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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Sociological Studies

Department of Sociology

Master's Thesis

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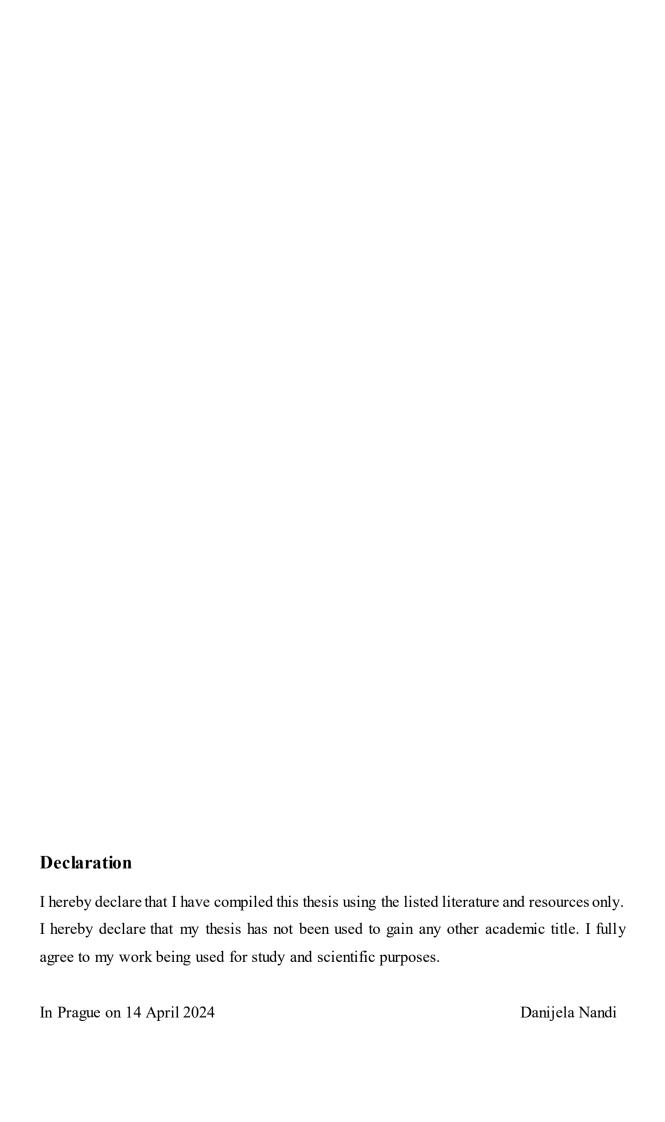# Yugoslavian Phantom Identity

Master's Thesis

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Study programme: Sociology of Contemporary Societies

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Declaration

I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 14 April 2024   Danijela Nandi

References

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Abstract

The research topic of the thesis relies on the notion of the condition known as "phantom pain" in medicine. Definition on the Mayo Clinic website states that "phantom pain is pain that feels like it's coming from a body part that's no longer there. Doctors once believed this post-amputation phenomenon was a psychological problem, but experts now recognize that these real sensations originate in the spinal cord and brain." (Mayo Clinic, n.d.).

The thesis explores the idea of "phantom identity", here conceptualised as the identity that former residents of the country that does not exist anymore – Yugoslavia – might recognize or express as theirs. The key question is if the common identity of the former common state, different to ethnic and other post-Yugoslav identities, can be found with its former nationals. Then also how does the process of identification work, and what are its elements. The work examines if there might be such a common identity, or elements of it, that manifest only (and in specific ways) when these individuals are together, usually in the context of social activities or shared emigration experience.

Finding an identity that is based on rather ethnic principles, such as language and territory, identity that is different to others and within the individuals of different ethnicities, is a provoking thought that can ultimately indicate the existence of concepts more powerful than nationalism, and within territories that are identified or self-identified as nationalist.

Abstrakt

Výzkumné téma diplomové práce vychází z medicínského pojmu známého jako „fantomová bolest". Definice na webu Mayo Clinic uvádí, že „fantomová bolest je bolest, která je pociťována, jako by vycházela z části těla, která již neexistuje. Lékaři kdysi věřili, že tento post-amputační fenomén je psychologického rázu, v dnešní době nicméně odborníci mají za to, že jde o skutečné pocity pocházející z míchy a mozku. (Mayo Clinic, n.d.).

Předkládaná práce zkoumá ideu „fantomové identity" konceptualizovanou jako identitu, se kterou se mohou ztotožňovat nebo ji jako takovou vyjadřovat obyvatelé již neexistující země – Jugoslávie. Klíčovou otázkou je, zda vůbec existuje něco takového jako společná identita bývalého společného státu, která by byla odlišná od etnických a jiných post-jugoslávských identit. A dále pak, jak vlastně tento proces identifikace funguje a jaké jsou jeho základní element. Práce zkoumá možnost existence takové společné identity nebo

jejích prvků, které by se projevovaly pouze (a specifickým způsobem), když jsou tito jedinci spolu, obvykle v kontextu společenských aktivit nebo sdílené emigrační zkušenosti.

Hledání identity založené na etnických principech, jako je jazyk či území, identity odlišné od ostatních identit, a to i v rámci jednotlivců různých etnik, je v jistém smyslu provokativní myšleka. Může totiž v konečném důsledku naznačovat existenci konceptů silnějších než nacionalismus, a to uvnitř území, která jsou identifikována nebo sebe-identifikována jako nacionalistická.

Keywords

Yugoslavia, social identity, post-Yugoslavs, popular culture, documents of memory, emigrants, phantom pain

Klíčová slova

Jugoslávie, sociální identita, post-Jugoslávci, populární kultura, dokumenty paměti, emigranti, fantomová bolest

Title

Yugoslavian Phantom Identity

Název práce

Fantomová identita Jugoslávie

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1. Introduction

1.1. Inspiration and background

In the stories of Yugoslavs who came to the territory of the Czech Republic during the 1990s, there is a common motif of how welcomed they felt, and how the locals supported them. When a famous Czech dissident Dana Němcová died in April 2023, one of the former Yugoslavs wrote a text on Facebook stating that "the refugee mother has died", and that thanks to Mrs. Němcová, thousands of people from Yugoslavia got permanent residencies, including the Facebook text author herself. Listing all the achievements of the great Czech humanitarian, it is written that she managed to get Yugoslavs treated with exceptional conditions by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Internal Affairs at that time, ensuring both legal and psychological help.

Known as *Jugoši* in Czech colloquial speech, these people can still find the reminders of their once-home in the country. Prague is the city where one of the largest and most central streets still carries the name *Jugoslavská*. The country is not there, but the memory of its existence is alive on Czech streets, making former Yugoslavs feel accepted and visible, recognized.

It is not surprising to see that much of the work, especially in the field of art, specifically theatre or writing, reflects experiences of these people in the country that welcomed them during the 1990s. One of these people, also the respondent in the research for this thesis, wrote a theatre play titled "Where is my identity" (*Kde identita má?*). In the play (see Appendix for the pictures), he asks himself if he is Czech, because he spent most of his life here, or maybe Bosnian and Serbian, because those are his roots, or maybe Croatian, because that is where he initially left to from Bosnia before coming to Prague, and because it was the only place that Czechs knew during the time Yugoslavia was disappearing from the map. While he is on stage, drinking traditional coffee as prepared and drunk in Bosnia, his table is covered with the Yugoslavian flag, and he will wave it at one point during the play. The picture of the greatest Yugoslavian pop star, in many ways a symbol of the country for many of its inhabitants, is framed on the stage. The protagonist will symbolically remove the dust from the photograph at one point. At this moment during the play, it was easy to observe who were the former Yugoslavs in the audience by how they reacted to that movement. They smiled or sighed. The actor narrates how he knows who he is, and where he is from, but he has still somehow lost his identity. "It is not like when

you lose something on the street, or when someone steals something from you… I'm wondering if I ever had an identity"[1] (Teskeredžić, Zlatko, Kde identita má?, 2023, Act 1, Introductory scene).

During the renown Yugoslavian rock music journalist's book tour, Prague was an important stop, according to the author, Petar Popović, himself. The promotion was organised in Lastavica (eng. *swallow*), a club founded as a citizen association to represent people from former Yugoslavia. The author mentioned that he was present when one of the "first swallows" packed to leave for Prague in 1991. It was the guitarist of Indexi, a famous Yugoslavian band from Sarajevo, yet another symbol of the country, authoring the songs sung by the audience in the club that evening. The said musician could not stay in Sarajevo, so he chose Prague as his destination, and stopped in Belgrade to say his goodbyes. This was when Popović stopped talking due to tears, and continued to say that such a club and such an association are key guardians of our values, and that so many people have put in small branches to build this nest for all of the swallows who left over the years. He continued to explain that "this is the place where certain values are kept… values we will never give up on". He attempted to describe what he means when he says *territory of emotion*. To him, "territory of emotion" are the people who speak the same language and people who have the same emotion. This territory is best defended by quality, he concluded. A photo from the event can be seen in the Appendix. While he speaks about *values* and *territory of emotion*, it seems he means something that existed before, that is tied to quality in art, and that does not exist anymore in that way. However, it is still the norm for him, and possibly many others. In this conceptualization could be the traces of the phantom identity, its (non-geographical) territory and other elements, to be further examined in the following chapters.

Lastavica, a club situated just around the corner from Wenceslav's Square in Prague, describes its purpose, what it is and what it is not on their *About us* page. The page states that the association is for citizens from former Yugoslavia who wanted to legally protect their wishes and interests in their new country. However, it goes a step further, stating who its members are.

"Our Yugoslavia disappeared in the last war. The new borders, new states and new customs were created. We didn't change. We live in the old, microworld of friendship and

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[1] If not indicated otherwise, all the translations from Czech, Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian are by me.

love. 'Swallow' flies and connects people, cultures, states, and stops for a break wherever it can help." (Lastavica, n.d.).

The page states that it represents citizens from all the republics of former Yugoslavia, that all those new states are theirs, and they love them all. It even states the reason why all together, and it is because these people are connected by the language, culture, origins. Interestingly enough, in outlining why these people are different from the Czechs, the page lists names of musicians, pop culture heroes, movie characters, writers and children's games that anyone who grew up in Yugoslavia knows. Here again I found something relevant for the thesis as it helped outline some of the elements in which this culture differs from others, and possibly also the elements of the common identity. And not only that. The text conceptualises a single identity for people from all the former Yugoslavian republics, nowadays independent states. The warm welcome of the local culture, and how the people helped the Yugoslavs when they needed it the most, is mentioned here as well. It expresses the motivation not only to nurture the shared culture, but also to show the richness of *our* culture to the hosts. Importantly, the page states the intention is not to make a new Yugoslavia. This is probably to address those who might have sentiments against so-called *Yugonostalgia*, another term mentioned throughout the thesis. These are the people who reject the values and positive valorisation of Yugoslavia. *Yugonostalgia* is a dirty word for some, and some are proud to state they are Yugoslavs, or *Yugonostalgics*. Viktor Ivančić, a contemporary Croatian journalist, writes about an incident at a soccer game where the trainer of a soccer team from Split said that the referee behaved as if the game was played in Yugoslavia. Ivančić (2022) challenges the concept of *Yugoslav time* by saying that it seems to not refer to some period in the past, but rather a description of a deviation. While arguing that too many Croats falsify their own memories, he writes that "just like any other Croat who cares about their social desirability, (the referee) does not have to actually remember those times in order to refer to them as the worst" (Ivančić, 2022). Similar examples of what Ivančić describes as social desirability by falsifying own memories about Yugoslavia can be found in media of each of the former republics and refer to that part of the population that does not have positive association nor appreciates any relation to Yugoslavia. Those are some of the influences on the social identities that are taught and un-taught in the former republics. One more illustration from personal experience is the event related to the death of a famous Serbian singer and songwriter in 2021. A member of our post-Yugoslav Prague community from Zagreb, Croatia, visited me.

He told me, almost in secrecy, that his sadness was somehow bigger than when a comparatively famous singer and songwriter from Croatia died. I kept the secret to date.

Appearing in a talk show running for decades in primetime on Croatian state television in January 2024, Serbian Orthodox bishop deployed in Croatia tells that "culturally, I think we are all still Yugoslavs. Politically, I will probably never be Yugoslav" (Nedjeljom u 2, HRT, 2024). Asked to elaborate on what *cultural* means, and to comment on the fact that Serbian artists can attract larger audiences in Croatia than Croatian artists, he continues "well, obviously, we cannot put state borders around life, it is obvious that there is some common pulse that ticks in us all, that's where we recognize each others" (Nedjeljom u 2, HRT, 2024).

In her article "The confiscation of memory" from 1996, Ugrešić outlines a non-translatable space that stays after talking about culture, politics and everyday life with her friends from countries other than Yugoslavia (see Ugrešić, 1996). This non translatable space is related to the experience of living together in a particular country, at a particular time. The author defines confiscated memory as all those invisible losses after the country and many of its belongings fell apart. Confiscating one collective memory in order to replace it with another construct (national memory) marked the territory of former Yugoslavia during the early 1990s and continues to date. Ugrešić argues that the space left behind the confiscated memory is filled with nostalgia. And it is this nostalgia that functions on the level of the subconscious, based on mechanisms often compared to the "phantom limb" phenomenon. The phantomness of confiscated memories is reflected also in the *luggage* that former Yugoslavs carry with them around the world, wherever they ended – filled with fragments of the past reality that will never again be put together (see Ugrešić, 1996). Almost 30 years after Ugrešić published her article, I intend to peek into the luggage of fellow immigrants in the Czech Republic.

1.2. Author introduction

After I decided to study in a master program at Charles University, I already had an idea of what I wanted to research and write about. Thus, I chose the program I thought this topic would fit.

My personal motivation and subjective perspective on the topic came from two different experiences. One of them is the experience of being an immigrant in the Czech Republic, and as such, being part of the small community of former Yugoslavs. Observing

this community and participating in it largely motivated me to approach the topic of identity from the *phantom, Yugoslavian* side, as I kept seeing the elements of something that was different and relevant in this specific context, more than any of our other identities. I got curious and decided I want to look into this from the academic perspective, to try to discover what I was witnessing and analyse it.

The second experience is my personal life journey from Bosnia and Herzegovina, where I was born and raised while Yugoslavia still existed, and where I lived until the end of the civil war in former Yugoslavia in 1995. Right before the end, and due to the war operations, I found myself in Belgrade with my family, as a refugee. After seven years of refugee status, I became a Serbian citizen, only to leave for Germany a few years later, and then settle in Prague some more years later. The question "where are you from" is one of the most difficult questions for me to answer, and I always look for the most suitable ways to answer it, depending on where I am and who is asking, as another respondent will describe his experience as well. To foreigners, non-Yugoslavs in this case, I'm from Belgrade, Serbia. I rarely speak about my *first life*, the war and refugee experience. To people in Serbia, in case I know them longer, I am from Bosnia. To people in Bosnia, I am from *here*. Sometimes I mention the name of the city where I lived, though I know I risk building a wall around me, as people will correctly guess my ethnicity and might not appreciate it. To people in Croatia, I say I was born in Bosnia and live abroad now, and quickly proceed to the next topic.

I grew up close to the Croatian border, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and lived for almost the same amount of years in Belgrade, Serbia. This makes it possible for me to change my dialect and the way I speak between what is today known as Serbian, Croatian, or Bosnian. If I want, I can easily hide my ethnicity, the identity that became the most important in the republics of former Yugoslavia in the dawn of the 1990s. This patchworked background works well for me outside of former Yugoslavia too. An anecdote that illustrates this is a friend from our Prague community wanting to make a cake as per the recipe which she found written in Serbian. She is from Croatia, and while she understands the word "cream", she was not sure what kind of cream it is, that is, is it one or the other variant that she would call differently in Croatian. After she wrote in our Facebook chat, with about fifteen of us former Yugoslavs, some born after the country fell apart, it was only me who could successfully and with certainty tell her what kind of cream to buy.

