Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building

War on Architecture:

Scenographic strategies in tracing post-war home in the former SFR Yugoslavia

Nevena Mrdjenović

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Technology Sydney

2017

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I declare that this thesis is my own work and is the result of my research candidature at University of Technology Sydney.

I certify that to the best of my knowledge the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree, except for this doctoral degree.

I also certify that this thesis has been written by me.
Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged.
In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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I dedicate my thesis to this 'home'… оцу и мајци.

ABSTRACT

This research investigates domestic spaces in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia following their destruction and abandonment in the wars of the 1990s. It establishes case studies and frameworks for examining sites according to the significance of ‘home’ - before, during and after acts of violence. The research questions the aims, meanings and consequences of the phenomenon of violence against domestic space, in the light of widespread ethnic, cultural and political violence across the globe.

The study is distinctive in terms of positioning domestic space as a direct casualty and witness of violence. Its scenographic perspective, here applied inversely, frames war-torn domestic interiors as abandoned mise-en-scenes inscribed with layers of spatial narratives, traces of time, and tactile remnants of past violence and trauma.

The study is established on theoretical framing, historical contexts, field trips and an artistic component. Analytical grounds are discovered in phenomenological theories of ‘home’, scenographic and artistic influences, and the ideas of scholars and artists from social, historical, architectural, spatial and psychological studies.

The artistic component that I refer to throughout the thesis as '*TRAVEL*' is a physical and conceptual investigation of the aftermath of ethnic conflicts, and seeks to represent live actions and direct experiences. *TRAVEL* is an artwork that explores events and phenomena within the critical context of conceptual and performance art, resulting in photographic artefacts presented as a spatial installation and visual essay.

This research casts light on the destruction of domestic space, proposing that acts of violence transform the meaning of ‘home’ from the core infrastructure of human existence, identity and belonging to a symbolic representation of ‘the other’. Strategic acts of violence are framed as modes of cultural and ethnic cleansing, and domestic space as their true medium. War-torn domestic ‘homes’ represent survivors of history, and, in metamorphosing into uniquely powerful monuments of collectively-lived trauma, hold the capacity to transform our own relationship with the past.

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INTRODUCTION

The principal inspiration for this research lies in a set of eleven photographs of abandoned interiors, taken in 2009 in an abandoned village near the town of Knin in Croatia. These images, featuring details of three war-torn domestic dwellings, were taken by N. A., at the time a student of directing at the National Institute of Dramatic Art in Sydney. A native of Serbia, N. A. migrated to Australia with his family in 1995 following the civil war in the former SFR Yugoslavia. In the winter of 2009 he was visiting family who had stayed in the motherland. The many towns he visited are now part of the independent republics of Serbia and Croatia.
In Croatia, a chance encounter with an old family friend, P. K., led N. A. to an abandoned village where he photographed the domestic interiors.
A month later, on his return to Sydney, I received a set of eleven photographs. They are reproduced on the following pages.

Figure 1: Abandoned home A - village near Knin (N. A. 2009)

Figures 2, 3, 4: Abandoned home B - village near Knin (N. A. 2009)

Figure 5: Abandoned home B - village near Knin (N. A. 2009)

Figures 6, 7, 8: Abandoned home B - village near Knin (N. A. 2009)

Figures 9, 10, 11: Abandoned home C - village near Knin (N. A. 2009)

1. The Phenomenology of 'Home'

The interior settings captured in N. A.'s set of photographs feature specific details of abandoned domestic dwellings. Compellingly, these forsaken spaces represent - as French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) defined the meaning of a house - violated 'spaces of bliss'. Bachelard applied the phenomenological method to architecture, analysing domestic space according to the lived experience of architectural objects. In this light, N. A.'s abandoned interiors disclose multiple layers of spatial narrative, traces of time, and 'spatial experiences'. Such an exploration of 'home' in terms of phenomenology supports one of its basic assumptions, namely that reality is made up of objects and events that form the phenomena of life. In essence it is a reflective study that analyses how the world appears in terms of subjective experience, that is, its underlying order, structure and coherence. The noted phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) defines this path of thinking as 'a return to things themselves', while Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) characterises it as 'a way of seeing', and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) as 'the essence of perception'.

In the context of spatial analysis, phenomenology is recognised as an aspect of philosophy that researches, studies and analyses the experience of built structures. Precisely, it aims to integrate sensory perception as a function of the architectural object. Domestic dwellings essentially incorporate everyday human activity within an adapted physical context. Thereby, phenomenology in architecture seeks above all a unique experience of the phenomenon of space, form and light. By analysing the qualities of events and objects according to their influence on human perception, the phenomenological approach repudiates the rationalist one. Human perceptual sensitivity is argued to surpass any autonomic sense of reason in relation to the tectonic qualities of buildings. It is further proposed that intimate thoughts and memories of different spaces are overwhelmingly derived from experience within the space, precisely constituting the bond created between the building and the human senses.

In this light, concepts of 'home' and 'dwelling' become principal interests of the phenomenology of architecture. Such interest may originate in an early proposal by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who argued that 'dwelling' in fact defines what it means to be human. Heidegger thereby argued that 'dwelling' defines what it means to live. In the context of this research, his early analysis and definition of 'dwelling' emerge as highly significant.

In his prominent essay *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* (1971), Heidegger proposes that: ‘We attain to dwelling, so it seems, only by means of building. The latter, building, has the former, dwelling, as its goal’ (Heidegger 2001, p. 143).

Heidegger initially observes the relationship between ‘dwelling’ and ‘building’, and questions both what it means ‘to dwell’ and how a ‘building’ responds to ‘dwelling’. Following on, Heidegger posits the question of how a ‘building’, in itself, allows for ‘dwelling’. In response, he proposes a new perspective, presenting the building as more than simply a constructed object. Rather, Heidegger traces its origins as a central generator of its meaning. He then proceeds to suggest that ‘dwelling’ in essence reflects a specific embodied emotional state, that is, the emotional and psychological state of the human being, the one that ‘dwells’. Crucial to this present study, Heidegger proposes that ‘to dwell’ supposes an action related to notions of peace and contentment.

In specifying language as the principal rule on which his proposition rests, Heidegger traces the diverging connotations of the terms ‘building’ and ‘dwelling’, concluding that contemporary society generates a negative hiatus between the two. He introduces the origin of the German word ‘bauen’ and finds that in contemporary translation the term connotes ‘to build’. The term has lost its inherent meaning of ‘buan’, which originally meant ‘to dwell’, ‘to remain’, ‘to stay in place’. Pinpointing this shift allowed Heidegger to highlight the influence of language on behaviour. On closer inspection of what precisely the word ‘bauen’ reveals, he discerns that:

> 1. Building is really dwelling.
> 2. Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth.
> 3. Building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings. (Heidegger 2001, p. 146)

Heidegger’s analysis shows that we do not dwell because we have built; instead, we have built and continue to build because we are ‘dwellers’. Again, he asserts that the essence of ‘dwelling’ reveals itself through the linguistic history of the German term ‘wohnen’. This term originates in the Old Saxon ‘wuon’ and in the Gothic-period ‘wunian’. Both mean ‘to remain’, ‘to stay in a place’. According to Heidegger, ‘wunian’ more distinctly and descriptively expresses this remaining in place, and means: ‘to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace’ (Heidegger 2001, p. 147). Heidegger goes on to explain that ‘friede’, the term for peace, is commonly translated as ‘free’; but in his terms, ‘to free actually means to spare’ (Heidegger 2001, p. 147).

He in fact interprets the term according to its old association with a thing loved, a thing needing protection from harm or danger. In this context, ‘to spare’ embodies more than simply ‘not harming’ but rather: ‘leaving something beforehand in its own essence’ (Heidegger 2001, p. 147). To ‘free’, therefore, means to lovingly and thoughtfully preserve something in its peace. Heidegger hereby proposes that ‘sparing’ is the principal character of dwelling:

> To dwell, to be set at peace means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence. The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing. It pervades dwelling in its whole range. That range reveals itself to us as soon as we recall that human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals in the world. (Heidegger 2001, p. 147)

Heidegger herein defines two fundamental aspects of dwelling. The first is ‘to be spared’, to be cared for and protected by inhabiting the dwelling place. The second refers to the act of sparing and preserving, taking care of the different aspects of the dwelling place. Heidegger asserts that the ultimate threat to a man and his dwelling - to one’s ‘being in the world’ - is death. According to Gaston Bachelard:

> The house, quiet obviously, is a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space, provided, of course, that we take it in both its unity and complexity, and endeavour to integrate all the special values in one fundamental value. For the house furnishes us dispersed images and a body of images at the same time. (Bachelard 2014 , p. 25)

Bachelard conceptualises a house as embodying meanings deeper than simply those of an ‘object’. He understands the house as a psychological diagram that guides our analysis of intimacy:

> For a phenomenologist, a psychoanalyst or a psychologist (these three points of view being named in the order of decreasing efficiency), it is not a question of describing houses, or enumerating their picturesque features and analysing for which reasons they are comfortable. On the contrary, we must go beyond the problems of description - whether this description be objective or subjective, that is whether it give facts or impressions - in order to attain to the primary virtues, those that reveal an attachment that is native in some way to the primary function of inhabiting. (Bachelard 2014, p. 26)

Bachelard here suggests that in order to comprehend the vital spatial qualities of a house, one needs to abandon simple descriptions. Rather, the vital qualities of a house lie in the notions of intimacy, protection and bliss that it provides. Bachelard proposes an interrogation of spaces that preoccupy poetry, focusing on the individual and personal elements found within the house. The goal of such poetic exploration is to know how the poetic image is received in subjective consciousness. For Bachelard, such a reception demands openness and focus on the present experience. Any poetic image that appears in consciousness is a direct product of our feelings, and thus represents an essence of our humanity. Bachelard further suggests that such poetic images precede rational thought. It is apparent that his phenomenology focuses on the human soul, not on the mind.

Bachelard proposes that a phenomenological exploration, focusing precisely on the poetic representations of the house, enables the actual experience of its most complete definition and meaning. Bachelard introduced the concept of 'topoanalysis' as a means for discovering this meaning, explaining the concept as a systematic psychological analysis of the sites of our intimate lives. Topoanalysis examines the 'intimacy' of a house by observing it room by room. The examined rooms are however, not always material areas within a house. Often, analysed spaces are imagined, dreamed, read, remembered. Bachelard proposes that such abstract spaces bring us closer to the essence of psychological experience. Topoanalysis is related to topophilia, a concept that connotes strong emotional connection with a place or physical environment. Through topoanalysis, Bachelard traces profound emotional relationships with the embodied individual areas, rooms and objects of a house. Bachelard assigns the physical dimension to his concepts of topoanalysis and topophilia by suggesting that a house, as our 'home', is forever engraved in our being. That is, one's body holds capacities for preserving memories that are superior to the mind. Bachelard assigns particular significance to the childhood home, defining it as one's 'principal home'. For him, this house is forever physically 'inscribed' in its inhabitants. Such inscriptions represent a group of habits, which Bachelard terms 'organic habits': 'After twenty years, in spite of all the other anonymous stairways, we could recapture the reflexes of the 'first stairway'; we would not stumble on that rather high step' (Bachelard 2014, p. 36). Bachelard thus posits that a house represents the quintessential phenomenological object, in which personal experience reaches its epitome. As such, house is not 'experienced' through a linear narrative. Rather, multiple places in which one has lived 'co-penetrate' and 'retain the treasures of the former days' (Bachelard 2014, p. 28) through dreams. Bachelard argues that a house in which one was born represents more than a 'home'. In his poetic framework, this house is an embodiment of dreams.

The Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926-2000) proposes that:

> The house… remains the central place of human existence, the place where the child learns to understand his being in the world, a place from which a man departs and to which he returns. (Norberg-Schulz 2006, p. 56)

As a pre-eminent architectural figure seeking to apply phenomenological approaches to the study of architectural objects, Norberg-Schulz suggested that ‘to dwell’ essentially means to belong to a given place. In his view, a house assigns a person his place in the world; in this, it represents the central site of human existence. Norberg-Schulz proposes that to define the meaning of ‘home’, one needs to trace the ways people build meaningful environments. Essentially, he posed a semiotic question through which he examined the potential of a physical object to simultaneously represent and embody cultural meaning. In this way, he analysed the potential of a house to simultaneously act to provide shelter and protection and to form foundations of individual and collective identity.

In his definition of ‘home’, Norberg-Schulz took as a starting point Bachelard’s presentation of home as the compelling integrating power in a human life, proposing that a person essentially discovers their core personal identity in their house. Norberg-Schulz further understood the structure of a house as a structure of place. Significantly, for the present analysis of abandoned interiors, Norberg-Schulz acknowledged the significance of the house’s interior structure. This interior aspect is divided and differentiated in multiple subordinated places and connecting paths. Numerous activities and actions are established in these subordinated places, and their coordinated integrity forms and expresses narratives that are formed inside the house.

This research, embracing phenomenological perspectives of ‘home’, analyses the context in which a domestic dwelling is violently destroyed. It understands a house to form the foundations of personal and collective identity. Hence, it is here suggested that violent attacks against this core infrastructure of human existence are charged with complex, multilayered aims of conquering, dominating and exterminating ‘the other’.

In Norberg-Schulz's development of a method of phenomenological architectural thinking, presented in *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1979), this research finds a promising departure point for investigating the multilayered objectives behind violent attacks on domestic dwellings. Norberg-Schulz demonstrated in his work the extent to which one's personal identity is a result of belonging to a place. 'Genius loci' represents the 'spirit of place' and is rooted in the early Roman cultural notion that all independent beings, in this context including places, embody their guardian spirits. Contemporary belief states that notions of 'genius loci' no longer contribute anything of value to our being in the world. Norberg-Schulz however, asserts that this phenomenon is still utterly real. In his terms, 'genius loci' represents a 'profound sense of place'. The contemporary 'genius loci' therefore stands for our understanding of a place as the sum of all physical and symbolic values in nature and in the human environment. By connecting notions of identity with belonging to particular place, Norberg-Schulz suggests that a human being essentially creates and develops 'objects of identification' during the process of building. By defining buildings as 'objects', Norberg-Schulz simultaneously nominated a house as one of the most significant objects of identity, as both an object that satisfies material and physical needs and an object that assembles a particular human world.

In his vision, a principal notion of architectural objects is to visualise their 'genius loci'. Buildings, as such, reflect their 'genius loci'. Through the development and building of 'objects', architecture establishes, creates and develops meaningful places, and by so doing assists people in 'dwelling'. House, that most significant object in the life of a human being, hence imparts to its inhabitants the sense of orientation and identity. Crucially for this research, Norberg-Schulz establishes a concept that seeks to directly understand the relationship between architectural objects and concepts of identity. Using case studies from the cities of Prague, Khartoum and Rome, Norberg-Schulz proposes that such action is possible without having to turn to preliminary conceptual definitions of architecture or identity.

American theatre historian Arnold Aronson proposes that:

'Our theatre is (likewise) a respiratory of dreams, emotions, memories and evocation: it should be a gathering place for society to come together to dream and remember' (Aronson 2005, p. 41).

This research proposes that theatre represents a site through which we can directly access our identity; that theatre is a kind of social mirror. Says Aronson: 'When we face a stage, we are facing a reflection of ourselves and our society' (Aronson 2005, p. 40). He argues that theatres of different époques arrange spatial configurations to essentially reflect the arrangement of social elements in that society[1]. In his view, private homes have never held such a dominant role in architectural aesthetic as they do today. Contemporary society has abandoned market squares, churches and community halls as central gathering places. Instead, we live in highly individualised homes that are assigned notions of sacredness. Aronson thereby proposes that contemporary theatre compares to elements of a house, associated with copious feelings and experiences. He further suggests that a new form of theatre is to seek elements of 'homeness' in theatrical presentation.

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2. Theatricality of the Abandoned 'Home'

> 'In front of you is a stage; the curtain is open; the actors are absent.'
> (Féral 2002, p. 95)

It is said that theatre can take place wherever an intersection is established between a performer and potential spectators. From the perspective of contemporary theatrical practice, almost any space may be perceived as a bare stage: 'A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged' (Brook 1995, p. 7). Similarly, German professor of theatre studies Hans-Thies Lehmann argues:

> Theatre is the site not only of 'heavy' bodies but also of a real gathering, a place where a unique intersection of aesthetically organised and everyday real life takes place. (Lehmann 2006, p. 17)

[1] The theatre of the Athenians was centred around the 'agora', an open and interactive 'gathering place' in which all events concerning politics, commerce and social interaction took place. 'Agora' represented a central point for Ancient Greek city-states. Citizens gathered there to hear important announcements, assemble for military campaigns, and discuss politics.

During the Renaissance, all significant events took place in closed, dark palaces and churches. In the same manner, Aronson defines the theatre of the time as evolving inside 'a hermetic world'.

Importantly for the context of this research, professor of theatre studies Marvin Carlson argues that the distinguishing feature of theatrical theory in the past two decades is its pronounced merging with the fields of social sciences. Carlson notes that everyday social interactions continually embody performed roles:

> The recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behaviour raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as performance, or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself. (Carlson 2004, p. 4)

This research embraces a scenographic perspective, and thereby proposes that the abandoned interiors featured in the presented photographs emerge as highly theatrical spaces. The absence of human figures is not seen as an obstacle to the theatricality of the depicted moments. In scenographic terms, 'An empty space does not exist. There is only an emptied space' (Hocevar 2003, p. 56). This research treats the abandoned spaces as if the action had already ended, and thereby the captured moments represent scenographic afterimages. Employing scenographic strategies to 'decode' the domestic interiors as scenographic remnants, we gain a solid understanding of the nature of the ended theatricality that haunts the captured spaces. These war-ravaged, abandoned sites remain inscribed with the fundamentals of mise-en-scene, narrative and transformation, whereby particular visual signs, suggestions and narrative framings are already inflicted. The static nature of these discarded interiors does not exclude them as products of a theatrical process. Further, the distinct nature of the presented theatricality is primarily embodied in the awareness that these mise-en-scenes are not staged and designed. Instead, they are domestic dwellings, destroyed and abandoned during the inter-ethnic conflicts in the former SFR Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. These scenographic remnants are therefore products of real violent actions. Further 'reading' and interpretation of such discovered spaces is established around a scenographic analysis of material and immaterial effects of violence and destruction.

A. Scenographic 'decoding' of abandoned domestic space

The word 'theatre' is derived from the Ancient Greek 'theatron', that represented a place, often on the slopes of hills, at which spectators gathered to watch productions staged as part of festivals honouring their gods. The term 'theatron' discovers its roots in the verb 'theaomai', which translates as 'to watch', 'to see' and 'to observe'. It is here in this framed and defined 'watching space' that scenography discovers its foundational roots. It is therefore appropriate to claim that: 'Scenography is at once an ancient and recent term' (Aronson 2005, p. 7).

Since its earliest applications (traceable to the theatre of Ancient Greece), scenography has been concerned with the inhabitability of space. The history of theatre suggests that the scenographic discipline was established to develop spaces in which performing bodies could interact. Through interactions with space, performers were able to deliver a more complete message to the gathered spectators.
Although scenography was commonly employed as a visual elaboration of a dramaturgical text inside a traditional theatrical configuration, it was always specifically concerned with audience reception and engagement. There is no doubt that scenography has always utilised its visual and conceptual methods of communication with an audience to extend the means and outcomes of theatrical experiences. Its unique principal definition has not changed over time, yet it continues to modulate its intrinsic meaning and expand its paradigm. Its core principles as we recognise them today feed directly from the original term 'skenographia'. Aristotle[2] (384 BCE - 322 BCE) coined the term from the Greek words 'skene' and 'grapho', meaning 'scene' or 'stage', and 'to describe'. Aristotle clearly referred to 'skenographia' as the form of 'scenic writing', or more literally, 'scenic painting', and it is important to note that it was integral to theatrical architecture of this period.

The theatre of the Ancient Rome, dating back to performances by Etruscan[3] actors in the fourth century BCE, relied heavily on the established foundations of Ancient Greek theatre. Although marking a new period in theatrical history, it sustained the architectural conception of 'skene'. In the first century BCE, Roman author and architect Vitruvius (c. 80 - 70 BCE to c. 15 BCE), referred to the term 'skenographia' in the context of architectural perspective drawings. Towards the end of the first century BCE, Vitruvius denoted 'skenographia' as distinct from the theatre and its stage area; that is, as an autonomous form of design known as 'dispositio'. This term, of Latin derivation, refers to a system for the organisation of arguments, as well as to 'organisation' and 'arrangement'. In the context of theatrical and scenographic history, the term infers spatial arrangements, formations and compositions.

More familiarly, traditional scenography traces its historical roots to the architects of the European Renaissance. The earliest descriptions of a practice that more closely resembles our contemporary understanding denote a fusion of historical scenographic methods, that is: 'scenic painting', 'scenic writing' and architectural perspective drawing, with spatial arrangements, formations and compositions.

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[2] The term derives from Aristotle's earliest surviving dramatic work, 'Poetics' (335 BCE).

[3] Etruscan civilisation refers to the civilisation of ancient Italy, in the areas of Tuscany, western Umbria and northern Lazio.

These trends historically derive from illusionistic manipulations of scenic space, which were generally based on staged reflections of contemporary architectural objects and idealised landscapes.

Increased theatrical activity in the twentieth century marks a period where 'the word scenography increasingly emerged as the term of choice' (Aronson 2005, p. 7). The term now implies 'something more than creating scenery or costumes or lights. It carries a connotation of an all-encompassing visual-spatial construct as well as the process of change and transformation that is an inherent part of the physical vocabulary of stage' (Aronson 2005, p. 7). In this way, present-day scenographic practice has abandoned former conventional and traditional applications, limiting them to theatre prosceniums and film sets. Instead:

> …the impulse to experiment with found space redefined the scenographic function; the scenographer's focus shifted from interpreting text within a prescribed stage space to deconstructing found space within a critical context. (Irwin, cited in Collins & Nisbet 2012, p. 139)

Clearly, scenographic practice, in all its inherent strategies, adjusts and reshapes itself according to prevailing cultural and (thus) theatrical communication. This research proposes that, since contemporary society is experiencing extreme shifts in its ways of communicating, scenography is increasingly perceived as an open-ended structure, continually extending into diverse yet entwined fields of spatial and cultural practice and discourse. These interlaced fields mainly refer to three-dimensional forms of artistic and expressive spatial practice, that variously inscribe the core notions of theatricality, mise-en-scene, narrative, transformation, action, and performativity.

In such contemporary non-conventional applications, scenography continues to apply inherently developed strategies that allow it to understand, interpret, frame and establish different kinds of spatial forms. Therefore, in the context of this research, scenographic strategies are primarily introduced to orchestrate a particular spatial relationship and to provoke and maintain multiple types of desired encounters. In fact, scenography today is:

> …increasingly conceived of as event, experience and action, rather than a set of physical elements, or representational or metaphoric images. This makes it possible for scenographers to adopt process-based methods as part of their professional and artistic discipline. (Gröndahl 2012b, p. 2)

In this research, scenographic strategies are framed as hybrid methods of spatial manipulation and interpretation, and seek to investigate the essential nature of events, phenomena and objects. Scenographic interpretation, reading, understanding and perception of space are directly established in historical, geographical, physical and ideological contexts. The understanding and interpretation of found spatial configurations is developed around the manipulation of material and immaterial spatial attributes. Spatial compositions, objects, colour, light and shape are here perceived in a way that transcends their physical reality in a framed environment. Further, since scenography deeply inheres in inhabitation and the relationships between human and spatial narratives, movement, in conjunction with the presence and absence of human figures as performers, is deemed highly significant.

This research perceives scenography as both a discipline that is concerned with visual and spatial investigations, and as a transformative conceptual force. It recognises that '(scenographic) apparatus (has been) sensitive to the philosophical discussion about the relationship between the inside mind and the outside world' (Gröndahl 2012a, p. 4). Our study further discovers such scenographic precedents in the areas of theatre and film, and confirms its approach by analysing selected works in which scenography is perceived and presented as a synthesis of spatial and conceptual relationships. This research further proposes that these identified scenographic strategies be utilised beyond their traditional applications. In the context of this research, scenography emerges as a hybrid field, in that the abandoned spaces become agents in the comprehension of intimate and collective spatial and political relationships. Hence, by inverting the common scenographic process, the strategies are introduced as tools that let the researcher treat the framed events and phenomena by thinking 'of', 'with' and 'through' space. The study therefore begins by critically analysing the acquired set of N. A.'s photographs, whereby the images are perceived as documenting the scenographic remnants of an ended theatricality.

B. 'Home' as poetic scenography

To further clarify its scenographic perspective, this research analyses the unique approach to the portrayal of domestic space in the films of Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-1986). Tarkovsky's approach is here perceived as a multilayered fusion of visual and conceptual associations in the relationship between concepts of home and personal identity. Tarkovsky precisely defined the concept of home, and particularly the childhood home, as holding therapeutic power in the process of healing the ruptures of identity.

