence provided a discourse embedded into the idea of injustices between republics and not hatreds between communities; the violence lead into formation of amoral communities (Dragojević, 2019) and ethno-national tensions.

The right-wing interviewees, and not all of them, would say that they were aware of their ethno-nationality as a child. They would still add that they are aware that it was a minority view. The far right-wing interviewee, we remember underlining his memory narratives of anti-Titoism of his father and religious upbringing that was giving the family *certain looks*, remembers declaring himself as Croat as a 7-year-old child, during the census of 1981, and his parents being proud of him. Almost nervously playing with his coffee spoon, he instantly proceeds to explain how he is, even most fervent right-wing nationalist, a bit *atypical* because he always had friends from other ethno-nationalities, as a child and still today – taking his mobile phone out and telling me about a Viber group he is a part of with all of his childhood friends (63-HR-1974-M). In a specific manner, the interviewee explains that his awareness of his ethno-nationality did not produce a social distance, even if the mainstream discourses might claim so and introduces again the strategy of *exceptionality*, in order to solve the dissonance between his political positionality and his own memory narrative and private life. The issue of interethnic relations indeed, as our research shows, represents the first element

through which we, together with the interviewees, can see that labeling any positive memory of Yugoslav times as Yugo-nostalgia constitutes the continuity of the nationalist discourses from the 1990s.

Growing up with JNA

The Yugoslavness did not reflect only within the last pioneers' families, but in their nearest environments as well. Many interviewees who grew up in the modernist housing blocks built during socialist times vividly remember the diversity, what some of them called "mini Yugoslavia", especially if the buildings were mostly populated by the families of employees within the Yugoslav People's Army. A left-wing political party member, from the coastal region of Slovenia, between underlining his continuous life still today throughout the (post)Yugoslav space due to his job, adds: „We never knew...I lived in a building, in a housing bloc, where there were all nationalities... all groups that existed in the ex Yugo... but nobody knew then by ethno-nationality who is who, who is what... it was never asked who works where, what is your father...by profession... We were brought up in that, let's say, Yugoslav spirit of brotherhood...“ (9-SLO-1983-M).

The memory on the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) remains complex, especially in cities where JNA had barracks. Some of the smaller cities in Yugoslavia were living off the JNA barracks, their towns being vivid and lively – enhancing economic and cultural activity, exactly due to the barracks and a high turnout of young people from all over Yugoslavia. For these towns, JNA was bringing well being and dynamics to the life of a small town. While we continue to enjoy the spring sunshine in a café in Ljubljana, the previously quoted interviewee reminisces: „It gave to our town, the town I lived in, it gave a rhythm of life... For the weekend, everything was full, the cafes were open, a cinema was open, pastry shops were open... hotels. Now in Bistrica there is no hotel. In those times, the hotel was full. That's what I mean when I say, the atmosphere, a different rhythm of life“ (9-SLO-1983-M). Unquestionably, such a favorable memory of JNA changed later in the course of lives of the last pioneers once the wars started and JNA became a different symbol. But it is exactly this type of ambiguity which flourishes across Yugoslav memory of the last pioneers, and what brings a capacity for owning up to one's own ambivalent understandings and emotions. No life narrative is without ambiguity, without ambivalence. The life narratives of the last pioneers, taking into account the fractures that were ingrained without their will, rather

enhanced their capacity for resilience and thoughtful understanding of the complexities of life, history and politics.

In many cities, except for the army barracks, the industrial complexes were bringing the life: people from different parts of the country and different republics; and also, art, culture, sport, leisure time. They were the centers of social cohesion of cities. Once ruined, the cities died. And the social cohesion withered away.

Regional over ethno-national

In comparison to ethno-national identification, the last pioneers rather remember regional consciousness as being more prominent, in the Yugoslav times but also today, as we will later look into. Being a Slavonian, an Istrian or a Dalmatian was a more common identification than a Croat or a Serb. Hometown or the region in which they were born for many last pioneers has a stronger resonance towards their identity and who they are. Sometimes the differences between regions in the (post)Yugoslav space are considered stronger than the ones between today's states. The region of Primorska in Slovenia and the region of Istria in Croatia might have more similarities than Istria and Dalmatia in Croatia might have. A recurring narrative in both Croatia and Serbia is the one that one might rather have his car damaged with Zagreb plates in Split, than with the Belgrade ones – as such is the strength of tensions between the two cities in Croatia. And the regional background is considered to have played a stronger role than any ethno-national identity or state level socialization. Leaning upon previous interviewee from Primorska, another one, this time institutional left-wing Member of Parliament, in his office in the parliament in Ljubljana supplements (4-SLO-1980-M):

My part – we say Primorska... Primorska has been for 20 years under fascism... My grandmother, my grandfather... when they were kids, everywhere it was written *Qui si parla soltanto italiano*⁴¹. They were not allowed to speak Slovenian. And this Yugoslavia... so then, we could speak Slovenian... Because of that, how can I put it, we very much loved this Yugoslavia. If there wasn't for Yugoslavia, we would have been part of Italy, and I wouldn't now be able to speak Slovenian....

The awareness of the historical advantages that anti-fascist liberation and the creation of Yugoslavia brought to certain regions does not seem forgotten. Historical heritage of a region also influences our childhood socialization, together with our families and our closest

⁴¹ Here we speak only Italian,

environments; the regional “we” remaining stronger than any ethno-national “we”. Continuing the stories from Primorska region, the left-wing political party member tells an anecdote: “...and I wanted, father and mother wanted for me to learn Italian language – small anecdote – I went to one, two (classes)...and then I came home... so I told my grandfather that I started to learn Italian, and then... but in a calm tone, he said ‘They’ve beaten us here to learn Italian; I declined to learn it while a gun was pointed at my head.... and now you go voluntarily’ (laugh) and that is how I was done with Italian..” (9-SLO-1983-M). As convergences and divergences between different republics are worked through in the narratives of the last pioneers, regions are contrasted as being more varied: more than once it was said that, for example, diversities between Istria and Dalmatia might be stronger than between Croatia and Serbia on a global level. And that includes populations’ animosities and prejudices. A HDZ member explains: “It’s less of a risk to come to Belgrade and say you are a Croat, than to come to Split and say you are a fan of Dinamo” (60-HR-1983-M). Regional identities provide another lens of understanding the volatility of the imposed ethno-national identities and an important element denying the usefulness of the approaches of methodological nationalism.

Whether Tito’s pictures were taken off the walls of family homes the moment the dissolution started or they are still on the walls of parents’ offices, like in one case in Slovenia, we can see that Yugoslav identity has been interwoven into the last pioneers’ identities deeply. Parents’ and grandparents’ memory narratives fed the children’s narratives, as frames of understanding, starting points of their life story and missing puzzle pieces.

The memories of the last pioneers cannot be simplified into *ordinary* longings for childhood and “simpler times”, or etiquetted as banal Yugonostalgia. This is an important element to apprehend from early on when researching (post)Yugoslav memory of the last pioneers. The interviewees are understood in this thesis as fully capable subjects of reasserting their political subjectivity – through their memory narratives and their actual political identities. And precisely these introspections and analytical capacities, which they have shown in their interviews, represent a key notion of the misperceptions of mainstream discursive labeling of Yugonostalgia in the research and the public space today (to be further developed in Chapter 8).

The stark difference between the remembered plenitude of childhood and the war trauma was highlighted more than once, to what we will return in Chapter 7. In the war of the 1990s, hunger became part of the last pioneers' lives: "...afterwards we were a couple of times in a situation that we were hungry. And not only during the war, but also after the war... And... I became aware what it meant to be hungry very young and what it meant in socialism to have food, to have, like, everything. For example, my mum, I remember that she experimented every Sunday with some fish. Once she even bought a lobster once, it is unbelievable." (30-SR-1980-F). Coming from a Yugoslav middle class family, in which father was working in JNA and mother was a stay at home mum, with five children; and then becoming refugees and losing everything in the war, after surviving the war in Sarajevo – for our interviewee, the main trauma remains hunger. Remembering childhood in Yugoslavia means remembering safety that was irretrievably lost in (post)Yugoslav times; as my interviewee juxtaposes the rupture.

For the last pioneers, the interview provided the possibility to rethink Yugoslavia in terms that differ and oppose to mainstream anti-Yugoslav narratives. If families could harmoniously exist among different ethno-national identities, different religious views and different political understandings, for the last pioneers it represents a clear marker that Yugoslav society was not a totalitarian uniform society behind the Iron Curtain, as Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, president of the Republic of Croatia from 2015 to 2020, claimed ("Grabar-Kitarović na uručivanju Fullbright nagrade: 'Rođena sam s krive strane Željezne zavjese'", 2019).

In Yugoslav families only with the wars and the dissolution, Yugoslavia became an unavoidable daily topic. A left-wing political actor in Croatia, with Serbian ethno-national origin from Istria, claims: "Actually, you do not discuss Yugoslavia while you're living it... you start to discuss Yugoslavia only once it does not exist anymore" (62-HR-1977-F). Yet, communicative memory within the families constitutes only a fraction of our political socialization. What were the other factors constructing the Yugoslav childhoods of the last pioneers? As within Yugoslav diverse families the communicative memory flowing from the generation of their grandparents through the generation of their parents to the last pioneers, childhood political socialization in Yugoslavia was marked primarily by the, previously in-depth elaborated, lack of interethnic tensions and even basic ethno-national consciousness,

strongly embedding the diversity as a positive value, and encouraging nostalgic memories to transform into political reflections on pre-war Yugoslav times.

6.2 Living in the times “when people worked and lived”

But before the darker times, and outside of the most immediate family environment, how do the last pioneers continue to remember Yugoslavia? Political socialization takes place within the family but also outside, in school, through media and in society itself. Memories of the last pioneers are glimpses into their childhood, today trying to comprehend what it meant to grow up in Yugoslavia. Values we develop in early age can mark us for a lifetime. How did the last pioneers experience their pioneer days: were they influenced by the ideological teachings and teachers at their schools; were they becoming political subjects before the war erupted?

Yugoslav times were the times when it was simple for the last pioneers: “when people worked and lived” (46-HR-1982-F), as simply put by our left-wing NGO political activist from Slavonia. Growing up in Yugoslavia created shared memories; but also values, experiences, expectations and interpretations – all the elements that Jan Assmann considers essential for the creation of a common culture (Assmann, 2008). A common Yugoslav culture undoubtedly existed, and as many of the last pioneers, if not all, claim it still exists. Generational memory, as much as autobiographical memory, stems out of one’s culture and returns to complement it. Last pioneers’ memories represent one of the elements that keep the Yugoslav culture alive, even after the dissolution of the country. An idea still vivid within a society, through memories, remains one of the identity elements of that society and cannot be erased by a simple negation. Early impressions tend to coalesce into *a natural view of the world* (Mannheim, 1952, p. 298) and for the last pioneers, it was a Yugoslav world.

There is no doubt that coming-of-age in Yugoslav times left marks and deeply embedded certain values into the development of our last pioneers. The perception of the society around us, awakening at a young age, remains as a part of our identity throughout our lifetimes. For a left-wing activist from Croatia, it meant giving a sense to life: “Since the early age, you learn that it makes sense to create something and to work. It is extremely, extremely important”

(62-HR-1977-F); confirming to her narrative of how much the Yugoslav childhood influenced her political socialization and her political positionality today.

Yugoslav schools

School environment is an important element of childhood memories. It has been often said that teachers avoided the topic of Yugoslavia or in rare cases, emphasized the importance of antifascism and Yugoslavism. In the late 1980s, when the last pioneers went to school, in their memories school was not a *propaganda machine*, regardless of what has often been a discourse in anti-Yugoslav narratives.

But in the earlier times, what is today presented as propaganda, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in its programme declared prime values as following: "...New humanist qualities in relationships between people have to unavoidably flourish from such social and political relations. New social role of factories, cooperatives, communes, schools, social organizations and families consists in development of *the relations of honesty, trust, humanism, understanding, tolerance, cooperation and help*, in one word – people's sympathies and camaraderie between peoples" (League of Communists of Yugoslavia Programme, 1965, p. 44). The quoted segment could easily be imagined to be a programme or a policy paper from Council of Europe or another transnational organization working in the education field today. Even if those words were drafted more than 20 years before the last pioneers were born, it coincides with the symbolic overall framework of Yugoslav society, as the last pioneers remember it. The outlined values are reflected in the memories of the last pioneers and keep reappearing in their narratives. Undeniably they resonate as universal values, but in the memory narratives of Yugoslav last pioneers and in contrast with what are considered to be values of today's (post)Yugoslav societies, they are perceived as *Yugoslav values*.

In schools, collective Yugoslav identity, no matter if we see it as actively pursued by the Yugoslav regime or not, was promoted through solemn pioneer rituals and sermons. The last pioneers got their name by the pioneer organization. The last age-cohort who attended and became members of the Yugoslav pioneer organizations were indeed born in 1982, giving their solemn sermons in 1989. This moment has marked the identity of the generation in their childhood, by the importance of the event and its symbolic weight. It featured as the start of the "ideological and political socialization" and "the ritual of maturing" (Duda, 2015, p. 110). To become a pioneer meant to become a citizen, to become Yugoslav. The significance of this

“rite de passage” is reflected in the fact that the trope of pioneers is repeated throughout the narratives on Yugoslavia, in Yugoslav memories and media accounts of Yugoslav times, and even as a “costume” for (Yugonostalgic) parties. Beyond that, the pioneers’ values influenced the values of the last pioneers and to a certain extent, framed their memory on Yugoslavia. A number of times in our interviews, the respondents would say that it would make them happy to see their children growing up within the same value framework, while emphasizing its universality. As the pioneer’s sermon changed throughout the Yugoslav history the last known version – even if it is unclear if it has been used in the same form in all schools across Yugoslavia (ibid., p. 133) - was as follows:

“Today when I become a pioneer,

I give a solemn pioneer word:

that I will study and work diligently,

and I will be a good friend;

that I will love our self-managing country,

Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia;

that I will promote brotherhood and unity,

and ideas for which Tito has fought;

that I will respect all people of the world

who want freedom and peace!”⁴²

⁴²Author's translation from Serbo-Croatian original: „Danas kada postajem pionir, dajem časnu pionirsku riječ: da ću marljivo učiti i raditi i biti dobar drug; da ću voljeti našu samoupravnu domovinu, Socijalističku Federativnu Republiku Jugoslaviju; da ću razvijati bratstvo i jedinstvo i ideje za koje se borio Tito; da ću cijeniti sve ljude svijeta koji žele slobodu i mir!”

Not once would my respondents make a remark that there is something wrong with promising to study and work hard, be a good friend, respect people and promote peace and solidarity. Indeed, when discussing the value framework of Yugoslavia, these were the values resurfacing in their memory.

Such rituals gave value to the last pioneers, to their becoming of citizens and becoming of Yugoslavs. In Split, a left-wing political party member frames politically what it meant for her: “If anything meant to me to be a pioneer then, it meant to me to be a part of a community that goes forward” (45-HR-1974-F). Most repeated associations that come into the last pioneers' memory when asked about becoming a pioneer were that it was an event that was: important, solemn, and celebratory. Not a single interviewee had negative memories on becoming or being a pioneer; a large majority of the interviewees connected the images of becoming a pioneer with highly positive feelings, or at worst, neutral ones. A most often reaction of the interviewees, when the segment of the interview on the pioneers would start, has been an attempt to remember and recite the pioneers' sermon, largely with success. Some of the interviewees would bring memorabilia (see Figure 6.2) with them to the interview, a pioneer book or a photo of them being a pioneer, inspired by the upcoming interview. One could rightfully ask how much of nostalgia has in effect been woken up by the interview itself. We must not shy away from acknowledging that the ones who agreed to tell their (post)Yugoslav memories of the last pioneers are the ones who wish to remember.

Figure 6.2 Pioneer schoolbook from Slovenia - memorabilia of an interviewee from Koper



Source: Author's archive, 2017

As most of the last pioneers themselves would claim, their memories are strongly influenced by the memories of their parents and they are well aware that their image of Yugoslavia is the one that has been mediated many times, through many filters: through their closest surroundings; through their school environments; changing textbooks and confused (history) teachers; and through revisionist political discourses and media. Their memory narratives were created in a continuous “dialectical articulation” (Mannheim, 1952, p. 298), between appropriated memories and personally acquired memories (ibid., p. 296). Their differentiating experiences influenced their construction into separate generation units but still within one single generation – the generation of the last pioneers.

The solemn day of becoming a pioneer was understood as an obligatory part of the school routine, compared to habitual practices like Christmas, yet felt as an initiation event. For some of the last pioneers it was even a little bit annoying – a couple of female interviewees expressed their discontent of being obliged to wear a skirt. Nonetheless, not a single interviewee forgot the event. It is important to note here that it was an event that was always photo documented and found its place in family albums. Transforming a memory into a material object of memory keeps our life events from being forgotten, even if it could be only

a memory of the photograph itself. Our senses keep the memories alive, and are being transmitted as the family narratives of one's becoming. On all sides of the political spectrum, in all three countries, pioneer identity was considered *natural*. Snowballing to a HDZ Member of Parliament, sitting in the parliament café once again, seemingly happy to be interviewed but with a bit of a rush due to his many obligations, our interviewee makes yet another *confession* even if openly anti-Yugoslav: „Whatever I think about that country [today], it was an important part of the identity” (64-HR-1983-M). As he hides his musical taste, we are confronted again with an ambivalent statement of a political actor which might not be repeated in a public discourse. Being a pioneer, just as being a Yugoslav child, marked the last pioneers' political identities for life; whether in more private or public spheres.

School remained an important actor of political socialization of the last pioneers connecting the Pioneer Alliance with pioneers and their parents (Duda, 2015, p. 21), even if it was less powerful in transferring value frameworks than the family environment. The Pioneer Alliance of Yugoslavia was officially founded in 1942 in Bihać and, interestingly enough, lasted the longest in Slovenia and Croatia (Duda, 2015). The acronym of the word PIONEER was made of values that were supposed to make one a pioneer (in Serbo-Croatian language): fair, honest, courageous, progressive, tenacious and hard-working⁴³. As Yugoslavia was withering away so were the activities and importance of the Pioneer Alliance, including the diminishment of their property. From 99 summer camps that existed in 1950s, by the 1980s only 10 pioneer summer camps have remained (ibid., p. 192). In 1990, all existing Pioneer Alliances at the Yugoslav and republics' level were abolished. While Ildiko Erdei claims that it was the main task of the Pioneer Alliance to produce *happy children of socialism* (Erdei, 2004), by the 1980s it would be misleading to give such a prominent role to the Alliance. The ideological apparatus of Yugoslav communists in the times when the last pioneers were growing up was already on decline, if ever such a true intention existed and/or was successfully implemented. But indeed, childhood memories of the last pioneers confirm that they were happy.⁴⁴

⁴³ PIONIR meant „pošten, iskren, odvažan, napredan, istrajan i radan“ (author's translation into English),

⁴⁴ A documentary film, directed by Igor Mirković and produced by Rajko Grlić, was released in 2003 in Croatia under the title “Happy child (Sretno dijete)” depicting late 1970s and early 1980s authors' adolescence in

Beyond the event of becoming and being a pioneer, within the families and the schools, the childhoods of the last pioneers were influenced by many various factors which remained important to their sense of identity today. The diversity of the families, as we have seen in the previous sub-chapter, played a role in the development of a sense of what it meant, and what it means, to be a Yugoslav. Seeing diversity at home spilled over into seeing diversity at school. Our left-wing political party member, originally from Zagreb but setting our interview in Split, depicted: „But I think... that is how... if you learn to write two alphabets⁴⁵... from the beginning, you see your own identity differently, than if you learn only one“ (45-HR-1974-F). Her insights, rich with analytical capacities of a social scientist, kept returning to the importance of values more than anything else. Belonging to the “older” group of the generation of the last pioneers, she has spent longer time in socialist Yugoslavia and her political socialization in her narrative seems to have left more entrenched traces.

Understanding the importance of basic societal values being learned at such a young age remains an important element of the last pioneers’ narratives. For those who are parents today, particularly female interviewees, this is being expressed through their hope to instill those same values with their own children. As they remember their childhood being stress-free, they regret that their children might not experience it in the same way, given the tensions that today’s (post)Yugoslav societies produce and they, themselves, bring home to their children. Rocking her baby in Osijek sun, the Catholic conservative activist further explains: „I believe that some of those values, even so to say values of communism, could be redefined and actually be... I don’t know how it went with the acronym pioneer...fair, honest, loyal, progressive, hard-working... Those are all universal values. I raise my children in the same manner... and they don’t even know who the pioneers were. I believe that all of those values are still much needed. And I think that today, those values vanished...” (58-HR-1975-F). Despite of having had family history of exile and a politically “mixed” family, since her childhood being religious and in the meantime, entered disenchantment with the Catholic church today, our interviewee confirms the universality of the pioneer values.

Happy Yugoslav childhoods

Yugoslavia, colored by the alternative music and cultural scene that was on the rise at the times. The film depicts the Yugoslav times just as the last pioneers were being born,

⁴⁵ In schools during their Serbo-Croatian language classes, children were taught both Latinic and Cyrillic alphabet,

After seeing their childhoods in their families and on their playgrounds, after they became the pioneers, how did the school and wider environments influence them? In the same cafe in Zagreb, where Members of Parliament would most often schedule our interviews, in a long interview, the independent MP, explains why his memories on the childhood for the last pioneers means recalling a general atmosphere of safety and freedom: „That childhood was connected to school, family and safety in public space. We were not concerned that anyone will harm us. The world was ours. And it seems to me that (today) Yugoslavia is perceived as a country of lack of freedom, but it did not develop enmity within. There were foreign enemies, but in my childhood inner enemies were already silenced.“ (61-HR-1977-M). The liberty of political actors of sharing their personal life histories in public spaces, as much as the trust put in me as a PhD researcher, never ceased to impress. This openness, among its many possible reinterpretations, also led me to believe of the longing to talk about Yugoslavia, from a political frame but far away from daily politics. Regardless of the actual situation in Yugoslavia at the end of the 1980s, for the last pioneers their childhoods are remembered as happy childhoods, uninhibited from the restrictions they feel from today’s world.

Looking at the whole of the interviewees, when asked about their main associations on their (Yugoslav) childhood, the last pioneers would most often repeat general feelings when reminiscing childhood: easiness and carelessness; safety; happiness, optimism and solidarity.

Sense of carelessness and safety are the two main elements marking last pioneers' childhoods as recurring themes in almost all of the interviews. While mainstream narratives depict Yugoslav times as times of oppression and hardship, for the last pioneers the interviews were a possibility to tell their life story, as they remember it. Reconstituting life histories of the last pioneers gave „voice to what would otherwise remain voiceless, even if not traceless“ (Connerton, 1989, p. 18): a different history of socialist Yugoslavia, in the public space.

Aside from the main emotional associations, other associations arise, including material ones, objects of nostalgia, events and lieux de souvenir (Assmann, 2011). As any other childhood, the childhoods of the last pioneers’ images are abundant with bicycles, cartoons and chocolate, music and comic books and vacation homes. As all extracurricular activities (choir, painting, etc) were free of charge and organized in schools, they were accessible for all children, what some of the last pioneers have underlined, again in contrast with today’s

commercialization of the school and extracurricular activities. Participation in these activities further awakes memories like traveling and school exchanges; as much as Yugoslav national holidays like the 25th of May⁴⁶, 29th of November⁴⁷ or the day when Tito died, the 4th of May. A minute of silence on the 4th of May, taking place throughout Yugoslavia, remained vivid in the memories of the last pioneers. Some of them recall their participation in the Yugoslav-wide school competition under the name 'On Tito's revolutionary paths' (Titovim stazama revolucije). Religious holidays are remembered as events bringing together family, friends and neighbors – regardless of their religious identification and differences. Sport events and tournaments are a recurring topic – but only among the male interviewees.

Yugoslav space

Memories sometimes included traveling to other socialist countries, seeing different socialist worlds and appreciating more the Yugoslav hybrid reality. At the Adriatic Sea, the strongest symbol of (post)Yugoslav memory narratives, under the palm trees, a left-wing political activist, close to a small political party, remembers her holiday in the Czech Republic, at the time communist Czechoslovakia (46-HR-1982-F):

...there was a queue in front of a pastry shop, million people waiting for some cakes... We never had that. Then you come to a great bar, they only have beer. And then you see people nicely dressed, taking home 5 liters of beer, serious alcoholics... Some real fundamental misery and pain, to make your heart clench. For me it was the first time in my life to see a man dig down a garbage bin. And I was coming from Yugoslavia, I had my eyes wide open, it was the first time I've seen such a thing in my life.

A sense of uniqueness of the Yugoslav system, in regards to other communist countries of the Cold War times, does not appear often in the narratives of the last pioneers. In the times when they were growing up, travels were taking place either within Yugoslavia itself, either in the Western part of the world, mostly European neighboring countries like Austria and Italy. Any gaze of comparison or desire was rather turned towards the West, than towards the East.

In spatial terms, associations on Yugoslavia are the beauty and the size of the country – notably compared to the last pioneers' claustrophobic sense of smallness of today's (post)Yugoslav states. The sentiment of Yugoslav identity is indeed linked to the travels

⁴⁶ Day of Youth (unofficial Tito's birthday),

⁴⁷ Republic Day,

throughout the country – we can notice a higher sense of attachment among the interviewees that were traveling more often throughout the country, in addition to the quality of family and friendship connections throughout the Yugoslav space. Almost all of the last pioneers remember vividly of strong friendships their parents shared with people throughout Yugoslavia. These friendships were an important part of Yugoslav childhoods, and yet today - as an interviewee said: „And today, those people need a visa to come here“ (46-HR-1982-F). Dissolution of Yugoslavia built borders, between once unique space and between peoples. Remembering Yugoslavia for the last pioneers means remembering the width of their childhood experiences and the width of diversity that once existed – and a world without borders.

The Adriatic Sea was the most common place of gathering and meeting point of people from all Yugoslav republics, especially during the summer holidays. Associating pleasant memories of holidays, today inaccessible to many, often leads to pleasant memories of people from other republics, other children they would meet, play with and fall in love with.

Memories of love (re)appear also in the times after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, directly expressed by the last pioneers as a resistance strategy, uncovering their political identities. A couple of female interviewees evoked how during and after the war they would be continuously falling in love with people coming from “enemy” lines, and through laughter in their narratives, they would reflect on the significance of such obviously recurring choices. For them today, it seems like it was a subconscious but an intentional attempt, a certain politics of love; to state in their teenage years that they do not believe in the imposed nationalisms and that love is more important than hatred.

Living in Croatia also means having an insight into the tourism industry of the Yugoslav times and the tourism industry of today. The interviewees from Croatia often intertwined their memories on summer holidays in Yugoslavia with comparisons of the two different approaches to tourism, largely recognizing the benefits of Yugoslav tourism to the mass neoliberal tourism of today’s Croatia. Safety, one of the main associations on Yugoslav childhood, reappears in the memories on traveling throughout Yugoslavia – giving examples of how one could travel alone even as a child, or that help was to be found everywhere – if you would get a flat tire, you would be certain that people will help you immediately.

Yugoslav women’s emancipation

A sense of freedom was almost unanimously associated by female interviewees, further enlightening that the post-war societies of (post)Yugoslav space have undergone a re-patriarchalization and thus diminished the sense of everyday safety for women. Positive effects of emancipation in communist eras are not solely a Yugoslav phenomenon but have been noted in other post-socialist countries (Ghodsee, 2004). Certainly women's freedom herewith did not only refer to girl's sense of freedom; but the atmosphere of growing up also surrounded with strong women who were given a chance to emancipate, as it was often evoked.

Facing nostalgia of anti-Yugoslavs

Whatever the first association on their childhoods is, it is always linked to something missing today, in our present times. While he is having that "beer with a Serbian, from Belgrade!", a right-wing interviewee in Ljubljana, faces his dissonances: „But then we... then we were very, very....it was very nice for us. OK, again that is a little bit of nostalgia... I was very sick; I had asthma...so we bought a house on Cres⁴⁸, because of the air... But then it was cheap, then you could get a house very cheaply..." (8-SLO-1978-M). Making long pauses, and in the middle of the sentence distancing from factual data which sheds a positive light onto his Yugoslav childhood – marking it as Yugonostalgia, he seems at unease and almost rushes to a next topic. It can be seen here how today's anti-Yugoslav discourses name any positive memories as nostalgia. The approach to post-socialist memories that aims to infantilize post-socialist citizens through depicting only *nostalgic* or *traumatic* memories of socialist times provides a highly ideologized substitute of what in the Western world would simply be called history and memory. Without negating nostalgic memories to exist and constitute part of our life narratives – everywhere in the world - , exclusive focusing on the *nostalgic* serves the purpose of obfuscating the mere historical existence of socialist societies in the past and the (post)socialist citizens in the present.

When discussing Yugoslav childhood memories with right-wing activists and conservatives, there is always a need to distance from a positive outlook on Yugoslavia, in an overall context. Yet, it does not prevent them from pointing out the values they consider today as important and relevant, for example, a strong and functioning state administration and a sense

⁴⁸ An island in the Adriatic sea, today in Croatia,

of national pride are two elements that seem recurring in their narratives. On the right-wing side of the political spectrum, additional positive associations were discipline and order in the country; economic power and the international status of Yugoslavia – notably among non-aligned countries; and also sometimes overall international recognition and status of the country.

The concept of a normal life

Ivana Spasić explains the nostalgic memories on Yugoslav childhood or, in particular, Yugoslav times – “times before” (Jansen, 2005, p. 13), as „only a place of lost normal life“ (Spasić, 2003, p. 100). While Jansen does not engage in defining a ‘normal life’, Spasić explains it as „material well-being; peace; open borders and international recognition of the country and its citizens; stability of the institutions and basic social frameworks“ (ibid., p. 101). In another café in the center of Kragujevac, a trade union activist coming from a “mixed” marriage, explained his understanding of a ‘normal life’: „Everything is nice, everything is normal, you work, you earn money, you have a good time, you have a future, you have a vision of a future, you plan a family“ (29-SR-1975-M). Looking at our interviewee’s narrative and Spasić’s definition, all of the evoked categories defining the concept of a ‘normal life’ are indeed to be considered as political categories. Socio-economic policies are key aspects of politics, as much as international policies and basic institutional political framework and a regime of a specific country. Taken as a self-evident and a normative concept, normality is essentially defined by our understanding of what constitutes a normal life: a mono-ethnic state or a multi-ethnic state; a capitalist or a socialist regime; etc. Being able to find employment and to have a decent working wage, live in peace and prosperity and being able to plan a future constitute essential elements of a ‘normal life’ – a life one chooses through the choices in the political field, through specific ideological frameworks and through one’s own political positionality. Separating the notion of a ‘normal life’ from politics would actually leave politics void of any actual meaning, except for bare power struggle between the political elites – and yet for those political elites, it would remain their own struggle of preserving their concept of ‘normal life’. One cannot imagine ‘normality’ without a possibility of a future, and as such politics that can provide for that future.

Even more so, in the memory of the last pioneers we note basic traditional political categories and political values. Some of the interviewees have emphasized the anti-racist values being taught in school; then compared with the rise of racist values in today's respective (post)Yugoslav societies. Remembering Yugoslav childhood in the narratives of the last pioneers would often invite terms as “unreal”; “unimaginable”; “a dream”. These discursive choices depict the impossibility of the present moment to achieve what was once considered ‘normal’ – ‘normal’ as a progressive modern society. Or in more concrete definition of a center political party member which I met in Kragujevac, on a terrace of the biggest hotel in town built in socialist times and today privatized and renovated, while remaining a popular café; despite his many critiques towards the Yugoslav socialist system, succinctly put: „The Yugoslav dream: 8 hours of work, 8 hours of culture, and 8 hours of sleep“ (28-SR-M-1977).

Tanja Petrović's interviewees, a different generation – the workers of Jagodina Cable Factory in Serbia during Yugoslav times, express their nostalgic narratives around their memories of being active „actors of modernization“ (Petrović, 2010, p. 21); active political subjects. In my research, the last pioneers recognize the values that were instilled in them when they were kids, and see themselves as some of them would call themselves - „the children of socialism“.

What it means when they say “the children of socialism”? What are the key values the last pioneers identify as values that the children of socialism acquired during their political socialization into the Yugoslav society? Throughout the interviews, the most salient values could be divided as:

- societal values: solidarity (togetherness, collectivism, camaraderie); anti-materialism; family values; and meritocracy.
- individual values: modesty; freedom (safety through the trope of ‘sleeping on the bench in a park’); and critical thinking.
- public policy values: social equality and social justice (welfare state, access to health care, access to education, right to public housing); brotherhood and unity (anti-nationalism); antifascism; and women's emancipation.

All those values together constitute what the last pioneers comprehend as their childhood learned values living in Yugoslav times.

Normality for the last pioneers consists of the above enumerated values; that encompass various notions among which, for example, that there were no homeless people in Yugoslavia (46-HR-1982-F). For another interviewee, normality in the framework of his childhood also related to social equality and socialist politics, as evoked by a self-identified communist-political activist in Serbia, giving focus on the issue most important to his political positionality of today: „We lived in a country where the political subject was the working people...in a country where it was proscribed that a director has a more than a couple of times bigger salary than a cleaning lady“ (37-SR-1977-M). Values embedded within the last pioneers' upbringing bear consequences till today, making the link between his memory narrative and his political outlook today, he continues: „But I am simply not used to that... I am not used to misery and poverty of the majority, I am not used to exploitation, I am not used to competition. I mean, I really am not used to competition. I feel disgusting whenever I have to compete with someone for something“ (37-SR-1977-M). Being a refugee once, having had the opportunity to live in the United States, he returned to Serbia understanding how the childhood values have made him unprepared for the ideological reality of today's world.

Ideas inherited from Yugoslav times, such as workers' self-management, interethnic solidarity and women's struggles for emancipation, have already been identified in research as „counter-memory by local activists in different post-Yugoslav states, against new hegemonic national narratives centered on ethnic homogeneity and based on the rehabilitation of anti-communist collaborationist forces“ (Bonfiglioli, 2016). When reflecting on the ideological importance of Yugoslavia for their own coming-of-age, socialism appears as a value on its own. For left-wing activists, among many values from Yugoslav times, the idea of the peoples establishing a socialist system by themselves and the successful revolutionary struggle is regularly evoked. The memory narrative on their early political socialization, in families, as much as in schools and wider society, is structured by their political positionality today on one side, but on the other side, their political identities are perceived as being strongly embedded in socialist Yugoslav times. The left-wing last pioneers, regardless of their future outlooks on possibilities of a new Yugoslavia or their critical outlooks on the Yugoslav regime, strongly believe their political identity today emerged as a result of their Yugoslav childhoods and their activism was a response to the ethno-nationalisms of the Yugoslav dissolution and the neoliberal policies of the (post)Yugoslav transitions.

Even when normality is being used as a term to describe their childhood, the last pioneers define it through political categories. Access to education and social mobility, which the last pioneers have witnessed in their parents' generation, along with access to health care and anti-consumerism as an underlying societal value remain recurring themes in the last pioneers' narratives.

As a generationally transmitted narrative, the fact that their parents could provide them with summer vacations, even with one salary in a household, every summer, remains an unattained dream of today. Yugoslav parents of the last pioneers were able to fulfill all the basic needs of their children, and further encourage their potentials. The idea of 'having a chance' appeared more than once as a reference of what it meant to live in Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia is referred to as „a space in which you had a chance“ (23-SR-1975-F) or „Yugoslavia gave us all a chance. It simply seemed to me that in Yugoslavia you could be whatever you wanted, and that today you cannot be anything“ (59-HR-1977-F) – both reflections coming from the interviewees self-identifying as left-wing, yet of different sorts – atheist and Catholic, in Serbia and Croatia. The feeling of a possibility, of a future promised, strongly rests with the sense of equality, an equality in both positive and negative memories: „What was interesting for us as children... we were open... why were there no enormous material differences. We all went through the same collective cults, from pioneers to coffee coupons.... now, was it about the same chances, was it about the same limitations...“ (61-HR-1977-M). Even if remaining ambivalent towards establishing the “truth” on the Yugoslav past, our interviewee took the chance of the interview itself to think on the go – not providing final answers, but acknowledging the shared generational positionality. Chances or limitations, the sense of equality between all children, all ethno-national origins and all classes, is one of the key memories for the last pioneers.

Normality, comprehended as solidarity or equality, is also remembered as a possibility for the last pioneers' parents to own a house, to buy a summer house, to have a car, or even simply buy home appliances with one regular blue collar worker's salary. The promise of abundance in capitalism was never achieved, and the basic minimum of socialism today seems unachievable. Sentiment of safety often narrated as one of the key memories on Yugoslav times goes beyond the physical well-being – it also refers to the safety of a future. When discussing socio-economic conditions in their childhood, the last pioneers depict as follows:

“we had everything we needed”; “we did not miss anything”; “there was not much in abundance but there was enough of everything”; “there were less needs, but bigger satisfaction”; “you could not get rid of the postman, who was always bringing some money” etc. In each statement about how it was, there is at least one reflection on how it is today – in terms of what is lost.

‘Normality’ also comprehends the functionality of the state. Yugoslavia is considered to have been, regardless of all its fallacies and ambiguities, a functional state providing its citizens with basic needs and promoting important societal values. A just society represented also a moral society, in words of a self-identified center liberal interviewee who in general had a negative outlook on Yugoslav times and is a stark critic of nostalgic positive memories on Yugoslavia – yet she asserts: „It is a fact that then... in that Yugoslavia, you did not have people you were ashamed of. You did not have fake diplomas...” (32-SR-1979-F). The last pioneers juxtapose Yugoslavia with today’s (post)Yugoslav states – lexicon in their narratives refers to Yugoslavia most often as a “serious state” and to the (post)Yugoslav states as “periphery of the periphery”.

Rather than ‘normality’ alone, the memory narratives on Yugoslav childhood refer to the idea of *progress* – the idea they connect with the Yugoslav society and the idea of what is lacking within the (post)Yugoslav societies. One of the Croatian political actors in the memory on progress sees another element inseparable of the Yugoslav idea that she apprehended in her Yugoslav childhood: „The idea of progress and that there is more that connects us than what separates us“ (45-HR-1974-F). As our interviewee articulated, she believes that this was not something she absorbed from her family environment – but if anywhere – school and media environment. For all of the interviewees, it was in education and social mobility. For majority of the left-wing interviewees, it was an unimaginable development of Yugoslavia from the ashes of the World War Two, as asserted by a trade union activist in Central Serbia: „Yugoslavia practically from a demolished country turned into a highly developed country, and they [the political elites of the 1990s] have demolished a highly developed country“ (29-SR-1975-M). Having gone through a refugee experience, yet continuously keeping links with today’s *different* country – country of his birth, in the space of a left-wing collective, an activist in Belgrade, with both a bit of melancholy and bitterness, explains: „Now imagine, I don't know, when today they justify the backwardness and social misery in Bosnia and

Herzegovina with the wars of the 1990s... That war ended 22 years ago. Imagine if someone in 1967 justified any social problem with the WWII...It would be...people would look at him like a fool“ (39-SR-1976-M).

Certain political ideas, among all interviewees, are evoked when discussed the idea of progress - like the Non Aligned Movement, as a positive historical event – both from the political and economic significance for Yugoslavia. For left-wing political actors, some of the progressive Yugoslav ideas remained relevant for the political world of today, even if being renamed: the concept of self-contribution today as crowd funding; or self-management today as cooperatives. A number of interviewees did name the Yugoslav times as ‘Golden Age of the Balkans’ or ‘the peak of civilization in this region’, yet only three out of all 62 did call Yugoslavia utopia. Discourses which name any positive reflections and memories on Yugoslavia nostalgic suppose that there is an inherent perception of Yugoslavia as utopia. Clearly making a distinction between a utopia and a country that truly existed under the name of Yugoslavia, the narratives of the last pioneers avoid being nostalgic and as such remain rather political reflections on the past times and their life (hi)stories.

Nonetheless, the notion that anything good that exists today still in the (post)Yugoslav space is from Yugoslav times emerged more than once. As ambivalent as they might be towards their understanding of the Yugoslav past, the last pioneers acknowledge the failure of (post)Yugoslav states to provide ‘normality’. Across the whole of the political spectrum of our politically active last pioneers, the lack of social justice and public services, like health care, today serves as a comparison to Yugoslav state – and one in which the fact that (post)Yugoslav states obtained sovereignty and independence does not truly matter as much as their systems have largely collapsed.

Solidarity

Yet, the value of solidarity appears in all the interviews: regardless of the place of the interviewee on the political spectrum, country of origin and country of residence, class and gender. Solidarity is sometimes remembered as a second-hand memory of their parents “who truly felt that... the solidarity they lived in their everyday lives and everything that was built through that revolution, or actually that war... where they all felt it as a common struggle, common building of that country“ (30-SR-1980-F). Solidarity is also remembered as a value the last pioneers themselves acquired in Yugoslavia: „That minimum of solidarity, or that

inter-national solidarity, or actually faith that it is alright to cooperate with your neighbors... that you should take care of the ones who don't have... I definitely took it with me from there and it definitely has to do with Yugoslavia“ (62-HR-1977-F). The belief how Yugoslav childhood socialization has influenced their understanding of solidarity and cooperation, widespread among our interviewees, confirms again how (post)Yugoslav memory narratives are both shaped by and shape political positionality of the last pioneers.

The memory on becoming “the children of socialism”, in the narratives of the last pioneers, is always contrasted with the perception of today’s society of competition and individualism as I have previously underlined. The last pioneers express their fascination with the successes of the Yugoslav state, and the mere possibility of a society being truly built by the peoples. A left-wing political party member from Slovenia elaborates: „The state was built on solidarity, on self-contributions, on work, on working brigades, on... those were not artificial... those are not some artificial creations. That state was built by the peoples. That is not... that... would not have been possible if only ten people, some army commanders from Belgrade and decided, no...but the action was coming from the peoples. The action... the state was built bottom up. The action was by the peoples“ (13-SLO-1979-M).

Solidarity remains a shared important value for the interviewees from all political backgrounds. Across the street from the Saint Sava Temple in Belgrade, as priests come in and greet him, a right-wing Member of Parliament, originally from Vojvodina and with a brief experience of life abroad, points out: „I am not an adherent to that ideology, I am not a fan of that communist ideology... but on the issue of that sense of togetherness, it was much more paid attention to than today, in this system“ (24-SR-1975-M). The generational positionality has in points of values acquired in the socialist Yugoslav times transpired and bridged the confronted political positionalities. This conservative right-wing interviewee in Serbia shares his outlook with a left-wing workers’ rights activist in Slovenia, originally from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Without rejecting the communist ideology, he complements: : „Back then, everyone was a comrade. Maybe socialism taught me that there is friendship... that there is some trust between people that builds solidarity“ (17-SLO-1979-M).

Hope as a political category

What gives an opportunity to mainstream memory discourses to frame any positive reflections on Yugoslavia as nostalgic is its inherent abundance of hope. Hope colors the last pioneers’

idea of the past but also provides an opportunity for them to organize their understanding of the future (Assmann, 2008, p. 49). Hope indeed can be noticed throughout the memory narratives of the last pioneers, when telling their childhoods or when further reflecting on Yugoslavia (see Chapter 8). Memory as “a positive form of attachment” and “outside of the framework of grievance” through our narratives indeed can be forward looking, as outlined by Ann Rigney (Rigney, 2018, p. 370), defies the supposition that it does not serve as a potentiality for present political identities. Cultural and collective memories do hide an ideology behind, as Jan Assmann claims (Assmann, 2011). Following on Ernst Renan's understanding that defeats sometimes bear bigger significance than victories, the collective memory of the last pioneers weaves through their positive memories on Yugoslav childhood with the negative memories on the dissolution and the wars in Yugoslavia – yet both equally embedding into the Yugoslav narratives of their ideological positioning. Without our personal histories, we cannot create meaning of the social world that surrounds us and we cannot create a coherent political understanding of that same world. Memory narratives are decisive in our understanding of who we are as human beings and as political subjects.

Negative memories

The tropes of political repression of the Yugoslav socialist regime, or its most common emblems like Goli Otok or Bleiburg, do not appear in the last pioneers' memories on their childhood or families. Unless there was a personal example – in a couple of cases like in the one where two family members were part of Ustasha diaspora in Germany – these narratives are seldom even mentioned. The only times these issues are raised and discussed are in relation to contemporary memory politics (see Chapter 7).

Most of the right-wing and liberal interviewees, along with some of the left-wing interviewees, felt compelled to underline that they do not agree with the Yugoslav communist regime. Yet the expression of this disagreement would always be accompanied by ‘however’. And with ‘however’, a series of positive memories would follow or the interviewee would stress that today the repression in Yugoslav times seems justified, in comparison to the progress Yugoslavia made within the span of few short decades. The notion of the verbal delict, as an expression of communist repression, is often accompanied with a justification that it was largely directed towards hate speech and in those cases, justified. There is no

denial among the last pioneers that there was little to no democracy, in terms in which we understand a democratic society today, but always mirrored with the progress achieved.

The negative narratives on Yugoslav times were continuously compared with present times, as much as the positive ones, and always counterbalanced with perspectives trying to discern both the positive and the negative elements. The only decisive negative outlook on Yugoslav values was given by a far right-wing Member of Parliament from Croatia, claiming that Yugoslav society was a society without values because “once you distance yourself from the church, from God...there are no true values“ (63-HR-1974-M). The same interviewee did share a number of positive memories on his Yugoslav childhood, yet stayed true to the main ideological position he represents today in the political world.

The political repression is not forgotten, yet it is contextualized and understood in a larger framework of historical events and circumstances. There is no denial by the last pioneers that nationalist tendencies existed throughout the Yugoslav history and some were violently calling for the regime change and the dissolution of the country. Continuing her profound sociological analysis through her memory narrative, one of our interviewees in Croatia sums her reflections: „And all that repression, Goli otok and everything else that is being talked about, it really seems banal to me, in comparison to what was obviously needed to achieve with such repression. Now when I see what was boiling under the surface all the time“ (45-HR-1974-F).

The role of individuals in collective memory studies has been underlined more than once (Kansteiner, 2002; Vučković Juroš, 2010; Confino, 2011 etc.). The interactionist model of collective memories explains the influence of various intersections of different levels of institutionalized narratives influencing the individual narratives (Vučković Juroš, 2010, p.87). Such narrated and re-narrated memories define and are both defined with our generational and political positionality. If we assume political actors are more active mnemonic subjects in the memory struggles, understanding the creation of their memory narratives can help us further discern the ambivalences of mainstream discourses, as well as the depth of relational structures between the memory narratives and generational and political positionality.

The last pioneers remember the development of the country through transmitted memories of their parents who were low qualified workers and could afford summer vacations, while they

themselves today could be university professors and not in a position to afford a vacation. Discursive negation and dismissal of such positive reflections on Yugoslav times are the key problem in understanding so-called Yugonostalgia. Some of the last pioneers do call upon a different approach in the growing research field on Yugoslav times. Continuing the exchange with our previously quoted interviewee, she uncovers her understanding of the ideological interplays between public discourses, history and the potentiality of memory narratives and history to incite present political demands (45-HR-1974-F):

... I would like if five people in Croatia would understand that once there were standards in urbanism. That a kindergarten was built according to population numbers. It is much more valuable to understand this, than to lament over Tito's role on the 8th congress there and there. And I think that mostly historians lose themselves on such analyses, and that most people find it boring, especially young people find it boring. But we should show them that free access to healthcare and free access to education are not... I worked with some students, and they see it as anachronistic and unsustainable. They've learned that it's unsustainable. And then it is shown to them on the example of Western social-democracies that it is sustainable and you have to show it to them with examples from outside. And if you tell them through the example of Yugoslavia, then every kid already in high school will highlight that Yugoslavia was in debt, so that is why it could have free healthcare.

More than once the issue of discussing left-wing politics in Croatia has been approached through examples from Western Marxist and social-democratic traditions instead of looking into one's own history, the history of Yugoslavia (see Chapter 8).

Whose are our memories – reflexivity of the last pioneers

Regardless of their political positionality, our interviewees provide a large number of very different reflections on the true role of Yugoslav socialization; even if left-wing last pioneers are more prone to connect their current political reflections upon the fact that they have experienced the socialist Yugoslav childhoods. It is important to note that the capacity to recognize ambivalence in the Yugoslav past is accompanied by a capacity to recognize potential distortions of one's own memory among the last pioneers. A third of the last pioneers tend to question their memories, aware how much everything that followed and what they have become today has influenced their reinterpretations of their own past. Throughout their life narratives, they keep reflecting upon their answers, their memories, and their own identity, while (almost) always cheerfully appropriating the identity of the last pioneers.

For many, becoming a pioneer represented an opportunity, for what it seemed to them at this young age, to have their voice be heard in the society and being part of a community, a

Yugoslav community. Self-identified libertarian, a Member of Parliament in Serbia, once a refugee from Bosnia and Herzegovina, arrived to the interview seemingly annoyed. It was the only interview which was held in a less pleasant tone. My assumption was that his parliamentary group asked him to do the interview and he was not overly enthusiastic about it. In a café near the parliament in Belgrade, he was strongly trying to dismiss any positive value on the Yugoslav past, claiming his own *dissidence* against the socialist regime from his early youth. Part of this narrative was to dismiss the possibility of children's active understanding of the political world: „Generally, when you are a kid, you would say your vows to anyone: to Mussolini, to Vučić, to Saša Janković, I don't know, Theresa May, I mean there is no difference“ (25-SR-1976-M). As meaning of events is given in our personal narratives challenging and changing our overall mnemonic framework, here we can see how „editing out those aspects of themselves which seemingly 'contradict' the self-image they are currently trying to establish and sustain“ (Misztal, 2010, p. 87) works. All the „justifications“ and immediate discursive additions trying to *explain* a positive Yugoslav narrative were systemically given in the aim as not to contradict the contemporary political ideology of the interviewee; especially in the cases of adherence to the mainstream revisionist anti-Yugoslav narratives. As we change our views of the world, we rewrite our histories, even personal ones.

Understanding narratives as „selective accounts with beginning and endings, constructed to create meanings, interpret reality, organize events in time, establish coherence and continuity, construct identities, enable social action, and to construct the world and its moral and social order for its order“ (Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2011, p. 376), elements and values that form part of the Yugoslav childhood narratives of the last pioneers have been selectively chosen to interpret the Yugoslav society. The positive categories do not necessarily contradict negative categories and depict a true capacity of political subjects to discern the complexities and ambiguities of social reality. Framing of certain events, as necessary in memory narratives, indicates the framing of the social world of the last pioneers. If there was a special event marking their childhood, the last pioneers will create their childhood story around that event or the event will obfuscate other memories: if they are an economist today, they will focus on the economic aspects of their childhood; a death of a parent might erase other childhood memories etc. But throughout the interviews in all three countries, the main recurring sentiment was happiness, even if sometimes through their ideological lens of today, they would add that this is a sentiment following all childhoods, not just the Yugoslav one.

Rarely discussed today, the identity ruptures that took place in their young age, for the last pioneers emphasized their distance towards Yugoslav times; having difficulties making a link between their Yugoslav childhoods, war adolescences and ‘transitional’ adulthoods. As the interviewees were highly keen and open towards their participation in the research, continuously reflecting on the experience of the interview itself during the interview, for many – if not all – it was indeed the first time that they were given such an opportunity, not only to share their life narratives, but to make this connection between (hi)stories of their lives still lingering disconnected.