The fact I was a refugee and an immigrant for a larger part of my life made me wonder about identities, not necessarily in search for my own identity, as I weave it from

all the identities I carry, but rather because some of those identities were or were not acceptable, were questioned, even denied. I observed other immigrants, and immigrant communities, and found something rather specific in Prague and the Czech Republic. My impression is that this thesis could not be researched or written in the same way if I was researching the community of former Yugoslavs in Germany, because those communities differ. But once I found the community in the Czech Republic, and heard all the references to Yugoslavia, the way this seemed to be a medium that helped us be and connect without identities that will be exclusive or denied, I decided I want to look for the *phantom* that might be there, and that can exist beyond the often normative identities assumed by others in many other places.

2. Relevant theoretical concepts

This thesis considers the relationship between identity and nation, or rather citizenship. It includes reflection on art, such as the idea of NSK (*Neue Slowenische Kunst*) presented in Venice biennale in 2017 about a stateless state, that Slavoj Žižek understands as "state without a nation, a state which would no longer be founded on an ethnic community and its territory" (Ramm, 2017) not without reflecting on conflict in Yugoslavia during 1990s. The idea of civic national identity assumes that the person identifies with the state in terms of its institutions and rules, and not its traditions, language or religion, typical for ethnic nationalism (see Kiss and Park, 2014). Extending the idea of traditions and language (as ideas that define belonging to a nation) to culture in the case of this thesis, serves to explore if the common, Yugoslavian identity, exists in different national identities. These are represented by respondents who belong to three different nationalities, based on their background, and language they reported as their native. The key hypothesis in this case is that the civic identity, defined by state institutions, does not exist, because the state does not exist anymore. Kiss and Park (2014) argue that ethnic conception of nationalism came to existence in the territories of Germany and Eastern Europe, precisely because the communities living there were fragmented and needed to define themselves.

The idea of a Yugoslavian identity that continues to exist even after the legal entity (state) itself ceased to exist, an identity that is based on rather ethnic principles such as language and culture that is different to others, and within the individuals of different nationalities, is a provoking thought that can ultimately indicate existence of concepts more powerful than nationalism, and within territories that are identified and self-identified as nationalist. Such a concept in this case would be culture and its artefacts. It is to be seen further in the thesis if this is tied to a specific context, emigration in this case.

Von Hirschhausen et al. introduce the idea of *phantom borders*, defining them as "mostly political demarcations or territorial divisions that structure space despite their subsequent institutional abolishment" (Von Hirschhausen et al., 2019, p. 370). These continue to shape the social practices even if they do not exist in this way. Dynamic of the phantom borders lies in the fact they are established and reproduced, driven by social and historical processes. The authors argue that "former historical territories have the capacity to shape both the experience and the imagination of a social group and, consequently, to establish regional patterns in a specific domain" (Von Hirschhausen

et al., 2019, p.386). The driving force of this capacity are people and their behaviours. The concept of phantom borders is relevant in the context of the thesis as the former Yugoslavs might demonstrate this capacity in the way they define themselves and others, and how the former country is embedded in their lifestyles and memory. The authors make a point about phantom borders not only offering perception of the world, but also a possibility of the future. This might be particularly visible in the case of former Yugoslavs, who carry their Yugoslav identity in their new countries as a signal, expecting often a more favourable treatment, help, or enjoyable social interactions from their former countrymen.

Discussing the Yugoslavian popular culture and the way it is perceived post-war across the borders of the former country, Baker (2020) notices that the fact some cultural artefacts are considered nostalgic or not, is not predetermined but socially constructed. Second, she also argues that evoking remembering Yugoslavia during production is not necessary (see Baker, 2020). Whether nostalgia is a useful concept in approaching Yugoslav culture or only a matter of cultural politics, Baker answers in a way that nostalgia by itself does not necessarily offer new insights. However, the "politics of emotion" behind the nostalgia might be useful. Some examples refer to wondering if the lives of post Yugoslavs would be more prosperous if the country did not have a war. In a way, this nostalgia serves as a way to express "as-yet-unrealized 'vision[s] for the future' by ostensibly representing the past" (Baker, 2020, p.62). The experience of shared cultural connections between the former members of Yugoslavia is sometimes exploited by entertainment industry, when the artists from one or the other country visit across the territory, however, without the politically charged concept of Yugonostalgia and attempting to evoke memories of Yugoslavia, but rather relying on cultural connectedness and recognition (see Baker, 2020). Baker concludes that nostalgia comes not only in the form of *Yugonostalgia*, but also in a more ethnocentric form evoking particular moments in history across Croatia or Bosnia. These coexist together, and Yugoslav popular music can be even "orientated against a Yugoslav past" (Baker, 2020, p. 76).

While this thesis is interested in the phantom identity, relying on the concept of phantom pain, the idea of *phantom pain* is examined also from the perspective of art where "the postmemory of collective ethno-national trauma is the pivotal element in the formation of subcultural activity" (Jelača, 2014, p. 141). Analysing two films produced in Serbia in the 2010s, Jelača describes how the second generation experiences the memory of the catastrophe, catastrophe it did not live through directly. Thus, films express

postmemory (or the *phantom memory*) of violence in two films about lives of (subcultural) youth. Whether the heroes in the films inflict pain on others or themselves, the violence and pain coming from it are echoing the wars and violence of the 1990s. While the pain us used differently in the two films, it comes "from a familiar source: the postmemory of violence inflicted by, and inherited from the parent culture in the name of collective belonging, now a phantom that haunts its youth" (Jelača, 2014, p. 152).

It is important to note that this thesis briefly considers the ideas of post-communist nostalgia: the ideas of post-Czechoslovakian or post-SSSR nostalgia, but is not following the idea of exploring post-Yugoslavian nostalgia, concept strongly present and very controversial in the territories of the former member states. The thesis rather explores identity implications indicating if nostalgia might actually be about an identity.

Underlining this is an observation of what happened when describing the thesis idea to some of the potential respondents (individuals who belong to the research target group). I noticed that some respondents' first reaction was to say they are not nostalgic about Yugoslavia and thus are not the right subjects for the research. However, when asked if they know a specific quote from a specific film or if they know a specific band, or a song, often from the pre-war times, the response was by default positive. And not only do they know it, they seem to appreciate and fondly remember all the art, no matter where it came from, and often keep it as a standard even today.

Nostalgia about former Yugoslavia seems not to be appreciated in predominantly national states that came to exist after the country fell apart (see Ivančić, 2022). Attributing these states as predominantly national is based on the research on party membership in national parties showing how they gained support from the war onwards (see Čakar and Čular, 2023). Same time, there is an undeniable *recognition* within the population of these after-states, often through the exchange of cultural artefacts, mainly musicians who tour across the former Yugoslavian republics, and often through creating together, such as in the case of films with Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian co-production.

2.1. Defining the identity

When introducing the concept of (social) identity, Jenkins writes about a *map* on which the actors place themselves and others, based on many of the classifications and belongings that humans have. Jenkins, however, insists that this map does not state identity as a quality someone can have or not have, but conceptualises it rather as the process of

identification (Jenkins, 2008). No matter if we consider individual or collective identities, entangled as they are, they are produced and reproduced through interactions, that is, through the process of identification. Relying on the process of establishing similarity and difference, identity is not something given, it always has to be established. Understanding identity means relying on notions of similarity, difference, reflexivity and process. "Although individual and collective identification are matters of symbolic classification and boundary maintenance, they are matters of classification in interaction and practice" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 153). He argues that "minimal reality of a group is that its members know that it exists and that they belong to it" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 12). Furthermore, our own sense of group membership influences how we perceive, that is identify, others. These identifications, and self-identifications, are to a large extent driven by interest, meaning they are dynamic, and influence behaviours. "My pursuit of particular interests might cause me to be identified in this way or that by others. How I identify others may have a bearing on which interests I pursue" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 7).

Differentiating between individual and collective identity can be based on the principle each of them uses for the process of identification, where individual identity emphasises difference, and collective emphasises similarity. However, they remain intertwined, and Jenkins proposes three different orders to understand how humans make sense of their world: (1) *the individual order*, including individuals and relying on processes within one's own experience, (2) *the interaction order*, including what happens in interactions between individuals, and (3) *the institutional order*, including the world of pattern, organisation, and relying on established way of how things are done (Jenkins, 2008). Jenkins argues that these three orders are inseparably connected, and it is difficult to talk about one of them without bringing others in the picture. When discussing the concept of institutional order, he makes a distinction between the nominal and the virtual identity, between the name and the actual experience. "The name can stay the same – X – while what it means in everyday life to be an X can change dramatically. Similarly, the experience may stay relatively stable while the name changes" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 44).

This thesis attempts to explore the case where the institutional order as it was (Yugoslavia) does not exist anymore. Institutional order tells us that how we identify ourselves is inseparable from the way others see us. In the case of Yugoslavian phantom

identity, the question emerges if and how other post-Yugoslavs see and *label* one another, also if the identity exists only through interaction, within specific circumstances.

Jenkins outlines the relevance of time and space for the process of identification, where relevance of time is connected to continuity, past that we can make sense of, and future that we can look forward to, sense of the order and meaning that human beings long for. Relevance of space is in the fact that identification always comes from a certain point of view, own body in case of individual, and territory or region in case of collective identity (Jenkins, 2008).

Being a process, something that individuals do, makes identities changeable and not timeless. They might resist the change, but they are not static and set in stone. Collective identification, social identity, relies on members of a particular group identifying themselves as such, however, even if this self-recognition doesn't happen and the members don't identify themselves as members of a particular group, the collective identification can be made based on the way others recognize the members of a group. This could be particularly relevant in the case this thesis explores, because despite the division of the country, and establishment of new states and institutional identities, the former citizens are still identified by the former collective name – *Jugoši*, by the collective of the host country. In light of nominal and virtual distinction, "nominal is how the group or category is defined in discourse, the virtual how its members behave or are treated. As with individual identification these are conceptually distinct. In practice they are chronically implicated in each other, but there is no necessary agreement between them" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 109).

The belonging is underlined by usage of symbols, meaning that members of the same community similarly understand things, however, this is not necessarily the truth. They only believe they do, and usage of symbols makes them believe so. Former Yugoslavs have the symbols they share, some of them emerging in the material collected, where they mention the same songs, quote the same moves, or speak about holidays they celebrate.

Collective identifications come into being through institutionalisation, through the practices that individuals, part of a certain collective, perform. Jenkins defines institution as a pattern of behaviour that people recognize and know as the way things are done (Jenkins, 2008). Further, collective life is founded in both the objective reality, in the doing, as much as in thinking, or symbolic reality. It seems that one without the other does not constitute collective life. Reflecting on the work of Frederik Barth, Jenkins makes a point

about collective identities and their sources in different ways of institutional identifications. "Even when they are not in themselves collective identities, they are institutionalising identification productive – in Barth's terms generative – of identifications" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 163).

Another insight that the thesis sources on is the definition relying on the notion of collective memory, a memory that defines and shapes the collective identity (see Hájek and Dlouhá, 2014). Hájek and Dlouhá explain how collective memory enables people who belong to a specific community of memory – defined as a group of people or a society relating representations of the past to its current identity – to transform into representations of their own past. Collective memory manifests itself through various media that together make documents of memory. Those can be visual, acoustic, discursive or plastic. Collective memory being a specific knowledge base is typically approached from the perspective of those who produce it or those who consume it. The two authors underline how little attention was paid to how these documents are interpreted and received by the communities of memory, which is an insight relevant to this thesis, and what the thesis attempts to do. The way people cooperate with a particular document of memory is as relevant for being a member of a specific community, as much as it is relevant to share the knowledge of the past that is represented by that document.

Kansteiner claims that communities of memory are not built on shared interpretations of particular past events, but on shared experience of their media representations (see Kansteiner, 2002). In his article, he outlines the key challenge of memory studies, where the focus is on representation of specific events, without reflection on the recipients of those representations. He proposes contextualization of specific strategies of representation, resulting in linking "facts of representation with facts of reception" (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 179). Only with this, one can understand the memory politics, and why some memory initiatives fail, and others don't. The three historical factors that frame collective memory are "the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the memory consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artefacts according to their own interests" (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 180). Further, he outlines the diversity of terminology used to name the phenomenon, where the term "cultural memory" emphasises the materiality of memory, discusses what different authors proposed in defining and organising the term, most interesting to this thesis the idea that attempts to historicize memory indicate how crisis

of memory inevitably comes with crisis of identity. Specifically, memory is "valorized where identity is problematized" (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 184). The relevant thought here is connection of memory and identity, as well as the point that history and memory cannot be so clearly separated, because neither seem to be objective, that is, both are socially distorted.

Further, Kansteiner raises the point of how collective memory relates to the collective and to the individual, concluding that there is no such thing as "individual memory" as even the personal accounts are inseparable from "social standards of plausibility and authenticity that they embody" (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 185). Individual memory in this sense is inseparable from social memory. However, Kansteiner also underlines that this does not mean that to study social memory, one needs to understand it as a manifestation of individual memories.

In the section dedicated to media of memory, Kansteiner describes it as the way in which past events are structured, represented, and used in a social setting. It is usually in visual, discursive or spatial elements that the knowledge of the past is transmitted. These elements, in all its different forms, audio, visual, discursive, are what is called media of memory. He quotes Irwin-Zarecka who claims that individuals inject their own meanings into stories of the past, and work with the meanings that fit their own (see Kansteiner, 2002). There are two separate processes here: the one of actual recording of an event, and second one, the one of its reception. This extends to the fact that the larger the audience, recipient, of some event is, the more likely it is its interpretations will differ. He proposes innovating in the space of researching media reception to understand the past. The key is to understand that these media representations do not simply reflect the collective memory, but are participating in its construction (see Kansteiner, 2002).

Kansteiner concludes that "memory studies offer an opportunity to acknowledge that historical representations are negotiated, selective, present-oriented, and relative, while insisting that the experiences they reflect cannot be manipulated" (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 195). He proposes the interdisciplinary approach to memory studies, emphasising communication and cultural studies, rather than research of individuals who are carriers of these memories.

National identity, as Mandler outlines in his article (see Mandler, 2006) can be understood in psychological and sociological meaning. This shift from historiographic perspective, focused on ideology of nationalism, towards exploring how identity is constructed inside people's minds, came during the 1970s, during the "cultural turn".

Both identity as individually constructed and identity as "collective identity" were of interest. Mandler brings the formulation of Benedict Anderson, who claimed that modern development of communication technologies enabled individuals who were not necessarily in the same place geographically, to connect and feel as part of a single "imagined community". Furthermore, modern states leveraged the technology to influence and manipulate this kind of identity. With it, "national identity" becomes very durable, and has a strong mobilising effect. Mandler claims that any time we speak about identity, we need to consider "national identity [...] almost any kind of human cognition, behaviour or activity also acts to construct our national identity" (Mandler, 2006, p. 273). Briefly reflecting on definitions of national identity that rely on "otherness", Mandler further proposes a deeper exploration of mechanisms by which meaning and identity get constructed.

He proposes taking lessons from the work of several theories aiming to explain collective identity, including examination of social discourses that has been more recently employed by social psychologists and those employing "ethnomethodology", where focus is examination of "identity talk" in more naturalistic situations. Same time, understanding the context does not necessarily explain how humans work with those. Defining who we are and who we are not still calls for understanding how exactly this process works. Even during "identity talk" when we speak to those who belong to the same group as ours, there is a tendency to argue, in order to get to a consensus. This already brings to a highly diverse "identity talk". Having multiple identities also means that we don't know which one is salient at a given time.

Conclusion is that we need to be careful in assuming that we know the process by which any identity is formed. Context and situation are key to be able to do this. It is not enough for someone to self-categorise themselves as a member of some collective, it is important that this is shared by others. This depends on the situations where they are encountered. Also, other entities, such as state or bodies of civil society, will recognize someone's self-identity differently than members of that group. In this context, where identity construction is both a psychological and a social process, Yugoslavian identity can be constructed as collective identity recognized by those who self-construct it as part of themselves, even if the state does not exist.

Looking at factors that build group cohesion, there is a wide repertoire including "loyalty and trust, ethnocentrism, normative and stereotypical perception and conduct, conformity and homogeneity of attitudes and behaviours, group identity, intergroup

competitiveness and discrimination" (Mandler, 2006, p. 278). The author presents thoughts influenced by both Freudian explanations, psychotherapeutic, and those who are taking a more historical perspective.