Acknowledging the relationship between these concepts in three films: *The Mirror* (1975), *Nostalgia* (1983) and *The Sacrifice* (1986), this study frames a concrete scenographic perspective: '… another kind of language, another form of communication: by means of feelings and images' (Tarkovsky 2006, p. 12). The three films in focus are notable for slow and subtle movements from scene to scene, specifically-developed rhythms, and rich spatial and visual composition, achieved by means of specifically-established cinematic language.

Tarkovsky has continuously searched for a fundamental harmony between human beings' inner and outer worlds. In the three selected films, Tarkovsky unconventionally explores ways to find the balance between his characters' spiritual world and the material world in which they live. Domestic spaces are portrayed as highly intimate and personal, and as such, do not act as solely descriptive or informative mise-en-scenes. Instead, Tarkovsky puts his characters in spaces that represent direct consequences of profoundly intimate emotional and psychological states, along with the physical circumstances and events in which they are set: '… the mise-en-scene arises out of the psychological state of particular characters at a particular moment, as a unique statement of the complexity of their relationship' (Tarkovsky 2006, p. 74).

Through his 'sculpting in time'[4], as Tarkovsky defined his cinematic method, he developed a distinctive approach to portraying the symbolic nature of space, and this is particularly applicable to his presentation of domestic dwellings and the concept of 'home'. The poetic nature of his images is embodied in a particular 'awareness of the world'. For Tarkovsky, poetry is closely related to philosophy and to our personal ways of relating to surrounding reality. The term 'poetic' refers in his films to the holistic nature of his images, rather than to a common notion of aesthetic quality as the 'undefined beauty' in moments and things. In fact, the poetic nature of Tarkovsky's cinema is defined as embodying poetry in the concentration of frequently allusive and associative images, which also act as conceptual auxiliaries.

Although Tarkovsky's images rarely include rapid movements, the mise-en-scene often appears as if sudden and precipitous events had taken place before the camera started recording. Despite the slow movement between scenes, the action actually never stops flowing. Tarkovsky therein exemplifies the possibility of managing *tension* through various cinematic techniques and effects.

[4] As suggested by the title of his personal reflection on cinema: 'Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the cinema' (1986)

Scenography specifically initiates a visual captivation, embodied in both the images themselves and the association and symbols they evoke. Simultaneously, space is identified as a conveyor of the theatrical nature of the presented images.

Such a singular cinematic framework links strongly with the theatrical nature of the abandoned domestic interiors in the selected set of photographs. The absence of people in the photographs speaks volumes. The unbearably present traces of their previous inhabitation further highlights their absence. Personal objects, furniture, clothing, ordinary domestic equipment and books, compounded by traces of human movement through space, glaringly illuminate the missing human component in these former *homes*. Moreover, the 'captured' nature of these interiors implies that the people have long been absent. There are at the same time poignant suggestions of how and why these people left. It is evident that through such visual suggestions, the tension remains alive beyond the fact that the initial theatricality has long since ended.

Nature, along with 'home', represents a dominant visual aspect in all Tarkovsky's films. When the homes of his characters are unavoidably reclaimed by nature, often by rain, fire or time, their ruins continue to stand as 'loci of memory'. Similarly, our own research shows nature as a dominant visual element. The photographs from the discovered sites show in so many ways that nature has begun the process of reconquering the built environment. These images may be interpreted to imply a process of healing the effects of violence, through the acts of disguise that nature is performing inside the demolished buildings. The images capture grass that covers the floors and staircases of smashed interiors, trees that grow inside bombed and mined bedrooms, weeds and bushes that mask walls, ceilings, windows, and the doors of pulverised hallways.

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3. Forensic Scenography

In the principal domains in which scenography operates, events are set and enacted within pre-defined spatial and temporal boundaries. This research embraces a scenographic prism whereby all spatial and temporal coordinates serve as a means to reveal and express. The established coordinates of 'space' and 'time' emerge as existential coordinates that condition, direct and articulate aspects of human existence. In this respect, the geographical location of the abandoned interiors, that of Knin in Croatia, reveals critical information. Such a geographic fact, cited below each figure, further iterates the destructive and traumatic nature of the past events.

Similarly, the cited temporal coordinate shows that in 2009[5] these photographs documented the aftermath to an ethnic conflict that occurred between 1991 and 1995. In the context of this research, such assigned spatial and temporal coordinates implicitly ascribe the complex notions of war, violence and destruction to the 'lived experience' of the presented interiors. Thereby, newly-assigned concepts overwrite the former 'spaces of bliss' and 'footholds of identity' with the fundamentals of intimate experience of war, trauma and suffering.

The scenographic perspective of this research finds further analytical ground in the ideas of German philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892-1940). In ruins, Benjamin offered an emblem of allegory as a critical tool for understanding history. His approach to ruins looked beyond their aesthetic qualities as objects. Instead, he read them as a process: 'a means of demythifying and stripping away symbolism - a means of approaching historical truth through reduction, at the expense of romantic aesthetics' (Stead 2003, p. 5).

It is here proposed that the abandoned, war-gutted domestic spaces allow a telling search through narratives of intimate spaces shaped by war. This research goes beyond merely captivating aesthetic interest in architectural decay. Instead, it asserts that these domestic spaces expose a unitary, intimate experience of spatial narratives.
From a scenographic perspective, the abandoned homes are interpreted as locations charged with traumatic experience. This research in effect introduces another layer to the study of domestic space, whereby an abandoned 'home', earlier established as a phenomenological and poetic concept, is further ascribed social and political connotations. In short, 'home' is assigned the ineffable notions of war, violence and trauma.

This research embraces space as forever unfinished, as 'the simultaneity of stories so far' (Massey 2005). From this perspective, we begin to understand the traumatised domestic spaces not purely as sites of intimate and collective memory, but as authentic sites of history.

Embracing Benjamin's concept of history as: '…the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now. (Jetzzeit)' (Benjamin 1969, p. 261), the study proposes a physical and psychological exploration, performed from a scenographic perspective and rooted in awareness of conflict and violence. It is simultaneously a conceptual, theoretical and physical investigation. It reconstructs the past as a present, active material.

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[5] When the photographs were taken.

It employs scenographic strategies, particularly its logics of space, perception and interpretation as a framework for discovered spatial narratives. By 'deconstructing' such narratives, the study seeks a new critical analysis of the abandoned domestic space. Finally, it traces these shattered domestic dwellings as sites reflecting the constancy of war in the region's recent history.

Contemporary French cultural theorist and urbanist Paul Virilio argues:

> War can never break free from the magical spectacle, because its very purpose is to produce spectacle; to fell the enemy is not so much to capture as to 'captivate' him, to install the fear of death before he actually dies. (Virilio 2009a, pp. 7-8)

A. Inscriptions of war, violence and trauma

The exploration this research proposes is physically and conceptually rooted in the aftermath of the bitter disintegration of the SFR Yugoslavia (1945-1992), a socialist state and federation, once comprising six republics: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia and Montenegro. From the early 1990s, the state faced a series of political turbulences and conflicts. The intense political crisis caused brutal inter-ethnic conflicts in the region, which led to civil war and final disintegration of the unity.

In his book *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (2006), professor of political science Stathis N. Kalyvas analysed the aims and dynamics of violence in civil war. He proposes that: 'In everyday language, 'civil war' (unlike 'revolution') is a term that conveys a sense of violent division, often used as a metaphor for extreme conflict and widespread brutality' (Kalyvas 2006, pp. 16-17). Kalyvas defines civil war as '… armed combat within the boundaries of a recognised sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the hostilities' (Kalyvas 2006, p. 17). Civil wars are fought for multiple reasons, so that the behaviour, actions and tactics of the military rivals vary considerably. Without exception however, war leaves devastating traces on cities, landscapes and entire countries, most commonly resulting from direct military action. Such military manoeuvres seek multiple goals, both overlapping and contradictory. These are commonly identified as intimidation, demoralisation, degrading the enemy's ability to fight, gaining territory, destruction of resources, elimination of opposing forces, and material and moral destruction of 'the other'.

Notably, almost all global civil conflicts involve a simultaneous war against architecture, and such systematic attacks are currently a feature of conflicted zones in Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Ukraine. This research treats the attacks on domestic architecture in former SFR Yugoslavia as a concrete case study. It proposes that civil-war attacks on architecture can be classified in three categories: 'strategic', 'cultural' and 'domestic'. In concurrent wars against the architectural heritage of 'the other', attacks on institutions of power and authority such as military headquarters and army camps, are here classified as strategic. Strategic attacks principally aim to wipe out the mobilised enemy's ability to fight. Performed as a tactic, these attacks exemplify the dominant power and superiority of the attackers. Secondly, attacks on cultural institutions such as museums and libraries, that stand for the preservation and confirmation of national cultural identity, are here understood as a violent negation of the cultural and historical significance of the attacked. Such attacks are strategic, and targets are never random or irrelevant. In seeking to demoralise, destroying these objects aims to more profoundly conquer the population to whom they belong. Thirdly, in relation to the domestic, this research finds that people's homes, often remotely located and well beyond major front lines, are seldom attacked because they block strategic military targets. Instead, this research proposes that ordinary dwellings become specific targets for destruction. The bulk of domestic architecture that suffers fatal damage in ethnic conflicts has no evident distinction in style or design. None of these domestic objects carried any sort of ethnic, cultural or religious identification. Rather, they embodied merely the functional and aesthetic architectural references common to their region.

This research, in its primary concern with the phenomenon of violence against domestic architecture, proposes that these types of attacks have become a prominent dimension of contemporary political and ethnic violence, and embody complex psychological meanings. Such intentions imply an indirect means of cultural and ethnic cleansing by means of domestic, often vernacular, architecture. The destruction of an object that on one hand embodies the most profound notion of personal identity and belonging and on the other a permanent solid structure, is calculated to inflict maximum psychological damage. Indeed, to face the destruction of an object that is supposed to outlive not just one's own life but many human spans, that forms an intergenerational foothold of identity, inevitably wants to remind an entire people of their own irrelevance.

In multi-ethnic environments, domestic space becomes politicised through the notions of ‘belonging’, and this phenomenon intensifies in times of civil war. By belonging to a family of a certain ethnic group, the domestic space itself is assigned the same ethnic identity. This research suggests that violence against domestic architecture can be categorised. First, according to Kalyvas’ definition, ‘expressive violence’ emerges as a type that serves no solid instrumental purpose. Such forms are restricted to achieving nothing beyond consummatory rewards for the attacking side. Here is the achievement of the attackers’ to desire to cause pain, disturbance and physical and psychological loss to ‘the other’. ‘Expressive violence’ also relates to the urge to demolish a hated symbol. In this case, domestic architectural objects represent material symbols of the centuries-long presence of the opposed ethnic group. Secondly, civil war violence can be categorised as a strategy to dominate or exterminate a particular selected group. This is referred to as ‘coercive violence’. Although its core logic is similar across contexts, its forms vary depending on the cultures to whom it is applied. Such forms of violent attack are seen to be a resource or method rather than a final product; that is, coercive violent attacks are strategies developed and applied to achieve the final goal. In the context of this research, while domestic architecture ‘represents’ the victim of violence, people are the actual target, that is, the inhabitants of the violated spaces. Crucially, the real ‘indirect targets’ are in fact ethnic groups marked for erasure.

B. Attacked ‘homes’: from target to witness

Prominent political theorist Hannah Arendt (1926-1975), who escaped Europe during the Holocaust and became an American citizen, coined the term ‘banality of evil’ in 1963 in response to the Jerusalem trial of a Nazi lieutenant-colonel, Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962). Eichmann was directly responsible for organising the transportation of the Jewish population to extermination camps. In her report, Arendt noted: ‘On trial are his deeds, not the sufferings of the Jews, not the German people or mankind, not even anti-Semitism and racism’ (Arendt 2006, p. 5). Arendt’s report demonstrates that ‘evil’ is not necessarily committed by monsters or beings who are pristinely assigned demonic qualities. Instead, ‘evil’ is more often committed by ‘imbeciles’ and ‘idiots’. Arendt assigns these terms their prime, inherent meaning, namely, human beings of low intelligence who are incapable of clear or critical thinking, capable of nothing but guarding themselves against danger and performing simple mechanical tasks under strict supervision. Arendt concluded that Eichmann was in fact an utterly banal and extremely diligent bureaucratic criminal. Herein, the ‘banality of evil’ is summed up by Arendt in the truth that ‘evil’ fundamentally withstands thought. This research notes that the attacks noted in the previous section inevitably fail if the proposed acts merely eliminate the subject whose compliance they essentially seek.

If coercive violence in terms of ‘compliance’ has no systematic grounds, then such violent attacks merely conflate to the concept of ‘the banality of evil’.

Domestic architectural objects are not political by nature; however, they become inscribed with political, cultural and ideological connotations through their known history and present narratives. This research embraces the ideas of prominent French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) whereby the abandoned spaces analysed, according with Lefebvre’s definition of space as a product of political, economic and social forces, are precisely the outcome of the spectacle of war. Further, Hannah Arendt argues that space is essentially political as ‘it provides the canvas for all social life’(Arendt, cited in Kingwell 2007, pp. 83). Her argument implies that space is inevitably inscribed with numerous events, and with the indelible traces of those events.

Contemporary architect and scholar Bernard Tshumi essentially corroborates Arendt’s definition, acknowledging architecture as a mark of ‘the milieu of social practice’. (Tschumi 1996, p. 22) Tshumi further elaborated space as not only far more than pure form, but also more than socio-economically determined concepts. In his book *Architecture and Disjunction* (1996), he proposed that architecture be defined as a simultaneity of space and event: ‘Architecture is defined by the actions it witnesses as much as by the enclosure of its walls’ (Tshumi 1996, p. 100).

American architect Peter Eisenman, author of the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin, understands architecture as ‘the sphere of mediation’ (Corbo 2014) between our inner and exterior worlds. Through the design of the Holocaust memorial, Eisenman argued that architecture is not exclusively concerned with what we can see, but is in fact dominated by our experiences and emotions. Eisenman’s memorial tells us that architectural experience is not purely retinal despite the fact that the optical dimension is the strongest way we perceive buildings. Instead, he proposes that architecture focuses more on tactile experience. His monument seeks to deny the metaphysics of presence, so inscribed as it is with iconography, meaning and symbolism. Instead, the architectural aspect must be reduced to pure presence.

Polish-born American architect Daniel Libeskind proposes that architectural objects tell multiple stories: ‘…When we consider history, what we see before us are the buildings’ (Libeskind 2004, p. 3). For him, buildings ‘live’ and ‘breathe’ and, like humans, embody inner and outer attributes. Buildings have both bodies and souls, and architectural objects project memory. Through a building people can ‘sense the spiritual and cultural longing that it evokes’ (Libeskind 2004, p. 13).

Libeskind in fact defines memory as the principal architectural element, providing historical, geographical and ideological orientation. Memory, according to him, is particularly significant for places where traumas and tragedies have occurred. He proposes a shift in our perception, suggesting that everyday life is the crucial realm of architectural experience. Herein, 'ordinary' architectural objects, houses and hospitals, etc., shall be regarded on a par with, or more significant than, museums and institutes of power and authority.

As a child of Holocaust survivors, Libeskind has profoundly interwoven trauma and memory into his architectural work, focusing especially on trauma that involves destruction. He identifies traumas that are both physically and spiritually destructive:

> I find myself drawn to explore what I call the void - the presence of an overwhelming emptiness created when a community is wiped out, or individual freedom is stamped out; when the continuity of life is so brutally disrupted that the structure of life is forever torqued and transformed. (Libeskind 2004, p. 12)

Libeskind's concern for the experience of emptiness after tragedy connotes that architectural objects are inscribed with life and memory, so that the destruction of buildings translates to destruction of a community and its individuals. For Libeskind, architecture holds a significant role in dealing with trauma and tragedy, offering ways to overcome the emotional and mental void that follows it. He understands that a core function of architecture is to deal with such loss, and to offer hope for the future.

This research affirms that the acts of erasing human physical symbols and collective memory in the destruction of homes, is conceptually linked to killing people themselves. Thereby, ravaged domestic architecture in a region takes on a monumental quality. The destruction of domestic architecture can by no means be classified as collateral damage. Instead, the systematic destruction of domestic dwellings emerges as a strategic act for erasing individual and collective identity and memory. Therein, these actions can be perceived as the strategic manipulation of history.

In recognising abandoned spaces as 'unfinished' locations following Walter Benjamin's emblems of allegory for understanding history, this study shifts away from conceiving abandoned war-torn spaces as sites of intimate and collective traumatic memory. Instead, by embracing these sites as critical tools, it introduces a new reading of spaces and their present meanings. Perception of ruins is to a large degree shaped by previous personal associations with decaying structures. Our interpretation of what we see before us precisely defines our sense of ownership of events, landscapes and objects.

French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1941), defined this concept of ownership by arguing: 'Perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory - images which complete it as they interpret it' (Bergson 1990, p. 133).

Further, ruins are commonly inscribed with notions of monumental quality. They are ascribed meaning and value due to their age, their history and the collective memories they evoke. However, this association of monumentality applies only to ruins of formally approved social, cultural and historical significance. Other examples defined as unworthy, banal or ordinary are simply dismissed. These 'ordinary' ruins are thus twice abandoned - for the second time as meaningless architectural structures. Certainly, architectural decay has for centuries had special appeal for human imagination and emotion. In the present epoch, in our urge for 'spectacle and sparkle' allied to a widespread contemporary longing for aesthetic perfection, sights of decay and abandonment fuel shallow cultural production. Scholars (Olsen & Pétursdottir 2014) have raised concerns relating to the strong but commonly merely perfunctory fascination with ruins: 'a superficial and one-eyed portrayal of urban decay that turns social and material mystery into something seductive and aesthetically appealing' (Olsen & Pétursdottir 2014, p. 1). This research therefore, employs scenographic strategies to reshape the meaning of 'ordinary' ruins. It proposes a scenographic 'decoding' of discovered abandoned interiors. This is achieved through scenographic strategies that include: theatricality, narrative, context, perspective, framing, focalisation, embodiment, atmosphere and materiality. By re-orienting our interpretation of the domestic dwellings and by constructing a new relationship around them, domestic ruins are assigned equal notions of monumentality. Inspired by Benjamin's theories of history, this study proposes a shift in approaching the past. Through the neutral archiving and objective historicising of traumatic events, it seeks a critical illumination of the remaining aspects of those events.

C. The monumentality of domestic ruins

In proposing a shift in the perception of architectural decay, this research mounts an investigation into the definition of identified historical sites. Relevant authority is discovered in the theories of the contemporary French historian Pierre Nora, which mark a notable increase in contemporary interest in the concept of memory. In Nora's view, the main reason for this renewed attention is that the memory that actually remains in our society is strictly limited. 'We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left' (Nora 1996, p. 1).

Nora has coined the term ‘Les lieux de memorie’ (1984-92), which he defined as ‘… any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community’ (Nora 1996, p. 7). Nora defines such sites of memory as: ‘At once natural and artificial, simple and ambitious, concrete and abstract, they are lieux - places, sites, causes - in three senses - material, symbolic and functional’ (Nora 1996, p. 14). Nora refers to ‘lieux de memory’ as sites in which a residual sense of continuity has not ceased, yet they exist precisely because there are no longer ‘milieux de memorie’, that is, sites of actual living memory and experience, in short, authentic environments that nurture memory. In this research, abandoned domestic dwellings are recognised as authentic sites of history, which thereby act as stimuli for collective memories.

Nora has startlingly identified the modern phenomenon of replacing the existence of genuine memory with an accelerated urge to remember through historical archives and documentation. He defines this phenomenon as an ‘acceleration of history’ (Nora 1996, p. 1) and introduces such a metaphor to confront contemporary society with the difference between real memory and history, ‘which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organise past’ (Nora 1996, p. 2).

D. Inscribed trauma

> Armed conflict on the territory of the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 2001 claimed over 200,000 lives, gave rise to atrocities unseen in Europe since the Second World War, and left behind a terrible legacy of physical ruin and psychological devastation. (Nation 2004, p. 7)

In this research context, tracing history inevitably involves tracing individual and collective experiences and memories of trauma. Trauma refers to profoundly distressing and disturbing experiences that interrupt the ability to cope and which alter the established way of life of an individual or entire community. ‘Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life’ (Herman 1997, p. 33).

American professor Cathy Caruth investigates the endless overwhelming impact of trauma on a human life and on our notions of experience. Caruth argues that the pathology of trauma is discovered precisely in the ‘structure of experience or reception’ (Caruth 1995, p. 4). This suggests that a catastrophic event is not entirely experienced at the precise moment of its occurrence.

Instead, its effects are also profoundly endured belatedly: 'in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it.' (Caruth 1995, p. 4) .

In Caruth's understanding, therefore, 'To be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event. (…) The traumatised, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess' (Caruth 1995, p. 5).

In this study, the term is used to describe events that initiate deep sorrow, material and emotional loss, significant destruction and extermination on a collective level. This sense of trauma has been inscribed in almost all aspects of human existence in the region. Domestic space, which fundamentally represents human interactions and experiences, has inextricably absorbed the intensity of trauma previously experienced by its inhabitants.

E. Implicit monuments

Spanish author and Holocaust survivor Jorge Semprún (1923-2011) has proposed that:

> Only those who survived can remember for they alone know the smell of burning flesh and a day is coming when no one will actually remember this smell, it will be nothing more than a phrase, a literary reference, an idea of an odour. Odourless therefore. (Semprún, cited in Woolfson 2014, p. 4)

War, as the crucial regional event, is here identified as collectively-lived traumatic experience. Such experience dominates contemporary collective memory. Abandoned spaces, as both scenographic afterimages and remnants of war, directly express vulnerability on the collective level. These traumatic aspects are now being preserved through the region's literature, film, museum exhibits and archives. However, this regional history, that is, the bitter collapse of the Yugoslav unity, is only selectively and briefly presented in sections of museums of the now individual republics. Each new country thus presents its own individually-developed and institutionally-approved perspectives on collective trauma.

This research frames the abandoned domestic dwellings as implicit monuments of the past. Yet finding a way to remember traumatic events without lessening their inscribed horrors is deeply complex. The selected period of regional history marks no true victors. This study asserts a shift from the treacherous view in which history is written by 'victors' and remembered by the 'conquered'.

The fact is, the past embodies two levels: explicative and ontological. Events that occurred remain forever as fact, yet interpretation of these events flies in multiple directions. As proposed by French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007), scenographic interpretation of the past (as employed in this research) agrees that: 'event is not entirely true or false, but rather oscillates between one, two or three octaves of truth' (Baudrillard, cited in Brejzek, Greisenegger & Wallen 2009, p. 6). It is right therefore, to abandon rigid perspectives on individually-established places of memory. Instead, our study treats the attack and abandonment of domestic dwellings as direct factual links to past. Intervening with scenographic strategies that 'read' and interpret space, establishing new relationships with existing domestic spaces, our goal is to frame these spaces as physical and factual survivors of history.

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4. Speculative Scenography

A. *TRAVEL*

This research is established on theoretical framing, historical context, field trips and a practical component. The practical component is informed by live actions and direct experiences, along with their faithful representation. Established on the basis of conceptual and performance art and photographic practice, it explores events and phenomena within historical and geographical contexts, that is, this research comprises a physical and conceptual search in civil-war conflict regions of SFR Yugoslavia. It is particularly concerned with locations of violent clashes between 1991 and 1995 in the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and later in Kosovo. I refer to my conceptual peregrinations as *TRAVELS*. The term implies physical movement, referring to verbs 'to go', 'to move' and 'to go from place to place for work-related purposes'. However, in the aftermath of ethnic conflict and trauma, *TRAVEL* also suggests psychological, emotional and spiritual movement and development. As an embodiment of both physical and conceptual movement, *TRAVEL* is to be comprehended as both a framework and a process of discovery and investigation.

Such a framework is established through the lens of scenography, and proposes that all scenographic concepts find their departure point in multiple forms of visual and spatial investigation. Scenography is a discipline deeply rooted in seeing and the experience of presenting.

Just as authors discover their inspiration in people they meet, dialogues they hear and diverse mentalities they interact with, scenographers collect visual material. Through drawings, photographs and physical interaction with discovered objects, scenographers interpret and analyse architectural forms, spaces, interior structures and objects. Contemporary scenographers commonly use field trips as strategies for discovery, accumulating sights, scenes, snapshots of locations and moments, remnants of events, physical traces and objects, while experiencing architectural forms from different ages and locations. Contemporary German scenographer Anna Viebrock explains this strategy:

> What I like to do the most of all is run around and look at things. Sometimes I discover or find things - including houses, spaces, structures, objects - that make my heart beat faster. Because I find them so beautiful or also so strange; or because I think I am seeing things that soon will no longer exist. It is something like an archeological interest in the visible fading of things. (Viebrock, cited in Adam et al. 2011, p. 8)

This research proposes that scenographic perspective can deepen our perception of war-torn domestic architecture. From a scenographic point of view, spaces and events are thoroughly interlaced. Space assigns validity to events and narratives, and acts as proof that an event has taken place. In this light, abandoned homes go beyond sites of personal and collective traumatic memory, and emerge as critical tools for comprehending history. Through acts of scenographic 'decoding' in terms of spatial and visual exploration and interpretation, the material and immaterial testimony of discovered sites becomes the prime witness to a collectively-lived traumatic past. In effect, the acts of violence that occurred in these destroyed spaces constitutes their present identity. Further, the present monumentality of these sites is derived from their acquired traumatic identity, and this monumental nature is contained in the haptic traces of the collective trauma.