With the economic crisis and as the dissolution of Yugoslavia was starting in 1990, the atmosphere changed. The last pioneers remember the nationalist and anti-Yugoslav pressure that started appearing in their school environments and most notably if their father’s workplace was within the Yugoslav People’s Army. The pressures are not remembered equally throughout the three countries, yet they do appear in both Slovenia and Croatia, the strongest being felt in Croatia.

As much as this was noticeable already for children or young adolescents, the general atmosphere did not convey the impression that there will be a war – according to the last pioneers, no one believed that there would be one. With the arrival of refugee children or sometimes astonishing changes of dialect being imposed in schools or direct discrimination on the basis of ethno-nationality or above mentioned father’s profession, the last pioneers started discovering their new imposed identities primarily in schools. Looking back at their childhoods, the last pioneers describe Yugoslavia as a dream from which they were brutally awoken.

The childhoods of the last pioneers in their memories remain as a long series of happy and safe moments that were viciously stopped *just when they were supposed to have the most fun*. The last pioneers witnessed the end of their childhood and the end of Yugoslavia – overnight. The memory on a harsh rupture constitutes one of the key elements of life narratives of the last pioneers, one of the backbones of their cultural memory understood as “an encompassing term for functional frameworks that appear as inventing tradition, relationship towards the past and political identity, and imagination” (Assmann, 2008, p. 27). After safety and happiness, came a rupture that marked (post)Yugoslav memory narratives.

7. *And then it was no more*

But I always do recognise my people. I recognise them at international airports, where they are more easily hidden, mixed up with others. I recognise them by a kind of twitch, by their eyes, by the way they glance shyly around them, and the way they try not to, by the way they check in their luggage, I recognise them even when they're traveling in the opposite direction, when they're well disguised in foreign clothes, and pretending, therefore, to be something else.

Dubravka Ugrešić, *The Culture of Lies: Antipolitical essays*, 1998, p. 18

Just as Ugrešić notes, no matter how much Yugoslav history is being rewritten and *pretending to be something else*, Yugoslavs always recognize each other. The last pioneers remember realizing that they were indeed the last pioneers, with melancholy. They search for seeds of awareness that the country was irretrievably falling apart, while mostly remembering fear and confusion. Reinterpreting their childhood today, a minority among them notes that they were aware that changes were taking place and that ever bigger changes were coming, without fully grasping the scope of events. When narrating their becoming of age and the rupture that took place in their Yugoslav childhoods, the word *overnight* finds its place in almost all interviews.

This chapter looks into the two main aspects of the dissolution of the Yugoslav identity of the last pioneers: how they remember the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the wars that ensued causing their identity discontinuities, and how they relate to the (post)Yugoslav nation building processes embedded in historical revisionism and anti-Yugoslav mainstream narratives. As Yugoslavia disintegrated, the (post)Yugoslav countries were hastily raising borders through violence and everyone started wondering where is The Border, separating Europe from the Balkans, a “synonym for the lack of civilization and backwardness” (Jezernik, 2007, p. 23). Racing to *return to Europe*, two major “collective turnover events” (Jansen, 2005, p. 12) had to take place: dismantling the communist regime and returning to/creating the homogenous nation states. As much as the experiences of these events largely differed from one to the other (post)Yugoslav republic, the memories on these events are not ethno-national. Anti-national “multitude of resistances” (ibid., p. 91) and nationalist reactionary discourses and politics are remembered and still alive across the (post)Yugoslav space. Borders change, open and close, yet they do not stop common identities, or memories, or shared cultures, or solidarity and unified struggles. As Viktor

Ivančić would summarize: “Who can be so stupid to say that Yugoslavia is dead just because it does not exist anymore?” (Perica & Velikonja, 2012, p. 239).

As Yugoslavia was “*dying*”, the last pioneers, when the war started in 1991, were between 9 and 15 years old. Whether the conflict lasted ‘only’ for ten days like in Slovenia, or altogether ended with the NATO intervention in Serbia in June 1999, for the whole of the last pioneers, Yugoslav wars constituted the largest part of their adolescence. The adolescence represents the period when we open towards wider influences on our political socialization, outside of our families and the most immediate environments like school, and we start trying to make sense of the world around us. Between 15 and 25 years of age are considered the most political ‘impressionable years’ (Grasso, 2016, p. 40). Our sense of self and our identities are questioned and strengthened, and we start (re)constructing the political views, borrowing from our surroundings and yet building our own. As the last pioneers tell how they remember this major event that created deep ruptures in their lives, they narrate their identities; changing regimes, changing contexts, changing countries, changing homes. These narratives continue to give us further insight into their political identities, as “what an individual or community choose to tell about themselves is intricately tied to how they construct their political identities” (Andrews, 2007, p. 11).

Early childhood political socialization where family memory narratives can play a stronger role, if remaining powerful tools for the whole of life and understanding of the past (Rosenzweig & Thelen 1998; Figes, 2008; Green, 2013 etc.); the last pioneers’ adolescent years, today re-narrated through their memory narratives, further give insight into how these narratives are told; what is said and what is omitted; and how they dialogue with their political identities today – as narratives serve to carve our identities (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). In an important work “The political life of children” (1986), Robert Coles claims how children and adolescents have the agency of understanding the political world around them and these impressions then further fuel their memory narratives today.

As the last pioneers try to comprehend the Yugoslav history, they refer only to the most common tropes: the Tito-Stalin break as an important date which made Yugoslavia independent and gave it a specific position in the communist world; the 1974 constitution as a breaking point and the key to understanding the dissolution, including the Croatian Spring protests in 1971; and Yugoslavia, being a leader of the Non Aligned Movement, but also a

buffer zone between the East and the West. I would claim that no idealized narratives have been created, neither on the country itself and its regime, nor its leaders.

7.1 Dissolution of Yugoslavia: 'and then the second part of history started'

Becoming Slovenes, Croats and Serbs

Ethno-nationality, in the memories of the last pioneers, started appearing as a relevant factor only moments before the dissolution and the wars – always raised as a topic in the interview only once the narrative on the dissolution would start. In the very late 1980s and early 1990, an interviewee in Slovenia evokes, Slovenian children in the kindergarten started using assigning negative and insulting meaning to the term “Bosnian”. An interviewee in Serbia remembers some ethno-national quarrels while serving the army in the same period. With the dissolution, the Yugoslav children were forced to “discover” if they were Serb, Bosniak, Slovene or Croat. In his organization’s space in the center of Ljubljana, with his daughter every once in a while joining us, a left-wing activist from Bosnia and Herzegovina, but living in Slovenia today shares: „Or me who became Bosnian overnight. And you come to Slovenia, and you need a visa, and you need something... to be honest, who stole my right, we are born in the same state. My ancestors died on Krško fighting against Germans and fascists. So maybe it is not by accident that I found myself here...I don't know how to explain it...” (17-SLO-1979-M).

Besides the peer pressure and overall media propaganda, the last pioneers witnessed ethno-national discrimination. Already in 1990, the creation of ethno-national tensions started appearing. As we sit in a boat café on river Drava, a left-wing NGO activist carefully reconstructs her childhood memories, and obviously not for the first time, and the narrative flows more naturally than with other interviewees, yet with the same sense of weight of memories. She recalls: “In my second grade, we were distributed small pieces of paper on which we were demanded to write down which religion are we. I remember it precisely...1990....” (57-HR-1982-F). Even if these ‘incidents’ were not taking place systematically throughout Yugoslavia nor within republics, more last pioneers remember similar events. Left-wing activist interviewee in Serbia, once a double refugee, while asserting

that his experiences from Mostar were much different than the ones from Zadar, reiterates: “In Zadar... it started... I don’t know, the teacher asked us all to stand up, say our name and surname, our father’s name and where is our father from... So, provocations...but that was already ’89, ’90 when it happened” (37-SR-1977-M) – showing the gradual emergence of the ethno-national tensions just at dawn of the war.

Once the war started, the situation further escalated. Besides the ethno-national identity, for many not a chosen but an assigned one, the pressure was rising on the ideological level as well – a Partisan family past in Croatia or a father working in the Yugoslav People’s Army in Slovenia could have been enough for children to experience discrimination and, to say the least, unpleasant consequences. A political party member from Slovenia tells the story of his father who was a border guard in JNA, at a small border crossing at the border with Austria. Coming from a “mixed” marriage, he continues to explain the confusion with severe consequences in the aftermath of the Ten Day War in Slovenia. When the Slovenian forces arrived to the barracks, the interviewee describes: “They asked him why didn’t you surrender...[he responded] Well whom to surrender to, nobody came for me..” (20-SLO-1981-M). And yet, his father was arrested for treason and ended up in prison for three months. Such radical ruptures in life narratives have influenced stronger emotional connections to the previous Yugoslav times and Yugoslav childhoods, among all interviewees who have experienced them. Nationalism was being violent not only towards different ethno-national groups, but also the same ones if they were considered not to adhere to the newly created identities and realities. For the majority of the last pioneers, the confusing times of their adolescence, besides creating a rupture in their life narratives, remained as a memory of imposed identities. These memories create the backbone of anti-nationalism; a building block of the Yugoslav identity.

Being from a “mixed” family produced further trauma. In Osijek, people were disappearing, without trace (57-HR-1982-F):

I remember well [the war], because I had such a family situation... it was very high risk... they came twice for my dad, to take him for an “informative talk”... these informative talks ended in Drava⁴⁹ and he was lucky, he managed to get out of it. The first time they came was at his workplace, so he did not want to go out, and he was not brutally taken away, but he

⁴⁹ River going through Osijek,

stayed at work. Second time they came was at home, but he was not at home and third time was, actually... We had this one raid at home, and I remember it vividly because I was there. I was in the toilet – in that moment when they arrived, I locked the door... and it was a big trauma. And it was literally a home raid, a real raid.

Details of traumatic events like the one narrated were rarely disclosed and exclusively by the left-wing interviewees. Such experiences by the center and right-wing interviewees would usually be framed through their present political positionality as an explanation for the impossibility of inter-ethnic common life, as their political identities interpret their memory narratives. When Mila Dragojević discusses in her work *Amoral Communities* (2019), she identifies two key elements that were key to inciting violence in Yugoslav wars: building borders and removal of moderates. In Osijek, Josip Reihl-Kir, chief of the police station since 1990, is a prime example – famous for his efforts to de-escalate the tensions and attempts at negotiation between the conflicted communities; Reihl-Kir was brutally murdered in 1991 by a declared pro-Ustasha with dual Australian-Croatian citizenship, convicted only in 2008 for the committed crimes. Within one same republic, the events and the level of pressure and violence differed, from region to region, from town to town, and sometimes from building to building. In Šibenik, in Dalmatia, another left-wing interviewee shares how his location influenced his experience, better understood with what he learned years later and through the meaning making process still ongoing even today (49-HR-1974-M):

And what was good with Šibenik, as opposed to other towns, there were no taking away of the citizens of Serbian ethno-nationality. It was also thanks to the then police captain who was very strict and he did not want to allow any... some lists were made... We did not take it lightly, but nobody was coming for us, as opposed to... I found about it all later when I started working in Zagreb and getting in touch with people from the whole of Croatia. Then I realized that it was happening and that we were lucky that it wasn't like that at home.

If there wasn't for the assassination of Josip Reihl-Kir, maybe the situation in Osijek would have been more similar to the one in Šibenik. It is today in Osijek, a city that has been emptied with the transitional impoverishment and emigration of the population once Croatia entered the EU, that we see "art installations" reminiscing the war (see Figure 7.1); a monument none of the interviewees in Osijek ever referred to as a *lieux de mémoire*.

Figure 7.1 “Osijek 27 June 1991 – 27 June 2011. On June 27, 1991 the tank of the great Serbian aggressor crashed the red Fiat that was placed in defiance in front of it at this intersection by our fellow citizen Branko Breškić. In memory of resistance, defiance and victory in the imposed war, this art installation has been erected by the citizens of the unconquered town of Osijek” (the text explaining the monument, N.A.)



Source: Author's archive, 2017

The feeling of being afraid of one's own assigned ethno-national group was shared throughout Yugoslavia. As hatred and nationalism were spreading during the war, the enemy was not only “the Other” in terms of ethno-national or religious categories. The enemy was anyone who opposed the perpetuation of violence. Becoming further agitated when reminiscing war memories, a left-wing activist in Novi Sad, remembers the war days in Sarajevo: “And so, now we were there Serbs, there were mostly Serbian children that stayed whom we hang out with, but there were Muslims too. And some Serbs were harassing them... there were Chetniks with skeleton heads, so they moved around and patrolled that Serbian Sarajevo. And that is a horrible situation... I was, for example, more afraid of them than [of the soldiers on the enemy side]” (30-SR-1980-F).

The complexity of the violent conflict in Yugoslavia is reflected in memory narratives of the last pioneers and provides further information for understanding this conflict beyond the

supposed ethno-national tensions. Aware of these complexities, the last pioneers developed the ambivalent stances towards the Yugoslav conflict and history, as will be discussed further.

Even if not a firsthand experience, continuing their meaning making of the war years, another interviewee from Croatia remembers (43-HR-1981-M):

I did not experience any problems. But there were... because I know some stories, from my cousins... a friend had a Serbian husband, from Serbian family but from Zagreb. He was fired for example and he left for Serbia. And then my cousin held a grudge against him because he went to Serbia during the war. That cousin is a right-winger and he told us honestly years later: listen, he was a bigger Zagrepčanin⁵⁰ than me; he spoke in full Zagreb dialect.⁵¹ He was fired just because he was a Serb. Well, wait, how can you judge him that he left for Serbia, when he was fired without any reason?

For almost all last pioneers, the first encounters with the nationalist discourses took place in their school environments. As in the last pioneers' memory narratives Yugoslavia was not truly discussed within families before the dissolution started, the school environment was the primary place where the last pioneers remember discovering their assigned ethno-nationality. After the summer of 1990, they would return to their schools to discover that Tito's portraits in the classrooms have vanished or have been replaced, the names of the schools have been changed, or even the language/dialect has been changed. The mother tongue became Serbian or Croatian in each respective republic, and in Slovenia, teaching of Serbo-Croatian language was abolished altogether. In Slovenia and Croatia, the Cyrillic alphabet disappeared from the curriculum. Laughing while remembering these abrupt and for children incomprehensible over night changes, a left-wing activist, originally from Zadar and today living in Zagreb, recalls: "And then I remember they told us we can no longer say *Zdravo*⁵², except if we want to say *Zdravo budi Marijo* and that in Croatian you say *Dobar dan*, and that *Zdravo* is Serbian" (52-HR-1982-F). In Slovenia, all references to Serbo-Croatian language became now solely to Croatian language.

⁵⁰ Citizen from Zagreb,

⁵¹ „Kajkao je“ – kajkavski is a dialect majoritarily used in the city of Zagreb,

⁵² Various greetings in Serbo-Croatian language for Hello/Good day. *Zdravo budi Marijo* has a strong Catholic religious conotation which explains why it was considered as the only acceptable form in Croatia,

Some of the last pioneers remember their teachers' warnings that they are a "lost generation" (60-HR-1983-M) or that their generation "does not have a future" (42-HR-1976-F), warnings whose full understanding they have grasped only today. In 1991, the atmosphere was changing and soon their childhood was to change abruptly. Today one of the most prominent political actors of the generation of the last pioneers, one of those who have shortly after the interview started gaining more importance in the daily political fields of their respective countries, lowers his voice once he mentions Yugoslavia. A Member of Parliament in Croatia, in the so often visited café near the parliament in Gornji Grad, tries to remember the first moments in his adolescence when he heard about the impending conflicts from (49-HR-1974-M):

And all of a sudden...[they said that] the school director will come to explain to us, the oldest pupils, what is going on. All of my professors, as much as I remember them, were on the Party⁵³ line, more or less....so he explained that certain events are taking place with the aim of dividing the peoples, as a consequence of bad governing of the Party... he explained that every Yugoslav republic had its own newspaper called Communist. Communist was a Party newspaper...he said that every republic published its own Communist, even the Yugoslav People's Army publishes its own... And that it was the source of problems...

From each republic creating their own Communist, soon enough each republic was creating their own nationalism. When asking the last pioneers to remember the dissolution of Yugoslavia and subsequent wars, predictably the most common associations were those of *difficult and troublesome times*. While in schools the teaching of history was transforming (see Subchapter 7.2), the last pioneers were attempting to understand the world around them. As they remember sometimes seeking answers from their families, leaving their homes as becoming refugees or seeing others leave, everything turned into an unknown, total chaos.

The last pioneers' memories on their adolescence are primarily linked to the dissolution and the conflicts. As much as their childhoods might have been 'just like anyone else's in the world', their adolescence certainly was not. It has been deeply marked by the end of socialist Yugoslavia. On one side, their teenage lives seemingly continued as usual: many are remembering concerts, parties and first loves, notably in Serbia or in the regions that were not directly impacted by the conflicts, like Istria in Croatia. Yet, everywhere they do remember the fear, for oneself and for their dear ones, and they do remember the atmosphere of a war.

⁵³ Communist Party, or more precisely the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, is often referred to simply as "the Party",

Our joyful far right-wing interviewee from the Dalmatian coast, recalls that, being already 15 at the time, the quest for understanding started among his peers and friends – and through a quarrel between friends: “... so there was a dispute, with all those boyish arguments... I heard it on the television, or in my family, that Yugoslavia was an artificial creation... my friend responded to me that marriage is also an artificial creation... And so we argued about it... we were aware that it was a heated discussion, and fierce and that we were actually fighting... So, as friends who grew up together, we were at one point fighting. In the end, it was an absurd situation” (63-HR-1974-M). Proud on his remaining childhood friendships through the dissolution and the war, in his narrative we can identify continuous attempts to reconcile his intimate closeness with those he would publicly disclaim as his political enemies.

Disrupted families

The war brought disruption to families. Women would more often than men follow their spouses, leading them to being dishonored by their families and close environments. As an interviewee recalls from his childhood, when his mother decided to follow his father to Serbia: „They started calling her *četnikuša*⁵⁴“ (37-SR-1977-M). The patriarchal line was always respected, and in my interviews it was not the mother who would bring a decision whether to leave their home or not. Once the wars started, decisions to leave were often instigated by direct ethno-national violence and threats, from unfriendly visits by unknown soldiers, insulting graffiti in the corridors of their building, or written signs on their surnames on the interphones of the buildings.

According to the last pioneers’ narratives, (some of) their parents overcame the WWII heritage of ethno-national tensions and were open to “mixed marriages” throughout Yugoslavia, but the dissolution of Yugoslavia brought back the complexity of mixed family structures. The war brought families into different armies, on different sides of the front line. As a political activist in Serbia, a refugee from Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a large, what she calls, Yugoslav family explains: „We have total madness, my father and his nephew – son of my father's sister – they have been on the front line on different sides“ (23-SR-1975-F).

⁵⁴ Četnik became a derogatory term for all Serbs, thus *četnikuša*, as a derogatory female form, was used in this case for the woman who decided to follow her husband to Serbia, regardless of her ethno-national identity,

As children were appropriating the mainstream discourses, in today's memory those disagreements seem absurd, even for the anti-Yugoslav perspectives of today. The memories encountered in my research support the sociological studies previously mentioned that have shown that there was an awareness of the bitter relations between the political elites of different Yugoslav republics, but they were not (yet) manifesting into ethno-national hatred between the populations.

If they remember the discussions on the topic, they remember arguments. With much humor and laughing, a left-wing activist from Dalmatia tells a story of her politically "mixed" family (52-HR-1982-F):

I remember that grandma found it outrageous that grandpa was voting for Račan⁵⁵ and against Croatia leaving Yugoslavia. And I remember that grandpa was very aggressive about his viewpoints. I didn't understand anything... just that they shouted and fought. I remember the topic of the argument, why it was important and I remember that I thought that grandpa was a Chetnik (laughter)... And I remember that once I came home from school and that... actually I remember that morning, before I went to school, grandma took off Tito's portrait that was above the television and put Tuđman's instead. When I came home... everything was smashed, it was clear that grandma and grandpa had a fight... And then later I found out it happened because of that portrait, because grandpa had a nervous breakdown when he saw Tuđman at home and that plates started flying around. He threw a plate into Tuđman, then she threw everything off the dining table... and they have had a horrible fight because of damn Tuđman. Then they found a compromise: Tuđman's portrait was never again put up on the walls; Tito's portrait came back to where it was; and next to him was then the Pope (laughter)... but then when grandpa died, unfortunately before Tuđman in 1997, then Tito was thrown out of the house and only the Pope stayed.

Following Gagnon's thesis (2004) that nationalism was rather instigated top down, than bottom up, the memories of the last pioneers support that claim. In Osijek, two interviewees believe that the war came first, and nationalism only followed. As one of them explains: "...but for me, personally, the times, when that situation [war] officially ended, were much more brutal... because then everything became normal....My family, friends, neighbors, all my surrounding... you see that people start behaving differently, that they started to accept or tolerate something that you know they wouldn't, and that it all became normal" (57-HR-1982-F). From the nostalgic normality of Yugoslav times, the new normality stands opposed – as a consequence of the dissolution of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav conflicts.

⁵⁵ Candidate of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia,

Yugoslav families, as described in Chapter 6, were often put on opposing sides of the conflict, as further explained by a left-wing political party member from Zagreb: “I have some cousins...their dad was a Serb, and mum a Croat. He was for example in the Croatian army, and his brother on the other side. There were some stories like that. There was a lot of ideological confusion about some things” (43-HR-1981-M). The war stirred up fear and confusion, creating the foundation for the Yugoslav ties to be torn. Many of the last pioneers witnessed themselves or remember stories that they would hear during the 1990s. A political party member from Croatia recalls: “We had at home some people from Mostar, architects... the man was telling us that his students shot at him, not by accident, but aiming at him as their professor...and then he asked the rhetorical question: Was I such a bad professor?” (45-HR-1974-F). And she continues:

Then, we had a friend who was a Serb and who is now living in Belgrade...who even, as a minor, helped the Croatian army in Dubrovnik... but anyway his house was burned down, as a Serbian [house] and his parents were driven away. He was at the time already at my place in Zagreb and I remember when he got the news that he does not have a house anymore in Dubrovnik... he went silent. He didn't speak for a year. De facto, his friends burned his house down...

Recalling the stories she heard from people from the war areas she hosted at her home in Zagreb, our interviewee further explains the fear the war brought up – aimed not at other ethno-national groups, but at the people who were leading the war, instigating the hatred among Yugoslav communities. She vividly recalls how she felt (45-HR-1974-F):

But I remember, when after Oluja⁵⁶, there was an army procession of Croat soldiers in the city. I will never forget it. I was on my street, in the center of Zagreb, and I felt extremely unpleasant and I remember that I turned my back towards the wall because I was afraid of them. I did not experience it as a celebration and a victory, but then, in 1995, I was afraid of them. That fear remained for a long time, because people walked around in uniforms for a truly long time.

Providing their insights into their life narratives, the memories of the last pioneers further distance the real life experiences from methodological nationalisms. Even glancing at the family structures, the entanglement of Yugoslav families across the (post)Yugoslav space, the migrations that took place, the inconsistencies between the nationality and the ethno-national self-identification or an imposed one, prove the wrongness of the approach which would be strictly comparative along the border lines of new (post)Yugoslav states.

⁵⁶ Operation Storm by the Croatian Army conducted in 1995,

Yugoslav families as previously explained as “mixed”, as they were on different levels, made it impossible for clear ethno-national identifications. For a war that was allegedly led on solely the basis of ethno-nationality, identity confusion produced further fear. Regardless of the institutional and regime outlooks, or the debates surrounding the so-called national question with the Party in Yugoslavia, or the lack of institutional Yugoslavism in socialist Yugoslavia, the reality on the ground produced complex identities, that were not only embedded in religion or ethno-nationality (see more in Chapter 8). As countries can be dissolved with declarations, treaties and international recognition, the “imagined communities” are much more difficult to dissolve overnight. If the European Union were to fall apart, it would still be difficult to imagine that no French or German citizens would continue to claim their European identity. As “imagined” Yugoslav identity was, equally “imagined” was any other ethno-national identity existing in Yugoslavia. Our interviewee in Serbia continues: “But in the war, people were becoming of a certain ethno-nationality even sometimes by chance... I could not accept it, on one side you feel some horror because those who are shooting at us are all of a sudden Muslims and Croats, and I am all of a sudden a Serb. Although I know that I am not really a Serb, but...” (30-SR-1980-F).

Overnight

The salience of the reference *overnight* in all of the interviewees was significant. The phrases used to depict the rupture were: a radical cut; we were left without anything; everything disappeared; the whole system/everything fell apart; a sudden change; a turning point; the biggest life event; the biggest rupture; the end of an era; we lost the ground under the feet. Overnight, sudden, loss: the three words repeatedly used to remember the times of the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Many last pioneers underlined that they do not really understand to this day what really happened, as to them it seemed ‘you simply wake up in the morning living in a new country’ or ‘yesterday you have one identity, and all of a sudden you have another’. As a left-wing activist from Serbia described: “But my childhood has a rupture... when from a bourgeois princess, you become a refugee” (35-SR-1981-F). In stark comparison to the Yugoslav childhoods, the adolescence seems like times they will never be able to make up for. Happiness and serenity of their childhoods were replaced with trauma of their adolescences; trauma – a word used by the interviewees themselves. Without aiming to *diagnose* trauma

among our interviewees, herewith we understand the re-narration of traumatic memories by leaning on trauma theory and its entanglement with narrative and memory studies already largely researched (i.e. Caruth, 2016). While other post-communist regions connect the memory on communist times as traumatic (Georgescu, 2016), in the (post)Yugoslav space it was the dissolution of the socialist Yugoslavia that is considered as a collective trauma, calling for *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* within the frameworks of transitional justice.

In attempts to understand the collapsing world around them, a couple of last pioneers remember writing war journals or gathering newspaper articles, one in Osijek and one in Rijeka, while another interviewee in Slovenia was taping the TV news on VHS tapes. Material objects that resulted from these child intimate initiatives serve today as personal archives, and an assistance tool for meaning making of traumatic memories. Early morning, in a café in central Serbia, previously a right-wing political party member, today a trade union member cannot escape her traumatic memories: “I remember... and those scenes are still alive in my mind...how much I got used to it... that every evening on TV news I see, I don’t know, mutilated bodies, and, I don’t know... And I remember bodies floating down Sava and I am, like, watching a cartoon” (27-SR-1977-F). Traumatic events in adolescence that “rip the larger existential fabric of our being-in-the-world” (Davis, 1979, p. 102) – this is how in short the 1990s could be marked in the memory narratives of the last pioneers. Dissecting the true nature of war trauma goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, being focused on “the transmission of positive forms of attachment” and “an archive of mnemonic practices that extends beyond current practice and its traumatic horizons” (Rigney, 2018, p. 370), herewith trauma is understood as an important marker of the identitarian (dis)continuity and as one of the elements building the Yugoslav identity today. For many memories from this period remain hidden, sometimes with screen memory of other important events from that period of their lives. Dissociating remains noticeable, as their narratives would most often quickly lead to a simple analytical lens of comprehension of the 1990s, at the social and political level; discussing *politics* seems easier than discussing personal trauma.

At the same time, resolving trauma requires also a political understanding of the circumstances and the events that have brought it upon. For moving forward it is not (only or always) crucial to know the number of victims and engage in an never ending (memory) battle over victims and perpetrators, how many people were killed and by whom. Often a more

productive approach has been to understand the structural conditions that have enabled the atrocities to happen, a process attempted in most of the last pioneers' narratives. As the nationalist mainstream discourses continuously impose hatred, the Western mainstream discourses continuously impose the victimization and criminalization narratives; both of which leave little space for hope.

People leaving

With the wars erupting, one of the main memories of the last pioneers of the 1990s are refugees: being one, more common in Croatia and Serbia; or having friends who are refugees, like it was the case most often in Slovenia. For the last pioneers who became refugees, memories are indeed the only trace of the past they are left with – their houses were mostly burned, and with the houses, everything they owned. Sometimes they were being displaced multiple times, from Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and then from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Serbia. Everything changed: their homes, their environments, their schools. Beyond hunger, traumatic memories of war and running across the fireline in Sarajevo in order to join her father *on the other side*, our left-wing interviewee, always vividly speaking in loud voice and with profound interest of both understanding her life history and her political identity, recalls: “You come into a new school... it’s like the same language, but you know, many things are different. Many things, for example, totally different curriculum in mathematics..” (30-SR-1980-F). From the calmness and order of Yugoslav childhoods, dissolving war adolescence marked the beginning of continuous shifts. In our interviewee narrative, one she shares with other refugees, the overnight rupture profoundly impacted their socialization. As the economic transition might have started already during officially socialist Yugoslavia, the identity transition started in the 1990s – but both never ended.

For all of the last pioneers, the disappearance of important people from their lives remains as one of the most traumatic memories – *overnight*, they were losing classmates, best friends, and crushes. As it was previously evoked, many of the last pioneers were socializing with other children on the playgrounds in front of their buildings, living in highly ‘mixed’ environments. For children and adolescents as their inner circles of friends and family are of utmost importance, their memory narratives uncover yet again the sentiment of loss and abandonment. In Zagreb, a left-wing antifascist activist juxtaposes his memories with the discourses which framed them, at the time and today: “...one day you have five friends with

whom you hang out every day, you go home from school with them every day, and then one day you come to school and they are gone... What the hell, one minute you are here, next minute you are gone.... So obviously if you are the one who's left, you are bad... we who stayed, we are good" (56-HR-1980-M).

The ones who stayed, if they might have found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time, experienced the war first hand. Lighting up cigarettes one after the other, in worn down armchairs in a left-wing collective space in Belgrade, a left-wing activist nervously explains why she never or extremely rarely talks about it: "I repressed those things... The only thing I remember, actually, is that I was always crying because someone was leaving the building...and that it was really difficult.... those friends from school, someone was always leaving... and they were leaving within a very short time frame.." (22-SR-1979-F). Our interviewee did not leave Bosnia during the war, yet much later in the early 2000s. Migrations throughout the Balkans did not cease.

Nostalgia for childhood home is always strengthened when the last pioneers became refugees. There is nothing specifically Yugoslav about it, nor post-socialist. Exile always invigorates our sense of loss and builds up the imaginary of home as a forbidden place of longing.

As we sit in his room in an apartment where he lives with his parents, in Novi Zagreb, during the longest interview I have conducted, a left-wing member of a political party depicts his everyday resistances in his daily life, confronting his environment on his life history and his political outlook on his sentiment of emotional proximity with his once home (47-HR-1978-M):

I had a discussion about it, about my nostalgia towards Novi Sad... where my aunt told me that she is upset by the fact that I am so nostalgic towards Novi Sad and Vojvodina. So I told her... ok, tell me, do you go every year to Dalmatia? [she said] I go. Do you go to see your family and friends there? I do... Why? Why wouldn't you go to Barcelona? Or Berlin? Why is your nostalgia towards your own birthplace more politically correct than mine? Because my homeland is in Serbia? Can you please remember a simple fact that I cannot change my birthplace? I could, but then it would mean that I am running away from something.

Comprehending that one does not have to declare himself/herself as Yugoslav, in order to have a Yugoslav identity, remains an important element of identity of the last pioneers. And even more, our independent Member of Parliament from the Croatian coast asserts: "I think that I could without any problems, without any consequences, still live in that world without infringing on all my identities of today" (61-HR-1977-M).

Leaving from somewhere, the refugees were arriving somewhere. These forced migrations changed the population structures throughout Yugoslavia. Just one example was given by a Member of Parliament from Serbia – in Vojvodina, into the town of Inđija a total of 16 000 refugees arrived (40-SR-1974-M) – a town that previously the population of 22 0000. Inđija doubled in size with the arrival of refugees and it certainly provoked tensions between the populations, which reflected among children and adolescents as well – as our pioneer remembers. Instead of the ethno-national tensions, the primary tensions for adolescents in this town were actually intra-ethno-national, between the “natives” and the “newcomers”. All of the last pioneers remember either a sense of pity either antipathy towards the incoming class mates – in Slovenia, the animosity towards other Yugoslavs seemed to have been strengthened; in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they remember laughing at refugee children’s different dialects and accents. Being themselves refugees, they remember struggling to fit in and adapt to the new environments.

In memory of the last pioneers, the politics of the dissolution and the war was not much discussed within the families. There were difficult moments lived as intimate ruptures with close friends and neighbors, followed by a sense of betrayal. The abandonment the last pioneers felt with their friends *leaving and disappearing overnight*, the experience of the adults in their family environments added up. At the same time, the families shared hopeful stories of friends and neighbors taking care of each others’ homes, defending them against the nationalist violent attacks. Their own family backgrounds were not stopping them from being friends: in Slovenia, one interviewee had friends whose fathers were part of the Territorial Defense of Slovenia while his own father was still in the Yugoslav People’s Army. It is important to note that the diversity of Yugoslav families extended to diversity of Yugoslav friendships and camaraderie.

The dissolution of the country for some of the last pioneers did not only mean loss of a homeland, but also loss of a home. As some were becoming refugees and losing everything, their housing situations sometimes left them almost homeless. In Croatia the last pioneers remember the practices of flat expulsions of all unwelcome, meaning non-Croat, populations – a political party member from Split explained that even today, in Split, everyone knows exactly who expelled who from which flat. Another interviewee, today a left-wing political

party member in Croatia, lived through the institution of *flat exchange*⁵⁷. His family moved from Novi Sad to Zagreb in 1991 through a flat exchange, expecting the exchange and their move to be only temporary, ‘until the things cool down’. Being Croatian and living in Novi Sad in 1991 made his family face discrimination and what he calls “small provocations” – their surname being marked on their apartment doors, his mother being provoked at her job and similar. Once they moved to Zagreb, it was another struggle to make sure to keep their new apartment as flat expulsions were continuously taking place, by unknown (or not) perpetrators (47-HR-1978-M).

Political socialization in war

The last pioneers, reminiscing their childhood and adolescent political formation, also seem much aware of the wandering and straying and shifting their political views throughout the years. Their childhoods might have brought upon one ideological viewpoint; the times of the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the wars another; the post-war “transition” could have instigated a fresh new outlook. Given the prominence of the nationalist discourses at the wake of the war and during the war, being adolescents, many of the last pioneers, as they tell us, went through a phase of nationalism or adherence to a religion. For the right-wing last pioneers, nationalist orientations stayed a prominent element of their political identity. For the others, they have re-evaluated their stands and adopted rather anti-nationalist sentiments. Important to underline is also that the level of war trauma does not seem to have incited anti-Yugoslav sentiments of the last pioneers. The key to anti-Yugoslav political orientation remains to be a product of adherence to a specific ideological narrative, often inherited through patriarchal family lines. While negotiating their political views as much as their memories on Yugoslavia throughout their adolescence, between family communicative memory, post-memory, their own souvenirs and the lived socio-historical contexts, numerous reasons appear to have influenced the narrative the last pioneers share today.

⁵⁷ When the conflicts started, a number of citizens “exchanged” flats in different republics, like in the example given here. Those who managed to exchange their flats were considered the lucky ones as they had secured housing in the republics they fled to. Obtaining legal documents was also facilitating avoiding expulsions and evictions from new apartments,

Searching for political identity

Overall change of context and the taking over by an ethno-nationalist and religious discourse influenced the last pioneers' political reflections in their adolescence, regardless of their present political positionality. The left-wing political actors remember their meandering political socialization and development, as some of them have undergone religious and nationalist escapades in their teenage age – as mentioned in the previous chapter. In Croatia, the introduction of religious education in the mainstream education provoked peer pressure and incited some of them to undergo Catholic education even if today they consider themselves as atheists. Today passionate anti-fascist left-wing activist from Zagreb illustrates this peer pressure: “It was 1992, everybody started going to church...so they asked me if I want to go to church... I had no clue what I am going to do there, I said, but let's go...Marko goes, Pero goes, so will I go...So when I was 13, 14 years old I did it all, all those sacraments, and I am ashamed of it still today” (56-HR-1980-M). A similar account follows by another left-wing political party member, a party that would be considered as the New Left today (43-HR-1981-M):

I am now an atheist, of course. I never really believed, it was more something social. It even wasn't a pressure, but two, three people from my group of friends went, so we asked ourselves why they go and we don't. The only thing my mother told me only a few years ago was that the school director said on a meeting: to the religious education don't go only Serbs and *'surname of the interviewee'* (like, me and my brother). I didn't feel it at all, obviously there was pressure, but my parents never told me anything... So, when we started attending religious education, it was like... they play football, so we want too. But now you can witness... for example, my little cousin was horrified when I told her I don't believe in God.

As today these 'excursions' into faith are considered shameful or discarded as peer pressure, meaning making from present positions of atheism renders these memories into attempts of fitting in within the new circumstances. In the same apartment from the beginning, our activist interviewee with a *true Yugoslav family*, shares through laughter memories on her own journey of discovering her political positionality. As she tells us, she brought home a cassette tape of Serbian nationalist songs about the Kosovo battle “because it was popular then and not because I knew what it really was. Dad got really mad, and then dad and mum got into a fight over it (laughter)” (23-SR-1975-F). Overnight, from the last pioneers it was expected to go to church and embrace the new ethno-national realities. And without understanding those realities, they started to feel the harsh consequences of nationalism.

Diverging memories and meaning-making

These examples of memories reconnecting with opposing narratives, re-surfacing sometimes decades after the events, show how retrospective meaning making in the Yugoslav intimate environments has been challenged and re-performed over time. As I have noted in the introduction, and I wish to underline here, the memories presented in this research are glimpses of the memories of the last pioneers in 2017 and 2018. As everything else, memories change in time and every time when narrated. As memory narratives change, identity changes; as identity layers change and diversify, political positionality shifts. The generational approach to memory narratives must avoid remaining static and should always include the reflection of “generational positionality” (Palmberger, 2016), marking the very exact moment in which the story is being told, from the temporal perspective of the point of life of the narrator and the global temporal context. But also in the other way round: as political positionality changes, the memory narrative is being reshaped and shifts in our political identity influence the stories we tell.

As the unexpected arrived overnight, the last pioneers remember that at the beginning of the conflict, everyone thought it is *temporary*, that *it will pass quickly and soon everything will return to normal*. As in the world it was impossible to imagine the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, bringing to “a close the “age of revolutions”, but also two centuries dominated by belief in the idea of progress” (Rupnik, 2014, p. 12), in Yugoslavia it was impossible to imagine the end of Yugoslavia, half a century dominated by belief in the idea of progress. Previously quoted left-wing political party member, coming from a right conservative family in Croatia, in his narrative continuously searches for understanding of the dissonances of his parents’ narratives – and without a definite answer: “That’s what my mother told me... in the beginning of the 1980s everybody thought that Yugoslavia and socialism will last forever. No one thought that it could fall apart. Simply, nobody thought about it. Just like today nobody thinks that capitalism could fall apart, also back then nobody thought how anything else would be possible...” (43-HR-1981-M).

The last pioneers disown any responsibility for the Yugoslav wars, given that they were mostly adolescents at the time, whereas for their parents, it might be what Catherine Baker calls “the memories of moral compromise”, such as “participation in the black market or compromising the cherished myth of multi-ethnic Sarajevo by giving in and viewing ethnic

groups as the basic building-blocks of society” (Baker, 2015, p. 67). This is visible in their narratives providing inconclusive reflections and little to no identification of neither perpetrators nor victims of Yugoslav wars, such as the use of impersonal pronouns (they, them, it) or passive voice (the war erupted, people were killed). The dissonances between the mainstream discourses and personal memory narratives, as for example the one on the interethnic relations, emphasize the need for this distancing. A certain cautiousness develops, and comes together with the uncertainty of one’s knowledge. Their dual position, as a last pioneer who is narrating their memories and as a political actor, did not seem to me that have been the key for avoiding the clear identifications and analysis of the conflicts. It rather seemed that the ambiguity of the truth and the impossibility of its establishment, in public arena, enhanced the prudence of any definite claims for the majority of the interviewees; but also the embrace of ambivalences.

Interestingly enough, there is also a significant dissociation with the political landscape today. Whether they are the Members of Parliament, within the governing coalitions or parties or in opposition, or oppositional political party members, they share an analytical approach to the present tense with a sense of helplessness and almost as they were simple spectators and bystanders and not political actors (see Chapter 8).

Certainly, being political actors largely with higher education, the interviewed last pioneers maybe possess sufficient educational capacities to more easily deconstruct the ethno-national identities and politics. Some of the last pioneers were aware of and facing blatant propaganda that was conducted, already during the Yugoslav wars and not only today in retrospect. A left-wing political party member from Slovenia, the one minutely recording TV reportages during the war and his adolescent year, explains: “One manipulation when I was there... in 1993, we went to Dalmatia and we took with ourselves lots of food, flour, drinks etc, because there was no electricity on the island, and we were carrying it on the ferry for my family... And I was there, and I see, Croatian TV starts saying that 40 grenades just fell on Biograd an hour ago and that there was a bomb that fell on the bus station... How, we were there... nothing was falling” (7-SLO-1979-M). With a long pause after this reflection, he becomes more agitated with the today’s nationalist discourses.

In the process of juxtaposing their own personal memory narratives and the mainstream discourses, for the last pioneers, their life stories become counter-narratives. These are not an

expression of nostalgia but a demand for recognition of a history, acknowledging its complexity and multiperspectivity. Any today's perceptions of Yugoslavia or sentiments that are being named as Yugonostalgia are being based on these counter-narratives which are the truth for the last pioneers; opposing the media and the political propaganda, and sometimes even research agendas.

The production of these counter-narratives is nested in the generational positioning, the concept developed by Monika Palmberger describing "the importance to the stage of life in the sense of a particular 'life situation' individuals are in at the time they reflect on the past (and not only at the time of the original experience)" (Palmberger, 2016, p. 5). Through their situational positions in the present, for the last pioneers their Yugoslav memories change frames of meaning "with major social shifts that affect entire mnemonics" (Misztal, 2010, p. 87). Given the present contexts of (post)Yugoslav politics - revisionist, anti-communist and anti-Yugoslav, deeply ingrained in the methodological nationalism of any analyses on the past of Yugoslavia; their life narratives cease being solely their life stories and become political, contentious narratives. It is in their encounter with their political identities, that these narratives remain understood as nostalgic sentiments or that they evolve into a more articulated political demand.

'It was not that bad'

Against readings of conflicting communities in (post)Yugoslav space firmly stands the value of solidarity, appearing in different places. One reading of a most common phenomenon that I noted throughout the population of the last pioneers in all three researched countries, throughout the political spectrum and throughout the diverse specific circumstances and experiences of the interviewees, was a devaluation of their war experiences. Remembering their war memories, the last pioneers were lessening the events they experienced and their consequences. As certainly it could be understood a common response to trauma, it was always somehow connected to pointing out that given the total of atrocities that took place in Yugoslav wars, their own experiences were *not that bad*. Sometimes the comparisons were made to the current refugee situation, like an activist from Osijek pointed out, having had the experience of being an internally displaced person in Croatia: "When I was in war, as a refugee, we were treated like we were on summer vacation. That is not how it goes today..."

when I go to protests and I see people in parks⁵⁸... that's not how it goes today, not even close" (57-HR-1982-F). It is precisely in such narratives that we notice how multidirectional memory works, connecting various political, social and global injustices in connection and opening space for reflection and solidarity.

Many of the last pioneers make jokes in reference to war and the most common phrase that appears in their narratives is "We got away just fine". An interviewee from Slovenia recalls, when she was already a university student and a visiting professor from the United States asked them to write an essay on the Ten Day War in Slovenia: "We all reacted – what war? Here there was no war... (laughter)... in the south, that's where the war happened." (19-SLO-1974-F).

But being a Yugoslav family as elaborated in the previous chapter, even if you were born and grew up in Slovenia, meant that there was family in other parts of Yugoslavia. Self-identifying as center left, Member of Parliament explains his entangled Yugoslav memories in his office in the parliament (5-SLO-1981-M):

Especially because, for example, by my father's side, they are from Kladuša, and there not only Serbs and Muslims were in war, but Muslims fought between themselves, because there was Abdić and Izetbegović, so the situation was very bad... I know that, for example, my father has two brothers, and no one of them was in war, I mean as a soldier, because they lived here, but my cousin was... I don't for how long, he is two years younger than me... He was during the whole war with his grandmother, meaning my grandmother, he lived down there, actually, next to to the border between Izetbegović and Abdić.

In *The South* - meaning in all the (post)Yugoslav countries south of Slovenia, the last pioneers do remember namely: the lack of electricity; their family members going to war; going to school under sniper fire; police repression in the Sandžak region of Serbia; their friends dying in the war and themselves running across the front line and the confusion of not understanding as children the full meaning of the events that deepened the trauma. They underline that *they got away just fine* by narrating: "I mean if some of my close ones was slaughtered, I would probably think differently and I suppose that I would think differently about Yugoslavia" (45-HR-1974-F). It is difficult to measure the level of trauma, from one's own experience and the memory narratives we create around it to preserve ourselves. Even the interviewee having

⁵⁸ Many refugees in the European refugee crisis that took the Balkan route regularly slept in parks in the cities on their route,

most dramatic experiences during the war in Sarajevo, a double refugee – first from Croatia and then from Bosnia and Herzegovina, yet like everyone else downplays her traumatic war adolescence: “So I didn’t really feel it... I mean I did, a million times, when there were really heavy attacks, when we had to hide, when somebody from our close environment died. Luckily no one from my family died; we are all alive and so... But simply it is all horrible, it was horrible... when it wasn’t for the hunger, hunger was, I think, the most difficult” (30-SR-1980-F).

With their worlds collapsing overnight and the war becoming an everyday reality in many different ways, the last pioneers were growing up. Meaning making through memory narratives is a natural part of the process of remembering and preserving the continuity of the identity. As soon as we would be discussing their memories from the 1990s, the last pioneers would enter the process of attempting to understand what seemed to be unimaginable for them at the end of the 1980s. Given the entanglement of the Yugoslav families and the Yugoslav society itself, with no apparent ethno-national deep-seeded hatreds, new narratives were preparing the dissolution of Yugoslavia and emanating from it, through historical revisionism and nationalism propaganda, but an in-depth elaboration on the topic goes beyond the scope of this thesis. It is important solely to understand it as a complex framework of memory wars and opposing ideological narratives that created the social framework within which the last pioneers were reconstructing and re-narrating their Yugoslav narratives and understanding their (post)Yugoslav political identities. So, how do the last pioneers understand the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav wars?

The Nineties

The context of the 1990s were different in the three countries researched – as Slovenia went through a Ten Day War; Croatia was in war from 1991 till official peaceful reintegration of East Slavonia in 1998 (Kasunić, 2019) and Serbia has participated in the Yugoslav wars from 1991 till the end of the NATO bombing in 1999. Political circumstances also differed and these diverse contexts colored the memories of the last pioneers. 1990s were a term appearing saliently enough in the interviews to become a code but not everywhere and not for the same reasons.

In the Slovenian discourse, there is no such category as 1990s (*devedesete*). A short reference to the Ten Day War appears seldom and largely in relation to the independence of the

Republic of Slovenia, but the decade of the 1990s does not have a special mnemonic status as an important decade in the life stories of our Slovenian last pioneers. When the reference appears, it was due to the continued intimate relations providing stronger links with the rest of the (post)Yugoslav space, for family or other private reasons. Closer involvement with the rest of the (post)Yugoslav space always enhances the Yugoslav sentiment, as it provides more deeply felt shared generational experiences. An institutional left-wing Member of Parliament in Slovenia, for example, remembers more vividly the NATO bombing of 1999 – as his girlfriend at the time was living in Serbia: “We still had a lot of friends around...we were true Yugoslavs, you know, in that sense. And from our side, from Aviano, these planes [were ... you know, to my girlfriend...” (4-SLO-1980-M). Even if borders were constructed, they did not (always) tear down the Yugoslav families, friendships and relationships. For the interviewees residing in Slovenia, especially the ones having family in other Yugoslav republics, memories on the war rather refer to wars in other parts of Yugoslavia: “War in Slovenia... I would say I don’t have any memories on it... I remember a grey airplane that flew over Štore⁵⁹... on television we’ve seen those couple of tanks and that is my memory, to be honest... I wouldn’t say, it is stupid, it’s one week, in comparison to five years... But anyhow, when you compare it, I have stronger memories of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina than that.” (22s-SLO-1978-M). As the trauma of what followed after the Ten Day War was much more profound, the war in Slovenia was almost erased from the memory narratives. In the same time, to those with little or no personal connections, the war in (the rest of) Yugoslavia seemed distant, especially, the war in Kosovo and the bombing of Serbia. As a local social movement turned to political party member from Nova Gorica illustrates: “...it was like Rwanda for us... far, far away” (18-SLO-1981-M). These memory narratives show slow distancing of experiences between the same generation across the (post)Yugoslav space, but these connections seem to have been swiftly (re)built in the post war times. Almost all of the left-wing interviewees continue to nurture their various (post)Yugoslav connections; but it also might be that the political actors with such connections were actually the ones more prone to participate in the research.

In the Croatian discourse, *devedesete* are the years of wars, privatizations and strong nationalism on the rise. Nation building processes, hand in hand with the independence of the

⁵⁹ A town in Slovenia,

Republic of Croatia and the reign of Franjo Tuđman, were encouraging cultural changes like the linguistic changes and consolidation of the influence of the Catholic Church (which will be further discussed in details below and in the following sub-chapter).

For Serbia, *devedesete* became a specific code on its own, a symbol and a key term for understanding the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Impregnated with numerous meanings, the tropes the last pioneers referred to in their narratives: the wars; the complete economic crash down; the political repression and the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milošević; the retraditionalization of the society and the rise of influence of the Orthodox Church, the rise of nationalism and the far right, including the repatriarchalization of the society. The most current reference to wars was the conscription into the army. The last pioneers remember their fathers and brothers, largely outside of Belgrade, being drafted into the army. Some remember their friends being killed in the war and one interviewee was himself drafted for the war in Kosovo in 1999.

The differences in contexts illuminate the frameworks within which the last pioneers remember the decade in which Yugoslavia was erased, politically and geographically. If happiness, progress and brotherhood and unity were the main associations on Yugoslav childhoods, the associations on the 1990s were the exact opposite.

In Serbia, the rise of nationalism in the memory narratives of the last pioneers is most commonly presented as an outcome of the nationalist propaganda, imposed in the 1990s, by the Milošević's regime and the media, in addition to the consequences of the country being fully isolated by international sanctions and propaganda against Serbia in the (Western) world. Confusion, ambivalence and ambiguity often led to adoption of the mainstream narratives throughout the political spectrum with little to no reflection on deeper causes and more complex explanations. As we tend to memorize only the events that had the most direct impact on our lives, it is possible to understand how the last pioneers in Serbia, or any other of the two countries for that matter, do not remember the ethno-national tensions and incidents taking place in parts of the country which they have not visited or that they did not have personal connection to, especially if these events were not given any media attention neither. One example in Serbia is Sandžak, with the exception of the interviewees coming from that region, of course. The closer the intimate link with the events, the stronger

memories are on specific cases and the stronger correlations of accounting those elements in their attempts to understand the Yugoslav wars.