The definition of identity here draws "on the latest social-psychological and sociological thinking about what actually goes on inside people's minds in the construction of 'identity' – the self-concept – and of various kinds of 'collective identity', including the national kind" (Mandler, 2006, p. 272). This self-concept, the way people identify based on their own experience or individual order as Jenkins (2008) names it, is explored through the relationship with artefacts of art and culture, relationship towards the others who know about and/or understand those cultural artefacts (supposedly in a similar way), and finally, in exploring whether or not there is modification in "self-concept", the own identification, in the presence of other individuals from the same group or in relation to them.

Addressing the socio-psychological theories which claim that (national) identity depends on recognition from the outside, Fabry writes that while: "recognition may be the central external goal of claimants of statehood… non-recognition fosters national identity to a much greater degree than recognition" (Fabry, 2016, p. 19). He takes the examples of both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia after their creation, as examples of weak national identities, and while some sense of togetherness had to be created, the formal recognition of states did not help it. He compares the case of interwar Yugoslavia and the strong centrifugal forces that worked to prevent weakened national identity to the other postcolonial countries, in a way that even after the breakup of the country and honouring the separate national identities, not all members of all groups wanted to be included in post-Yugoslav states, deepening the internal divisions, such as the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The research in this thesis attempts to understand if those earlier centrifugal forces managed to create an identity that survived Yugoslavia's breakup.

For the purpose of this thesis, the identity is observed also through expressing specific cultural references, or rather, the way in which specific "documents of memory" are interpreted within the target population. The examples of this are the films cited when individuals who belong to the target group are together, or music they listen to, and recognize as "theirs", essentially, shared experience of medialized interpretation (see Kansteiner, 2002). It is important to note that most of the languages spoken amongst these individuals are almost identical, or at least well understandable regardless of whether

respondents are from one or the other post-Yugoslavian state, such as Serbia, Croatia, or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Exploring textual, visual and audio documents of memory with the members of a particular community, in this case, the community of Yugoslavia-born immigrants in the Czech Republic, and understanding how they work with these documents, could help understanding "if they are then able to incorporate it into an intersubjectively shared representation of the past" (Hajek and Dlouha, 2014, p. 209).

In her doctoral thesis, Pehe writes that her "project's wider relevance beyond its immediate regional context is a contribution to the understanding of how popular culture and its circulation in the public sphere acts as one of the major structuring forces of collective memory and uncovers the different political agendas to which this memory is harnessed" (Pehe, 2016, p. 4). However, while this diploma work is interested in popular culture and its role in structuring/defining the collective memory, the focus is on the identity and personal reflection on popular culture, thus internalised ideas about the popular culture, rather than how the representations in the public sphere influence political agendas and other.

2.2. Yugoslavia and various types of social identities

Describing the development of the idea of *Yugoslavism*, Tomić reflects on the popularity of the idea in the 19th century, despite of nationalist streams within Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian intellectuals, as the national identities were much weaker, especially in the territories on the borders of former Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. The first Yugoslavian state from 1918 was envisioned as the nation of Southern Slavs, who speak the same language (see Tomić, 2014). Integrating all the different identities within the state proved to be a great challenge, however, with the outbreak of WWII and threats from both German occupation and internal fascist supporters such as Croatian Ustaše, and Serbian forces fighting against Germans, Četniks, it was the partisan movement which integrated everyone else, no matter the national identity. "The fact that socialist Yugoslavia, proclaimed already during the war in 1943, was born out of the antifascist struggle of 'all Yugoslav peoples' became over time one of the main pillars of legitimization of the new state, subsumed under the motto of 'brotherhood and unity'." (Tomić, 2014, p. 276)

Post-WWII modernization of the country, social justice as its basic promise, political split from Soviet Union in 1948, relative freedom and high living standard, created the space

for new identities to emerge. "Yugoslav" as an identity first occurred in the 1961 census, and grew steadily, though most of the population still identified with their national identities. Death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980 saw the onset of growing national tensions. Led by Serbian nationalism, and relying on the past and church to justify politics of the 1990s, it was reflected in a similar fashion in Croatia. This is when the national identifiers such as nationality, religion, and language, were defined in both Serbian and Croatian cases as the opposition to the other. Together with the economic crisis and overall sense of insecurity, the wars broke out on territories of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia (see Tomić, 2014).

These wars were ignited by fear that each side fuelled using powerful imagery of destruction, refugees, and discourse of genocide it broadcasted. In the aftermath, these wars made nationalisms widely accepted with people in Yugoslavia. "The breakup of Yugoslavia led the newly created states to establish new social and political mythologies based on old forms of identity-language, ethnic/national origin, religion/confession and the alleged common past" (Tomić, 2014, p. 283). However, in the 2000s, there is a different trend within Serbia and Croatia, where the new, "European" identity is promoted by the elites, often only nominally. Same time, regionalist identities, such as Istrian or Vojvodinian, that were not present during the 1990s wars, are emerging. A surprising re-emergence is the identity of Yugoslavs and what is known as *Yugonostalgia*, which "can be seen in the revival of old socialist symbols, a newfound enthusiasm for Josip Broz Tito, private renovation of different monuments, reappropriation of old places of remembrance, collecting and exchanging souvenirs from everyday life in Yugoslavia, simply travelling throughout the area…" (Tomić, 2014, p. 287). This reinforcement of post-Yugoslav area refers to common cultural space, or common communication space. Its unique feature is the concept of *naš jezik* (eng. *our language*), "a form of post-Yugoslav identity can already be traced among the hundreds of thousands of mostly well-educated people who have left Yugoslavia since the 1990s" (Tomić, 2014, p. 287). All of the respondents in this thesis research used the term *our language* at least once to identify the language they speak. It concurs with the idea Tomić argues, that sharing this transnational cultural intimacy, and despite different national identities construction or (re)emergence, some traces of Yugoslav identity still remain. The challenge presented is that Tomić does not elaborate further what makes this identity besides the language, which is an effort this research and thesis attempt to find out.

Describing how the Southern Slavs united into one state, Štiks differentiates between the civic nationalism that was shaping in Western Europe in the 19th century as being led by political figures, and different to it, the one happening in the Eastern Europe where such process was led by intellectuals, writers and linguists (see Štiks, 2018). It relied on the principle of ethnic and linguistic nationalism. Composed of different dialects, the common language became the one that was most dominant, and probably here lie all the future disputes over language among the Yugoslavs. Already here occur the "enormous difficulties in naming the newly created standard language; a perennial problem for all subsequent generations" (Štiks, 2018, p. 27). The concept of *naš jezik* was introduced in the beginning of the 19th century, as one of the terms used to avoid naming the language Serbian or Croatian, something respondents in the research for this thesis will be most comfortable with in 2023 and 2024 as well. "International institutions today refer to these languages, for practical purposes, as BCS or BCMS and former Yugoslavs when speaking among themselves refer to it as naš jezik, just like the people who 'imagined' the Yugoslavs almost two centuries ago." (Štiks, 2018, p. 28)

Defining moment for the formation of the Yugoslav nation came with WWI, when it came into existence without going through all three stages of nation making as proposed by Miroslav Hroch, namely, Yugoslavia was created without gaining mass movement support (see Štiks, 2018). Next wave of challenges came with what was recognized as Serbian domination, between the two wars, as well as the "clash between centralist and anti-centralist visions of Yugoslavism" (Štiks, 2018, p. 31). Yugoslav citizenship came into existence in 1928, enforced by King Aleksandar, who renamed the *Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes* into *Kingdom of Yugoslavia* a year later (see Štiks, 2018). Though Kingdom of Yugoslavia disappeared in the eve of WWII, due to internal divisions and unresolved national question of those under previous dictatorship of King Aleksandar, who was assassinated in 1934, the forces that led the resistance to the Nazi occupation managed to resurrect Yugoslavia as the political project.

The ideas of anti-fascist past, values of resistance and partisanism in liberation of the country, re-emerged in the personal interviews with respondents in the thesis, underlying if not the common identity, then at least the common values that aimed to construct that identity after WWII and before the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s.

2.3. Focus and research questions

The research and thesis examine the hypothesised common identity within the population of citizens of former Yugoslavia, who left the territory after 1990, and nowadays live on the territory of the Czech Republic, more specifically, cities of Prague or Brno. The individuals in the target group are people born while the country existed, and they spent some part of their lives in Yugoslavia. They were thus exposed to certain cultural content directly, or indirectly, through their parents, and/or later reflection on the culture (especially film and music) of the former, joint country. These individuals come from different republics of former Yugoslavia, and have different ethnic backgrounds.

In the concept of social identity, Jenkins outlines three different orders: individual, interaction, and institutional (see Jenkins, 2008). These are the orders people use to make sense of the world. In the case of Yugoslavia, institutional order as such does not exist anymore in the form of the state and its institutions, including its behaviours or beliefs, at least nominally. The thesis attempts to research the case of a social identity where institutional order is removed, and what that removal might mean for interaction and individual order in both nominal and virtual terms. Given that time – in terms of continuity, and space – in terms of common territory when it comes to collective identities, have great importance for the process of identification, in the case of Yugoslavia, both concepts are distorted or removed. The country does not exist anymore in terms of historical continuity, nor in terms of territory.

Following insights into nominal and virtual identity as defined by Jenkins, nominally, the members of post-Yugoslav community are known as *Jugoši* by outsiders. Inside the community, the term used is rather *we* or *our*. The thesis will explore the meaning(s) respondents give to this term, to help understand if and how it might relate to Yugoslavia. Virtual identity, the way how members of a group behave, does not necessarily have to correspond with nominal identity. However, the thesis will explore if *we* and *our* also mean something for the way they behave, and for the way they perform the process of identification. Understanding this process can help understand if the phantom identity exists, when and how it occurs, what are the circumstances of this process. If minimal reality of a group is that its members recognize it, and use it to identify themselves and the others (see Jenkins, 2008), and if such identification is found within the members of community of former Yugoslavs in the Czech Republic, it can also provide insight into some of the characteristics of the phantom identity.

The idea that there is an identity that does not relate to their new home, nor to their new, post-Yugoslav nations in the space where Yugoslavia once was, means this identity is phantom, existing even if the country and the ways how things are done don't, at least officially. As such, it might not rely on institutions such as nation, religion, or ethnicity, which can be a provocative thought for the post-Yugoslav social identities founded on these institutions. As Srebotnjak argues in her article about the mechanisms of "invisible" ethnical cleansing of the Yugoslav identity, "the sheer existence and acknowledgment of the Yugoslav identity could therefore disprove the new nationalistic tenets" (Srebotnjak, 2016, p. 65).

3. Methodology and research design

The qualitative approach was chosen as a data collection method because it enabled insights into subjective experiences of participants. Attempting to understand how individuals performed the process of identification in the context of (formally non-existent) institutional order, and the way they identified individually and in interaction with others, in-depth interviewing helped "get detailed information that sheds light on an individual's perspective and the perceived meaning about a particular topic, issue or process" (Rutledge and Hogg, 2020, p. 1). The conversational style of in-depth interviewing gave the opportunity to respond real time to some of the insights respondents were sharing and ask them follow up questions. Same time, it helped build the sense of trust and encouraged respondents to reveal some of the more intimate thoughts about the topics we were discussing, and their relationship to them. Thus, a qualitative approach was essential to collect data on their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (see Rutledge and Hogg, 2020).

The data is collected via semi-structured in-depth interviews with individuals in the target group, and later, the (thematic) analysis of data was performed. The questionnaire with interview prompts used in the interviewing is available in the Appendix. The method of data analysis is described in section 3.4. Method of data analysis.

Data collection included the method of participant observer, as I am myself a part of the community of people coming from former Yugoslavia and who nowadays live in the Czech Republic, the same community respondents were selected from. My own positionality is discussed in section 3.4. Methodological challenges and reflection.

I used the MPI (*multiple perspective interviews*), because of suitability for research of a specific social group, and understanding similarities and divergences on the selected questions between individuals belonging to it, though they differ in their social roles and perspectives (see Vogl, Schmidt, Zartler, 2019). Though triangulation is often a method ensuring trustworthiness of the gained insights, and assuring the accounts given by individuals are corroborated by others, the authors of the article conclude that clarity or truth over the research question is not necessarily ensured by triangulation, and the approach rather offers an insight into the complexity of the question (see Vogl, Schmidt, Zartler). Researchers are co-tellers of the story in this case, as analysing the data obtained by interviews are influenced by researchers' own worldviews. Thus, researchers must

be clear about their own positioning, and demonstrate self-reflection. Using the MPI approach for analysis of obtained material means analysing individual interviews, then also the relationship of each individual unit in individual interviews (see Vogl, Schmidt, Zartler, 2019). The respondents in the research were asked questions about cultural artefacts in the domain of film, music, books, vernacular culture, helping me understand important cultural references and personal stories behind them, but then, these reports were compared between each other, to look for patterns and relationships between all the different accounts. This is what helped understand the elements of the proposed common identity.

3.1. Development of topics and prompts for the interview

Questionnaire is designed across four segments of interview protocol *prompts*, attempting to avoid some of the common pitfalls when conducting in-depth interviews, such as own biases or lack of comfort to discuss certain topics with respondents (see Jimenez and Orozco, 2021). The four segments of prompts are: (1) biographic (the grand tour), (2) cultural prompts, (3) identity prompts, and (4) economics and other practical prompts. While the in-depth interview here is chosen as the most useful to gather data on experiences, behaviour, perceptions of certain events that might have been traumatic or extremely sensitive for the respondents, and attitudes towards similarly challenging topics in terms of their observability, such as identity, interview protocol is not designed "as a set of specific questions to be answered but as a set of prompts that guide respondents to talk about topics relevant to the research question" (Jimenez and Orozco, 2021, p. 508).

The questionnaire design attempted to avoid social desirability bias and self-censoring, for example by asking for attitudes in the reference group of those close to the respondents, such as their friends or family, also by asking for comparisons, for example by comparing their own cultures to the one they observe and participate in, in the Czech Republic. One of the counterfactual prompts, looking to understand the effect of a certain condition on the outcome (see Jimenez and Orozco, 2021) was asking the respondents to imagine and describe what their life would look like if they didn't come to the Czech Republic.

While the questionnaire prepared is elaborate in outlining the questions for each of the prompts, it is important to note that not all questions were asked, but served as guidance on how to get as much as relevant material from the respondents,

and as guidance on how to navigate between biases, general opinions and personal beliefs and values.

3.2. Selection of participants

Selection of respondents aimed to enable triangulating perspectives, via MPI. Respondents were selected from different age, education, and earning power groups (see Vogl, Schmidt, Zartler, 2019). Including diversity of their national background, data obtained made it possible to bring independent interview data together, and compare them, to understand whether they converge or diverge, how they relate to one another. "MPIs are potentially the most useful when seeking to understand relationships and dynamics among members of a social unit and when exploring similarities and differences in their perceptions." (Vogl, Schmidt, Zartler, 2019, p. 613)

The key criteria in selection of the participants was that they were born on the territory of former Yugoslavia, before 1984, and that today they live in Prague or Brno. The age criterion is important because it means that all participants are 40 years old or older, thus all of them had direct experience of living in Yugoslavia before the beginning of the civil war in 1991, and none of the respondents relied only on the representations of life in Yugoslavia that they might have experienced second hand. Though Yugoslavia had 6 republics, 3 of them (Montenegro, North Macedonia and Slovenia) are omitted in the research because the sample was convenience driven, and I couldn't find representation for the 3 mentioned republics. Thus, the respondents come from Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The limitations of the sample, and its implications, are presented in section 3.4. Methodological challenges and reflection.

Relevant to the national identity is also religion and language, where Croatians are commonly Roman Catholic, Serbs are Eastern Orthodox, and Bosnians are Muslim. Languages they speak are Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian (see Tomić, 2014). Whether these languages are different or not has been a subject of debate over the past couple of decades in the academia of respective countries, and continues to date (see Štiks, 2018). While this is not the focus of the thesis, it shall be noted that the participants understand each other perfectly, despite dialect variants. This is, for example, visible on occasions when they spend time together, or plan meetings without their Czech friends or partners, with the motivation to speak *our language*. In such cases, *our* language is either one or all the above listed languages.