TRAVEL begins as a conceptual art practice, and emphasises ideas and conceptual framings above physical objects. It identifies the obscure positions of abandoned, war-torn domestic dwellings in the present life of the region. SFR Yugoslavia, as a historical and geographical context, remains a basic reference in history and memory. War-torn domestic dwellings are real spaces, and their present state is a real remnant or product of a violent spectacle that marked the disintegration of the former unity. After the war, newly-formed countries independently established their new lives. Attacked, abandoned and vandalised homes remain as 'in-between zones', disconnected from the contemporary life of the region. Formally, they belong to a former 'motherland' that no longer exists.

TRAVEL aims to redefine the meaning of abandoned sites by redefining our present relationship with them. Our conceptual art practice reframes our relationship with the past by defining the sites as active material, precisely as mediums though which this relationship is established. Each destroyed 'home' represents a trace, a reflection, of the narrative of the past. Each interior space is a haptic record of a past moment. The found spaces physically incorporate traces of violently-interrupted human inhabitation. Each home reveals personal suffering and reflects personal trauma. Collectively, these homes represent tangible links to a historical past, and *TRAVEL* frames them as genuine survivors of history.

Conceptual framings of *TRAVEL* evolve into performative practice, embodying core elements of performance art: space, time, performing bodies and spectators, including interdependent interactions and relationships between all of these. Performative aspects of *TRAVEL* emerge through the physical co-presence of performers and spectators in the present. *TRAVELS* are framed as series of orchestrated live actions in which performers and their relationships and interactions become principal mediums. These live actions are ephemeral, and are established around physical movements, direct experiences, scenographic 'decoding', investigation and relationships that form between the performing bodies and spectators in framed physical and conceptual environments. These aspects are considered equally significant as the final artefacts.

TRAVEL develops as the performance of a physical and psychological quest through history, as the sum of collective experiences, personal experiences and memory. It embodies parallel conceptual levels, defined as 'internal' and 'external'. Internal levels follow a personal trajectory, established from the point of view of 'insider' and 'outsider'. The 'insider' point of view is derived from the *TRAVEL* as conceptualised and performed by a person born in the former unity who lived through terrible events during its disintegration. This perspective assigns layers of personal experience and memory. The 'outsider' treats the framed phenomena from the perspective of a person who was absent from the region for eight years - from 2003 to 2011.

Both perspectives 'read' and interpret the discovered abandoned and destroyed dwellings as complex sites that validate personal and collective memories of past violence. These are perceived as material manifestations of the intensity of physical and psychological trauma. While external levels of *TRAVEL* refer to physical movements and investigation of a region, they also embody theoretical framings and critical analysis of the events and phenomena. We should add that these are overlaid by complex emotional responses.

TRAVEL is therefore never a simple movement between destinations. Instead, it is always physically and psychologically active observation, engagement and analysis.

These live actions are interdisciplinary activities, where physical journeys across the geographic region of former SFR Yugoslavia constitute the mise-en-scene of a performance: interaction with other performers and spectators, interaction with physical and atmospheric qualities of abandoned space, photographic practice, sketching, sound recording and tactile interaction with discovered objects. The *TRAVELS* were established on a continuous strict rhythm, where repetition and consistency were significant to the performing process. All *TRAVELS* departed from Belgrade, the 'physical capital of a country that no longer exists'. Performances began in early morning or late at night. In three years, from 2011 till 2014, I made a series of field trips and performed five major *TRAVELS*. Performances lasted from eight to fourteen hours. Some *TRAVELS* were performed in one day, while others spanned two or a maximum four days.

The *TRAVELS* involve multiple performing bodies, who hold different roles. In interacting with attacked and vandalised homes, performers and spectators encounter physically and emotionally disturbing situations. Through this process, those who initially join the performance as spectators evolve into performers. Professor of Theatre Studies Erika Fischer-Lichte, in her work *The Transformative Power of Performance* (2008) traces performance art as 'an art event', and proposes that: '… members of audience became actors merely through the impact of shock and the power of provocation' (Fischer-Lichte 2008, p. 17).

Individual acts and relationships between performers emerge as genuine, direct responses to experience during *TRAVELS*, and are not scripted in advance. In these shared moments, strong emotional bonds develop between those involved. Spectators and performers base their views and experiences of encountered events, environments and situations on immediate impressions. These jointly-performed acts create a new reality for everyone involved. Here, attention shifts from understanding and witnessing events, locations or memories of trauma to actually experiencing them, '… and to cope with these experiences, which could not be supplanted there and then by reflection' (Fischer-Lichte 2008, p. 17). The past trauma is experienced through the materiality of its remnants. Such physically and emotionally challenging experiences initiate fear, shock, curiosity, sympathy, empathy and overall physical and emotional distress. These emotions then dominate metaphysical and semiotic experiences and interpretations.

The war-torn domestic dwellings represent climax points in the performance of the *TRAVELS,* whereby the homes are reshaped as sites of history. They expose the fragility of 'ordinary' traumatic narratives which are here echoed in the fragility of their monuments. From the perspective of our 'accelerated history' (Nora 1989) such 'monuments' often represent triviality. However, *TRAVEL* demands that they preserve what happened to 'ordinary' victims and survivors of trauma. The performance is thus concerned with preserving and building up an identity that takes the 'trivial' past into account. In this respect, *TRAVEL* redefines the intimate as monumental.

The live actions, direct experiences and relationships shared between performers, and between performers and their 'spectators', cannot be replicated in another environment. They establish a unique spatiality that emerges from the interaction of people and objects. Live actions, etc., do not produce a work of art that can thrive independent of these performances. However, photographic practice has been introduced to create artefacts that reflect the acts, experiences and relationships, resulting in sets of photographs as independent artefacts of the process, that are then exhibited in a spatial installation and in book form.

Fischer- Lichte sums up this process:

> The artist, subject 1, creates a distinct, fixed, and transferable artefact that exists independently of its creator. This condition allows the beholder, subject 2, to make it the object of their perception and interpretation. The fixed and transferable artefact, i.e. the nature of the work of art as an object, ensures that the beholder can examine it repeatedly, continuously discover new structural elements, and attribute different meanings to it. (Fischer-Lichte 2008, p.17)

B. Scenographic artefacts

This research recognises that our contemporary epoch is dominated by 'image'. Tarkovsky explains the act of image:

> The function of the image, as Gogol[6] said, is to express life itself, both ideas and arguments about life. It does not signify life or symbolise it, but embodies it, expressing its uniqueness'. (Tarkovsky 2006, p. 111)

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[6] Tarkovsky refers to Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852), the famous Russian novelist and dramatist.

Scenography was inherently conceived to create and present images to spectators, to extend the theatrical experience through the presentation of developed images. Images, paintings and photographs are perceived as artefacts, as reflections of their own time. Scenographically, they embody dual roles: as a source of information about a time long gone, and as objects and tools in the creation of scenographic environments and unique experiences. My own research introduces the photographic image as its principal artefact.

This research is rooted in contemporary scenographic practice, yet proposes that scenography needs to invert its common processes. Instead of creating images through spatial and visual manipulations, scenography here acts to preserve and present the existing 'images' of commonly invisible sites of history that are captured during *TRAVELS*. It then establishes events and environments in which it acts as an agent of experiences and interactions between spectators and the presented images. These events echo fundamental notions of theatrical experience, conceived on a proposal of Hans-Thies Lehman: 'Theatre means the collectively-spent and used-up lifetime in the collectively-breathed air of that space in which the performing and the spectating take place' (Lehman 2006, p. 17).

In the context of this research, scenography develops two conceptual dialogues between abandoned homes and gathered spectators. My anthology of artefacts was initially exhibited as a spatial installation in Sydney in 2014. Conceptual framing of this installation was inspired by the proposal of French theatre revolutionary Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), who, in pointing to the decline of human sensibility, urged that: 'we need above all a theatre that wakes us up: nerves and heart' (Artaud, 1958, p. 84). Artaud understood theatre as a physical expression in space, and argued that in the context of Western theatre text has for decades played tyrant over meaning. He urged the creation of theatrical experiences based on a unique language developed between thoughts and gestures. He defines this as 'physical language':

> …composed of everything filling the stage, everything that can be shown and materially expressed on stage, intended first of all to appeal to the senses, instead of being addressed primarily to the mind, like spoken language (Artaud, cited in McKinney and Butterworth 2009, p. 33).

In response, this research presents its photographic artefacts in a new geographical, historical and ideological context, and by doing so creates new and independent experiences. The most personal 'space', a former home, takes a leading role in a newly-formed relationship. Through my spatial installation, the reality of attacks on 'the little intimacies' (Bachelard 2014) is rediscovered and presented to public view.

Thus, abandoned spaces emerge as sites with multiple layers of meaning, the physical manifestation of trauma, and genuine places of memory. They are able to deal with the tension between past and present, and between reality and fiction. The reality of a person's trauma emerges as an artefact of a violently 'staged' narrative that is observed and experienced by unknown audiences.

This scenographically-established environment emerges through strategies that include theatricality, narrative, spatial organisation, arrangement of objects, light, framing, and strategies of focalisation. The spatial composition intentionally mimics the traditional theatrical configuration. The framed artefacts are 'staged' on the back wall, and are symmetrically lit from two angles. Such spatial composition resembles the theatrical proscenium arch, while each framed image represents a constituent of the collective narrative.

Individually-framed domestic spaces are treated as fragments of the 'physical language' of the past. The abandonment of the found spaces, and the overall traces of war, violence, vandalism and trauma, along with the absence of people yet with present traces of their previously-inscribed narratives, are all to be read as solid pieces of the material language of a framed theatricality. Instead of being directed exclusively to the mind as spoken words are, this concrete 'physical language' addresses, as Artaud suggests, 'the soul' and 'the heart' of the gathered spectators. Spectators are invited to perform close visual investigations. They can move in front of the 'proscenium' and by engaging with images are able to 'see' real domestic interiors shaped by war, by politics, by the performance of real violence. In addition, they are invited to bring personal associations and memories to interpret the installation.

The same anthology of images is presented in a book as a collection of artefacts. This research proposes that reading a book can also be a scenographically-driven experience. Jorge Louis Borges (1899-1986) tells us: '(I think of) reading a book as no less an experience than travelling (or falling in love)' (Borges 2013, p. 14). This research recognises that the experience of reading involves explorations of unfamiliar, real and fictional worlds. It embraces the fact that during reading, the mind does not necessarily distinguish between the process of reading about an experience and actually experiencing it.

This research seeks to build a relationship between the spectators and the destroyed and abandoned homes, that allows for a direct and intimate experience of these presented inscriptions of trauma. The experience is framed through the book as a medium for intimate communion between the viewer and the artefacts.

This relationship is inspired by the proposal of contemporary French artist Christian Boltanski, who proposes that humans have two deaths: we die once when we actually die, and for the second time when no-one in the world recognises our photograph (Boltanski 2009).

The book of artefacts compiles images of existing layers of spatial experiences, inscriptions of trauma, and traces of previous human narratives. It preserves layers of memory and traumatic experience by creating new experiences with unknown ‘readers’ and ‘spectators’. This research suggests that each interaction with the book and each process of ‘reading’ is unique. Each reader renders his own experience of the presented narrative, because the book is directed, as Artaud suggested, to emotions, to senses, to heart and soul.

The collection is produced according to a series of scenographic strategies, namely, physical and conceptual investigations, analysis, ‘decoding’, interpretation, framing and presenting. Scenography commonly ‘writes’ by using elements such as shape, colour, light, arrangement and organisation of objects as ‘words’. In this context, it captures and ‘presents’ existing historically-significant spatial narratives. A book embodies inherent connotations and skills, and it prompts familiar actions. Through the acts of reading, interpreting and analysing, the reader enters a kind of immersive experience.

The unifying aim in presenting the final artefacts in two forms (spacial installation and book) is to define places of memory by recording and presenting ‘banal’ aspects of human lives, that is, locations that resist being turned into national, historical or heroic stereotypes. The installation and book, as independent collections of artefacts, lift, through the intervention of scenographic methods, the ‘banalities’ of human existence into the sphere of truly significant objects.

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Abandoned and often remote, these war-torn homes remain cut off from the re-making of the region's official history. Here, reinterpreted as monumental sites of history, they are ready to take what Benjamin calls a 'tiger's leap' (Benjamin 1969, p. 261) into the future. Benjamin's leap thus establishes a new role for history: reorientation to future. His phrase urges revolution, yet embodies no guarantee that it will occur naturally. Instead, it requires the intervention of a revolutionary, namely the *artist,* to initiate the action.

Through the intervention of scenographic strategies, and through *TRAVEL* as a practical component of this research, abandoned domestic dwellings as sites of history, are unchained from the ceaseless flow in which they remain trapped. By being entirely reoriented in a new reading, the destroyed domestic spaces emerge as a legacy for the future.

This research investigates the wanton destruction of domestic space, whereby violence alone defines the significance of the violated sites for the survivors of a collective traumatic past. The brutal attacks in the region of the former SFR Yugoslavia represent acts of ethnic and cultural cleansing through the destruction of that domestic space. Our process demonstrates that its meaning has metamorphosed from being a target of violence to becoming a witness and a monument to collectively-lived trauma.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF ‘HOME’

1. 1. ‘Home’

This research identifies ‘home’ as the principal elaboration and most significant infrastructure of human existence, representing a dominant force in the formation of personal and collective identity. It is a concept that embodies specific psychological association and significance for each individual. (As such, the term is here given quotation marks.) ‘Home’ here does not exclusively refer to built domestic structures, but to the embodiment of myriad associations and relationships to physical structure, and to the idea of rootedness to diverse locations. This research proposes that ‘home’ represents a site unique in human experience: a complex construct of historic, symbolic, cultural and spiritual elements, physical characteristics and psychological attachments nurtured within our dwelling sites. ‘Home’ exists on various existential levels, referring variously to places of residence, houses, neighbourhoods, geographic regions and (not rarely) entire countries. The process of comprehending country, native village or birthplace as ‘home’ derives from ancient literary texts and poems in which authors describe experiences of banishment and exodus. These have proved deeply relevant to the physical, historical and conceptual contexts of this research.

This research has meanwhile narrowed the analysis of ‘home’ to the functional qualities of the physical dwelling in terms of emotional significance, belonging and identity. Here, ‘home’ and ‘house’ are understood as separate concepts, which when united, offer unique experiences. Accordingly, ‘house means shelter, and implies edges, walls, doors and roofs - and the whole repertory of the fabric’ (Rykwert 1991, p. 54). Meanwhile, ‘home’ transcends the complexity of the first term, and assigns a powerful psychological dimension: ‘home is where one starts from’ (Rykwert 1991, p. 51). In short, ‘home’ marks a focal point of our individual being in this world, the place according to which we understand our orientation in the world. Our ‘home’ comprises essential personalised space, our ‘territory’ the site of everyday activities, of personal, cultural, historical and social relationships. As a core and human need for safety and protection, ‘home’ represents the psychological rootedness of individuals to certain physical sites, to childhood memories; it is a private shelter in which individuals are free to orchestrate their being in the world.

Our dwelling unit inherently develops both from need for protection from environmental factors and natural disasters, and from the urge to grow and evolve as human beings. Practical skills by which people successfully manipulate building materials, along with the development of complex spatial structures, are recognised as humanity's progress against environmental factors and (often harsh) climate conditions. By the same token, personal growth and spiritual development evolved through the personalisation of our spaces. Such personalisation assigned to domestic dwellings notions of belonging, identity and heritage. In short, while 'walls' define physical territory, 'home' defines a person as a social being.

'Home' initially took on domestic associations in seventeenth and eighteenth century England, where the term increasingly began to refer to a house or domestic dwelling. Since the nineteenth century, the term has been regularly associated with domestic architecture. With the triumph of ideals of privacy and comfort, the house emerges as the principal element of identity and self-definition - the 'home'. Architectural history marks the development of 'home' as a simultaneous development of built cottages as the means of protection and survival, and as symbols of ownership in which the resident becomes a 'subject of space'. Such an established relationship defines domestic space as a personal (architectural) object.

This research suggests 'home' be comprehended as an enclosed 'dwelling unit' on two levels. First, the physical boundaries of domestic interiors represent the division between inside and outside worlds; that is, between private and public experiences. The private three-dimensional domestic enclosure, offering safety and protection, also grants the power to refuse or allow access to others. 'Home' as a physical dwelling unit thereby offers the sense of enclosure and refuge - crucial aspects of human comfort, security and peace. Further, domestic interiors allow us to perform basic functional tasks such as cooking, eating, sleeping, bathing and so on. This functional level of comprehension embraces the relationships established between people and their immediate surroundings through their interaction with objects within a house; that is, their existential site. These objects represent focal points around which humans organise their daily activities, that is, the objects embody meaning that is shaped by their functional potential for human activity. On this level, we comprehend our surroundings through the 'affordability' of objects: an opening in the wall allows contact with the outside world, a smooth floor surface allows easy movement through the space, a bedroom allows privacy and intimacy, and a house *in toto* grants shelter and protection.

Conceptually, ‘home’ therefore represents a unique reflection on the human condition, as well as a specific personal and cultural symbol that successfully traces historical, social and personal relationships within particular epochs. ‘Dwelling as action’ is the prime definition of human existence in domestic space. A ‘home’ as a material embodiment of ‘dwelling’ represents the firmest manifestation of the inhabitant’s lifestyle. Hereby, the dwelling space reflects social values and individual aspirations. ‘Home’ is thus to be observed according to its cultural and historical contexts, and our understanding of it inevitably changes according to prevailing cultural, social, historical and economic values. In different epochs, our comprehension of ‘home’ shifts on both the functional and emotional level. This research notes that in our contemporary world, domestic dwellings have become a dominant force, strongly embodying individualisation. It recognises that: ‘Each home is a miniature, segmented universe, its rooms, basements, attics, garages, patios, and porches the equivalent of galaxies, solar systems, nebulae, and intergalactic strings’ (Aronson 2005, p. 41).

In the context of the former SFR Yugoslavia (dating from 1945 to 1992), both historical and contemporary concepts of ‘home’ refer to the family house. However, the concept is also profoundly linked to hometown, geographical region and homeland. For many former Yugoslavs, SFR Yugoslavia, as the former motherland, bears the most strongest notions of home. This research concentrates on the significance of the domestic dwelling in the context of their assault and abandonment in the aftermath of the region’s civil war. Our understandings and associations of ‘home’ are thus specifically analysed in terms of destroyed and abandoned dwelling sites.

The terms ‘dwelling’ and ‘to dwell’ imply permanency and stability. Such implications infuse the comprehension of ‘home’ in the selected region. For the people of the region, the dwelling place embodies the physical and emotional relationship with ancestors, achieved through the continuous act of dwelling in the same ‘home’. A family house, particularly in rural regions of the former unity, represents the primary thread in comprehending personal identity and belonging. ‘Home’ is therefore understood as a particular inhabited microcosm, both past and present. Physical interior dwelling space becomes a ‘home’ for multiple generations of the same family. A family house and the land on which it is built were understood to belong to a family forever. Thereby, association with ‘home’, in the minds of the people transcends the functional qualities of the domestic dwelling; it moves in the realms of pure emotion.

The concept of ‘home’ has always been a crucial focus for former Yugoslavs. The architectural history of the region places domestic architecture at the epicentre of human life and development. People have invested more than physical strength, materials and economic resources in the building of their family houses. Instead, between the builder and the completed architectural object, they have invested intense emotional and psychological relationships. Such profoundly interwoven physical and psychological acts and relationships rarely occur in other aspects of the region’s cultural heritage. Domestic dwellings are thereby assigned a notion of sacredness. ‘Home’ particularly in this region’s rural areas, is comprehended as the materialisation of the owner’s personal constitution, ancestry, achieved respect and personal identity within the local community. In short, ‘home’ as a domestic object is inscribed with meaning that transcends its physical existence.

As a permanent place of residence, ‘home’ here also embodies a strong social dimension. It marks a place where one stays with family and friends, full of pleasant and blissful associations. ‘Home’ as a multi-layered concept, that may include a physical site, a house, place of birth, neighbourhood or town, profoundly embodies notions of roots, family, intimacy, privacy, refuge, peace and habitat. The psychological dimension of ‘home’ manifests in the human ability to realise sophisticated needs that transcend the physical and functional needs of a house. Thereby, the individual comprehension of ‘home’ is closely linked to the development of personal identity.

In the context of this region, the family house as ‘home’ is strongly conceived in terms of local vernacular architecture. General concepts of vernacular architecture date back to the sixteenth century, while an explicit use of the term occurs in 1818. Its meaning relates to the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘anonymous’. The architect and historian Bernard Rudofsky (1905-1988) defined this early architectural practice as ‘an architecture without an architect’ (Rudofsky 1964, p.7). Paul Oliver, in his work *Built to Meet Needs: Cultural Issues in Vernacular Architecture* (2006), traces the definition of vernacular architecture through the etymological roots of the terms ‘architect’, ‘architecture’ and ‘vernacular’. He seeks the Greek origin of ‘architect’, and arrives at ‘archi’ and ‘tekton’, which translate as ‘chief builder’. He also translates ‘architecture’ as the ‘science of building’, and ‘vernacular’ - from the Latin ‘vernaculus’ - as ‘native’. Oliver thereby proposes ‘native science of building’ as the appropriate definition of vernacular architecture.

This mode of architecture embodies unique building principles. Dominant features include: adaptability to region and landscape, recognition of local needs, materials and local traditions and customs, and acknowledgment of prevailing social and economic conditions. Vernacular builders nurture a profound relationship with nature, which in turn governs their most significant building methods. They face the reality of climatic and environmental conditions in their regions, and develop domestic objects that respond to these conditions.

The development of vernacular architecture of the SFR Yugoslavia region was spontaneous, evolving from temporary habitats made of wood, mud and stone, to the use of contemporary materials. The late Serbian architect and architectural scholar Ranko Radović (1935-2005), whose architectural work encouraged a unique approach to architectural and cultural production in the second half of the twentieth century, defined vernacular architecture in SFR Yugoslavia as an approach to life, or a perception of the world, rather than a style. Radović (2007) suggested that traditional architecture represents a domain of genuineness and authenticity, that vernacular builders build houses in accordance with everyday existential needs. He compares the existential urge to build a family house with that of believers in building a church; the latter, Radović explains, build their local churches, monasteries, cathedrals or mosques in accordance with their belief, deep respect and celebration of their saints according to their faith in God.

Vernacular architecture dominated rural areas of the former unity, showing that everyday human activities were strongly related to earth, agriculture and close contact with natural surroundings. Distinct geographical regions of the former SFR Yugoslavia displayed a variety of structural architectural concepts, and rural architecture displayed many core qualities for the development of tradition: houses were built of materials found near each site, and ancient customs, often unique to each region, were applied during the building process. One favoured custom, rooted in all the regions, was the planting of a tree near the new house to represent the family's guardian spirit.

Vernacular domestic objects also embodied local characteristics and the mentality of inhabitants. Vernacular builders principally aimed to meet the existential needs of the family - which dictated spatial organisation, functionality, structural shape and overall quality of the final built object. Vernacular builders strongly understood their families' dwelling needs as well as their own building abilities. Houses in the region were commonly built by their owners, aided by family members and local builders. These people had extensive practical knowledge rather than formal education.

Quality examples of local vernacular architectural aesthetics are now rarely found in the independent republics. A prolonged process of industrialisation in SFR Yugoslavia was mirrored in big transformations of its rural areas. For this reason, after World War II vernacular architecture was pushed to the margins of social and spatial phenomena. Much of it suffered the consequences of shifting political, social and economic factors, while many examples were utterly destroyed in the ethnic conflicts of the 1990s. The remaining examples hold strong integrity, revealing elements of the daily life and needs of former inhabitants. Despite all, specific elements of the architectural style remain, particularly in terms of the building process as a marker of family relationships. The process of building a 'home' remains one of the most significant events in life in the region. People become rooted to a place where they build, and potential relocations are associated with negative feelings and displacement. Before the mass migrations to cities in the former unity during industrialisation, such moves were almost always initiated by major traumatic events such as wars and natural catastrophes.

1. 2. 'Home' as a key phenomenological object

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, Gaston Bachelard, the French philosopher, poet and phenomenologist, defines the house as a quintessential phenomenological object. In *The Poetics of Space* (1958), a seminal phenomenological study of human existence in space, Bachelard identifies house as a site that offers 'heavenly' protection and security. 'To dwell' surpasses banal acts of physical residence in the dwelling unit; rather the house represents a site of the most profound human experience. Bachelard recognises it as a root of poetic image, where poetry lifts the experience of a house above descriptions and verbalisations. He recognises a direct link between poetry and reality, and asserts that 'imagination augments reality' (Bachelard 2014, p. 26). That is, poetry intensifies the reality of observed objects. He performs a phenomenological interrogation of the human being in the world by analysing intimate spaces that represent dominant poetic themes. He recognises the domestic interior, with its principal components, as a significant coordinate of human experience of intimacy and bliss. Bachelard defines the house as an object that can be read, and as a psychological diagram that guides writers and poets in their analysis of intimacy. He thus performs lyrical interrogations of diverse areas of the house as sites of our intimate lives. Clearly, 'house' represents more than the physical domestic object. In phenomenological terms '… our house is our corner of the world' (Bachelard 2014, p. 26), and thus frames our initial universe.