Given that most of the Yugoslav wars took place in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, in Serbia a key element to the memories on the 1990s is the economic crash. Hyperinflation, total impoverishment, seeing their teachers selling second hand goods at the markets or due to sanctions, feeling like their space has considerably shrunk: those are the key associations of the interviewees. While we talk in her parliament offices, Member of Parliament in Serbia with minority background, further explains her sentiment of how her generation was deprived of a solid middle class lifestyle her parents had in Yugoslav times – her childhood was a much different experience, becoming a social case dependent on foreign aid (42b-SR-1982-F):

And the first scholarship... I think it was in the fifth, sixth grade. Because the Hungarians were sending help, the Hungarian government, help to the pupils... I remember that I applied for the first scholarship and it was one liter of oil, one kilogram of flour, one kilogram of sugar etc. And I don't know, some sneakers that were imported from God knows where... that was a scholarship. There was no money. So that, those are my memories on my primary school.

The economic crisis, which never really ended for the Serbian society, is linked to the analysis of today's political arena. The last pioneers still blame the fallacies of today on the 1990s, whether understood as a societal regression so deep that the society did not yet manage to recover from, or as an outcome of personal political figures of the epoch and those who are still governing today. Generational positionality comes to the fore when discussing present day politics. Regardless of political positionality, last pioneers tend to insist on the generational divide. As a right-wing Member of Parliament in Serbia notes on the need of new people in Serbian politics, he explains that Serbia needs politicians who are not: "part of that political swamp of the 1990s... [we need] people who understand the times in which we live in, regardless if they are oriented to the right or to the left... but simply we need a change" (24-SR-1975-M). But for the right-wing interviewees, it is always underlined that being against Milošević in the 1990s meant being against communism, given the complex ideological brand Milošević was creating for himself – as a guardian of Yugoslavia, as a guardian of socialism and a fervent nationalist, all at the same time.

Understanding dissolution and the wars

When trying to understand the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the majority of the last pioneers throughout the three countries believe that peoples were the real victims; that the dissolution was politically induced, maybe inevitable, but that it is certain that the war was artificially created. Still, certain differences in the perceptions on the dissolution between the countries can be noticed – but the war itself remains undividedly perceived as a top down instigated event.

In Serbia, a research conducted already in 2001 has shown that the citizens considered the war „unnecessary“ by 62%; „imposed by politicians“ by 29% and „inevitable and justified“ by 9% of respondents (Gredelj, 2001, pp. 241-260). The nationalist propaganda started already in the mid 1980s by the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences and was continuously reproduced by Slobodan Milošević and the Socialist Party of Serbia, but also the parties in opposition who had an even stronger anticommunist stance. Past and present nationalist discourses influenced the understanding of the dissolution by the citizens. Intertwining their memories on the 1990s, today the last pioneers try to explain the events by distancing; most often *someone else*, whether the foreign powers or the political elites at the time, was responsible. On the one side, the last pioneers do understand that the overall context of the fall of the Berlin wall and the final victory of capitalism has played a certain role. They all also acknowledge the significance of the economic crisis that Yugoslavia was undergoing in the 1980s. Among the left-wing actors, we can notice that the main explanation is usually twofold: firstly, the continuous political and economic crises of Yugoslavia led to nationalism and populism; and secondly, the generational change within the Party brought political and social distancing from true values of socialism. On the other side, the center and the right-wing activists put a bigger emphasis on the ethno-national identities, by claiming that different ethno-national communities in Yugoslavia have actually been „conflicted tribes since forever“ (28-SR-1977-M) while the communist tropes of brotherhood and unity were just hiding and suppressing the nationalist frustrations.

While the left-wing activists in a way preserve a coherent continuity narrative with their memories on their Yugoslav childhoods, the center and the right-wing political actors enter the space of cognitive dissonances. As they start narrating their ethno-national view on the state of affairs, most often than not, at first, they do not notice their contradictory narratives.

The dissonance, if noticed, is explained through exceptionality: their immediate environments experienced no ethno-national tensions, yet that was not the rule. Often at this point of our interviews, the last pioneers would start reflecting upon their confusions, and through re-narration go through another meaning making process, within the span of the interview itself. Eric Hobsbawm explained this process: „If there is no suitable past, it can always be invented“ (Hobsbawm, 1997, p. 5). The revisionist processes happen at the collective, as much as at the individual level and their structural mechanisms often align. If we fail at making sense of our own personal narratives, we might be prone to adhering to the solutions provided at the collective, mainstream level of discourses (see next sub-chapter) and in that way solve our cognitive dissonances, keeping the most intimate elements in the field of less political nostalgic sentiments. The emotional responses to Yugoslav memories can provide a deeper insight into the meaning making of the past: a trade union activist comments on the famous Tito's funeral that he stumbled upon on the television with his children, on the archival footages of the Yugoslavs crying throughout the country: „Today my children ask me, when they saw it on television, why is everybody crying... and I told them...because, my children, subconsciously they know that it will only become worse and worse“ (29-SR-1975-M). Every new look at the past, brings another layer of understanding thus irretrievably changing our memories and our life narratives. Every time we tell a memory, it is a memory of the way we told the same story the last time enriched with new facts, insights, memories and questions – our new generational and political positionality.

Similar reflections are found among the interviewees from Croatia. Distancing from the wars remains, a left-wing activist from Croatia claims: “It has nothing to do with people who lived there and who still live there” (59-HR-1977-F). As the last pioneers on the left-wing pole of the political spectrum explain, the key elements for the dissolution of Yugoslavia are: the external actors (including the United States and the Catholic Church); populism; the Constitution from 1974 and the transition to capitalism, inducing the first accumulation of the capital which, in their interpretation, demanded a violent conflict. If domestic actors were included, they were the traitors within the Yugoslav People’s Army. As everyone on a general note agrees that the issue at hand is an extremely complex one, underlining and bringing to the fore specific elements show us how the narratives are being interwoven into the personal (hi)stories of the last pioneers.

It is important to highlight that, in both Serbia and Croatia, the left-wing last pioneers did emphasize the role of the Yugoslav middle classes, the generation of their parents, who contributed to the dissolution and the wars, by their apathy and lack of intervention, at least. A Member of Parliament, from Zadar, agrees with Susan Woodward (1995) that if there was ever a “natural” division between the peoples, there would not have been a war and adds to depict his own personal activism against the events of the 1990s (61-HR-1977-M):

...I was in Zadar one of two people who were buying Croatian Left (Hrvatska ljevica)⁶⁰, by Stipe Šuvar⁶¹. I reacted that way then... We were only two people in Zadar, me and one history teacher, I remember. The saleswoman told me that nobody else asks for it and I know that when I was carrying that Croatian Left on the streets... it provoked reactions – why I need that, Yugoslavia is over, vanished. But for me it was only a shield and possibly a way to protest and provoke the public.

Among the self-identified left-wing actors, the representatives of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) are more prone to identifying repressed nationalisms as a cause of the conflict, as do the interviewees self-identifying as liberal (center) and right-wing. As the diagnosis of insurmountable animosities between different ethno-national and religious communities is shared among the last pioneers of similar political self-identification in Croatia and Serbia, in Croatia another element is added: Serbian nationalism. Through such examples, we can see how the present political positionality re-narrates their memory narratives. Even if they have no recollections of ethno-national animosities, or any similar events in their childhoods, the discursive strategy of singularity of their environments towards the rest of the country precedes. Their re-narrate their Yugoslav past, adjusting it to their today’s political identities. While it is asserted that war should have been avoided, the central affirmation is that the history itself has shown the *impossibility* of Yugoslavia. Even if within HDZ members among interviewees there is discordance if multinational states are at all possible, the Member of Parliament from the far right-wing confirms that Yugoslavia was “an artificial creation” and the usual trope of “hundred thousand years old yearning for Croatian independence” (63-HR-1974-M). Nevertheless, when analyzing the conflict, the right-wing last pioneers still comprehend the complexity, as a HDZ member puts it, it was a multitude of conflicts that

⁶⁰ Monthly magazine published from 1993 to 2005,

⁶¹ Šuvar was a prominent sociologist and Croatian politician, member of the Communist Party, high official in various positions like the Minister of Education of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, member of the Central Committee etc. and a fervent Marxist, until his death in 2004,

caused the war: “Conflict of interest, conflict of ego and conflict of nationality” (60-HR-1983-M).

Most of the interviewees on the center and the right-wing scale in Croatia, affirm their content for the independence of the country, and in the case of the far right-wing, the violence is sometimes minimized (63-HR-1974-M):

My wife has her first cousin in Belgrade... Her mother is from Split, from Dalmatia, she married a Serb and in 1990, they ran away...ran away, I have to say, because they had here... as teenagers, she told us how he got beaten up on the street [in Šibenik]... Let's be clear, war is always a mess. And he as a child who was a Serb, his father from JNA, he got beaten up in the street. It's an ugly thing, but in the war much worse has happened, than to get a couple of slaps on the street.

This interview was overall pleasant and welcoming, with continuous in-between repetitions of the interviewee that his closest environment remains ethno-nationally and politically “mixed”, ending with jokes how I might end up getting married in Croatia and me joyously responding that in such case I will invite him to the wedding. Yet knowing the public discourse of the interviewee, and with such brief passages that would more explicitly show his political positionality, it left me wondering if, regardless of these positive narratives and relations, with a (new) war taking place *overnight*, my new friend would be able to see me as the Other. As his early family socialization, the paternal right-wing heritage, seemed to be in continuous conflict with his wider environment Yugoslav socialization, identifying why and when do one or the other prevail, remains for some further researches.

In Slovenia, the last pioneers, together with their generation in Serbia and Croatia, believe that the dissolution was largely induced by foreign factors and interests and economic crises but also the power of particular, individual and nationalist, interests. Some interviewees characterized it as “teenage moves”, “ego trips”, “too much testosterone”. On the left-wing part of the spectrum, there is a sentiment of melancholy for the dissolution. “Mixed” marriage origins; Primorska region origins; generational positionality; closely kept ties with people in the rest of the (post)Yugoslav space; or primarily his political positionality – all these elements seem to have led a left-wing political party interviewee to depict: “I look now at 1991 and the war – nobody came out as a victor from that war, we are all losers, from the first to the last. And from the economic, and all, political aspect... Yugoslavia meant something, much more than any of these countries today mean on their own” (9-SLO-1983-M). And not unexpectedly, on the center and the right-wing spectrum, the same claims as in Serbia and

Croatia are maintained: Yugoslavia was an artificial creation and doomed to fail due to too many differences between ethno-national and religious communities.

The most prominent elements in the memories of the last pioneers yet remain the feeling of confusion; dissociation; uncertainty and lack of a possibility to identify the true causes of the dissolution and the war. Important to note is that for a majority of the interviewees there were no clear perpetrators, as a left-wing political party prominent member from Osijek notes: “We acted like it was happening to someone else. But no one ever said that comrade Tito is guilty for it. But simply, here they are shooting. And who are they? Well them from Bosnia. That’s how it was” (59-HR-1977-F). Surviving the war was the initial focus; the ethno-national identification of victims and perpetrators became normalized only afterwards, simplifying the diversity of experiences on the ground.

Foreign powers appear as the, or one of the, most decisive influence in all three republics; but most prominently appearing in the last pioneers’ discourses in Serbia. A left-wing Member of Parliament, coming from the so-called established left, originally from Kosovo explained: „Did we really fight in Croatia only because we were Serbs and Croats, did we really fight in Bosnia only because we were Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats or did we fight as toy soldiers of someone else who has nicely distribute us on the Monopoly table?“ (26-SR-1975-F). While for many foreign interests interfered, for SNS members, Serbia did not participate in the war – it was a Yugoslav war.

For the majority of the interviewees in Serbia, Kosovo is sometimes framed as the root of all Yugoslav conflicts, whether as the ethno-national tensions between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians, or as the poorest region which caused the dissatisfaction of the Slovenian branch of the Party. For the right-wing interviewees in Serbia it is “the communists” who are responsible for their lack of political maturity to solve the conflicts, due to their communist ideology, but in general the conclusion remains that Serbia was the biggest loser of the Yugoslav wars. Yet it is important to note that “the foreign powers” as one of the causes do not always serve as an avoiding strategy nor does it always fall within the conspiracy theory frameworks, rather it is introduced as one within a multitude of causes and actors of the Yugoslav wars and in a certain way, a unifying element against ethno-national animosities’ readings of the conflict, bringing together (post)Yugoslav communities.

Adherence to the mainstream discourses on the dissolution of Yugoslavia is adopted when it resonates with one's political positionality. On the left-wing, Member of Parliament from the Social Democratic Party in Croatia, taking up more prominent positions since our interview, explains (51-HR-1979-M):

So it happened in Yugoslavia in 1945. We all lived in brotherhood and unity and we all loved each other, but we didn't love each other. There were deep, deep divisions, and the society did not work to overcome them, but it was just imposed by a decree and said: now, everyone's cool. It doesn't go that way. I think that thing is, even a misunderstanding by those who built that country after the Second World War and brought to its failure because they thought it was enough to decide something and then it will happen, and in the same time they did horrible other injustices. I talk about socio-economic status. Yes, at first it seemed, but then I make the parallel – it was not the same if you were born in Slavonia or if you were born on Kosovo. It was not the same if you were born in Istria or you were born in the surroundings of Šid. You did not have the same chances.

A Member of Parliament from the Democratic Party from Serbia confirms: “That was a defect... because that country is very complicated, you know, in the whole country - you have Bled, and down there, you have Peć” (40-SR-1974-M). The regional inequalities are considered as the key element of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, often represented as injustices in the anti-Yugoslav mainstream narratives. Throughout the memories of the last pioneers, the reference to “us” remains unidentified – from the context sometimes it can be understood as *us as Yugoslavs*; sometimes as *us as Serbs/Croats/Slovenes*; sometimes as *us as peoples* (in a class sense). The people are continuously perceived as being top down driven into the war. While discussing at large the historical knowledge he possesses in comparison to personal memory narrative being himself a refugee from Slavonia, an activist in Serbia, explains how the war was brought into his region and village: „I mean, somebody consciously was giving arms into people's hands... so that when Croatian army started conquering the territory of the [Serbian] rebels, Serbs would start shooting, Croats would kill some Serbs and then the TV Belgrade can say look, Ustashas are again killing Serbs“ (39-SR-1976-M).

A sense of helplessness and the understanding that the war which tragically disrupted their childhoods was imposed, bringing new imposed identities and new imposed histories - is shared among the last pioneers throughout the three countries. Even the previously depicted, annoyed by the interview, fervent anti-Yugoslav Member of Parliament in Serbia, self-identifying as a nationalist liberal, calls the dissolution “a tragic mistake“ (25-SR-1976-M), with a long pause after this statement before returning to the anti-Yugoslav narrative. Mourning the end of Yugoslavia does not necessarily represent a wish for a Yugoslav

unification, or what the mainstream discourses would depict as Yugonostalgia. It often represents a reflection on the potential of the Yugoslav state: the potential for a peaceful transition into a new economic and political regime and the European Union, which for Serbia today seems unachievable.

A discussion and understanding of the past is perceived as necessary “for a normal future” (32-SR-1979-F). Yugoslavia is seen as a lost opportunity and the moment when future was irretrievably lost; thus, the last pioneers continue to search for understanding of how everything that happened could have happened. As a left-wing political party leader from Croatia resumes: “You cannot forget how it was and how it could have been” (44-HR-1981-M); and a fellow activist from Split concludes: „It seems to me that war is one big lie“ (46-HR-1982-F). Always becoming agitated when confronting the issues of imposed ethno-nationalities and nationalist mainstream discourses, she continues to explain (46-HR-1982-F):

So an example from Lastovo... There was never a war there, there was a big military base. JNA was a serious army, it was disciplined, and those were professional soldiers with medals. So at some point they had to leave the base, I mean what the hell would they still do on Lastovo. They left everything orderly and clean, washed, folded sheets, locked all doors and left the keys outside. That is how you do it in the countryside so that a cat wouldn't open the doors. So we were supposed only to come and move inside, you could have opened a hotel tomorrow. And then people from my village came, I know them personally, and stole the sheets, the sinks. It was convenient for them that that army left. And those are also small war criminals, but war criminals!

Memories on the dissolution and the war in Yugoslavia did not raise discussions or reflections on the concept of transitional justice, the ICTY or at any point did those memories fervently were pointing the fingers to blame. They unraveled a deep need for comprehension of how it was possible to have their happy and peaceful Yugoslav childhoods so brutally disrupted. War has not been appropriated as another seed of division today, and war experiences, lighter or more difficult, seem to have only a partial influence on the political positionality of the last pioneers today – a much stronger influence has been noted in the political identities of their parents and families. The left-wing party member interviewee, calm and continuously trying to analyze her memory narratives and the frameworks which have shaped them, for a moment in our long interview becomes perplexed: “Because everything I loved as a child and what I was proud of as a child was now falling apart in total senselessness. And I had nothing to hang on to explain it to myself. And then I started learning history manically, and I was growing more and bitterer. With every new information, I was not getting an explanation of

the conflict, but stronger bitterness why after 45 years, it was decided to destroy it” (45-HR-1974-F). Trying to understand their childhoods falling apart “in total senselessness”, mainstream discourses continued to provide nationalist sense-making through historical revisionism. The ignorance that the last pioneers are trying to defeat through their search for understanding, at the same time is sometimes reflected in the mainstream discourses of the political organizations they belong to. Being today political actors, the last pioneers would be expected to actively participate in the public discourses on the Yugoslav past and memory struggles. The institutionalized memory politics seem to still be construed without the direct participation of the generation of the last pioneers, and it is only left to be seen whether their understandings will complexify the picture and successfully activate more nuanced debates. Understanding the individual dialogues between memory narratives and political positionality of political actors can help us further understand the creation of the mainstream discourses and enlighten the ambivalences which color the multidirectional discussions in the (post)Yugoslav space.

In the next sub-chapter, I will analyze how do life stories of the last pioneers dialogue with the mainstream revisionist narratives; how and why they complement or oppose them; and how do those alignments and discordances affect the personal narratives of the last pioneers.

7.2 Revising the history: anti-Yugoslavism of the Yugoslavs vs. Yugoslavism of the anti-Yugoslavs

The history that lies inert in unread books does no work in the world. The history that does work in the world, the history that influences the course of history, is living history, that pattern of remembered events, whether true or false, that enlarges and enriches the collective specious present, the specious present of Mr. Everyman.

Carl Becker, 2011, p. 125

While the last pioneers uncover the memories on Yugoslavia, the representations of the history of Yugoslavia keep changing, often in direct opposition to their memories. The hegemonic mainstream discourses emerging from the political elites of a different generation, the official histories in history textbooks and the works of activist historians, have been flourishing throughout the (post)Yugoslav space since the dissolution of the country, even since the 1980s. The last pioneers interviewed, being political actors, continuously go

through re-narration and meaning making of their personal and Yugoslav histories; their individual and their collective memories; their intimate memories and the mainstream discourses.

Why are the mainstream discourses important for our understanding of the memories of the last pioneers? Memories are in continuous narration and creation, re-narration and re-creation, making it impossible to separate the individual memories from collective memories, intimate memories from collective memories. Being always plural, they are a dynamic phenomenon perpetually adapting to the new context of the individual, personal and social circumstances. Without understanding the framework of the mainstream memory politics within which they exist, we cannot understand the individual memory politics and their own specific, intimate shifts. Just as much as the individual, the social memory is equally selective and as Burke claims: “we need to identify the principles of selection and to note how they vary from place to place or from one group to another and how they change over time. Memories are malleable, and we need to understand how they are shaped and by whom” (Burke, 2011, p. 189). The mainstream memory politics framework, within which the last pioneers create their own memory narratives, comes from two axes: a transnational one, *outsider*, Western narrative and a national one, *insider*, state-building narrative.

Despite the low ethno-national distance among the populations (Baker, 1995; Gordy, 1999; etc.) that I have previously elaborated in Chapter 5, the crises that were taking place continuously in Yugoslavia in the 1980s were encouraging the destruction of sociability (Archer, 2018) through top down changes of the mainstream discourse. In 1985, a monograph “The Allies and the Yugoslav War Drama” by Veselin Đuretić was published as a first piece “to abandon the antifascist consensus in the interpretation of the history of World War II in Yugoslavia, while adopting nationalism as the key point of reference in the interpretation of the war” (Škorić & Bešlin, 2017, p. 638). Rewriting Yugoslav history demanded serious efforts to re-nationalize Yugoslav space. In order to de-Yugoslavize (post)Yugoslav peoples and reinforce the ethno-national identities, new shared historical memories had to be created, differentiating elements had to be reinforced and Yugoslav solidarity had to be broken. After the war, the mainstream discourses had to further justify the atrocities and the horrors of the Yugoslav wars, and to fortify the state-building goals of separate (post)Yugoslav republics.

With the aid of “professional historians” (Berger & Conrad, 2015), new Yugoslav histories demanded forceful remembering and forceful forgetting (Connerton, 1989).

Re-nationalization and economic transformation of Yugoslavia was implemented through political strategies – a new normality. Ernst Gellner notes that “having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such” (Gellner, 1983, p. 6). The imagined communities had to be reconceptualized as new cultural hybrids (Hall, 1992, p. 297) of mono ethno-national states, defying the meta-national character of Yugoslavism. Any look into the past had to be banalized and discarded. As on the global level, for decades any positive reflections on all socialist systems were named nostalgic. In the same manner, any positive reflection on Yugoslavia is named Yugonostalgic. How has the historical revisionism bolstered the Yugonostalgic content? Dissonances between understanding of the past in the public memory discourses and intimate family narratives have already been noted by Tschuggnall and Welzer when researching the family transmission of the Nazi past in Germany (2002). Similar dissonances have been noted throughout the narratives within this research. As to lean on Bartlett (1932), these dissonances were rectified through various discursive strategies, exactly to adhere to the “social conventions and beliefs current in the group to which the individual subject belonged” (Bartlett, 1932, p. 118). The more we discussed what is perceived as “general history”, the more the interviewees adhered to their political positionality; and vice versa, the more individual memory narratives were discussed, the more the interviewees adhered to their generational Yugoslav positionality. Anthony D. Smith believes that the nation demands “the constant renewal and re-telling of our tale by each generation of our descendants” (Smith, 2011, p. 236). The last pioneers were expected to re-tell a story of their (new) nation, which they have never or barely have heard of, nor felt it existed. This impossibility of fulfilling the demand of new nation states towards the generation of the last pioneers enlightens the creation of counter-narratives and also explains the continuous distancing from the political elites, despite their own being political actors. Thus, in some aspects they have interiorized the historical revisionist mainstream discourses - in some aspects being opposed as much as their personal memory narratives differ and for some, as their ideologies dispute - but they never perceive themselves as so-called producers of mainstream discourses. The elites, in their views, still belong to the previous generations, even if the generational shift is taking place as we speak.

The last pioneers carefully differentiate between the debate on Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav history, and the debate on Yugoslav dissolution and Yugoslav wars. And they do not deny that debating Yugoslavia does have a potential of identifying future progressive paths in the region. As the main focus of this thesis are not the revisionist politics in the (post)Yugoslav space, herewith I will be presenting only a selection of revisionist policies that were considered relevant for portraying the context within which the last pioneers re-narrate their memory narratives.

Becoming Slovenia

In Slovenia, most often the revisionist claims focus on the Second World War. With the recent changes in Slovenian government with the arrival of Janez Janša at the post of the Prime Minister, revisionism took the highest institutional stance. Janša, leader of SDS, has numerous times been criticized for tweeting false historical facts in his anti-communism declarations and going as far as to claim that the genocide in Srebrenica is a consequence of the communist crimes in Yugoslavia (Janša, 2020). In August 2020, Janša participated in the announcement of a new research institute, a continuation of the Study Center for National Reconciliation founded by SDS in 2008, which will seek to demonstrate that Slovenes are not Slavs (Jager, 2020). In 2020, the President of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, from the center left-wing part of the political spectrum - SD, in July joined commemorations of “the victims of Titoist terror” by the Italian fascists. Levica, considered a New Left party on the Slovenian political landscape - vigorously criticized these political statements.

Oto Luthar resumes the historical revisionist attempts in Slovenia by identifying two processes: “firstly, the nationalization of history/ the past and, secondly, the struggles for a new political monopolization of a particular version of historical interpretation. Since 1991, more than two hundred monuments praising collaborators as the true victims of the war have been erected” (Luthar, 2018, p. 34). As the key of the memory struggles revolves around the events during and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, these struggles continue to reflect the ideological struggles in the political present of Slovenia. The mainstream discourses put forward the discourse of civil war instead of People’s Liberation Struggle and paint collaborators and the Home Guard as “Slovenian martyrs” (Luthar, 2018). Distorting historical facts, while hiding behind the reconciliation narratives, is a key attribute of the revisionist efforts embedded in the contemporary ideological struggles.

The reconciliation discourse is most often appropriated by the right-wing and many center liberal self-identified last pioneers; within the official memory politics reconciliation - the mainstream discourse of the state institutions. On the right-wing part of the political spectrum, a SDS member explains the cleavage as he sees it, while acknowledging that the main reason for the dissolution of Yugoslavia was economic collapse: „The point is in the following: the difference between the left and the right in Slovenia is that, that the left... that the right, says that abuses and crimes happened on both sides, so all dead should be buried; the left says – only on one side, so only ones should be buried. That is not right, that is not a basis for a state.“ (15-SLO-1978-M). Often, anti-Yugoslav interviewees would not go into larger elaborations of their stands – their responses would become short, and almost annoyed because I would wait for them to see more explanation would follow. And at the same time, a SDS Member of Parliament in his official parliament offices sums up: „Look, Yugoslavia existed. Full stop. No one can say that it did not exist, and we must inquire what was good in Yugoslavia, read it and transfer it to today; and what was bad, we should leave in those times“ (3-SLO-1978-M). These two, inherently opposing discourses, found within one political party – SDS, show how even the mainstream memory politics are heterogeneous. A possible analysis could also lead to believe that *regular* party members would be at more freedom to express their viewpoints; while the MPs might feel constrained by their institutionalized position – but this has not been a pattern that was possible to identify. Through these cracks and dissonances of the mainstream discourses we can see the negotiations of personal memory narratives with the mainstream memory politics; in these cracks the generational narratives can open the space for re-narration and what they themselves identify as nostalgia.

The mainstream discourses are widely opposed, and these oppositions do have their continuity. Looking at the public polls from the beginning of the 1990s, it is important to note that in Slovenia there were only 23,3% of citizens that openly demanded “a completely independent state” and that the majority of 50,6% was more favorable to see Slovenia “as a state within Yugoslav confederation, with large autonomy of some republics” (Jović, 2017, p. 46). Once again, the subsequent development of events has changed the landscape and yet it confirms again how the top down violence rather instigated ethno-national hatreds than the other way round. The self-identified left-wing last pioneers in Slovenia criticize the mainstream memory politics, but recognize the ambiguities of Yugoslav history. For them, certain perceptions in the public opinion are shifting in the last decade. A left-wing Member

of Parliament notices: “When you say you are a socialist [today], you don’t think now that people will laugh at you, it has become a legitimate political position” (6-SLO-1983-M). They criticize the notion of Yugonostalgia as presented in the media and the public space, identifying it as banal emotion based on commodified goods, as an activist explains: “In one sense, you see a bunch of Slovenes go to Belgrade for New Year’s Eve and there they buy nostalgia... and then, those Slovenes come back to Slovenia and say that Yugoslavia is communism, totalitarianism, everything that was happening after WWII, killing everyone” (22s-SLO-1978-M). The multiplicity of content of the term of Yugonostalgia as we know and use it today here clearly obfuscates the ideological debates and struggles in the present times; behind the tourist industry, there is more at play (see Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2 Kafana Jugoslavija in Kragujevac, Serbia – “the best quality and the cheapest, just like in the good old times”



Source: Author’s archive, 2017

Vjeran Pavlaković observes that two main strategies were implemented in the Croatian nation building mythologization – one leaning on the (almost pre-)historical roots of Croatian nationality; and the second one erasing any connection to the Yugoslav state (Pavlaković, 2014). The reconciliation narratives, established in the times of Franjo Tuđman, normalized the Ustasha movement from the WWII; in 2011, only a third of Croatian citizens understood the Ustasha as a fascist movement (Pavlaković, 2016, p. 44). In 2000, the Croatian Parliament adopted a Declaration on the Homeland War, reinforcing a unique “regime of truth” about the Yugoslav history. As Tuđman was the first to coin the terms “Serbo-Communism” and “Yugo-communism”, which are still being used in the Croatian political discourse; the only antifascism left was the Croatian antifascism – “nationalized antifascism” (Đurašković, 2016, p. 777; Đureinović, 2018a). This phenomenon of nationalizing the anti-fascist legacy was perceived in all of the post-Yugoslav mainstream narratives – all of a sudden, the Partisans were not Yugoslav but distinctly Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian etc. The revisionist mainstream discourses, as part of the nation-building narratives, largely based themselves in the issues surrounding the Second World War. Starting from the foundational myth that the WWII was *truly just a fratricidal war*, negating any ideological framework, revisionism aims to unite the populations of the newly founded nation states on the basis of ethno-nationality, and in opposition to the Yugoslav concept of brotherhood and unity. For such a newly founded unity, the discourse of reconciliation was unavoidable in all of the three countries. Based on this reconciliation narrative, Ivica Račan, the Croatian Prime Minister from the Social Democratic Party, attended both the Jasenovac⁶² and Bleiburg⁶³ commemorations (Banjeglav, 2012, p. 110), discursively equating the victims of the Nazi ideology of extermination and the victims of the end of the war battles. In 2005, the Croatian Parliament adopted the

⁶² Jasenovac was a concentration and an extermination camp in Slavonia, operated by the NDH and imprisoning Serbs, Jews, Roma and political opponents. The latest estimation is that between 80 000 and 100 000 people were killed in the camp,

⁶³ As in May 1945, the Axis collaborating forces of NDH, together with Chetniks, White Guards in Slovenia etc, and some civilians, fled the liberation of Yugoslavia in the aim to surrender to the British Army. In Bleiburg, a small Austrian town in Carinthia, the British forces returned them to be repatriated and sent to the Yugoslav Partisan forces; the Partisan forces have killed large numbers of these prisoners; with the numbers and the true nature of the events still being contested in historiography. Bleiburg became a symbolic commemoration place, notably for Ustasha supporters, rich in fascist insignia and folklore, which lead the Austrian National Council in July 2020 to adopt a resolution calling for the banning of the event,

Declaration on Antifascism and then in 2006, the Declaration on the condemnation of crimes committed during the *totalitarian* communist regime in Croatia 1945-1990 (ibid., p. 113). Antifascism was separated from communism and following the mainstream European discourses, communism and fascism were equated as totalitarian ideologies. This further led to important statements in commemoration politics of the Republic of Croatia, like when in 2010 Ivo Josipović, so far considered as the most progressive president and a candidate of the Social Democratic Party, nevertheless attended the commemorations in Bleiburg (ibid., p. 115). The new political elites do not want to or do not dare to change the nationalist discourses and the reconciliation discourse is an integral part of the nation-building mythologies.

As previously noted on the case of the Member of Parliament of HDZ in Croatia, enjoying cultural content does not necessarily reflect one's ideological positions and one's ideological positions are not per definition Yugonostalgic if they oppose mainstream memory politics. In Croatia, the revisionist tendencies in the mainstream discourses seem even more aggressive than in Slovenia. With the state-building process in the 1990s, the same pattern of the ethno-national reconciliation narrative was started by Franjo Tuđman. In 1996, Tuđman, then the President of the Republic of Croatia, proposed that Jasenovac becomes a symbol of the reconciliation between Croats, as "both Ustasha and Partisans fought for a Croatian state" (Banjeglav, 2012, p. 107). Reconciliation narrative defines participation of the institutional representatives in commemorations of both afore mentioned movements, in Jasenovac and in some cases in Bleiburg.⁶⁴ Jasenovac commemorations gather a number of various actors including The Alliance of Antifascist Veterans and Antifascists of the Republic of Croatia (SABA RH) and Serb National Council (SNV), further illustrating the confusing and conflicting tones of the mainstream discourses. Demolishment of the monuments from the socialist Yugoslav times in Croatia was widespread: only a small number were reconstructed upon demand of SDSS, making it conditional to enter the coalition agreement with HDZ in 2007 (see Figure 7.3). Systematic demolishment of monuments in Croatia (Horvatinčić, 2015)

⁶⁴ This participation at both venues included Prime Minister Ivo Račan, coming from the Social Democratic Party, and President Ivo Josipović, an independent candidate supported by the Social Democratic Party. Josipović explained his participation as the need to politically „conclude this issue and let the conclusions be made by historians“ (Banjeglav, 2012, p. 115). President Stjepan Mesić, also from the Social Democratic Party, on the contrary, did not ever participate in Bleiburg commemorations. This rightly shows us dissonant voices within the same political parties and cracks in the coherence of the hegemonic narratives,

shows a more violent ideological struggle, as Reinhardt Koselleck explains: “we tear down the monuments when we see them as a threat or when we wish to suppress a still living tradition” (Koselleck, 2002, p. 325).

Figure 7.3 Demolished Partisan monument in Osijek, laying abandoned in a courtyard



Source: Author's archive, 2017

As part of the revisionist evaluation, the mainstream discourses make a parallel between the Second World War and the Homeland war⁶⁵, defining the Homeland War as ground zero for the creation of Croatian national identity (Jović, 2017, p. 12) and creating consensus around the Homeland War as “a justified struggle for independence, cutting all ties with the Yugoslav history and the idea of Yugoslavism” (Pavlaković, 2016, pp. 27-28). The ICTY overturning of convictions of Croatian generals, Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markač, during the Operation Storm fortified the narrative of the victim and “exoneration of Croatian war-sins” (Milošević, 2017, p. 898).

As state memory politics was assigning Croatia the status of both a victim and a winner of Yugoslav wars, in support to previous claims that the war was primarily instigated top down,

⁶⁵ „Domovinski rat“ – in Croatia, the war in the 1990s is referred to as the Homeland war,

Dejan Jović explains how war was at first “one of the possibilities and then, everything was done so that it would become the only possibility” (Jović, 2017, p. 85) creating an atmosphere of “ethno-totalitarianism of everyday life” (ibid., p. 26). Meanwhile, the ethno-national landscape of Croatia equally changed. In 1991, there were 581,663 people who identified as Serbs; in 2001, the numbers fell down to 201,631 and as the decline continued, in 2011 it was only 186,633 (ibid., p. 228). While the official narrative reinforces the image of ethno-national identity being crucial for today’s populations of Croatia, IPSOS survey from 2011 concluded that for only 14% of the respondents ethno-national identity was considered more important than their citizenship status of the Republic of Croatia, while the religious aspect seem to remain strong as 88,2% declare as Catholics (Pavlaković, 2016, p. 31).

The division remains on the understanding of the Ustasha movement: 38,8% of the respondents believe that they fought for Croatian national interests, while 36,2% believe they were fascists (ibid., p. 44) thus for some the national interests legitimizing fascist ideology. A phenomenon that Stevo Đurašković calls Ustasha-nostalgia, depicting a normalization of the Ustasha movement despite its collaborationist nature with the Nazi regime and the fascist ideology, an unexpected consequence of the reconciliation politics led by Tuđman (Đurašković, 2016). National reconciliation politics, besides normalizing the Ustasha movement and collaborationist regime of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) also led to de-croatization of negative aspects of communism and Yugoslavia, now being attributed exclusively to Serbs; but also to the nationalization of antifascism.

A sense of shame and fear to discuss and openly talk in the public of Yugoslavia is noticeable. It was interesting to observe how in Zagreb and Split, if interviews were taking place in a public space, a number of interviewees would have a tendency to lower their voice once they would start talking about Yugoslavia. At first, I thought it was a specific onetime event, but later in the research process, I have noticed a pattern. Yugoslavia remained, even for the left-wing, still somewhat of a “forbidden” word.

On the part of the left-wing political spectrum in Croatia, the last pioneers oppose to the mainstream memory discourses, while continuing to acknowledge the ambivalences of Yugoslav history, repeating the idioms “it was not black and white”, “it was not all good or all bad”. They understand that anti-Yugoslavism represents the key notion of the Croatian state-building processes, as a left-wing political party member from Split explains: „Because the

whole identity of contemporary Croatia is actually built on the dissolution of Yugoslavia “ (44-HR-1981-M).

At the same time, the debates about the past are always the debates about the present. What is in the public discourse dismissed as simple *Yugonostalgia*, it is rather an attempt of a complex understanding of the Yugoslav history, society and ideology; as much as revisionist efforts are part of the ideological endeavors of the anti-Yugoslav nationalist and anti-communist neoliberal capitalist ideologies. Nostalgic sentiments may come when one is sensing a *Madeleine*, but when we are trying to comprehend our past in a structured way, through our memories and through our nostalgia, always working through that memory, we also embed our own ideological positions, our knowledge and our beliefs. No memory is apolitical, which is precisely why use of the past plays an integral role in our societies. Further inquiring about the role of anti-Yugoslav mainstream memory politics, a left-wing political party member elaborates (43-HR-1981-M):

Yes, the debates on the Second World War are the debates on the present, or actually the future. You have to demonize communism, so that everything what was then would seem worse, so that we wouldn't see how today is worse in so many ways. So when they say let's not talk about the past, those talks about the past are actually the debates about the present and the future. As much as they might not be aware of it, on the right, but that is actually that. Simply, if you say I want public health – that was in Yugoslavia, so you are Serbo-Chetniks. But it works much less today than it did ten years ago. It changes a little...

Sometimes, for the last pioneers, demonizing the Yugoslav past seems absurd and grotesque. Denying Yugoslav sentiments of Croatian citizens in Yugoslav times is countered with proofs like „Nobody was holding a gun to no one to cry when Tito died in 1980“ (56-HR-1980-M), or challenging claims about economic scarcity of goods which did not even exist at the times: „When they say we did not have computers. Well nobody [in the world] had computers, come on, remember when did PC enter into wider use!“ (47-HR-1978-M). And in spite of what would be expected as an unwelcoming public atmosphere, as it if were to establish by the mainstream discourses, during none of these interviews in public spaces, full cafés, it did ever occur for passer bys to react to our conversations.

Besides forgetting the horrors of the NDH and Ustasha regime in the mainstream reconciliation discourse, the left-wing last pioneers believe that separating antifascism from Yugoslavism and socialism is part of the European memory politics agenda, highly endangering the true value of that heritage. It also means, for them, forgetting the economic

progress that socialist Yugoslavia brought to all of the republics: „It's not only the point that we liberated ourselves from fascism; but also that we were manufacturing submarines“ (56-HR-1980-M).

Many note that from 2009, when there was a massive strike and occupation of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Zagreb that spread throughout the country, called the Blockade, the then-young students, gathered around the movement who were openly left-wing, changed the political landscape in Croatia. They believe this movement, which marked a new era for the Croatian politics, as marginalized as it was in the beginning, also helped to remove the taboo from Yugoslavia. Yet, the last pioneers claim that in today's politics, every even remote approach from left-wing politics is immediately linked with Yugoslav history and through anti-communism and anti-Yugoslavism discredited. A member of the so-called institutional left, the Social Democratic Party, further explains: “Every attempt of resistance to today's system is discredited as something that was defeated. Those are maybe some ideas we had once. Now we have all of sudden there were ideas [in Yugoslavia], and till yesterday we were saying that it was a prison in which we couldn't do anything, and now it turns out that actually something existed in that Yugoslavia, but even if it did, now it should not exist no more“ (59-HR-1977-F). Within the same political parties, both institutionalized or more marginalized, there exists a multiplicity of narratives as these interviews show. Embedding more in their generational positionality, through which they claim their *helplessness* in the production of mainstream discourses, the last pioneers show a multiplicity of voices entering the memory struggles in the (post)Yugoslav space.

The last pioneers show how the mainstream discourse itself is shifting between diverse explanations and understandings of the *ancien régime*; and is not as monolithic as it is often represented. The mainstream anti-communist and anti-Yugoslav discourse remains complex, multi-layered and contradictory. The porosity of both narratives, the revisionist and the so-called nostalgic one, makes space for eternal fluctuations and negotiations between different memories, making them adaptable to the contemporary political and ideological purposes. Only in such uncertain atmosphere of where do memories stop, and where does history start, it is possible for the revisionist narratives to claim and reclaim historical data as they see fit. A Member of Parliament from Social Democratic Party gives an example (50-HR-1981-M):

He [Andrija Hebrang] is today a hero because he was a victim of the communist system because he was pro-Croatian. It is not true; he was a Stalinist, a Kominternist. He was a bigger communist than Tito, worse, and nobody will say it. No, today he is a Croatian victim, a Croatian martyr. Those are crazy things. Now they are removing the name of Marshal Tito square, but we have Hebrang's street. How is that possible? The man who led pogroms in Croatia. He is responsible for Bleiburg, not Tito, but him. He was a direct commander.

But also within the left-wing discourses and various organizations, there are important differences. A left-wing political party member, a refugee from Bosnia and Herzegovina, today living in Dalmatia, outlines the convergences and divergences also between the various left actors in the (post)Yugoslav space, on their understanding of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav history (44-HR-1981-M):

It's a taboo [to talk about Yugoslavia], and it is stupid to have any taboos. It is simply pointless. And here it is awkward... because the whole of Split, two thirds of Split were built in socialism. The majority of those people came to the social housing... and worked in that industry and that is now... they largely vote for HDZ. Not all of them, but a large majority... especially the working class...I think that all those leftist initiatives, and Radnička fronta and Marks 21, that it is all pure bullshit, pardon me. Their understanding of economy, that those [people] use nationalism to cover the theft. I think it is the other way round... that they are primarily fascists, and then they stole on the side, because they could. There is not one rational reason why would anyone who got everything from socialism be a hard nationalist. They can say whatever they want now.... it's a fact.

On the left-wing spectrum, the debate whether economy comes before nationalism or the other way round remains. Some of the left-wing last pioneers do not regret Croatian independence, but the war. Some aspects of the Yugoslav heritage are accepted, the others are not. Defining a unified content of what the mainstream narrative calls *Yugonostalgic* is impossible, because its main aim is simply to obscure any debate on the Yugoslav past. The tension between divergent opinions on the transition and nationalism remains. Some blame the left-wing actors not to discuss the war in the 1990s sufficiently, while some blame the left-wing actors for embracing the capitalist system, but they all agree that further discussion is needed, as they do not accept the simplifications the mainstream narrative offers. It is needed not only to have more discussion, but a discussion of a higher quality, and to use this discussion as a means to exit the banal depictions of Yugoslavia as (only) times of evil and repression. As a Member of Parliament concludes: „I agree that it should be clarified, but to reduce Yugoslavia to Goli otok is not... [it would be the same as] to reduce it to the pioneer scarf“ (49-HR-1974-M).

Memory narratives continue to be re-narrated, responding to the present political situations. In the narratives we can rather identify the resistance towards the present socio-economic and political reality invoking Yugonostalgia, than nostalgia itself forging resistance. After meeting up in a café of a gallery in Split, a retired university professor joins us for more over an hour of a talk, once he has heard my research topic. Only once he has told his stories, the left-wing political party member and I start the interview. Commenting on revisionist efforts of negating Yugoslav heritage, he further interprets: “Everybody subconsciously knows that it is not better today, not on any basis... It is better as much as you have formally a democracy. But below 50% of people vote, it is clear that it is misplaced, lost [chance]. It is clear that you live in misery and everyone who is rational understands that it is stupid to be in EU and to have borders with people with whom they share the language. I mean, everybody knows that” (44-HR-1981-M). Not *everybody* knows that, but at least some of the last pioneers insist that planned forgetting and erasure of the Yugoslav memories cannot be done, that it is only a matter of time before there will be more space for the debate and then the generation of the last pioneers will have their say. Continuing the longest interview, over cookies and coffee, in his room, a left-wing political party member in Zagreb clearly marks his anger: “... someone wants to dictate my memories and what they should be like, what I should remember and how it actually was for me, and they don’t have a clue. Especially with everything happening to myself and my family at the beginning of the war, when we moved in here [Zagreb]. It is all connected, people who didn’t move an inch had nothing happening to them, but they have the right to dictate me how and what” (47-HR-1978-M). And sometimes it is (simply) a protest against negation of pure historical facts, an activist tells us: “I cannot write that I was born in the People’s Republic of China, if I was born in Yugoslavia” (56-HR-1980-M). Erasing Yugoslavia from the map fuels the sentiment of erasing last pioneers’ identity; stripping them away from key moments in their life narratives; contradicting their life histories. Noticeably, in all countries given that the right-wing self-identified last pioneers adopt the revisionist mainstream narratives nominally, they are less prone to discuss them and they remain loyal to the reconciliation discourse. As the center and left liberal actors, as previously noted, sometimes hide their support and connections with their peers in other Yugoslav republics; among the right-wing it is also reiterated that any mention of the word Yugoslavia would hinge on one’s possibility of electoral success. It is the same fear we observed when the couple of voices lowered down during the interviews, and sometimes even in the academic

community the fear persists as tells us the Catholic left-wing interviewee from Osijek: „I recently experienced, I wrote an article on Vjesnik and then one of my professors said we will not publish it in Croatia, nobody will publish this here. It was a political economy approach to media, but she said that nobody will publish that here. Those are the barriers in the academic community, towards any topic that [discusses Yugoslavia]... so, except for that enclave in Pula⁶⁶, let's say“ (59-HR-1977-F).

Nevertheless, as will be further elaborated in the next chapter, the political actors belonging to the generation of the last pioneers, and not necessarily on the left-wing part of the political spectrum, have already in the time of drafting of this thesis undertaken some bold moves. One example could be the participation of the SDSS Member of Parliament – who also happens to belong to the generation of the last pioneers, Boris Milošević, in the commemoration event of Oluja. Having caused enflamed reactions across the political spectrum and the (post)Yugoslav space, Milošević's act has emanated a possible change in the political course – coming with a generational shift. Silencing of the anti-Yugoslav discourse strengthens the anti-nationalist discourses and influences the discourses on the Yugoslav wars – furthering the possibilities of new solidarities, or in transitional justice terminology – “reconciliation”.

Ambivalences of Serbian Yugoslavia and Yugoslav Serbia

In Serbia, revisionism undertook significant efforts to represent the Chetniks as antifascists. What seemed rather worrying was the historiographical turn to revisionism. More nuanced approaches have been appearing rather with a generational shift among historians (Radanović, 2014; 2015). Despite the revisionist vague, the diplomatic relations with the Russian Federation have seldomly influenced the memory politics of the Serbian governments: three street names were given back, even if at the periphery of the capital, this time to General Zhdanov, Marshall Tolbuhin and the Red Army. The Partisan cemetery and the Monument to the Liberators of Belgrade were renovated for the first time since the 1980s in 2009, in the honor of the visit of Dmitry Medvedev, but the contradictions continue, as when, in 2005, Serbia was the only country without an official diplomatic representation at the Anniversary of the Liberation in Moscow.

⁶⁶ Centre for Cultural and Historical Research of Socialism, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, founded in 2012,

Revisionism spills over to the materiality of the (post)Yugoslav spaces – in Croatia, out of 937 memorials of the National Liberation Struggle till 2014, only 310 were left (Jović, 2017, p. 192). In July 2019, in Slovenia ten such monuments were profaned with nationalist graffiti. Dubravka Stojanović explains the development of the revisionism looking at the Serbian history textbooks which were first amended in 1993/1994 (Stojanović, 2010, p. 222), and argues that in all these revisions “anti-communism was used as the key ideological tool, as the new authorities appeared to think that it would provide them with the most sympathy and support from the voters, who were deeply divided... It was necessary to compromise the Yugoslav communists’ victory in the war, as it was the source of their later political authority.

While the political leaders in Croatia fervently distance themselves from Yugoslavia, Serbian leaders take a more ambiguous stand. Aleksandar Vučić, now President of the Republic of Serbia and previously Prime Minister, in his populist narratives and self-praises likes to make a comparison with Tito, claiming that he managed to achieve more than Tito (“Vučić: Za tri godine uradio sam koliko i Tito u bivšoj Jugoslaviji”, 2016), but at the same time when discussing workers’ rights policies, he declares the need to distance from socialist policies, criticizing people’s *socialist mentality*. Serbia’s mainstream narrative is far more complex given its structural position before, during and after the Yugoslav wars. Slobodan Milošević has claimed the Serbian participation in the war as an attempt to preserve Yugoslavia and he never distanced from socialism itself, along with his wife, Mirjana Marković, being a nominally fervent communist throughout Milošević’s reign. It was in the 1990s that Serbian nationalist discourse established what Nataša Govedarica excellently explains as an “ambivalent position in which nationalism found itself regarding Yugoslavia as a vault of Serbs, but also claiming that Serbs were the only Yugoslavs, rejecting communism that was killing Serbian nation but at the same time, claiming that only Serbs were the Partisans” (Govedarica, 2012, p. 184).

In 2000, when Milošević’s regime fell as a result of lost elections and the so-called 5th of October revolution, the new political elites coming from Milošević’s opposition parties “freed” Serbia from him but also from communism. The true revisionist policies have been implemented only then, through parliamentary memory laws. In Serbia, just as in Slovenia and Croatia, the revisionist discourse is ingrained in the national reconciliation concept, leading to depoliticization and ethnification of anti-fascism (Đureinović, 2018a, 2018b). In

history textbooks, Draža Mihailović, the leader of the Chetnik movement, was suddenly presented as a fine educated man and Chetnik's collaboration with the Nazi forces was not, or barely, mentioned (Stojanović, 2010, pp. 136–137) and in historiography, the revisionist stances and publications started flourishing (Vučetić, 2018). The Parliament, in the name of national reconciliation, adopted in 2004 the Law on Rights of Veterans, War Invalids and Members of Their Families⁶⁷, granting the veterans of the Yugoslav Army in the Homeland and Ravna Gora Chetniks the same status as the Partisans. In 2006, the Law on Rehabilitation⁶⁸ was adopted with the aim to administer the “rehabilitation of individuals who were, without an administrative or court ruling, deprived of their life, liberty or other rights in the period from April 6, 1941 to the day of implementation of this law, and who lived on the territory of the Republic of Serbia”, further amended in 2011. In 2009, the government initiated the formation of the State Committee for Determining the Circumstances of the Execution of General Dragoljub Draža Mihailović and the State Committee for Finding and Marking Secret Graves with Remains of the Individuals Who Were Executed After the Liberation in 1944 (shortened to: State Committee for Secret Graves of the Individuals Executed After September 12, 1944) (Radanović, 2014, pp. 143–174). All these legislative changes were initiated and supported by the Democratic Party, before the takeover of SNS. Dubravka Stojanović explains these memory policies as representing the new memory narrative: “Communists took the place of archenemies, almost substituting the Turks as usual suspects and explanation for all our failures” (Stojanović, 2009, p. 266); while marginalized mnemonic actors such as The Society for the Truth about People's Liberation Struggle 1941-1945 were not able to reach the media and wider public. The revisionist memory politics was visible in national museums, as one of many examples has been in 2014 in the Historical Museum of Serbia in Belgrade. Under the support of the Ministry of Culture, the exhibition named “In the Name of the People! Political Repression in Serbia 1944-1953” represented the events in the aftermath of the Second World War. The exhibition seemed “inspired by the House of Terror in Budapest” (Đureinović, 2018a, p. 89).