Participants come from different social backgrounds in terms of their education. There are representatives of both urban areas (capitals of former republics) and smaller towns. They live mostly in Prague, with 2 participants living nowadays in Brno, and 1 participant living in Bosnia since last year. According to the Czech Statistical Office data for 2022, about citizenship of foreigners staying long term in the Czech Republic, there were 3.919 Serbs, 1.180 Croats, and 1.075 Bosnians.

Participants were selected based on responses to inquiry via social media, through personal recommendations and personal connections. I was surprised and almost touched by the response in a Facebook group called *Naši u Češkoj*. I wrote the invite for the interview volunteers, briefly outlined duration and what the questions are about. Nine people reacted within an hour. I selected 3 of them, based on their backgrounds, and to ensure sample representativeness.

The names of the respondents are somewhat modified or changed, to ensure anonymity. The representativeness and limitations of the sample are discussed in section 3.5. Methodological challenges and reflection.

Table 1 – List of interviewed participants with their socio-demographic characteristics

Name	Age, Gender	Nationality	Education	Birth place	Interview length
Alex	55, Male	Serbian	High school	Belgrade, Serbia	50 min
Zlatan	40, Male	Bosnian	High school	Zenica, BiH	50 min
Vlad	49, Male	Serbian	High school	Brčko, BiH	45 min
Enida	55, Female	Bosnian	High school	Banjaluka, BiH	47 min
Ivana	45, Female	Croatian	University	Zagreb, Croatia	46 min
Neno	40, Male	Croatian	University	Zagreb, Croatia	48 min
Slobodan	50, Male	Serbian	High school	Novi Sad, Serbia	45 min
Merima	60, Female	Bosnian	High school	Zenica, BiH	53 min
Ivan	41, Male	Croatian	High school	Osijek, Croatia	45 min
Kata	42, Female	Croatian	University	Zagreb suburb, Croatia	47 min

I met several respondents before I selected them to be interviewed for this research, and some I met only when we got together for the interview.

Alex was the first participant I interviewed, and has asked me if I mind if he cooks while we talk. He placed the computer in his kitchen, opened a beer, and prepared a meal while responding to my questions, sometimes stopping the chopping (or whatever he was doing) to think, reflect, and provide me with his thoughts. He is also the respondent who is in the Czech Republic the longest of all participants, since the beginning of 1990s. It might be that the phantomness of Yugoslav identity is the most prominent in his case, as I've learned throughout the collection and analysis of data.

I met *Zlatan* through an introduction by a common friend, and after I've seen his theatre play about identity, related and relevant to his background of a former Yugoslav. He was interviewed second, and brought special insights because he is the only respondent who attended part of elementary school and high school in the Czech Republic. It was insightful to listen to him switch and translate between the languages, also to inquire into how he compares his country of origin and the Czech Republic.

Vlad has been a long-time friend of mine, our friendship dating back to Belgrade where we used to work together, some fifteen years ago. After his departure for China, and later to Czech Republic, I decided to invite him to participate in the research, because he had a rather unique experience of living in different countries both in post-war emigration, but also in terms of being born in one republic of former Yugoslavia, and living for a large part of life in a different one. He is also the only respondent who fought in the Yugoslav civil war.

Enida has been in Prague since the early 1990s, and works in a small grocery store with products from Balkan, or rather, with products that are recognizable from our childhoods and home countries, products that cannot be bought anywhere else but in such specialised stores. I met her when I was looking for one such product shortly after my arrival to Prague in 2017. I remember her warmth, and how quickly she made me feel at home.

Ivana is one of the latest additions to our small Prague community. I met her through a common friend, after she came from Zagreb several years ago to work in a specialised academic institution. Our common friend, working for the same institution as her, and coming from Zagreb as well, thought we would get along, and thought that she, as a newcomer and a migrant for the first time around, will appreciate the connections within the community of former Yugoslavs, *our* community.

Neno and I met after I joined one of the large American corporations in Prague. I received a message via the company chat application, in my native language, saying that he saw I am from Belgrade, and that he wanted to welcome me. Five minutes after we agreed to have a coffee and properly introduce ourselves, we were in the kitchen, talking fast among the confused colleagues who were not sure what the scene they were witnessing was about, as they could not understand us, and we expressed, as they said, "more temperament" than the average Czech person. Neno's wife is Serbian, and he came to Prague because of their relationship.

Slobodan is one of the three respondents who are in the Czech Republic for the longest time, and is the most knowledgeable when it comes to Czech culture and history. He is the one with stories about events from Czech history, biographical data on politicians or other important figures of Czech public life, Czech literature and music scene. Anecdotal example of how he helps people who came later to the Czech Republic to understand who is who on the Czech music scene: he gives insights into who they would be if they were a performer from the former Yugoslavia. He is the only participant who reported he speaks Czech the most between the 3 languages he daily uses. He speaks Czech even with his daughter, born in the marriage with his Serbian girlfriend he came to Prague with in 1998.

Merima responded to my inquiry via social media, although we have met previously, when I visited and shopped in a bakery where she worked. Due to personal reasons, she left Prague with her husband last year, after living here for 9 years. She now lives in her home town in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and travels back and forth between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, because her husband is Serbian. I thought her reflections might bring variability given the circumstances of return to the home country, and have thus accepted her offer to be a respondent.

Ivan was another respondent to my inquiry via social media, and through the interview, I learned that his wife is Czech, that they met in Scotland and during one visit to her home country, they stayed and now live in Brno for the past 5 years. He works as an electrician, fixing elevators, and comes from a smaller city in Croatia. When speaking about our community, he said he relies on it a lot, and was thus motivated to volunteer for the interview, to pay back some of that perceived debt. He is the one respondent who mixed languages the most, often using Czech words, or Czech variants of words, in a sentence.

Kata responded to my inquiry via social media, and told me a story very different from other respondents. She keeps friendships only with Czech people, because she believes it is not a good idea to mix the two. While she wasn't able (or willing) to elaborate what would happen if she mixed it, and kept saying she saw examples where things went bad, she told me her children from marriage with a Czech man speak Croatian, and she keeps doing things *our* way. Being a tourist guide, and a driver for *Rohlik*, a grocery delivery service in Prague, she is familiar with both Czech history and culture, and is in constant contact with both Czech people and foreigners. Same time, she insisted *our* ways are better. Leaving an impression of someone slightly suspicious and telling me she is in a hurry at the beginning of the interview, very quickly she opened up and indicated several paradoxes and insights into how she (self)identifies. She was the only respondent who didn't ask to change to a more informal way of addressing each other.

I've performed one more interview outside of the survey participants criteria, with Peter Korchnak, a writer and artist, author of the podcast *Remembering Yugoslavia*. Interested in exploring "the memory of the country that no longer exists" (Remembering Yugoslavia, n. d.), and motivated also by the fact he himself comes from a country that does not exist anymore (Czechoslovakia), I thought Peter could give me valuable commentary and insights, given his work in space somewhat tangent to this thesis, but with a unique perspective of an outsider, the *other* compared to those whose memory he is exploring. Moreover, he is focused on exploring the memory of people who don't have direct experience of living in Yugoslavia, the children or grandchildren of my target group. I've used a few of Peter's comments throughout the thesis, when presenting the research material, and to underline some of what was said.

While we spoke about how he chooses people to interview, Peter admitted bias towards people who remember Yugoslavia in a positive way. However, elaborating on the profile of former Yugoslavs, or post-Yugoslavs that he speaks to, he said something that reminded me of the work by Von Hirschhausen et al., and the concept of *phantom borders*, where they state that these are not only about the past but also a possibility of the future (see Von Hirschhausen et al., 2019).

> *"I tend to speak to people who are not, like, hardcore Yugonostalgic, but more emancipatory Yugonostalgic… or, constructively looking at history, people who are less about politics and more about values that are still valid… We could use more solidarity and antifascism, brotherhood and unity… Then also people who value*

it as a cultural project, in terms of exchange between different nations, more like a cultural idea, some sort of unity or togetherness of people who are separated but want to work together and continue together." (Peter Korchnak, author of the podcast Remembering Yugoslavia)

3.3. Interview process

Creating rapport with the respondents was essential as the insights gathered were not always what the respondents considered socially desirable, especially when it comes to dominant sentiments towards Yugoslavia in their country of origin. The fact I speak the native language of the respondents, and belong to the same community, also helped the process. "It is helpful to remind respondents before the start of the interview that the researcher wants them to speak openly and honestly; that the researcher does not have an agenda or point to prove; and that the respondent has all of the answers since the questions are about their life, event, and/or experience." (Jimenez and Orozco, 2021, p. 522)

Before the interviews, I started with small talk, asking them about what they have been up to that day, or how the weather impacted their plans. The aim was to create trust and rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. Outlining the purpose of the interviews, clarification and ethical concerns, such as confidentiality and usage only for specified purpose, were part of the introduction. Participants were informed how long the interview will take.

I used the iterated questioning approach, with the purpose to challenge some of the narratives that might be culturally expected and desirable, but not necessarily stating the real opinions of the respondents, so called frontstage and backstage talk. "Drawing from Goffman, the terms frontstage talk and backstage talk are used to show how particular interviewing techniques can produce complementary narratives regarding the same identity-relevant theme" (Robinson and Schulz, 2016, p. 57). Frontstage is about desirable self-presentation, and reflecting the officially accepted and promoted values, while backstage is about exploring what can potentially be embarrassing, or threaten someone's reputation (see Robinson and Schulz, 2016). In the context of controversy of the term *Yugonostalgia* or just *Yugoslavia* itself, the state politics of former republics – now nationalist states, and vulnerability of immigrant position, it was important to iterate, and repeat some questions in their rephrased form, in attempts to invite responses that will indicate as best as possible how respondents think about some of the identity questions.

During the interview, I would go back to some of the questions, reminding respondents of their previous answers and asking for clarification.

An example that kept repeating was usage of terms *Yugoslavia*, *former Yugoslavia*, *Balkan* and *our country*, where I would often introduce questions such as:

"Earlier you said you are from Croatia, and now you speak how friends from our country were helpful when you first moved. How is 'our country' different from 'Croatia'?"

"You interchangeably use terms 'our territory', 'Yugoslavia', 'ex-Yugoslavia' and 'Balkans'. How are they different?"

"Is this something you would say to your friends back home? How do you think they would react?"

The interviews were performed in the native language of the respondents, they were recorded and later transcribed. Most of the interviews were performed online, via Google Meet platform, and one was performed in person, and recorded using a smartphone voice recorder. My decision to perform interviews online was driven by a lower barrier to ensure participation. It influenced respondents' decision to give me their time, as it meant they could do it in the comfort of their home, and at any time during the day that was convenient. I will reflect on some of the limitations of online in-depth interviews in section 3.5. Methodological challenges and reflection. The duration of interviews was between 45 and 53 minutes.

The interviews were conducted during 2023, mainly in spring and fall, and several followed in the beginning of 2024.

Interviews at times had elements of biographical interviews, mainly in the introductory part where I asked them when did they arrive in the Czech Republic, how would they describe that experience to someone that never changed countries, also in the question whether they can imagine how their life would be if they never moved. Biographical details emerged in questions about the books they read as children, or holidays they like to celebrate. This is relevant because biographical data are not necessarily about the narration of past events, but rather an ongoing experience of construing and re-construing, telling about our identity, how we came to be who we are, and how we integrate the past into our present (see Gluhlich, 2017).

3.4. Method of data analysis

The approach to data analysis acquired through recording and transcribing the interviews relied on multiple steps. Transcriptions included utterances, pauses, sighs, grammatical mistakes, differences in dialects, and the reactions or body language of the respondents I could notice. Some of the analysis happened already while transcribing the interviews, because I could annotate (code) some of the patterns emerging in data when the respondents spoke about specific topics, also mark or add comments in the transcript that I wanted to come back to and analyse after getting more data.

After transcribing the interviews, I spent time reading through the transcripts and further annotating content using either comments or highlights, for the material I wanted to process or quote. I organised the larger themes that emerged in 5 groups: (1) territory (space), (2) art and culture, (3) (self)identification, (4) experience of emigration, and (5) symbols and behaviour. The content from interviews corresponding to these themes I copied and organised across 10 rows (for respondents) and 5 columns (for themes) in a single table, so I could have a look at a specific theme across the responses I collected. I've finally analysed the data across these themes. During the analysis, my approach was to look for commonalities across the attitudes and information respondents provided, but then also to look for specifics and how they diverged from each other.

Putting these conclusions in perspective via their relation to the research questions, that is, analysing if they are indeed a phantom identity as conceptualised by the theoretical part of this thesis, was the final step in the way I processed the data.

Described approach to data was inductive and semantic, especially in the beginning (see Terry et al., 2017). Reading through transcripts and making decisions on how to code larger parts of data, including decision on codes themselves, makes the approach inductive and data led. Semantic or descriptive approach in this case is represented by the themes I identified, and it relied mostly on specific terms and themes the respondents spoke about, rather explicitly. However, there were cases where I was able to understand the meaning behind some of these words for the respondents, thus following a more latent or interpretative approach. A typical example would be the words "Balkan", "Yugoslavia", and "our" that kept repeating throughout the data, and seemed to have carried a lot of meaning for the respondents.

During the transcript phase already, and later during familiarisation with data, I was able to notice many details, and mark them for myself, either through assigning them one

of the codes, or through making notes that enabled me to come back to it, and perform analysis. Some of the notes I made already in the thesis text itself, to help me create a structure of results presentation later on. Some of the themes were influenced by the prompts, for example, the theme of art and culture, and some emerged during analysis of the material, for example, experience of emigration.

Data extracts, the quotes I placed throughout the analysis, served both the illustrative and the analytical purpose (see Terry et al., 2017), because I would use the extract to illustrate a theme, to give an example, but then often also to follow up on the extract analysing it, especially in cases when it brought a different insight to what was already argued or presented.

The post-structural critique of the coding and categorisation approach that Roulston paraphrases is that "it is a way of counting and sorting data, but it is not necessarily 'analysis' and may not produce significant or theorised stories" (Roulston, 2014, p. 305). Another challenge presented is making data fit the preconceived hypothesis (see Roulston, 2014). The reflectiveness during the process and awareness of one's own positionality is a way to overcome the challenge, and is discussed in continuation.

3.5. Methodological challenges and reflection

The key methodological limitations I faced and had to address are related to online interviews challenges, representativeness of the sample selected and the impact of my own position and reflections in relation to this research and data collected, namely the process of data analysis. In continuation, I will present some of those challenges and the way I approached them.

Performing in-depth interviews online became a necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic, nevertheless, some insights into the advantages and especially disadvantages were considered even before the pandemic. Sedgwick and Spiers find that despite the good quality of internet connection, ensuring good video quality and simulating the face-to-face experience "videoconference-based conversations do not replicate face-to-face, in-person interactions" (Sedgwick and Spiers, 2009, p. 3). The key challenge observed is related to the lack of shared personal space which fosters intimacy, that is, the distance between the researcher and respondent, which in return influences willingness of respondents to share insights that might be highly sensitive or even traumatic. When prompting respondents to speak about their childhood or their immigration experience, they were often reminded

of the conflict in former Yugoslavia, thus this was a real challenge I needed to address. The elements I paid attention to were:

1. High speed internet connection, emulating the in-person experience as much as possible. The question of digital divide, that is, availability of the right technology and knowledge on how to use it was not the challenge in this research, as the high-speed network and a laptop or a phone were available to all the respondents.

2. Small talk in the beginning of the conversation. I used it to ease the respondents into the format and context, but also to understand the setting they are in, the current day and activities they did, which room they are in, if they are alone. This helped me build rapport with them, become aware of their situation, and attempt to prevent distractions by communicating clearly how long the interview will take and that it would be good to remove distractions if they can anticipate any. I would also share the context I was in, saying that I am sitting in the kitchen or my living room chair, and that the weather was similar.