Bachelard uniquely 'reads' the house and its poetics, specifically the significance he assigns to individual objects that make up the house. Each embodies unity and complexity, and he discovers even the 'humblest' dwellings as complex and beautiful.

Bachelard maintains that our understanding of home is defined in early childhood, that in fact a house embodies 'maternal features'. 'Without it a man would be a dispersed being' (Bachelard 2014, p. 29). From the very beginning, we are conscious of 'home' as a place from which we depart to experience our surroundings and establish other relationships. In this process, our 'home' represents the most prominent landmark. We depart and return after investigating and discovering the outer world; thus we understand 'home' as the 'nucleus' of our life. Experiences and memories of our childhood home are deeply significant as they store comprehension of our first 'universe', and they establish narrative threads if and when we go on to inhabit a new house. In phenomenological terms, these prime memories and experiences frame our adult understanding of the world.

Bachelard asserts that our vision of 'house' transcends the domain of description, which often lists a dwelling's banal qualities and features. Instead, he suggests that intense attachment to a house as 'home' is discovered by bringing it down to the 'original shell' (Bachelard 2014, p. 26). This 'original shell' embodies numerous delicate and intimate layers of attachment to one's 'corner of the world', established through intimate experiences, habitual acts of dwelling, and memories. The sum of these layers defines our rootedness to a house as a dwelling. Each secluded area of a house, along with individual pieces of furniture and objects within it, initiates distinct feelings and sensory experiences. Our uniquely intimate and personal collection of experiences and emotions creates our dwelling experience, so that Bachelard defines 'home' as the sum of intimacy and memory. His phenomenological interrogation becomes a materialisation of the soul, achieved through poetic and literary images.

Bachelard proposes that all inhabited spaces rise above the geometrical value of space. He asserts that: '… all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home' (Bachelard 2014, p. 27). House, along with the individual objects it contains, is inscribed with psychological and physical experience. Bachelard describes an open cabinet as a 'world revealed', drawers as 'places of secrets', and our (seemingly) routine acts of inhabiting as manifestations of numberless realms of human existence. He discovers these individual elements as mirroring the activities of hiding, discovering, preserving and memorising. In phenomenological terms, such domestic objects represent the centre, the order and coherence of a house, the protection from chaos.

Bachelard, in asserting: '… thanks to the house, a great many of our memories are housed…' (Bachelard 2014, p. 30) introduces a system of 'topoanalysis', defined as an 'auxiliary of psychoanalysis'. For him, psychoanalysts may discover a blueprint for understanding the soul by shifting the focus to the 'localisation' of memory. Topoanalysis is in fact a psychological survey of the sites of our intimate experiences and memories. Bachelard suggests we return to these 'refuges' through our dreams and daydreams. For him, memories remain still: '…the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are' (Bachelard 2014, p. 31), while space is defined as a medium for comprehending the conscious and unconscious self within the world. To this end, he examines the intimacies of a house, room by room, and connects the physical room with dreamed, imagined, read and remembered spaces. In doing so he bonds a person's past and present experiences, in fact framing space, rather than time, to evoke memories.

Bachelard applies topoanalysis, which relates directly to topophilia - literally 'love of place' or profound emotional relationship to a house - to examine diverse areas of 'home'. Stairwells, attics, living rooms and basements are all defined as intimate sites that shape experience. Bachelard further links physical environments with the ways they are subconsciously preserved in the mind. He defines chests, drawers and wardrobes as sites and images of intimacy '…in which human beings, great dreamers of locks, keep or hide their secrets' (Bachelard 2014, p. 95). A wardrobe, for example, is defined as a centre of the underlying order, guarding the house from chaos and the dispersal of images. For Bachelard, these locations of order and secrecy represent prominent notions of intimacy, through which we develop affectionate relationships within a house. Similarly, Bachelard suggests that small boxes, chests and caskets exemplify our urge for secrecy and the guarding of possessions. Locks on such intimate locations are, beyond guardianship, also a 'psychological threshold'.

'Home' for Bachelard is experienced not only through reality, physical inhabitation and rational thought, but through dreams and lyrical thoughts. People create a meta-level of spatial experience through imagination and dream. Our intimate experience of 'home' does not necessarily exist as a linear narrative akin to our temporal being. Memories of a house and its individual areas do not simply exist in the past. Instead, past is interwoven with present, and remains as a constituent of ongoing spatial experience:

> Through dreams, the various dwelling-places in our lives copenetrate and retain the treasures of former days. And after we are in the new house, when memories of other places we have lived in come back to us, we travel to the land of Motionless Childhood, motionless the way all immemorial things are. We live fixations, fixations of happiness. We comfort ourselves by re-living memories of protection. (Bachelard 2014, p. 28)

Phenomenologically, 'home' represents the fusion of our thoughts, memories and dreams. Bachelard precisely defines 'daydream' as the principal binding force in this unity. The most significant aspect of a house is that it '…shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace' (Bachelard 2014, p. 28). Bachelard assigns 'daydreaming', along with 'thought' and 'experience', as defining our primary values. Accordingly, house, as a site that allows protection to perform these activities, is recognised as a space of bliss. Experiences and memories of past and present, with open awareness of the future as a constant of spatial experience, inscribe each house with dynamics that oppose or stimulate. As such, a house embodies the endless continuities of life.

1. 3. 'Home' as the foothold of identity

> If the 'centre of the world' (thus) designates an ideal, public goal, or 'lost paradise', the word 'home' also has closer and more concrete meaning. It simply tells us that any man's personal world has its centre. The *Odyssey*, however, shows that the home, too, is easily lost and that it takes a 'hard journey' to find it again. (Norberg-Schulz 2006, p. 33)

Norwegian architect and architectural scholar Christian Norberg-Schulz (whose theories were touched on in the Introduction) offers a phenomenological approach to architecture in which he aims to 'develop the idea that architectural space may be understood as a concretisation of environmental schemata or images, which form a necessary part of man's general orientation or 'being in the world' (Norberg-Schulz 2006, p. 11). Norberg-Schulz observes the concept of 'place' in its relationship to space, and qualifies space as holding 'existential roots'. For him, existential space is structured in schemata and domains, directions and paths. Man's intrinsic focus on space, he argues '…stems from a need to grasp vital relations in his environment, to bring meaning and order into a world of events and actions' (Norberg-Schulz 2006, p. 14).

Norberg-Schulz identifies levels of existential space, specifying ‘house’ as a private space common to the ‘urban level’. He defines the ‘urban level’ as one defined by structures determined by human actions. ‘House’, as an architectural space in which we feel ‘at home’, may in Norberg-Schulz’s terms be described as a ‘concretisation’ of existential space. ‘House’ is here understood as both a physical object and an elaborate conceptual dimension. For Norberg-Schulz, house both satisfies the physical needs of its inhabitants and assembles our unique human world: ‘House is imagined as a system of meaningful activities concretised as a space consisting of places with varying character’ (Norberg-Schulz 2006, p. 57).

Norberg-Schulz proposes that our ‘home’ represents the centre of our world, discovering its origin in early childhood. For each individual, ‘home’ and ‘house as dwelling place’ represent initial benchmarks. People orientate their existence and establish personal and social relationships in accordance with ‘home’ as the dominant reference point for existence and identification. Norberg-Schulz cites a conversation with his (twelve-year-old) son, asking him to describe his environment. His son tellingly began by acknowledging ‘home’ as a place he must leave in order to visit any other ‘place’.

For Norberg-Schulz, ‘to dwell’ means to belong to a given ‘place’. The act of ‘dwelling’ is the prime human characteristic, and through it we create meaningful relationships with our environment. Through these relationships and identifications we assign notions of presence and ‘being in the world’. Individual existence is defined through our continual search for personal focal points within the wider spatial construct. We continuously strive to discover a place with which we can ‘identify’ and according to which we can ‘orientate’ within the wider environments where we exist. It is here proposed that a site in which an act of ‘dwelling’ takes place is defined by qualitative and quantitative characteristics. The sum of both characteristics creates a unity which defines the concept of ‘place’. Norberg-Schulz sees ‘place’ as a dual concept made up of factual, physical boundaries and subjective experiential foundations.

Norberg-Schulz conceives ‘place’ as ‘evidently an integral part of existence’ (Norberg-Schulz 1991, p. 6). It represents a ‘…totality made up of concrete things having material substance, shape, texture, and colour’ (Norberg-Schulz 1991, p. 6). The unity of these elements defines the ‘character’ of ‘space’, while space represents the essence of ‘place’. Norberg-Schulz asserts that the structure of place consists of two elements: ‘space’ as a three-dimensional arrangement of elements, and ‘character’ as its overall atmosphere. ‘Character’ is a multi-layered concept.

In the context of a dwelling place, it is not merely the solid form that represents the constituent element and essence of spatial definition, but is a cognitive atmosphere as well. Norberg-Schulz distinguishes between ‘space’ and ‘character’ by defining the act of dwelling as a profound unity of relationship between a person and her dwelling place. When a person ‘dwells’, she is physically situated in ‘space’, and simultaneously exposed to the unique ‘character’ of the chosen living environment.

Norberg-Schulz introduces two psychological elements, ‘orientation’ and ‘identification’, as principal functions of the process of ‘dwelling’. If a person aims to establish an existential foothold, she needs to be able to ‘orientate’, that is, be aware of where she exists. At the same time, a person needs to ‘identify’ personally with the environment in which she dwells. That is, one ‘… has to know *how* he is in a certain place’ (Norberg-Schulz 1991, p. 19). The significance of ‘orientation’ links to the sense of safety and peace within a system where we recognise familiar and defined reference points. Norberg-Schulz suggests that in order to be able to ‘orientate’ in accordance with the ‘centre’ from which we depart, we need to be able to ‘identify’ with this centre.

Norberg-Schulz explains the need to identify with elements of our surroundings, as the urge to establish secureness and belonging. This he connects with the concept of ‘sacred places’, symbolically represented in different cultures as mountains, hills, churches or temples. He explains: ‘In many legends, the ‘centre of the world’ is concretised as a tree or a pillar symbolising a vertical *axis mundi.* Mountains were also looked upon as points where sky and earth meet. The ancient Greeks placed the ‘navel’ of the world (omphalos) in Delphi while the Romans considered their Capitol as caput mundi. For Islam the Ka’aba is still the centre of the world’ (Norberg-Schulz 2006, p. 32). Norberg-Schulz goes on to suggest that, on the personal level of existence, ‘home’ represents our ‘axis mundi’. That is, our ‘home’ represents a symbolic centre of the world, a site in which heaven connects to earth.

For Norberg-Schulz, a ‘house’ gives a person his place in the world. As the centre, it represents the familiar in contrast to the unfamiliar. Norberg-Schulz often searches through poetry and literature for descriptions of the relationship between ‘home’ and its inhabitants. He quotes the Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz (1911-2004): ‘I say Mother. And my thoughts are of you, oh, House. House of the lovely dark summers of my childhood’ (Milosz, cited in Norberg-Schulz 2006, p. 56).

Norberg-Schulz sees 'house' as particularly significant in its interior aspect, that satisfies the need to be situated and to have shelter. The sense of belonging is experienced by understanding a house and by identifying with it on both physical and psychological levels. Interior space, as the most significant aspect of house, allows us to move inside, to be alone, to be protected. A person holds the power to allow or refuse access to others in her private dwelling. That is, each individual holds authority to allow or refuse 'the unfamiliar' to enter. Likewise, the interior space marks the point from which we depart for other realms of our existence.

Each individual discovers their microcosm in the interior aspect of their house. For Norberg-Schulz, the interior replicates the essential structure of the environment, defined as earth, heaven (sky) and the optical array. Our comprehension and experience of 'place' is comprised of different aspects: surfaces we walk on, things that exist above, elements we find in our surroundings. The floor of a house represents the earth, the ceiling becomes heaven, and the walls limit the optic array. Norberg-Schulz here assigns particular significance to the walls, which he claims hold the leading role in shaping 'character'. Walls, he explains, are points where inside and outside forces merge, and mark the point where architecture exists. They create a boundary between the private and public domains, and represent the 'face' the house expresses to the outer world.

Meanwhile, the atmosphere of a house is a manifestation of its identity. Atmosphere does not come from outside, and neither is it an isolated phenomenon. Instead, the 'character' of the space is the relationship between inner and outer worlds, and gives overall meaning to life. Atmosphere is to be seen as a constituent part of the person in the world. The interior only gains the qualities of 'place' once we establish our life inside, marking the moment when we genuinely 'dwell'. The interior meanwhile, depends on numerous spatial elements. Norberg-Schulz identifies openings such as doors and windows as significant elements that shape the 'character' of 'place' and develop the room's atmosphere. He also names the interior colours, materials and finishes as significant character-determining aspects. For Norberg-Schulz, the aim is always to experience the room in relationship with its surroundings.

Norberg-Schulz asserts that the discourses of social science have failed to provide significant qualitative definitions of the concept of 'place'. Citing deficient conceptualisation, he proposes we seek new definitions of place. He turns to the domains of art, architecture, poetry, literature and the work of phenomenologists such as Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gaston Bachelard and Otto Bollnow.

In his key work *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1980), Norberg-Schulz develops a unique method of phenomenological thinking that furthers Heidegger's concepts of 'dwelling' and habitation, demonstrating the extent to which one's personal identity is a result of belonging to a place. Norberg-Schulz seeks to: '… investigate the physical implications of architecture rather than its practical side, although I certainly admit that there exists an interrelationship between the two aspects' (Norberg-Schulz 1991, p. 5).

The main focus of Norberg-Schulz's phenomenology of architecture is that of 'genius loci', explained as a spirit of place. 'This spirit gives life to people and places, accompanies them from birth to death, and determines their character or essence' (Norberg-Schulz 1991, p. 18). To be existentially rooted, a person needs to be open to the typology of their environment. That is, we need to establish our 'being in the world' in accordance with the 'genius loci' of the place where we exist. That spirit of place is defined by the aspects or things it consists of, that, is, our dwelling units. A house should mirror the 'genius loci' of its environment. By doing so, the house manifests how we 'orient' and 'identify' with place. For Norberg-Schulz, to create objects and things, that is houses and dwelling units, means to interpret the structure and character of the environment.

According to Norberg-Schulz, we develop objects of identification through the process of building, and assign meaning to life by developing physical and psychological links with a selected dwelling place. Analysis of the relationship between 'place' and human identity allows Norberg-Schulz to understand the symbolic meaning of the building process, which for him complements the study of its functional dimensions. Hereby, he defines those who build as creators of 'place', and identifies buildings as objects and things. He also asserts that the environmental character of architecture represents its essential quality, which as an object of identification offers people their prime existential stronghold. If notions of architecture are treated purely in logical terms, the concrete environmental character of architecture may be lost. Norberg-Schulz thereby promotes 'genius loci' as representing the sense people have of a place. 'Genius loci' stands for human understanding of a place as the sum of all physical and symbolic values in nature and the human environment. He therefore sees the phenomenological challenge of his work as the revival of the poetic dimension in objects and things. That lost relationship between diverse elements upon which a life is established, needs to be reestablished.

Norberg-Schulz sees Heidegger as the core influence on his thinking about 'dwelling', defining the term as synonymous with the existential foothold, as the existential purpose of architecture. Norberg-Schulz follows Heidegger's definition of architecture as 'concretisation' of existential space, suggesting that this concept can be explained through 'gathering' and 'things'. 'The word 'thing' originally meant 'gathering', and the meaning of anything consists in what it gathers' (Norberg-Schulz 1991, p. 5). Norberg-Schulz then quotes Heidegger: 'A thing gathers world' (Heidegger, cited in Norberg-Schulz, 1991 p. 5), and merges his interpretation of architecture with Heidegger's 'gathering': 'The existential purpose of building (architecture) is therefore to make a site become place, that is, to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment' (Norberg-Schulz 1991, p. 18).

The essence of Norberg-Schulz's interpretation of 'genius loci' is discovered in the concluding chapters of *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, where he presents case studies on the cities of Prague, Khartoum and Rome.
The Prague study is most significant in the context of this research:

> Here all houses have deep roots in layers of history, and from these roots they rise up, having individual names which suggest a legendary past. Architecturally these roots are expressed by heavy and massive ground-floors, low arcades and deeply-set openings. (Norberg-Schulz 1991, p. 75)

Norberg-Schulz here shows that we may proceed directly to understanding the relationship between architectural objects and concepts of identity without having to turn to the conceptual definitions of each term. By analysing the transformations occurring in 1970s Prague, he shows how the city adjusted to its newly-introduced functions:

> Today Prague is different and still the same. The cosmopolitan unity is gone and the colourful popular life of the past has disappeared. The economic structure has also undergone profound changes, and the old city merchants have had to accommodate new functions and institutions. But the place is still there with its urban spaces and its character, beautifully restored with its Late Baroque polychromy, allowing for an orientation and identification which goes beyond the security or threat offered by the immediate economic or political system. From the new residential neighbourhoods people go to old Prague to get a confirmation of their identity. Without the old centre, Prague would today be sterile and the inhabitants would be reduced to alienated ghosts. (Norberg-Schulz 1991, p. 107)

He continues by quoting Prague native Franz Kafka (1883-1924), who describes his impressions when an old Ghetto was torn down around 1900:

> They are still alive in us, the dark corners, the mysterious alleys, blind windows, dirty courtyards, noisy taverns and secretive inns. We walk about the broad streets of the new town, but our steps and looks are uncertain. We tremble inwardly as we used to do in the old miserable lanes. Our hearts know nothing yet of any clearance. The unsanitary old ghetto is much more real to us than our new, hygienic surroundings. We walk about as in a dream, and are ourselves only a ghost of past times. (Kafka, cited in Norberg-Schulz 1991, pp. 107-108)

Norberg-Schulz's Prague study shows how identity is profoundly interwoven with memory. While personal memory is a personal interpretation of an event, collective memory represents the shared knowledge of many people in a specific group. Still, personal memory is established through socialisation and social structures; individuals add their personal memories to a united assembly which constitutes the realm of collective memory. Socially-constructed in terms of shared circumstances, memories are added to the social group through diverse interactions between members. Such joined memories are vital in establishing a sense of collective identity.

By tracing the links between memory and architecture, this research discovers that human memory is only functional within a collective context. The proposal by French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) is significant: '… it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognise and localise their memories' (Halbwachs 1992, p. 38). Halbwachs also argues that since collective memory is unavoidably selective, distinct collectives have different memories.

This research therefore proposes that collective memory acts to sustain continuity, shaping the past so that members of a collective can recall themselves within this memory in the present moment. Collective memory reconstructs images of the past, and shapes our perception of present and future. Collective memory is of great significance for our sense of identity. It acts differently from history, in that it preserves continuity and eliminates change.

German Egyptologist Jan Assmann differentiates between 'communicative' or 'everyday' memory, and 'cultural' memory. He explains that communicative memory refers to memories based on everyday, recent communications. In contrast, cultural memory focuses on fixed points in the past.

To understand architecture and belonging to a place as the foothold of identity, cultural memory does not retain the past as such. Instead, it remodels the past into 'symbolic figures'. As Assmann proposes:

> Cultural memory has its fixed points: its horizon does not change with passing of time. These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (text, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance). (Assmann, cited in Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi & Levy 2011, p. 213)

Norberg-Schulz's depiction of the people of Prague visiting their old neighbourhoods in search of confirmation of identity represents the essence of the relationship between cultural collective memory and architecture. When a group establishes its dwelling place, it projects its own image there, and thus becomes subject to a previous environment when it is taken away. This argument tallies with Norberg-Schulz's proposal that in order to be rooted existentially, we need to remain open to the specific typology of our surrounding. We need to live in accordance with the 'genius loci' - which is partly determined by the objects that exist there. For Norberg-Schulz, the action of dwelling requires us to respect and protect the concept of 'place'. On the other hand, in his portrayal of Prague, Norberg-Schulz defines historical buildings as symbolic figures that emerge as foundations of cultural memory and a confirmation of personal and collective identity. Immediate contact with these buildings represents direct communication with a collective past and with memory.

CHAPTER TWO: THE THEATRICALITY OF 'HOME'

This research proposes that the essence of 'theatricality' is discovered in various artistic fields that are inscribed with elements of mise-en-scene, narrative, performativity and spectatorship. The concept may be traced through the proposals of contemporary theatre professor Josette Féral:

> Lexically speaking, theatricality is both poorly defined and etymologically unclear. It seems to be much like the 'tacit concept' defined by Michael Polany: 'a concrete idea that one can use directly but that one can only describe indirectly.' It is a concept that one associates in a privileged way with theatre. (Féral 2002, p. 95).

Féral offers three scenarios to analyse manifestations of theatricality, on and off stage. This research recognises the first as the most significant. Here, Féral sets the scene:

> You enter a theatre. The play has not yet began. In front of you is a stage; the curtain is open; the actors are absent. The set, in plain view, seems to await the beginning of the play. Is theatricality at work here?
> (Féral 2002, p. 95).

Féral recognises that our positive response confirms that space, or spatial elements placed in front of spectators, can convey particular theatricality. The physical presence of performers is not essential to it. Féral explains that although the presented mise-en-scene may appear static, key theatrical constraints have been imposed and unique symbols attached. Since the semiotisation of a play has taken place, meaning that specific elements have been assigned to the presented scene as symbols and signs of an event or situation about to take place, spectators are able to grasp the essence of theatricality. This argument proposes that the presence or absence of human figures does not condition the overall theatricality. In Féral's scenario, spectators study and confirm the established relations within the mise-en-scene, and understand space and all its elements as principal conveyors of theatricality.

2. 1. The scenographic 'decoding' of abandoned homes

N. A.'s set of photographs represents the principal impetus behind this investigation into abandoned, war-torn domestic spaces. N. A.'s photographs depict three interiors with multiple close-ups of specific spatial details and personal objects. This research begins with a pictorial analysis in three sections: House A, House B and House C[7]. The analysis is performed and presented from a scenographic point of view, and its conceptual framing is established on the proposal that:

> A scenographer is by nature a cultural magpie, delighting in the search for the ephemera of history and sociology. The variety of work that presents itself is part of the fascination of the subject, and satisfies an inherent and insatiable curiosity that wants to know not only the great events of history, but also the precise details of how people lived, ate, dressed, washed, and earned their livelihood. The challenge for the scenographic researcher is to know how to use an individual eye to ferret out the essence of the subject, hunt it down (and then decide whether or not to use it).
> (Howard 2009, p. 63)

This research applies the scenographic method as an inversion of common scenographic frameworks. It frames existing interiors as starting points, interpreting the abandoned interiors as mise-en-scenes. Mise-en-scene is here understood as a holistic setting in which an event is set and through which it is presented to spectators. In the inverted context, found mise-en-scenes represent the remainders of already-ceased events. Domestic interiors are seen as scenographic afterimages of violent acts, and emerge as principal physical remnants of a collective traumatic narrative. These mise-en-scenes represent direct consequences of violent acts performed during the war. These spaces therefore genuinely and profoundly embody the traumas experienced by the absent human figures. Each violated home represents a remnant of individual trauma. However, in the context of this research they also emerge as framed case-studies that represent all such attacks, capturing the holistic experience of war as the major spectacle of the region. This research therefore begins with a scenographic 'decoding' in a predetermined context, performed as the principal method for investigating the collective traumatic narrative.

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[7] N. A. assisted the process by assigning each photograph to the house where it was taken.

Inscriptions of past narratives and remnants of past events are interpreted through a series of scenographic strategies that include theatricality, narrative, context, perspective, framing, focalisation, atmosphere, inhabitation, embodiment, materiality and spectatorship. This 'decoding' strongly focuses on perspective. In common scenographic frameworks, perspective relates to the relationship between spectators and the presented visual or dramatic narrative. Perspective, essentially both a point of view and a graphic technique for achieving depth in three-dimensional objects and spaces on flat surfaces, is derived from the methods of Renaissance painters who sought to add 'truth' to their portrayal of life. In common scenographic frameworks, scenographers use strategies of perspective to establish a strict point of view for spectators, and to define the visual dramaturgy of the performance. This strategy determines the overall scenographic framework, acting to highlight the holistic concept and performance themes.

In our inverted framework however, perspective is linked to physical and historical contexts. The 1990s war is defined as the crucial event affecting the region's recent history. These events frame the critical context in which the abandoned interiors are observed and 'decoded'. The captured interiors represent the aftermath of military clashes between Serbian and Croatian armies in the context of the formal disintegration of the former Yugoslav unity. The town of Knin and surrounding villages was the stage for the worst violence and destruction in the region. Conflict between the two ethnic groups followed Croatia's official declaration of independence from SFR Yugoslavia in June 1990. The period between 1991 and 1995 saw constant ethnic tension between the two groups within the now independent republic. Beyond sporadic conflicts throughout the region, the Croatian army's operation 'Storm' represented a climax, bringing decisive victory in the wake of high Serbian civilian casualties, particularly during the shelling of Knin. Thousands of Serbian refugees fled Knin and surrounding villages.