⁶⁷ Zakon o pravima boraca, vojnih invalida i članova njihovih porodica, Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije 137/04,

⁶⁸ Zakon o rehabilitaciji, Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije 33/06, 92/11,

Yet, 2009 brought what Dubravka Stojanović calls “the revision of the revision” (Stojanović, 2011, p. 261): for the visit of Dmitry Medvedev, at the time President of the Russian Federation, and subsequently the visit of Vladimir Putin in 2014, the celebrations of the Liberation Day of Belgrade (20 October) were re-introduced (Đureinović, 2018a, p. 94). As differing from the state supported commemorations in Croatia, in Serbia the commemorations dedicated to the Chetnik movements are rather “bottom-up initiatives” – by the Association of Victims of Communism and Political Prisoners, SPO, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Karađorđević family (Đureinović, 2018a, p. 99).

The self-identified left-wing last pioneers oppose, first and foremost, the revisionist efforts of the mainstream discourses to erase Yugoslav history. A Member of Parliament from the Socialist Party of Serbia opposes (26-SR-1975-F):

We had the historical facts and those are the historical facts. And based on that you could determine what you think about it. If you were a healthy child from a healthy family, and majority of us were, then it was natural to choose the side of Boško Buha.... my disrespect towards Chetniks is a consequence, how should I put it, of what I know about that war because I was told by the people I trust and I believe that everything they said is completely true.

The Socialist Party of Serbia was the only political party in the Parliament opposing the revisionist legislation – despite being the fervent nationalist force responsible for leading the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. But for the Member of Parliament quoted above, the left-wing anti-fascist orientation of the party was the key factor for joining them; showing, yet again, the ambivalent understanding of the left-wing political space in Serbia today.

What is important is also the European perspective, with a different reading. A self-identified left-wing Member of Parliament, even if his party would be rather positioned as center liberal - in his own words, explains that denying antifascism is actually distancing from the European heritage as well: „They [antifascist struggles] are not denied in Austria, they are not denied in Germany, not in France, Poland, Italy... So it has to be a backbone, you cannot be ashamed of Sutjeska and Neretva“ (40-SR-1974-M). Yet the complex processes of “de-communizing” antifascism are part of the European memory politics and transnational activism (Grosescu et al., 2020), enhancing the revisionist efforts in the (post)Yugoslav space.

The main argument against revisionist discourses is the attempt to erase the ideas that were, in their eyes, the key for Yugoslav socialism: “It is a war against the idea of Yugoslavia where,

those ideas are destroyed, are attacked. And those are the ideas of self-management, the ideas of socialism and the ideas of brotherhood and unity” (37-SR-1977-M). Yet, as in Slovenia and Croatia, the last pioneers notice that there is an ongoing change, that certain processes unraveling are opening more space for debating Yugoslavia and socialism. Generational positionality and the political socialization of Yugoslav childhood, as well as traumatic socialization of the Yugoslav wars, leaves the last pioneers remembering the happy childhoods, but not having had been responsible for the dissolution and the wars, and most generally not having participated in them. Political positionality can undertone the debates on the Yugoslav past, as previously noted, but never in the aim of erasing the Yugoslav experience. Rasza (2015) has in his ethnography of grassroots activism already noted specific developments in the direction of imagining alternatives and the return of the political hope. Marginal as they might seem, the generation of the last pioneers as artists, writers, musicians, activists, researchers, scientists, has introduced new dynamics into the *region*. As they are more and more joining institutional political spaces, we will see if their specific generational position will develop into a political change. Among the interviewees in Serbia that the most fervent revisionist came from self-identifying libertarian, a Member of Parliament, apparently impatient to leave the interview: „Antifascism is a Yugoslav fabrication which was used to cover the fact that, when Russians occupied us, our freedom was taken away. And that denial of freedom did not differ at all from the one by fascists in 1941. So that we wouldn't call it a communist revolution we made up the term antifascism “ (25-SR-1976-M). As in the other two countries, the right-wing last pioneers repeat the tropes about communist repression and elimination of “tens of thousands” of Serbian intellectual elite representatives, but without going into the discussion more deeply nor providing more elaborate reflections.

As a generation is being formed through experiences connected by interpretation (Mannheim, 1952), regardless that the national level mainstream memory battles seem to revolve around the Second World War, the last pioneers do not discuss it at large and in-depth in their narratives. Some might express a sense of pride and the disbelief of the achievements of the Partisans, and a few right-wing interviewees make a link between the Second World War and the war in the 1990s; but not more than this. It could be explained as a consequence of a general unease of the last pioneers to discuss history and historical facts, with an exception of a few interviewees that are historians themselves: interestingly enough, the majority of historians have self-identified as the right-wing. Otherwise, the last pioneers feel insecure about

their own knowledge on the Yugoslav history and they question everything through their narratives – the public memory battles have reinforced the sense of insecurity, given the amounts of contradicting so-called historical facts being used, including a large amount of fake data. There is a visible salience of use of idioms like: “I don’t know”; “I am not an expert”; “I did not research it”; “I am not sure” etc. Caution is raised when trying to establish their own version of the historical developments, as what it seems only a natural response to the cacophony of cognitive dissonances in the public and private space.

Anti-Yugoslav last pioneers

Whenever anticommunism would appear during the interviews, among the right-wing and the center liberal last pioneers, there was a shared trait of these discourses among all of the three researched countries. Communism is always presented as it was more repressive in their own respective republic: Slovenian anticommunists would claim the repression in Yugoslavia was the strongest in Slovenia; Serbian anticommunists would claim the repression was the strongest in Serbia and Croatian anticommunists would claim the repression was the strongest against the Croats. At the same time, not in one single narrative has a last pioneer experienced - personally, or within their closest family - any of the repression they mention. Repression is being used as a well known fact or common knowledge, but without any personal memory. Our previously quoted jumpy libertarian MP, a fervent anti-Yugoslav, elaborates: “What I understood, at the age of 13, is that we are living in a society where there is no freedom. And it was getting on my nerves... to me freedom was always the most important thing in life and I would give up anything except freedom, so I was happy that communism was falling apart” (25-SR-1976-M). This is the only narrative that directly expressed memory on happiness of the dissolution of the country, through the prism of anticommunism, and the only example of negation of antifascism. The other interviewees, even in cases of political imprisonment or political emigration in the larger family, were more prone to balanced reflections on the Yugoslav history and the Yugoslav regime.

Another strong anti-Yugoslav narrative comes from a far right-wing last pioneer from Dalmatia, explicitly reinterpreting his memories and knowledge on the Yugoslav times through his current political positionality, while explaining how the repression against Croats was peculiarly violent (63-HR-1974-M):

We often say in Croatia, [it was] a prison of the Croatian people and it really was that. If you know that in Šibenik, only Serbs were police captains... since forever. If you know that in total of five high schools [in Šibenik], in four, the directors were Serbs. If you know that in all possible key positions, now I speak only in the context of Serbs and Croats, all were Serbs. If you know that in the Yugoslav People's Army... how many generals were Serbs, how many Croats? I never heard someone swear a Partisan mother, a German mother or a Chetnik mother. Obviously, I am remembering now, most of those fights, those quarrels, were with Orthodox Serbs. So, someone taught someone, at some point in time, that their family is different and then, he swore at my Ustasha mother. So in 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986.

And he continues to explain why he objects positive memories on Yugoslavia, even as he himself has shared many during the interview:

It gets on my nerves that, today, we started talking about Yugoslavia as a myth...it was nice in Yugoslavia. It was nice for me in Yugoslavia, you know why? Because I was a kid. When I remember queues for bread, queues for oil, for detergent..... My parents did not have a vacation house because they were not in the Party... or, for example, you have Catholic Christmas, an important holiday that was always respected in the Croatian nation. We went to school on that day, not only that we went to school, but some professors would give assignments on that day.

Important to note is that none of these negative memory narratives appeared when the interviewee was reminiscing his childhood; all of the negative references actually started being prominent only once the interviewee started narrating his experiences of the dissolution and the Yugoslav wars.

Only another view criticizing the secular state regime in Yugoslavia came from a Member of Parliament from Sandžak who was viewing Yugoslav policies and the Antifascist Front of Women as a violent attack on the patriarchal family and Muslim religion through legislation prohibiting the veil and hijab.⁶⁹ Interestingly enough, one right-wing last pioneer from Slovenia criticizes communism exactly by saying that “it was like a religion” (8-SLO-1978-M), insinuating its dogmatic character. So besides the general deficiencies of the system or its alleged corruption, the secularity of the state is identified as one of the key fallacies of the Yugoslav communist regime.

Yet our Catholic conservative interviewee from Osijek, coming from a politically “mixed” Yugoslav family, has ambiguous views on the Yugoslav history while embracing the social-democratic values as framed in Christianity, but distancing herself openly today from the

⁶⁹ In 1951 in Yugoslavia the Law on the prohibition of hijab was adopted,

Catholic Church. Her memories on the religious freedom in Yugoslavia are as follows (58-HR-1975-F):

...literally behind the Iron Curtain. We were not allowed to go to religious education [even if she previously talked about her father being a hero for standing up to the Party for marrying in church and waking them, children, up every Sunday to go to church]... We were not supposed to raise our hand in school, I remember that. Our teacher was calling us out, asking who attends religious education... Then he would make a list...I don't know how it was in Serbia. We were on a list, what can we do, children, we raised our hands. They had us somewhere in a little black notebook, but we did not suffer any consequences because of that. I cannot say. But I don't know if we were protected because my father was in the Party – I cannot say that. But I know mum was always saying – don't say you go to church. They were hiding it. They were hiding that we had two uncles in Germany. They were hiding that the third uncle was persecuted by UDBA, he had a lot of troubles.

The same interviewee that previously narrated memories how her father, a member of the Party, woke her up for religious education she was regularly attending. As in the previous case, memories that do not appear when solely narrating their childhoods, or complete opposite recollections, start appearing only when the dissolution and the wars, thus the Yugoslav history as interpreted in the public discourse begins being discussed.

For one last pioneer, a Member of Parliament from HDZ, the problem was, as he claims, that one could not get an apartment if s/he was not a Party member, but he *luckily* had a grandfather who was a Partisan, so his family did obtain an apartment. A Member of Parliament from SDP, remembering economic scarcity in the 1980s and the gas crisis when the car plate system was introduced: “as kids, we had problems that the parents had to... I mean, we were lucky that both mum and dad had a car and one had an even and one had an odd number car plates. So we could always drive one of the two cars” (51-HR-1979-M). In personal examples, somehow the last pioneers were always *lucky* to avoid the repression or the repercussions of the general repression, or the little black notebooks, that they *remember* existing in Yugoslavia; taking us back to the discursive strategy of *exceptionalism*.

Whatever the negative memories on Yugoslavia are, they are mostly constructed as second-hand memories or post-memories from the previous generations, largely the generation of the parents of the last pioneers. Still, negative memories appear much more rarely than the positive ones. And even when the negative memories come to the surface, they undergo a process of negotiation - even during the interview itself - taking various back and forth reflections, narrations and re-narrations and often ending in confusion or unsure views. The processes of negotiating seem to be at hand at its strongest when discussing the official and

the unofficial history of Yugoslavia. Generational positionality, but also their present political positionality, put the last pioneers between highly contradicting narratives and telling their life stories in these interviews was an attempt to create meaning of these contradictions, to find a solution for the cognitive dissonances.

Sometimes the negative perceptions on the Yugoslav times, as embedded in the political positionality of the last pioneers, also stem out of the lack of research on specific issues and inability for contextualization, or just simplification – like previously the lack of computers was raised in the times when computers did not exist, one of the interviewees in Slovenia from a liberal center political party raised the issue of lack of recognition of LGBT rights in socialist Yugoslavia. Without diminishing the importance of the issue, contextualizing the global situation regarding LGBT rights and actually acknowledging the lack of specifically violent, systematic and widespread repression against LGBT individuals (Dota, 2017) would render this argument misplaced; or at least questioned.

It is important to note that anti-communism and anti-Yugoslavism do not necessarily go together, especially in Slovenia and Serbia, while the two positions remain strongly intertwined in Croatia. Yet remembering, re-remembering and re-narrating the negative sides of Yugoslav history and the socialist times, does not result in any support for the conflicts in the 1990s. The war was, as previously noted, unexpected and perceived as a top down endeavor.

Who led the war?

The narratives on the war remain impersonal: it is always “they”, “them”, “someone”, “a war happened”, etc. Distancing from perpetrators, but also victims, reflects the generational sentiment of having no control over the events at the time, and seemingly, not much has changed today. Yet, discussing the atrocities of the wars and the dangers and horrors nationalism has brought upon, the left-wing last pioneers recognize that some of the political repression in Yugoslavia was *maybe*, in the light of that war, to some extent justified. On the terrace of the hotel in Kragujevac, a local political party member puts it: “They at least kept some people in prison, who belonged in prison, but still they kept also some who did not belong, but not as much. Now we are all in prison” (28-SR-1977-M). The broken (Post)Yugoslav space is felt as more limiting than the Yugoslav times ever were.

The war was not chosen by the last pioneers, nor led by their generation even if some of them were forced to participate. The rise of the nationalist politics is also something they largely witnessed before they were even able to vote. Regardless of their political positionality today leans toward the left or the right-wing part of the political spectrum, they largely deny that their personal differences between themselves and other Yugoslavs remain an obstacle for progress, within their own countries or within the (post)Yugoslav space. Trying to fathom the history of Yugoslavia, they struggle with understanding how their intimate memories correlate to the hegemonic discourses of hatred and repression, and how those memories influence their values today. If we understand that the “generational nostalgic sentiment... creates as it conserves” (Davis, 2011, p. 450), the subversive space of dialogue between various memory narratives of the last pioneers, as much as the so-called *Yugonostalgia*, provides an open space for new realities and new potentialities; counter-memory creating “the political conditions for change” (Molden, 2016, p. 130).

The interviewees coming from different parts of the political spectrum display relevant differences, regarding the memories on interethnic relations in Yugoslavia. The right-wing interviewees, and sometimes the ones identifying as center, have a stronger tendency today to claim the success of multi-ethnic life was a lie and that the differences between ethno-national communities were “too big”. It is interesting to note is that it is never explained in which way those differences were too big and what does it actually mean. The only argument for denying any possibility of interethnic cohabitation is the war of the 1990s, which confirms that the interethnic relations were not the (key) cause of the Yugoslav conflict. If the interethnic hatreds and grievances were so strong, they would have had to remain remembered among the children of the late 1980s. Unanimous memory among all interviewees was yet that the war was not possible to imagine.

In order to counteract the mainstream narratives on the interethnic hatreds, the memories of the last pioneers take different interpretations and many various examples. Sometimes they are being a depiction of the sense of continuity of an anti-nationalist comprehension of the world: „I did not wear myself out – not which ethno-nationality, or which origin I am. It was not important to me when I was a Yugoslav, so it's not important to me now“ (55-HR-1977-M). The importance of defying the imposed differences translates into an active political statement for today: „Yugoslav Partisans, whatever ethno-nationality, fought against the same

scum. And today when we are separated, today when there is no longer our country, I do not see any reason why we would again divide into Serbian and Croatian left.“ (56-HR-1980-M). Regardless of the current ethno-national identification, meaning attributed to the identification in the childhood years and Yugoslavia of the 1980s remains relevant – a Slovenian Democratic Party, a right-wing nationalist party, Member of Parliament explains the impossibility of reattribution of ethno-national identifications today to the past times: „But Bojan Križaj⁷⁰ – he was a Yugoslav. He wasn't a Slovene, or a Serb, or a Croat...“ (3-SLO-1978-M); giving us one of the examples where Yugoslavism relays rather on the generational than political positionality.

The last pioneers, at the same time, do not deny the social realities of differences existing on the ground, like the linguistic diversity: „Before the war, I had no clue. The only thing I was aware of was that in Serbia you say *bioskop*, and we say *kino*. But I was only aware that it was said differently, from the comic books“ (43-HR-1981-M). But in Yugoslav society, the linguistic diversity did not have a meaning of insurmountable differences of a common life.

In the Socialist Party of Serbia headquarters, in her offices serving me coffee and after a while rushing off to the Parliament to vote on a law, I had one of the most interesting interview experiences. Looking at my own positionality, entering the SPS HQ was exciting but also uneasy. Meeting an open, left-wing ideologically clear and progressive, Member of Parliament; moreover important for me – a strong woman, led me to listen even more carefully. Originally from Kosovo, today living in Belgrade, our Member of Parliament, looking at the Yugoslav history and (post)Yugoslav future, defines the key question for her, as follows: “Because if we are not different, then who is different? .. there lies the answer to our question which is a historical one. And it is our responsibility not to let our children to divide” (26-SR-1975-F). The puzzle of a more complex understanding of how did the last pioneers choose the political organizations they adhered to remains as a question for further research.

This atmosphere of open questions that are yet to be answered, also opens an opportunity for opposing narratives to be articulated in the political field, bringing new hope onto the horizon. Unsure of their knowledge on Yugoslav history; re-narrating their Yugoslav life (hi)stories

⁷⁰ Bojan Križaj was a highly popular alpine skier from Slovenia,

and finding ways to solve the dissonances between the mainstream narratives and personal remembrance; the last pioneers sometimes find Yugonostalgic space as the only space possible to ask questions and forge new solidarities and potentialities among *the peoples that recognize each other, even when they are pretending to be something else.*

8. Yugoslavia – a memory of an era or identity for the future?

History is not the past. It is the present. We carry our history with us. We are our history.

James Baldwin, *I am Not Your Negro*, 2016

Memory narratives of the generation of the last pioneers are created through their attempts at finding their way through the multitudes of mainstream discourses, the counter-memory narratives and their own intimate memories that contradict or at least, convolute the mainstream, along with sharing life trajectories. They share a sense of belonging to a specific generation, a lost generation, once victims of the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav wars, and today victims of the neoliberal capitalism and the never-ending *transition*. The last pioneers believe that, as *children of socialism*, they were taught that a different world is possible, a different world from the one they found themselves in their adult age. As they struggle to fully comprehend the dissolution and the wars that they have witnessed, they are aware of their responsibility to discuss those events, even without being directly and personally responsible for them. They believe that a generational change in the political field is much needed, even if they remain skeptical towards their own capacity to be that generation who will change their societies.

The continuous sense of dissociation which has been previously underlined is indeed connected to the fact that, largely, the last pioneers are only now entering more powerful and prominent positions in the political field. It was noticeable that even in the short span between the period of fieldwork in 2017-2018 and the writing of the thesis in 2020, the last pioneers, including some of the interviewed ones, started taking up more space in the political arena of their countries. It would be interesting to see how the sense of helplessness and disconnection from the political power will transform in the next decade, yet for the time being and at the time of the research, a shared feeling among the politically active last pioneers was that there was little they could change or do.

8.1 We are at home everywhere, in (post)Yugoslavia

(Post)Yugoslav home

Among the spatial images of Yugoslavia that come into mind of the last pioneers when asked about their associations with Yugoslavia, the most common trope, above all, is the Adriatic Sea, as a memory and as present. Once it was accessible for (almost) everyone, through organized summer vacation houses that were provided to the blue collar workers, the pioneers, and the middle classes; today it remains as a place of yearning for most (post)Yugoslavs. For Slovenia and Croatia, the Adriatic Sea represents also a place of contestation today – the Piran Bay is a place of border dispute, regardless of a ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2017. In a café in Zagreb, while next door there was a music rehearsal for a wedding, a HDZ member, from Zagorje, tells us a joke on the topic: “And then you ask whose bay it is? In our circles, we always make fun of it, so we say Serbian. How Serbian, man? Well, Kostić⁷¹ is the owner of the land from the Croatian side, Kostić is the owner of the land on the Slovenian side, in between is just the sea” (60-HR-1983-M). The joke told was part of a good atmosphere of the interview, coming from an interviewee with (post)Yugoslav experience of life in Belgrade and strong emotional connections with *the region* which he is still nurturing. This anecdote successfully depicts the irony of the parallel processes of obtaining statehood, especially through the war, and losing that sovereignty through political economy of free market privatizations.

It is important to understand that, like we underlined previously, early in the 1990s the populations were not unanimously supporting the full independence. It is even more so the case regarding the change of the economic system. If one would look into the arguments of the 1990s, one of the many reasons, argued at the time, why Croatia, for example, should become independent was opposition to solidarity transfers towards the poorer republics and countries that existed within socialist Yugoslavia. Putting it shortly, the argument claimed that the Croats deserve to keep their money from *their* Adriatic coast. Today, people are

⁷¹ Miodrag Kostić, a Serbian businessman, is the owner of Istrian Hotels, part of his MK Group, who bought Skipper Resort Savudrija in Croatia but also Kempinski Hotel in Portorož in Slovenia (including shares in the Airport Portorož and Bay Portorož). This is how Kostić acquired ownership over the most valuable property on both sides of the Piran Bay,

growingly aware that, in the free market economy, they are not the ones “keeping the money” and the coast no longer remains “theirs” - they lose access to the beaches, given into concessions to large private hotels and resorts.

Reclaiming the Yugoslav space is by itself a resistance strategy, denying the border reality of (post)Yugoslav states. It is also what Tanja Petrović presents as “mental maps” of former Yugoslavs, within which she identifies three key narratives: the narrative of shrinking of the geographical space; the narrative of reducing the space of free movement; as well as narratives through which alternative Yugoslav territories, such as virtual or miniature Yugoslavia, are produced (Petrović, 2007, p. 265). The most common narrative I have identified in my research is the narrative of *home*. Yugoslav space, whether we wish to signify it as *post* or not, continues to produce a sentiment of home, regardless of the political positionality, the country of origin and residence, and ethno-national identity of the actor. Yugoslavia represents a home, which is simultaneously lost and still existing today. If we can be nostalgic only for what we have irretrievably lost, how can we be nostalgic for what we still have today? This is another paradox of assigned meanings to Yugonostalgia – sometimes (post)Yugoslavs deny framing their reflections as Yugonostalgic, because as they say, they still live (in) Yugoslavia. As a center liberal Member of Parliament from Slovenia puts it: “But I understand it as Yugoslavia. It is my space where I can be at home... I don’t feel like a stranger” (5-SLO-1981-M). Nuances are attributed across the (post)Yugoslav space: some would rather describe Zagreb as closer to Vienna than to the rest of Yugoslavia, but they all feel upset, or see it as an injustice, when they have to wait at the borders, cross the borders, show their passport at the borders and get their passports stamped at the borders. The borders are considered a nuisance and an unnecessary burden in the (post)Yugoslav space.

Beyond the borders, the last pioneers acknowledge a shared (post)Yugoslav economic and cultural space. The common market and economic cooperation, as a product of capitalism but also an emotional consumer attachment to Yugoslav products and brands, is seen as both a necessity and an unavoidable future.

Yet, within the common space, the distance also appears. Kosovo is mostly forgotten in the narratives of the interviewees, and not only in relation to the linguistic and cultural issues and memories. Kosovo has been the least visited part of Yugoslavia, it never appears in the memories of the last pioneers and it is often even forgotten to be included in any meaning

making or reflection on the Yugoslav history. It only appears as the problematic poorest region of the country, or through a direct reference to the conflict at the end of the 1990s and NATO bombing, or rare references among the right-wing interviewees in Serbia as an important issue for Serbia today. But in an overall context, Kosovo seems as excluded from the reflections and sentiments on the (post)Yugoslav space. As the linguistic difference and thus cultural separation most certainly play a role, and is explained by a couple of interviewees, nevertheless the social distance observed among the generation of the last pioneers shows that for the Yugoslav, Kosovo Albanian does represent the Other.

If we were to try to measure the distancing level, for the interviewees from Croatia and Serbia, the next on the list would be Slovenia: remarks appear regularly on how Slovenia was always something different, or yet today it is the (post)Yugoslav place where they feel the least at home, or how there is the biggest linguistic difference. Yet, while Kosovo, feels like an excluded place, Slovenia remains included in the (post)Yugoslav space, even if more distant than the rest.

North Macedonia follows, just behind with Montenegro, barely ever showing up in the narratives. The (post)Yugoslav space for the last pioneers, within the three countries researched, truly means Croatia and Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and ambiguously Slovenia, and as almost an addendum, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

Nevertheless, no matter the salience of their appearance in the narratives, all of the former republics of Yugoslavia do not represent *a foreign country* for the last pioneers. As the linguistic proximity is stronger, the homebound feeling follows. The spatial dimension of *home* is most often narrated when asked about the cultural space and whether they connect their memories to the present times. A right-wing, SNS, Member of Parliament from Serbia asserts: “And we are so similar that even if we wanted to be different, we wouldn’t be able to be” (33-SR-1981-M). Yugoslav approach to cultural proximities among the people, as generationally embedded it is, given the political positionality opens further questions; the legacy of the mythology of *the Big Serbia* or negation of diversities, no matter how big and small, can be read into various statements of the last pioneers. Accordingly, reading the narratives in their larger frameworks remains essential for full understanding of the rising phenomena.

Yearning for the Yugoslav space simultaneously with feeling it as home, the last pioneers move onto the more recent memories. Once the wars ended, the *transition* started, they have become adults and a new century commenced. A new era began in what is now called the *post* Yugoslav, *ex* Yugoslav, *former* Yugoslav space or *Yugosphere*, a space that is “not a simple reintegration or restoration, but a reconfiguration of what had existed before” (Baker, 2015, p. 124).

The sentiment of a home reflects also in international arena. Our political actors, who participate in the work of European and international organizations, always underlined their personal connections with other (post)Yugoslav representatives. The typical event, mentioned in almost all narratives, is getting together of *the Yugoslav group*, especially in (truly) foreign countries. Once again generational positionality supercedes political positionality, opening at least more direct and easier communication channels; even if not necessarily political actions or initiatives.

The need to come home sometimes is being performed through different means. Sometimes, it is related to the curiosity, longing to visit a certain place, even while staying anti-Yugoslav, like a center left-wing Member of Parliament from Serbia who said: “I looked forward more to Sarajevo than to Paris” (32-SR-1979-F).

Future of Yugoslavia

The horizon of Yugoslavia for the last pioneers remains open in the future as well, in various different forms - all other than a nation state. When asked whether a new Yugoslavia is possible, the answer is unanimously negative. Leaving a possibility for unexpected developments, if ever, the last pioneers envisage it for future generations. Their doubts are based in a sour aftertaste of the dissolution and war trauma and, as they say, “bad experiences” or “fear or reprisal”. Some believe foreign powers would not welcome such a development, and some doubt that the current political elites and/or populations have *the maturity to deserve* Yugoslavia: “Just, it’s a question, who is capable of doing it? So it’s impossible (laughter)” (17-SLO-1979-M). Our last pioneers, both as political actors and as citizens, continue to hold to the sense of helplessness.

In spatial terms, Yugoslavia does not cease to exist nor will it, if we try to understand visions beyond nation state. Internationalism on the left-wing part of the political spectrum naturally inclines towards supranational projects - an activist from Serbia reflects (30-SR-1980-F):

Imagine if it was all Yugoslavia. That idea is fantastic to me. And now, call it Yugoslavia or somehow differently, or some Balkan alliance or what. So, the idea to make a community, a political community, which will not be made on the basis and on the classical model of a nation state, for me that is the best that can be thought, in which direction to go with a progressive, political idea.

But depending on the political positionality, the spatial perspective takes different interpretations. The center liberals welcome a common market, free movement of capital and people, together with the right-wing. Depending on their political positionality, it is seen as inevitability or a necessity: “As a matter of fact, Serbia is the biggest market for Croatia and the other way round” (55-HR-1977-M); or an unavoidable evil: “Economic space of Yugoslavia certainly exists; it is tragic, as everywhere in capitalism” (30-SR-1980-F). SDS, the right-wing political party in Slovenia, members do not exclude possibility of a confederation, reiterating their rather anti-communist than anti-Yugoslav stance— sometimes claiming that *the only problem are the Croats in between the Slovenes and the Serbs* (15-SLO-1978-M). Expectedly, the interviewees in Croatia generally have been the most skeptical towards the idea of a new state.

The curious case of the Covid-19 vaccination case in Serbia open the question of spatiality of the (post)Yugoslav *region* (CNN, “This man’s country offers free vaccines to foreigners”, 31 March 2021). At the beginning of 2021, Serbia has used its geopolitical position to order vaccines from all parts of the world, including Russia and China. This has led to one of the quickest vaccination campaigns against Covid-19 crisis, taking up the battle against a strong anti-vaccine movement. Most peculiarly, the Government has decided to open the vaccination to foreigners – especially the ones from *the region*. Thousands of people have traveled to Serbia and the Government explained their move as, on one side, a human gesture and on the other side, as a spatial reality. In a global pandemic, with so many professional and private connections within the (post)Yugoslav space, it would be difficult to fight the virus without sharing the immunization process with the neighboring countries. Regardless of all possible readings of such a move - certainly also a part of both national and international political campaign of the leaders, we can see a solidarity gesture and an understanding of the

(post)Yugoslav space beyond the national borders in a government led by a Prime Minister who by her birth age belongs to the generation of the last pioneers.

YU or EU?

When analyzing the present and future perspectives of the (post)Yugoslav space, the European Union appeared a couple of times as the new framework, a new spatial paradigm, which will bring (post)Yugoslav countries together again. Other than the fact of a possible future unifying factor, the European Union has not been proved to be salient in any of the narratives of the last pioneers – it rarely appeared in our long interviews. When it did, the EU was most often viewed from a skeptical point of view, both regarding its survival and regarding the benefits of the EU membership.

Almost all interviewees deeply believe that in a way Yugoslavia will be united again in all forms except the political one. For a Democratic Party Member of Parliament in Serbia, there is a strong proximity between YU and EU – in the value system: “The European union is the closest to Yugoslavia by its values” (40-SR-1974-M). Yet, the cultural Yugoslavism persists, as we see, among the generation of the last pioneers and is almost never brought into the question. The political unions however are.

For some of the more EU optimistic last pioneers, the political unification is not relevant anyway. A Member of Parliament from the Social Democratic Party in Croatia believes: “I mean it’s like Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, they separated, then tried again, and nothing worked. Then we should nicely divorce and be friends. At the end of the day, we all now enter a much bigger marriage, and that is European Union” (51-HR-1979-M). The European Union is seen as the inevitable political fate of the (post)Yugoslav space, even if not always a welcome one.

More often skeptical towards the EU, on the left-wing part of the political spectrum, some believe this will represent a step back instead of a step forward for the (post)Yugoslav countries: “We will be united in the EU, a worse federation and a worse community than the one we were in” (47-HR-1978-M); to which a prominent institutional left-wing political party member and a local parliament member, adds: “Entering EU has only brought us barbed wire on the borders” (54-HR-1980-M). The European Union seems rather as an imposed entity, than a chosen one; standing as such in juxtaposition with the socialist Yugoslavia which the

peoples of Yugoslavia fought for and built. Once again, the helplessness and distancing color the narratives of the last pioneers – even if such a Yugoslavia becomes, it will not be *ours*.

A sense of “we”

The narrative, when discussing Yugoslavism and identity, always shifts to an undefined “we” as I have previously noted. And the seemingly undefined “we” relates to Yugoslavs, yet not always a same aggregate. For a right-wing interviewee from Slovenia, the perception is that the Slovenian cultural space is closer to Tirol and Bavaria than to the Balkans, thus his “we” remains loyal to the ethno-national concept of Slovenes. The other last pioneers might understand this perception as another sign of Balkanism and orientalism, and part of the state building narratives of Slovenia and Croatia which were embedded in distancing from the Others – Yugoslavs and/or Balkan peoples. When “we” leaves the ethno-national identity behind and becomes Yugoslav or Balkan, this imaginary of a common cultural space often hides Balkanism, and self-orientalism. In some of the explanations of their understanding of common cultural space, the last pioneers call upon the concepts of the Ottoman legacy and mentality, all the while in Serbia explaining that it is the precise reason why “Slovenes are different” – ‘they were not under the Ottoman rule’ – even if the same claim would be true for Croatian populations. The generational “We-sense” is explained by Michael Corsten as “a *sense* that the other members of the same generation share similar background assumptions...They do not only have something in common, they have also a (common) sense for (a kind of knowledge about) the fact that they have something in common.” (Corsten, 1999, p. 258). This shared knowledge on sharing something in common as a generation, a Yugoslav political generation, persists among the last pioneers - a right-wing Member of Parliament in Serbia elaborates: “We speak the same language, more or less have the same problems, more or less we live the same. Now whether the average salary in Zagreb is bigger for 20 Euros or in Sarajevo, and whether in Belgrade it is bigger for 20 Euros than in Skopje, more or less that is, our problems are similar. Similar culture, similar heritage, similar history” (33-SR-1981-M).

The unity of a generation, the generation of the last pioneers, the last Yugoslav generation, is reflected also through the fact that in the narratives “us”, “we” and “our” keep relating to the whole of Yugoslavia whenever the topic of Yugonostalgia, Yugoslavism, future of

Yugoslavia or the potential of the Yugoslav idea is discussed. Stemming from this shared generational and Yugoslav outlook, the previously quoted right-wing political party member in Serbia says: “And that is why I say that it is not bad all of it, that insisting on Yugonostalgia. Maybe it will all bring a new good idea; you know a really good idea” (33-SR-1981-M).

Among majority of the interviewees in Croatia and Serbia, the relationship towards the Slovenes is somewhat different – they are considered *the West*. The Other, *the East*, or in this case the Balkans, is considered, as a right-wing Member of Parliament from Croatia explains to us: “an exclusively cultural concept that implies backwardness, narrow-mindedness, rigidity...” (63-HR-1974-M); while a left-wing Member of Parliament from Serbia adds: “Political elites in the whole of Balkans are mentally retarded, including me” (40-SR-1974-M). This dichotomy of East and West is reflected in various narratives. Sometimes the differences that are noted by the last pioneers are reduced to the differences in accents and dialects, while affirming linguistic proximity. Interestingly enough, the dialect diversity is actually considered as an attractive trait as it appears often when explaining the falling in love with other ethno-nationalities from (post)Yugoslav space. While dialects may differ, for the majority of the last pioneers, a common culture means a common mentality. When making meaning of their Yugoslav memories and the impact of growing up in Yugoslavia, the last pioneers often suggest that there is a shared mentality. In narratives on mentality, I have identified two distinctive features, one uncovering auto-Orientalism and the other anti-communism: *the others have it better than us* and *the socialist mentality*.

The notion of *the others have it better than us* relates to always underlining other (post)Yugoslav citizens as better off: for Slovenes, Croats are more united and Serbs are braver; for Croats, Slovenes are more organized and Serbs are braver; for Serbs, Slovenes are “Western” and Croats are more united. In Croatia and Serbia, Slovenia is perceived as the most successful (post)Yugoslav state. To describe their relationship towards Slovenia, the last pioneers use idioms like “they were always different”; “richer”; “harder working”; “different mentality and culture”; “a more successful transition”; “they kept the best from Yugoslav heritage”. Balkanism comes to the fore as “better” in these depictions rather relates to the idea of Slovenia being “more Western”, “more Austro-Hungarian”, “more European” thus “more civilized”. The so-called *socialist mentality* as part of the common culture, heritage and

history is understood as “irrational”, “anti-intellectual”, “lazy”, “lacking in responsibility”, “corrupted”. These descriptions are most often appearing in the narratives of the last pioneers who self-identify as center liberal in their political positioning. Part of the liberal discourse in the (post)Yugoslav space has been a strong embrace of Balkanist perceptions of the region, along with the anti-communist stance.

(Post)Yugoslav culture, cultural Yugoslavism

So what are the first associations when one thinks of Yugoslavia, what are these possible images and senses and ideas that give the meaning to the idea of Yugoslavia? The associations among the last pioneers float from cultural and sport ones (Lepa Brena; Bijelo dugme; Zdravko Čolić; New Wave; Cibona); through events (Sarajevo Olympics); images and sentiments (the ethno-national costumes of all peoples; a big and beautiful country; a nice and optimistic life; careless times; happy childhood; no borders; the Adriatic sea; friendship; togetherness; power) to social and political values and institutions (solidarity; brotherhood and unity; peace and freedom; socialist revolution; modernity; Non Aligned Movement; self-management; the Yugoslav woman).

The cultural (post)Yugoslav space has many distinct meanings for the last pioneers. Peoples’ heritage, language, codes of communication and behavior in society: all of which are elements of the last pioneers’ understanding of culture. In the SPS headquarters, once a political party forging the Yugoslav wars yet in almost all post-Milošević’s governments ever since, their member and a Member of Parliament explains: “Let everyone protect their national identity, they have it, those are old nations, nobody there is an improvised nation... But [we need] to reduce these differences that were imposed and to recognize what is our common goal” (26-SR-1975-F). And a member of HDZ also expressed the need to advance together, as “we are closer between ourselves than we are with Austrians or Hungarians” (60-HR-1983-M). These two last pioneers come from the two parties that were leading the nationalist wars in the 1990s, and today they are demanding the recognition of similarities rather than differences between the ethno-national communities.

Rare interviewees have pointed out that despite the continuity of culture, regime change has led to the discontinuity of cultural policies, notably on the left-wing spectrum of political identification. There was only one interviewee who claimed that the cultural space did not survive the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This Member of Parliament, of a Bosniak minority

political party from Sandžak in Serbia, but also a literary scholar which explains the importance he assigned to Yugoslav literature, illustrates: “Today not a single high school student in Serbia reads Krleža. And you cannot imagine Yugoslav society without Krleža” (38-SR-1982-M). Krleža or Lepa Brena, one could debate which figure is more constitutive of the Yugoslav culture, but with that exception in mind, the rest of the last pioneers claim the continuity of the cultural space, especially being strengthened with internet and social media. An important reflection comes from the left-wing part of the political spectrum – a class approach. In Split, a left-wing political party member from Croatia notices (44-HR-1981-M):

It functions at the level of elitist individuals. I don't think we are elitist by the money we have, but we simply are. The fact that we go to Krokodil⁷², it is a selected group of people, we go to Borka⁷³'s, or that in Sarajevo I know columnists, writers. It is a selected group of people. There are many liberals, some are even nationalists. Of course decent nationalist, there are leftists... There is everything. But it works in a way that type of scene still encourages another type of scene, an equally small number of people. It will never be the same, nor that group was ever dominant... People are still primarily nationalists.

The interviewee is referring to the established cooperation in the world of academia, art or between political actors, most notably left-wing parties and groups, while showing a perception of a restrained spillover effect of the Yugoslav idea. The idea of “Yugoslavism for the elites” is presented from many different perspectives – sometimes as an exception to the rule that the masses are nationalist in the Balkans; sometimes as an answer to the question what is left of the Yugoslav idea when stripped of communism and revolutionary aspect. As this “Yugoslav elitism” stands together with the commodified banal Yugonostalgia, including the popularity of folk and pop music which is often evoked, across the (post)Yugoslav space (see Figure 8.1) – one could come to a conclusions that Yugoslavism, in various forms, transpires both the elites and the masses.

⁷² Krokodil – Engaging Words is a literary festival that takes place in Belgrade on a yearly basis, gathering (post)Yugoslav writers, poets and various artists <http://www.krokodil.rs/>,

⁷³ Borka Pavićević (1947-2019), an established dramaturg and activist, founder of the Center for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade,

Figure 8.1 Kafana SFRJ in Belgrade



Source: Author's archive, 2020

Another example given in this context is the Declaration on the Common Language (*Jezici i nacionalizmi*, 2017), adopted and signed as an outcome of a project “Languages and Nationalisms” by a number of intellectuals and activists from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. While some criticized the Declaration lacking potency and any courage in the political field, others critically approached it from a class perspective: that it was part of the efforts that remain within a closed and small group of people. A left-wing political party member from Croatia believes that it is simply a wrong approach: “Maybe language is not the priority battle field, I mean fuck it, let’s first deal with Ustasha plates in Jasenovac. You need to defeat nationalism in general, so you could defeat nationalism in language” (43-HR-1981-M). A Member of Parliament from the Social Democratic Party in Croatia, supports the view that the language is not a key issue. It is the precarious socio-economic conditions of today, and in comparison to Yugoslav times. As he puts it: “As the Party secretary said... it is not important if you say kruh or hleb⁷⁴, it’s important that there is enough of it; it is not important if it’s fabrika or tvornica⁷⁵, it’s important that it’s being built. It was in the 1960s [when he said it], but those are the issues that are present even today” (50-HR-1981-M).

⁷⁴ Two ways of saying “bread” in Croatian (kruh) and Serbian (hleb) today,

⁷⁵ Two ways of saying “factory” in Serbian (fabrika) and in Croatian (tvornica) today,

Acknowledging cultural proximity goes beyond saying for the last pioneers in the majority of the cases. As Tito t-shirts are being sold, or Yugonostalgia being used as an encompassing empty signifier for any positive or even neutral reference to Yugoslavia, the ideological discussion on the systems possible outside of the neoliberal capitalism and the ethno-national nation states is being hindered.

Transition to worse

When everything was supposed to change for the better, the economic downfall continued, or was even accelerated, even if paused by a brief return of hope in the early 2000s. Soon enough, the privatization that was part of the *transition* agenda continued to destroy the social tissue of the (post)Yugoslav societies. The effects were felt everywhere, even in Slovenia where a left-wing political party member remembers his mother, while being a single mother, losing her job. And many other last pioneers witnessed their families' socio-economic status collapsing. A local political party member from Istria further explains: "Nobody asked us if we want capitalism or we don't, but we got it and that's it" (55-HR-1977-M).

If the nation state-building goals were achieved, they were followed with unexpected consequences for the peoples. A last pioneer, a HDZ member and a local council representative, concludes: "What was burnt down by war in this region is just a drop in the sea in comparison to what was burnt down by transformation and privatization" (60-HR-1983-M) – even if belonging to the political party which is, at least, partly responsible to that same process of transformation and privatization; another example of continuous dissociation of the last pioneers on the basis of their generational positionality.

The socio-economic crisis and the impoverishment that followed erased any hope, except the memory on the hope which existed in the Yugoslav times. In Serbia, in the particularly affected region of Sandžak, a Member of Parliament recalls (38-SR-1982-M):

Big strikes in the streets.... [Novi] Pazar is for example a town where the most extreme strikes... where one worker, I think in the textile factory Raška, cut his own finger and swallowed it. Another one hammered himself to the wall. Massively, massively did people... I remember people were on strike for months; hunger strikes; rigid strikes. And that is what marked the period after 2000, maybe until 2005 or 2006 when they lost hope, when all those bad privatizations happened. That comprehensive theft of all those resources which gave somewhat hope to people, that maybe glimpse of normal life they had in the 1970s and 1980s will be back.

The disenchantment of the generation of the last pioneers, as well as whole populations of the (post)Yugoslav space, reflects also in the fact that class issues saturate as a code only once the interviewees refer to the present. They notice a disappearance of class mobility and of any promise of a better standard of life. As a trade union member in Central Serbia concludes that the 2000s brought only disappointment: “And then you need a couple of years to understand that nothing changed, except that we stopped fighting” (27-SR-1977-F). The negative perception of the present is widely shared, among all three countries, among the diverse political statuses, numerous professional situations and class nuances. The awakening of the (post)Yugoslav reality for most of the last pioneers confirmed that “nationalism was more an instrument than a cause” (Baker, 2015, p. 129) of Yugoslav wars. The disenchantment with the present opened the possibility for new readings of the Yugoslav past.

The end of the Yugoslav wars in the (post)Yugoslav space brought the concepts of *transition, democracy and transitional justice*. But none of these concepts provided a better quality of life for the people, nor produced successful narrative shifts. People, who were once terrorized by nationalist violence and overnight brought to deep identity ruptures, became entangled in concepts of blame, guilt and responsibility. Without entering into a deeper discussion on transitional justice and its effectiveness, which overpasses the scope of this thesis, in a new book by Lea David “The Past Can’t Heal Us – the Dangers of Mandating Memory in the Name of Human Rights” (2020), David argues how human rights memory agenda can produce further ethno-national divisions and animosities, together with social inequality. Instead of binary concepts of perpetrators and victims, for collective responsibility introduction of concepts such as implicated subject (Rothberg, 2019) providing more nuanced visions of responsibility is much welcome. And following this line of thought, a left-wing activist in Serbia, who was himself a refugee, further elaborates his opposition to the concept, adding an important class perspective: “All that concept of collective responsibility is highly problematic because it completely erases the responsibility that stems from the class. I mean, how does a beggar, who spent the war begging on the Republic Square, have the same responsibility as, I don’t know, Vulin⁷⁶ because they are both Serbs?” (37-SR-1977-M). A

⁷⁶ Aleksandar Vulin is a politician from Serbia, currently Minister of Defence (since 2017). He supported Slobodan Milošević in the 1990s and was one of the key figures of the Yugoslav Left, a political party founded and led by Milošević’s wife, Mirjana Marković,

much needed debate is yet waiting to be opened, in public, political and academic spheres, and in private.

As the past and the present are always entangled, one of the saturated codes that appeared from the interviews was the *negative present*. In their own words: the economic decline; the rise in the materialist culture and a consumerist society; exploitation and misery as the key social norms leading into new slavery and the populations becoming only a cheap labor force; in all three countries, all along the political spectrum. They remark on the lack of social mobility, contrary to the one that existed in socialist Yugoslavia, and they often make observations that anything good and positive is actually the heritage from the socialist times. Post-war emigration continued, notably in Serbia. In Croatia, emigration is a phenomenon that rised in numbers since the EU membership of the country.

After reminiscing his Yugoslav childhood and the hardships he has gone through due to his mother's professional career, in café Kino Europa, our antifascist activist interviewee makes a distinction between the emigration in Yugoslav times and the one which has seriously impacted demographics in Croatia since 2013: "Today it's not anymore... dad goes to work in Germany, so he will send money to mum and kids, to make it easier for us. No, today dad goes *with* mum, kids and two dogs; they sit down in his car and they (all) go. If you have a car. Isn't that a proof that today is worse than it was then?" (56-HR-1980-M).

What Štiks and Horvat enumerate as "general impoverishment, huge public and private indebtness facilitated by a flow of foreign credit, widespread deindustrialisation, social degradation, depopulation through diminished life expectancy and emigration, and general unemployment" (Štiks & Horvat, 2015, p. 2); the last pioneers describe as occupation; colony; no sovereignty and occupying neoliberal ideology. The *transition* is perceived as simply one of the ways of being subordinated to neoliberal ideology, and the interests of global capital by the left-wing last pioneers: "We had the German army which is today the same thing, only as German capital. Today they did not come on their tanks, but with their banks and their companies" (56-HR-1980-M). This shift that happened in the adult life of the last pioneers gets summarized by a Croatian local political party member in Istria: "We traded brotherhood and unity for capital" (55-HR-1977-M). The promises given at the beginning of the dissolution, today in the eyes of the last pioneers, seem broken.

Sitting in a café in Ljubljana, a local social movement turned political party member from Nova Gorica, tries to reconcile his anti-nationalist memory narratives and center left political positionality, with the present in the (post)Yugoslav space (18-SLO-1981-M):

You know what, now everyone's on their own, go, now show yourselves. And now Croats see that their coast did not feed the whole of Yugoslavia, because it cannot feed even the whole of Croatia. Serbian corn did not feed the whole of Yugoslavia, because now it does not feed the whole of Serbia. Macedonian paprika did not feed the whole of Yugoslavia and us, who are the smartest ones here in Slovenia, we also did not feed the whole of Yugoslavia, instead we have homeless people now.

The portrayal of negative and different present is important in the last pioneers' memory narratives as it provides a framework within which those memories are being constructed. A sense of collective defeat and instability is what characterizes the last pioneers' understanding of the present.

Yugoslavism today

So how does, in such a contemporary understanding of their adult lives and identities, Yugoslavism stand? What it means for the last pioneers to be Yugoslav today? How do their ethno-national identities of today dialogue with their Yugoslav memories and (post)Yugoslav identities? What is Yugoslavism in the second decade of 2000s?

Yugoslavism has a long history. Since the 19th century, Yugoslavism has appeared in numerous forms. As an intended state politics adopted by the first Yugoslavia through the concept of integral unitarism, it has failed (Banac, 1988) with the monarchy. Yet, Yugoslavia never ceased to represent an idea (Djokić & Ker-Lindsay, 2011). A deeper insight into the identity politics in socialist Yugoslavia is given in the work of Hilde Katrine Haug “Creating a socialist Yugoslavia” (2012), where she depicts how the national question was framed in the communist discourse. Before the Second World War, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was adhering rather to a unitary approach to Yugoslavism, as an idea of supranationalism, and a federal model of the state. Once socialist Yugoslavia was established, the approach to the so-called national question changed: distancing from the repressive unitarism of the monarchist Yugoslavia, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, while promoting a common Yugoslav culture, “had to tread a fine balance between the two great 'dangers' to the building of a Yugoslav socialist community: 'national particularism' and 'bureaucratic centralism'” (Haug, 2012, p. 161). Since the beginning of the idea of Yugoslavism, language and nationalism issues were debated. In the socialist Yugoslavia, nationalism was perceived

as a class phenomenon and it was concluded that “*Nationalism and socialism cannot go together. They are two contradictory issues.*” (ibid., p. 287).

The Constitution from 1974 seemingly returned to a more particularist approach, also through a partial abandonment of the idea of a common Yugoslav nation. But a unitary Yugoslav nation, in the sense of modernist European nation states, was never the aim of the Party. In 1957, in his work “The development of the Slovenian national question”, one of the main leaders and ideologues of Yugoslavia, Edvard Kardelj, clearly noted that Yugoslavism emanates from the interests of socialism and no new nations can be created in Yugoslavia. In 1964, Tito on the Seventh Congress of the League of Communists declared: ” Development of a common Yugoslav culture can be understood as a free and wide flourishing of national cultures of all Yugoslav peoples and nationalities, united by unique interests, unique socialist state system, and in that way, unique basic and important content of its cultural creation” (Matvejević, 2003, p. 134). The development of a common Yugoslav culture and identity was thus understood as a revolutionary, anti-colonial and socialist interest, embedded in its struggle against particularisms and nationalisms in the tradition of socialist internationalism.

Therefore, the debates on Yugoslavism today require a deeper reflection on the context – socialist Yugoslavism comprehends rather common revolutionary interests, cultural co-creation and a socialist state system. But within the generation of the last pioneers, Yugoslavism does not necessarily and always correspond with the socialist Yugoslav identity. Yugoslavism remains largely generational, spatial and cultural; strengthened by the early socialization of the last pioneers - deserving to be recognized as an empiric phenomenon.

At the same time, in public discourses anti-Yugoslavism today is obscuring the ideological position of anti-communism, more than an inherent anti-Yugoslav agenda against any cooperation and alliances – especially in Croatia. Leaning rather on generational than political positionality, Yugoslavism appears an anti-nationalist and meta-national identity. Throughout the interviews, the generational aspect is also noticed through the fact that the first monarchist Yugoslavia is barely ever mentioned. Despite the variety of responses and images, the silences are sometimes louder in creating a generational location, not only by experiencing the same events and data but “especially that these experiences impinge upon a similarly ‘stratified’ consciousness” (Mannheim, 2011, p. 95). Only two interviewees claimed that they have no particular associations on Yugoslavia; but it does not necessarily mean distancing

from Yugoslavism. A Member of Parliament from Croatia elaborates further: “I remember it as something towards what I have in a theoretical, scientific way, a completely neutral stand. In terms of growing up, it’s childhood emotions. In a national sense, I think Yugoslavism is a natural finalization of a nation state” (61-HR-1977-M). The articulation of one’s understanding of Yugoslavism, or memory narratives in general, was always dependant largely on the social framework of the interviewee’s profession – professors, especially in social sciences, were able to provide more finely attuned conceptualizations.