3. Throughout the conversation, as I was getting the data based on the prompts, I was able to ask follow up questions, very often with a high level of details. For example, if they would mention a specific book or a performer they like, I was able to ask why and even quote some of the songs they would mention, before asking them what it means to them. The fact I knew these details, and was someone who shares the experience of childhood in former Yugoslavia, and immigration in nowadays Czech Republic, helped me build a more personal connection and create an environment where they felt comfortable to share intimate insights they might not have shared easily otherwise. The fact I could understand and speak in each variant of dialects respondents used helped rapport even further.

4. The camera was on the whole time of the interviews. I paid attention to visual and audio cues, such as facial expressions and body movements, sighs or other non-verbal cues, and sometimes followed up by asking respondents what the sound they made meant. These cues are recorded also in transcripts, and helped me relive the experience of the interview when reading and processing the data.

Representativeness of the sample was another challenge I encountered when sourcing the respondents for the research. While small sample size is one of the known limitations of in-depth interviewing, the fact I had to ensure as much variability within it proved

to be not as straightforward. Finding respondents that come from different republics of former Yugoslavia was the first challenge, because I didn't manage to find enough variability within the community that lives in Prague and Brno, for example, I didn't manage to find anyone from Montenegro or Slovenia, while there was one person I managed to find from Macedonia, however, unwilling to participate in the research. The focus on the three remaining republics – Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina - was thus a response to the fact I could not ensure variability in this regard. The variability in terms of age and gender is another driver that helped me select the respondents, however, the sample might over-represent higher educated people, because the lowest education level I came across was high school education, creating a chance for the conclusions to be biased and under-represent respondents without higher education and doing manual work, which is the case for three out of ten respondents.

As I have briefly noted in the introductory part, there are differences I observed in communities of people coming from former Yugoslavia in Germany and in the Czech Republic. While living for six years in Germany, I noticed Germany is generally a very desirable immigration country in terms of an already existing large community of former Yugoslavs. Yugoslavs and later former Yugoslavs emigrated to Germany for work since the 1960s (see Kosinski, 1978; Pavlica, 2005) continuously, which only rapidly increased from the beginning of 1990s and continued to the 2020s. In many cases, it was to do manual labour, work that didn't require higher education. Also, the earnings are higher in Germany than in the Czech Republic. These seem to be the main drivers that decide in many cases. Comparatively, the Czech Republic is not as economically lucrative as Germany, and seems to attract a different kind of immigrants, either with higher education, or people who found home here and decided to neither return to former Yugoslavia, nor move further looking for better economic opportunities. This could be one of the reasons I struggled to find people who do manual labour or are below high school level of education in the Czech Republic. The sample has one electrician, one baker, and one courier representing this segment. One of the interviews even reflected the perceived difference between Germany and the Czech Republic. Answering the question if and where she votes, one of the respondents explained:

> *"I voted in the Croatian embassy a long time ago, but I don't think that people living somewhere else should. I am not some gastarbeiter living in a small room to save*

money and then visiting every year planning my return. I live here, my children are Czechs, and I am staying here permanently." (Kata, F, 42)

Similarly, another respondent reflected on expectations when coming to the Czech Republic, saying that he never expected nor planned to end up here.

"I had no expectations, I never thought about living in Czechia, whenever we spoke about going somewhere to work, it was Germany, Austria, but never Czechia, Slovakia." (Ivan, M, 41)

My own positionality in this research can be presented across three different themes: (1) the subject under investigation, (2) the research participants, and (3) the research context and process (see Holmes, 2020). Understanding my own positionality also meant I had to look for ways to not only be reflexive about it, but to overcome some of the challenges I faced in the process.

Being a former Yugoslav living in the Czech Republic makes me part of the same process that I have set myself to investigate, and this largely motivated my studies and thesis topic, as I was able to observe the hypothesised phenomenon and later decided to research it. On one hand, this positionality helped me not only to identify the topic, but also to build rapport with respondents and establish trust when collecting data. On the other hand, I had to be careful during the interviews to not insist on certain follow up questions attempting to acquire data that I thought were relevant. It took me a bit of discipline and reflection to accept some of the responses as they were, and to realise their variability contributes to describing the phenomenon in more nuance, even when I considered responses controversial in terms of what I thought I would discover. An example would be questions about language where some respondents were clear about speaking Serbian or Croatian, and did not consider Serbo-Croatian, nor did the question if those are the same or different languages resonate with them.

The fact my position is part of the process and phenomenon I was researching helped me build rapport with participants, specifically because I conducted the interviews in their native language, but also because I was able to prompt their reflection with more detailed questions I knew to ask because of the same background. Moreover, it largely helped me identify and address the potential respondents, via groups on Facebook where I am a member. On the other hand, in situations when some of the respondents described their journey from Yugoslavia to where they are today, I had the impression that two of them

might have held back because they knew my ethnic background, and might have not expressed their opinions and feelings directly. I attempted to overcome this in both cases by being as impartial as possible, and by encouraging them to tell me what is on their mind. However, it seemed to me they avoided expressing sentiments that might have indicated the fault of a particular ethnicity or ethnicities in ending something they believed was good (Yugoslavia). This enabled me to pay attention to such cases in the rest of the interviews, and to be more careful when analysing the data to balance the fact I am ethnic Serb and responses I got from both Serbs and non-Serbs.

Throughout the conversations and especially when writing the thesis, I paid attention to material that I was inclined to not consider, or didn't think was relevant. My attempt was to manage the generalised conclusions and allow variability, to ensure I provide an insight into the phenomenon, rather than conclusions that might be not only too general, but also questionable due to the sample size and representativeness. The experience of living in Hamburg, Germany for several years, and getting to know some of the members of former-Yugoslav community, influenced my perspective on the same community in the Czech Republic, and enabled me to notice some differences, which I might have not noticed if I was not also an outsider in this case. This referred mostly to the level of education and the kind of jobs these people do in Germany, compared to the Czech Republic, that I was able to observe on a smaller sample I met.

Finally, after one of the interviews, I became aware of another potential motif for my interest and pursuing the topic. While the respondent spoke about her experience of the war, coming to Prague thinking it will be only for a couple of months, but then staying for the rest of her life, she uncovered a narrative in which she insisted that we can't look back, there is only way forward because it was a tragedy that we can't make sense of. Reflecting on the interview later, I realised that one of my motives could be to share some of the experiences many of the people had, and to make them matter, so that their sacrifice would make sense, or to get some kind of closure. This reflection helped me challenge myself and apply different lenses when sifting through the data, and analysing it, for example, challenging my motivation to include some parts of the data, or the way I interpreted them.

4. Presentation of material and analysis

The results will be presented across two dimensions. One dimension follows the research questions as conceptualised based on the theory.

- Can a common identity be identified with people coming from the territory of former Yugoslavia, in circumstances where institutional order, and to some extent interaction and individual orders as they were and reflected in symbols and behaviour, do not exist anymore?

- In terms of virtual and nominal identity, and principles of similarity and difference, how do respondents identify themselves and others, within the group of immigrants from former Yugoslavia?

- Moreover, given that the process of identification is often driven by interest (see Jenkins, 2008), what are the possible circumstances of identification in this particular case, and how interest might be driving it?

The second dimension follows the structure across the five main themes defined:

- territory (space);

- art and culture;

- (self)identification;

- experience of emigration;

- symbols and behaviour.

Providing insights into the relevance of biographical approach in her research of high skilled migrants, Gluhlich points out that "moving places may initiate the process of biographical reflections on oneself and one's own positioning in society, since the perception of the self and patterns of action acquired in one set of surroundings does not have to be necessarily transferable to the new places" (Gluhlich, 2017, p. 100). This certainly resonates with the relevance of the three orders Jenkins identifies and how they are intertwined in the process of identification (Jenkins, 2008). Throughout several of the interviews, I had the impression it is the self as it was before moving to the new country that manifests in relation to the community of former Yugoslavs that respondents are part of. For some others, especially younger respondents in the group, in terms of their age or in terms of their

time in the Czech Republic, it was as if they were reminded of and embraced some norms and ways things were done (in Yugoslavia) only after coming to the Czech Republic and becoming part of this community.

4.1. Territory (space)

The theme was identified based on all the variations and complexity that occurred in the way respondents narrated and developed their thoughts when asked where they were from. In relation to theory of social identity, relevance of space is in the fact that identification always comes from a certain point of view, own body in case of individual, and territory or region in case of collective identity (Jenkins, 2008).

Situated within the general questions on their background, move to the Czech Republic and corresponding experience, the answers started to indicate the controversy of the question. Initially simple for most of the respondents, it required additional clarifications and reflections for the most, creating insights into values and what Yugoslavia represented to them, and how it is different from other terms used for the territory respondents referred to as their homeland.

Respondents from capitals of former Yugoslav republics would mention only the name of the city, Belgrade or Zagreb, while respondents from smaller cities, would add also the republic, for example, "Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina", or even just say "Yugoslavia" after the name of the city they were born in.

The pattern that emerged during the interviews was the fact that all respondents used a number of terms to talk about their background. This made the question of space, relevant for the collective identity, rather blurred in terms of naming, the nominal quality, but rather clear when it comes to language, behaviour or shared experience of emigration. If initially they used a precise term, name of the town, former republic or current state, or even Yugoslavia, to state where they are from, throughout the interview, the terms "our territory", "Balkan", "former Yugoslavian countries", "former Yugoslavia", "ex-Yugoslavia", "Yuga", "south-eastern nations", "South Slavs" started to occur in their responses and reflections. I would follow up each of the times the respondent would introduce the new term to speak about their homeland, with the question if and how it differs from the term(s) they used previously.

"To me, Brčko was never Bosnia, it was Yugoslavia, and I don't want to relate to Bosnia, but to Yugoslavia. Now I say I'm from Belgrade, it somehow describes me the best." (Vlad, M, 49)

Asked to elaborate on mention of *roots*, Zlatan narrates:

"The roots are for sure in the Balkans. I mean, for sure they are. I don't know, I have a feeling they are in the whole of the Balkans, not only my home town… I feel good in most of the Balkan countries, wherever I go…" (Zlatan, M, 40)

Are Romania, Bulgaria, Greece also there?

"No, no." (Zlatan, M, 40)

Can you then try to define for me what is *"Balkan"*?

"Countries of former Yugoslavia… Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro. I haven't been to the others. I was briefly in Slovenia, but I can't say I felt my roots there particularly. So, primarily Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro." (Zlatan, M, 40)

In her interview, Ivana states that Balkan is the most comfortable term, because on one hand, *we* (here refers to people from former Yugoslavia) are not insulted when someone tells us we are from the Balkans, and thinks that Greeks or some other Balkan nations might not like being told they are from the Balkans. On the other hand:

"Balkan is safer than the term 'Yugoslavia' because of the attitude some people have towards the other countries of former Yugoslavia. It is safer… It is larger than Yugoslavia, but when you say Balkan somewhere else, like in Czechia, they mean Yugoslavia." (Ivana, F, 45)

The nominal identity here is the same for the respondent as an insider, but also when identified by those outside the group, even if the terms Balkan and Yugoslavia are intermittent.

The challenge of defining the territory and name continued to emerge across the interviews, and didn't always refer to the territory, but to behaviour as well.

"I mean, I come from Bosnia, but the coffees I sell come from all over the place. I still see it as old Yuga, those people I mean…I behave the same. That means I don't

make differences, I speak to everyone the same way. I don't show where I am from
[she means ethnic background]*, and I expect the same from them."* (Enida, F, 55)

To her, Yugoslavia is a territory, and means certain kind of behaviour that she still keeps and expects from others, thus displaying the phantom nature of an identity that is in a place where it should not be, or where it would not be expected, similarly to Vlad who does not want to relate to Bosnia, but only to Yugoslavia.

Merima reflected on the perception of this territory that the Czechs have. When describing her experience, she spoke of something that a couple of other respondents mentioned – Czechs might differentiate Croatia because they travelled and still travel there, but otherwise, the only widely available understanding is the one where they speak of Yugoslavia.

> *"Czechs know about Bosnia, but we had to explain to other foreigners that it is part of former Yugoslavia… Everybody knows Yugoslavia because of that unfortunate war… And the Czechs, I mean, I remember how the taxi driver asked my friend from Croatia why Croatians are the only ones who say they are from Croatia, and everyone else from Yugoslavia, even Slovenians… I think this is because they are trying to be closer to Czechs, Czechs travel there, so it's some kind of instant connection."* (Merima, F, 60)

In one case, a respondent outlined the difference between Croatia and Serbia in the following way, speaking of them as "those societies":

> *"When I say that the standard of living is better, I mean… At some point in time, those societies need to switch the mode to blaming others for their own failures, right? That sense of failure might be bigger in Serbia, and then this narrative of blame has to guide the media and the whole society."* (Neno, M, 40)

The lack of clarity in defining the borders of the territory and its name underlines the lack of institutional order, but only in nominal terms. The country and its territory are not there, but the respondents feel belonging to it nevertheless. This lack of clarity manifests in the discomfort respondents seemed to have felt in many cases when asked to elaborate. The fact they needed to work with so many terms due to the lack of clarity or avoidance, danger that terminology might bring, or lack of the easily identifiable and recognizable borders seems to underline both the phantom character and pain coming from this lack of clarity.

4.2. Art and Culture

The questions in the art and culture segment helped understand how references to music and other forms of art, *documents of memory* in the context of this thesis, create a shared representation of the past. In Jenkins' definition, both space and time are relevant for the process of identification (Jenkins, 2008). In the case of former Yugoslavia, the time does not have a continuity, and there was an abrupt stop to the former social identity in institutional, state terms. However, that doesn't mean it is not there in some form because art and culture, the way *we* do things and how *we* differ from others, can be recognized as an institution in this case.

The element of space is not as difficult in this theme, and respondents did not differentiate between artists from different republics of the former country. Art and culture were thus safe, unlike talking about the territory. Same time, they uncovered how respondents use it to differentiate from others, non-Yugoslavs.

It was the cultural references where nominal identity was easier to establish, as respondents seem to be comfortable with the expression "ex-Yu music", while virtually, art is something they experienced and understood similarly. In the films, performers, quotes they use, as well as in the way they differentiate towards the outside (for example, Czech culture), a standard, behaviour as they think should be, thus the institution, emerges, even if in its phantom form.

> *"I always tell that to foreigners, if you are really interested in understanding the Balkans, Yugoslavia, see Underground, because I think it is a phenomenal piece of art, from the aspect that it fits the mentality, all the variations of mentality in three hours of the movie…anything that is left from Yugoslavia is cramped in that movie."* (Vlad, M, 49)

Talking about this particular film, Vlad also touches on what he thinks was systemic indoctrination in Yugoslavia, specifically, the education system where children learned about geographic advantages of the country, all the resources that it had, and glorious, antifascist history.

"I still believe we were one great nation. Yes, we were indoctrinated, but I still believe we were a great nation." (Vlad, M, 49)

Talking about a specific film, co-production of Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian film industry, that played in cinemas in the Czech Republic in the summer of 2023, Zlatan elaborates:

"I don't think Czechs understand things completely… Like, to them, this film is some coming of age story, but they don't understand things we understand, they are not obvious to them. It's a typical Balkan thing." (Zlatan, M, 40)

It was the topic that emerged with some of the other respondents too, referring to the complexity of the civil war that foreigners don't want to bother to understand. He also thinks that Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav cinematography are better than Czech.

"They have a large production, 50 or 60 films per year, and in the Balkan we have maybe a few, but each one of them is worth seeing. I think we had a mix of cultures, war tragedies, and experiences that are good stories… You know, a film is about a story, and we have stories." (Zlatan, M, 40)

Neno sees it differently.

"I think that any success is about the individual, not the environment. Of course, if a state invests in the culture, it helps, but I don't think films are good or bad depending on where they come from." (Neno, M, 40)

His views, however, changed somewhat when talking about music.

"Well, I don't know if it is relevant, but one thing I realised when I moved… Czech music is actually inferior. I still think, if I had only one choice, I would choose Croatian music." (Neno, M, 40)

"I sometimes play old folk music, and I cry. Really, cry… You wouldn't like to see that." (Alex, M, 55)

What makes you cry?