Scenographic perspective is also linked here to the method of framing, which traditionally describes the process of identifying, selecting and positioning material and immaterial elements on stage. The scenographer builds a visual dramaturgy by designing and presenting material (objects, props, furniture, etc.) and non-material (lighting, sound, projections, etc.) elements on stage. Once these elements are framed in a particular manner, they establish and convey meaning that transcends their physical presence. Acting to provoke thought in the spectator, the presented elements imply or symbolically suggest aspects of the narrative; that is, the physical object acts as a 'sign'.

The scenographer undertakes a period of interpretation and adaptation of the concepts behind the performance, then coalesces them into objects that embody multiple meanings on stage: (1) They reveal information about the geographical, historical and ideological contexts. (2) They add information to the characters' on-stage existence, implying information about identity, past and heritage. (3) The stage objects conceptually suggest a meta-framing of the performance. In traditional scenography 'framing' involves creating and arranging preselected shapes and objects in service to an overall atmosphere that conceptually sums up the spatial (and often temporal) coordinates of a performance.

In the context of this research, 'framing' is manipulated inversely, that is, to interpret past events through the present arrangement of objects in space, and to 'decode' the current state of the discovered interior on a holistic level. By thus inverting the process of scenographic framing, the researcher can grasp the nature of past events that shaped the current physical state and atmospheric quality of the found interiors. Importantly, this inverted framing process confirms the theatrical nature of the abandoned interiors. In theatrical contexts we commonly encounter scenes in which events that take place 'off-stage', implied by means of lighting, sound, projection and so on, are often more significant than the acts witnessed by the spectators. Accordingly, these off-stage events can initiate powerful impressions on them.

Scenography is here embraced as a discipline profoundly linked to *inhabitation.* The relationships between people and spaces are at the heart of it. This analysis thereby identifies the absence of human figures as the predominant factor. Although they are physically absent from each mise-en-scene, the people (actors) are the core focus of the spatial investigation. Their previous interaction with each space is inscribed in the interiors' captured state. Meanwhile, the remaining objects reflect multiple layers of past narratives. The presence of domestic objects, furniture and personal items reveal multiple domestic activities performed in these spaces before the war. The current arrangement and physical state of the objects point to the performance of intensely violent acts in each space during the war. Numerous objects are smashed, personal garments are torn and scattered about floors, and multiple interior elements such as doors and windows are pulverised. Human movement through the spaces is traced through the strange arrangement of the furniture. Scenographically, the ghost of human violence is mesmerically present in all these physical appearances.

The atmosphere is also inevitably controlled by such clear traces of performed events. In every room, within each captured interior, records of violent human interactions are exposed, frozen in time. In scenographic terms, such events deeply inscribe the spaces with atmosphere, such that a space takes on an ambience only after an event has occurred there. In each of our three spaces, material and immaterial traces of violent physical actions define an atmosphere of severe trauma. Scenographically, wherein a space is the principal conveyor of theatricality, these interiors have absorbed the intensity of that previously-experienced trauma.

Our 'decoding' interprets these captured mise-en-scenes by critically investigating the personal objects, the furniture, and the inherent atmosphere of violently-rent homes. The concrete scenographic framing of these objects reveals data on missing inhabitants - their age, ethnicity, family structure, occupation, etc. Meanwhile, critical investigation of the objects' present state speaks of the nature and intensity of trauma the missing people experienced. Scenographically, these mise-en-scenes expose layers of otherwise obscure past narratives, and upon investigation ever more closely render the events that took place here. These events, in the context of the phenomenon of violence against domestic space, are framed as the prime focus of this research.

2. 2. House A

Figure 12: Abandoned home A - village near Knin (N. A. 2009)

N. A.'s set of eleven photographs contains one image from House A, a small room that implies a dining room setting. However, it is clear that the layout of objects is uncommon in that they were perhaps gathered in this space from other rooms. Although all furniture pieces in the space are different, their colour scheme seems united. The combination of green, brown and mustard tones aesthetically unifies this mise-en-scene. The rough concrete floor is bare, muddy and irregular in colour, suggesting that floor coverings have been removed. There are leaves scattered about on the floor.

A table and three chairs are placed in the middle. Two chairs, one behind the table and the other on the right, are identical. The chair on the left differs, with an upholstered green seat and wooden back. These chairs likely belong to different rooms and are intended for different occasions. The green chair on the left appears more comfortable, suggesting multiple dining settings in the house, formal and informal.

The table, which here appears as a central object, is far from a (conventional) dining table. Instead, it is simple and narrow with a green timber top and thin metal legs. Legs on the left are green with hints of brown while those on the right have corroded. The table top shows colour disintegration, and an object akin to a white plastic bag sits on top.

Two different couches appear in the background. One serves the table, and the other is placed along the wall. The couch behind the table is a green sofa-bed with brown timber frame. The other is upholstered in mustard fabric, with brown timber sides and legs. Both are aesthetically simple, with the latter resembling a common living-room setting of the former SFR Yugoslavia.

A large red-brown piece of fabric, shiny and resembling plush, covers a pile of unfamiliar objects on the sofa. Closer inspection suggests folded quilts and blankets[8]. Between the couches, two identical timber bedside cabinets are stacked. They do not match anything in the space. A small, decrepit mirror hangs above the couch on the back wall. This object with its faded gold frame, appears as a focal point. Close inspection (with magnifying glass) reveals a blurry N. A. in the act of taking the photograph. A door knob appears above the chair on the left, indicating another room.

While this is evidently a domestic space, the arrangement of furniture and other objects does not reflect common domestic activity. The layout is irregular and appears orchestrated. The table is placed in the middle with all chairs and one couch facing the viewer. The two simple chairs face straight forward while the green chair is set at an angle. The bedside cabinets are unusually stacked between the couches, perhaps to ensure they do not obstruct the actions of the inhabitants.

This analysis is principally concerned with the arrangement of objects in space. Here, tension is suggested, and the layout looks strategically organised. Most objects face forward toward the main door, implying a sense of strained expectation, as if all inhabitants are set to act promptly if needed. Unnecessary items are neatly stacked away, clearly to create clear circulation paths in the space. It is unknown who left the space in this condition. One scenario suggests that the inhabitants rearranged it in order to leave as soon as danger approached, or else people hid here during the violent clashes. Perhaps soldiers used the space as a shelter during clashes, and rearranged it in readiness for a potential enemy approach.

On the following page is a floor plan, based on information provided by N. A.

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[8] N. A. confirmed that he had not moved any objects in the space. He did not look under the fabric to see what was there.

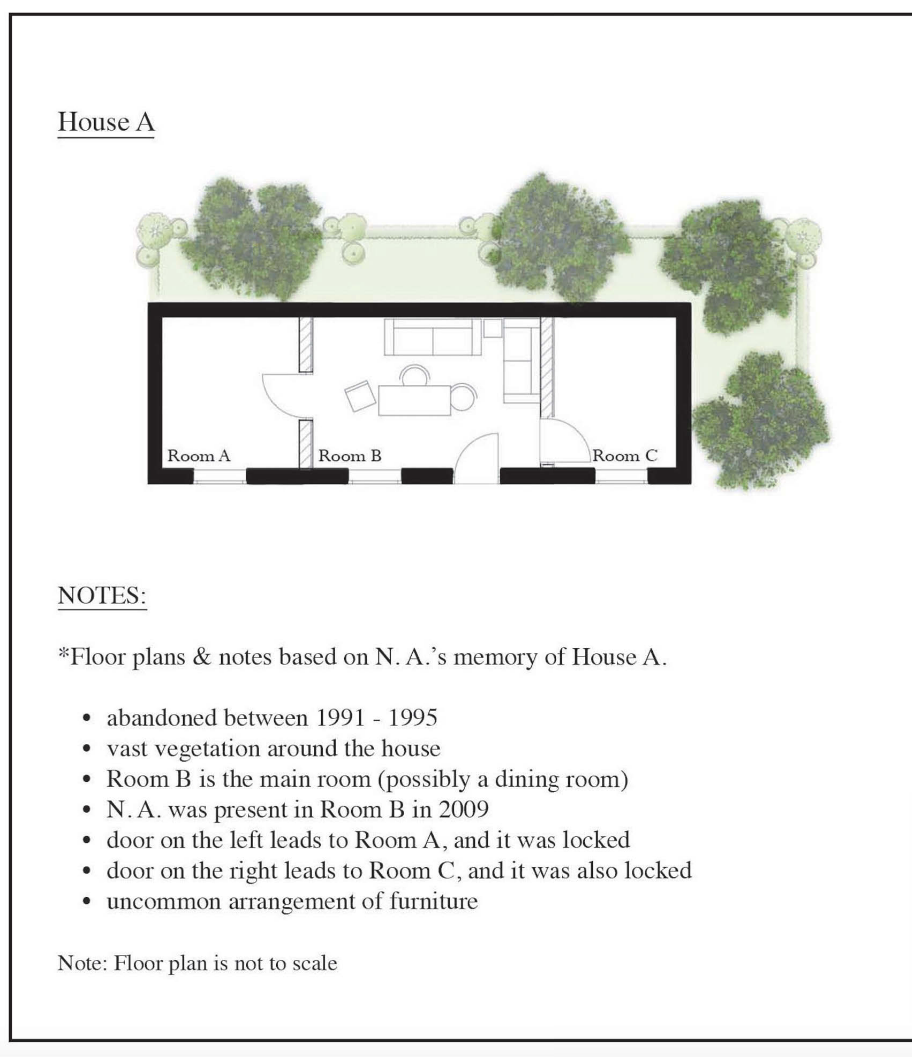

Figure 13: Floor plan House A (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

2. 3. House B

Figure 14: Abandoned home B - village near Knin (N.A. 2009)

Figure 15: Abandoned home B - village near Knin (N.A. 2009)

Figure 16: Abandoned home B - village near Knin (N.A. 2009)

Figure 17: Abandoned home B - village near Knin

(N.A. 2009)

Figure 18: Abandoned home B - village near Knin
(N.A. 2009)

Figure 19: Abandoned home B - village near Knin (N.A. 2009)

Figure 20: Abandoned home B - village near Knin (N.A. 2009)

N. A.'s set of photographs contains seven images from House B.
They depict interior details only, with none showing the space as a whole.

The first depicts a kitchen cupboard in the corner of the room. Symbolically, it suggests a domestic setting specific to SFR Yugoslavia. Known as 'kredenac', the cabinet represents a conventional piece introduced in the 1950s and common to almost all households. Although aesthetics, materials, finishes and details varied, all types of 'kredenac' were of a unitary structure. 'Kredenac' here represents an aesthetically simple but structurally complex example of this furniture type. It suggests that this was most likely a kitchen or dining room. The original colour seems to have faded significantly, which implies its age and condition over several decades.

The walls behind the cabinet are rotting and faded in colour. Paint is chipping off, while some sections appear darker. A corroded metal hook hangs from the ceiling above the cabinet. A light bulb hanging from the ceiling briefly enters the frame. The rough, muddy concrete floor looks darker than the walls. Leaves and other objects are strewn about the space. Like House A, inconsistency in colour and surface imply floor coverings may have been removed.

The next image shows an open cabinet drawer, the bottom drawer on the right side of 'kredenac'. Inside, three silver forks lie on a sheet from an old calendar. The calendar reveals the month of October, written in Serbian Cyrillic alphabet: 'Октобар'. The calendar has an unfamiliar logo, and 'InvestBank', also in Cyrillic alphabet: 'ИнвестБанк'. This calendar is significant for many reasons: 'InvestBank' had branches throughout the former SFR Yugoslavia, and many Yugoslavs invested their foreign currency savings there. After the break-up many have struggled to access those savings. The image suggests information about the inhabitants: perhaps they had savings in the bank and underwent the same struggle, or some might have worked for the bank. The Serbian Cyrillic suggests the ethnicity of the former inhabitants. In the final years of SFR Yugoslavia, people increasingly focused on their ethnicity. The Serbian population used both Serbian Cyrillic and Latin alphabets while the Croatian population used only Latin. Finally the image reveals another symbol: the use of newspaper, magazine and calendar pages to cover shelves and drawers, is typical of many, mainly rural, households in the region.

In the drawer we find a wooden scoop, baby bottle teat and blue paper food packing, with an illustration of a duck holding a spoon. Inspection of the blue package reveals, upside down on its back in large font: ‘Levita’. Once again in Serbian Cyrillic alphabet, ‘Levita’ was a significant meat producer in the region, located in the town of Gradiska in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The factory no longer exists.

The other five images from House B depict details of windows. The first shows a closed window, with a faded green wood frame and soiled, dusty glass that is intact on both sides. On the windowsill on a pile of torn pages, sits an open book.

The next image depicts a closed window overlooking a courtyard with a large tree as a focal point. The glass is broken, and a sharp fragment lies in a corner. The other side is intact. The windowsill has tiles on the inside and bare concrete outside. An old comic book lies on it.

The next image again portrays an open window overlooking the courtyard. A stained and torn curtain offers the most evocative domestic element. Probably originally white, it hangs on a single loose thread. Such items were always hand-knitted with a crochet hook by women who lived here. The curtain displays a detailed pattern of flower bunches. It has two layers, with the top layer shorter than the rest. The bottom is ripped.

The final images from House B show faded timber windows and broken glass. In one, grass emerges through an old frame. Numerous shards lie on the windowsill. A small shard still hangs from a bottom corner. A comic book lies on the windowsill. It appears to be a famously popular comic from the period of SFR Yugoslavia, with Giddap Joe as the main character. It is printed in Latin script, but is in Serbian dialect (ekavica).

The images from House B imply that the house was violently broken into, with a high level of destruction. Remaining personal objects in this space suggest that a family with children, most likely of Serbian ethnicity, lived here.

On the following page is a sketch floor plan, based on the information given by N. A.

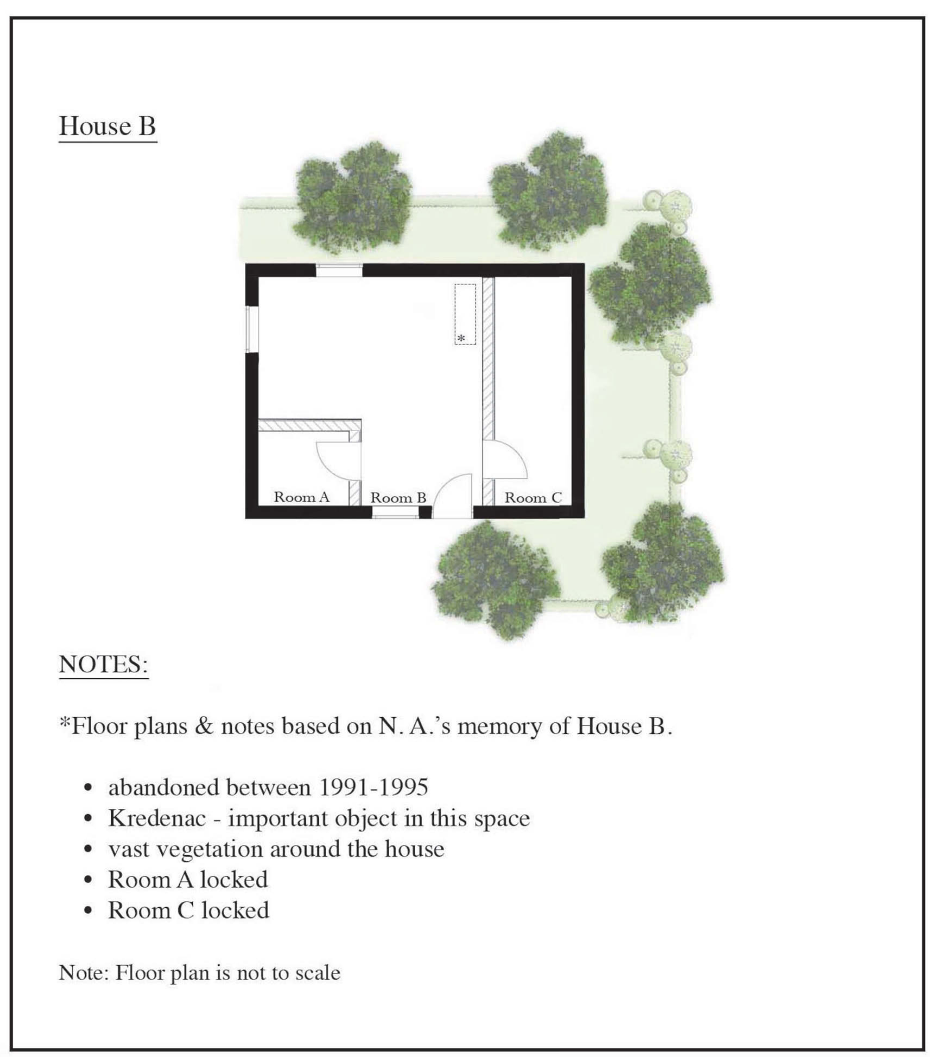

Figure 21: Floor Plan House B (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

2. 4. House C

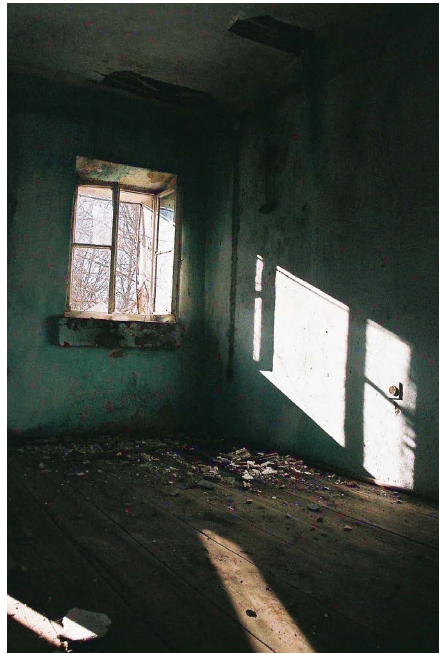

Figure 22: Abandoned home C

(N.A. 2009)

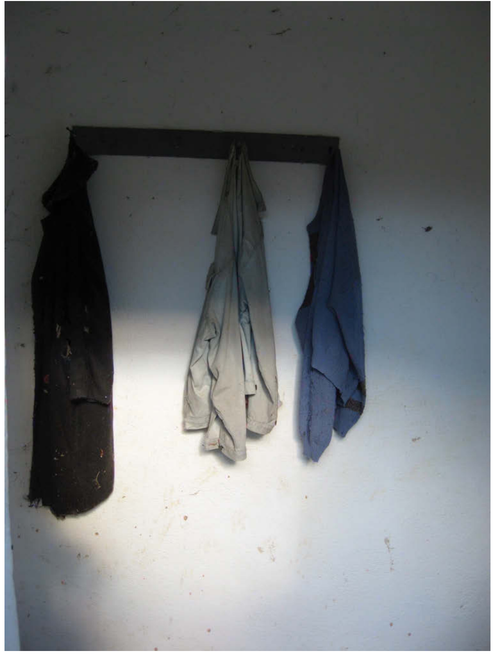

Figure 23: Abandoned home C

(N.A. 2009)

Figure 24: Abandoned home C - village near Knin (N.A. 2009)

The first image from House C depicts an empty corner of a room, with green walls and large timber floorboards. The focal point is a small open window. Natural light penetrates, creating an atmospheric quality. Glass on the window's left is broken, while the right is intact. Wall colour is inconsistent across the space. Such inconsistency, with the state of the floor and ceiling, suggests long abandonment.

Numerous unidentifiable objects are scattered about. There are two visible holes in the ceiling where paint and plaster haves disintegrated and fallen off, strewing across the floor. A power switch, the only object on the wall, is highlighted in natural light.

The next image from House C depicts a hanger with six hooks bolted to the wall. Of three garments, the first is a black coat with a brown button. Thick fabric indicates a warm winter coat. Its base is torn. A faded denim jacket hangs next to it, and three empty hooks separate them. The jacket's size implies a male garment. Last, there is a knitted blue jumper with two brown stripes on each sleeve. It is also torn, evidently very old. Its size again implies a male garment. Condition of the fabric suggests these garments have been hanging here for years.

The final image depicts a bedroom. This smashed room suggests severe conflict took place inside, or that it was vandalised after the war. An old-fashioned, brown-timber single bed in the corner is the focal point. A patterned, colourful blanket hangs off its footboard, faded and worn. There seems to be another coloured blanket underneath. The headboard is irregular in colour, and an old mattress is still in place, torn and stained.

Numerous items, predominately personal male garments, are scattered about the timber floorboards. Part of a wooden frame sticks out behind the bed. Piles of ripped garments and numerous unidentifiable objects are scattered about. In the foreground is a plaid fabric, resembling a male shirt or pyjamas. Other objects imply that before the war, this room belonged to an older male.

The size and style of numerous elements here suggest an old dwelling: wall heights, low ceilings and small windows exemplify the region's vernacular architecture. House C seems to pre-date World War I[9]. The hinterland of Dalmatia, to which the region of Knin belongs, is known for its modified Mediterranean climate: extremely hot summers (above 40 degrees Celsius in July and August) and severe winters. The initial settlements in Knin developed around the base of the Dinaric Alps, to which this village belongs.

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[9] P. K. informed N. A. that some of these domestic structures are about three hundred years old.

In response to climate conditions, vernacular architecture here was mainly built of the local stone, with flagstone roofs and small windows. Painted walls and the timber and concrete floor finishes suggest the house had been adapted to the needs of the inhabitants over time.

Below is a sketch floor plan, based on information given by N. A.

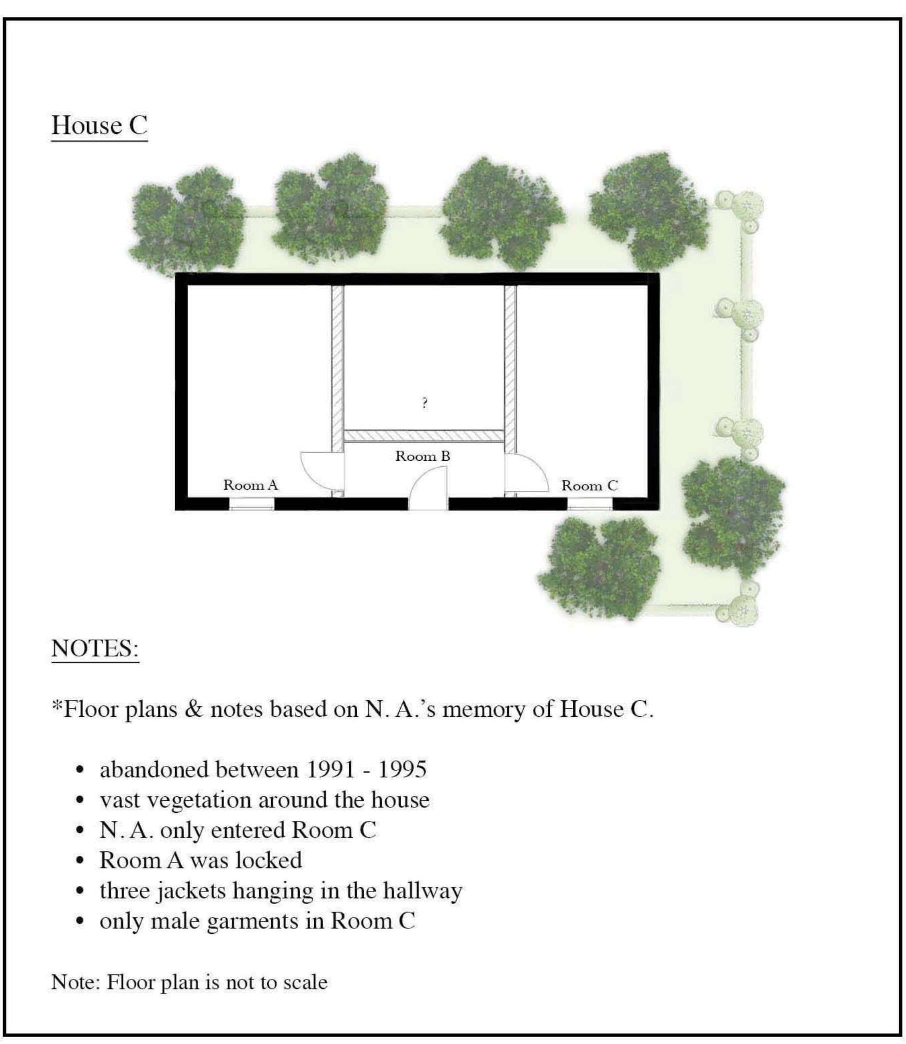

Figure 25: Floor plan House C (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

2. 5. ‘Home’ as poetic scenography

This research discovers its principal scenographic reference for the portrayal of ‘home’ in three films by Andrei Tarkovsky: *The Mirror*, *Nostalgia* and *The Sacrifice*. Tarkovsky, often referred to as a poet of cinema, uniquely portrayed concepts of ‘home’ and ‘house’, developing a profoundly intimate relationship between his characters and these. From the start, interaction with N. A.’s photographs implied an atmospheric and aesthetic analogy to Tarkovsky’s domestic mise-en-scenes. Correspondences occurred through similarities in colour schemes, the tone and undertone of various images and objects in N. A.’s photographs, the framing, stylistic references in the choice of furniture and its often unusual arrangement, symbolic objects, and the nature of the presented theatricality.