The volatility of the ethno-national self-identification and its capacity to co-exist with various other identities, along with acknowledgment that nations are built top down, in the tradition of Eric Hobsbawm’s understanding (Hobsbawm, 1992), provide us with a framework to understand Yugoslavism today. As I identify it as a specific code that appears in my interviewees’ narratives, a phenomenon distinct from Yugonostalgia and yet interconnected, Yugoslavism often constitutes the backbone of what is at play when we try to determine the content of the so-called Yugonostalgic sentiments. But as previously noted, Yugoslavism is not necessarily a resistance towards the anti-communist mainstream discourses, but rather remaining an anti-nationalist performance, more adaptable to the new global context of Europeanization and neoliberal economic policies. A Democratic Party member and MP in Serbia, over a coffee during the weekend, despite of her family significant socialist Yugoslav history, shares a more liberal and anti-communist view on Yugoslavism: “Brotherhood and unity and that we were once brothers, and now we are not. Those words are worn out, misused, today’s kids, not even myself, understand them, I mean, I don’t understand them in that sense. To me, everyone is a brother and no one is a brother, not even my first neighbor, if he is a monster...” (32-SR-1979-F). With a sense of confusion, she does not apprehend how, after the Yugoslav wars, there can still be any Yugoslav concepts still relevant for the political space today. Her anti-nationalism is universal, rather than Yugoslav, and more aligned with contemporary identity politics. Such apprehension is most common among center liberal and center-left interviewees, throughout the three countries.

Yet, given the sample structure, *brotherhood and unity*, as previously noted, indeed appears as a salient code in the narratives of the left-wing last pioneers. It is the first or one of the first associations on Yugoslavia and Yugoslav values – an idea, or an ideal. A left-wing activist in Serbia continues: “Those are ideas that were not only words which brainwashed us, but

truly... I don't know; I truly felt it then" (30-SR-1980-F). The left-wing last pioneers link the idea of Yugoslavism to their memories of the lack of awareness of the ethno-national identity, the memories on good interethnic relations in Yugoslavia and their feeling of home everywhere in (post)Yugoslav space. Anti-nationalism tends to strengthen its Yugoslav side as a contentious expression with the (post)Yugoslav context. Viktor Ivančić, one of the most prominent Croatian journalists, expresses his activist view on Yugoslavism: "I am not a Yugoslav by my national belonging, but by my national non-belonging; for me it is not a matter of a herd, but a matter of engagement" (Markovina, 2016). Dragan Markovina, a Croatian historian belonging to the generation of the last pioneers, published in 2015 a book named "Jugoslavenstvo poslije svega (Yugoslavism after all)". In his work, Markovina differentiates between two types of Yugoslavism – an action oriented one and a nostalgic one, claiming that the main actors of the action-oriented Yugoslavism are indeed young people, who did not even experience life in Yugoslavia (Markovina, 2015, p. 12). Markovina's understanding of Yugoslavism consists of seeing it as a plural and heterogeneous group of ideas, friendships and contacts; a conscience of a common and unique Yugoslav cultural space, declining any fetishization of a state or any national symbolic. While believing it does not represent any invitation for resistance or a rebellion, Markovina asserts that "Yugoslavia is a name of a utopia in becoming" (ibid., p. 21).

As we can notice, these multiple meanings given to Yugonostalgia and Yugoslavism often overlap. In my understanding, as previously elaborated, even if interconnected, they represent two different phenomena. Yugoslavism is understood as an anti-nationalist (counter-)identity, and a meta-national identity, surpassing our existing political imaginaries of static ethno-national identities. As Yugoslavia once existed in the form of a multi-national state, yet without the majority of the population self-identifying as Yugoslavs, it is indeed possible that Yugoslavs exist today without Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavism as an utopian ideal

Another layer to Yugoslavism is assigned in Croatia, as HDZ members call it *utopia or a fake value*, with one of them, a MP, further explains (64-HR-1982-M):

We didn't fight because we didn't have anything better to do, but because all those differences were shoved under the carpet. So some values ok, socialism, collectivism, communism. We know what social regime it was, but for me it's all actually funny, from a perspective of a serious man, with some critical distance when I see that mythology and

those stories, it all seems funny. I cannot believe how a grown man could have believed in those things. I mean I understand how, but when you look from the distance...

Infantilizing the socialist citizens has already been recognized as an ideological strategy of delegitimizing any socialist or communist political positioning since 1989 (Buden, 2012) and here it clearly appears through a nationalist lens, yet once again representing the inseparability the use of anti-Yugoslavism blending into anti-communism. Still, utopia appears as an association only twice.

When we analyze the last pioneers' narratives, we can conclude that in their understanding, Yugoslavia might have not been a completed project, as it disintegrated and as some of the last pioneers underlined; but it was *a political idea*, even if an unaccomplished one. Even if there are no explicit nor implicit demands for a (re)creation of a Yugoslav nation-state, the Yugoslav state is often noted as the only state the left-wing last pioneers feel an intimate connection to. A left-wing activist in Croatia explains her sentiments: "I have a sense of pride... I have what Croats have towards Croatia, I have it towards Yugoslavia" (52-HR-1982-F); and a left-wing local political party member in Slovenia joins: "Because it is... I don't know I feel some love, for me that is love - Yugoslavia" (20-SLO-1981-M). Children of solidarity, the last pioneers, believe that Yugoslav identity provides an important layer of their identity; an important puzzle piece of their intimate identity mosaic.

Certainly, damage to the idea of Yugoslavism has been brought on by war, as a left-wing political party from the institutional left member in Croatia explains us: "And now, the idea of Yugoslavism, it lost in the public discourse its emancipating potential. Can it be again filled with it? I don't know if it was too compromised here. But if it was compromised, then it is because of the Yugoslav People's Army, only because of that, and not because of anything else. That destroyed it" (59-HR-1977-F). Marginalized, demonized, and identified as a nostalgic sentiment rather than an ideological position – could Yugoslavism be an identity of resistance in the (post)Yugoslav space?

Yugoslavism as a resistance act

Understood as an idea, a left-wing activist in Novi Sad continues: "Something best that one can think of, in which direction to go, in some progressive, political idea..." (30-SR-1980-F). Yugoslavism is perceived as a supranational, European, cosmopolitan, internationalist identity. That understanding is what differentiates Yugoslavism from the concept of a nation

state, and, as such, from the concept of nationalism as we know it today, or as the ones that followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia. And through this reflection, declaring oneself as Yugoslav becomes in itself a resistance act: against nationalism; and against orientalism and Balkanism. Yugoslavism today reflects the diversity of the Yugoslav families, but beyond that, within the left-wing circles, continues to preserve the continuity of its meaning in the socialist times, and of its cosmopolitan and internationalist spirit.

A recurring motive in the narratives of the last pioneers is that Yugoslavia did not happen yet, but it could be the name of what is coming. A left-wing political party member in Croatia tries to further explore its meaning and its significance: “Yugoslavism became some sort of excommunication, or nomadism...but it is like an unnatural state, a bit disturbed” (59-HR-1977-F). . The frequency and the strength of an identity, in this case Yugoslav identity, cannot be measured only through census. For many, census self-identification represents adherence to the concept of ethno-national identity, which they wish to avoid. For some, census self-identification is a formality linked to their citizenship or even place of residence, without any serious reflection and importance being assigned to the act. In a number of cases, they weren’t even truly given an opportunity to self-identify as the data collectors would automatically write in ethno-nationality and religious identity, without asking. Just as being abroad and connecting with other (post)Yugoslavs strengthens the sentiments of Yugoslav identity, it is often encountered that one does not self-identify as Yugoslav and yet does feel like one. Census does not reflect inner self-identification processes, nor depicts the potency of an identity.

Assuredly, Yugoslav identity can be strengthened if one comes from a “mixed” family, as a left-wing political party member explains: “I mean I felt Yugoslav, and Dalmatian, and Slovene, but because I was more attached to mum, I felt Croatian more. It is the same today” (7-SLO-1979-M). But the generational identity of belonging to a Yugoslav childhood and having gone through the Yugoslav socialization most often comes to the fore, as a Member of Parliament from Istria, on the left-wing part of the political spectrum, elaborates: “There must be an attachment... if it is Yugoslavism, call it whatever you like, I don’t care, some attachment exists. If I need to explain something to someone from my generation, let’s say

from Niš, I will say *Vozi Miško*⁷⁷ (Drive, Miško!) and the man will immediately understand what I am talking about. Of course that there is a certain dose of common identity that we cannot, nor should we, run away from” (51-HR-1979-M). Regardless of this interviewee’s previous critical outlooks on the Yugoslav past, there is no negation of a shared generational identity. Stuart Hall explains how through narratives we define our identity, not as an embedded notion but as a fluctuating one, what he calls “coming-to-term with our ‘routes’” (Hall & du Gay, 1995, p. 4). The identity does not require an expression through formal self-identification in census, or an everyday active declaration through practices of one’s identity, the multilayered character of our life narratives provides multiple spaces for the variety of our identity outlooks: “They arise from the narrativization of the self, but the necessarily fictional nature of this process in no way undermines its discursive, material or political effectivity, even if the belongingness, the ‘suturing into the story’ through which identities arise is, partly, in the imaginary (as well as the symbolic) and therefore, always, partly constructed in fantasy, or at least within a fantasmatic field” (ibid.).

Fluctuating, dynamic and multidirectional, just as our memories, identity provides the sense of (dis)continuity in our lives. The stronger we accept its volatility, the wider we embrace openness and subsequently, oppose to the forced nationalisms. Stef Jansen in his study on anti-nationalism in the (post)Yugoslav space confirms the presence of a rupture in the narratives of the (post)Yugoslav citizens and that until the beginning of the war, the majority of Yugoslavs was not accepting separatist intentions (Jansen, 2005, p. 42). While he claims that a distinction can be made between the Croatian discontinuity and the Serbian continuity, our study confers a more nuanced outlook. The dissolution for all Yugoslavs represented a discontinuity in their identity, as a Member of Parliament in Croatia depicts: “Till the 1990s, I considered myself a Yugoslav, but with the dissolution, with the introduction of nationality... I was forced to become a Serb, I didn’t want it, I simply had to become a Serb” (49-HR-1974-M). Lack of choice in defining one’s identity is the key aspect in the discontinuity in the narratives of last pioneers. The last pioneers did not choose their new identities; the new identities were assigned to them.

⁷⁷ A phrase from the movie „Ko to tamo peva“ („Who's Singing Over There“) from 1980, directed by Slobodan Šijan and the screenplay written by Dušan Kovačević. The movie has the status of a cult movie and Serbo-Croatian language adopted a number of quotes into everyday idioms,

Resisting this discontinuity became a resistance strategy, with memory being an important element of the anti-nationalism (Jansen, 2005). While Jansen focuses on anti-nationalist NGO activists, whom he calls also “anti-war profiteers”, regarding their dissident status as a form of capital among urban liberals, and while questioning if their memory narratives claiming that ethno-national identity in Yugoslavia was not omnipresent are true, Jansen confers that the war was “a conflict between nationalisms and not between nations” (Jansen, 2005, p. 97).

I have identified anti-nationalism, often ingrained in cultural Yugoslavism, prominently appearing in the memory narratives of the most of the center liberal and left-wing last pioneers. The acts of resistance, ingrained in anti-nationalism, were visible throughout the (post)Yugoslav space as personal, intimate acts of resistance beyond the mainstream political activism: from buying books on Yugoslavism; saying in Serbia you are, for example, Croat even if you are not; using your (different) dialect; declaring Yugoslav on census; falling in love repeatedly with other (post)Yugoslav ethno-nationalities; openly resisting nationalist professors in high school; and all the way to becoming an active anti-nationalist activist. For a large number of notably left-wing and liberal political activists from the generation of the last pioneers, anti-nationalism was the first resistance act and the first ideological stance; the first political initiatives and movements they have joined have often been rooted in the anti-nationalist positionality; and for the majority they persisted till today.

Yugoslavism continues to exist without Yugoslavia, appearing in its anti-national, and meta-national form, as a political statement. The continuity of individual memory narrative, and as such a generational Yugoslav identity, opens more possibilities of political and activist cooperation. In a dialectical relationship with (the content assigned to) Yugonostalgia, as we will see in the next subchapter, Yugoslavism opens new possibilities of coexistence and solidarity as “noeuds de mémoire”, exceeding attempts of territorialisation and identitarian reduction (Rothberg, 2010).

It is an identity putting into the question the mere concept of a nation state, as the strongest identity framework in today’s world. Yugoslavism reasserts itself as anti-nationalist – simultaneously being against the (post)Yugoslav nation building discourses but (often) also against supranational ones – against the European Union and against a new Yugoslav state project, as well. Emerging through different layers as a background element of everyday life, in my master thesis, one of the interviewees from Slovenia summarized it perfectly: “I do not

declare myself a Yugoslav, except when nationalists get on my nerves” (Popović, 2012). It is articulated against, as much as for. Our left-wing interviewee at the coast of Dalmatia, with a double citizenship, elaborates: “Well I self-identify since ’91, as a Croat, from the first census. By a certain feeling I am a Yugoslav, but I do not think it is something incompatible, au contraire. I think it fits with one another. At the last census in Bosnia and Herzegovina I have declared as a Yugoslav so that there would be less of those ethno-nationally declared.” (44-HR-1981-M). He is strategically using the census declarations as a political tool, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to alter the strong anti-nationalist panorama.

Yugoslavism emerges as a supra-national layer of identity, compatible and aligned with other ethno-national identities – one can be a Croat, Yugoslav and European simultaneously; acknowledging the porosity of borders. Yugoslavism can be understood in Aleida Assmann’s terms “beyond national borders and interests ...(as) new forms of belonging, solidarity and cultural identification” (Assmann, 2014, p. 547), or in the specific context, as Gal Kirn would define it “a common multiethnic space predicated on anti-nationalism” (Kirn, 2014, p. 326). Andrew Wachtel and Igor Štiks complement stating that in socialist Yugoslavia, Yugoslav identity existed in the form of “civic pluri-nationalism” (Wachtel & Štiks, 2019, p. 55). Given its capacity to be a political identity without a demand for a political community, it transcends current political imaginaries, all the while fervently opposing them. Yugoslavism crosses the borders of the newly established (post)Yugoslav states, while creating its own borders, not the ones identified by the promise of a new supranational organization or another (multi)nation state, but the ones obtained through temporal travelling, borders that have already existed. It does not connect “nations”: it has already has one community, in the past and in the present, represented on a meta-level.

Anti-capitalism and Yugoslavism

In the public discourse, Yugonostalgia often refers, beyond anti-nationalist, to anti-capitalist stances – depicted as an irrational emotion of *transition losers*. Anti-capitalism has spread throughout the (post)Yugoslav political scene later, following the *transition*, but it was an aspect that brought the nationalists to the table. Many right-wing political movements, organizations and parties today fervently propagate against neoliberal capitalism. An example is the party Dveri from Serbia, when explaining their (post)Yugoslav cooperation with another populist movement Živi zid in Croatia and their invitation of Živi zid’s representative

to Serbia, they explain: “We invited him as an opponent to neoliberalism, capitalism, who understands what did EU do to the Croatian economy” (24-SR-1975-M). It is thus important not to amalgamate the anti-neoliberalism stances with exclusively left-wing ideologies; the resistance against anti-communism is what separates the two groups and the right-wing last pioneers often adhere to the concepts of cultural Yugoslavism.

Among all of the right-wing interviewees, the nationalist ideology went hand in hand with strong anti-communist views – among Dveri, SNS, SRS, HDZ, Hrast, SDS, NSi political party members. Equally important is to understand that anti-Yugoslavism does not necessarily equate anti-communism, and the other way round. Surprisingly enough, or not, the right-wing actors were not always against the idea of Yugoslavia – notably through the anti-neoliberalist lenses; though exclusively in Serbia and Slovenia. The shift of the global political framework influenced this shift among the right-wing ideologies in the (post)Yugoslav space for which the consequences are yet to be seen, with the generational change among political elites.

Yugoslav cooperations

The politically active last pioneers co-operate throughout the (post)Yugoslav space, along the whole of the political spectrum. I have previously outlined the right-wing cooperation between Serbia and Croatia; left center cooperation, even if hidden, between Croatia and Serbia; trade unions cooperation, as per an example given by an interviewee, along the axes of Koper in Slovenia, Rijeka in Croatia and Bar in Montenegro. After the representative of Levica from Slovenia, Luka Mesec, and the representative of the Coalition Možemo from Croatia, Katarina Peović, held a common press conference in Rijeka as part of the election campaign, in July 2020 a number of left-wing organizations from Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia published a Declaration on Regional Solidarity (“Objavljena Deklaracija o regionalnoj solidarnosti”, 2020), signed by a large number of intellectuals and activists from the region. Based on shared values like social justice, cooperation and peace, antifascism, gender and ethno-national equality – among others -; the Declaration calls upon common efforts and regional solidarity as key political resources for struggle against health and socio-economic crisis ensuing from the Covid-19 pandemic. As for three decades since the dissolution of Yugoslavia the issues of economic inequality and socioeconomic conflicts were banned from the public discourse and the political agenda (Dolenec, 2012, p. 79), the generational shift brought a rupture with the imposed silence and from a Yugoslav perspective, a possibility of

coming closer or unifying common political struggles beyond the (post)Yugoslav nation states.

In his parliament office, a right-wing Member of Parliament in Slovenia, narrating his experiences of representation in international organizations, explains his understanding on the cultural Yugoslav identity and the group dynamics it produces in these environments, describing after-work hours and social contacts: “People, look... we are from ex-Yugoslavia, let’s go together’.. There was no such: ok, you are from Croatian right-wing, you are from Serbian left-wing; there was never something like that” (3-SLO-1978-M). Their generational common heritage supercedes their political positionalities, as our interviewee explains.

The newly imposed ethno-national identity through top down memory politics are striving to forget any Yugoslavism, following Ernst Renan’s concept of the importance of forgetting for a nation. Yet, Yugoslavism, without being a nation, responds to other Renan’s principles: “the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories and the present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form” (Renan, 1992, p. 19). Its meta-national character imposes us to recognize “the desire to live together” beyond the concept of the nation state; one does not need to belong to a nation, so that a community would exist as much as a state does not need to exist, for a space to endure.

As previously claimed, census data do not enlighten us on the strength of a specific ethno-national identity. A prime example is Croatia, where in 2001 there were 176 Yugoslavs, and in 2011 331 (Jović, 2017, p. 231). As we can indeed notice that the number is rising, for a country of approximately 4 million citizens, these numbers are beyond negligent. But *the rich legacy of Yugoslav memories* and *the will to perpetuate the value of the Yugoslav heritage* do constitute a Yugoslav identity as a legitimate, and existing in the (post)Yugoslav space, encompassing the spatial and cultural aspects while opening the horizon for a political one.

As “our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past” (Connerton, 1989, p. 2), as we have discerned the ways Yugoslavism dialogues with political identities of the last pioneers and which potentialities of different approaches to political cooperations it brings; we are left with the question what is Yugonostalgia beyond

Yugoslavism for the last pioneers? Where do we see the place of Yugonostalgia, in the dialogues between last pioneers' memory narratives and their political identities?

8.2 Yugonostalgia – mourning or hope, past or future?

Studies of nostalgia today often nominate almost *any* remembering of the socialist past, without discrimination or careful research into the contents of the memory narratives, as nostalgic. In 2016, Ekaterina Kalinina gave a comprehensive overview of such approaches, public and academic ones. She enumerated the depictions of this “social disease” (Stewart, 1984, p. 23), showing the “prejudices (that) lie at the core of nostalgia attributions, which are used to denigrate some while at the same time strengthening the privileged position of dominant groups” and how “nostalgia can and usually does become a powerful tool for disempowering others” (Kalinina, 2016, p. 9). Besides being understood as a *coping mechanism*, for Kalinina nostalgia could contribute to a more “democratic history” (ibid., p. 11), through inclusion of individual narratives in the official public discourses.

While Dubravka Ugrešić names nostalgia as „the department of the heart“ (Ugrešić, 2008, p. 193), claiming that the political system cannot be an object of nostalgia, Ana Petrov (2016) asserts that the political system remains in the past. Through the example of (post)Yugoslav concerts of Yugoslav music, Petrov shows how the Yugoslav space remains a common cultural and a common emotional space which keeps it relevant for emancipatory political attitudes, following the notion of emancipatory Yugonostalgia already existing in the research field of (post)Yugoslav studies (Velikonja, 2010; Petrović, 2012; Buden, 2012; etc.); what we have previously displayed as generational cultural Yugoslavism.

The content of the term of Yugonostalgia remains almost impossible to be precisely defined as it is as multiple as are the actors who use it. It would be impossible to elaborate all (possible and impossible) meanings within this thesis. Nevertheless, for the main aim of uncovering the content of Yugonostalgia for the last pioneers, we are required to uncover the more generalized approach to post-socialist nostalgia. As much as it might seem as almost an empty floating signifier that leaves space for cognitive dissonances of the (post)Yugoslav populations, and certainly encompassing a variety of individual and collective meanings we assign to it, the main reading, in the public space, of the term of Yugonostalgia is negative,

depicting it as a banal and a retrograde, or simply a useless, phenomenon; an emotion of the old generations mourning the old ways without a clear political agenda (See Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.2 The 1st of May protest organized by various trade unions and movements in Serbia where some of the participants brought Yugoslav flags, 2017



Source: Author's archive, 2017

Yet, the generational perspective of the last pioneers, even when departing from the mainstream reading of Yugonostalgia, further uncovers specific potentialities and refreshing outlooks on its contents. If we understand Yugoslavism as an anti-national and a meta-national concept, as elaborated in the previous subchapter, Yugonostalgia of the last pioneers remains inherently a memory narrative transcending the transnational perspectives. As memory attempts to reach beyond victimization narratives, Yugonostalgia's multidirectionality and meta-national character are actively trying to overcome imposed boundaries. It is necessary to understand Yugonostalgia through its multivocal, multi-layered, multi-sited and multi-directional dynamic (De Cesari & Rigney, 2014). While Gal Kirn poses as the key question the possibility of remembering outside of the revised narratives framing Yugoslav memory as national and totalitarian (Protić, 2017) especially with regards to finding new ways of engaging the young and new generations in memory transfer and memory

politics. Dragan Markovina questions if Yugoslavia is a name for a utopia that is (just) being born (Markovina, 2015). Monika Palmberger in her research shows how Yugonostalgia for the Last Yugoslavs in Bosnia and Herzegovina can mirror “the economic insecurities, the loss of a social network, together with the loss of a life prospect” (Palmberger, 2016, p. 175). Tanja Petrović shows how “positive memories of life and work in socialism are dismissed as nostalgia, while the memories of those who testify about crimes and violence conducted by the communist authorities prevail in media discourses and are taken as objective testimonies with the legitimacy of historiographical sources” (Petrović, 2016, p. 509). We need to search for new concepts that would bring to the fore a more comprehensive understanding of Yugonostalgic memories of the last pioneers, the generation that is today active in (post)Yugoslav space. As Stef Jansen in his study defined Yugonostalgia as a generational (but referring to the generation of parents of the last pioneers) and a class phenomenon, labelling it as individualistic, cultural and apolitical (Jansen, 2005); in this thesis we see Yugoslavism being a cultural generational identity, and Yugonostalgia, beyond its capacity for resolving cognitive dissonances between memory narratives and public discourses, in dialogue with the political positionality of the last pioneers.

There is indeed a multitude of meanings behind so-called nostalgic reflections and acts: some hiding nationalism, some anti-nationalism; some are acts of resistance and activism, some are a lamenting intimate reminiscence of youth; all engendering both methodological and ideological confusions. Yugonostalgia appears a multidirectional memory narrative, beyond singularity of narratives (Assmann, 2014) and as “memory (that) emerges from unexpected, multidirectional encounters – encounters between diverse pasts and a conflictual present, to be sure, but between different agents or catalysts” (Rothberg, 2010, p. 9). Being born in intimate spaces resolving cognitive dissonances between the individual memory narratives and revisionist public discourses, through the lens of generational positionality, it is the political positionality that then provides the capacity to Yugonostalgia to transform into a political and a collective phenomenon.

A space for cognitive dissonances

As we could have seen in the previous chapter, historical revisionism, based on anti-communism and to a lesser extent, anti-Yugoslavism, is reproducing similar narratives throughout the (post)Yugoslav space and produces spaces of dialogue between the right-wing

political activists. Simultaneously, the disappearance of an institutional Yugoslav framework in the form of a state did not erase the existence of Yugoslav identity, Yugoslavism nor Yugoslavs. As memories travel across newly created borders, on the highways new communities are being born. Consider just one example: the carpooling Facebook group 442 created by individuals often travelling between Belgrade and Zagreb, for private or professional reasons (though largely romantic ones). As mnemonic agents travel with their memories, new communities are being built, communities based on solidarity, resonating within intimate, artistic, cultural and political fields. And beyond the (post)Yugoslav space. A left-wing activist in Croatia narrates (46-HR-1982-F):

I was in Morocco in a cafe in Tangier. And that is a cinematic city, and some woman recommended me, as I see you and your friend, there is a super cafe, if they let you in, it is the best place to have a drink. We came; it was about closing time, some two, three 60 years old guys are there. We ask them can we have a beer, they ask where are you from? They are sick of tourists. And I tell them from Yugoslavia. Oh, when you are from Yugoslavia, then you can. And we sit with them and there were x stories why Yugoslavia was cool for them.

Positive memories on Yugoslavia go beyond the borders of the (post)Yugoslav space where they are still strongly rooted. In Serbia, 48,8% of interviewees in a survey conducted in 2012 reflected moderate pro-Yugoslav attitudes and 28,1% very pro-Yugoslav attitudes, with four-fifths of the interviewed citizens believing that Yugoslavia should not have collapsed, and almost two-thirds believing that socialism should not have collapsed (Mirkov, Petrović Trifunović & Poletić Čosić, 2018). It is difficult to establish the particular content of these positive Yugoslav reflections and memories in quantitative studies, but continuously through various methodologies, approaches and by various researchers, the studies reaffirm the positive outlooks on Yugoslavia. Sometimes, considered to be “a bridge to establish communication between today conflicted ethnic communities and silent the war memories” (Palmberger, 2016, p. 223) or a critic of “today’s Slovenian Other, meaning all systemic injustices of the contemporary Slovenian society” (Velikonja & Perica, 2012, p. 160), Yugonostalgia has a multiplicity of meanings for the last pioneers as well.

Music is most often invoked as a representation of Yugonostalgia. While most certainly it can have a strong political meaning (Petrov, 2016; Hofman, 2016); it does not necessarily reflect the political positionality of the mnemonic actors – remember previously mentioned right-wing activists attending the (post)Yugoslav concerts. A Member of Parliament from Sandžak, previously claiming the disintegration of the (post)Yugoslav cultural space, when asked to

define Yugonostalgia, explains: “It is mostly an emotional state when you have a low moment, and then you listen to Džoni Štulić, I don’t know, Bijelo dugme or some, something of it and you enjoy it running away from the reality and the madness that surrounds you” (38-SR-1982-M). While the music industry continues to cooperate, reflecting the free market reality and the cooperation which did not cease even throughout the 1990s and the wars (Perković, 2011), Zdravko Čolić publishing an album in 2017 in cooperation of the two main music publishing houses PGP RTS from Serbia and Croatia Records from Croatia does not represent a Yugonostalgic endeavor, but a (post)Yugoslav one reflecting the economic system changes. Besides music and remembering, the last pioneers claim that traveling throughout the (post)Yugoslav space – where they feel at *home* – engenders stronger nostalgic sentiments and association on love; as much as certain material objects from their childhoods and brands do. But they also believe that Yugonostalgia is a *catchphrase* made up for political opponents, hiding a much thicker content beyond the everyday affective manifestations; insisting that *discussing Yugoslavia beyond Yugonostalgia* is the most important issue at hand.

Through the totality of life narratives previously presented within this thesis, the last pioneers show a high level of *ambivalence towards Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav past*, while depicting their positive memories from their Yugoslav childhoods often conflicting with contemporary mainstream discourses. Even the mainstream discourses leave space for ambivalence and present contradictory narratives. My understanding that Yugonostalgia provides a refuge for cognitive dissonances within the memory narratives of the last pioneers stems from the understanding of the ambivalent nostalgia, providing space for both positive and negative feelings (Hirsch & Spitzer, 2002). In the same time, I believe that the value of Yugonostalgia for providing the space for ambivalence also provides an understanding why the term has not been happily embraced by various political actors, including the politically active last pioneers.

Discursive battles over Yugonostalgia

Denying Yugoslav identity to (post)Yugoslav populations is another element of the discursive strategy of characterizing almost any political reflection on the anti-nationalist, left-wing part of the political spectrum as Yugonostalgia. Identity understood as “the escape sought from (that) uncertainty – where to place oneself” (Bauman, 1996, p. 19) here reflects the continuity

with safe and happy memories from Yugoslav childhoods, the openness of the Yugoslav family and the sentiment of a Yugoslav home.

And still, nobody wants to be called a Yugonostalgic. Very few accept to name themselves as Yugonostalgic; questioning whether it is even possible for them to be nostalgic, given the generation they belong to. Interiorizing the anti-Yugonostalgic mainstream discourse on one hand, but on the other hand wishing to reassign the meaning given to Yugonostalgia, they avoid being called Yugonostalgic. A left-wing political party member in Slovenia, also an anti-fascist activist participating in the work of defying revisionist efforts of new nation-building public discourses, specifies: “But, I have to say, not nostalgic, rather Yugoreferent” (13-SLO-1979-M). Our left-wing political party member at the coast of Croatia tells us: “I can say I am socialist-nostalgic. Those some progressive ideas of the socialist Yugoslavia, that is something towards what we can feel nostalgia, I suppose that is the nostalgia people feel, that nobody cares much about the state.” Some approaches to their contemporary political identities are more anti-nationalist Yugoslav, as the first interviewee’s, and some more socialist Yugonostalgic, as the second interviewee here quoted. Both reflect the lack of adherence to nation state ideologies; and a counter-narrative towards the public anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist discourses.

It is the political and the ideological content of the reflections named today Yugonostalgic that is being hidden through the mainstream discourse banalizing the contents of Yugonostalgia, using it as a smokescreen of legitimate left-wing politics, leaving some of the interviewees to question whether Yugonostalgia exists at all: “It doesn’t exist. So, there is no that Yugonostalgia that everybody talks about. Yugonostalgia appears in the moment you start talking that everybody should have the right to free health insurance. And that is when they call you Yugonostalgic” (59-HR-1977-F).

Making a distinction of what Yugonostalgia is not remains equally important as to identify what it is, a left-wing political party member in Croatia elaborates (43-HR-1981-M):

So in the sense of this completely unconscious, banal level. Those are the groups that gather in Kumrovec. It seems to be peasantry; ideologically it is not at the level... There is of course my elitism, I can be aware of it, I can recognize some positive sides too... But to be honest, at first, it is repulsive to me. I am aware of the layers I necessarily have, and honestly those things are repulsive to me. In that old fashioned way, with the old fashioned

phraseology and rhetoric, I really don't like it. I think it is not productive. And on the other side, Yugonostalgia that I have and that exists in *my party*⁷⁸, that is something completely natural to me. And to try to look only forward, you cannot look only forward. A couple of times I asked my parents, so what the fuck did you do? I was little, but your generation has generally really fucked it up! I look from my position, if something like that has stayed, I would have a bigger salary, free summer vacation, I would have social housing.

The discursive strategy of the mainstream discourses to depict any (post)Yugoslav memory narratives and left-wing ideologies as nostalgic has been a continuation of the discursive strategy in which “an ideological "other," communism, has replaced the geographical/cultural "other" of the Orient” (Bakić-Hayden & Hayden, 1992, p. 4).

As the idea of Yugoslavia was inseparable from the socialist ideology, the strategy had to be inherently expanded to anti-Yugoslavism. Memory politics is not new to the political hegemony struggles (Popular Memory Group, 2011, p. 257):

What we may insist on in addition is that all political activity is intrinsically a process of historical argument and definition, that all political programmes involve some construction of the past as well as the future, and that these processes go on every day, often outrunning, especially in terms of period, the preoccupations of historians. Political domination involves historical definition. History – in particular popular memory – is a stake in the constant struggle for hegemony.

Delineating various forms of Yugonostalgia, evaluating which ones are productive and which ones are not, goes along the generational lines, again taking a critical stand towards the generation of their parents. A left-wing activist in Serbia follows the reflections of her peers in Croatia, as she accepts being called Yugonostalgic, being a very rare one (30-SR-1980-F):

Simply that Yugonostalgia, that exists in the leftist circles, that is reduced to those some, I don't know how crazy parties and nonstop that Yugoslavism, it seems funny to me. And politically unproductive completely, I don't know what they do with it. But the part when it is theoretically thought through and when texts are being translated, when texts are being written, when books are written, that is serious for me and that should be done. And that, I think that we mostly need that.

For some, Yugonostalgia is perceived more as an obstacle than a tool, a theme confirmed by another left-wing activist from Dalmatia, today living in Zagreb, when she tells us: “I still think that Yugoslavia has a subversive potential, but I think that nostalgia should fuck off because it is perceived at the emotional and psychological level and it does not deal with it at

⁷⁸ The exact name deleted for anonymization purposes,

the level at which it should. I know I am too rigid, I know that I speak maybe too abstract, but basically that's it. You cannot say it in a different way" (52-HR-1982-F).

Yugonostalgia for real

Nevertheless, why remembering the Yugoslav past as "something that shouldn't be easily lost" (12-SLO-1979-F)? An answer could be read from the narrative of a left-wing long time anti-nationalist activist in Croatia, as we are having a drink at a terrace in Rijeka(53-HR-1975-M):

Mourning for things that truly functioned much better than today in Croatia, and today in Croatia it is a consequence of privatizations, denationalization, free market, loss of economic and social rights which were guaranteed then, no matter how were they exercised. An apartment, a salary, social security, health security, retirement, education. Those are the objective elements, I suppose, for which you can say that it was better than today, especially if you understand why today it is as it is.

When trying to explain what Yugonostalgia represents for them, it indeed varies from reminiscing the seaside vacations, to an *emotional state* today when seeing one's friends from another Yugoslav republic. But their political socialization is reiterated, tells us a Member of Parliament in Croatia, one of those actively aiming to change the inter-ethnic relations within the country: "...that idea of equality, of freedom, of brotherhood and unity, of the Anti-fascists People's Liberation Struggle, of antifascism has definitely been sown into me. That is most certainly a consequence of the socialization and growing up in the system. I am aware of it and that is my DNA." (49-HR-1974-M).

A compatible outlook emerges from another left-wing activist in Croatia: "Talking about Yugonostalgia is demeaning the heritage of what we once had and we don't have anymore" (56-HR-1980-M). None of the interviewees believe that a positive outlook on the past regime's specific features does not bear any relevance, or truth. Thinking about Yugonostalgia for the left-wing last pioneers mostly focuses on discussing values, visions and ideas. A left-wing political party member from Croatia, in his narratives trying to understand his parents' contradictory viewpoints, further uncovers (43-HR-1981-M):

Yes. My mother always honestly says that everything was better before. My father in law, who is a liberal, also from a mixed marriage... His father is a Serb, mother Croat. I told him about a research, in 1988 the salaries were 30% bigger than today, and he said: yes, yes, I worked through a student service, and I had tons of money. And from my brother's wife, the parents are also right-wing HDZ, and her father says: but no, during Tito, things were in order. They got social housing in 1989. From that side he will say it was honest, and from

the other side he will vote for HDZ. I don't know how to explain it, but it's very schizophrenic.

From such examples the last pioneers question how we can call nostalgia what is a reasonable comparison of the past with the present; a left-wing activist from Serbia briefly concludes: "If most people had it worst in Yugoslavia, there wouldn't be Yugonostalgia" (37-SR-1977-M) – claiming that no one is nostalgic for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the one created in 1992, under Milošević's rule. The perception of the 1990s, elaborated in the previous chapters, yet might differ based on generational and class positionality, as Rory Archer in his research notices that for some blue-collar workers the narratives of 1990s in Serbia are not exclusively negative, due to experienced upward social mobility but also further worsening of the present in 2000s due to the transition which influenced the posterior re-writing of the memories on the 1990s (Archer, 2018). Yet, for the last pioneers, positive memories on Yugoslav times are unquestionable in large majority of cases and are embedded in historical realities.

If the right-wing interviewees might claim that Yugoslavia was hell for more than half of the country (8-SLO-1978-M), all of the interviewees who belong to national minorities in all three countries would have preferred to live in that "hell". Most often the last pioneers insist that nobody mourns the state and some do not mourn for the regime, yet they claim to mourn for the values and ideas. Making a distinction between the societal values of the Yugoslav socialist state and the basis of the socialist ideology between the practical implementation of those values by the regime reflects further political reasoning about the Yugoslav past, one depicting a profound contemplation. Socialist values reminisce of solidarity and brotherhood and unity, the values previously discussed as key remembered values from the childhoods of the last pioneers. "The one who knows what he's lost, will know better what he is looking for", writes Predrag Matvejević in his book "Yugoslavism today" (Matvejević, 2003, p. 11); a book that continues to provide an object of memory, as an object of resistance – as we will see later.

(Post)Yugoslav space of solidarity and cooperation

Asked if Yugonostalgia could be an inspiration for the changes, given the current state of affairs in (post)Yugoslav countries where everything is the "same just everything much poorer" (47-HR-1978-M); the last pioneers consider the appearance of nostalgia as *normal*:

“of course you have some nostalgia” (43-HR-1981-M). Yet, this possibility of an alternative reading of the past and an alternative future is precisely what the mainstream discourses try to annul. While the rare interviewees perceive that the return of the old system would be desirable, like the trade union activist in Serbia stating that “If someone told me you will be in prison for ten years but after that Yugoslavia will come back, I would accept” (29-SR-1975-M); what is much more common is a belief, or differently put, a “hope in a better past” (Pogačar, 2013, p. 118). Distancing away from any demands for a new Yugoslav state or a simple recreation of the same regime, while demanding a reflection and a discussion of both the positive and the negative of the Yugoslav past, is the key backbone of (post)Yugoslav memory of the last pioneers. Anchoring these memory narratives and the “nostalgic” reflection in global, contemporary, democratic societal frameworks defies the discursive strategies of “repressive infantilization” of the post socialist societies (Buden, 2012, p. 41).

Acknowledging the importance of emotions in the political field remains crucial, but also does carefully making a distinction between the emotionally potent political content and the intimate memory narratives, even if never fully separating them. Our life narratives create who we are, providing us specific lenses for molding and reshaping our memories. Emotions provide interpretative frameworks, for our own lives, our memories and our political behavior. As denying them in our intimate field calls for a struggle for asserting our reality, so denying them in the political field equally invites a counter-strategy and contentious politics for re-legitimizing our world views.

The generational change in academia in the last decade already brought significant progress, as we have noted in the introduction, as the Yugoslav studies are becoming more prominent in universities and in research institutes throughout the (post)Yugoslav space. Informal and formal cooperation between political actors across (post)Yugoslav borders is also gaining traction, all along the political spectrum. Remembering the guest visit of Ivan Pernar in 2016 from a populist political movement in Croatia, *Živi zid*, to the right-wing political party in Serbia, Dveri, the interviewee from Dveri complained that it had been badly received in the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia, and that many Members of the Parliament and representatives from other political parties, ironically enough, called out Dveri to be *Ustashas*. As there is no surprise to right-wing movements cooperating across borders, this indeed seemed like a generational shift in the right-wing politics in (post)Yugoslav space. Such

cooperation was so far only expected in more marginal political spaces. In his research on anarchist activists in the (post)Yugoslav space, Maple Razsa in his book “Bastards of Utopia – Living Radical Politics After Socialism”, observes: “Ironically, despite their disavowal of the kind of Yugonostalgia common among the older generation of antinationalists, this anarchist youth subculture has been more successful than any other social group in the postwar life of the region in producing strong cross-border links, effectively recreating a transnational cultural space among former Yugoslavs” (Razsa, 2015, 49). While I question the idea that the anarchist groups were the most successful, what is true is that the links created between various activists, artists, academics, and many others have been renewed after the war, if they were ever broken.

While many activist initiatives and movements cooperate across the borders, and the cooperation seemingly being strengthened as we speak; like in a case of a public announcement of support from a social movement in Serbia to a social movement turned political party in Croatia. As one of our interviewees *confessed*, they were not openly publishing this support in Croatia, adhering to a political strategy of hiding their (post)Yugoslav ties with fellow activists from Serbia.⁷⁹ As he further explained: “Yes, we are left-wing; we stick to the issues of the left, but we deal [primarily] with the city and topics around the city and the questions that are important for the city. You cannot force us to discuss Tito!” (48-HR-1979-M). Focusing on issues, as he perceives of the future and local politics, not wishing to engage in the discursive memory battles on the Yugoslav past, the movement/party of our interviewee nevertheless reflects on the socialist Yugoslav heritage when formulating their policies.

In 2020, the mayor of the city of Rijeka, Vojko Obersnel, from the Social Democratic Party, disguised himself for the carnival as Jovanka Broz (“Riječki gradonačelnik Vojko Obersnel prošetao kao Jovanka Broz”, 2020), – drawing on a realm of performative and humorous nostalgia, yet for the context in Croatia this could be considered as a brave and a provocative move. But it could also be read as a change that occurred in the Croatian context from the time my fieldwork was conducted 2017/2018 to the time this thesis was written in 2020. A number of small left-wing movements and parties have formed a coalition (Možemo!) for the

⁷⁹ Regarding local elections in Croatia in 2017,

Parliamentary elections in 2020 and won seven seats. Among those parties and movements, discourses on the Yugoslav past differ among themselves, but more importantly, all of them differ strongly from the mainstream anti-Yugoslav discourses.

As politics are about group solidarities and affects appear as crucial motivations for activism (Jasper, 2006, p. 163), wrapping up the narratives on their Yugoslav identities, Yugonostalgia and the future of Yugoslavia led to the question of the potential of the Yugoslav idea today in the political field.

The political potentialities of Yugonostalgia

The Yugonostalgic reflections change location with the generational and political positionality, leaving behind simple cultural expressions and manifestations. Yugonostalgia differently dialogues with the political identities of the last pioneers, differing more through political and ideological cleavages, than ethno-national identity or country of origin and residence of the last pioneers.

For the left-wing interviewees, the discursive strategy of banalizing and demonizing Yugonostalgia and any reference to Yugoslavia is a result of the ideological efforts of the political elites since the dissolution of the country. An activist in Serbia believes that the potentiality of reflection on the Yugoslav past is deemed dangerous for the political elites: “Potential danger for today’s ruling class in all countries of ex Yugoslavia, from Macedonia to Slovenia... to break down their project on which they got rich in the last 25 years” (31-SR-1976-M). Yugonostalgic memory narratives are perceived as counter-narratives endangering the nation-building discourses, but also the regime changes introduced on the ideological basis since the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

In opposition, the right-wing last pioneers stand firm in the anti-communist perception of Yugonostalgia, together with center liberal activists; reiterating the ethno-national animosities. The right-wing Member of Parliament from Croatia explains that there are no open spaces for dialogue until the guilt and responsibilities are taken up, embracing the concepts of transitional justice (63-HR-1974-M):

The earthquake happened in Niš, so I will donate 1000 kunas. I don't know if you understand the degree. But the political degree of some cooperation of any sort, the farther the better. I am not for building walls etc, but a lot of Danube and Sava will flow before we could talk about those issues. True, I said some things happen as they happen. But, the war was in my

homeland. That my old house in which my grandmother lived was shot and destroyed by a grenade. In my street 30 people died. Christmas of 1991, grenades are falling next to my house. In 1992, next to my house. And now I have all the arguments on my side, even if the opposite side will have some arguments of their own for which I have to say in advance are ridiculous. Because the war was led on the territory of my homeland, on the territory of Croatia. Not one single grenade fell on the territory of Serbia, thousands and thousands of volunteers, Chetniks, is that legitimate to say, were in Croatia and „White eagles“ who burnt and butchered and killed in Croatia. I will say today of course that war is a nightmare and that always in war you kill and butcher and that there were on the Croatian side of course those who....

...It is very, very important. Today when you come to Germany and mention to any German the Second World War, he simply stops talking. He looks into the floor and he is ashamed. So, with flowers they were sending the tanks to demolish Vukovar, our thousands of peoples are butchered, thrown into pits. I know people who survived Ovčara⁸⁰. We can relativize everything and say ok, there was Storm. I agree. The front where was the border of Great Serbia in that moment was 3-4 km from my city. I took the ferry to university to Zagreb. My father started stuttering from fear of grenades that were falling around my house. And I know that in those moments we really had JNA tanks and barehanded people on the other side, no matter how it sounds weird in Serbia now. You don't have to agree with me, regardless of everything. I gave you the context. And now you see what is the prerequisite. The prerequisite is the German one, and that is that the president of Serbia, actually Serbian people, understand that they made a mistake in one moment. To say, we are guilty. We have at one moment demolished, burned and destroyed another country. It wasn't Ustasha that were looting Belgrade, but people from Serbia did it in Croatia.

As an example where the concepts of transitional justice are being used in the aims of strengthening the ethno-national divisions (David, 2020), we can see from the previous example how the negative recollections of the war have entered our interviewee's narrative only once the possibility and the potential of future Yugoslav political cooperations is being opened. On one side, memory narratives tend to embellish our past and such traumatic memories are not necessarily called in, unless the present positionality requires so. But war memories are not always playing the same function. For some of the other interviewees, JNA continues to be remembered in confusion, mentioning also Macedonians and Bosnians participating in war activities in the beginning. A majority of the last pioneers are more open to complexities of the war past, avoiding any transmission of war grievances onto the new generations. A Catholic left-wing interviewee in Osijek further reflects on the war (58-HR-1975-F):

Someone who participated in that war was a left-wing, he was also Croat, he also defended his country. I think that we need a revision, an honest dialogue, but I think that here people,

⁸⁰ A transit camp for Croatian prisoners in 1991, held by the Serbian forces, and the place of mass execution of prisoners at the end of the Vukovar battle on the 18th of November 1991,

both little people, that are not in politics, both politicians, are not capable. That is a field that they still haven't come clean with. And what is the problem with us is that war, those are additional wounds, that additionally deepened the division left-right. I think we need a complete change of generations. I look at our kids now, they are growing up completely unencumbered with that, I don't even tell them. I told to my son and my daughter that there was a war, I said objectively how it was, I never say Serbs are guilty, some of those people protested, but not all Croats were honest and alright. And that Croats also did crimes and that some Croats made a mistake in some things. They have friends who are Serbs, so, they are not Croats, I never burden them with that, even as it all goes from the family. In my son's class there is, he is 11 years old, since two years it has appeared – hey, he is a Serb.

The claim that Yugoslav memory is incapable of generating political reflections or movements can be found also on the left-wing part of the political spectrum, for different reasons, rather due to the negative heritage of the Yugoslav past than ethno-national hatreds. A Member of Parliament from the Social Democratic Party in Croatia believes that the negative heritage of Yugoslavia still resonates too strongly (51-HR-1979-M):

So on one side, you are claiming national equality, but on the other side, you hope you're not Albanian. On one side everybody was equal, but generals were only members of one nation, much more often than members of any other. Those are simply the facts, but also this what is claimed today that the Croats have been neglected in that Yuga (Yugoslavia) is not truly so. So the seized property, of Weifert⁸¹, people have contributed to the development of Belgrade more than the whole of that system.

As the political parties remain distanced from socio-economic issues and thus left-right cleavages still are not fully constituted today in the (post)Yugoslav space (Dolenec, 2013; Stojiljković et al., 2013), traditionalism and modernism are marked as key cleavage elements on the political scenes of the (post)Yugoslav countries. Memory narratives are being interpreted, re-interpreted and used for daily political aims.

The cacophony of the narratives provides space for nationalization of antifascism leading to cases like: the Prime Minister Andrej Plenković, from HDZ, in Croatia sending a wreath to the commemorations of Sutjeska⁸² in 2019; or one of the center liberal opposition leaders in Serbia, Sergej Trifunović, being filmed singing Chetnik songs in 2020; or the Mayor of Ljubljana, Zoran Janković, defending the right of left-wing concerts under the name Nosil

⁸¹ Đorđe Vajfert (Weifert), an industrialist in Serbia and Governor of the National Bank of Serbia and (first)Yugoslavia,

⁸² Considered as a decisive point for Yugoslavia in the Second World War, the battle of Sutjeska also known as Fall Schwarz or the Fifth Enemy Offensive, was an attack by the Axis in 1943 in South-Eastern Bosnia aiming to destroy the Partisan forces yet without success,

bom rdečo zvezdo (I will wear the red star) to be held in the center of Ljubljana on a yearly basis in the last couple of years (see Figure 8.3); and in 2019, Lepa Brena singing her Yugoslav hit song “Jugoslovenka” in the fully packed Arena in Zagreb. All these mixing discourses in the public send contradictory and plural messages and provide no clear memory narratives, along with the top down revisionist memory politics.

Meaning making processes of the last pioneers thus are burdened with contradictions between, what they perceive, personal and public memory narratives leaving them with a number of open questions and cognitive dissonances – creating the previously noted ambivalence. As Yugonostalgia can soothe the dissonances, providing a space where it is not imperative to have a clarified political understanding; the political potential of (post)Yugoslav memory narratives of the last pioneers proves to be more challenging.

Figure 8.3 Nosil bom rdečo zvezdo concert, where a number of participants brought Yugoslav flags, Ljubljana, 2018



Source: Author’s archive, 2018

The left-wing political pioneers resist the mainstream discourses meanings assigned to Yugonostalgia, often with difficulties. For them, the most important issue is addressing the taboo of Yugoslavia in the public space, while still widely disagreeing among themselves on a number of issues. Self-identifying as an activist of a left-wing social movement turned political party in Croatia shows resistance to any subversive potentiality of Yugonostalgia, as he understands it (48-HR-1979-M):

Except as a joke, as a phenomenon where at a party you like Zdravko Čolić and I don't know what, and you sing Yugoslavia and that is subversive only because it's against a dominant frame, and not because it truly contains subversion. I don't see it. Another issue is the question of socialism, of self-management, ok... but Yugoslavism as an identity... of course, it is a subversion against Ustasha here, when you come and say you are a Yugoslav then they freeze. But you can use it as a joke, I don't see how it has seriously a potential in political organizing. If we separate Yugoslavism from socialism, from self-management. You take Yugoslav identity, imagine it in capitalism, without socialism, without Tito, without NOB...