"It's an irrational and divine experience, haha, I don't know… it's something in us that is planted over generations, and can be painful." (Alex, M, 55)

Ivan differentiated between Yugoslavian and Croatian cinematography, when comparing them to the Czech films. An example of phantom identity that emerged here is that

Yugoslavian films are held as a standard, and he was perceiving them as separate from post-Yugoslavian, Croatian art.

> *"In Czechia… they have good films, Czech cinematography is really good, like the old Yugoslavian films."* (Ivan, M, 41)

What about Croatian films?

> *"Croatia is nothing when it comes to films, Croatia is a catastrophe."* (Ivan, M, 41)

One observation when it comes to music is the difference between urban and non-urban population, mapped by the difference between non-folk and folk music, regardless of other characteristics in the sample. It seems that while there is a geographical difference between urban and non-urban demographic, and specifically when it comes to music, there is no difference between these respondents when it comes to their understanding of this music as Yugoslavian. Nominally, there is a high level of clarity, and again, when speaking about culture, the terminology previously identified as problematic when respondents spoke about territory is not problematic in this case.

> *"The music I like is what I used to listen to when I was young… all the Croatian music, Balkan, ex-Yu rock. Those are some Croatian bands, some Serbian, a couple from Slovenia, and also from Bosnia."* (Ivana, F, 45)

Though this is not necessarily the case where the respondent displayed the phantom identity as such, but is rather an example of how we stay with habits and tastes formed during earlier life stages, some of the respondents referred to specific artists as a standard that is irreplaceable to them. The respondents who were born and grew up in capitals and large cities, regardless whether they came from Serbia, Croatia or Bosnia, mentioned EKV as a band they still listen to and appreciate. The band is from Belgrade and was extremely popular during the 1980s, firstly in Belgrade, but then also in other cities in Yugoslavia. Same time, some of the respondents from smaller cities mentioned Lepa Brena, the greatest pop and folk star in Yugoslavia. The term Balkan emerged when some of the respondents spoke about how Czechs understand *our* music.

> *"Sure, Czechs understand… some of it. To them, our music is essentially trumpets, Bregović, but that's it. They may understand some of it, but only a small part."* (Ivana, F, 45)

This is one example where outsiders seem to wrongly identify or understand the group. But there are other examples too.

> *"I took Czechs to some of our concerts, for example, Partibrejkers, or Rundek… it's something universal, they understood it. They even looked for it later on YouTube and listened even after."* (Slobodan, M, 50)

Discussion about performers, specifically Lepa Brena in this case, uncovered the existence of a beauty norm that people who grew up in former Yugoslavia might still have.

> *"Those idols from childhood… they become ideals, for example, to us, the older generation who knew and liked Lepa Brena, short skirts and long legs are the most important. That woman never had big breasts. And these new generations, they are all about breasts, and that's what they like."* (Vlad, M, 49)

And while beauty norms are known to change through the times, it is worth mentioning that Lepa Brena is a powerful symbol for former Yugoslavs, and that one of her greatest hits proudly exclaims "I am Yugoslavian!". Written and recorded in 1989, the song is said to be a reaction to the pre-war atmosphere in the former Yugoslavia. Controversial back then, when touring the world nowadays, including all the countries and capitals of former Yugoslavia, it is this song that causes the strongest reactions of the audience. Incidentally, it is still a powerful identifier for some non-Yugoslavs as well. A former colleague from Bulgaria likes to make an inside joke when reserving a table for meetups with an international group of former colleagues. He makes a reservation under the name Lepa Brena, which means something only to him and me, while colleagues from the USA and England never bothered to ask who Lepa Brena is.

The difference between urban and rural came up in one interview in somewhat different context, and when the respondent tried to make sense of the experience of war and coming to the Czech Republic as a refugee.

> *"Nobody liked that bloody war, and none of us accepted it, and nobody had nothing from it. You can't explain that to people here, I mean… My neighbour came the other day, her husband was in Doctors without borders, and told a story how he was almost killed, but was spared because he was with somebody with the right name. It happened close to Sarajevo… And how can I explain to them that those are some people who came from some mountains to the city, and that in the cities we lived normally, nobody would do something like that in the city, those are some uneducated*

people who were brought up differently than us in the city. None of us wanted the war." (Enida, F, 55)

Comparing their respective cultures and the Czech culture, talking about their expectations or describing the experience of coming to the Czech Republic, respondents talk about a range of impressions.

"I thought Czechs are sad and poor, that whole Eastern Bloc, it made me feel superior. I still feel superior even though Yugoslavia doesn't exist." (Vlad, M, 49)

Several respondents expressed their admiration for Czech culture. Even if the question was how much they know about Czech culture, they would by default use comparison to their own culture, for some it is Croatian, for some Serbian, and for some Yugoslavian culture. When speaking about their favourite films, performers, or books they read, respondents referred to a similar set of artefacts, the specific names and titles kept recurring. In a way, this represents the shared past, present in the contemporary moment, if not nominally, then certainly virtually.

In Merima's reflection, there is some of the phantom character of identity, as Yugoslavian culture is what she still refers to, even if she is critical of it, comparing it to Czech culture.

"Our culture is specific. I mean our, Yugoslavian culture. That's where I was born and that's what I refer to. We have a much richer history and so many changes that happened in Yugoslavia compared to Czechs who were lucky, so to say, that they didn't have big scandals... and talking about the culture, it will take us some 500 years to reach the Czech level... their reading habits are not dependent on their level of education and in our case, it is proportional, hahaha." (Merima, F, 60)

Similarly to the previous segment on territory, when speaking about their favourite films, performers, or the books they read, the respondents often used a variety of namings as in the previous chapter, however, with less discomfort and struggles to explain what they mean by them. It is almost as if they felt guilty for mentioning Yugoslavia and references to it, unless it was in the context of music and another art. That seemed acceptable. Referencing *ex-Yu* art didn't hurt. A similar opportunity will come up in another context, when discussing the experience of emigration, and how they relate to their social identities in that context.

It is relevant to note that "ex-Yu rock" is a recognized category, for example, searching YouTube, Spotify or other platforms, the rock and pop music from the territory

of former Yugoslavia is universally categorised in that way. Reading comments under those video or audio clips will often create an impression that "such great art will never again be created" or that all such attempts in contemporary art in the former republics are "pathetic", demonstrating the presence of Yugoslavian identity, even if in its phantom form, where the country or institutional order, and nominal identity don't exist.

Merima attempted a definition of Yugoslavian culture.

"I say, principally, that Yugoslavian music is all the music from former Yugoslavia, but I can't say that for some performers who came later, you know, geographical details make someone from Croatia or Bosnia. That's what I mean by 'principally Yugoslavian', because it is in our language." (Merima, F, 60)

4.3. (Self)identification

The process of identification and self-identification was examined across questions about language, similarities and differences, how respondents see others and themselves, finally, how they define some of the categories used during the conversation, such as *we*, *our language*, *mentality*. Some of these notions carried discomfort, especially when respondents reflected on the civil war, and attempted to explain what the fall of Yugoslavia, the fall of institutional order, meant for them, and how they perceived it in terms of (self)identification.

Some notions, on the other hand, carried a lot of comfort, because it seemed as if it solves some of the challenges that the fall of institutional order brought. Here respondents referred to interaction and individual order, the way they (still) identify themselves, and between themselves.

Respondents were asked to state their native language, after being asked which language they use the most. The question revealed similar interchangeability as observed when respondents spoke about territory. Here, they would report that they most often speak *our* language, but when asked about their native language, it revealed that this can be one of the official state languages now, such as Serbian, Croatian, or Bosnian, and some responded that *our* language is Serbo-Croatian. They still continued to use the term *our language* throughout the interview, even if the respondents were Serbs, like me, and knew that in this case *our* does not mean anything else but Serbian language.

What is your native language?

"Serbian. Serbo-Croatian." (Alex, M, 55)

Why did you correct yourself?

"Because it used to be Serbo-Croatian, before Yuga fell apart, I mean, the language cannot change, you can't destroy something... I mean, how can you destroy the language that still exists, that is still spoken? Well, the fact they decided that it is now called differently, you know, I don't give a damn about it. I have sworn to the Yugoslavian army, not the Serbian army. I still don't know the Serbian anthem, and Yugoslavian I know by heart." (Alex, M, 55)

Same time, when asked how he introduces himself to Czechs or other foreigners, Alex said:

"I tell them I am from Serbia. Of course. Because Serbs do it better, haha." (Alex, M, 55)

Similarly, Enida spoke about the values she learned in school, and even after abrupt stop of the country and behaviour that instilled those, she still believes in them, and re-affirmed them during a school reunion in Bosnia recently.

"I can't differentiate between all these countries that came after Yugoslavia, because we truly belonged to Yugoslavia then and we were taught this in school. I remember when we met after I don't know how many years, and our teacher, a Serb, said that he remembers what he taught us to be, and that he knew what was waiting for us after the war started. He couldn't help us because of the names [Muslim, Croatian] *we had, and he couldn't tell us what was going on because we were children, but he could talk to us now."* (Enida, F, 55)

What kind of lesson did he have in mind?

"Well, he brought us up to know that we are all together, and that there are no differences between us." (Enida, F, 55)

Asking her if she resented him for any reason, Enida said she never thought about resenting him, because he was born with one name and she with another, and that the war was a tragedy for all who kept and still keep those values she identified as Yugoslavian - where the name, that is, ethnicity - don't matter.

Asking Merima what language she reads in, her response was *our*. But what language is that?

> *"Bosnian language officially, and unofficially it is Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, then also Slovenian and Macedonian. That is all our language. For example, in Bosnia, the official language is Bosnian, but when children get their certificates in school it says BHS - Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, so it is all three languages which are basically one language."* (Merima, F, 60)

While stating that his language is Serbian, Vlad added:

> *"I felt arrogance so many times when I was abroad… no matter where I was, I felt I was the best, because I was brought up to believe I'm the best* [in Yugoslavia]*, and it sticks."* (Vlad, M, 49)

What he said after is an example of a phantom identity, where even though he learned the truth that is different to what he believes, he still sticks to it.

> *"When I take a look now, and see GDPs or something… I see that Czechoslovakia was in some segments better than Yugoslavia. It only confirms we were indoctrinated… it is not pleasant to face some facts like that in life, like, f***, what to do now, but then you find some way within yourself to justify it, to continue believing… it doesn't even have to be conscious."* (Vlad, M, 49)

Somewhat similar story about expectations from the Czech Republic, and first impressions from the early 1990s, tells Enida.

> *"I didn't have great expectations… I was never in Czechoslovakia and I knew Czechs only from the holidays when the Czechs would come to Croatia and all the boys would go after the Czech girls, so we had ideas about their low moral norms… you know, we always thought they are poor, just like Poles and Hungarians, but then when I came and started to know their culture, I started to respect their art and culture very much. Prague opened its arms to everyone, but only in the beginning… look at Ukrainians… they never changed their mind on us though."* (Enida, F, 55)

Why do you think it's like that?

> *"Because they knew us from coming to Croatia, and they liked us, they always liked us."* (Enida, F, 55)

A very distinct process of identification and self-identification based on language emerged in responses from Zlatan, who said that his response to what language he speaks depends on who is asking.

> *"If I'm talking to Bosnians, I say Bosnian. Otherwise, I say Serbo-Croatian when the company is mixed... You know, if I don't know somebody, and I'm in Croatia, I'll probably say I speak Croatian. If I am among friends, I will say I speak our language... Yeah, my native language is Serbo-Croatian, although I speak Czech better, haha."* (Zlatan, M, 40)

Moreover, I had the opportunity to witness how Zlatan uses the language to identify and self-identify, in an example I found extreme in terms of the identification process. While he was talking about Christmas, he mentioned he celebrates both Catholic and Orthodox Christmas, on December 25th and January 7th, respectively. However, when saying that he celebrates on the 25th with his family, he used one variant of the word for family: *obitelj*. Speaking about celebrating on January 7th, with a different part of the family, he used a different word: *porodica*. They correspond with the term more common in Croatian and Serbian language, respectively. He used both words in one sentence, and wasn't aware of the switch. Lack of institutional clarity was here substituted by relying on interaction, that is, interpersonal process of identification.

The respondents from Croatia all stated their native language is Croatian, and later spoke about *our* language, never using the term Serbo-Croatian like some of the other respondents. Usage of the term Serbo-Croatian was also a display of phantom character of Yugoslav identity, because the language as such is not recognized (anymore), yet, they consider it their mother tongue.

Still, while Neno (from Croatia) spoke about some of the cartoons he remembers from childhood, I asked him if his wife, who grew up in Belgrade, knows those same cartoons.

"Probably. Actually, all the cartoons I watched were synchronised in Serbian, so she probably did… At that time, I didn't notice the difference, I wasn't aware if the cartoon was in Serbian or Croatian." (Neno, M, 40)

One example where a respondent perceived Czech language as richer than her own, was when Kata responded to the question if she misses some expressions in Czech. Unlike the rest of the respondents who missed the ability to express using single words or short expressions to carry a lot of meaning over, Kata saw it the opposite way.

"I have a problem expressing myself, because the Czech language is richer than ours. Like, we say one word only, and you need three to four sentences in Czech." (Kata, F, 42)

You think their language is richer because of that?

"Yes, yes. Because we have one word for things they will describe." (Kata, F, 42)

Another pattern where respondents from Croatia differed was a notion that more often foreigners will know about Croatia because of the coast, especially Czechs who travelled there for decades. However, they also mentioned that they will use the term "former Yugoslavia" to respond where they are from, as this is something *everybody* knows. In the process of identification by others, Yugoslavia is still universally recognized.

"You need a bit of luck when you emigrate. And you have to be brave… look, without bravery, nothing. But I think it comes with age, you need to be a good person, it all comes back in life. If you cheat, first, there is the whole community here… you cheat on someone, they can think we are all like that. And that's it. For example, in Germany, some Bosnian cheated on someone, and they blamed all of us, because we are one to them. To them we are all Yugoslavia. OK, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia… but we are Yugoslavia." (Ivan, M, 41)

Yugoslavia is recognized from the outside in this example, but the respondent saw it the same way, and felt responsible for all of Yugoslavs, no matter Yugoslavia does not exist institutionally, Yugoslavians are recognized as such from the outside, and that is enough.

What do you think about that?

> *"I don't know... I mean, I don't have anything against it, it is how it is."* (Ivan, M, 41)

My impression was that he is not comfortable with it, so I continued by saying that I find it interesting that he feels responsible even for me, and has to be careful how he behaves.

> *"That's how things function everywhere in the world, if you want work or anything. I'll recommend you, you do something wrong. You closed the doors not only to yourself and me, but also those who are coming after us. They want to make something of their lives, and you close the doors for them."* (Ivan, M, 41)

Phantom identity occurred also when respondents changed their perspective on the language depending on the questions, again, demonstrating how institutional and individual order might intertwine, or contradict in the phantom form. Asked about the language he uses the most, Slobodan answers:

> *"Czech."* (Slobodan, M, 50)

What language do you think in?

> *"Serbian."* (Slobodan, M, 50)

What is your native language?

> *"Serbo-Croatian."* (Slobodan, M, 50)

When asked if there are terms in their native language that they wish to translate, participants often mentioned swear words, but some also pointed out specific elements of the language where they believed their native languages were richer.

> *"There are no augmentatives in Czech language... but you can't really find it in English in that shape, so...it's not like some critique of Czech, rather it points out the richness of Croatian... and Serbian."* (Neno, M, 40)

A pattern that came up in almost all cases, was when the respondents introduced the word *mentality* in their answers, and used this word to describe something that is different from the Czechs, and something that can be a barrier for Czechs to understand the artefacts respondents spoke about. It seemed as the main category the respondents used in the process of (self)identification, and based it very much on interaction order, and behaviour.

"The main difference between our territory and Czech is… hm… openness, friendliness… I don't know, we're louder, we gesticulate with hands, somehow… we easily start communicating, and it is probably more alive and personal. I don't know, maybe we can call it southern or south-eastern mentality or character, it might mean we have some connections in those main values." (Ivana, F, 45)

Ivana also stated that though she expected similarities in the Czech Republic due to a similar (communist) past, and looked forward to atheist culture compared to strong presence of Catholicism in Croatia, she was surprised that it wasn't at all as good as she hoped for, and it turned out *mentality* very much differed.