Figure 26: Comparisons between Tarkovsky’s and N. A.’s images

(*The Mirror* 1975; *Nostalgia* 1983; *The Sacrifice* 1986; N. A. 2009)

This research identifies unique atmospheres and significations in many scenes in the three films. Tarkovsky does not simply provide information, but rather urges spectators to develop personal interpretations and associations. His cinematic images transcend the evocation of obscure ‘poetic beauty’, and hold meaning that can be philosophically and scenographically decoded. In Tarkovsky’s view, ‘poetry’ is closest to a particular awareness of our being in the world, to our personal interpretation of existence:

> The birth and development of thought are subject to laws of their own, and sometimes demand forms of expression that are quite different from the patterns of logical speculation. In my view poetic reasoning is closer to the laws by which thought develops, and thus to life itself, than is the logic of traditional drama. … Through poetic connections, feeling is heightened and the spectator is made more active. He becomes a participant in the process of discovering life, unsupported by ready-made deductions from the plot or ineluctable pointers by the author. He has at his disposal only what helps to penetrate to the deeper meaning of the complex phenomena represented in front of him. (Tarkovsky 2006, p. 20)

This research understands Tarkovsky’s ‘poetic images’ to exemplify multilayered inscriptions of life. For Tarkovsky (and this is significant for our analysis) images are capable of articulating deeper meaning than words. His images embody traces of different events and experiences that implicitly establish characters’ personal identities. The unique nature of Tarkovsky’s ‘poetic image’ is derived from the conceptual unity of his preoccupation with ‘home’, nature, roots, faith, identity, belonging and intimate spiritual journeys. Through complex visual interpretations and representations of these concepts, Tarkovsky developed elaborate cinematic images that can be interpreted intellectually and perceptually.

Tarkovsky’s ‘poetic image’ also represents a subtle method by which he creates visual captivation. Tarkovsky manages to embody multiple layers of conceptual, philosophical and cinematic meaning in a particular scene, even without physical action. The captivation is in the images themselves, in the associations and symbols they evoke. Tarkovsky then manipulates the situation to maintain tension. Many frames are established on slow movements and subtle transitions, yet action never stops. Although such frames may appear static, their theatricality is contained in spatial and atmospheric richness achieved through the poetic image.

Exploiting an atmosphere of stillness, Tarkovsky assigns deeper meaning to movement. Slow moves between scenes evoke surprise, expectation, change of perspective, and a unique continuous quality of spatial imagery. Tarkovsky also manipulates light and sound to introduce forms of movement that involve no human action. He achieves this by introducing elements such as rain, water, wind and fire. Such natural elements are significant to our present research. Many frames witness strong rain and continuously, monotonously falling water. Many contain wind, that moves curtains, opens and shuts doors and windows, moves objects about rooms. We see papers flowing in the air while all else is static. Tarkovsky introduces fire, which may be the only active element in the frame yet always offers symbolic meaning.

In the three films in focus, mise-en-scene is dominated by two scenographic forms: ‘home’ and nature. Tarkovsky elaborates the concept of ‘home’ in relation to security, peace, contentment, childhood, family and motherland. ‘Homes’ in these films are deeply personal and intimate spaces, usually shown through the human gaze. Their complex nature is reinforced by the use of compositional devices. Although they reveal information they are never merely ‘informative’. Houses are fragile metaphors, often reclaimed by nature or destroyed by human beings, destroyed by accidental fire, intentionally burned down, or flooded or deteriorated by time. Importantly for our own analysis of abandoned homes, they remain as sites of memory, and as such create new roles in peoples’ lives.

Tarkovsky often depicts architectural structures that belong to the past, specifically to his cultural, historical and religious background as Russian Orthodox. Significant traditional values are shared between generations, and ‘home’ and ‘house’ embody symbolic meanings. Tarkovsky treats ‘home’ as profoundly linked to belonging, identity, motherland and personal spiritual journeying. A childhood ‘home’ is recognised as a particular memoric monument, interwoven with icons of collective cultural memory, where our prime roots of spiritual identity are housed.

As a monument of memory, childhood ‘home’ is here nominated as an object that embodies the power to heal interrupted identities. For Tarkovsky, memories and dreams represent key unifying factors of this process, and he commonly reveals his characters’ identities in sequences that involve them. In Tarkovsky’s ‘poetic’ interpretations, dreamed and remembered ‘homes’ represent motherland, childhood, peace and family. He shows the power of such objects by portraying them as rare architectural settings that remain in their pure form, without falling apart. To these, his characters return in search of personal identity.

Domestic spaces in the three films are never simple containers of action; beyond the manifestation of events and actions, they portray characters' inner and outer states. Mise-en-scene is established equally on inner and outer dynamics, and rely on a merging between complex inner states of mind and the factual world in which the character exists. In short, mise-en-scenes signify the overall 'authenticity' of the portrayed life. The physical absence of human figures in many scenes is not an obstacle to their theatricality, and by no means condemns them to being static. Instead, space conveys layers of inscribed narratives, and evocatively reflects images of the missing persona and his or her life.

The atmospheric quality of domestic sites in the three films is established on relationships between the characters, their inner dynamics, their doubts, and variations in psychology. Mise-en-scene is in fact subject to the characters' physical and psychological states. To portray spaces that are charged with a positive, warm atmosphere, Tarkovsky scenographically links them to earth and nature. He portrays simple, raw structures whose interiors are decorated with warm natural colours, lace curtains, books and flowers, timber floors and walls, while (commonly) the natural light or candlelight is soft and filtered. A natural, soft colour palette implies natural surrounds, peace, contentment and calm - the fulfilled psychological state. Crucially though, physical environments in which he puts his characters may affect their sense of identity. Particularly, environments reflect their afflicted states, while in others they are depleted and worn down by living conditions and surroundings.

A. *The Mirror*

The Mirror, a film that explores time, memory and immortality, profoundly relates space and memory. It should be understood as a complex autobiographical reflection as well as a story about an old house - a farmstead on which Tarkovsky spent his early childhood and where his parents lived. Here are explored notions of displacement and the inability to return to a treasured 'home'. The film portrays an intimate relationship between a man and his 'home', that is, the foundation of personal identity within his childhood house. The adult narrator Andrei, who only appears on screen as a young boy, holds many regrets. He can no longer experience the innocent feelings of childhood, and constantly feels displaced. Tarkovsky explained that his goal was to depict a man who suffers because he is unable to give to his own family what his family had given to him as a child.

Domestic space here becomes a tool through which Tarkovsky searches for footholds in his own identity. He chooses an old home as a mirror of feelings and a place that unifies individual childhood memories. Tarkovsky performs a search through memory by performing acts of associating and remembering, in ways in which most people tend to do so. The narrative shifts from one memory to another, from past to present and vice versa. Tarkovsky searches the past by evoking individual memories of separate events. He assigns significance to individual moments in space, and portrays interior details as sacred. This is done through slow camera gazes and the revelation of individual 'poetic images': a kitten licking spilt milk on the table, wind slowly moving heavy lace curtains, or slow-motion images of objects falling to the ground.

The old house represents a pathway to personal identity and belonging. In fact, an old family 'dacha[10]', aesthetically marking Soviet Russia, manifests traditional relationships with family. The burning down of the barn, part of the estate yet not physically connected to the house, is deeply symbolic. The moment represents the tragedy in which Andrei's family loses the father. He is physically absent throughout the film, yet remains present, part of the family through their dialogues and internal and outer monologues. This scene of fire in the rain is followed by a dream sequence in which a house breaks in pieces, manifesting concepts of disrupted childhood memories. Within Tarkovsky's urge to portray a man overwhelmed by regret, the image embeds the protagonist's sick psychological state and profound feeling of guilt. *The Mirror* depicts the urge to return to what is lost, yet this inability to physically return 'home' is a source of tension throughout.

Figure 27: The burning barn and dream sequence (*The Mirror* 1975)

[10] 'Dacha' is a traditional Russian house typical of the Soviet Era (1922 - 1991). It was most commonly used as a holiday house or retreat, although sometimes 'dacha' was the actual family house.

Figure 28: *The Mirror*: comparison of two moments in the two different 'homes'

(*The Mirror* 1975)

Further, *The Mirror* shows how a 'home' can evoke contrasting feelings. An idyllic and remote dacha, inhabited by memory, is juxtaposed with Andrei's sterile apartment, the place he physically inhabits. One represents a place of childhood bliss and endless possibility while the other represents a space of shuttered regrets. The dacha is presented as warm, raw and simple, filled with domestic and personal details and rich decor. The apartment is well-lit, large, and lacking 'poetic' detail. Scenographically evoked by framing, embodiment, inhabitation and perspective, the childhood 'home' remains in memory as a warm refuge of security, bliss and comfort, while the new apartment is impersonal, emotionally-abandoned, anonymous. The latter's mise-en-scene reveals that although Andrei's inhabitation inscribes traces on walls and involves numerous objects, it actually lacks inscriptions of his intimate narratives, and thus appears neglected and deserted. Tarkovsky never portrays Andrei in the apartment, and we merely hear his voice as the camera gazes through the space. Momentarily, it seems that we follow his gaze as he speaks on the phone to his mother. We understand that the presented interior is not a place where Andrei feels at home, and the patina of neglect speaks to us as mirroring the state of Andrei's neglected relationships[11].

'Home', as the most intimate of sites, here appears as the place that stores and unifies our memories, dreams and longings. *The Mirror* manipulates domestic space and the concept of 'home' to explore how we use memory to justify identity and confirm what defines us. The two 'homes' Tarkovsky presents are linked by memory. Andrei holds memory as necessary because he sees his present as falling apart. The significance of 'dacha' as the only 'home' tells us that identity is not necessarily defined by what one has or by where one is located. Instead, it derives from the realisation of what one has had, and what has formed us. These 'possessions' are not simply material things, but memories, dreams and aspirations.

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[11] This is sensed through the fairly formal telephone conversations between Andrei and his mother.

B. ***Nostalgia***

In this film, Tarkovsky explores the concept of ‘home’ in relation to country and motherland. He dedicates *Nostalgia* to the concept of Russian nostalgia[12], understood as a characteristic state of mind of the Russian people when removed from their motherland. The film manipulates a private interior to portray a man who is unable to adjust to the new, contemporary world. Tarkovsky portrays nostalgia as a complete feeling, a ‘fatal disease’. This is explored through the Russian character Andrei Gorakachov, who goes to Italy to investigate the life of eighteenth-century Russian composer Pavel Sosnovksy, who lived there before committing suicide.

Here, Tarkovsky profoundly manipulates scenography to portray theme. He develops evocative (yet not banally metaphorical) mise-en-scenes to depict feelings of displacement. Andrei takes a hotel room in Italy, whose interior offers all material necessities to the contemporary man yet appears cruel and alien. The large room is stripped of objects and decor that add warmth and comfort to private spaces or assign identity to diverse interiors. The room appears as purely transitory: a large metal-framed bed seems to float in the midst, walls are painted white, a window with no curtains claustrophobically faces another wall, and floors are remorselessly tiled, without soft coverings.

Two concepts are identified in this stylistic reference. First, the mise-en-scene is read as Tarkovsky’s critique of contemporary society. The aesthetics and atmosphere in the room reference contemporary human alienation, whereby we are disconnected from our roots and identities. This hotel interior may house anyone, or be located anywhere in the world. It embodies no cultural, historic or other sense of identity or belonging. The room also exemplifies the author’s interpretation of ‘claustrophobic’, alienated displacement that we experience when away from motherland. *Nostalgia’s* sterile interiors suggest the impossibility of truly existing even in supposedly perfect material conditions. Elements in the room seem to float without solid foundation, pointing to the state of displaced human beings as a whole. Tarkovsky (2006), in pointing to the absence of freedom through lack of adjustment to the contemporary world, suggests we need instead to be in contact with our roots and heritage. To know where we come from and where we belong, is crucial to understanding the essence of self and to ‘orientate’ in the world.

[12] Tarkovsky was in exile while filming ‘*Nostalgia*’, and was unable to return to the USSR.

Tarkovsky's decision to place the protagonist in a hotel room should be linked with the notion of 'non-places' as coined by contemporary French anthropologist Marc Augé. This concept refers to spaces that hold no significant meaning as places *per se.* Augé defines these as spaces of transience, as the negation of 'place':

> Place, at least in the view of the anthropologist, is a space long taken over by human beings and where something is said about relationships that human beings have with their own history, their natural environment and with one another. (Augé 2009, p. 9)

Non-places are created when people are unable to identify with a place. Airports and hotel rooms are fundamental examples of transitory non-places. The hotel room in *Nostalgia* exemplifies the inability to project roots in a new country. Andrei's roots are in the motherland, and Italy as a new country is perceived as transitory. The protagonist remains forever a guest here, never entirely 'at home'. Tarkovsky supports this sense, by cinematically manipulating the architectural scale within a frame. Grandiose locations of spectacular classical interiors are juxtaposed with small, hardly identifiable human figures. Human disconnection, loss and vulnerability in the surroundings is starkly evident. In short, Tarkovsky portrays people as victims of presented (that is, alien) situations.

Figure 29: Andrei Gorakachov in a hotel room in Italy (*Nostalgia* 1983)

Figure 30: Final scene *Nostalgia* (*Nostalgia* 1983)

C. *The Sacrifice*

In *The Sacrifice* Tarkovsky portrays 'home' as exemplifying a period of peace and well-being for an entire family. 'Home' is here presented in the form of a physically fragile house, whose meaning transforms as the film unfolds. Tarkovsky's protagonist Alexander is a journalist and former philosopher and actor who obsesses with the lack of spirituality in the contemporary world and its domination by materialism:

> … *The Sacrifice* is not a lament for a lost past, but a courageous encounter with the very force of time as it is revealed in the ever-changing textures of the visible things. (Bird 2008, pp. 209-210)

Alexander's spiritual plight and flight from materialism sees him move with his wife and daughter to a house by the sea, where his son, whom he calls 'little man', is born. Despite the isolation that dominates their life, along with his wife's expressions of regret and frustration, Andrei sees his family world as ideal. This is replicated in early interior shots of pleasant and sophisticated rooms with numerous white objects, soft lace curtains (subtly moving), polished decorative items, cabinets full of books and family memorabilia - in total a well cared-for space. Suddenly, this wellbeing is threatened by nuclear disaster or the outbreak of a third world war. Alexander seeks ways to restore peace to the world and discovers that in order to achieve it he must give something in return. On the evening of his birthday the war breaks out, and Alexander turns desperately to God, offering everything in his power to avert it.

In *The Sacrifice*, a remote family house surrounded by apparent emptiness, holds a significance equal to human beings. In an early scene, Alexander sits on the ground with his young son on his lap and delivers a monologue on the house as a cherished memory. The house at this stage embodies his optimism and familial contentment. As events unfold, 'home' shifts to the embodiment of psychological confinement. Ultimately, the house becomes the object of Alexander's sacrifice and he burns it down, not as a sacrifice to save his family (his initial aim) but for his own, at least temporary, relief from spiritual agony. The act of burning the family 'home' as a core of belonging and bliss, is the protagonist's attempt to respond to the sickness of the contemporary world. He sees 'home' as the materialisation of personal misery.
As it burns we see it as a shrine to the family, to their entire life and to Alexander's psychological suffering.

Tarkovsky here manipulates ‘home’ as a multi-layered metaphor, reiterating the image of the family house in a model made by the child. The model embodies dual meanings in the light of this research. First, it is to be read as a metaphor for the dual nature of human beings. That is, by portraying both a model made by a child and a destroyed family house, Tarkovsky implies that the human spirit seeks both constructive creation and destruction. Second, once the actual home disappears in flames, the model remains as a symbol for spiritual harmony. It symbolises a chance for healing, a new family life through the future life of the child, a final omen of hope.

Figure 31: An early interior shot and the final scene (*The Sacrifice* 1986)

Figure 32: Replica of the family house that remains after the house burns (*The Sacrifice* 1986)

CHAPTER THREE:
RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMING

IVAN
I want to go home, to Yugoslavia.

DR MIRKOVIĆ
There is a war there. A horrifying war!

IVAN
I know.

DR MIRKOVIĆ
Not the Second World War, you are thinking of.
In our country there is only *our* war.
Second World War ended 50 years ago.'

(*Underground* 1995)

3. 1. ‘Once upon a time there was a country’

This research is physically and conceptually established and performed in the aftermath of a country that no longer exists: the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This section frames the understanding of a specific context in its geographical, historical, political, cultural and social aspects. SFR Yugoslavia was located in South-eastern Europe on the Balkan Peninsula. It existed for almost the entire twentieth century and was established with the goal of uniting all Southern Slavs into one country.

SFR Yugoslavia’s complex history was marked by changes of name and territory, and political and social regulations. The concept of Yugoslavia emerged in the late seventeenth century, its name deriving from the combination of the Slavic ‘jug’ meaning ‘south’, and ‘Slaveni’ meaning ‘Slavs’. The country reformed a number of times, yet its continuous thread was a compound of diverse nations, religions, cultures and traditions united in a small geographic region. This research focuses on the period of federation following World War II, a socialist unity of six constituent republics: Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

Figure 33: SFR Yugoslavia 1945-1992: The six constituent republics, marked in different colours (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

For the most significant period of its existence, SFR Yugoslavia was led by Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980), who for his entire rule was perceived as the federation's key unifying symbol. His internal policies were established on the concept of 'Brotherhood and Unity', rather than separative nationalist sentiments within each constituent republic. 'Brotherhood and Unity' became the federation's main slogan and core principle, embodying the policy of inter-ethnic relations as embodied in SFR Yugoslavia's federal constitutions (1963 and 1974). This essentially denoted Yugoslav nations and national minorities as equal, peacefully-coexisting groups who promoted both similarities and interdependence for the sake of overcoming conflicts stemming from World War II. The slogan was widely celebrated in all aspects of the federation's life. Many schools, public venues, factories, sports teams, folklore ensembles and other institutions adopted the slogan as their official name.

SFR Yugoslavia sought to distinguish between 'nations' and 'nationalities'. 'Nations' referred to constituent Slavic people, while 'nationalities' included other Slavic and non-Slavic ethnic groups. While twenty-six ethnic groups lived in this country, people were also able to identify as Yugoslavs, and almost 1.3 million declared such nationality in 1981. Being 'Yugoslav' was not established on ethnic lines but on associating one's personal and collective identity with SFR Yugoslavia as the primary political and cultural framework. Yugoslavs therefore belonged to the federation rather than individual republics. Although many found reasons for such beliefs in the mixed structures of their own families, the urge to belong to a larger unity derived from young Yugoslavs' desire for security, collective prosperity, and life in the name of 'Brotherhood and Unity'. This was the period when the first generations born in SFR Yugoslavia matured and identified with the federation as their only 'home' and motherland. Under Tito, young Yugoslavs were brought up to value country, culture, language and lifestyle over ethnicity, religion and tradition as the prime foundations for personal and collective identity.

This profoundly ethnically-mixed populace spoke three main languages: Serbo-Croatian, Slovene and Macedonian. All three languages come from the South Slavic language group and are notably similar. Although SFR Yugoslavia was a communist country, the key difference between ethnic groups centred on religion. Serbs, Macedonian Slavs and Montenegrins are traditionally Orthodox Christian, Croats and Slovenes are Roman Catholic, while Muslim Slavs and Albanians are primarily Sunni Muslim. Slovenes and Croats were shaped by Roman Catholicism and centuries under Austrian, Hungarian and Venetian rule. Conversely, other ethnic groups, both Orthodox Christian and Muslim, had long lived under the Byzantine and Ottoman canons.

Under Tito, SFR Yugoslavia morphed from one of Europe's least developed economies into a medium-developed society, established on agriculture and industry. By the 1970s all regions had become firmly prosperous and industrialised. However, distinctions between the richer north and poorer south became more evident as the communist era began. Many believe that this factor seeded future ethnic tension and political conflict. The communist regime elevated industry over agriculture, and intense propaganda promoted city workers over peasants, prompting mass migration from the countryside to cities in search of jobs and the urban lifestyle.

'Youth Labour Actions' represent a significant attainment of the former SFR Yugoslavia. These can be compared to the modern concept of volunteering and community development, and were traceable to World War II when young students brought food, clothing, military equipment and ammunition to soldiers in harsh conditions. World War II left an atrocious regional legacy of human and material loss, and for the newly-formed federation to establish normality, its ruined industry, economy, urban and rural infrastructure, cultural and educational institutions had to be rebuilt. It was proposed that Yugoslav youth should be employed for this purpose. With great enthusiasm, high school and university students from diverse regions laboured with scant mechanisation, often with no experience or material compensation, to rebuild railways, schools, former institutions, motorways, factories and other objects of collective interest. Significantly for this research, this generation later occupied key roles in the ethnic conflicts, and took a direct part in the destruction of private and public architectural objects and places.

Following Tito's death in 1980, ten years of economic crisis and growing political and ethnic tension led to the federation's end in 1991 and 1992. A weakened federal government system within which the six constituent republics gained more autonomy with a rotating presidency, was unable to deal with increasing economic and political challenges. From April 1990, pressures generated by the collapse of Communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe forced regional Communist parties to stage multi-party elections, and nationalist parties gained ascendancy in all republics. Leaders such as Milan Kučan in Slovenia sought to avert the tragic disintegration and implement a loosely-united Yugoslavia based on the Swiss model of confederated cantons. However, other parties sought complete autonomy and refused such proposals. New political leaders such as Slobodan Milošević (1941-2006) of Serbia and Franjo Tudjman (1922-1999) of Croatia, begun to promote nationalism as a principal ruling idea. The question of maintaining peace now became more pressing than keeping a united federation.

The beginning of the final break-up was marked by numerous political disruptions and sporadic armed clashes during the early 1990s. Military conflict primarily affected the geographic territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo, yet all 'nations' and 'nationalities' in the old federation suffered the brutal consequences of the ensuing war:

> A refugee became a new social category of the region. This term referred to an innocent victim of the insanity of war, manipulated 'numbers' who are moving in a new environment, not knowing where they are heading and in which direction their fate will take them. (Livada 2006, p. 49)

This research proposes that the reasons for disintegration are multi-layered. First, cultural, ethnic and religious distinctions could never really be subsumed under imposed Communist values. In the name of 'unity', the country dictatorially dismissed its previous identities. Second, memories of World War Two atrocities were never sincerely resolved but were spuriously concealed by the new government in the name of collective prosperity and enthusiasm. The federation was thus built on seismic foundations, and many still silently lived with traumatic memories of the War: family members killed in battles or concentration camps, physical and psychological wounds, experience of displacement, and the loss of 'home' and established identity. This research proposes that this, along with economic turbulence, is a key reason why nationalist forces that rose to power in each state so easily manipulated people to follow their principles - indisputably a factor in the brutal ethnic endgame. External factors also played a big role in this national erosion. Eastern European countries were abandoning communism and shifting toward free-market economies. SFR Yugoslavia became less economically supported by the West, further destabilising its already shattered economy.

3. 2. The Violent Fragmentation of 'Brotherhood and Unity'

A. 1991 - 1995

Between 1991 and 1995, a series of ethnic conflicts evolved into all-out war, then continued over the next few years in a series of shorter but still atrocious ethnic clashes. These clashes are considered independent yet related, and heavily affected all Yugoslav republics. They are to be characterised as violent ethnic clashes between nations that previously lived in a federation established on the concept of 'Brotherhood and Unity'.

This federation brutally disintegrated in the same way it was birthed in the aftermath of World War Two - with many victims on all sides, with poverty, great economic disruption, erosion of cultural, moral and traditional values, and continuous instability on all levels across the entire region.

Long-standing ethnic and religious tensions sparked conflicts between Serbs and Croats, Serbs and Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Muslims and Croats, Serbs and Albanians, and Macedonians and Albanians. Slovenia and Croatia were the first republics to pursue greater autonomy within the federation, while Serbia aimed to strengthen federal authority. As these goals became unachievable, Slovenia and Croatia urged severance. While Macedonia managed to secede and peacefully declare independence in 1991, the war officially began in the same year with the 'Slovenian Independence War', also known as a 'Ten Day War', fought between the Slovenian Territorial Defence and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA).
As a result, Slovenia declared independence in June 1991.

Croatia followed with its 'War of Independence', fought between 1991 and 1995. Its genesis was in the urge of the majority of the Croatian population for independence from SFR Yugoslavia. Serbs, who had lived in this region for centuries, opposed the secession and urged Croatia to remain. The JNA attempted to keep Croatia in the unity, yet with the rise of Tudjman the country rapidly changed its attitude to the Serbian population within its new borders, discouraging the use of Cyrillic alphabet in official documents and pushing Serbs out of state administrative positions and local police forces. Provoked by the traumatic memories of the genocide committed by the 'Ustashe' movement when over a million Serbs, Jews, and Roma were killed in the concentration camps of the Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945), the Serbian population, largely located in the area of the old Habsburg Military Frontier, formed an association of Serbian municipalities. With support from Belgrade, they announced secession from newly-independent Croatia and proclaimed a 'Republic of Serbian Krajina'.