I know that there are certainly more people who are more nostalgic than me and who will say in principle that Yugoslavia is truly a great project. Which also shows that it is not that important, because it is not an issue on which we will connect or separate. And the issue of privatization, you understand. We will never sit to cooperate with someone who believes health care should be privatized and that is good. So maybe that is the criteria of importance. And antifascism is something we have to agree upon. But the issue if Yugoslavia was ok or not, if self-management was more or less corrupted and if it was at all corrupted or it was great, ideal and perfect. All that spectrum from those who think that is fake to those who think it is ideal, we work together and it goes. That is maybe good to understand how much is it important in political alliances or not. I think that what are really important points are the topics of public good, antifascism... not topics, but a common denominator that is certainly there. Anti-nationalism yes, but not necessarily in a Yugoslav form, but in a sense that national is not that important. And secularism. That is against the existing context.

Whether we understand Yugoslavism beyond socialism, for the last pioneers depends on their political identity. Shared generational cultural Yugoslavism is not called into question; yet once the issue of political contents of Yugonostalgia is being discussed, the last pioneers start selecting the values they have elaborated as crucial in their Yugoslav political socialization and childhood memory narratives, solely in relation to their political positionality. Yugonostalgia serves as a secret memory box from which everyone picks their own favorite memories, values and attitudes according to their politics; or "a well from which everyone takes water when they need it" (38-SR-1977-M).

We can notice the success of mainstream discourses separating the socialist heritage from the Yugoslav heritage: as previously noted, among the left-wing political actors their ideology is often more turned towards Western thinkers than Yugoslav ones. Separating antifascism from Yugoslavism also proves a level of success of the European memory politics as well, and unconsciously brings closer the left-wing political actors to the center and the right-wing ones.

Besides the political positionality, the perceptions of the political potential of Yugonostalgia highly correlate to the personal memory narratives of each interviewee. The more the Yugoslav past resonates in one's narrative, the more they will perceive its openness for political use. Among the left-wing last pioneers, the closer the interviewee is to the liberal

center of the traditional political spectrum they would also be less inclined to attribute political importance to the Yugoslav memory narratives.

One issue that most certainly unifies the whole left-wing throughout the three countries is the demand to have open reflections and debates on Yugoslav history and the Yugoslav regime, which might provide specific ideas and inspirations for the problems of the negative present they live today, and candidly address the problem of the discursive strategies of the nationalist and revisionist political elites. Another left-wing activist in Croatia, in her party offices, further elaborates (59-HR-1977-F):

I think romantic in a positive sense. Not crying over something that was, but simply as a space that can... an idea that can turn into an action. I think that Yugoslavia was not achieved; the idea of Yugoslavia was not achieved. The same like the idea of socialism. We tried, and somewhat it worked. But I think that the real idea of such international community truly and something it was globally, that it did not achieve its full potential. And precisely because it was a threat, she threatened to happen, that destroyed her. So, I really have a high opinion on that project.

...Of course those who had a job think they failed in capitalism, because they lost their jobs. But then again you can also hear from the workers that it cannot be like that, of course the owner wants his piece, we are not in socialism anymore. They are the last one who should talk like that, you see. But then other things are also discredited, because they existed before 1990s, like trade union movements.. It is also remain of the past. And also you should deal with those trade unionist, because my God, there are no trade unions in Germany, it doesn't exist. And so... what is actually the biggest problem is that any sort of resistance to today's system is discredited as something that was overcome.

And the answer is given by another left-wing activist (62-HR-1977-F):

I think we should talk more about Yugoslavia, firstly as an answer to the revisionist tendencies and secondly as an answer to what should we do, how can we learn some good lessons, organizational lessons from the existing good practices in Yugoslavia. If we are to talk about the left today and the alternative answers, we cannot go without something connected to Yugoslavia. I said one hundred times, don't annoy me with Zagreb je naš pale libertarian models that look up to Sweden. There was something more serious here.

So the left-wing political actors wish to rethink and reconceptualize the Yugoslav past, without "falling into the trap" of Yugonostalgia. Discursive connotation of Yugonostalgia is an example of successful memory politics of the mainstream discourses; it has been so degraded in the public discourse that nobody wants to be Yugonostalgic. The Yugoslav past is considered as a well of ideas and inspirations that need to be reconceptualized but never copied as in, for example, the economic alternatives to contemporary neoliberal economic policies.

On the other side, some left-wing movements do use Yugonostalgia in their public discourses, albeit that these are rare and marginal. For example, Radnička fronta from Croatia, sometimes posts on Facebook content stating facts about Yugoslav past which they estimate is very well accepted, but is only attended to by their approximately 41 000 followers⁸³ (see Figure 8.4). Left-wing political actors in Slovenia also believe that some of the Yugonostalgic content can be useful in public: “I happily use it as a good practice example” (13-SLO-1979-M), or even as a retroutopian concept: “I think that we as humans need utopias, we need them, in a political and all other senses. Utopia is something that motivates you in a way” (12-SLO-1979-F). In Slovenia, a left-wing Member of Parliament notices that even their simple presence, with their open declaration of socialist ideology, in the parliament has helped shift the public focus: “They don’t laugh at us anymore when we say we are socialists” (6-SLO-1983-M).

Figure 8.4 Radnička front Facebook page “Leftovers of a lost civilization much more advanced than ours” – on the photo is the Monument on Petrova Gora (Kordun, Croatia) by Vojin Bakić, erected during the socialist Yugoslavia, that has been seriously damaged in the 1990s and never reconstructed



Source: Radnička fronta Facebook page, 2018

⁸³ As of the 24th of October 2020,

Socialism being inherent to the sense of Yugoslavism, going beyond the idea of cultural ethno-national closeness, as Boris Buden notes, constitutes an inseparable element of understanding of the Yugoslav identity by the left-wing part of the political spectrum. This is an unification not for the ethnic closeness or the tradition and perspectives of Yugoslavism, but based on the common struggle against fascism (Buden, 2003, p. 54). This is an important differentiator of the various understandings of Yugoslavism that do exist among the generation of the last pioneers. Thus intersecting, but not fully overlapping, the inseparability of Yugoslavism and socialism is rather, in my understanding, reflected in Yugonostalgia.

Encompassing a collective mourning for the loss of social solidarity (Scribner, 2003) and nostalgia for emancipation, along with “a sense of personal degradation and humiliation (is) strongly emphasized by the workers when they talk about the postsocialist period” (Petrović, 2017, p. 19), the Yugonostalgia of the last pioneers elucidates the “matters of urgent importance in the present” (Assmann & Shortt, 2012, p. xi).

Research has already confirmed the unifying elements among the youth political attitudes across the (post)Yugoslav space showing that “attitudes on employment and socioeconomic outlook, (which) unite Southeast European young adults in their ambivalence towards the EU, their fear of job insecurity, and their deep distrust of institutionalized politics” (Pavasović Trošt & Mandić, 2018, p. 5). If for the generation of their parents, holding Yugoslav flags on trade union protests and manifestations like the 1st of May 2017 in Belgrade might symbolize nostalgic memory narratives of *how it once was*, for the last pioneers Yugonostalgic references symbolize *how it can once be*.

In July 2020, Midhat Kapetanović, a Sarajevo architect and artist, following the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, the earthquake in Zagreb and anti-government protests in Belgrade, has drawn Vučko, symbol of the Olympics in Sarajevo in 1984, Zagi, symbol of the Universiade in Zagreb in 1987, and The Victor (Pobednik), a statue in Kalemegdan which represents the symbol of Belgrade, made by Yugoslav sculptor Ivan Meštrović, holding their hands, and overlooking the cemetery of the Srebrenica genocide victims (see Figure 8.5). The illustration has generated numerous emotional reactions throughout the internet in the (post)Yugoslav space. As one could deem it as nostalgic, the illustration actually represents a strong political statement reacting to the contemporary political landscapes in the region and as such provides the space for reflection on the Yugoslav past.

Figure 8.5 Midhat Kapetanović, July 2020



Source: Sadiković, 2020

Kapetanović's illustration, with the Declaration that brought together left-wing actors from Croatia (Radnička fronta and Nova ljevica), Serbia (Socijaldemokratska unija) and Slovenia (Levica) demanding regional solidarity as a response to the acute socio-economic and political crisis, represent the newest developments in the (post)Yugoslav space marking the transformations of Yugonostalgic memory narratives into a political arena.

Such developments reflect the reality that I have encountered already during my research in 2017 and 2018 where precisely in the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives, opposing the revisionist nationalist and neoliberal politics of the political elites in the (post)Yugoslav space, a common dialogue and space for creation of new solidarities occurs.

If we accept how memory narratives are being created through interactionist models (Vučković Juroš, 2010) and generational positionality (PalMBERGER, 2016), Yugonostalgia might have provided a starting point for opening up a more engaged discussion on the Yugoslav past. As identity is being "shaped and transformed historically and culturally" (Hall, 2017, p. 127) uncovering *what is at stake* (ibid., p. 130), Yugoslav identity was crucial for the

possibility of opening new solidarities, beyond the ethno-national and even political cleavages for the generation of the last pioneers. As Karl Mannheim noted “a generation as an actuality is constituted when similarly located contemporaries participate in a common destiny and in the ideas and concepts which are in some way bound up with its unfolding” (Mannheim, 1952, p. 306). Overcoming the sense of powerlessness, noticed already in the 1980s (Dević, 2016) among the Yugoslav citizens, for the last pioneers taking up more of the political space in Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia, the (post)Yugoslav common struggles reinforce the generational community. Nostalgia might have been rooted in the past for the generation of their parents, remaining individualistic and cultural (Jansen, 2005) or with a subversive potential (Velikonja, 2009, 2010; Petrović, 2012, 2018). But emotions remain pivotal for the political life, leaning on “communities of feelings” (Berezin, 2002), inseparable from memory narratives and communities of remembrance (Rothberg, 2013, p. 86). As such, nostalgia forges generational communities who (can) transform into active political generations.

A left-wing interviewee from Croatia depicts the need for this transformation (62-HR-1977-F):

I think it is therapeutic, it is good to hear from time to time that there are impressions of people who lived in those times and who keep a memory that has been programmatically erased. When you burn books, when you prohibit all topics and you don't have research funds for such a thing, the archives are falling apart, it means it's a serious problem. So I think it has a political potential, but if its reach is only commemorative, then I don't think it fulfilled its task. I don't find it repulsive, I think it can be pleasant and nice, that it is used up in these times, maybe it is good that it is there, because we are a little afraid for everything else.

Yugoslavism and Yugonostalgia cannot be erased, as a left-wing Member of Parliament in Serbia notes: “That idea existed much longer than that country formally existed. Nobody can guarantee you that it will not happen again tomorrow” (40-SR-1974-M). In societies where any discussion of the Yugoslav past, neutral or positive, is labeled as Yugonostalgic, Yugonostalgia reappropriates its own name, giving it a different content, a more political one.

However framed, as Yugoslav or (post)Yugoslav, the common political reality of the (post)Yugoslav states reflects in poverty: „Now here people go fishing because they are hungry, not because it is a hobby“ (41-SR-1980-M) and loss of home: „I am not here at home, and I go home and I am not there at home neither“ (17-SLO-1979-M). The entanglement of the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives of the last pioneers, including Yugonostalgia, provides a space and a starting point for solidarities and rebirth of lost hope. Hope indeed can „inform

civic action and motivate the struggle for a better life, if only in the form of small acts of resistance rather than of revolutionary transformations“ (Rigney, 2018, p. 371). The memory of a cause becomes a memory with a cause (Rigney, 2018), based on the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives of the last pioneers representing „nor nostalgia nor amnesia“ (Stubbs, 2016).

Acknowledging Yugonostalgia as a subversive and a strongly political phenomenon – among else, Yugonostalgic agents regain their political subjectivity. As messy and continuously interchanging as memory and memory interpretations can be, the political actors demand to live their past in dignity and to see their future with hope. If we understand the locational shift of Yugonostalgia within the generation of the last pioneers through glimpses of more political actions, we can perceive its capacity for a mobilizing force and a meta-national narrative, going beyond the borders of the (post)Yugoslav space, opening space for reconceptualizing our understandings of political identities beyond the nation states, and the importance of the nostalgic narratives for the political field. The importance of overcoming the mainstream discourses imbued with ethno-national animosities, a Member of Parliament in Croatia depicts: “With the already based linguistic animosity, you and me should have a translator. So if we negate a common past, we don’t need a translator, we need a rehabilitator of human” (61-HR-1977-M).

9. Conclusions

Then as I was getting up to the Closerie des Lilas with the light on my old friend, the statue of Marshal Ney with his sword out and the shadows of the trees on the bronze, and he alone there and nobody behind him and what a balls-up he'd made of Waterloo, *I thought that all generations were lost by something and always have been and always would be* and I stopped at the Lilas to keep the statue company and drank a cold beer before going home to the flat over the sawmill.

Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, 2011, p.62

This thesis through a Grounded Theory approach, within the highly interpretative and qualitative framework and taking into account purposive snowball sampling, does not aim at any generalizations. Our findings depict the memory narratives of the political actors of the generation of the last pioneers in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia from 2017 to 2019, and only those who have constituted our study population. Qualitative researchers are more interested in a small number of participants who represent the phenomena of interest and participants or informants are purposively selected to represent rich knowledge about the research questions (Beitin, 2012, p. 10). Analytical approach of Constructivist Grounded Theory provides a portrayal of the studied world, and not an exact picture of it (Charmaz, 2014).

Bringing together political sociology and memory studies, I aimed to show how the political socialization and memory narratives we create to uncover our identities interplay and dialogue with our generational and political positionality. Individuals' limited appropriation of public speech and mainstream memory discourses appears strong when reminiscing our childhoods and adolescence; yet our memory narratives tend to become re-interpreted according to our political positionality and our generational positionality tend to embeds more in our political identities. The generation of the last pioneers did not live in Yugoslavia except for their childhood; the generation of the last pioneers is not young now; as such, so far it did not find itself at the center of research studies. The fact that it was not previously approached as a specific generation might also explain the eagerness with which my respondents were willing to participate in my research and to share their memories and their thoughts, to tell their story, one mainstream discourses have been trying to erase. As my research encompassed Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, the three countries in question provided diversity and multiplicity of the views expressed but also a possibility to understand generation as a variable outside of the ethno-national and nation state frameworks. The generational approach, focused on the

political actors, further uncovers the partisan cleavages on Yugoslav memory. Looking into commonalities of a (post)Yugoslav generation of the last pioneers, this thesis outlines the convergences between political actors of Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia pointing out their proximities rather than distances, this thesis adds to the understanding of the (post)Yugoslav political subjectivities and their (re)construction of the (post)Yugoslav space. With the aim of understanding the multiple meanings of the phenomenon of Yugonostalgia for the last pioneers and its discursive instrumentality in the political field, I have formulated the key research question as “What does Yugonostalgia mean for politically active last pioneers and how does it dialogue with their political identities?”. Simultaneously with gathering the media and public discourses by various political actors, and spending two years in the field – in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia - I have interviewed 62 politically active last pioneers born between 1974 and 1982, including Members of Parliament, active members of the political parties and various social movements, organizations and initiatives. In-depth interviews and prolonged presence in the field have allowed me to enter the intimate and the political worlds of the generation of the last pioneers, and to notice shifts within the interviews themselves, but also after the interviews. In-depth qualitative interviews, focused on the interviewees’ life narratives, have given me a possibility to establish trust between the researcher and the interviewees, and much needed time to capture the dissonances and the ambivalences in the last pioneers’ narratives. It has also provided an opportunity to hear the political actors’ narratives, outside of their usual public discourses and thus gain access to their personal reflections and the interplays between their memories and their political positionality.

Intersecting theoretical frameworks on memory, nostalgia and generation, I have analyzed how nostalgic memories turn into political reflections within one single narrative and highlighted how the cognitive dissonances translate into ambivalent nostalgic memory narratives and political conceptualizations of the Yugoslav past, opening the space for future political imaginaries. In my research I tried to follow Corbin and Strauss: “The researcher must walk a fine line between getting into the hearts and minds of respondents, while at the same time keeping enough distance to be able to think clearly and analytically about what is being said or done” (2012, p. 16). The narratives of the last pioneers, aiming to create coherent stories about their own and the Yugoslav past, resulted in over 2000 pages of transcripts, coded in Atlas.ti and through data analysis leading to a conceptualization of the memory narratives of the last pioneers and their understanding of Yugonostalgia. Through

coding and memoing, clustering and diagramming, integrating my memos, I have aimed for an imaginative understanding of Yugonostalgia, trying to understand how the last pioneers construct meanings of their life narratives and the Yugoslav past, in opposition or in alignment with the mainstream discourses. I have identified the repeating patterns and concepts, allowing me to construct categories which have led to an interpretative scheme of how the memory narratives of the last pioneers in their multidirectional processes influence the political identities of the (post)Yugoslav space. Starting where I am (Lofland & Lofland, 1995), together with the interviewees during the interviews and analyzing the interviews afterwards; through theoretical and data triangulation, my research fits in the framework of Constructivist Grounded Theory.

The thesis also embraced an activist element visible in the data collection process itself. Some of the political actors thanked me, at the end of our interviews, for making them reflect and for opening questions that they did not previously dwell upon. Some of the political actors, for example in Croatia, started more boldly using Yugonostalgic tropes in their internet presence through Yugonostalgic memes with strong commentaries on the present. A fervent anti-Yugoslav ended the conversation asking me to send the recording so he could relisten again to all the wonderful memories that the conversation brought up. I hope this thesis also encouraged further reflection on the Yugoslav history among the interviewed political actors in the (post)Yugoslav space, encouraging a gaze into what connects us rather than what separates us.

Using a transversal more than a strict comparative approach, while avoiding methodological nationalism and the confines of the borders of the contemporary (post)Yugoslav nation states, has proved to be the most fruitful approach to the topic. It also provides an important contribution to the understanding of the divergences and convergences within the (post)Yugoslav space regarding the traveling memory narratives and more importantly, the generational and the political positionality of the last pioneers. The (post)Yugoslav identities traveled and still travel across the (post)Yugoslav borders; the readings assigning ethno-national identities based on citizenship or the place of residence do not contribute to the theoretical understanding of the political phenomena at hand but reproduce the nationalist lenses of the political elites. I believe that this thesis adds to the argument of the importance

of anti-nationalism in methodology, if we wish to truly comprehend the Yugoslav character of the (post)Yugoslav space.

Understanding the generation as a key variable, I have established that the generation of the last pioneers shares a sense of a generation, displaying an existing shared consciousness in all three countries. The narratives of a *lost generation*, and the shared sentiment of helplessness, in the past and in the present appear in all of my interviews. A concrete bond between the last pioneers exists, understanding their specificity, locating themselves at the end of the socialist Yugoslav history and within the never-ending transition into the negative present of the (post)Yugoslav states, the last pioneers being political actors, nevertheless, aspire for a change through their activism. They clearly delineate themselves from the generation of their parents, for whom they believe that they were given the best years of the Yugoslav past, and their children, for whom they believe do not share the same Yugoslav values. In spatial terms, they believe their generation indeed exists beyond the borders of the newly created nation states, representing the still existing (post)Yugoslav space. Understanding their generation as clearly demarcated in temporal and spatial terms, they recognize their common heritage of responsibility and their common need for future action. As the generation of the last pioneers shares the basic values and orientations, it also shares the way in which they interpret the lived experiences (Mannheim, 1952). I have also throughout my research pointed out at the specifics of certain generational units, whether in regard to their class, place of residence or origin, or political orientation, all gathered within one generation, the generation of the last pioneers.

The generational positionality, understood with both its diachronic and synchronic implications, helps us understand how Yugonostalgia changes location through the generational transmission – beyond cultural phenomenology, with the generation of the last pioneers it transforms into a space of reflection, engendering both the understanding of the conflictual Yugoslav past and a reference point for imagining possible futures. Distancing from the imposed binary dichotomies of victims and perpetrators, in the aim of avoiding conflicts between the imagined ethno-national communities, the nostalgic memory narratives of the last pioneers rather reflect time differentiated and long-distance solidarity aspirations.

An important conclusion regarding the cognitive dissonances and ambivalences of the interviewees has been noted throughout the interviews, in their reflexivity processes. The

level of feedback of the interviewees on their own knowledge and memory was visibly high. The reflections expressed have gone from the insecurity in their own memories: “I don’t remember; I am not an expert; I didn’t research the topic; I am not sure; I do not have the right”; to a strong sense of enjoyment of participation: “You made me think; You woke my nostalgia; You made my day; I have only now talked about it for the first time, explained to myself, said it out loud”. A strong need to have their story told was shared among the last pioneers, as much as openness to shifting their positions throughout the interview, according to the new memories and insights they would obtain from articulating their narratives.

The thesis elaborates the initial contextualization of the researched phenomenon of Yugonostalgia in the introduction, further elucidating the personal and scientific motivation for the topic, as well as laying out the theoretical framework in Chapter 3 and the methodological approach in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 depicts a brief historical and contemporary contexts of the (post)Yugoslav space, namely Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia as the countries within which the research has been conducted. Anchored in the individualistic approach to collective memory, the results’ discussion has been divided in three chapters, with two subchapters each.

Chapter 6 provides the analysis of the childhood memories of the last pioneers, their glimpses into the Yugoslav past as they have lived it, within their families, their schools and larger environments, and their understanding of what it means for them to be *children of socialism*.

The sub-chapter 6.1 reveals the concept of a Yugoslav family. Yugoslav families are understood in a sense much larger than the “mixed” marriage concept; it encompasses not only the ethno-national diversity, within both nuclear and larger family, but also religious and political diversity. Generational influences stretch for three generations, confirming the role of both parents and grandparents in the post-memory of the last pioneers. In the narratives on their families, the last pioneers confirm their sense of the generational delineation and the role of class is more prominent in the reflections on the present, than the past – the past enlightens the social mobility of their parents and their own, confirming the memories on a Yugoslav life of opportunities. Socialist political socialization took place more prominently within the families, than within the schools. For the right-wing interviewees, their political socialization is always evidently linked with their paternal heritage where the memories stretch into their earliest childhoods – including the awareness of one’s ethno-nationality. Other than a few

examples, the interviewees have neither recollection of their own awareness of ethno-nationality nor any interethnic tensions between the communities. They usually recognize their memory narratives as counter-narratives to the mainstream discourses, and sometimes even their own political positionality. The childhood memories, besides being unanimously depicted as happy childhoods, paint the diversity and the richness of various experiences, groups and communities as the biggest value.

The Yugoslav times, remembered as the simpler times than today, are narrated in the subchapter 6.2. For the last pioneers, the Yugoslav environment beyond their families and closest friends, continued to symbolize a secure environment, providing possibilities and abundance, less materialistically understood. Carelessness and optimism, safety and freedom frame their memories. The concept of *a normal life*, created in their childhoods as a natural view of the world (Mannheim, 1952), is framed by the social and political values, and the socio-economic system, colored by the idea and the faith in progress and security provided by the functionality of the state. Becoming a pioneer is more strongly linked to the values that the last pioneers have interiorized in their childhoods, than propaganda symbolic of the socialist regime, considered both a routine and an initiation ritual, as much as the memory of Tito remains scattered and rarely appearing. School environments did not appear to have had much of a political socialization values in the memory narratives of the last pioneers, but all the environments in which they grew up nurtured solidarity as prime; understood as politics of love rather than politics of hatred that ensued.

In the meaning-making process, due to the strength of mainstream discourses and their own political positionality, confusion and ambivalence appear. Having experienced almost no usual negative references on the Yugoslav past, the last pioneers either suspect their own narratives, either create stories of exceptionality, claiming their own luck for not encountering difficulties and repression, a view which appears the strongest in Croatia. Approaching the dissolution, as they were growing up, the sense of progress in their childhoods confronts the sense of loss in their adolescence, leading into the unforeseen rupture of their lives. The narratives on the interethnic relations slowly appear; discrimination against overnight assigned ethno-national communities or parents' professional association with JNA becomes a reality. Entering the dichotomy of their own memory narratives, turning from the nostalgic

into the traumatic ones, they commence to recognize the use of Yugonostalgia as a discursive strategy in the aim of obfuscating the Yugoslav history.

In the Chapter 7, I have looked into the memory narratives of the last pioneers as they were growing up and experiencing the dissolution of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav wars. Overnight rupture has been an over-arching trope, repeating in all narratives. The start of the dissolution for the last pioneers represented the learning times on ethno-nationalisms, which started to appear in their environments, most notably in their schools. A sentiment of a sudden loss was shared among the generation, in spite of the memories on the early in the process belief that soon everything will return to normal.

The sub-chapter 7.1 shows how the life stories transform into contentious narratives, more strongly elucidating the generational and the political positionality of the interviewees. Shared memories in all three countries are marked by everybody leaving and the interviewees in a number of cases leaving their homes and becoming refugees, due to their newly imposed identities. The war trauma brought confusion and meandering attempts of the interviewees to understand the identitarian shifts, often within family quarrels, divided families and disrupted friendships. A new normality of violence is recalled vividly, marking the memory on the 1990s. The difference in contexts within the three countries gains traction: as memories of the decade in Slovenia rather refer to the rest of the Yugoslav wars; for Croatia they are identified with the war; and in Serbia the whole decade the 1990s is a marker for wars and the political and economic destruction of the (both new and old) country. By minimizing the traumatic experiences through assertions that *it was not that bad*, the last pioneers try to make meaning of their tumultuous adolescence. Whenever the cognitive dissonances and ambivalences grow stronger in the processes of their meaning-making, the last pioneers are more prone to adhering to the revisionist hegemonic discourses – primarily, based on their political positionality; attempting to understand the total senselessness of the events.

The sub-chapter 7.2 further elaborates their relationship with the mainstream revisionisms of the 1990s and today, showing their heterogeneity in the narratives and the dialoguing with the memory narratives of the last pioneers. Through establishing the reflections of the last pioneers on the causes of the dissolution and the wars, we can further notice how the political positionality, including religious identification, influences the memory narratives. It can also be concluded that the family environments have played a stronger role in the political

positioning of the last pioneers than their concrete war experiences. In reflecting upon the reconciliation and rehabilitation ideologies led by the mainstream discourses, the last pioneers recognize the need for dialogue and debate but demand a balanced discussion, which would not lead neither to revisionism nor the banal nostalgia, as they understand it. For the generation of the last pioneers, ethno-nationalisms and the war were imposed top down by the then political elites, and made possible by a large number of various factors, including the global circumstances of the fall of communism and foreign powers' interests in the region. They acknowledge the new memory politics that were introduced with ethno-nationalisms, largely opposing the memory narratives which provide a more positive picture without those narratives being framed as Yugonostalgia. Through these reflections, the last pioneers take upon two paths. One is, previously mentioned, resolution of these cognitive dissonances and ambivalences through the narratives of singularity, their experience being exceptional, particular and unique; and the other is through acknowledging the political strategic and instrumental use of the term of Yugonostalgia. A careful approach to the contested Yugoslav history, including its dissolution and wars, brings to the surface a sentiment of confusion and shortly thereafter, opposition, from many various angles. An attempt to comprehend how the violent history could be created from their peaceful childhoods and memories confirms the sociological data on low interethnic animosities among the ethno-national communities and the rise of the sense of belonging to the Yugoslav community in the late 1980s, equally depicting how it was rather the violence that instigated the ethno-national distances, rather than the other way around.

With Chapter 8, from narration and re-narration of the last pioneers' childhoods and adolescences, which coincided with the last days of socialist Yugoslavia and its violent dissolution, I enter into further investigation of the last pioneers' understanding of Yugoslavism and Yugonostalgia.

In the sub-chapter 8.1, the last pioneers (re)construct the Yugoslav space, which they continue to feel as their (only) home. In spatial terms, with the Adriatic Sea being its most prominent symbol, home continues to encompass the whole of the (post)Yugoslav space, making it impossible for the last pioneers to feel like they have traveled abroad when traveling to the other republics. Yet the feeling of home is largely embedded in the linguistic proximity so, as the languages differ, the sense of distance is stronger. What seems to be uniquely experienced

among the last pioneers of all three countries researched, Kosovo does not appear as home nor the part of the (post)Yugoslav space intimately sensed as one. Without questioning the cultural and economic aspects of the (post)Yugoslav space, sense of a common (post)Yugoslav community goes further. A shared perception of the negative present and the consequences of transition transpire the three countries and the political spectrum, with neoliberal economic policies marked as negative. Memories on the dissolution depict that along with independence, the Yugoslav citizens were not determined with the choice of capitalism, just as much as the animosities between the ethno-national identities were primarily introduced through top down politics. Some of the understandings of a shared Yugoslav identity follow the psychologizing approaches, most notably by the center and right-wing political actors, relaying on the concepts of Balkanism and anticommunism, and as such appearing as an explanation of the negative present. In contrast with the negative present, Yugoslavism appears as a political idea; and a serious reflection on the institutional, political and economic regime of the socialist Yugoslavia. The continuity with the first Yugoslavia is (almost) never made; Tito remains incidental as a key symbol, and the Yugoslav past is not considered utopian. Understanding Yugoslavism as a political identity, an anti-national and ameta-national identity, beyond and in parallel to other ethno-national identities, construes the need for new forms of solidarity between the (post)Yugoslav states and the backbone of Yugonostalgic sentiments. While Yugonostalgia is perceived as equally producing and obstructing creativity in the present and future political struggles, Yugoslavism is understood as an important element of the re-imagining of the political space in today's world.

This entanglement between Yugoslavism and Yugonostalgia is being further explored within the sub-chapter 8.2. Acknowledging without hesitation the spatial and cultural Yugoslavism, as previously noted, the Yugoslav meta-national character is intertwined with the Yugonostalgic memory narratives of the last pioneers. Such an understanding of Yugonostalgia for the last pioneers adds another layer of understanding the term of Yugonostalgia in the political field of today's (post)Yugoslav societies. Arising as a counter-narrative, both with a multitude of meanings and as an empty signifier, Yugonostalgia of the last pioneers primarily serves the purpose of resisting the imposed discontinuity. In their personal narratives and political positioning, Yugonostalgia is identified in both intimate and individual resistance strategies throughout their political socialization; and collective and

political identities and resistance strategies. Whether perceived as an emotional state or a political catchphrase, it always opens the space for the continuity of the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives, transforming into a present sentiment of ambivalence towards the Yugoslav past and the sentiment of home. Accepting nostalgia as a normal reaction to the negative present, the last pioneers comprehend it first and foremost as a discursive political strategy of ethno-nationalisms and neoliberal economic policies. In this context, Yugonostalgia bears multidirectional memory narratives' capacity for articulating anti-nationalist and anti-capitalist positions.

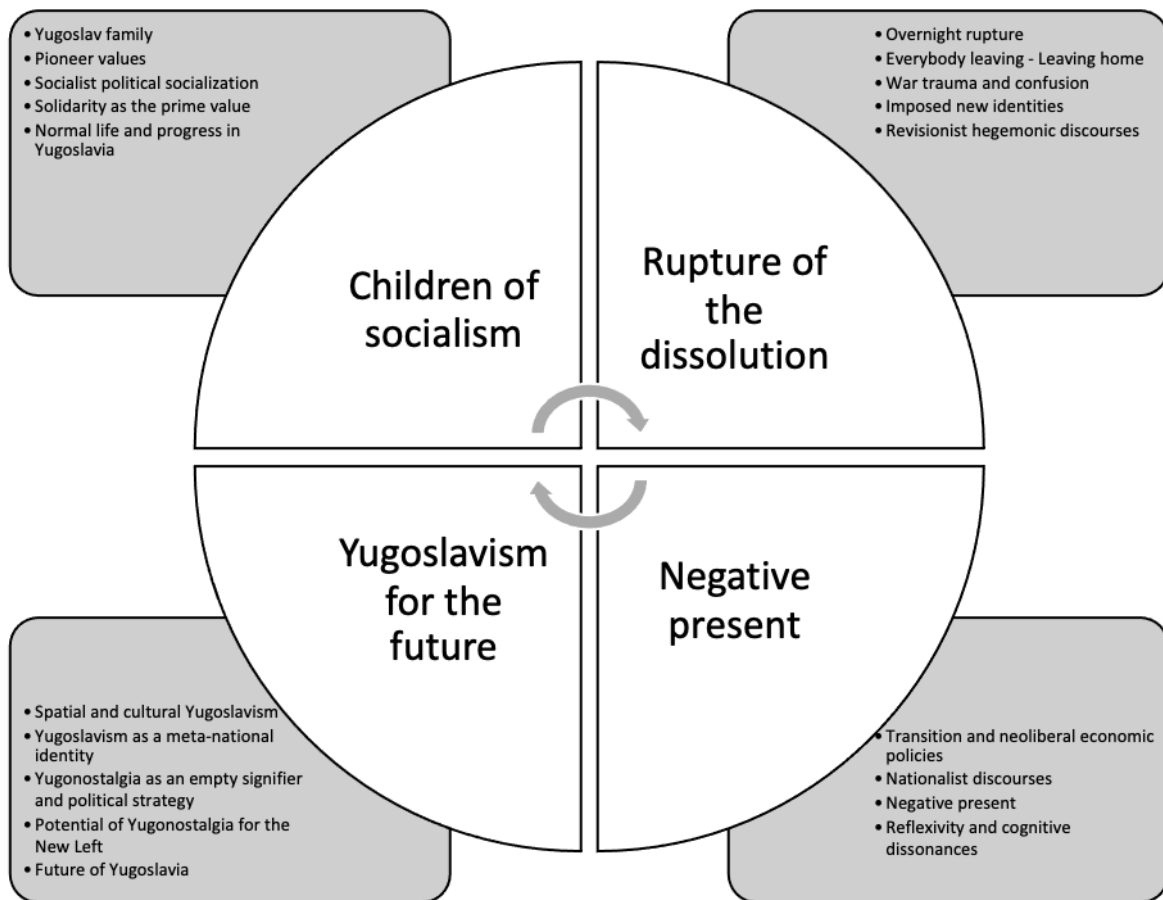
Anti-Yugoslavism is largely hiding anti-communism and the explanations for the dissolution based on ethno-national hatreds, put forward by the center and right-wing parts of the political spectrum. Yugonostalgia for the last pioneers generationally changes the location, strengthening the political identities of the new left-wing movements and political parties. The political struggles of the last pioneers are motivated also by their experiences and memory narratives and the values that they have acquired within their Yugoslav childhoods. Potential of the (post)Yugoslav space for the future generations demands a discussion on Yugoslavia beyond Yugonostalgia and an acceptance of the (post)Yugoslav space without a demand for a (post)Yugoslav state. The rise of the left-wing movements throughout the (post)Yugoslav space and their enhanced cooperation is embedded in the Yugoslav memory narratives, and investigative reflection into how it once was in order to establish the new political ideas for how it can once be. Rehabilitation of the socialist ideological identity requires a walk down the memory lane, even if often in parallel with the almost automatic denial of Yugonostalgic views. Nostalgia forges generational communities who are transforming into political generations, transforming the memory of the Yugoslav cause, into a memory with a (post)Yugoslav cause (Rigney, 2016), bringing back the idea of progress and hope into the political field of (post)Yugoslavia.

The diagram encompassing the memory narratives of the last pioneers, as shown in Figure 9.1, helps us understand two distinctive elements of the importance of Yugonostalgic memory narratives of the last pioneers for the political field today. Depicting the interplay between the memory narratives and generational and political positionality, the memory narratives of the last pioneers are inherently continuous and circular. The identitarian rupture brought upon by the mainstream discourses, through its many revisionist memory politics efforts, did not bear

fruit on the individual level of one's own understanding and *continuity* of identity and personal (hi)story. The childhood values, despite the possible wanderings in the adolescent years, have remained strongly ingrained in adults' value systems and further (tried to be) generationally transmitted onto their children.

Circularity of the memory narratives in relation to political positionality marks the never-ending dialogues between the cacophony of the memory narratives existing in the (post)Yugoslav world, and among the last pioneers, bringing the past and the present into a fruitful reflection on the future. Even if primarily among the left-wing part of the political spectrum and in its very roots, as the generation of the last pioneers is only now starting to take up important institutional positions in the (post)Yugoslav politics, the Yugonostalgic memory narratives of the last pioneers in their opposition with the nationalist and neoliberal present engender the political reflections and new alliances for the future.

Figure 9.1 Overarching diagram of the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives of the last pioneers



The thesis explicates the political layers of the multiple contents of Yugonostalgia for the last pioneers, and further implications on their political identities, notably for the left-wing part of the political spectrum – resistance evoking nostalgia more often than the other way round.

Yugoslavism of the last pioneers

Yugoslavism, intersecting with Yugonostalgia, develops as a counter-memory narrative, an anti-nationalist stance, but also a meta-national layer of multiple identities. The Yugoslav identity cannot be captured solely through the declaration of being Yugoslav in censuses. Yugoslavism appears on a meta level, complementing (many) other identities. As it has never remained in the past, and it still exists in the present, one can even question the possibility of a nostalgia for something that did not cease to exist. Ethno-nationalisms are being nurtured by the transition paradigm of nation state building and the neoliberal austerity politics, and ruptures in identity continuity and the concepts of victimhood and the transitional justice as binary dichotomies of the past representations. As confusing as mainstream discourses can equally be, the counter-narratives of the last pioneers provide a different reading of the past and the present and a different opportunity for the future. Remembering the lack of interethnic hatreds and a shared sentiment of Yugoslavism – the quality of normal life in Yugoslavia and the hope of a progress, the social mobility and the belief in the socialist paradigm, all these memories are deemed as dangerous resistances to the ethno-national borders of the (post)Yugoslav societies and the unquestionable character of the neoliberal austerity policies.

Yugoslavism today, as understood by the last pioneers, remains dialectical and always in process. Yugoslav culture vividly continues its existence and development, a coherent and multidirectional system of symbols which guides in our meaning-making processes, of our experiences, our memories and our narratives. Reclaiming a common emotional space does not necessarily serve as a screen memory for the traumatic overnight rupture of the dissolution; rather the imposed dichotomies serve the hegemonic discourses the other way round. The memory of the Gulag has overshadowed the memory of the revolution, the Shoah has overshadowed the memory of antifascism and the memory on slavery has overshadowed the memory on anti-colonialism, to paraphrase Enzo Traverso, leading us to memory of victims rather than the memory of the fights and struggles (Traverso, 2009). Providing the alternative visions of collective reality, the Yugonostalgic memory narratives remind us that it

is not only the nations that remember, but that mnemonic communities range from families, friends, ex or future nations to communities beyond the imaginary of nations.

Without an articulated demand for a new Yugoslav nation state, Yugoslavism in the present transpires any transnational conceptualizations, leaving us with a space of reflection of meta-national identities. Or, as Howard Zinn would argue: “Memory can remind us of possibilities that we have forgotten, and history can suggest to us alternatives that we would never otherwise consider. It can both warn and inspire” (Zinn, 1990, p. 281).

Instrumental discursive use of Yugonostalgia in the political field

Without providing a final definition of Yugonostalgia, this thesis shows the instrumentality of the term and its use as a discursive strategy of obscuring the Yugoslav past and any Yugoslav future, especially regarding the left-wing ideologies. While in the mainstream discourses, as well as in academia, Yugonostalgia represents a label applied in varying ways to a range of phenomena, this thesis focused on its political layers. As a political intervention, Yugonostalgia gives the voice to the hidden and considered illegitimate political articulations, confirming the plurality of collective memory and juxtaposing the individual and the collective meaning-making.

Any attempt to categorize nostalgia fails, not because it evades our capacity to understand the multitude of layers and meanings it comprehends, but because we try to deny its political character, because it is precisely through the political subjectivity of the nostalgic who colors his/her nostalgia by its contents, that we can identify the nature of nostalgia. Nostalgic sentiments for the times of women’s emancipation in the times of re-patriarchalization of the society are progressive; nostalgic sentiments for the Nazi ascent are fascist, that is, depending of our own political positionality. Restorative and reflective as understood by Svetlana Boym (2001) can be found in all of the nostalgias, the true cleavage depends on the nostalgic content, the political and the ideological within it. Framing nostalgic serves as a tool to delegitimize our political opponents as much as nostalgia can serve as a tool to regain our political dignity in the times of the “end of ideologies”, in the times of an unimaginable future.

Beyond compartmentalizing the research fields, beyond the post-socialist, without acknowledging the importance of memory narratives and nostalgia for the political, it will be

difficult to comprehend the contemporary political identities, their own ambiguities and dissonances as reflections of the ambivalent nostalgic memory narratives of their disrupted identities.

Political socialization and Yugonostalgia

Yugonostalgic memory narratives are a reflection of the Yugoslav mnemonic socialization of the last pioneers in their childhoods. As every memory is fleeting and interchanging, all positive memory narratives are inherently nostalgic, for the memory we once had. The mere act of remembrance remains simultaneously cognitive and affective, but as an act of culture understood in Cabral's terms (1973, p. 43), Yugonostalgia is a return to displaced memory. Structurally dislocated last pioneers, of seized homes and identities, nurture positive memory narratives on the Yugoslav past, resisting the imposed memory politics serving as tools for the ethno-nationalisms.

Our emotions shape the possibilities of political behavior, through forming interpretive ways in which we see the present and the future. Memory narratives that we tell about our lives unmistakably influence our political identities, anchoring the dialogical process in our generational and political positionality. As the traumatic experiences did not influence the (post)Yugoslav memory narratives of the last pioneers as much as their families did, the strongest influence has been noted by stable emotional networks and connections throughout the (post)Yugoslav space, within and outside the families. Friend or professional networks, and traveling, change our perceptions of the borders and irretrievably dialogue with our memory narratives. At the same time, the generational positionality seems to have a stronger influence than the political one, especially concerning the issues depicted under the category of negative present – ethno-nationalism and transitional politics.

Generational mnemonic socialization forms generational mnemonic communities, the subjects being the ones assigning the content of nostalgia, and not nostalgia taking away the subjectivity.

The interplays between Yugonostalgia and generational and political positionality

Yugonostalgia appearing as a multidirectional (post)Yugoslav narrative searching for the future through the past, and its many contents, provides the space for resolving the cognitive dissonances created by the contradictions of mainstream revisionist discourses and individual

memory narratives. Generational positionality strengthening Yugoslavism, and political positionality determining the use of Yugonostalgia for private or political purposes, explain the transformation of the Yugonostalgic memory narratives into resistance strategies of the last pioneers. I also uncover the various strategies that the political subjects use to resolve dissonances and ambivalences that appear within those narratives, including adherence to mainstream discourses and moreover, the strategy of exceptionality and singularity of experience.

Yugonostalgia is continuously reinterpreted based on generational and political positionality, being part of the memory narratives, which are always in the process of re-narration (Welzer, 2010). While re-narrated, its inevitable multidirectional character is encompassing the post-colonial legacy of the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman empire; the pan-Slavic movements; the monarchist unitary Yugoslavism of the First Yugoslavia; the Holocaust legacy and the memory on the Nazi collaborationist regimes; the global anti-fascist struggle and the socialist revolutions, together with the Non Aligned Movement; the demand for return to true socialism in 1968, as part of the global movement; the democratic revolutions of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe; all the way into the descent of the twentieth century into a monolith globalized capitalist societies of today bringing upon the shared heritage of the Global South and the periphery. All these narratives keep their entanglement with the Yugonostalgic memory narratives, serving as an intervention into the mainstream revisionist frameworks, forming a discontinuity in the (post)Yugoslav politics.

In the search for identification of how and why the political pioneers construct meanings from their (post)Yugoslav memory narratives, Yugonostalgia in the sea of ambiguity, dissonances and ambivalences, is always denied. Through the qualitative approach, I was able to capture more converging points between the various memory narratives as they might have occurred in the public, showing stronger proximity between various political actors than we can notice on the surface. Given the fractures between personal memories and the mainstream memory politics, the political shifts into (unsuspected) places of everyday life, cultural attachments, intimate friendships and relationships. But beyond the patterns and relations of everyday life, and beyond the singularity of experience, Yugonostalgia dialogues with the collective and political identities.

Anti-nationalism of Yugonostalgic memory narratives

Susan Woodward has well argued that “extreme nationalism in the former Yugoslavia has not been only a matter of imagining allegedly “primordial” communities, but rather of making existing heterogeneous ones unimaginable” (Woodward, 1995, p. 84). The Yugonostalgic memory narratives of the last pioneers express solidarity of pain for their disrupted adolescence among all ethno-national communities, demanding an identitarian continuity and making the heterogeneous communities again imaginable, and *searching for their own truth* about the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Cornered into pop culture and commodified brands, narratives and childhoods for sale, the last pioneers search for new entry points in the public and the political, re-establishing the ideological as the main cleavage, instead of the imposed ethno-national. While the framing of Yugonostalgia remains a discursive tactic of the mainstream to erase the ideological; the last pioneers deny this deletion of the horizon of future through their memory narratives. Anti-nationalism is, for many, the key motivation for the political engagement already in the 1990s, allied with anti-neoliberal capitalism since the 2000s.

While the cultural Yugonostalgia remains shared among the interviewees from the whole of the political spectrum, so does the need for recognition of the last pioneers’ political and social agency. Reclaiming one’s narrative, one’s story, in all of its dissonances and ambivalences, in itself represents a change of paradigm. The (post)Yugoslav new political space, led by ethno-nationalisms and neoliberal economic policies, does not communicate with social realities of the generation of the last pioneers, or their needs. Distancing from the competition of various memory narratives and serving as a bridge and as a discussion opener, Yugonostalgia for the last pioneers adds a politically productive layer.

Through establishment of cooperation networks between political parties in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, based on the ideological orientation of the parties and movements in question, rather than on the basis of ethno-national communities, the last pioneers’ political activism opposes the borders of the (post)Yugoslav space recognizing the shared heritage and the political responsibility towards the whole of the region.

The discursive battles over the historical readings and the ideological interpretations of the Yugoslav past act serve as ideological anchors of today’s political actors, expressing legitimate demands towards the present. If the political elites of the Yugoslav dissolution and

the Yugoslav wars aimed at political demobilization of anti-nationalist and Yugoslav identities, imposing homogeneity (Gagnon, 2004), the political elites of the last pioneers resist through the return to political mobilizations reflecting heterogeneity. The culture of lies, as depicted by Dubravka Ugrešić, reflected in “the terror of forgetting (they make you forget what you remember) and the terror of remembering (they make you remember what you do not” (Ugrešić, 2008, p. 111), is being resisted through the nostalgic memory narratives by *not forgetting and not remembering* what are not their memories.

Socialist Yugonostalgia

Possibly at first Yugonostalgia served as a secret box keeping the ambiguities and questions, along with the memories, waiting for the moment to open up, and open new perspectives. If Berger believes that we are condemned “to live an endless and uncertain present, reduced to being citizens in a state of forgetfulness” (Berger, 2016), memory and nostalgia take the place of politics. While previous scholars announced an emancipatory element in Yugonostalgia, “a vaguely profiled wish for a better world” (Velikonja, 2015, p. 194), if at all recognizing political potentiality of nostalgia, my thesis depicts this potentiality transformed into reality. If we confirm that memory can serve as “an actor of change and factor of social integration in periods of transition” (Assmann & Shortt, 2012, p. 10) and “create new frames of action” (ibid., p. 4), we can indeed agree with Boris Buden that in the (post)Yugoslav world “the one who wants to create a new social, has to give its fantasy to swing in cultural past” (Buden, 2012, p. 200). Knowledge itself, and memory as one of its elements, remains always partial and interest-led. If Mannheim understood ideology as a collective reality (Mannheim, 1936, p. 74), we can also understand collective memory as ideology, on the lines of Aleida Assmann.

Yugonostalgic memory narratives, or for that matter any positive memory narratives on the Yugoslav times, following this line of analysis, do not represent a continuity with Yugoslav politics, but a discontinuity with post-Yugoslav politics – a (post)Yugoslav resistance, a political intervention in the (post)Yugoslav world. Inevitably bringing an activist knowledge and counter-narrative perspective into the political field, distancing from the ideological reconciliation discourses of the revisionist mainstream narratives embedded in ethno-nationalisms, Yugonostalgic memory narratives become productive categories for the last pioneers.

Understanding the political potentiality of the nostalgic memory narratives of the last pioneers for the (post)Yugoslav space, help us further comprehend how the processes of identity formation are influenced by memory narratives, and how do memory narratives and political positionality dialogue, and re-narrate and re-create themselves in both directions. Showing the strength of political socialization within families over the experience of war, and, further on, of the everyday experience across the borders of new nation states and ethno-national communities, this thesis helps further understand the important influences on our memory narratives and our political positionality within contentious regions and histories.

Politically productive categories manifest through numerous activities and the transmission of basic values to one's children represents an element of an active political life. Opposing the hegemonic revisionist discourses through everyday life and political activism symbolizes resistance to the imposed oblivion (Todorova, 2010, p. 174). Zinn distinguishes the actual past which we cannot control anymore, and our recapitulation of the past which is in our hands (Zinn, 1990, p. 275), by relegitimizing positive memory narratives on socialist Yugoslavia and Yugonostalgia, regardless if they appropriate it as their own or not, the last pioneers intervene into the mainstream discourses returning the political content of nostalgia into the debate.

Another important element of activism, even if it remains constrained within the new borders, is opposition to the hegemonic discourses through commemoration events or the public discourses of the political actors. While the mainstream discourses enforce the silent selectivity of the Yugoslav past, preservation of the memory on the revolutionary socialist character of the Partisan resistance in the Second World War, or the economic and social progress as one of the characteristics of the socialist Yugoslavia, intervenes into the societal turn away from solidarity. De-nationalizing antifascist struggles and re-Yugoslavizing them represents an important manifestation of how the memory narratives reclaim the truthful depiction of the Yugoslav past, deconstructing the ethno-nationalisms of today. Zygmunt Bauman rightly notes: "...the irreducible obscurities of the past, the multiplicity of interpretations to which every selection of past events is amenable, and the resulting incompleteness and contentiousness of any attempt at a comprehensive and coherent narrative of the 'as things actually happened' sort may be a nasty irritant for a professional historian,

but are precisely the advantages of the past when attracting people seeking defensible trench lines for their faith.” (Bauman, 2017, p. 65).

My thesis also gives a small contribution to noting the (slow) re-birth of the left-wing movements in the (post)Yugoslav space. After decades of mainstream discourses of anti-communism, through nostalgic memory narratives of the socialist past has been preserved and are now more strongly being translated into the political space. Certainly, these developments are a part of the global tendencies, even in the United States where a recent poll concluded that 4 in 10 Americans would prefer living in a socialist country than a capitalist one, so it would seem the stigma of socialism is wearing off (Bekiempis, 2019). Understanding the post-socialist contexts and the political subjectivity of the so-called nostalgic actors helps us understand the political shifts beyond Yugoslavia. Generational turns bring new generational politics, as the life cycles change our political elites. With the arrival of the generation of the last pioneers into more prominent political positions, we can expect important shifts in the politics of the (post)Yugoslav space.