"I would recommend Prague to everyone, because it is similar to us, because we are Slavs… but we are also from the Balkan, haha. We are much more open, and more friendly than they are, even if I have close friends who are Czech… There is some common Slavic mentality that helped." (Merima, F, 60)

However, Merima uncovered one experience that demonstrated how the way she self-identified was (not) accepted in the Czech Republic. It came up when she spoke about the experience of coming to the Czech Republic and her expectations.

"You know, I forgot one detail. I expected something in the beginning, but this changed. I am Muslim, and at the time I arrived in Prague, I wore a hijab, I used to cover my head. And we chose Czechia because it is atheist, and it means people don't care about religion. And maybe it was like that in the first couple of years, but then, when we fulfilled all the requirements to get the long-term visa, we did everything needed, but we were denied. [silence] *It was like a cold shower, because everyone told us that our case is strong."* (Merima, F, 60)

What did you think, why didn't you get the visa?

"Because of my hijab." (Merima, F, 60)

OK.

"It sounds impossible, but only when I took it off, on our third attempt, we got approved. I know it is surprising, but maybe after some time, it is not surprising anymore. There are some filters where you simply don't pass." (Merima, F, 60)

Do you think the same would happen in a different country of former Yugoslavia, outside of Bosnia?

> *"Absolutely not. Because no matter what we are like, we are much more tolerant in every way, and for us differences are a lifestyle. Czechs were isolated and now they blame communism a lot, and it didn't even last that long, but to them it's an excuse for everything. And we, from the first Yugoslavia we were oriented at each other, and complementing each other. Nobody can convince me that the war happened because of differences. Because even today, I can go with a hijab wherever I want in former Yugoslavia…"* (Merima, F, 60)

Vlad elaborated on differences between former Yugoslavs and Czechs in the following way:

> *"The point is that Yugoslav schizophrenia and the melodrama of the south Slavs is completely different and does not exist in Czechs who are also Slavs. Maybe it's because of geography, those southern nations, like Italians, Spaniards… on the other hand, if it's not that, it must be some fatalism from the Byzant influence that we have and they don't… I mean, maybe we are the most energetic of all the Slavs. Maybe Czechs are more authentic Slavs, they kept the mildness, and that's a good characteristic of Slavs. I think they can understand some subtle emotions, but at the same time, they are not brave enough to show it. We can do that, and we don't control it, and it is not good, because it goes out of hand and ends with a war, for example. Temperament is one of the biggest differences between us… Sometimes they annoy me because they are so slow and soft…"* (Vlad, M, 49)

Enida reflected throughout the interview on different identification by the others, in some cases she liked it, and in some not.

> *"When I go to Banja Luka now and meet some of those people who came from somewhere else and settled in our homes… pffff… my hairdresser for example, and then she tells me how it is good for them when we, foreigners, come during the summer. Because then she has work, and normally she doesn't… So, I am a foreigner in my own home, and she is a local, after she came yesterday and…* [starts laughing]*"* (Enida, F, 55)

However, when talking about how other people identify her in the Czech Republic, she is much more comfortable, as it seems to be the identity that she herself recognizes.

"I don't explain much where I come from, and many times they call my shop 'Yugoslavian shop', and I am Yugoslavian to them, at least to older people, that's how they see us." (Enida, F, 55)

Older respondents refer to Yugoslavian values, and Yugoslavia, mentioning what they learned in school and what they believed. Some mention how they "woke up" later, but did not give up on the way they feel about being Yugoslavs. Younger ones don't have this reference, to them, *our* is about language, behaviour, *mentality*. It is almost as if the phantom identity is phantom, thus painful or out of place, only to those who experienced more of the Yugoslavian institutions, such as the schooling system and military, while for the younger respondents, it is rather about similarities that are practical, comfortable, given that they share same experience – besides the same language and mentality – with people from former Yugoslavia. The following segment will explore more into this specific experience.

"Well… I think that at one point I started to accept my Balkan identity, it seemed it was somewhere inside me, locked for a long time, and then I opened it and discovered there are many things that deserve to be discovered, and that… well, what I was saying, that Balkan people have similar experience, unfortunately it was the war and we all ended up in a different state, and it is something so strong... maybe that is the reason why we are connected here more than if we were in the Balkan and the thing that attracts me… I mean, we don't talk about the war and such, but we talk about what is happening now, and it seems to be a reason... seems to be very strong." (Zlatan, M, 40)

When explaining how he discovered his "locked", Balkan identity, Zlatan used a Czech term *třináctá komnata,* symbolising an identity that was not only locked, but even now is difficult to describe and capture outside of process of identification that happens on individual, and even more so, interactional order level.

4.4. Experience of emigration

Each of the respondents had a slightly different path that brought them to the Czech Republic, moreover, their arrivals were over a long period of time, from the beginning of 1990s, all the way to 2019, a year when the "youngest" respondent arrived. The reasons for their arrival to the Czech Republic differ. Some came here avoiding the war

in Yugoslavia or escaping it, later generations of migrants came mostly for economic or career reasons. The first arrivers in the respondent group were refugees, and those arriving towards the end of the 1990s and later are migrants.

The stories they told when I asked about describing the experience of changing countries, or if they can imagine what their lives would be like if they stayed, uncovered a lot of open questions they still have, and a space in which the phantom identity, as out-of-place, and often as painful as it can be, emerged.

> *"I used to be sad because I left, and used to think it was the wrong decision. And now? Now I don't even think about it, I accepted it. You know, I was a proud Yugoslav, volunteering to fix the country, but they didn't take me, haha… I was, you know, idealist, I believed in better future, wanted to work on it, I believed in discovering cosmos, social justice, what not all, and now I'm a grumpy old man, it doesn't matter where I am anymore, I don't have any illusions anymore."*
> (Alex, M, 55)

Asked if he can identify the moment when he became disillusioned, Alex answered that it was a process, but it started the moment Yugoslavia fell apart.

The second most important characteristic of their stories are the central roles people from *our* countries played, and still play, mostly in a positive sense. In this segment I could learn how the interaction order – identification that happens between the individuals, and to some extent individual order – how they self-identify through similarities and differences to the others around them, work in the specific context of emigration.

Moreover, while discovering this, I kept wondering if this is something specific to this community, or if it can be observed in any immigrant community.

A constant that kept coming up in conversations despite the fact their background, motivation, age, and time of arrival differ, was having or finding someone *our*s. Jenkins states that "individuals will self-categorise themselves differently according to the contexts in which they find themselves and the contingencies with which they are faced" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 112). It was always someone *ours* helping them to make the first steps in a new country.

> *"When changing countries, it is important… I think it is important to know at least one person that you can count on, and, you know, call."* (Ivana, F, 45)

Is it important who that person is?

> *"[Thinks for a moment] I suppose it would be good if I knew one of us, someone who speaks the same or similar language. We have something in common from the beginning. In most of the cases there is the same mentality... hm... which is different from the Czech mentality...* [thinks] *It is simply easier, the feeling you are in the same situation."* (Ivana, F, 45)

> *"We have each other. In any foreign country, it is important to have friends and build something... those people and those relationships. Alone, a person cannot survive anything. You have to have friends who will help, if you want to move a washing machine, someone has to help, you want to celebrate with someone, you can't only work and go home."* (Ivan, M, 41)

So, you'd rather ask one of us to help move a washing machine, or it's easier because you hang out with *our* people?

> *"I'd ask our people, but... for sure, our people are more willing to help. We are used to doing that also back home, even if things have gotten worse now, some of those values are still there. Like family values... It is different here when it comes to families. I mean, there are our people who also don't care, but our people are different. Us and Czechs are still a different story."* (Ivan, M, 41)

> *"I remember the culture shock, getting used to things... I don't know, I was angry with Czechs, I didn't like them in the beginning at all... they were terrified after the occupation and didn't trust foreigners."* (Alex, M, 55)

Can you tell me an example of culture shock?

> *"I mean, they yell, they don't fight. So many times, I took off my watch thinking there would be a fist fight, but nothing, they only yelled. We do it the other way around."* (Alex, M, 55)

> *"They will take more than they need if something is free. If someone is offering bonbons, I will take one. And they will take one for themselves, one for the kids, one for the grandma, one for the aunt, who knows who else, just because it is for free."* (Kata, F, 42)

And we don't do that?

"We do, but it is more intensive here." (Kata, F, 42)

"I didn't have culture shock, I mean, it all seemed familiar. Like… it looked like a better, nicer version of Zagreb, plus I prepared, I learned the language a bit. I felt accepted, there is nothing the Czechs did wrong to me." (Neno, M, 40)

"I didn't understand what I was about to do… I became aware of what I did only when I arrived in Prague, like, I thought, OK, I'm going, that's nothing special. And then I was here, and I noticed a huge difference. It was silent. And I realised I needed that silence to hear myself instead of politics, protests and all that was happening at home." (Slobodan, M, 50)

Identification is an active agent, it is never without the interest (Jenkins, 2008), and in this context, the role of *our* people can be understood as help, critical connection, that many respondents identified in their stories.

Guhlich summarises the insights into the role of family and social networks connected to the country of origin, pointing out that these networks were not a capital per se, but "presented a potential resource which might be transformed into social capital in the specific context" (Guhlich, 2017, p. 82). She argues that these social networks are very important when it comes to finding work in the low skilled and informal sector, which was the case for several respondents of this study as well.

These social networks connected to the country of origin were less relevant in this context for highly skilled migrants, however, regardless of the profile of the respondents, the material collected unanimously points out importance in other segments, for example, finding doctors, hairdressers, or translating in different contexts, from formal appointments in state institutions, to restaurant orders. In this case, the connections with *our* people were essential, and played the key role for almost all of the respondents.

It is necessary to point out the level of understanding that respondents claim cannot be found outside *our* people, regardless of their ethnic or religious background. A drastic example of identification that is "often most consequential as the categorisation of others, rather than as self-identification" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 15) came up when two respondents described how they felt when the war in Ukraine started. Their stories were similar in a way that they looked for company of *our* people, because they felt that nobody else can

understand how they feel, and the impact news has on their own war trauma carried over from Yugoslavian experience.

Asking Peter Korchnak about insights into the relationship between Yugoslavs who live abroad and Yugoslavs who still live in one of the post-Yugoslav countries, he mentioned something that sounded almost as re-discovering former identity, or finding a hidden identity.

"I did an episode about two schools under one roof, people who are Croats and Bosnians are told that there will always be conflict. It is politicians telling them they can't live together with people who are different from them. As soon as they leave for New York, or London, or Prague for that matter, they see this diversity, living side by side just fine. They go abroad and find these brothers and sisters, Balkan, ex-Yugoslav, however you call it, and they see it's all good. They all become more Yugoslav abroad than they were somehow allowed to be in their own country." (Peter Korchnak, author of the podcast Remembering Yugoslavia)

He mentioned that people told him listening to his podcast opens for them a possibility to feel a certain way, that they have a certain heritage, Yugoslav, and that there are others like them. It is almost like a safe space where they get some kind of *imaginary permission* to explore that part of their heritage.

The only example where a respondent did not seek the company of *our* people was Kata, who explained it by a conscious decision.

"I am in touch with our people, we know each other, if someone needs something, OK. If I need something, OK. But spending time together, no. I came to the other state, I accepted this culture, my children are Czech and that's it. I am not a member of any group of Croatians, Bosnians, Serbs, absolutely not. They know me, but hang out or go to our concerts… no." (Kata, F, 42)

It is interesting to note that she responded to my inquiry for interview volunteers in such a group on Facebook that she claimed she is not and would not be a member of. Continuing later through what I recognized as her process of self-identification, she mentioned that she speaks exclusively in Czech, but that her children speak Croatian too. A bit later, she offered an insight into possible reasons for such a decision, and why she insisted on spending time with Czechs and staying away from *our* people.

"It is not such a big no for me, but… I left once so why, why to stay in that? It's a step back, I had enough listening to it all in Croatia, and I don't have to do it here. I don't know any of our people who hang out with Czechs." (Kata, F, 42)

Really?

"Our communities, our company, our restaurants, what not all. OK, I go to buy what I need, I know them all. But no." (Kata, F, 42)

She was very insistent on ignoring or denying any kind of *our* identity, regardless if Croatian, or Yugoslavian. Thus, there were no traces of phantomness, or even nostalgia. Still, later in the interview, comparing the Czechs and own culture (Yugoslavian, as she defined it), she came with a few strong opinions where she identified as someone who differs from Czechs, and who sees *our* people and habits in a positive way.

4.5.   Symbols and behaviour

The interview prompts relevant in this segment included questions on vernacular culture, such as holidays they celebrate, jokes, topics they speak about or not depending on the company they are in, and what they do in their free time. Within the sample, I was able to identify the elements members of the group understood similarly to each other and different to host country culture, even if this was not necessarily the norm.

"I don't know if I would recommend partisan movies to Czechs, I mean… red star, I don't think they like it as much. And yes, I like it, everyone from Yugoslavia should like it and be grateful to it, because, well… I think that partisans did a lot for us all, and we should be grateful." (Alex, M, 55)

Do you think we are as grateful as we should be?

"I don't know… maybe. I am. Maybe some other people… But not many." (Alex, M, 55)

The question about vernacular culture revealed that May 1st is, next to Christmas, the one holiday most respondents report as their favourite, regardless of their age. Even if I expected that older respondents might mention the holidays that were widely celebrated in Yugoslavia, such as May 1st and that the younger ones, who lived very shortly in Yugoslavia during their childhood, would rather refer to Christmas, it didn't happen. The difference between different ages was rather in their explanations, that indicated

the differences in norms, and maybe traces of phantom identity. Symbolism is particularly strong in these responses.

> *"I like May 1st, because it has something to do with those partisan values, and you know, the weather is nice on May 1st."* (Alex, M, 55)

> *"Maybe I can single out the labour day, because I know where it comes from and why this is important..."* (Neno, M, 40)

It seemed that respondents noticed a difference between how Christmas is celebrated in the Czech Republic, and how it is celebrated at home. It uncovered some of the shared norms across the sample, and how they differ from the local culture. It is through these practices that their collective (self)identification can be observed.

> *"I celebrate Christmas with my family, but here also other Christmas or both Easter celebrations with friends from Balkan... but also some celebrations with Czechs... Ours are better."* (Ivana, F, 45)

> *"I celebrate all of our holidays, Bayrams, Christmases, Easter, all of it, because we have friends here who are Muslim, friends who are Orthodox or Catholic... especially our people, we are trying to keep together and close. We only have each other. That's the thing."* (Ivan, M, 41)

> *"Maybe my friends from the Balkans celebrate Christmas differently... like, it is more about family and some traditions, than about gifts and who will give a better present, if they will like iPhone 13 or 14..."* (Zlatan, M, 40)

> *"I like the kids to be with me for Christmas, we are then at my mom's in Croatia, so we celebrate traditionally. Decorating the tree, food, spending time together, simply peace. Cookies, talking. Unfortunately, that spirit of Christmas in Czech families looks differently because of many atheist families. They celebrate because it's celebrated, and Christmas is about presents. Well it is not. I stick to my own habits."* (Kata, F, 42)

Even if your friends are Czech and you are in the Czech Republic, you kept this?

> *"Yes, because religion is something else."* (Kata, F, 42)

Paradoxes (at least based on what she was reporting) in Kata's interview continued in the way she spoke about other types of behaviour. It seemed that she performed a self-

identification process based on certain elements of behaviour and symbols, but to do so, she did not need the presence of people who might be identifying her (and themselves) in a similar way. The lack of institutional and interaction order didn't mean individual order did not use differentiation to the Czech culture for (self)identification, thus showing a silhouette of the phantom identity in a place where not only it shouldn't be, but where she didn't want it.

> *"I don't have time to listen to our people complaining. It's always hard… ok, it is hard, so what? It bothers me. Czechs don't care, they do their thing, I do my thing, nobody is lamenting how hard it is."* (Kata, F, 42)

Is that a difference in mentality?