It should be noted that other than for transportation, this former frontier was of marginal economic significance for Croatia. However, its Serbian population was perceived as a core challenge to the new Zagreb regime, which sought an ethnically-united republic. Within months, ethnic hatred resulted in bitter fragmentation, initiated by nationalistic propaganda on both sides and fuelled by the new leaders Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman.

Following numerous smaller clashes in 1991, the Croatian army in 1995 launched two offensive operations: 'Flash' (May) and 'Storm' (August). Over two thousand people were killed, with several hundred thousands refugees displaced. Official figures published after the war estimate that thousands of housing units were destroyed in the two operations (Radio-Televizija Srbije 2011, para. 6).

Following Slovenia and Croatia, multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina, inhabited by Muslim Bosnians, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats passed a referendum for independence in 1992. This triggered new conflicts between the ethnic groups. Primarily, this was a territorial conflict between Serbian and Bosnian Muslim forces. However, Croatian forces soon decided they wanted to secure their portions of Bosnia and Herzegovina as Croatian. The conflicts in Bosnia were characterised by extreme ethnic violence, the shelling of cities and towns, and ethnic cleansing on all sides. Recent estimates claim that around 100,000 people were killed and 2. 2 million became refugees. All major towns and hundreds of villages were demolished. These figures make the Bosnian ethnic war the most devastating in Europe since the end of World War II.

B. 1999 – 2008: Continued conflicts

Following the period of assumed peace after the last conflicts of 1995 and the cessation of SFR Yugoslavia, new ethnic turbulence arose in 1998 in Kosovo. SFR Yugoslavia had condensed into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, consisting of Serbia and Montenegro[13]. The 'Kosovo war' was fought between the armies of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA[14]). From March 1999, when they began their second most significant operation, the KLA was supported by NATO, who stated that their aim was to stop human rights abuses in Kosovo. NATO's aerial attack on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia claimed thousands of civilian victims, both Serbian and Albanian, and initiated a substantial refugee-exodus from Kosovo along with great material damage. Long-term ethnic conflicts between Serbians and Albanians left Kosovo strictly ethnically-divided, and the region became a UN protectorate.

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[13] At this stage, Kosovo officially belonged to Serbia and was known as the 'Autonomous Province of Kosovo'.

[14] This is a Kosovo Albanian terrorist group, which sought Kosovo's independence from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as part of their long-term goal of a 'Greater Albania'.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia formally disintegrated when Montenegro passed a referendum for independence in 2006. This meant that all former constituent republics were now independent. Trouble however continued within Serbia, when after prolonged ethnic conflict, Kosovo's Parliament in 2008 declared independence. Kosovo still lacks diplomatic recognition from eighty-five United Nations countries, and Serbia continues to refuse to recognise the declaration. However, in 2013 it officially accepted the legitimacy of Kosovo institutions.

The break-up of the unity had fatal consequences for all countries, yet two decades later, all have established relatively positive relationships. However, ethnic and political tensions still constitute the current regional experience. Locations that represent direct aftermaths of violence have not healed completely, and sporadic ethnically-fuelled conflicts continue. This situation has significantly affected the performance of *TRAVELS* in our current thesis.

IVAN
With pain, sorrow and joy we shall remember our country,
As we tell our children stories that begin like fairytales:
Once upon a time, there was a country…

(*Underground* 1995)

3. 3. *TRAVEL*

TRAVEL is established in this thesis as a conceptual and performative practice defined by the perspective of scenography, here understood as '…a sensory as well as an intellectual experience, emotional as well as rational' (McKinney & Butterworth 2009, p. 4). As a practical element, established on live actions, direct experiences and their representation through artefacts, *TRAVEL* merges scenographic strategies with major qualitative research methodologies. It utilises theatricality, performativity, narrative, context, atmosphere, inhabitation, materiality, focalisation, perspective, framing, focus, embodiment and spectatorship, and combines them with core methodologies: participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, field notes and reflective journals.

A. Scenographic influence

TRAVEL offers the vision of contemporary German scenographer Anna Viebrock as principal inspiration for its scenographic perspective. Viebrock's work is heavily imbued with the concept of past:

> …(her) approach is that of an archaeologist who removes the most upper layers in order to uncover buried parts of interior life; as well, her method is perhaps like that of a psychologist who studies the subconscious of houses. (Adam et al. 2011, p. 31)

The main strength in Viebrock's spatial conceptualisation is found in the 'atmospheric density' of her unique and mysterious spaces[15] (Adam et al. 2011). Her scenographic expressions interpret the 'everyday' and 'commonplace', developing a unique visual strategy of 'as found'. That is, they discover and document ordinary spaces and seek inspiration in the 'ordinariness' of their inscribed narratives. Viebrock's scenographies discover and reinterpret the spaces of previous decades, the individual elements of abandoned interiors, and the traces of ended spatial narratives.

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[15] Viebrock's spaces often portray: blurry edges between interior and exterior space, distorted proportions, staircases that lead into different voids, etc.

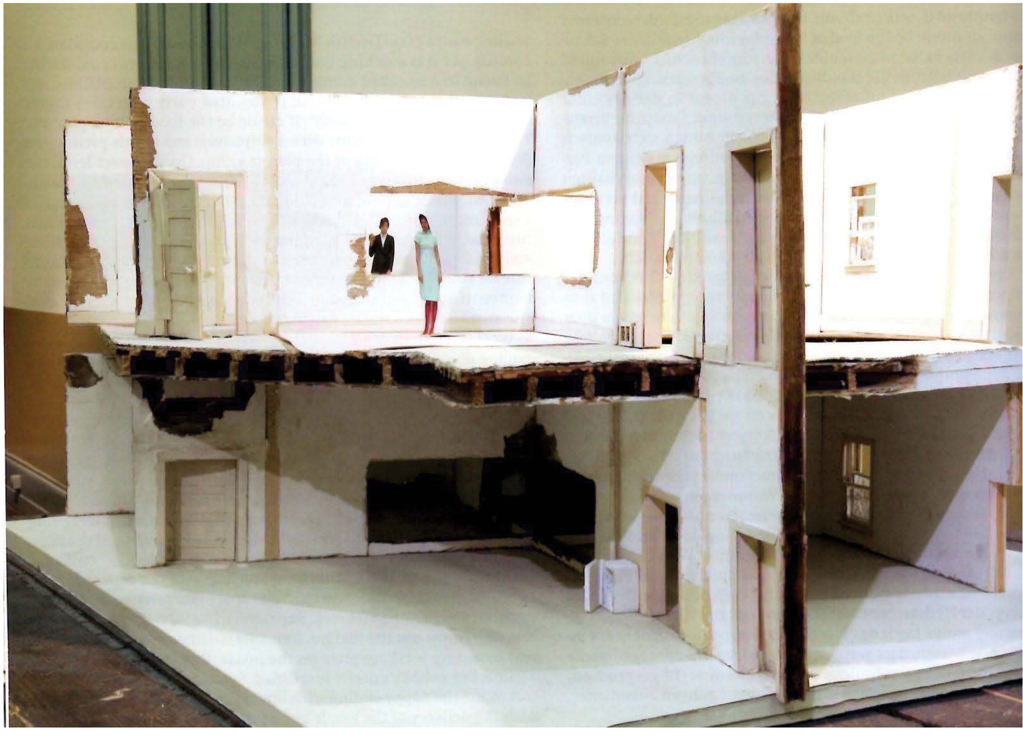

Figure 34: Viebrock's design for *Visitors Only*, directed by Meg Stuart, Schauspielhaus Zurich 2003 (Adam et al. 2011, p. 60)

Viebrock defines her method as 'an archeological interest in the visible fading of things' (Adam et al. 2011, p. 31). She establishes this on photographically documenting abandoned and aged interiors, on analysis, sketches, and the application or replication on stage of specific details or entire interiors. Here then is a 'deconstruction' of spatial details and reinterpretation of forgotten elements of human lives. In applying these on stage, she avoids creating metaphoric visualisations of dramatic texts, but rather depicts elements of interrupted existences. Her spaces appear as protagonists themselves, simultaneously belonging to past and present, both familiar and ambiguous.

Viebrock's scenographies are deeply concerned with 'past experiences'.
She acknowledges the present in which we live, yet demonstrates that we are shaped by past experience. Importantly for this research, Viebrock's designs present traces of the previous 'life' of people, spaces, and objects as positive inscriptions. This research proposes that herein is the 'psychological' element of her scenographies: her manipulation of psychology in scenographic and spatial terms that inevitably involves the relationship between people and space, and thereby studies subliminal layers of spatial and human narratives.

B. Orchestration of *TRAVELS*

TRAVELS were performed across the region of the former SFR Yugoslavia, in towns and villages directly affected by the 1990s ethnic conflicts[16]. They are strictly concerned with war-torn interiors representing direct victims of physical and ethnic violence. They involve thorough preparation and logistical planning, including deep research on diverse regions in terms of historical background, current political situation, and geographic and climatic conditions.

The physical, historical and conceptual contexts in which *TRAVELS* are established and performed (essentially as the aftermath to violent conflicts) impose strict devising processes:

1. The constant readjustment of proposed schedules according to the prevailing political situation in different countries[17].

2. The need to rigorously plan, in advance, movement through different regions.

3. Location-specific research undertaken prior to each *TRAVEL,* based on precise geographical location, climate conditions, safe modes of transport to and between proposed destinations, and the accessibility of locations. This segment involves thorough online research, constant following of news and articles published by individual republics in relation to these topics, and being in touch with people directly familiar with the region and able to provide concrete information.

4. Keeping informed about minefield examinations and demining programs coordinated through governmental bodies of individual republics. (Unexploded ordinance is still present in many areas, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.)

5. Where necessary, prearrangements to meet people familiar with the visited area[18].

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[16] Locations that have suffered economic and/or social consequences of war, but were not directly attacked, are not included in *TRAVELS*.

[17] *TRAVEL* to Kosovo had to be postponed and planned in accordance with the Kosovo elections in 2013. *TRAVELS* to Croatia had to be adjusted in accordance with the Vukovar riots against the use of Cyrillic alphabet on public institutions, which fuelled prolonged ethnic tension across the entire country.

[18] This was particularly significant for the *TRAVEL* to Kosovo, for organising travel between locations.

C. Belgrade as departure point

My arrival in Belgrade, former capital of SFR Yugoslavia, on the afternoon of June 27, 2011, marks the beginning of *TRAVELS*. This event represented complete physical and conceptual (re) immersion in the research context.

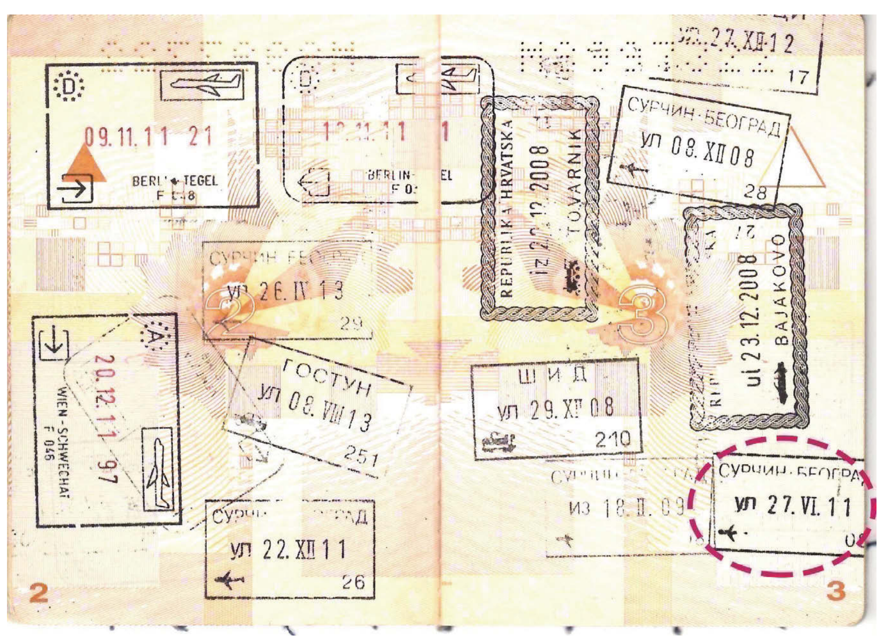

Figure 35: Passport for holder Nevena Mrdjenovic, Number: M8997322, Arrival in Belgrade: 27th June, 2011 (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

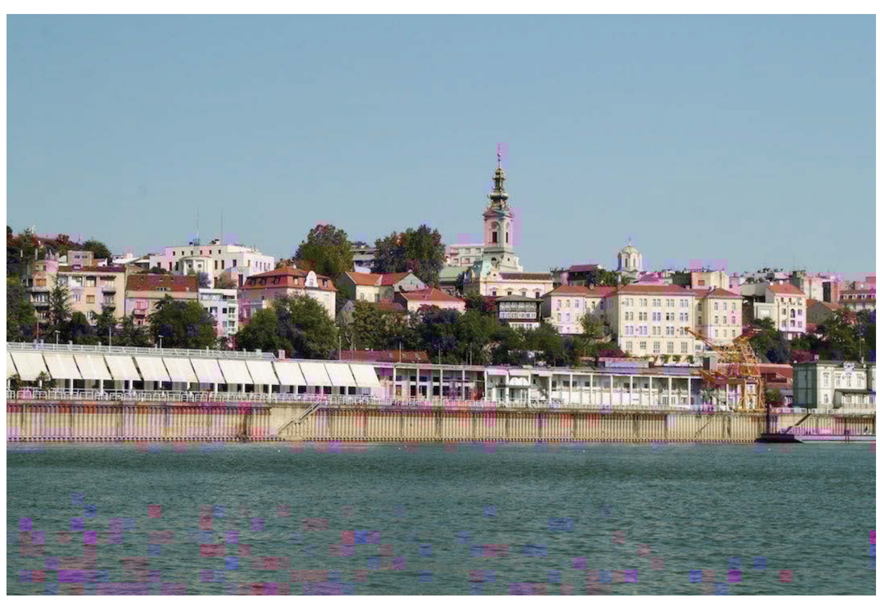

Figure 36: 27 June 2011 - arrival in Belgrade (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

Famous French architect Le Corbusier (1887-1965) named Belgrade 'a ridiculous capital: dishonest and disorganised' (Le Corbusier 2007, p. 43). Decades later, he 'apologised' for his negative impression by saying: 'This impression is from 1910. I was 23. Serbia had been enslaved by the Hapsburgs for a long time' (Le Corbusier 2007, p. 43). In response, Serbian and Yugoslav novelist Milorad Pavić (1929-2009) stressed that what Le Corbusier faced in 1910 was a result of centuries-long destruction. For Pavic, the most significant and beautiful aspects of this capital have disappeared and can never be reconstructed. He poetically suggests that contemporary experience of the former SFR Yugoslav capital cannot be based on what we see or touch; rather, the significant aspects of its history are 'stored' in its people, not on its streets. He adds: '(this) ridiculous capital in an admirable position, in fact, often represented an admirable capital in the most frightening position' (Pavić, cited in Znanje n. d., para. 4). Ivo Andrić (1892-1975), perhaps the most significant Yugoslav literary figure, and notably more emotionally involved than Le Corbusier, described Belgrade in the following way:

> This big city, it seems, always was as it appears today: wrenched, blown, just as it never actually exists, but is forever being created, in the process of being made and recovered. Sprouting and growing from one side, and withering and deteriorating on the other. It is forever moving and ruffling. The city sitting on two rivers, on the vast space, yet travelled by winds. (Andrić, cited in Znanje n.d., para. 7)

The present capital of Serbia, with a population of 1.65 million is the biggest urban centre and leading cultural and economical hub in the former federation. Built around an ancient stronghold, its name translates as 'white city' or 'white fortress'. Its historical core, fortress 'Kalemegdan', built in 535, lies on the right bank of two rivers, the Sava and Danube, while 'New Belgrade' was built on the left side. The city represents a key historical and geographical intersection between Eastern and Western Europe, and its history is complex. Surviving the period of the Ottoman Empire (1521), two Serbian Uprisings (1804-1813 and 1815-1817) against Ottoman rule, major destruction occurred when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia in 1914. More than 30,000 bombs landed in just three days (*Serbia in the Great War* 2014). Many buildings and numerous significant architectural objects were demolished. World War II brought new invaders and another two bombings (1941 and 1944), where infrastructure and multiple architectures of vital significance[19] were completely erased.

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[19] I. e. National Library, with more than 500,000 books, and other significant material completely destroyed.

Post-war, Belgrade claimed a new chance to grow as the capital of the SFR Yugoslavia. This period saw the city's development into a major industrial centre, beginning with the construction of 'New Belgrade' (1948), the emergence of the first television station in 1958, and the building of Belgrade airport (1962). However, the capital's political, economic, social and cultural stability eroded rapidly with the break-up of SFR Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Destruction of its architectural heritage culminated in 1999 with the NATO bombing. Among bombed sites were several ministries, the Radio and Television of Serbia building[20], several hospitals, hotels, embassies and numerous private dwellings later classified as 'collateral damage'.

Present experience of the city cannot hide evidence of destruction. Many buildings remain in their war-torn state, acting as unofficial memorials. Initial interaction with the streets discloses a chaotic, turbulent and inconsistent past. Aesthetically, Belgrade's streets are absurdly contrasting: socialist blocks squeezed between art nouveau masterpieces and remnants of the Habsburg legacy, Ottoman relics and the grandiose interiors of Orthodox Churches. Objects such as the National Theatre building (1869) sit in Republic Square next to glass and steel facades of the contemporary era. In terms of the current research, our experience of Belgrade cannot avoid the turbulent and often traumatic past.

3. 4. The Process of *TRAVELS*

A. Field-specific research

TRAVELS involve field-specific research for each proposed destination. Locations are labelled 'low or high risk'. This research segment commences days, weeks or months in advance. In high-risk locations, *TRAVELS* require more planning[21].

The segment is divided in two stages: research of historical and political context, followed by physical and geographical research. Each destination was researched in regard to recent history, significance during ethnic conflicts, important clashes and events that needed to be addressed during *TRAVELS*.

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[20] Sixteen technicians were killed at the scene.

[21] This particularly relates to the *TRAVEL* to Kosovo, because of the ongoing conflicts. This included detailed analysis of the political situation in the region, geographical locations, physical access, and contact with people who are familiar with the area.

Key issues related to identifying remaining minefields, traumatic past events that remain sensitive to discuss[22], vulnerability of local residents, ethnic tension and triggers for future conflict.

The segment included research on the current situation and ethnicity in the selected region, town or village. The goal was to avoid possible risks and prevent conflicts. *TRAVELS* were commonly organised with this information in mind. All participants were thus mindful of topics to be discussed, movement around towns and villages, structuring interviews and questions in relation to current facts, and understanding ethical, ethnic, cultural, and psychological boundaries during interactions with locals.

This segment included precise research of geographical locations, the prospect of movement between locations, physical access to abandoned sites, proposed transportation modes, and weather conditions for the day of *TRAVEL*. Physical access to abandoned sites included analysis of geographic location, climate, and flora and fauna typical to the region[23]. Different regions required different conditions, and *TRAVELS* were seasonally organised around the found information[24].

B. Two types of *TRAVELS*

TRAVELS are denoted as '*TRAVELS* by car' and '*TRAVELS* by bus'. *TRAVELS* by car commenced by leaving Belgrade early in the morning. They were noticeably more flexible, and as a result often garnered more material. Such *TRAVELS* offered more chance to move between locations, stop at unplanned sites and alter routes along the way. *TRAVELS* by bus, undertaken twice in a period of three years, began late at night, leaving from the central bus station in Belgrade. In both instances, *TRAVEL* 1 to Knin and *TRAVEL* 5 to Kosovska Mitrovica were performed by bus for safety reasons[25].

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[22] I. e. discussing events such as Kosovo Pogrom, bombing of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995), clashes in and around the town of Visegrad.

[23] This particularly relates to snakes and wild animals: i. e. Dalmatia is prone to snakes during hot summers. However,
jackals and wolfs have also become a common appearance in many remotely located villages outside the town of Knin, which have been entirely abandoned for more than fifteen years.

[24] Nature and vast vegetation have conquered the abandoned built environment, which has significantly impacted our access to many abandoned sites, particularly in spring and summer. Protective clothing and equipment had to be considered in such locations (high boots, winter jackets, gloves, sticks, etc.)

[25] *TRAVEL* 1 to Knin was performed by bus to investigate the actual situation in the region, and the relationship between Serbian and Croatian ethnic groups. *TRAVEL* 5 to Kosovo was performed by bus because this represents the only safe travel option for people of Serbian nationality. Busses commonly have police protection and drivers are familiar with the situation in the region.

C. Structured and semi-structured *TRAVELS*

TRAVELS by car are classified as structured and semi-structured. The first refers to rigorously-planned routes from Belgrade to proposed destinations. After crossing the border, we travelled to the planned location, ignoring possible sites of interest along the way. Structured *TRAVELS* apply to locations of particular interest such as Visegrad, selected because although it marks a major 1990s battlefield, it was neglected in the media compared to (for example) Sarajevo and Mostar. Semi-structured *TRAVELS* evolve by selecting one prime location of interest and allowing spontaneous diversions along the way. Routes may be altered by events, interactions with people, or sights of war-torn dwellings.

D. Participants

During all *TRAVELS* I was accompanied by at least one person. This practice, established for conceptual and safety reasons, was introduced at the start of the research process. In all major *TRAVELS*, the person was N. A., author of the original set of photographs from the abandoned village. In numerous locations we were accompanied by others, who informed and participated in *TRAVEL* segments. These segments included transportation, providing information about abandoned sites or movement between sites, participant observation, exploration of abandoned sites, and taking part in semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

E. Continually-active observation

TRAVELS began as soon as I boarded a vehicle to visit the proposed location. Physical movement between locations constituted continually-active observation, with all segments of the journey being significant for the *TRAVEL* performance. During *TRAVELS* by car, movement between locations was marked by scenic observation, observation of levels of destruction, paths and routes of former conflicts, and surroundings through which people fled. Observations were documented through photographs, video recordings and the *TRAVEL* diary. During *TRAVELS* by bus, this period included participant and non-participant observation. Two bus rides provided insight into the current relationships of previously conflicted ethnic groups and the overall situation in the region.

F. Border crossings

Crossing the border from one independent republic to another and stamping the passport, represented a significant moment in all *TRAVELS*. New borders have shifted geographical facts, and their new meaning has acquired major connotations. In Yugoslavs' new lives, borders emerge as new definitions of personal and collective identity and redefine the sense of belonging. Maps, as reflections of these borders, become key artefacts of the region's contemporary history.

G. Movement between locations, arrivals and interactions

Movement between locations was limited and often required detailed orchestration and planning, taking into account current relationships between newly-formed countries. To avoid possible incidents, *TRAVEL* implemented particular steps and strategies for the sake of safety. The aim was also to avoid intrusion into the lives and daily activities of the locals.

Strategies involved parking in side streets to conceal Belgrade number plates in areas where ethnic tension was still present, talking in English to avoid conflict that might be triggered by the Serbian dialect of *TRAVEL* participants, waiting for quiet periods of the day or arriving early to avoid crowds at sites of interest, and being mindful of conversations and topics discussed with the locals.

This stage of *TRAVELS* was highly significant as it allowed intimate engagement with the region, with nature, with streets and war-torn architecture. It delivered us direct experience of the aftermath of conflict, violence and trauma.

H. Interaction with abandoned spaces

Interactions with abandoned interiors varied from a minimum half-hour to a maximum three hours per space. A complex and intimate relationship developed between the person and the space, and between people within the space. Here I explored, photographed, sketched and recorded movements and sounds in the space. Each interaction with abandoned interiors was profoundly emotional, derived from their highly intimate nature: former bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms, hospital rooms, etc. These milieus intensified our emotional responses and reactions as we proceeded.

Movements in the abandoned spaces were not structured but were commonly directed by interior layouts or the physical state of the space. However, all followed a similar routine. As I entered a new space I selected a safe spot from which to observe and identify hazards: flooding, loose bricks, damaged floors, missing or demolished staircases, destroyed ceiling structures, etc. Following this, I identified safe circulation paths. I commonly began by taking a slow walk through a space on my own or with N. A. and other participants. After gaining a holistic sense I dedicated time to individual details. This segment was not orchestrated and evolved spontaneously. Discovering inscriptions of spatial narratives, and the interactions between participants and their relationships with each space, dictated the course of *TRAVEL* through these abandoned places.

I. Post-*TRAVEL* reflections

Each *TRAVEL* was followed by studio-based work in Belgrade, where I analysed, characterised, transcribed and stored collected material. This included writing detailed analyses of each *TRAVEL*, transcribing interviews and observations, editing notes, scanning *TRAVEL* diary pages, and filing and labelling photographs and other visual material.