And indeed, the last pioneers demand a balanced and carefully thought debate on the Yugoslav past, providing both a warning and an inspiration for the future – away from ethno-nationalisms, but also away from the neoliberal austerity economies. The socialist element of the Yugoslav past most certainly represents an incentive for the new left movements in the (post)Yugoslav space, repoliticizing nostalgia but also emancipating from the Western ideological heritage through embracing the Yugoslav one, constitute important elements of the new politics. As the right-wing and center political choices remain embedded in the concepts of nation states and ethno-national vision of the world, the new left-wing positionalities turn to internationalist Yugoslav reflections, making an important distinction between transnational and internationalist political cooperation. Shared memory brings new forms of solidarities, across the borders and across the political spectrum, confirming the power of memory to influence politics just as much as politics influences memory. Denying political strength to artistic performances like the ones performed for the European Capital of Culture 2020 in Rijeka, in Croatia, from the opening night to the installation of a Red Star on the highest building in Rijeka, or parallel commemorations of the Liberation of Zagreb on the 8th of May by Radnička fronta, blur our capacity for understanding the political fluctuations of memory and the generational shifts. Memory narratives on the Yugoslav past, for the last

pioneers, also bring a re-legitimization of the socialist politics and a new turn for the (post)Yugoslav space, away from single-mindedness and uniform anti-communist discourses.

Instead of discarding nostalgia as apolitical, we need to reinstate it as the political and thus expand our own understanding of the political field in the 21st century. The (post)Yugoslav memory narratives of the last pioneers give us an insight into new and unexplored political imaginaries of the (post)Yugoslav space that could be summarized as “No state, no nation – one space, one identity”.

As always, a number of questions answered led to a number of questions yet to be researched. It would be interesting to implement a comparative generational research among the politically active citizens, to try and capture differences in memory narratives between different political generations, but also a longitudinal research within one generation as to capture how our memory narratives change throughout our lives, further enlightening the influence of present on our recall of the past. These temporal and generational nuances and shifts in memory narratives would help us further understanding the complexity of mnemonic actors, and the production and the reception of memory politics.

The comprehensiveness of the empirical research I have conducted and the overwhelming data collection process will most certainly provide data for subsequent studies and articles as not all could have been used for the purposes of this thesis⁸⁴: for example, the issue of how different dissolution and war years experiences influenced the motivation for entering political activism.

In spatial terms, besides evidently an interest to further my research onto all (post)Yugoslav states, a generational research among political actors on the relationship and influence of nostalgic memory narratives in the political field would be interesting to be conducted within other post-socialist countries, in and beyond Europe; but also beyond post-socialist framework, to widen the research into the overall importance of nostalgic narratives for the politics today.

The complexity and ambivalences within the political identities of the contemporary times, as much as acknowledgment of the importance of emotions for the political field, and their

⁸⁴ Given the length limit of the thesis imposed by the University of Ljubljana to 350 pages,

dialoguing with the past, do demand further interdisciplinary research bringing closer together memory studies and political science so we can understand how the horizons of the futures are being constructed from the horizons of the past.

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Appendices

Appendix A: List of organizations and social movements of interviewees

Slovenia

Stranka Modernega Centra (SMC) – Modern Centre Party

Slovenska Demokratska Stranka (SDS) – Slovenian Democratic Party

Socialni Demokrati (SD) – Social Democrats

Levica - Left

Nova Slovenska Zaveza – New Slovene Covenant

Zveza združenj borcev za vrednote NOB Slovenije – Associations of the National Liberation Movement of Slovenia

Nevidni delavci sveta – Invisible Workers of the World

Goriška.si

Stranka Alenke Bratušek – Party of Alenka Bratušek

Lista kolesarjev in pešcev – List of cyclists and pedestrians

Sindikrat žerjavistov pomorskih delatnosti Luke Koper – Trade union of shipyard workers of the Port of Koper

Delavska svetovalnica – Workers' counseling

Croatia

Radnička fronta – the Workers' Front

Nova ljevica – the New Left

Pametno – Political party Smart

Zagreb je Naš – Zagreb is Ours

Samostalna Demokratska Srpska Stranka (SDSS) – Independent Democratic Serb Party

Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske (SDP) – Social Democratic Party of Croatia

Bilten – Web portal Bilten

NGO SMART

Akcija Mladih – the Youth Action

Mreža antifašistkinja Zagreba (MAZ) – The Antifascist Network of Zagreb

NGO Izvor

Hrvatska Stranka Prava (HSP) – the Croatian Party of Rights
Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednic (HDZ) – Croatian Democratic Union
Most – Coalition Most
Hrast – Pokret za uspješnu Hrvatsku – Croatian Growth
Centar za ženske studije – Center for Women’s Studies

Serbia

Centar za politike emancipacije (CPE) – Centre for the Politics of Emancipation
Društveni centar Oktobar – Social centre October
Levi samit Srbije – the Left Summit of Serbia
Ne da(vi)mo Beograd – Don’t drown Belgrade
Srpski pokret Dveri – the Serbian Movement Dveri
Dosta je bilo – Political party “It’s Enough”
Socijalistička partija Srbije (SPS) – the Socialist Party of Serbia
Ujedinjeni Granski Sindikat Nezavisnost – United Branch Unions “Independence”
Lokalni front – the Local Front
Gerusija – the Gerusia collective
Antifašistička akcija – the Antifascist Action
Demokratska stranka (DS) – the Democratic Party
Srpska napredna stranka (SNS) – Serbian Progressive Party
Clean Clothes Campaign
Ne rehabilitaciji! – No to the rehabilitation!
Bošnjačka demokratska zajednica Sandžaka (BDZS) – Bosniak Democratic Union of Sandžak
Srpska radikalna stranka (SRS) – Serbian Radical Party
Savez vojvođanskih Mađara (SVM) – Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians
Socijaldemokratska partija Srbije (SDPS) – Social Democratic Party of Serbia

Appendix B: Interview framework

Sex:

Date and place of birth:

Nationality:

Ethnicity (if other than nationality):

Profession:

Education:

Residence:

Any significant changes in residence (refugee, emigrant etc):

Family background (education level and profession of parents):

Political affiliation:

Political party/organization/movement:

General themes and topics

It has been concluded that it is impossible to keep always the same structure and line of questions and topics – if we wish to follow our interviewee and to adapt our interviews to the given context.

- What is political activism for you? How do you see your role and your position? Where do you position yourself on the political spectrum?
- When did you politicize? How do your personal and political narratives correlate?
- Do you remember becoming a pioneer, was it a significant event for you? Do you think it influenced your development? What are your first memories of your childhood in Yugoslavia? What are your memories of Yugoslavia in general?

- What is the Yugoslav heritage today in your country, in the political space – does it still exist and how? How is Yugoslavia used today in the political discourse? Do we need to talk about Yugoslavia today? What do you think of today’s representation of Yugoslavia in the public space?
- What is Yugoslavia for you? Does it represent any values or ideas? If yes, which ones? Do you think Tito/NOB/brotherhood and unity/socialism/non-aligned movement are relevant and important political categories today? Is Yugoslavia or Yugoslav history and/or heritage important and relevant for your political activism? What do you think about a possibility of a new Yugoslavia?
- What do you think of the dissolution of Yugoslavia? Did you or do you travel in ex-Yugoslav countries recently (after the dissolution)? Do you have personal or professional connections there? Do you feel like traveling to foreign countries? What do you think Yugoslavia/ex-Yugoslav space is becoming/has become? Do you feel or declare yourself as Yugoslav, in any public or private context?
- How do you define Yugonostalgia? Do you think it is a positive or a negative phenomenon?

Other

- Would you have anything to add? Anyone to recommend for interviews?
- Please let me know of any academic work on the topic or large public surveys in your country.

Appendix C: Model Non-Disclosure Agreement for the transcription of the interviews

Memorandum on confidentiality

I hereby signed, _____ (full name and surname), confirm that I will under no circumstances share, publicly or privately, any of the information received while transcribing the interviews conducted by Milica Popović for the purposes of her PhD thesis at the University of Ljubljana and Sciences Po Paris.

Any breach of this memorandum is subject to legal liability.

Place and date:

Povzetek v slovenščini

Postjugoslovanski spomini kot strategija upora na primeru študije političnega pomena jugonostalgije

Uvod

V času, ko spominske študije s prevzemom socialno-konstruktivističnega koncepta preteklosti, kot ga je uvedel Maurice Halbwachs (Assmann, 2008, str. 55), vedno bolj cvetijo, pričujoča doktorska disertacija, s spojem področij politične znanosti in kulturno-spominskih študij, ubira interdisciplinarni pristop razumevanja spomina in nostalgije. Poglavitni cilj disertacije je prispevati k dodatnemu pomenu objekta (jugo)nostalgije, oznake, ki se danes uporablja na številne načine in za širok razpon fenomenov spreminjajočih se v času, prostoru in sklopu socioloških kriterijev. Prav tako moja raziskava prispeva vpogled k razumevanju kompleksne realnosti postsocialističnih družb in multitud "postsocialističnih subjektov". Disertacija tako konceptualizira nostalgijo kot enega izmed izrazov spornosti, na podlagi ovrednotenja pomena čustev (Nussbaum, 2013; Hassner, 2015) v političnem polju in priznavanja vzpona politik spornega (Tilly, 2006; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001; Tilly, 2008) v svetu, kjer uradni spominski diskurzi konstruirajo in rekonstruirajo zgodovino.

Zanimanje za zgodovino obdobja socialistične Jugoslavije se je v zadnjem desetletju povečalo, vendar je bil vsak interes za Jugoslavijo, še več, vsaka pozitivna refleksija o jugoslovanski izkušnji takoj označena za jugonostalgijo; to *vsezajemajočo frazo za vsakršno nenegativno sklicevanje na Jugoslavijo*. Od 90-ih let dalje so bile naracije političnih elit v (post)jugoslovanskem prostoru selektivno antijugoslovanske in/ali antikomunistične. Njihov namen brisanja vsakršnega nevtralnega ali pozitivnega sklicevanje na jugoslovansko preteklost je s temi naracijami revidiralo zgodovino. Kar je bila nekoč hegemonna in socialistična spominska pripoved Jugoslavije, je morala biti zamenjana z novo, »demokratično« postsocialistično in antijugoslovansko spominsko pripovedjo: *revizionističnim mainstream javnim diskurzom*.

Spomini na Jugoslavijo s koncem drugega desetletja 21. stoletja v (post)jugoslovanskem prostoru, v sklopu generacije zadnjih pionirjev postane subverzivno ter jugonostalgija izvor kognitivne disonance⁸⁵ postsocialističnih subjektov.

Trdim, da se jugonostalgija pojavlja kot večsmerna (post)jugoslovanska naracija, ki išče prihodnost skozi preteklost, s tem, ko se ločuje od »enostavnih« spominov na Jugoslavijo. Jugonostalgija in njene številne vsebine delujejo kot strategije upora zoper mainstream diskurzov, ki brišejo jugoslovansko preteklost, hkrati pa omogočajo obvladovanje lastnih kognitivnih disonanc. Nasprotujoče si naracije spominov o življenju posameznika v jugoslovanski dobi z mainstream diskurzi, ter včasih z diskurzi o lastni politični poziciji, zahtevajo oblikovanje prostora, znotraj katerega lahko te naracije uskladimo. Glede na generacijsko in politično pozicioniranje, se tovrstne disonance in oblike jugonostalgije preoblikujejo skozi generacije in politični spekter. Z ozirom, h kateri naraciji se bolj prilega posameznikova politična pozicija, disonanca bodisi ostaja dozdevno razrešena v "banalnem" jugonostalgicnem prostoru ali pa se preoblikuje v bolj artikulirano strategijo upora, ki postaja kolektivna in politična.

Generacijska pozicioniranost je ključnega pomena za spomin in nostalgijo, kot dveh časovnih fenomenov. Za vsako generacijo obstaja drugačna jugoslovanska izkušnja, drugačna jugonostalgija. Moj poudarek sloni na generaciji zadnjih pionirjev, rojeni v Jugoslaviji med letoma 1974 in 1982, ter umeščeni znotraj različnih zgodovinskih dogodkov, ki določajo skupno izkušnjo generacije. Ključni spremenljivki za vzpostavitev vzorca sta bili pripadnost zadnji generaciji pionirjev in politična aktivnost. Različni prehodni trajektoriji in izkušnje vojne skupaj z zgodovinsko dediščino predstavljajo še en pomemben element v analizi, kar me je vodilo k temu, da za svojo raziskavo izberem Slovenijo, Hrvaško in Srbijo.

(Post)jugoslovanski zadnji pionirji tvorijo mnemonične skupnosti zasnovane na solidarnosti, ki rezonirajo znotraj intimnih, umetniških, kulturnih in političnih prostorov – kot "noeuds de mémoire" – prostorov, ki presegajo sedanje teritorialne in identitetne redukcije (Rothberg,

⁸⁵ Kognitivne disonance je prvič konceptualiziral ameriški psiholog Leon Festinger (1957), ko je opisal situacijo, v kateri se soočamo s protislovnimi stališči, prepričanji in vedenji – v naših poskusih doseganja skladnosti vpeljujemo različne strategije za zmanjšanje mentalnega neugodja, ki se pojavi s spreminjanjem nekaterih od teh stališč, prepričanji in vedenji,

2010). Nostalgčni obrat k Jugoslaviji presega kakršnokoli ideologijo nacionalne države; odraža identitete ljudi, kontinuiteto v življenjskih pripovedih in poglobljeno razmišljanje o jugoslovanski zgodovini in socialistični jugoslovanski ideologiji – prostoru, kjer lahko ambivalentnosti in neskladnosti združimo v skladno zasebno pripoved.

Ta razmišljanja so me vodila k opredelitvi enega samega raziskovalnega vprašanja, ki bi ga lahko ubesedila takole: *Kaj pomeni jugonostalgija politično aktivnim zadnjim pionirjem in v kakšnem odnosu je z njihovimi političnimi identitetami?*

Teoretični okvir in osnovni koncepti raziskave

Doktorska disertacija se nahaja na presečišču treh ključnih konceptov – generacija, spomin in nostalgija, ki jih v političnem polju raziskujem skozi aspekt političnega aktivizma intervjuvancev.

Generacija zadnjih pionirjev

Razločevanje med spominom in nostalgijo ima značilen časovni vidik – onkraj poenostavljenih kohortnih časovnic se različne generacije spominjajo različnih političnih obdobj. Generacija, kot jo razumem v pričujoči disertaciji, predstavlja obliko kolektivne identitete, ali kot bi dejal Todor Kuljić, je generacija zaznamovana z “udeležbo na istih dogodkih, resničnih in konstruiranih” (Kuljić, 2009, str. 5). Lastno razumevanje generacije utemeljujem predvsem na delu Karla Mannheima – razumevanju generacije kot družbene skupine, “lokacije, ki sledi življenjskim biološkimi ritmom človeškega bivanja” (1952, str. 290).

Zadnjim pionirjem je ime dodelila pionirska organizacija. Zadnja starostna skupina, ki se je udeležila in postala članica jugoslovanske pionirske organizacije je bila rojena leta 1982 ter slovesno zapriseгла leta 1989. Zaprisega je vključevala začetek “ideološke in politične socializacije” in “rituala dozorevanja” (Duda, 2015, str. 110). Postati pionir je pomenilo postati državljan ter postati Jugoslovan. Da bi razmejila spremenljivko generacije zadnjih pionirjev pred etnonacionalnimi in verskimi principi, ter kot avtonomen družbeni fenomen (Perica, 2012), je bilo potrebno leto rojstva vzeti za začetno leto. Pri razmejitvi sem se odločila za leto 1974, pomembno leto v zgodovini Jugoslavije, v katerem je bila sprejeta

zadnja Ustava Socialistične federativne republike Jugoslavije⁸⁶ (1974). Obdobje med letoma 1974 in 1990 je zadnje obdobje jugoslovanske zgodovine, hkrati pa je to obdobje, v katerem se je rodila in začela odraščati zadnja generacija pionirjev. Njihovo otroštvo in najstništvo je čez noč prekinil razpad države in s tem povezana vojne. Prostor se je zožil in nekateri od njih in/ali njihove družine pa so postali begunci. V formativni dobi, ko posameznik odkriva in vzpostavlja lastno identiteto, se je spremenilo vse. Kolikor je generacijo zadnjih pionirjev zaznamoval vrednotni okvir socialistične Jugoslavije, je ta generacija bila v enaki meri tudi priča njenemu razpadu – odraščanje v tako turbulentnih časih je vzpostavilo poseben kontekst za politično socializacijo zadnjih pionirjev. Gre za generacijo, ki je v času novonastalih (post)jugoslovanskih nacionalnih držav pričejala svoja odrasla in poklicna življenja. To jo je zaznamovalo kot generacijo, ki je odrasla z obljubo po zelo drugačnem življenju od tistega, s katerim se je predhodno soočila.

Vzajemno delovanje postspomina, ki ga »ločimo od spomina glede na generacijsko distanco in zgodovine po globoki osebni povezavi« (Hirsch, 2012, str. 22) ter komunikacijskega spomina, biografskega in stvarnega, ki se lahko prenaša skozi tri ali štiri generacije (Assmann, 2008, str. 32) s kolektivnim spominom – krovnim izrazom, ki je nadomestil pojem ideologije (ibid., str. 216), predstavlja opazno specifičnost spomina in nostalgične naracije zadnjih pionirjev.

Z zanašanjem na redko število, do sedaj opravljenih generacijskih študij o jugonostalgiji, sem bila hvaležna za koncept "generacijskega pozicioniranja" Monike Palmberger, ki razloži težo sedanjega življenja pri ustvarjanju posameznikove naracije o preteklosti (Palmberger, 2016, str. 9).

Spomin in identiteta

Preteklost se nenehno in vedno znova piše, v naših spominih in naših pripovedih. Doslednost in kontinuiranost idej lahko ostane, toda vsakič znova, ko »predvajamo« spomin, bodisi v naših mislih ali s (ponovnim) pripovedovanjem, se spomin vsaj nekoliko spremeni. Vsakič, ko rekonstruiramo spomin postane le-ta novo gledišče na naš individualni spomin in na našo

⁸⁶ Ustava Socialistične federativne republike Jugoslavije, Uradni list SFRJ 9/1974 (Ustav Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije, Službeni list SFRJ 9/1974),

lastno spremenjeno pozicioniranje v času in prostoru. V tem kontinuumu reinterpretiranja našega spomina poteka dialog z različnostjo in širino skupin, katerim pripadamo in od katerih smo odvisni na raznolikih ravneh in skozi različne načine navezanosti. V tem smislu moja doktorska disertacija prinaša izsek jugonostalgličnih spominov politično aktivne generacije zadnjih pionirjev med letoma 2017-19 v Sloveniji, na Hrvaškem in v Srbiji. To v preteklosti morda niso bili njihovi spomini in to morda ne bodo njihovi spomini v prihodnosti.

Čustva in spominske pripovedi močno vplivajo na naše družbene in politične vrednote. Verjamem, da so spominske pripovedi eno od področjih, znotraj katerih (ponovno) izpogajamo naše politične identitete, kot tudi naša politična prepričanja ter jih smatramo za inherentne našemu najglobljemu občutku pripadnosti določeni politični ideologiji. Prav tu prepoznamo kognitivne disonance, ki se pojavljajo na presečišču osebnih spominskih pripovedi in mainstream diskurzov, ko politično pozicioniranje respondentov začenja razvijati različne strategije njihovega reševanja.

Mit in izum gresta z roko v roki z identitetno politiko (Hobsbawm, 1997, str. 7), zgodovina in spomin nenehno vodita ideološke boje za vzpostavljanje resnice, in znotraj te resnice našo lastno politično identiteto. Kot vedno nastajajo kontrapripovedi kot reakcije, v (post)jugoslovanskem kontekstu jih lahko razumemo kot odziv ustvarjen zoper revizionistične spominske študije ter protijugoslovanski in protikomunistični drži.

Koncept Benedicta Andersona o nacijah kot zamišljenih skupnostih podpira trditev Ernesta Gellnerja: »Nacionalizem ne prebujata samozavedanja narodov; narode iznajdeva tam, kjer jih ni« (Gellner, 1964, str. 168). Ker so pripovedi neločljiv element gradnje etnonacionalne identitete, reinaracija in rekonstrukcija spominskih pripovedi omogoča ustvarjanje narodov. V primeru (post)jugoslovanskega prostora je bilo potrebno prizadevanja za ujemanje in gradnjo jugoslovanske spominske pripovedi 20. stoletja čez noč zatreti. Ne ustvarjanje jugoslovanskega naroda v tradicionalnem pomenu 20. stoletja, temveč spodbujanja jugoslovanske identitete k rasti in razvoju, je omogočilo nastanek jugoslovanstva kot nadnacionalne identitete, ki jo je težko razumeti s pomočjo tradicionalnih konceptov naroda.

Danes jugoslovanstvo ne predstavlja etnonacionalne skupnosti niti ne zahteva, da se (ponovno) ustvari nacionalna država, a vendar pri ljudeh vztraja kot druga plast njihove identitete. Monserrat Guibernau je raziskovala koncept narodov, izven državnih okvirov, kot

»kulturene skupnosti, ki si delijo skupno preteklost, povezane z jasno razmejenim ozemljem in želijo odločati o svoji politični prihodnosti, ki nima lastne države (Guibernau, 1999, str. 1). (Post)Jugoslovane lahko dejansko obravnavamo kot kulturno skupnost, ki si deli skupno preteklost in ki pripada jasno razmejenemu ozemlju, vendar brez kakršnekoli želje po ponovnem ustvarjanju države, karmenim, da je izrazit/ključen element sodobnega jugoslovanstva in njegove progresivne narave. Celu sprejete in ponotranjene etnonacionalne identitete niso singularne, niti so osnovane na singularni ali monolitni spominski pripovedi, saj »ne moremo domnevati, da za večino ljudi nacionalna identifikacija – ko ta obstaja – izključuje ali pa je vedno in celo nad ostalim nizom identifikacij, ki vzpostavljajo družbeno bitje« (Hobsbawm, 1992, str. 11). Medtem ko jugoslovanstvo močno odmeva v jugonostalgiji, in obratno, ostajata to ločena pojava. Jugoslovanstvo nastaja skozi (post)jugoslovanske spomske pripovedi in iz potrebe po nadaljevanju identitete, v nasprotju z etnonacionalnimi mainstream diskurzi; s tem, da ostajajo bolj odvisni od generacijskega kot političnega pozicioniranja.

Kljub temu jugoslovanstvo ni nujno v nasprotju z antikomunističnim elementom mainstream diskurzov; medtem ko jugonostalgija vedno vsebuje odpor proti antikomunističnim diskurzom.

Po mojem razumevanju, četudi medsebojno povezana, pojma predstavljata dva različna fenomena: jugoslovanstvo je vpeto v generacijsko pozicioniranje in varuje inherentno kontinuiteto z različnimi prijemi, medtem ko jugonostalgija, zakoreninjena v politično pozicioniranje označuje diskurzivni prelom.

Politično pozicioniranje vpliva na vlogo (nostalgičnih) spominskih pripovedi in njihovo interpretacijo, vendar jih ne tudi nujno spreminja; spomske pripovedi lahko prav tako vplivajo na politično pozicioniranje. Enako kot subjekti preklapljajo med svojimi identitetami, zahtevajo na videz skladne spomske pripovedi subjektovo uspešno prehajanje med njimi.

Kompleksnost kolektivnega spomina nalaga zahtevo po raziskovanju individualnih pripovedi, da bi razumeli kako nam ta večsmernost spomina, v časovnih, prostorskih in identitetnih smislih prinaša pogled na svet in se vnaša v politično pozicioniranje. Zato je pomembno razumevanje spominskih pripovedi skozi lažne dihotomije, kako biti proti ali za: strogo antijugoslovanstvo in antikomunizem ter jugonostalgija in hegemonih mnemoničnih

dejavnikov, ki z ostalimi vred zakrivajo množičnost in nestabilnost spominskih pripovedi, tako kolektivnih kot individualnih.

Raziskovanje zgolj javnih politik spomina, uradnih obeležitev in zakonodajnih spominskih okvirov ne zagotavlja dovolj globokega vpogleda v spominske pripovedi določene družbe. Poseg proti tem binarnim dihotomijam, ki jih želi doseči tudi pričujoča raziskava, je usidran v razumevanju večsmerne spomina, ki zajema »obenem posameznikovo, utelešeno in doživeto stran ter kolektivno, družbeno in konstruirano plat naših odnosov do preteklosti« (Rothberg, 2009, str. 5).

Spominski boji, ki izvirajo iz omenjenih zapletov v (post)Jugoslaviji so bili obravnavani skozi tri glavne raziskovalne cilje: revizionistični mainstream diskurzi in študije etnonacionalizma; transnacionalna pravičnost in sprava s preteklostjo ter nostalgija. Za izhodišče jemljem nostalgijo, a z namenom razširitve njenega konceptualnega pomena skušam graditi na številnih prej citiranih raziskovalcih, ki so prepoznali subverzivni potencial fenomena jugonostalgije (Velikonja, 2010; Petrović, 2012; Buden, 2012; Kirn, 2019, etc.).

Nostalgija

Kar imenujemo revizionistični mainstream diskurz in politike spomina le-tega, pogosto odražajo značilnosti restorativne nostalgije. Vaje v izgradnji nacije v (post)jugoslovanskem prostoru pogosto priključijo v spomin predjugoslovanske čase, na vzpostavitev »tisočletnih prizadevanj« tovrstnih narodov po svojih neodvisnih državah. Diskurzi sprave, bodisi med ustaši in partizani (Hrvaška), četniki in partizani (Srbija), belogardisti in partizani (Slovenija) imajo namen po ponovni vzpostaviti družbene kohezije etničnih družb in »vrnitev v Evropo«. Zanimivo pri tem je, da ti diskurzi nikoli niso imenovani nostalgija – predstavlja se jih kot *resnica*. Glede na to, da mainstream diskurzi vzpostavljajo resnico, je vsakršna pripoved, ki se dozdeva kot protispominska označena za jugonostalgično. Na ta način mainstream diskurzi nadzorujejo vsebine nostalgije in izvajajo diskurzivno strategijo v spominskih bojih za resnico. Revizionistične spominske študije »ščitijo absolutno resnico«, medtem ko jugonostalgija »poziva k dvomu« (Boym, 2011, str. 453). Ko se politika v (post)jugoslovanskem prostoru razpleta kot *nadaljevanje vojne z drugimi sredstvi*, postaja jugonostalgična spominska pripoved »po definiciji subverzivna, protisistemska in emancipatorna« (Velikonja, 2011, str. 92). Čeprav je za nekatere resnično impotentna za

politično artikulacijo, za druge »spomin brez bolečine« (Velikonja, 2017, str. 8); nujen okvir pri razpravi o diskurzih spomina in praks (post)jugoslovanskih državljanov (Petrović, 2017, str. 24); ali zgolj nostalgija po potrošniškem socializmu brez kakršnekoli utopične imaginacije (Dimitrijević, 2017, str. 30-31) – jugonostalgija ostaja lebdeči označevalec številnih različnih interpretacij.

Pričujoča doktorska disertacija pokaže, kako se jugonostalgija rojeva iz kognitivnih disonanc in neskladnosti med mainstream revizionističnimi diskurzi in (post)jugoslovanskimi spominskimi pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev; odvisno od politične pozicije tovrstnih političnih akterjev se bodisi ohranja v dovoljenih zasebnih političnih prostorih ali pa se preobraža v artikulirano strategijo upora.

Metodološki okvir

Za svojo raziskavo sem izbrala tri (post)jugoslovanske države. Slovenijo, Hrvaško in Srbijo; vsaka je imela vodilni položaj znotraj jugoslovanske misli, kardinalno vlogo ob razpadu in pri različnih transnacionalnih trajektorijah. Kljub temu je bil moj pristop jugoslovanski, ki se je izogibal etnonacionalni identitetni politiki in metodološkimi nacionalizmom (Wimmer & Schiller, 2003), ter obenem zavračal nacionalne države kot edine enote analize in naravne oblike skupnosti.

Z upoštevanjem specifičnih kontekstov posameznih držav znotraj analize podatkov, ko so rezultati pokazali divergence, je moj pristop omogočil oris konvergenčnih rezultatov raziskave, po generacijski in politični črti. Interpretativen in komparativen, v sociologijo znanja umeščen pristop, se kot primarnega predmeta proučevanja loteva naracij zadnjih generacij pionirjev – vendar ob upoštevanju mojega lastnega razumevanja spominskih pripovedi in nostalgije, ki že vsebujejo mainstream javne diskurze.

Odločila sem za umeščeno teorijo, ki je moje glavno orodje pri podatkovni analizi; z diskurzivno analizo (Fairclough, 1992), ki ostaja ena od podlag za vse pristope. Začeni s temo mojega zanimanja – jugonostalgija politično aktivnih zadnjih pionirjev – sem se poglobila v zbiranje podatkov, skozi politično etnografijo, intervjuje in opazovanja z udeležbo. Na začetku sem se soočila z raziskovalno situacijo in ne s hipotezo ter leta 2017 uradno začela delo na terenu. Z namenskim vzorčenjem sem intervjuvala dve glavni skupini

političnih akterjev – takratne poslance parlamentov ter člane političnih strank, ki niso bili poslanci, vključno s člani družbenih gibanj in/ali različnih političnih iniciativ, ob podmeni razumevanja koncepta "politični aktivizem" čimbolj široko in razumljivo, kot je le mogoče, pri čemer sem ga opredelila kot udejstvovanje pri konkretnih aktivnostih znotraj organizirane skupine za obdobje 6-ih mesecev oz. dlje; vse to je vgrajeno v definicije pri Ingelhartu (1990) ter della Porta (2014). Tekom leta 2017 in 2018 sem skupno opravila 62 intervjujev; 18 v Sloveniji, 23 na Hrvaškem in 21 v Srbiji.

Refleksivnost znotraj moje raziskave je z nenehnim zavedanjem lastne pozicije igrala pomembno vlogo pri raziskovalnem procesu pridobivanja znanja (Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2016). Hibridna in vmesna pozicija (McGhee, Marland & Atkinson, 2007, str. 338) je ostala pomembna tekom terenskega dela in podatkovne analize, pri čemer sem vodila notranji dialog in kritično samoevalvacijo (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017, str. 2). Podatkovno analizo podrobno razdelanih transkriptov intervjujev sem zasnovala z Atlas.ti, programsko opremo za kodiranje, ki je bila potrebna tudi za analizo javnih diskurzov, pri čemer me je vodilo temeljno delo Glaserja in Straussa ter še bolj Kathy Charmaz (2014) z vpeljavo Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) pri podatkovni analizi.

Doktorski disertaciji bi zagotovo koristila bolj celovitejša prostorska in generacijska perspektiva; vključno z vsemi (post)jugoslovanskimi državami ter več generacijami; vendar kljub temu verjamem, da doktorska disertacija bogati konceptualno razumevanje jugonostalgije in nostalgije na splošno.

Vzorec

Struktura vzorca odraža številne realnosti (post)jugoslovanskega političnega prostora. Nizka zastopanost žensk v politiki na splošno se odraža v 42 intervjujev z moškimi in 20 intervjuji z ženskami. Na podlagi etnonacionalne samoidentifikacije se je zgolj ena intervjuvanka nedvoumno identificirala kot Jugoslovanka, v štirih primerih pa je to veljalo kot verjetna možnost – prej kot ne v bodoče. Večje število sogovornikov, šestnajst intervjuvancev, je oklevalo z etnonacionalno opredelitvijo, saj so imeli potrebo po distanciranju od tega, kar se je predstavljalo kot glavni vzrok za vojne in trpljenje v (post)jugoslovanskem prostoru od 90-ih let dalje, medtem ko se jih osem sploh ni opredeljevalo. Druga pomembna značilnost mojega vzorca je, da ima neizmerna velika večina intervjuvancev visoko izobrazbo, kar 90%

sogovornikov. Kot predstavnikom zadnje generacije pionirjev v Jugoslaviji, je mojim intervjuvancem koristila ekspanzija izobraževalnega sistema v Jugoslaviji, še več, socialna mobilnost je koristila tudi njihovim staršem. Izobrazbeno ozadjestarev zadnjih pionirjev je veliko bolj pisano, hkrati pa njihova visoka izobrazba ostaja zastopana v velikem deležu. Okoli polovica intervjuvancev živi v glavnih mestih posameznih zajetih držav (Ljubljana, Zagreb in Beograd) in približno polovica jih je članov političnih strank: ena tretjina (32,26%) so poslanci v parlamentu⁸⁷; dodatno jih je 14 članov političnih strank, a niso poslanci. Druga polovica intervjuvancev je bila vpletena v politično udejstvovanje na lokalni ravni, bodisi v obliki strank/iniciativ/gibanj, ki ne obstajajo na nacionalni ravni bodisi kot aktivisti različnih nevladnih organizacij, sindikatov ali drugih politično angažiranih gibanj. Večina intervjuvancev se je samoidentificirala za levičarje (58,06%), kot nehotena posledica vzorca pa se je zgolj 14,52% samoidentificirala za desničarje.

Kontekstualizacija

Ker so zadnji pionirji odraščali v osemdesetih letih, beležijo sociološki podatki porast jugoslovanske identitete, kljub današnjim diskurzom o etnično motiviranem sovraštvu kot glavnemu razlogu za vojne v Jugoslaviji. Ena izmed javnomnenjskih anket iz leta 1985 med mladimi je pokazala, da se primarno čutijo kot Jugoslovane – posebno je bilo to zaznati med muslimansko, makedonsko, črnogorsko in srbsko mladino, z odstotki med 76% in 80%, medtem ko je najnižji jugoslovanski sentiment bil med slovensko mladino (49%) – vendar je bila pri vseh respondentih zabeležen skoraj pri polovici (Flere, 1988). Sredi 1980-ih let je skoraj 90% populacije verjelo, da so medetnični odnosi v njihovem okolju dobri, medtem ko so menili, da so medpolitični odnosi na ravni republik in znotraj stranke slabi (Goati, 1986, str. 152-153). Ana Dević v svoji analizi, ki temelji na velikem številu socioloških raziskav, ugotavlja da so etnonacionalne delitve – predvsem zaradi ekonomske diskriminacije in neenakosti – postale relevantne v javnih medijih v obdobju med letoma 1987-88 (Dević, 2016, str. 33) in da je bolj kot kakršnokoli etnično distanciranje prebivalstvo bolj zaznamovala družbena nemoč v Jugoslaviji s konca osemdesetih let (ibid, str. 22). Konec leta 1989 je 66% Hrvatov in 72,1% Srbov izjavilo, da so njihovi mednacionalni in medetnični

⁸⁷ V času opravljanja terenskega dela, torej v 2017/2018,

odnosi v njihovi skupnosti zelo ali predvsem dobri. Visok odstotek respondentov ni smatral "mešanih" zakonov za bolj nestabilne od ostalih zakonov (72% Hrvatov in 86,6% Srbov) (Dugandžija, 1991, str. 101-114 v: Gagnon, 2004, str. 36)⁸⁸. Zaznavanje slabih odnosov se je nanašalo le na odnose med republikami – kar pomeni med političnimi elitami in ne samimi skupnostmi (Gagnon, 2004, str. 36). Razredne razlike in napetosti med političnimi elitami so še globoko v juniju 1990 veljale za primarni družbeni razkol v Jugoslaviji in ne razkol med različnimi etnonacionalnimi skupnostmi (ibid, str. 38-45). Dejan Jović nas spomni, da "se vpeljava večstrankarskega sistema ni nujno enačila z željo po odcepitvi od Jugoslavije" (Jović, 2011, str. 137). Nasprotno, politične elite so nadaljevale z dvigovanjem nacionalističnih teženj, dva dokumenta sta dodatno prilila olje na ogenj med elitami: osnutek Srbske akademije znanosti in umetnosti (Srpska akademija nauke i umetnosti, SANU), ki je leta 1986 pricuriljal v tisk, v katerem sta bili dve razpravi "Križa jugoslovanske ekonomije in družbe" ter "Položaj Srbije in srbskega naroda". Kot odziv nanj je leta 1987 izšla številka Nove Revije s podnaslovom "Prispevki za slovenski nacionalni program", v kateri se razpravlja o možnostih polne suverenosti Slovenije (ibid, str. 94).

Jugoslovanstvo se je odražalo tudi v stališčih državljanov do politične krize. Leta 1990 je na Hrvaškem v anketi, ki je izvedla Fakulteta za politične znanosti v Zagrebu zgolj 10,66% vprašanih verjelo, da bi Jugoslavija morala biti še bolj centralizirana, a je zgolj 10,66% verjelo, da bi morala Hrvaška biti samostojna, medtem ko je 51,66% verjelo, da bi se Jugoslavija morala preobraziti v konfederacijo (Grdešić, Kasapović, Šiber & Zakošek, 1991, str. 199-200). Celo v Sloveniji, ki je vedno veljala za "čist" primer, je v začetku 90-ih let 50,6% vprašanih menilo, da bi Slovenija morala biti "država znotraj jugoslovanske konfederacije z visoko stopnjo avtonomije kot nekatere določene republike" in je samo 23,3% prebivalstva želelo, da Slovenija postane "popolnoma neodvisna država" (Jović, 2017, str. 46).

V.P. Gagnon (2004) v svojem pomembnem delu "Mit o etnični vojni – Srbija in Hrvaška v devetdesetih letih" pokaže, kako so jugoslovanske politične elite ustvarile nasilen konflikt kot

⁸⁸ Dugandžija, N., (1991) "Domet nacionalne zaokupljenosti" in "Položaj naroda i međunarodni odnosi u Hrvatskoj", ed. Štefica Bahtijarević in Mladen Lazić, Zagreb: Institut za Društvena Istraživanja, str. 101-114,

orodje za politično demobilizacijo jugoslovanskega prebivalstva. Novejše delo Mile Dragojević "Amoralne skupnosti" (2019) prikazuje, kako so bile jugoslovanske vojne vsiljene od zgoraj navzdol, kot del politične strategije, ki se je predvsem ukvarjala z ustvarjanjem meja in marginalizacijo zmernežev ter nadaljnjim spodbujanjem nasilja zoper civilistov. Dragojević potrjuje, da nasilje ni izbruhnilo kot rezultat medetničnih sovražnosti in kako je nadalje vodilo k marginalizaciji in demobilizaciji protinacionalističnega dela prebivalstva. Hannes Grandits in Ulf Brunnbauer (2013, str. 15) prav tako zavračata predobstoječo etnično sovraštvo, saj se je po njunem mnenju nacionalizem uporabljal v institucionalnem boju za hegemonijo znotraj Jugoslavije. "Skupinskost", ki ustvarja konflikte med etnonacionalnimi skupnosti, je bila po njunem mnenju rezultat specifičnih dinamik institucionalnih in režimskih sprememb ob koncu socialistične Jugoslavije (ibid, str. 31).

Ko so se politične okoliščine poslabšale in ko je nasilje izbruhnilo, so etnonacionalne identitete pridobile na moči tudi med prebivalstvom. Primer tega je sprememba v številu samoidentificiranih Jugoslovanov v popisu na Hrvaškem, kjer se je njihovo število zmanjšalo z 8,2% leta 1981 na 2,2% prebivalstva leta 1991; ravno ko se je v osemdesetih letih nacionalistična propaganda stopnjevala (Petrović, 1992, str. 7 v: Woodward, 1995, str. 92).⁸⁹

Novonastale (post)jugoslovanske države so ubrale različne poti, vendar so nekatere podobnosti med njimi ostale: prebivalstvo je obubožalo, ozemlja so se izpraznila in optimizma za prihodnost je ostalo, če sploh kaj zelo malo. Ko gledamo na režime, ki so se razvili v regiji, Danijela Dolenc za glavne vzroke za manko njihove legitimnosti prepozna v "politični zlorabi moči in globoko krivičnih privatizacijskih procesih (Dolenc, 2013, str. 7).

Razprava o rezultatih

⁸⁹ Petrović, Ruža (1992), „*The national composition of Yugoslavia's population, 1991*“, Yugoslav Survey, Vol. 33, št.1, str.7,

V poglavju 6 je podana analiza spominov zadnjih pionirjev o otroštvu – njihovi pogledi v jugoslovansko preteklost kot so jo živeli, znotraj svojih družin, šol in v širših okolij; ter njihovo razumevanje, kaj zanje pomeni biti *otrok socializma*.

Podpoglavje 6.1. razkriva koncept jugoslovanske družine. Jugoslovanske družine razumemo v veliko večjemu obsegu kot koncept "mešanega" zakona, ki ne zajema le etnonacionalno raznolikost, znotraj nuklearne ali razširjene družine, temveč tudi religiozno in politično raznolikost. Generacijski vplivi se raztezajo preko treh generacij in potrjujejo vlogo tako staršev kot starih staršev v postspominih zadnjih pionirjev. V pripovedih o svojih družinah zadnji pionirji potrjujejo svojo lastno generacijsko razmejitev, vloga razreda pa je bolj prisotna v refleksijah o sedanjosti kot preteklosti – preteklost zaznamuje lastna družbena mobilnost in mobilnost njihovih staršev ter potrjuje spomin o priložnosti polnem življenju v Jugoslaviji. Socialistična politična socializacija se je bolj pomembno odvijala znotraj družin kot pa znotraj šol. Za desničarske intervjuvance je lastna politična socializacija vedno očitneje povezana z dediščino staršev, kjer se spomini raztezajo vse do njihovih zgodnjih otroštev – vključno z zavedanjem o posameznikovi etnonacionalni pripadnosti. Razen v nekaterih primerih se intervjuvanci ne spominjajo lastnega zavedanja etnonacionalne pripadnosti niti kakršnikoli mednacionalnih napetosti med skupnostmi; kjer lastne spominske pripovedi prepoznajo kot kontra-pripovedi mainstream diskurzom – včasih tudi lastnim. Spomini na otroštvo so poleg tega, da so soglasno prikazani s podobami srečnega otroštva, kot največjo vrednoto zadnji pionirji izpostavljajo raznolikost in bogastvo raznih izkušenj, skupin in skupnosti.

Jugoslovanski časi, ki so si jih zapomnili kot preprostejše od današnjih, so opisani v podpoglavju 6.2. Za zadnje pionirje je jugoslovansko okolje onkraj njihovih družin in najbližjih prijateljev, še naprej simboliziralo varno okolje, ki ponuja možnosti in obilje, ki ni zgolj osredotočeno na potrošništvo. Brezskrbnost in optimizem, varnost in svoboda oblikujejo njihove spomine. Koncept *normalnega življenja*, ustvarjenega v njihovih otroštvih kot normalen pogled na svet (Mannheim, 1952), uokvirjajo družbene in politične vrednote in družbenoekonomski sistem, obarvan z idejo in vero v napredek in varnost, ki jo zagotavlja funkcionalnost države. Postati pionir pomeni večjo zavezo k vrednotam, ki so jih ponotranjili zadnji pionirji v svojih otroštvih kot pa k simbolični propagandi socialističnega režima, ki je bila razumljena kot rutina in kot ritual iniciacije; ob vsem tem spomin na Tita ostaja raztresen

in se le redko pojavlja. Zdi se, da šolska okolja v spominskih pripovedih zadnjih pionirjev niso odigrala večje vloge nosilcev vrednot politične socializacije, toda vsa okolja, v katerih so odraščali so gojila prvovrsten čut za solidarnost ter so razumela politiko ljubezni bolj kot politiko sovraštva, ki je sledila.

V procesu oblikovanja pomenov se zaradi moči mainstream diskurzov in njihove politične pozicije ustvarja zmeda in ambivalentnost. Ker zadnji pionirji sami niso izkusili običajnih negativnih referenc iz jugoslovanske preteklosti, bodisi dvomijo v lastne pripovedi ali pa ustvarjajo zgodbe o izjemah – s sklicevanjem na lastno srečo, da niso naleteli na težave in represijo, kar je bilo najbolj opazno na Hrvaškem. S približevanjem razpadu tekom svojega odraščanja se občutek napredka iz njihovega otroštva sooči z občutkom izgube, kar vodi v nepredvidljivo zarezo v njihovih življenjih. Počasi se pojavljajo pripovedi o medetničnih odnosih; čez noč diskriminacija zaradi predpisane pripadnosti etnonacionalnim skupnostim njihovih staršev ali vsled poklicnim zvezam z JLA (Jugoslovanska ljudska armada) postanejo resničnost. Z vstopanjem v dihotomijo lastnih spominskih pripovedi, iz prehoda od nostalgичnih k travmatičnim pripovedim, začenejo prepoznavati uporabo jugonostalgije kot diskurzivno strategijo za zamegljevanje zgodovine Jugoslavije.

V poglavju 7 sem preučila spominske pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev med njihovim odraščanjem ter njihovo doživljanje razpada Jugoslavije in jugoslovanskih vojn. Razpad čez noč se pojavlja kot krovni tróp, ki se pojavlja v vseh pripovedih. Začetek razpada predstavlja za zadnje pionirje čas učenja o etnonacionalizmih, ki so se začeli pojavljati v njihovih okoljih, predvsem v njihovih šolah. Generacija si deli skupen občutek nenadne izgube, kljub zgodnejšim spominom o tem, da se bo vse kmalu normaliziralo.

Podpoglavje 7.1 pokaže, kako se življenjske zgodbe preobrazijo v nasprotujoče si pripovedi, ki močneje pojasnjujejo generacijsko in politično pozicioniranje intervjuvancev. Skupne spomine v vseh treh državah zaznamuje odhajanje in ko intervjuvanci v številnih primerih zapuščajo svoje domove in postajajo begunci, vsled njihovi novi vsiljeni identiteti. Vojna travma je prinesla zmedo in ovinkaste poskuse intervjuvancev, da bi razumeli identitetne premike, pogosto z družinskimi prepiri, razdeljenimi družinami in načetimi prijateljstvi. Živo se spominjajo normalnosti nasilja, ki zaznamuje spomine v devetdesetih letih. Razlika med konteksti znotraj treh držav pridobiva na pomenu; spomini na desetletje v Sloveniji se nanašajo na preostale jugoslovanske vojne; na Hrvaškem se poistovetijo z vojno; v Srbiji

celotno desetletje iz devetdesetih označuje z vojno ter političnim in ekonomskim propadom obeh držav (stare in nove). Z minimaliziranjem travmatičnih izkušenj s trditvami, kot da *ni bilo tako slabo*, želijo zadnji pionirji osmisliti svoja turbulentna najstniška leta. Kadar kognitivne disonance in ambivalentnosti dobivajo na moči tekom njihovega procesa ustvarjanja pomenov – primarno na osnovi njihove politične pozicioniranosti; obstoji namen razumevanja popolne nesmiselnosti dogodkov.

Podpoglavje 7.2 nadalje pojasnjuje njihov odnos do mainstream revizionizmov od devetdesetih let pa do danes, ter prikazuje njihovo heterogenost v pripovedih in izmenjavo dialoga s spominskimi pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev. Skozi vzpostavljanje refleksij zadnjih pionirjev o vzrokih razpada in vojno lahko opazimo, kako politična pozicija, vključno z religiozno identifikacijo, vpliva na spominske pripovedi. Lahko tudi sklepamo, da so družinska okolja igrala močnejšo vlogo v političnem pozicioniranju zadnjih pionirjev kot pa njihove konkretne izkušnje vojne. Ko premišljujejo o ideologijah sprave in rehabilitacije, ki jih vodijo mainstream diskurzi, zadnji pionirji prepoznavajo potrebo po dialogu in debati, a zahtevajo uravnoteženo razpravo, ki ne bi vodila niti k revizionizmu niti k banalni nostalgiji, kot jo razumejo sami. Za generacijo zadnjih pionirjev so bili etnonacionalizmi in vojna vsiljeni od zgoraj navzdol s strani političnih elit, omogočale pa so jih številne vrste faktorjev, vključno s svetovnimi okoliščinami, kot so padec komunizma in interesi zunanjih sil v regiji. Priznavajo nove politike spomina, ki so bile uvedene z etnonacionalizmi in ki v veliki meri nasprotujejo spominskim pripovedim z bolj pozitivno podobo, brez da bi te pripovedi označili za jugonostalgicne. Zadnji pionirji skozi te refleksije ubirajo dve poti. Prva, kot že prej omenjena, je razrešitev teh kognitivnih disonanc in ambivalentnosti skozi pripovedi o singularnosti – njihove izkušnje interpretirajo kot izjemne, posebne in edinstvene. Druga pot je priznavanje politično strateške in instrumentalne uporabe izraza jugonostalgija. Poskus, da bi razumeli, kako je bilo možno ustvariti nasilno zgodovino iz njihovih mirnih otroštev in spominov, potrjujejo sociološki podatki o nizki medetnični sovražnosti med etnonacionalnimi skupinami in porastom občutka za pripadnost jugoslovanski skupnosti proti koncu osemdesetih let. Prav tako nam podatki orisujejo, kako je bilo nasilje tisto, ki je spodbujalo oddaljenost med etnonacionalnostmi in neobratno.

S poglavjem 8, od naracije k renaraciji otroštev in najstništva zadnjih pionirjev, ki je sovpadlo z zadnjimi dnevi socialistične Jugoslavije in njenega nasilnega razpada, vstopam v nadaljnjo

fazo raziskave razumevanja jugoslovanstva in jugonostalgije pri zadnjih pionirjih. Kot smo že omenili, se generacijska razmejitev ponovno potrjuje, prav tako razlike generacijskega razumevanja normalnosti.

V podpoglavju 8.1. zadnji pionirji (re)konstruirajo jugoslovanski prostor, ki ga še naprej doživljajo kot njihov (edini) dom. V prostorskem smislu, z Jadranskim morjem kot najprepoznavnejšim simbolom, dom zaobjema celoten (post)jugoslovanski prostor, kar zadnjim pionirjem onemogoča, da bi se počutili kot na tujem, ko potujejo skozi druge republike. Vendar je občutek doma močno vpet v jezikovno bližino; bolj ko so si jeziki različni, bolj se večja občutek razdalje. Kar se zdi kot edinstveno pri raziskovanju zadnjih pionirjih v vseh treh državah je, da se Kosovo ne pojavlja kot njihov dom niti kot del intimno doživetega (post)jugoslovanskega prostora. Brez dvomov o kulturnih ali ekonomskih aspektih (post)jugoslovanskega prostora, gre občutek za skupno (post)jugoslovansko skupnost še dlje. Skupno dojetje negativne sedanosti in posledic tranzicije si delijo vse tri države in njihovi politični spektri; neoliberalne ekonomske politike kot tudi mainstream nacionalistični diskurzi so v večjem delu zaznamovani negativno. Spomini na razpad kažejo, da z neodvisnostjo državljani Jugoslavije niso odločno pristali na kapitalizem. Podobno kot so bila sovraštva med etnonacionalnimi identitetami prvenstveno politično vpeljana od zgoraj navzdol, je neodvisnosti sledil tudi brezpogojni kapitalizem. Nekatera razumevanja skupne jugoslovanske identitete sledijo pristopom psihologizacije, predvsem s strani sredinskih in desnih političnih akterjev, ki se opirajo na koncepte balkanizma in antikomunizma, ki služita kot razlaga negativne sedanosti. V nasprotju z negativno sedanostjo se jugoslovanstvo pojavlja kot politična ideja; tudi kot resna refleksija institucionalnega, političnega in ekonomskega režima socialistične Jugoslavije. S prvo Jugoslavijo ni (skoraj) nikoli vzpostavljena kontinuiteta; in jugoslovanska preteklost se ne razume kot utopična. Razumevanje jugoslovanstva kot politične, metanacionalne identitete, onkraj in vzporedno z drugimi etnonacionalnimi identitetami vzpostavlja potrebo po novih oblikah solidarnosti med (post)jugoslovanskimi državami. Medtem ko se jugonostalgija v sedanjih in prihodnjih političnih bojih dojema hkrati kot tista, ki ustvarja in zavira ustvarjalnost, se jugoslovanstvo razume kot pomemben element pri (ponovnem) zamišljanju političnega prostora današnjega sveta.