> *"Yes… and also, us, women of former Yugoslavia, we know things… nails and things… but naturally. And here, OK, they all have their nails done, all of them, I never saw one without it. We will spend more money on clothes to show brands. Here, all is second hand."* (Kata, F, 42)

Ivan corroborated Kata's insight about the complaining nature of *our* people, to some extent, however, he saw it from the opposite angle.

> *"When we meet, we generally speak about life, work… you complain and such. You have to have someone to listen to you. That's it. Not to comfort you, but just to listen. It is different when you speak in our language than in foreign language. That's it. When you need to talk to someone, in my opinion, we understand each other better."* (Ivan, M, 41)

Following up on this conversation, I wanted to check if it is about the language or values or something else, so I replayed back his response, saying that in that case, I would understand him better than some Czech person, even if we have not met before.

> *"We are foreigners here. We always will be. That's what connects us."* (Ivan, M, 41)

Still, reflecting on a specific experience from Scotland where he lived before coming to the Czech Republic, his testimony discovered that not all foreigners are the same.

> *"We had a return ticket, but have taken our daughter to a doctor for a second opinion. The doctors there… I mean, the whole of Britain, doctors are not very good,*

and speaking of Scotland, we came across some Indians, so we decided to go for a second opinion." (Ivan, M, 41)

Talking about the way they spend free time uncovered one of the positives they see in the Czech Republic, something they prefer to the way it is done in their former countries. This was a single example where they questioned their old norms or habits, and confirmed a positive change due to the influence that the Czech society and lifestyle had on them.

"A good thing about Czechia is that people are somehow more connected with nature, you just go to nature and you walk, and that's it." (Vlad, M, 49)

"There is a certain energy here that I would miss if I went back… I used to think that you spend weekends by staying home and watching TV, and then I moved, and I thought that there was some event when I saw Czechs with skis… But I quickly realised that it wasn't some event, it was the way they live." (Neno, M, 40)

The only topic that is not discussed, as reported by eight out of ten respondents, is politics, more specifically, reflection on the war in former Yugoslavia, and post-war politics in resulting independent countries.

"When people are normal, you can talk about everything, we can have a different opinion, but it doesn't matter. Of course, we will not talk about the partisans, and ustaša and četnik all the time, it makes no sense. It's not who we are… it's a waste of time. What happened happened, we didn't do any of it, we can only look at today and the future." (Ivan, M, 41)

"We don't talk about… Srebrenica, or such things. It would cause some kind of clash for sure if we did… It is not worth it, we will not change anything, so there is no need… even with friends it can cause problems… There is probably some egoism in it, why would I cause such conflicts, I will not have anybody to hang out with then." (Vlad, M, 49)

"With people I don't know well, the best is to avoid the topic of war… generally, better avoid it. We could have a fight [smiles sadly] *… I don't think it would have some long-term impact, no tragedy, but you know… why would we? It is more important to be able to confide in each other, and talk about daily lives, criticise others… speak about things we enjoy when we are together."* (Ivana, F, 45)

"With people I hang out with, politics is definitely not the topic, I wouldn't spend time with such people." (Enida, F, 55)

What do you think would happen if you did talk about politics?

"Well, let me tell you. We probably wouldn't have the same opinion, and then we would talk about something that we survived, and I don't want to talk about what was. Because I was born in Bosnia, and they are from Serbia, and we would lose our friendship. If we are friends, let's stay friends. I have friends from childhood who are in Austria now, they are Croatian, but they have the same opinion as me, so we can talk." (Enida, F, 55)

For her, it is almost as if friendships from the time from before the war have a different quality, or different set of values they are built on, and she seems to treat them differently. It is not necessarily about the length of friendship, because she spends more time with her newer friends, and shares a specific experience of living in the Czech Republic. She seems to identify differently in the presence of one group of friends than in the other, and the differentiator is growing up together and being certain they share and identify in the same way, even if institutionally, or in the term of norms and behaviour, that identity is not there anymore.

Some of these reports serve as a testimony to the fact that "groups distinguish themselves from, and discriminate against other groups, in order to promote their own positive social evaluation and collective self-esteem" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 112). In this context, the immigrants from former Yugoslavia are not exempt from cognitive simplifying and exaggerating the similarities between each other, and differences to those around them.

"I have good friends here in Prague, Czechs, and sometimes I have a feeling they don't open up to me as much as they could, after all the years of friendship, and maybe… maybe they don't understand me either as much as Balkan people do, even though I started building those Balkan friendships much later… I now prefer their company to the company of Czechs." (Zlatan, M, 40)

"I can't say these people are different, but their temperament is different. Czechs are very peaceful people, and if I celebrate New Year's with them, I would be sleeping

at midnight. And with our people, it is completely different, we stay past 2 AM, we eat and drink…" (Enida, F, 55)

One respondent was elaborate on symbols, and the comparison between Czech and (in this case) Serbian society, outlining his denial of Serbian values, and probably underlying why he identifies as a Yugoslav, no matter if that is the norm or not.

"I listen to a Czech podcast… they are myth busters of a sort, and I think the Czechs have a similar path like many other nations. But there are some differences… There was a series about a poet who believed in pan-slavic movement, and went to Russia and found there something completely different than expected, so he came back and realised those were some illusions of the youth. But we… our examples of such idealists, they are different, they never got so far to realise those were illusions… I listen and explore trying to understand who we are, citizens of Serbia and our Serbian society." (Slobodan, M, 50)

He continued by answering the question if he can imagine how his life would look like if he stayed in Serbia, and in a way tells that leaving Serbia was for him a way to keep continuity of his Yugoslav identity.

"I tried to imagine that many times (his expression is melancholic) … It is very difficult to imagine, even traumatic, haha. Friends who stayed there… generally, I think it won't end well… I wouldn't… I mean, I know myself, I couldn't agree to it all over there, so I could never succeed in that system." (Slobodan, M, 50)

A more dramatic testimony on what she thinks would be if Yugoslavia didn't fall apart came from Enida.

"If I stayed there, things would be different. Back then, I had a boyfriend, and it was serious. He was from Sarajevo, I was from Banja Luka. When the war started, we both went our own way, and I suffered for years. I thought that it will get better, and that things will go back to old, but of course, there is no going back, what can I say… [she got very sad] I mean, if I didn't have to leave, I would have a family of my own, it is different when you all of a sudden come to a foreign country and you don't understand the language… Maybe I met some men, also our men, but I just had

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some blockage, maybe I was too picky… I don't know. It was simply not in the stars."
(Enida, F, 55)

She sounded almost as if some kind of norm stayed behind her, and she could not adapt or adopt the new norm, and stayed with the old, phantom one, even if it was not necessarily bringing her what was important to her or what she considered good for herself.

5. Summary and implications

The research conducted and results presented offer an insight into a relatively small community of people who came from former Yugoslavia to the Czech Republic, over the period of thirty years. The first members of the community and participants in the research came in the beginning of 1990s, mostly as a consequence of the civil war. Those who arrived in more recent years were motivated rather by economic reasons.

The key question the research attempted to answer is if there is a common, Yugoslav identity these people express and relate to. The specific circumstance of this question is the fact that Yugoslavia as an element of institutional order, together with many of its norms, behaviours and implications on interaction and individual orders (Jenkins, 2008) does not exist, at least nominally. This makes the existence of the hypothesised identity phantom, present where it shouldn't be and/or inflicting discomfort, even pain. The material collected also offers insights in circumstances that drive the process of identification within this community.

Yugoslavia represented a collective social identity, and served as the means for identification. When the country and its institutions were gone, the process of identification via the same norms continued as if they were there, because "we think and behave as if they are" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 159). It might be nominally different, but virtually still the same – it is not Yugoslavia anymore, but people behave the same as when it was, in both mundane situations when for example looking for help with the move, or in the way they think of art that is *theirs*. "Identity is produced and reproduced both in discourse – narrative, rhetoric and representation – and in the practical, often very material, consequences of identification." (Jenkins, 2008, p. 201).]

Phantom identity, as the sense of something that they had, then lost in a (tragic) accident, and can't make peace with, occurred across the sample, more prominently with older respondents. Several of them identified as Yugoslavs, and reported that they still behave the same, believe in the same values, and insist on the fact that the country falling apart "did not change anything in the way we are with each other" (Enida, F, 55). This might be related to the fact that they lived in Yugoslavia for a longer time, and thus had more experience and stronger norms originating in the former country.

For younger respondents, it seems that they almost fall back to some of the norms and behaviours that they might have abandoned identifying as per the more recent

institutional orders of their respective countries, mainly Serbia and Croatia. It is possible that they never had them, meaning they adopted them after coming to the Czech Republic and becoming part of the community. In this case, they nevertheless had something in common that they could resource to in the process of (self)identification. Their focus was on the norms and behaviours that connect them to the community, for example, when they celebrate holidays that are not in their tradition, or keep close friendships with people of different ethnic backgrounds. These behaviours would not be encouraged in their home, nationalist countries. Here, the phantom character of the identity shows in behaviours that normally would not be there. It is Yugoslavian because this is the label respondents use to identify each other in the widest sense. At the same time, they use many different terms to express the way in which they are the same, although again, they should not be.

The context and experience of emigration seems to be the single most important qualifier of connections and experience of shared, Yugoslavian identity, within this community. Even if the participants in this research never visited home towns or countries of origin of other former Yugoslavs, they feel they belong together, they rely on each other, and look for understanding and support within this community, even in cases where they lived in the Czech Republic for a larger part of their lives. In their countries of origin, the question of *Yugonostalgia* and qualifications of this term from one to the other former republic of Yugoslavia, or from one to the other segment of society, seems to be highly relevant, and is the subject discussed in the media. However, qualifying *Yugonostalgia* does not seem to be the topic in the immigrant community participants belong to. They are not necessarily nostalgic. They are rather adopting certain norms and behaviours that are relevant in the context of emigration. For them, the only topic that is not discussed is the topic of the 1990s civil war. All but two respondents raised this as the one topic they don't talk about, because it could bring out fights, and break connections between them. Thus, they rather leave it and recommend not talking about it.

This underlines the circumstances of these connections, the interest that drives it (Jenkins, 2008). The fact they speak the same language, have the same *mentality* (a term several respondents repeatedly used), know the same music, read the same books, or watch(ed) the same movies, creates the kind of support network that is beyond what they seem to expect from the local population or other foreigners, and is more valuable to them than having discussion about topics that will bring out the differences. It is a fact that the topic of war is discussed, but only within the subgroups where community members are

of the same ethnicity. In this way, the uniting character of Yugoslavia originating to its beginnings in the 20th century seems to live on. Same time, the youngest Yugoslavs learned a good lesson from experiencing the war and they seem to know how to protect and leverage what makes them similar, rather than insist on differences in the process of identification. Yugoslav identity, even if phantom in institutional terms, is still a common identity and moreover, a non-conflicting one. One might argue that this practicality of Yugoslav identity might evoke it on purpose, thus not only spontaneously emerging from an institutional void. Similarly, it seems that the Yugoslav (phantom) identity is mixed with the local Balkan identity, which is still alive and institutionalised. The fact that *we* can mean both ex-Yugoslavs and people with Slavic Balkan roots seems almost as an attempt to find ways to embrace the common identity, without the problematic, painful, mention of Yugoslavia.

I haven't found the definitive answer if post-Yugoslav community in the Czech Republic differs from other immigrant communities. Much of the understanding and especially behaviour seems familiar to what I observed or heard about from friends from other immigrant communities in the Czech Republic, Germany, and Canada. However, one exception and differentiator that might offer the opportunity for further research is that this immigrant community (or a part of it) found itself somewhere else because of the war. They started coming as refugees, which means they share a traumatic experience in combination with immigration, which might differ from the process of identification in case of other reasons for immigration, economic, or academic, for example. This qualifier seems to impact the process of (self)identification a lot, and in a way that respondents were usually aware (even if they don't admit it directly) of the ethnicity of their friends, explaining to me that they are friends "despite what happened". On the other hand, this is yet another element of the phantomness, being in a place where it shouldn't, and being a constant reminder of what was there before.

Looking into *documents of memory*, in this case, specific artefacts respondents referred to or mentioned during the interviews across prompts related to music, films, books, and vernacular culture, worked for respondents in a way that it made them identify as members of the community of former Yugoslavs, and drove their process of identification mainly through differentiating towards the local population or other foreigners.

For a few respondents, it was important to mention that they are by no means *Yugonostalgics*, though they seek the company of other former Yugoslavs. They recognize

Yugoslavia in the process of (self)identification, but are denying being nostalgic about it. Potentially this is another example of the existence of Yugoslav phantom identity. While the term *Yugonostalgia* might be rather a political term and carries specific political and historical connotation (see Tomić, 2014), respondents are still referring to the space of Yugoslavia in one or the other way, when talking about something that is *our*, that is different from post-Yugoslavian, and something they seek to belong to in the Czech Republic. *Our* includes and is more than any single ethnic (Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian) qualifier, and is the preferred term within the interviewed sample.

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Appendix

– *Questionnaire*

1. **Biographic segment / *"grand-tour"***
   1.1. Where were you born?
   1.2. How long have you been in the Czech Republic?
   1.3. Where did you live before coming to the Czech Republic?
   1.4. Did you come alone? Who do you live with?
   1.5. How would you describe the event of changing countries to someone who never experienced it?

2. **Cultural prompts segment**
   2.1. Films
      2.1.1. What was the last film you watched? How did you choose it? What about films in your first language? Are there films from the former Yugoslavia being shown in the Czech Republic? Who did you see it with? Do your friends see them? What do you/they think about these films? Would you recommend them to your Czech neighbours? Friends? What would they think about them?
      2.1.2. Do you remember some films from your childhood? What do you remember about it? When did you see it the last time? Do you think your friends know it? What about your family? Would you recommend it to your Czech neighbours? Friends? How would they like it?
   2.2. Music
      2.2.1. What about music? Where do you listen to music? When? Do you go to concerts? Are there musicians from the former Yugoslavia playing concerts in the Czech Republic? Did you see some of them? Who did you go with? Did they like it? Is that the kind of music your friends listen to?
      2.2.2. What about music from when you were kid? What about music your parents listened to? What do you like about it? Do you still listen to it? Do you know someone else who does? Would you play it to a foreigner?

2.2.3. Who is your favourite performer? Do you know other people who like them too? Do you think your friends from former Yugoslavia / your Czech / foreigner friends would also like it? When was the first time you heard this performer?

2.3. Books

2.3.1. Do you remember the first book you read? Or any other books you read when growing up? How did you hear about it? Do you think your friends read the same books?

2.3.2. Can you tell me what are your favourite books? Which language did you read them in? How did you come across them?

2.4. Vernacular culture: Jokes, Games, celebrations

2.4.1. What is your favourite holiday during the year? Who do you celebrate with? How do you celebrate it? What is it about that holiday that you like? Do you invite your Czech friends? What about neighbours? What about your friends from former Yugoslavia? Who do you think (would) enjoy it the most?

2.4.2. Is there some expression you miss in Czech? Did you try to translate it? Why? How did you translate it? Did your Czech friends understand it? What about your friends from former Yugoslavia?

3. Identity prompts segment

3.1. What language do you use the most? What language do you read in? Think in?

3.2. What is your native language?

3.3. How do you introduce yourself to a Czech?

3.4. How do you introduce yourself to some other foreigner?

3.5. How do they react? What do you think their understanding is?

3.6. Do you know much about Czech history or culture? Where did you learn about that? What do you like about it? Or don't like? Can you compare your own culture with Czech?

4. Economics and other practical prompts segment

4.1. How did you come to the Czech Republic? What did you expect to do or find here? What actually happened? What about your friends?

4.2.   What do you do for a living? What about your friends?

4.3.   What would life look like if you didn't move to the Czech Republic?

4.4.   How do you spend your free time? Would you rather do something else instead?

4.5.   What are the typical topics you talk about with your friends? Are there things you don't talk about? What would happen if you did?

4.6.   Which passport(s) do you have? Do you vote (in that country)? Do you have friends from the former Yugoslavia who do/don't?

– *Photo material (the author is the person who took the pictures)*

Photographs from the theatre play "Where is my identity?", by a former Yugoslav living in Prague.

Photograph of Petar Popović at his book presentation in the Prague club Lastavica.