Ta preplet med jugoslovanstvom in jugonostalgijo raziskujem naprej znotraj poglavja 8.2. Kot že prej omenjeno, je prostorsko in kulturno jugoslovanstvo brez oklevanja potrjeno,

jugoslovanski nadnacionalni značaj pa prepleten z jugonostalgicnimi spominskimi pripovedmi zadnjih pionirjev. Takšno razumevanje jugonostalgije za zadnje pionirje dodaja še eno plast razumevanja termina jugonostalgije v političnem polju današnjih (post)jugoslovanskih družb. Zadnjim pionirjem jugonostalgija kot kontrapripoved, ki je nastala bodisi z množico pomenov bodisi kot prazen označevalec, predvsem služi pri upiranju vsiljeni prekinitvi – v njihovih osebnih pripovedih in njihovem političnem pozicioniranju, kolektivni in politični fenomen nadomesti individualna in banalna čustva, kot ga prikazujejo mainstream diskurzi. Ne glede na to, ali se jo razume kot čustveno stanje ali kot politično geslo, vedno odpira prostor za kontinuiteto (post)jugoslovanskih spominskih pripovedi, jih preoblikuje v sedanji občutek ambivalentnosti do jugoslovanske preteklosti in do občutkov doma. S sprejemanjem nostalgije kot normalnega odziva na negativno sedanost, jo zadnji pionirji v prvi vrsti razumejo kot diskurzivno politično strategijo etnonacionalističnih in neoliberalnih politik. V tem kontekstu ima jugonostalgija zmožnost večsmernih spominskih pripovedi z namenom artikulacije antinacionalističnih in antikapitalističnih pozicij.

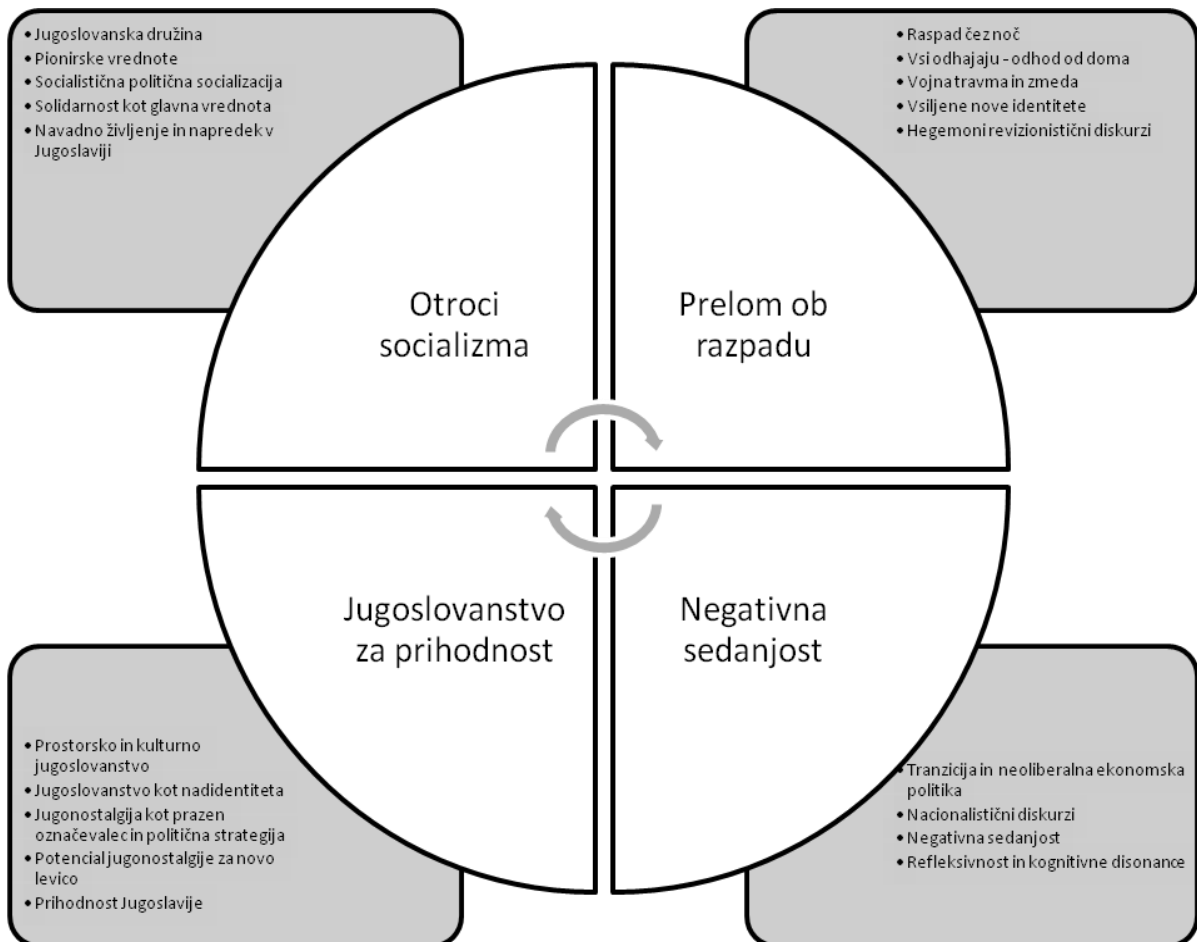
Protijugoslovanstvo v veliki meri skriva antikomunizem in razlage razpada, osnovane na etnonacionalnih sovraštvih ter podanih s strani sredinskih in desničarskih delov političnega spektra. Jugonostalgija zadnjim pionirjem generacijsko spreminja lokacijo in ustvarja politični potencial novim levičarskim gibanjem in političnim strankam. Politični boji zadnjih pionirjev so motivirani na podlagi lastnih izkušenj in spominskih pripovedi ter vrednot, ki so jih pridobili v svojih jugoslovanskih otroštvih. Potencial (post)jugoslovanskega prostora za bodoče generacije zahteva razpravo o Jugoslaviji onkraj jugonostalgije; sprejemanje (post)jugoslovanskega prostora brez zahteve po (post)jugoslovanski državi. Vzpon levičarskih gibanj širom (post)jugoslovanskega prostora in njihovo okrepljeno sodelovanje je vpeto v jugoslovanske spominske pripovedi z raziskovalno refleksijo tega, kar je enkrat bilo, da bi lahko vzpostavili nove politične ideje tistemu, kar bi enkrat lahko zopet postalo. Rehabilitacija socialističnega ideološkega pozicioniranja se pogosto znajde vzporedno s skoraj avtomatičnim zanikanjem jugonostalgicnih pogledov. Nostalgija oblikuje generacijske skupnosti, ki se preoblikujejo v politične generacije; s preoblikovanjem spomina za jugoslovanski namen v spomin z (post)jugoslovanskim namenom (Rigney, 2016) ter povratkom ideje o napredku in upanju v politično polje (post)Jugoslavije.

Diagram, ki zajema spominske pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev, kot je prikazan spodaj, nam pomaga razumeti dva značilna elementa v pomembnosti jugonostalgčnih spominskih pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev za današnje politično polje. Z upodabljanjem medsebojnega delovanja med spominskimi pripovedi ter generacijskim in političnim pozicioniranjem, so spominske pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev inherentno nepretrgane in krožne.

Mainstream diskurzi tako skozi svoje mnoge revizionistične poskuse spominske politike identitetnih prelomov niso povzročili na individualni ravni posameznikovega lastnega razumevanja in kontinuitete identitete ter osebne zgodbe-zgodovine. Vrednote iz otroštva, kljub možnim odklonom tekom najstniških let, so ostale močno zasidrane v sistemu vrednot odraslih; še dlje so se (poskušale) generacijsko prenesti na njihove otroke.

Krožnost spominskih pripovedi v povezavi s politično pozicijo označuje nikoli dokončane dialoge; med kakofonijo spominskih pripovedi, ki obstajajo v (post)jugoslovanskem svetu zadnjih pionirjev; z zблиževanjem preteklosti in sedanjosti v ploden razmislek o prihodnosti, jugonostalgčne spominske pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev nasprotujejo nacionalistični in neoliberalni sedanjosti, predvsem med levičarskim delom političnega spektra. Njihovo povzročanje političnih refleksij in novih zavezništev za prihodnost se še vzpostavljajo, saj generacija zadnjih pionirjev šele sedaj začinja s prevzemom pomembnih institucionalnih pozicij v (post)jugoslovanskih politikah.

Slika 9.1. Vseobsegajoč grafični prikaz (post)jugoslovanskih spominskih pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev



Sklepi

Poleg raziskav o jugonostalgiji med splošno populacijo (Velikonja, 2010), obstajajo še kvalitativne raziskave med delavskim razredom (Petrović, 2010, 2012; Kojanić, 2015, 2017; Bonfiglioli, 2019). Posredovanje empiričnih podatkov iz intervjujev s politično aktivnimi predstavniki generacije zadnjih pionirjev nam daje nove vpoglede in podatke v polju raziskav jugonostalgije in (post)jugoslovanskega spomina; še posebej, ker moji intervjuvanci prihajajo iz celotnega političnega spektra (od skrajno desnega do skrajno levega). Moji intervjuvanci, razpršeni po celi Sloveniji, Hrvaški in Srbiji, pripadajo generaciji zadnjih pionirjev, danes v svojih tridesetih in štiridesetih letih, ki aktivno participirajo v političnem življenju (post)jugoslovanskega prostora. Vzpostavljajo politično generacijo, ki si deli skupne izkušnje in skupne poglede na odraščanje v državi, ki ne obstaja več, a katere dediščina in vrednote močno odmevajo znotraj njihove generacijske in politične kulture.

Poglobljeni intervjuji in podaljšana prisotnost na terenu so mi omogočili vstop v intimne in politične svetove generacij zadnjih pionirjev, vpogled v premike znotraj samih intervjujev, pa tudi po samih intervjuvancev. Poglobljeni kvalitativni intervjuji, s poudarkom na življenjskih pripovedih sogovornikov, so mi omogočili, da vzpostavim zaupanje med raziskovalcem in intervjuvancem ter prepotreben čas, v katerem sem zajela disonance in ambivalentnosti znotraj njihovih pričevanj. Prav tako so mi zagotovili priložnost, da slišim pripovedi političnih akterjev zunaj njihovih običajnih javnih diskurzov in tako pridobim dostop do njihovih osebnih razmišljanj ter medsebojnih vplivov med njihovimi spomini in političnimi pozicijami.

Doktorska disertacija je prav tako zajela viden aktivistični element pri samem pridobivanju podatkov. Nekateri politični akterji so se mi na koncu intervjujev zahvalili, da sem jih pripravila do refleksije in za odpiranje vprašanj, s katerimi se predhodno niso ukvarjali. Nekateri politični akterji, na primer na Hrvaškem, so v svojih internetnih objavah s pomočjo *memov* in komentarjev o sedanjosti, jugonostalgicne trope začeli uporabljati drznejše. Goreč protijugoslovan je pogovor zaključil s prošnjo, naj mu pošljem posnetek, da lahko še enkrat preposluša čudovite spomine, ki jih je vzpodbudil pogovor. Upam še, da je pričujoča disertacija med intervjuvanimi političnimi akterji sprožila nadaljnjo razmišljanje o zgodovini Jugoslavije z namenom, da bi spodbudila pogled v to, kar nas povezuje, ne pa k temu, kar nas ločuje. Verjamem, da disertacija prispeva k argumentaciji pomena antinacionalizma v metodologiji, v kolikor resnično želimo razumeti jugoslovanski značaj (post)jugoslovanskega prostora.

Z razumevanjem generacije kot ključne spremenljivke sem ugotovila, da generacija zadnjih pionirjev deli občutek za skupno razumevanje generacije ter s tem prikazuje obstoječo skupno zavest v vseh treh državah. Pripovedi o *izgubljeni generaciji* in skupen občutek nemoči, v preteklosti in sedanjosti, se pojavljajo v vseh mojih intervjujih. Med zadnjimi pionirji obstaja konkretna vez; z umeščanjem samih sebe na konec socialistične zgodovine Jugoslavije in znotraj nikoli dokončane tranzicije v negativno sedanost (post)jugoslovanskih držav, si pionirji kot politični akterji vseeno s svojim aktivizmom težijo k spremembam. Jasno se razmejujejo od generacije svojih staršev, za katere verjamejo, da so jim bila dana najboljša leta jugoslovanske preteklosti, ter od svojih otrok, za katere verjamejo, da ne delijo istih jugoslovanskih vrednot. V prostorskem smislu verjamejo, da njihova generacija vsekakor

obstaja onkraj meja novonastalih nacionalnih držav, kar predstavlja še vedno obstoječi (post)jugoslovanski prostor. Generacijska pozicija, razumljena tako s svojimi diahronimi kot sinhronimi implikacijami, nam pomaga razumeti, kako jugonostalgija spreminja lokacijo s pomočjo generacijskega prenosa – onkraj kulturne fenomenologije se z generacijo zadnjih pionirjev preobraža v prostor za refleksijo, ki tako ustvarja razumevanje konfliktno jugoslovanske preteklosti in referenčno točko za zamišljanje mogočih prihodnosti.

Jugonostalgija znotraj generacije zadnjih pionirjev razvije svoj aktivistični element. Z oddaljevanjem od vsiljenih binarnih dihotomij žrtve in storilca z namenom izogibanja konfliktov med zamišljenimi etnonacionalnimi skupnostmi, nostalgicne spominske pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev kvečjemu odražajo časovno diferencirane in solidarnostne težnje na dolgih razdaljah.

Pričujoča disertacija brez dokončne definicije jugonostalgije pokaže, kako instrumentalnost omenjenega termina in njegova uporaba v diskurzivnih strategijah zakriva jugoslovansko preteklosti in kakršnokoli jugoslovansko prihodnost, posebno z ozirom na levičarske ideologije. Jugonostalgija je nenehno (re)interpretirana na osnovi generacijskih in političnih pozicij, kot del spominskih pripovedi, ki so vedno v procesu reinaracije (Welzer, 2010). Jugonostalgija kot politična intervencija daje glas skritim in nelegitimnim političnim artikulacijam, s tem ko potrjuje pluralnost kolektivnega spomina in se zoperstavlja individualnemu in kolektivnemu ustvarjanju pomenov.

Prav tako se je pokazalo, da ima generacijski faktor močnejše učinke kot politično pozicioniranje, kar nas je privedlo do zaključka o obstoju resnično obstoječe generacije zadnjih pionirjev, v smislu politične generacije. Ker se disonance in ambivalentnosti v pripovedih zadnjih pionirjev dozdevajo kot neprekinjeno vijuganje, jim nostalgicne spominske pripovedi pomagajo pri ponovnem vzbujanju občutka za pripadanost in si s tem povrnejo kontinuiteto lastnim identitetam. V danih prelomih med osebnimi spomini in mainstream spominskimi politikami se politično premika v (neslutene) prostore vsakdanjega življenja, kulturne nezavezanosti, intimnih prijateljstev in odnosov. S prikazom moči politične socializacije znotraj družin vsled izkušnjam vojne, in nadalje, do vsakodnevnih izkušenj onkraj meja nacionalnih držav in etnonacionalnih skupnosti, pričujoča disertacija pomaga nadalje razumeti pomen vplivov na naše spominske pripovedi in našo politično pozicijo znotraj sprtih regij in zgodovin.

Susan Woodward je pravilno trdila, da "skrajni nacionalizem v bivši Jugoslaviji ni bil zgolj predmet zamišljanja dozdevno 'prvinskih' skupnosti, temveč za ustvarjanje obstoječih heterogenih skupnosti kot nepredstavljenih" (Woodward, 1995, str. 84). Jugonostalgčne spominske pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev izražajo solidarnost bolečine z vsemi etnonacionalnimi skupnostmi, zaradi njihovih prekinjenih najstniških let, z zahtevo po identitetni kontinuiteti s ponovno zmožnostjo zamišljanja ustvarjanja heterogenih skupnosti; z *iskanjem lastne resnice* o razpadu Jugoslavije. Zadnji pionirji, stisnjeni med pop kulturo in poblagovljenimi znamkami, pripovedmi in otroštvu na prodaj, iščejo nove vstopne točke v javno in politično – s ponovnim vzpostavljanjem ideološkosti kot glavne točke razkola, namesto vsiljene etnonacionalne.

Možno je, da je jugonostalgija sprva služila kot skrivnostna skrinjica z vsemi nejasnostmi in vprašanji, vključno s spomini, ki čakajo na trenutek, da se izpovejo in odprejo novim perspektivam. Če lahko potrdimo, da spomin služi kot "akter sprememb in dejavnik družbene integracije v tranzicijskih obdobjih" (Assmann & Shortt, 2012, str. 10) in "ustvarja nove okvire delovanja" (ibid, str. 4), se lahko strinjamo z Borisom Budnom, da mora v (post)jugoslovanskem svetu "tisti, ki želi ustvariti novo družbenost, zazibati domišljijo v kulturno preteklost" (Buden, 2012, str. 200).

Sledeč analizi jugonostalgčne spominske pripovedi, ali kakršnekoli pozitivne spominske pripovedi o jugoslovanskih časih, ne predstavljajo kontinuitete z jugoslovansko politiko, temveč diskontinuiteto s (post)jugoslovansko politiko – (post)jugoslovanskim uporom, politično intervencijo v (post)jugoslovanski svet. Jugonostalgčne spominske pripovedi neizogibno prinašajo v politično polje aktivistično znanje in kontrapripovedno perspektivo. Z oddaljevanjem od ideoloških spravnih, revizionističnih mainstream diskurzov, vpetih v etnonacionalizme, postajajo jugonostalgčne spominske pripovedi produktivne kategorije za zadnje pionirje.

Politično produktivne kategorije se kažejo skozi različne aktivnosti – prenos osnovnih vrednot na posameznikove otroke predstavlja element aktivnega političnega življenja. Nasprotovanje hegemonim revizionističnim diskurzom skozi vsakdanje življenje in politični aktivizem, simbolizirata upor zoper vsiljene pozabe (Todorova, 2010, str. 174). Zinn (1990, str. 275) razlikuje med dejansko preteklostjo, nad katero nimamo več nadzora, od naše rekapitulacije preteklosti, ki je v naših rokah – zadnji pionirji s ponovno legitimacijo pozitivnih spominskih

pripovedi o Jugoslaviji in jugonostalgiji, ne glede na to, ali si jih prilastijo kot svoje ali ne, posegajo v mainstream diskurze in v razpravo vračajo politično vsebino nostalgije.

Z vzpostavitvijo mrež sodelovanja med političnimi strankami v Sloveniji, na Hrvaškem in v Srbiji, ki temeljijo na ideološki orientiranosti tovrstnih strank in gibanj in ne na osnovi etnonacionalnih skupnostih, se politični aktivizem zadnjih pionirjev zoperstavlja mejam (post)jugoslovnaskega prostora s tem, ko priznava skupno dediščino in politično odgovornost do celotne regije. Nasprotovanje hegemonim diskurzom z obeleževanjem dogodkov ali javnih diskurzov političnih akterjev je še dodaten, pomemben element aktivizma, četudi ostaja zgolj znotraj novih meja. Medtem mainstream diskurzi vsiljujejo tiho selektivnost jugoslovanske preteklosti; z ohranjanjem spomina na revolucionarni socialistični značaj partizanskega odpora v drugi svetovni vojni ali na ekonomski in družbeni napredek kot enega izmed značilnosti socialistične Jugoslavije se posega v družbeni odmik od solidarnosti. Denacionalizacija antifašističnih bojev in njihova ponovna jugoslavizacija je pomemben odraz, kako spominske pripovedi ponovno zasedajo zvesto upodobitev jugoslovanske preteklosti in dekonstruirajo današnje etnonacionalizme. Zygmunt Bauman upravičeno zapiše: »...neizpodbitne obskurnosti iz preteklosti, množica interpretacij, za katero je dojemljiva vsaka izbira preteklih dogodkov ter posledično nepopolni in sporni so vsaki poskusi razumljivega in koherentnega načina pripovedi o tem, kako so se 'stvari dejansko zgodile', ki so lahko silno neprijetne za profesionalnega zgodovinarja – vendar so ravno to prednosti preteklosti pri privabljanju ljudi, ki iščejo obrambne jarke za svojo vero« (Bauman, 2017, str. 65). Diskurzivni boji za zgodovinsko branje in ideološke interpretacije jugoslovanske preteklosti današnjim političnim akterjem služijo kot ideološka sidrišča za izražanje legitimnih zahtev sedanjosti. Če so politične elite jugoslovanskega razpada in jugoslovanskih vojn stremele k politični demobilizaciji antinacionalizma in jugoslovanskih identitet z vsiljevanjem homogenosti (Gagnon, 2004), se politične elite zadnjih pionirjev upirajo s povratkom politične mobilizacije, ki odraža heterogenost. Kultura laži, kot jo prikazuje Dubravka Ugrešić, se odraža v »terorju pozabe (prisilijo te, da pozabiš, česar se spomniš) in terorju spominjanja (prisilijo te, da se zapomniš, česar si ne)« (Ugrešić, 2008, str. 111), se upira skozi nostalgične spominske pripovedi s tem, ko *ne pozablja, niti si ne zapomni*, kar niso njihovi spomini.

Danes jugoslovanstvo, kot ga razumejo zadnji pionirji, potrjuje svoj nadnacionalni značaj, ki je daleč od konceptov nacionalne države in etnonacionalnih identitet; je vedno dialektičen in v postopku obdelave. Jugoslovanska kultura živahno nadaljuje s svojim obstojem, ki nas vodi v naših procesih ustvarjanja pomenov, naših doživljanj, naših spominov in naših pripovedi. S ponovnim pridobivanjem skupnega čustvenega prostora ne služi nujno kot spominsko platno za travmatične in čez noč ustvarjene razkole ob razpadu. Vsiljene dihotomije pravzaprav bolj služijo hegemonim diskurzom v obratni smeri. Jugoslovanstvo zadnjih pionirjev predstavlja sloj identitete, ki se dopolnjuje z njihovimi številnimi drugimi identitetami, zasnovanimi na njihovih zgodbah-zgodovinah ter konceptualizaciji možnih skupnosti zunaj etnonacionalizma ali nacionalnih držav. Brez artikulirane zahteve po novi jugoslovanski nacionalni državi, jugoslovanstvo v sedanjosti preoblikuje transnacionalne konceptualizacije in nam pušča prostor za refleksijo o nadnacionalnih identitetah, ali kot bi trdil Howard Zinn: »Spomin nas lahko opomni na zmožnosti, ki smo jih pozabili in zgodovina nam lahko predlaga alternative, ki jih sicer ne bi upoštevali. Lahko nas opominja in navdihuje« (Zinn, 1990, str. 281).

Dejansko zadnji pionirji zahtevajo uravnoteženo in skrbno premišljeno razpravo o jugoslovanski preteklosti, ki nam naj bi bila opozorilo kot tudi navdih za prihodnost – proč od etnonacionalizmov in obenem stran od neoliberalnih varčevalnih ekonomij. Socialistični element jugoslovanske preteklosti vsekakor predstavlja spodbudo za nova levičarska gibanja v (post)jugoslovanskem prostoru – s ponovno politizacijo nostalgije, vendar se tudi z emancipacijo v odnosu do ideološke dediščine Zahoda in s sprejemanjem jugoslovanske vzpostavljajo pomembni elementi novih politik. Ker desničarske in sredinske politične izbire ostajajo vpete v koncepte nacionalnih držav in etnonacionalistične vizije sveta, se nove levičarske pozicije obračajo v smeri jugoslovanskih internacionalističnih refleksij, ki pomembno razlikujejo med transnacionalnim in internacionalističnim političnim sodelovanjem. Skupni spomini prinašajo nove oblike čezmejne solidarnosti preko celotnega političnega spektra, kar potrjuje moč spomina pri vplivu na politiko tako kot politika vpliva na spomin.

Ker travmatične izkušnje niso znatno vplivale na (post)jugoslovanske spominske pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev v enaki meri kot njihove družine, je bil najmočnejši spomin zabeležen na podlagičustvenih mrež in povezave v celotnem (post)jugoslovanskem prostoru, znotraj in zunaj njihovih družin. Med drugim tudi prijateljske in poklicne mreže ter potovanja

spreminjajo naše dožemanje meja in nepovratno vzpostavljajo dialog z našimi spominskimi pripovedmi. Hkrati se zdi, da ima generacijska pozicija močnejši vpliv kot politična, predvsem kar zadeva vprašanja v kategoriji negativne sedanjosti – etnonacionalizma in transnacionalne politike.

Generacijska mnemonična socializacija oblikuje generacijske mnemonične skupnosti, katere subjekti so tisti, ki določijo vsebino nostalgije in ni nostalgija ta, ki odvzame subjektivnost. Vsak poskus kategorizacije nostalgije je neuspešen; ne zato, ker se izogne našim zmožnostim, da bi razumeli multitudine pomenskih slojev in pomene, ki jih vsebuje, temveč zato, ker se trudimo zanikati njen politični značaj. Ravno skozi politično subjektiviteto nostalgika oz. nostalgičarke, ki s svojimi vsebinami obarva nostalgijo, lahko prepoznamo naravo le-te.

Namesto, da zavržemo nostalgijo kot apolitično, jo je potrebno repolitizirati ter s tem razširiti naše lastno razumevanje političnega polja v 21. stoletju. (Post)jugoslovanske spominske pripovedi zadnjih pionirjev nam dajejo vpogled v nove in še neraziskane politične imaginarije (post)jugoslovanskega prostora, ki bi jih lahko povzeli kot »Brez države, brez nacije – en prostor, ena identiteta«.

*Les mémoires post-yougoslaves comme stratégie de résistance et portée politique de
la Yougonostalgie*

Résumé

Introduction

Alors que les recherches sur la mémoire se multiplient, cette thèse propose une approche interdisciplinaire, entre sciences politiques et études sur la mémoire culturelle, du concept de nostalgie; en étant basée sur une conception social-constructiviste du passé définie par Maurice Halbwachs (Assmann, 2008, p.55). On vise à ajouter une nouvelle dimension à la (Yougo)nostalgie, une notion aujourd'hui utilisée pour désigner un grand nombre de phénomènes qui diffèrent dans le temps, dans l'espace et dans le champ social. Cette recherche donne également des clés de compréhension de la réalité complexe des sociétés post-socialistes et de la multiplicité des « sujets post-socialistes ». Prenant en compte l'importance des émotions (Nussbaum, 2013; Hassner, 2015) dans le champ politique, et de la montée des politiques contestataires, dans un monde où les discours de mémoire officiels construisent et déconstruisent l'Histoire, on conceptualise la nostalgie comme une autre formule de contestation.

Durant cette dernière décennie, l'histoire de la période socialiste en Yougoslavie a connu un intérêt grandissant. Cependant, toute marque d'intérêt pour la Yougoslavie était immédiatement caractérisée de « Yougonostalgie » ; *une expression générale désignée pour définir toute référence positive à la Yougoslavie*. Ce qui fut autrefois le discours de mémoire hégémonique de la Yougoslavie socialiste a été remplacé, avec la dissolution du pays, par un nouveau récit « démocratique » post-socialiste et anti-yougoslave : *un discours publique dominant révisionniste*. Par la socialisation politique, depuis notre enfance et à travers des narratifs mémoriels de nos familles et nos environnements les plus proches, on construit nos identités, inclut nos identités politique et cependant, on forme les générations politiques. A la fin des années 2020, dans l'espace (post-)yougoslave, au sein de la génération des derniers pionniers,⁹⁰ se remémorer la Yougoslavie est devenu subversif et la Yougonostalgie un refuge

⁹⁰ L'association des pionniers de la Yougoslavie, fondé en 1942, est une organisation au quelle adhéraient les enfants des premières sept classes de l'école élémentaire. Les pionniers faisaient parti de l'Association de la jeunesse communiste de la Yougoslavie, lui-même intégré au Parti communiste de la Yougoslavie. Les nouveaux membres étaient admis dans la première classe, chaque 29 novembre, le jour de la fête de la République. Les élèves faisaient un serment pionnier et ils recevaient une casquette bleue (« titovka ») avec une étoile rouge et un foulard rouge. La dernière génération des pionniers est née en 1982,

pour les dissonances cognitives⁹¹ des sujets politiques post-socialistes. Je départs de l'idée que la Yougonostalgie apparaît comme un récit multidirectionnel (post-)yougoslave cherchant le futur dans le passé, tout en cherchant la réponse à la question de départ suivante : Que signifie la Yougonostalgie pour les derniers pionniers politiquement actifs, et comment dialogue-t-elle avec leurs identités politiques?

Cadre théorique et concepts fondamentaux de la recherche

Le concept de *génération* dans cette thèse est compris dans le sens socioculturel, comme une forme d'identité collective et une communauté liée par les valeurs et les fins, les expériences et les croyances (Mannheim, 1952). Celle qui nous intéresse ici est la génération née entre 1974 et 1982 ayant accédé en dernier au statut de pionnier, (nous les appellerons ici) les « derniers pionniers ». Devenir un pionnier signifiait devenir un citoyen, devenir yougoslave; être pionnier était donc un élément important de la socialisation politique de la génération. La période entre 1974 et 1990 représente la dernière phase de l'Histoire yougoslave et simultanément, l'époque durant laquelle la dernière génération de pionniers est née et a grandi. Du jour au lendemain, leur enfance et leur adolescence ont été interrompues par la dissolution du pays et les guerres, suivies des transitions économique et politique dans les années 2000 – cela les définit comme une génération ayant grandi avec les promesses d'une vie différente de celle qu'elle a vécue. C'est dans l'interaction entre la post-mémoire, la mémoire transmise par les générations précédentes (Hirsch, 2012); la mémoire communicative, biographique et factuelle, qui peut être transmise de trois à quatre générations (Assmann, 2008, p.32) et la mémoire collective que je place la spécificité des récits de mémoire et de nostalgie des derniers pionniers. Les récits de mémoire sont un des champs dans lesquels nous (re)négocions nos identités politiques tout autant que nos convictions politiques.

⁹¹ Les dissonances cognitives ont été conceptualisées par Leon Festinger (1957), un psychologue américain, qui décrit la situation où l'on se trouve lorsque nous faisons face à des comportements, des croyances et des attitudes contradictoires – dans notre tentative d'assurer une cohérence, nous mettons en place différentes stratégies pour diminuer l'inconfort mental qui apparaît, en modifiant certains de ces comportements, croyances et attitudes,

Le mythe et l'invention étant étroitement associés aux identités politiques (Hobsbawm, 1997, p.7); l'Histoire et la mémoire font partie des luttes idéologiques visant à établir la vérité, et au sein de cette « vérité », notre propre identité politique. Les *contre-récits*, comme toujours produits en réaction, peuvent être compris dans le contexte (post-)yougoslave comme une réponse à l'encontre des politiques mémorielles révisionnistes et les postures anti-yougoslaves et anti-communistes. Sans créer de nation yougoslave dans le sens traditionnel du 20^e siècle, mais encourageant l'identité yougoslave à se renforcer et à se développer, aujourd'hui, le Yougoslavisme ne représente plus une communauté ethno-nationale ni une aspiration à (re)créer un État-nation, mais perdure plutôt comme un des identités des individus. Alors que le Yougoslavisme fait fortement écho à la Yougonostalgie, et inversement, ils demeurent des phénomènes distincts. Le Yougoslavisme s'est forgé est à travers les récits de mémoire (post-)yougoslaves et de nécessité d'une continuité d'identité. Créé en opposition aux discours ethno-nationalistes dominants, le Yougoslavisme se trouve plus dépendant de la positionnalité générationnelle que politique. Cependant, le Yougoslavisme ne s'oppose pas nécessairement au caractère anti-communiste des discours dominants, même si la Yougonostalgie comprend toujours une forme de résistance vis-à-vis des discours anti-communistes.

La complexité de la mémoire collective impose de chercher à l'intérieur des narrations individuelles afin de comprendre comment la *multidirectionnalité de la mémoire*, au sens temporel, spatial et identitaire, construit des conceptions du monde et alimente la positionnalité politique. En prenant la nostalgie comme point de départ, mais dans le but d'élargir sa signification conceptuelle, je m'inscris dans la continuité du travail d'un nombre de chercheurs ayant identifié la potentialité subversive du phénomène de Yougonostalgie (Velikonja, 2010; Petrović, 2012; Buden, 2012; Kirn, 2019; etc.).

Les politiques de mémoire révisionnistes « protègent une vérité absolue », tandis que la Yougonostalgie « la remet en question » (Boym, 2011, p.453). En considérant que les politiques dans l'espace (post-)yougoslave se développent comme une *continuation de la guerre par d'autres moyens*, les récits de mémoire yougonostalgiques deviennent « par définition subversifs, antisystèmes et émancipatoires » (Velikonja, 2011, p.92).

Cadre méthodologique

Pour ma recherche, j'ai choisi trois pays (post)yugoslaves : la Slovénie, la Croatie et la Serbie, chacun représentant une position importante dans l'Histoire yougoslave, un rôle cardinal dans la dissolution et une trajectoire transitionnelle spécifique. En même temps, cette recherche se démarque des politiques identitaires ethno-nationales et du nationalisme méthodologique (Wimmer et Schiller, 2003) marqué par l'idée que les États-nations sont les seules unités d'analyse possibles et une forme naturelle de communauté. Toutefois, en prenant en compte le contexte spécifique des pays lorsque les résultats montrent une divergence, mon approche a également permis de souligner les convergences de mes résultats de recherche, selon les lignes générationnelles et politiques. De caractère interprétatif, situé dans le champ de la sociologie de la connaissance et suivant une approche comparative, mon objet de recherche principal est centré sur les récits des derniers pionniers; mais en prenant en compte qu'ils contiennent de manière inhérente les discours publics dominants.

Mon approche privilégie la *Constructivist Grounded Theory* (Charmaz, 2014) comme outil principal d'analyse des données, tout en gardant l'analyse de discours (Fairclough, 1992) comme une des approches sous-tendues. En prenant pour point de départ la Yougonostalgie des derniers pionniers politiquement engagés, la collection de données s'est effectuée à l'aide d'une ethnographie politique, d'entretiens et d'observation participante. Par échantillonnage dirigé, je me suis entretenue avec deux principaux groupes d'acteurs politiques – les députés et d'autres membres de parties politiques non membres du parlement; mais aussi les membres des mouvements sociaux et/ou à différentes initiatives politiques. J'ai compris l'« activisme politique » de manière aussi large et exhaustive que possible; comme la participation à des activités concrètes au sein d'un groupe organisé pendant au moins 6 mois, tel que défini par Inglehart (1990) et della Porta (2014). Au cours des années 2017 et 2018, j'ai effectué un total de 62 entretiens: 18 en Slovénie, 23 en Croatie et 21 en Serbie. Deux tiers des répondants étaient des hommes, ce qui reflète la faible représentation globale des femmes en politique. Mes répondants pour la plupart ne se déclaraient pas yougoslaves mais étaient hésitants à se définir par leur ethno-nationalité; ils et elles étaient majoritairement de formation supérieure; la moitié habitant dans la capitale et l'autre moitié en province. La moitié des répondants étaient membres de parties politiques et l'autre moitié participaient à une échelle locale à des parties politiques/initiatives/mouvements qui n'existent pas à l'échelle nationale, ainsi que

dans des ONG, des syndicats ou d'autres mouvements politiquement engagés. La majorité des interrogés s'auto-identifie comme étant de gauche (58.06%), une conséquence involontaire du processus d'échantillonnage, et seulement 14.52% s'auto-identifient comme étant de droite.

Résultats de recherche

Mon analyse s'inscrit dans la continuité des travaux qui défendent que les animosités ethno-nationales ont été une conséquence de la violence, plutôt que sa cause, et qu'elles ont été imposées « par le haut » par les élites politiques, ce que confirme aussi un large nombre d'études sociologiques dans les années 1980 (Flere, 1988; Goati, 1986; Woodward, 1995; Dević, 2016; Gagnon, 2004; Jović, 2011, 2017; Brunnbauer & Grandits, 2013; Dragojević, 2019). En parallèle, même si les nouveaux États (post-)yougoslaves ont connu des trajectoires différentes, certaines similarités demeurent: les populations se sont appauvries, les territoires désertés, et les citoyens ne voient pas d'optimisme pour le futur.

En commençant par une analyse des souvenirs d'enfance des derniers pionniers – le passé yougoslave tel qu'ils l'avaient vécu, au sein de leurs familles, écoles, et environnements plus larges, apparemment plus socialisés politiquement au sein de leurs familles que de leurs écoles – je décortique leur compréhension de ce que cela signifie pour eux que d'être *des enfants du socialisme*. Le chapitre 6 révèle le concept de famille yougoslave; compris dans un sens plus large que le concept du mariage « mixte », il comprend non seulement la diversité ethno-nationale, au sein de la famille nucléaire et élargie, mais aussi la diversité religieuse et politique. Le passé éclaire la mobilité sociale de leurs parents et la leur, confirmant leurs souvenirs d'une vie yougoslave pleine d'opportunités. Pour les personnes interrogées se considérant comme de droite, leur socialisation politique est toujours clairement liée à l'héritage paternel, dont les souvenirs – y compris la conscience de l'ethno-nationalité – remontent à leur petite enfance. Cependant, en dehors de ces quelques exemples, les répondants n'avaient de souvenir ni d'une conscience de l'ethno-nationalité ni de tensions interethniques entre les communautés. Les derniers pionniers, en dehors du fait de décrire unanimement les souvenirs de cette époque comme « joyeuse », dépeignent la diversité d'expériences et la mixité de groupes et de communautés comme étant la plus grande richesse que leur a apportée leur enfance. Pour eux, l'environnement yougoslave, au-delà de leurs

familles et plus proches amis, continue de symboliser un environnement sécurisé offrant des possibilités et de l'égalité sociale, comprise dans un sens élargi. Le concept de *vie normale*, créé dans leur enfance comme vision naturelle du monde (Mannheim, 1952), est encadré par les valeurs sociales et politiques et par le système socio-économique; il est teinté par l'idée de progrès et la foi dans celui-ci ainsi que par la sécurité assurée par la fonctionnalité de l'Etat.

En raison de la force des discours dominants et de leur propre positionnalité politique, la confusion et l'ambivalence apparaissent. N'ayant connu aucune expérience négative dans leur passé yougoslave, les derniers pionniers mettent en doute leurs propres récits, ou créent des histoires d'exceptionnalité – revendiquant leur chance de n'avoir pas connu de difficultés ou de répression, ce qui apparaît le plus en Croatie. Alors que les derniers pionniers grandissent, le sentiment de progrès présent dans leur enfance se confronte au sentiment de perte lors de leur adolescence, ce qui mène à une rupture imprévisible de leurs vies. Les récits des relations interethniques apparaissent progressivement. La discrimination devient une réalité ; envers des communautés ethno-nationales imposées du jour au lendemain par les élites politiques nationalistes au pouvoir ; ou à cause de l'association professionnelle de leurs parents à JNA (l'Armée yougoslave).

Dans le chapitre 7, nous analysons les récits de mémoire des derniers pionniers pendant la dissolution de la Yougoslavie et les guerres yougoslaves. La « rupture du jour au lendemain » est un trope présent dans tous les récits. Le début de la dissolution pour les derniers pionniers est marqué par la découverte des ethno-nationalismes, qui ont commencé à apparaître dans leur environnement, désormais plus notablement dans leur école. Un sentiment de perte soudaine était partagé par une génération, malgré la croyance, au tout début, que tout reviendrait bientôt à « la normale ». Les mémoires partagées dans les trois pays par les pionniers sont marquées par le souvenir de départs massifs et, pour certains d'entre eux, de la nécessité de quitter leur maison pour devenir réfugiés, en raison de leurs nouvelles identités imposées. Le traumatisme de guerre a apporté de la confusion et des tentatives sinueuses chez les derniers pionniers pour comprendre leurs changements d'identité, souvent dans un contexte de querelles de familles, de familles divisées et d'amitiés rompues. Ils se rappellent avec précision d'une nouvelle normalité de la violence, marquant les souvenirs des années 1990. La différence de contextes entre les trois pays se creuse; alors que les souvenirs de la décennie en Slovénie se réfèrent plutôt aux guerres yougoslaves dans les autres républiques,

pour la Croatie, la décennie est identifiée à la guerre dans le pays, et pour la Serbie, la totalité de la décennie des années 1990 est un marqueur de destruction politique et économique du pays. En minimisant les expériences traumatiques à l'aide d'affirmations telles que *ce n'était pas si mal*, les derniers pionniers essaient de donner un sens à leur adolescence tumultueuse. A chaque fois que les dissonances cognitives et les ambivalences s'agrandissent dans ce processus de fabrication de sens, les derniers pionniers sont plus susceptibles d'adhérer aux discours hégémoniques révisionnistes – principalement en se basant sur leur positionnalité politique, y compris leur identification religieuse. A nouveau, les environnements familiaux ont joué un rôle plus important que les expériences concrètes de guerre. Lorsqu'ils évoquent les idéologies de réconciliation et de réhabilitation portées par les discours dominants, les derniers pionniers reconnaissent la nécessité du dialogue et du débat, mais réclament une discussion équilibrée qui ne mènerait ni au révisionnisme ni à une banale nostalgie, telle qu'ils l'entendent. Pour la génération des derniers pionniers, les ethno-nationalismes et la guerre ont été imposés « du haut vers le bas » par les élites politiques alors en place, et rendus possibles par un large nombre de facteurs, tels que les circonstances globales de la chute du communisme et les intérêts de pouvoir étrangers dans la région. Ils reconnaissent que les nouvelles politiques de mémoire ont été introduites avec les ethno-nationalismes, et s'opposent largement aux récits de mémoire qui, eux, donnent une image plus positive. Au terme de ces réflexions, les derniers pionniers s'engagent dans deux voies: la résolution des dissonances cognitives et des ambivalences à l'aide du récit de la singularité – leur expérience étant exceptionnelle, particulière et unique; et la reconnaissance de l'usage stratégique politique et instrumental du terme de Yougonostalgie.

Dans le chapitre 8, on entre plus en profondeur dans la compréhension qu'ont les derniers pionniers du Yougoslavisme et de la Yougonostalgie. Les derniers pionniers (re)construisent l'espace yougoslave, qu'ils continuent à ressentir comme leur « cheux-eux ». En termes spatiaux, et avec la mer adriatique pour symbole prédominant, ce « chez-eux » continue à comprendre l'ensemble de l'espace (post-)yougoslave, rendant impossible pour les derniers pionniers de se dire qu'ils voyagent à l'étranger lorsqu'ils se rendent dans les autres républiques. Cependant, ce sentiment de « chez-soi » est largement dépendant de la proximité linguistique; plus les langues diffèrent, plus la sensation de distance des derniers pionniers des trois pays interrogés est grande – le Kosovo n'est pas compris dans ce « chez-soi ». Sans questionner les aspects culturels et économiques de l'espace (post)yougoslave, une perception

commune d'un présent sombre et des conséquences de la transition traverse les trois pays et le spectre politique; les politiques économiques néolibérales sont en majeure partie pointées du doigt, de même que les discours nationalistes dominants. Certaines des compréhensions d'une identité yougoslave partagée suivent les approches psychologisantes, en particulier chez les acteurs politiques centristes et de droite, qui s'appuient sur les concepts de balkanisme, d'orientalisme, et d'anticommunisme, émergeant ainsi comme une explication du présent sombre. Par opposition au présent sombre, le Yougoslavisme est entendu comme un élément important de la ré-imagination de l'espace politique du monde d'aujourd'hui; reconnu sans hésitation dans le sens spatial et culturel.

La Yougonostalgie des derniers pionniers sert principalement à résister à la discontinuité imposée, devenant ainsi un phénomène collectif et politique. La Yougonostalgie prend un sens différent selon les générations, et se retrouve comme un potentiel pour les nouveaux mouvements et parties politiques, de gauche particulièrement. La montée des mouvements de gauche à travers l'espace (post)yougoslave et leur coopération renforcée est ancrée dans les récits de mémoire yougoslaves, et dans le regard réflexif du passé pour construire l'avenir. La réhabilitation du positionnement idéologique socialiste requiert de se rafraîchir la mémoire, même si cela va souvent de paire avec un déni presque automatique des visions yougonostalgiques. La nostalgie forge des communautés générationnelles qui se transforment en générations politiques, transformant les souvenirs de la cause yougoslave en un souvenir pour la cause yougoslave (Rigney, 2016), et ramenant l'idée de progrès et d'espoir dans le champ politique de la (post-)Yougoslavie.

Les récits de mémoire des derniers pionniers sont intrinsèquement continus et circulaires. La rupture identitaire imposée par les discours dominants, à travers les nombreux efforts des politiques mémorielles révisionnistes, n'a pas altéré, à l'échelle individuelle, la compréhension et la continuité de l'identité, de l'histoire et du récit personnels. La *circularité* des récits de mémoire, en relation avec la positionnalité politique, marque les dialogues interminables entre la cacophonie des récits de mémoire dans le monde (post-) yougoslave et ceux des derniers pionniers, faisant intervenir le passé et le présent dans une réflexion sur le futur.

Conclusions

Les entretiens approfondis et ma présence prolongée sur le terrain m'ont permis de pénétrer les mondes intimes de la génération des derniers pionniers, en établissant la confiance, et en donnant une opportunité d'entendre les récits des acteurs politiques en dehors de leur discours publics habituels. En comprenant la génération comme variable clé, j'ai démontré que la génération des derniers pionniers partage un sens de génération, affichant une conscience partagée dans les trois pays. Les récits de *génération perdue*, et le sentiment partagé d'impuissance, dans le passé comme dans le présent, apparaissent dans tous mes entretiens. Les derniers pionniers se distinguent clairement de la génération de leurs parents, qui ont profité selon eux des « années fastes » du passé yougoslave ; et de leurs enfants, qui ne partageraient pas les mêmes valeurs yougoslaves. En termes spatiaux, ils estiment que leur génération existe en dehors des frontières des États-nations, représentant un espace (post)yougoslave toujours existant. Étant données les fractures entre les mémoires personnelles et les politiques de la mémoire dominantes; le politique s'imisce dans des lieux (insoupçonnés) de la vie quotidienne, des attachements culturels, des amitiés intimes ou des relations. En montrant la prédominance de la socialisation politique au sein des familles sur l'expérience de guerre, et davantage, de l'expérience quotidienne au-delà des frontières des nouveaux États-nations et des communautés ethno-nationales, cette thèse aide à comprendre plus en profondeur les influences importantes sur nos récits de mémoire et notre positionnalité politique au sein de régions et d'histoires contentieuses. Sans donner de définition définitive de la Yougonostalgie, cette thèse démontre la pertinence et l'instrumentalité de ce terme et son usage comme stratégie discursive visant à obscurcir le passé yougoslave et tout potentiel futur yougoslave, particulièrement vis-à-vis des idéologies de gauche.

Les récits de mémoire yougonostalgiques des derniers pionniers expriment un sentiment de solidarité avec l'ensemble des communautés ethno-nationales vis-à-vis de leur douleur partagée; revendiquant une continuité identitaire et rendant les communautés hétérogènes à nouveau imaginables; et *cherchant leur propre vérité* sur la dissolution de la Yougoslavie. Les derniers pionniers cherchent de nouveaux points d'entrée dans le public et le social, ré-établissant l'idéologique comme clivage principal, plutôt que l'ethno-national imposé. Les récits de mémoire yougonostalgiques, ou d'ailleurs tout récit de mémoire positif sur les temps yougoslaves, ne représente pas une continuité avec les politiques yougoslaves, mais plutôt une

discontinuité avec les politiques post-yougoslaves – une résistance et une intervention politique dans le monde (post-)yougoslave.

Les catégories productives politiquement se manifestent à travers de nombreuses activités, à travers la transmission de valeurs fondamentales aux enfants mais aussi l'établissement de réseaux de coopération entre les parties politiques en Slovénie, Croatie et Serbie basés sur l'orientation idéologique des parties et mouvements en question plutôt que sur la base des communautés ethno-nationales. Un autre élément important d'activisme est l'opposition aux discours hégémoniques, lors d'évènements de commémoration ou de discours publics des acteurs politiques. Alors que les discours dominants renforcent la sélectivité silencieuse du passé yougoslave, la préservation de la mémoire, du caractère socialiste révolutionnaire de la résistance partisane pendant la seconde guerre mondiale, ou encore le progrès économique et social comme une des caractéristiques de la Yougoslavie socialiste, devient subversive.

Le Yougoslavisme aujourd'hui, tel qu'il est compris par les derniers pionniers, confirme son caractère méta-national, loin des conceptualisations d'Etat-nation. La culture yougoslave continue son existence et son développement, comme un système cohérent et multidirectionnel de symboles qui guident nos processus de fabrication de sens, d'expériences, de mémoires et de récits. Le Yougoslavisme pour les derniers pionniers représente une couche d'identité qui se rajoute à leurs nombreuses autres identités, et une conceptualisation de communautés possibles en dehors de l'ethno-nationalisme et des États-nations.

L'élément socialiste du passé yougoslave représente très certainement une inspiration pour les mouvements de gauche dans l'espace (post-)yougoslave. Repolitiser la nostalgie mais aussi s'émanciper de l'héritage idéologique occidental, en embrassant celui de la Yougoslavie, constituent également des éléments importants des nouvelles politiques. Alors que les choix de l'aile droite et du centre restent ancrés dans les concepts d'États-nations et de vision ethno-nationale du monde, la nouvelle gauche se tourne vers des réflexions yougoslaves internationalistes. Les mémoires partagées apportent de nouvelles formes de solidarité, au-delà des frontières et au-delà du spectre politique, confirmant la capacité de la mémoire à influencer les politiques tout autant que les politiques influencent la mémoire.

L'influence la plus importante sur les récits de mémoire et la compréhension du Yougoslavisme et de la Yougonostalgie est celle des réseaux émotionnels et des connections stables à travers l'espace (post-)yougoslave, à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur des familles; les réseaux d'amitié et professionnels ainsi que les voyages et la circulation changent nos perceptions des frontières et dialoguent irrémédiablement avec nos récits de mémoire. En même temps, la positionnalité générationnelle semble avoir une influence plus importante que la positionnalité politique, particulièrement en ce qui concerne les problématiques dépeintes sous la catégorie du présent sombre – l'ethno-nationalisme et les politiques économiques transitionnelles.

La plupart des tentatives de catégoriser la nostalgie échoue, non pas parce qu'elle échappe à notre capacité de comprendre les multiples couches et significations qu'elle comprend, mais car nous tentons de nier son caractère politique. C'est précisément à travers la subjectivité politique de celui qui la ressent et qui colore la nostalgie, que nous pouvons identifier la nature de cette nostalgie. Au lieu de rejeter la nostalgie comme apolitique, nous avons tenté dans notre thèse de la reconceptualiser comme politique et ainsi élargir notre propre compréhension du champ politique au 21^e siècle. Les récits de mémoire (post-)yougoslaves des derniers pionniers nous donnent un aperçu des imaginaires politiques inexplorés de l'espace (post-)yougoslave qui pourraient être résumés par « Ni état, ni nation – un espace, une identité ».