J. Artefacts and support material

Each *TRAVEL* produced material that is here divided in two groups: ‘artefacts’ and ‘supplementary or background material’.

1. <u>Photographs</u> represented the most significant material produced in each *TRAVEL*. They were divided in two clusters: (a) ‘Artefacts’: interior shots reproduced as separate artefacts and presented in an exhibition and in book form. The goal here was to develop a new conceptual dialogue with spectators. (b) ‘Support material’: exterior and surrounding shots of sites along the way, of levels of destruction, or spatial details used to document the *TRAVELS*.

2. <u>Audio and video recordings</u> were introduced as supplementary methods in most *TRAVELS*. They supplemented interview transcripts, description and analysis of war-torn sites, and the overall experience of documentation in the *TRAVELS*. This strategy was applied for practical and conceptual reasons. In different locations, severe weather conditions complicated the process and it was easier to record impressions, additional information and casual conversations than to mark them in the *TRAVEL* diary.

3. The *TRAVEL* diary was my instrument for collecting detailed information about events, the behaviour of participants, moments in space, etc. It followed the structure of a reflective journal, allowing compilation of brief notes, sketches, rough floor plans, maps, etc. This supplementary research tool later proved a rich source of information.

K. Staging of artefacts

The *TRAVELS* produced photographic artefacts presented to spectators in two forms: a spatial installation in Sydney and a book. Both presentation forms have been realised through scenographic strategies through which the practical component of this research proposes new conceptual dialogues with spectators.

This research discovers inspiration for these 'dialogues' in the proposals of Antonin Artaud, who deeply emphasised the physicality of theatrical experiences. We note that theatre '… inspires us with fiery magnetism of its images and acts upon us like a spiritual therapeutics whose touch can never be forgotten' (Artaud 1958, p. 84-85). Artaud defined theatre as a physical expression in space, while physicality represents the most significant method for communication with spectators. In his *Theatre of Cruelty*[26], Artaud proposes an 'attack on all senses', where theatre is no longer a place where performances are delivered to passive spectators. This research embraces Artaud's effort to shift theatre from the sphere of banal entertainment into real life and social phenomena. Spectators should not be entertained, he argues. On the contrary, one should goad the audience to be terrified, shocked, and skeptical of the world around them. Artaud urges that language and written text, traditionally the tyrant over meaning, are insufficient to express any kind of trauma. For him, different types of trauma represent significant aspects of personal and collective existence. He instigates a language of the senses, defined as 'physical language'. In this process he recognises 'the poetry of space and its physicality', transcending 'the poetry of language'. For Artaud, the physicality of space is poetry for the senses, akin to poetry with the spoken word. This research embraces Artaud's urge for a theatre based on the unique language that is developed between thoughts and gestures. Our *TRAVELS* recognise 'physical language' and 'spatial poetry' as significant references for perceiving and presenting abandoned sites to new spectators. This research asserts that words speak very little to the soul, being directed exclusively to the mind.

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[26] 'Theatre of Cruelty' represents a theatre form developed in Artaud's collection of essays titled *The Theatre and its Double* (1938). It is often perceived as a break from traditional Western theatre. Artaud's definitions of 'theatre' and 'cruelty' differ from their colloquial use. 'Theatre of Cruelty' proposes to restore a passionate and convulsive conception of life. Artaud refers to 'theatre' as a practice, while 'Cruelty is more profoundly the unrelenting agitation of a life that has become unnecessary, lazy or removed from a compelling force' (Artaud, 2011, p. 263). 'Cruelty' metaphorically refers to the essence of human existence, and is most precisely evoked in the sense of violent rigour and in the production's scenic elements.

Yet space and the objects within it have power to communicate to the soul. For Artaud, images speak to humans on a deeper level '… if we know how to leave enough space for silence and stillness occasionally' (Artaud 1958, p. 87).

Further inspiration in this research is derived from Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990) and Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940). Kantor, a Polish painter, set designer and director, is here significant due to his focus on the performance environment. He understood space as an active and influential force rather than a passive container of action. He thus influenced the spatial organisation and inherent meaning and quality of objects placed on a stage. Kantor's space is framed as a dynamic agent, while his scenographies search for the essence of reality rather than creating artificial onstage replicas. For Kantor, objects used on stage are in no way subordinate in their relationships with performers and spectators; each object is capable of communicating on a level equal to the performers.

This method is best exemplified in his *The Return of Odysseus* (1944), developed as a metaphor of war and the occupation of Poland by the Nazis[27]. Kantor worked on this production despite formal prohibitions, staging it in a single room in a bombed building. For Kantor, the room represented the most evocative way of connecting mythology with contemporary reality. All objects and props were retrieved by Kantor and his cast from inside or near the room. This process of discovering, selecting and staging previously-discarded objects was crucial. Parallel to our concept of *TRAVELS* (which frame and 'stage' abandoned, war-torn 'homes' and traces of 'disregarded' trauma), Kantor's collected objects, previously considered insignificant, became a means by which spectators' imaginations were powerfully activated.

Vsevolod Meyerhold, a Russian director, actor and producer, often provoked spectators by presenting topics outside the common theatrical norm. For Meyerhold, theatre cannot simply mirror reality; it needs to transcend the everyday. He achieves this by introducing 'stylisation' - a strategy that allows his productions to communicate beyond the presented onstage reality; that is, by a unique scientific method of abstraction, he exposes subtext through the interaction between performers' movements and their scenic environments. Meyerhold is one of the earliest practitioners to urge that visual aspects of performances transcend the verbal.
His approach sought to 'sharpen' the senses of both his ensemble and spectators by exploring the emotional, intellectual and muscular capabilities of his performers.

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[27] Kantor's career begins in the aftermath of World War II and the Stalinist rule of his Polish homeland. His experimental theatrical expressions were opposed to the authorities and often initiated conflict.

He also sought to develop strategies through which the action of the performers directs spectators to perceive the world of the play through a ‘visual eye’.

TRAVEL involves both direct experiences for participants, and presentation of representations of these for spectators. Both aspects give priority to framing past violent acts in terms of their personal and collective consequences. It is here proposed that inscriptions of violent acts are primarily experienced through the ‘visual eye’, while verbal aspects act as support to the visual. Elements of Meyerhold’s concept are thus applied during the performance of *TRAVEL* and in the two forms of presenting artefacts. Inscriptions of violence, found personal objects and spatial details all imply and reveal layers of information about the former inhabitants: their life, family, age, ethnicity, etc., - as well as profound personal and collective trauma. In the presentation of artefacts, the ‘visual eye’ seeks a unique experience in which ‘staged’ spatial narratives are not presented to spectators for the sake of their aesthetic quality. Instead, ‘visual eye’ supports Artaud’s proposal: to ‘move’ spectators, to direct them to question framed events and actions, to ‘interpret’ and ‘experience’ the remnants of personal and collective trauma through ‘the poetry of space and its physicality’ - all the while speaking the language of sense and emotion.

CHAPTER FOUR: *TRAVELS*

4. 1. *TRAVEL* 1

Performers:

Nevena Mrdjenovic, the main researcher

N. A., theatre director, creator of the original set of photographs

A. M., an elderly local resident, born & raised in Knin

TRAVEL 1 follows a route from Belgrade to Knin, and to the abandoned village where N. A. had taken the original set of photographs. The *TRAVEL* spans over five days, yet one of the most significant segments takes place on the bus to Knin. During this nine-hour night ride, N. A. provides crucial information about the past conflicts. It soon becomes apparent that the tense atmosphere on the bus exemplifies the current, post-conflict situation in the region.

N. A. and A. M. are the only collaborators in this *TRAVEL*. A. M. initially acts as a logistic support: provides accommodation, transportation between remote locations, and informs us about the present state in the region. However, as he begins to testify about the past events, he becomes more emotionally involved in this *TRAVEL*.

A. M. fled the town in 1995, along with other Serbian refugees. In 1996, not being able to live away from *home*, he returned to Knin and lived in an old shed in his courtyard for seven months until he rebuilt his family house exactly as it was before the war. He never left Knin again. His testimonies of the past and comments about the present help us navigate and plan our movements and actions in town.

TRAVEL 1 starts as a focused search for abandoned houses featured in the original set of photographs. However, this exploration soon reveals a complex set of traumatically inscribed issues, and sets stage for all of the other *TRAVELS*.

Date:	27 to 31 July, 2011.
Route:	Belgrade to Knin and the Abandoned Village.
Rationale:	Search for the abandoned interiors presented in N. A.'s photographs.

On July 27 2011, two years after I received the original set of photographs from their creator N. A., (who visited Knin and the abandoned village in 2009) I boarded a night bus from Belgrade to Knin with N. A. The bus departed Belgrade central bus station (BAS) at 8.30pm.

Prepared equipment for the *TRAVEL* included a DSLR camera, *TRAVEL* diary, selected literature, and N. A.'s set of photographs.

Figure 37: Map for *TRAVEL* 1: Belgrade to Knin 2011 (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

‘Prior to this *TRAVEL,* my knowledge of the town of Knin was limited. My preparation included research on the town and its history. Knin is situated in the Sibenik-Knin province of Croatia, on the major rail-line that connects the capital Zagreb with Split, an important coastal town. By rail, Knin is 688 kilometres from Belgrade, and 55 kilometres from the Dalmatian coast. The closest coastal town is Sibenik. Knin’s location has played a significant role in numerous historical conflicts, climaxing in 1995 when it was heavily damaged in ethnic clashes between Serbian and Croatian forces. In the civil wars in SFR Yugoslavia, Serbia viewed the clashes there as the final stage in the ‘Yugoslav war’, while the Croatian army’s operation Storm saw it as the last battle in the ‘Croatian War of Independence’.

My research before the *TRAVEL* reveals that: ‘Before the war only about 10 per cent of the population were Croats, while 86 per cent were Serbs. On the other hand, after the war the share of Croats rose to 76 per cent and the share of Serbs reduced to only 21 per cent’ (Glamuzina M, Šiljković & Glamuzina N 2005, p. 87). In the war’s final days, the majority of Serbs (predominately civilians, children, elderly and women) fled the town. After the war, many Croatian citizens moved to Knin from other parts of the former SFR Yugoslavia, particularly from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The 2011 census recorded the population at 10, 633 (Croatian Bureau of Statistics n. d.).

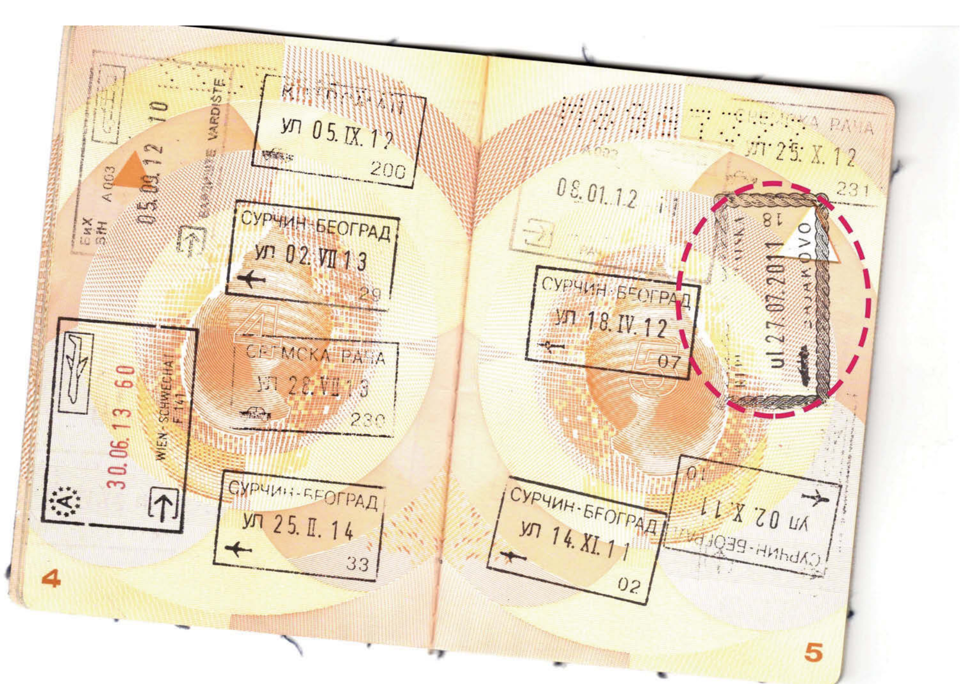

Figure 38: Passport for holder Nevena Mrdjenovic: Number M8997322.
Stamped at the Croatian border, checkpoint Bajakovo, 27.07.2011 (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

'…This *TRAVEL* marks my first visit to Knin. My bus takes the former 'Brotherhood and Unity' Motorway with no stops until we reach the Croatian border, 120 kilometres from Belgrade. There are border checkpoints in the village of Batrovci on the Serbian side, and Bajakovo on the Croatian side. Once we reach Bajakovo, we are all made to get off the bus and line up in the customs office. The officer checks my passport, wanting to know my final destination, purpose and intended duration of visit. He also asks for an address for my stay in Knin. Accepting my answers, he stamps and returns my passport and I am free to reboard. Hotels are shut down in Knin at this time, I am told, and N. A. has organised accommodation with the people he visited in 2009…

Literary Inspirations: Meanwhile I have prepared two books for the *TRAVEL*. The first, *Theatre as a Creation of the World* (2008) by Zorica Jevremović, a Belgrade playwright, reflects on her experience in applying theatre strategies and creating performances for patients in one of Serbia's biggest mental health institutions, the Doctor Laza Lazarević Hospital in Belgrade, between 1993 and 1995. Significantly, it represents the reflections of a dramaturgist and playwright who abandoned traditional theatre contexts for a new approach to conceptualisation, staging and theatrical practice in general. Specifically, in the context of my *TRAVEL,* Jevremović offers insights into the sources and triggers of psychological and emotional issues - and their significance is precisely due to her conception, production and staging of performances in a hospital. At the time, ethnic conflicts were escalating across the different regions of the former unity, and many of Jevremović's observations relate directly to the traumatic break-up of SFR Yugoslavia. Patients - here introduced as actors in roles, scenographers and costume designers - all at some point reflect on their 'lost motherland'. Jevremović portrays their psychological issues and mental states as direct and indirect consequences of the conflicts raging across the region during her work in the hospital. I note that inclusion of people with physical and mental disabilities has become prominent in contemporary artistic practice. In fact, in Western Europe and beyond, 'trauma' has emerged as a dominant topic in theatrical and cultural production. Multiple and profound artistic investigations and intimate expressions of traumatic experiences expressing human weakness and vulnerability, are now a prominent method for dealing with trauma. Jevremović's book constitutes the most significant early investigation of these issues in this war-torn region.

The second work I find relevant for the *TRAVEL* is a novel by the significant Yugoslav literary figure Borislav Pekić (1930-1992). *The Houses of Belgrade* (1970) offers me a promising springboard for reimmersion in the region's culture. Pekić here portrays his protagonist Arsenije Njegovan through his obsession with the houses that he owns; he treats them like human beings and falls in love. In fact, his houses represent a longing for property, ownership and beauty. Yet, rather than seeking to create a 'holistic image of an epoch', Pekić wants to revive its spirit by portraying a single character. In similar vein, I myself have set out to observe individual elements of abandoned interiors (captured in N. A.'s photographs) in order to get deeper understanding of a collective traumatic past and its narratives. By analysing individual objects in abandoned homes, I am afforded insight into their former inhabitants, their past lives, and the events that occurred in their spaces during and after the war…

…Our bus ride to Knin lasts nearly ten hours. It is dark and quiet, and most passengers are asleep. A film is playing on a TV screen above the driver's seat - a well-known old Yugoslav comedy. The volume is just a murmur. We are seated in a row at the back, and can't really hear it. I am awake for almost the entire trip. I keep reading Jevremović's book. N. A.'s photographs are spread in front of me on the fold-out tray, and I continually refer back to them. My *TRAVEL* diary and pens are also laid out. N. A. and I look at the images and discuss details. I keep asking him questions about the spaces he has visited. I am interested in their size, their location, their history - but N. A.'s answers are brief…

N. A. now offers more on the conflicts of 1995. He speaks softly, and pauses often. He is clearly uncomfortable. At one point, when he speaks about the military conflicts in Knin, he is almost whispering. To him, our situation is clearly tense. The bus has left Belgrade and though it is run by a well-known Serbian company (Lasta) we don't know the ethnicity of our fellow passengers. The tension is heightened by the fact that we are travelling through the very region where those traumas took place. Most people here were, in diverse ways, affected. We know that discussing somebody's potentially worst experiences will impose risks, even trigger new conflict.

As we discuss the abandoned interiors in the photographs, I make notes and sketches in my *TRAVEL* diary. I also note down questions that N. A. can't answer.
I hope to find someone in Knin who can answer my queries about the interiors.
We begin to construct possible narratives… the missing people, the inhabitants who fled… Their destiny is our primary interest right now. I am obsessed about whether these people were given a chance to escape the village in time… and inevitably we think of what happened to those who stayed.

Some of the images expose extreme destruction. I shiver to think of going into spaces where people have experienced trauma, perhaps even been tortured or killed. As I talk to N. A., I mark any and all thoughts in my diary…

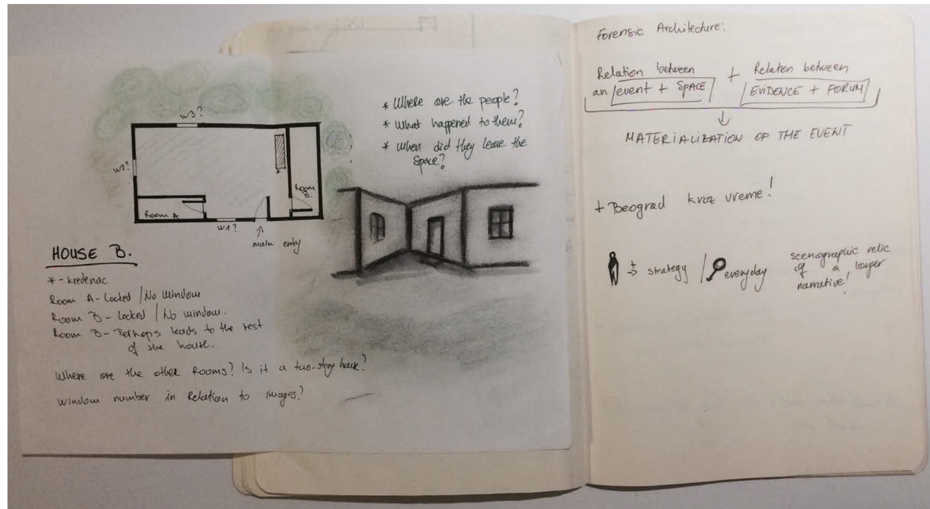

Figure 39: *TRAVEL* diary record 2011 (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

Looking at the images, I discern significant visual, aesthetic and stylistic references to Andrei Tarkovsky's films. The images inescapably bring to mind particular scenes… from *The Mirror* (1975), *Nostalgia* (1983) and *Stalker* (1979)…

Figure 40: Tarkovsky's poetic images (*The Mirror* 1975; *Nostalgia* 1983; *Stalker* 1979)

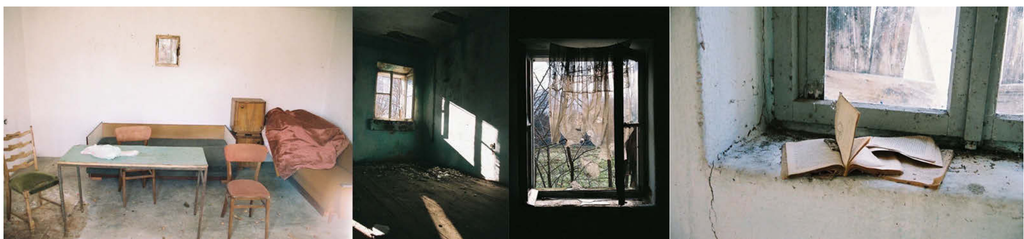

Figure 41: Collage of N. A.'s photographs (N. A. 2009)

Our bus makes a few brief stops, but we don't alight. It is dawn, around 4 am, when we make the final stop before Knin. The bus pulls up in front of a large restaurant near the town of Gracac in the region of Lika. We are here about 20 minutes, and all passengers get off. Many stay outside the restaurant, stretching and walking round the parking lot. They don't speak to each other. Some smile and nod to greet others, but most stay quiet. Some stick to their travel groups, smoking and talking in muted tones. Three elderly men stand at the bus door, each a few steps away from the others. They do not communicate. Inside the restaurant, people are loud, even cheerful, speaking mainly German and English. It appears most of them are tourists travelling to the Adriatic coast. There is no apparent tension in their relationships. By contrast, our passengers talk softly. They line up to buy drinks and food, only briefly discussing their orders with each other. Clearly, they don't feel at ease. The waitresses are restrained. N. A. tells me he experienced a similar scene in 2009. On his bus were people of probable Serbian nationality, either visiting their former homes, or relatives and family members who came back to the region after the war. According to N. A, people of Serbian nationality rarely spend their summer holidays in this region unless they have their own houses. If they do holiday in Croatia, they tend to visit other parts such as Istra - places not directly involved in past conflicts.

We arrive in Knin at 6 am. The town is quiet, and it is a warm, sunny morning. A. M., a local resident born and raised in the town, greets us at the bus station and takes us to his house. The bus station is in the centre, and houses on the main street - narrow, mostly two-storey dwellings with small windows and built of the local stone - typify the architecture of the Dalmatian region. In most other streets, the houses only differ in the size and colour of their timber shutters. The Knin inner town still carries clear traces of former conflicts. Facades along the main street are renovated, but many display bullet-sprayed facades, burned structures, graffiti. Traces of violence become more obvious as we leave the inner town. On the outskirts, facades are completely broken, houses abandoned, and multiple dwellings entirely razed. Such traces of violence imply more recent conflicts - yet A. M. confirms they are from the 1995 war.

As a resident who knows the area, A. M. advises I should be cautious in my moves and actions in Knin. He points out that people are still highly vulnerable to dredging up the past. With a current town population , he says, foreigners are easily noticed. He admits that my interest in vandalised sites, particularly domestic dwellings, will definitely attract the locals' attention. If N. A. and I are to discuss events, locations or historical details, he suggests we should consider speaking in English. Our accents and dialects are easily depicted as Serbian, and he warns us this may be a conflict-trigger for someone who comes across our field work.

A. M. explains that such incidents happen often in summer when many people visit relatives here. I duly note these instructions in the *TRAVEL* diary, initially finding them absurd.

They differ greatly from my experiences of daily life in cities like Belgrade and Zagreb. A. M.'s words imply that the situation in smaller towns, affected as they are by deep trauma, is far more tense.

Figure 42: Destroyed dwellings in Knin (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

Figure 43: One of the main streets in Knin (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

A. Knin to the Abandoned Village

Figure 44: Map of *TRAVEL* 1: Knin to Abandoned Village (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

It is 9 am on a warm summer's morning when N. A., A. M. and I leave Knin to visit an abandoned village about seven kilometres away. The aim is to find the houses in N. A.'s 2009 photographs. The village is located on a hill beyond the town, and has been abandoned for twenty years. All signage has been erased here. Despite the beautiful views of natural surroundings, this is an uncomfortable trip in A. M.'s little old car. He confirms that at some point in history this village was part of the nearby village of Vrbnik, some minutes away. Once past the inhabited area of Vrbnik village, we slowly venture along a narrow rural road. Although it is still early morning, the temperature is already high.

This upper region of Dalmatia is mainly stony, with poor soil. It faces frosty winters with a lot of snow, while summers get hot and dry. The weather in 2011 was particularly bothersome (A. M. explains) as it became extremely hot in July, after a long and severe winter in the higher regions.

Meanwhile, A. M. ventures deeper into the events from the past. He explains that with the formal break up of SFR Yugoslavia in 1991-1992, conflicts between the constituent republics intensified. Many people fled this and many other surrounding villages, relocating mainly to towns in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia.

Most stayed in these new towns as refugees, while many returned to their villages in the period of peace between 1993 and 1995. It remains unknown which houses were inhabited then. With the beginning of the final military clashes, marked by the Croatian army's operation 'Storm', the inhabitants, no later than 1995, fled this village en masse once again. Although some visited their homes after the war, no-one has ever returned to live.

Our goal now is to find the houses that N. A. previously visited, but he does not remember the area too well. The first house we get to is barely visible. A. M. parks the car and we continue on foot. He warns us that in this weather, and particularly in abandoned locations, there will be snakes. We carry sticks and wear high shoes. After twenty years of abandonment, nature is reconquering the area's architectural objects. In some parts we can hardly see the houses. They are overgrown with weeds, bushes and tree branches. We try to break our way in with sticks. Despite several attempts to find a way into at least one of the houses, we give up. A. M. continues driving through the village, and we glimpse roofs and parts of built structures: all low single-storey buildings. N. A. has remembered some locations, and tries to connect details in the photographs with the 'disguised' houses before us. Yet access is impossible.
He suggests we come back to this village later in the year.

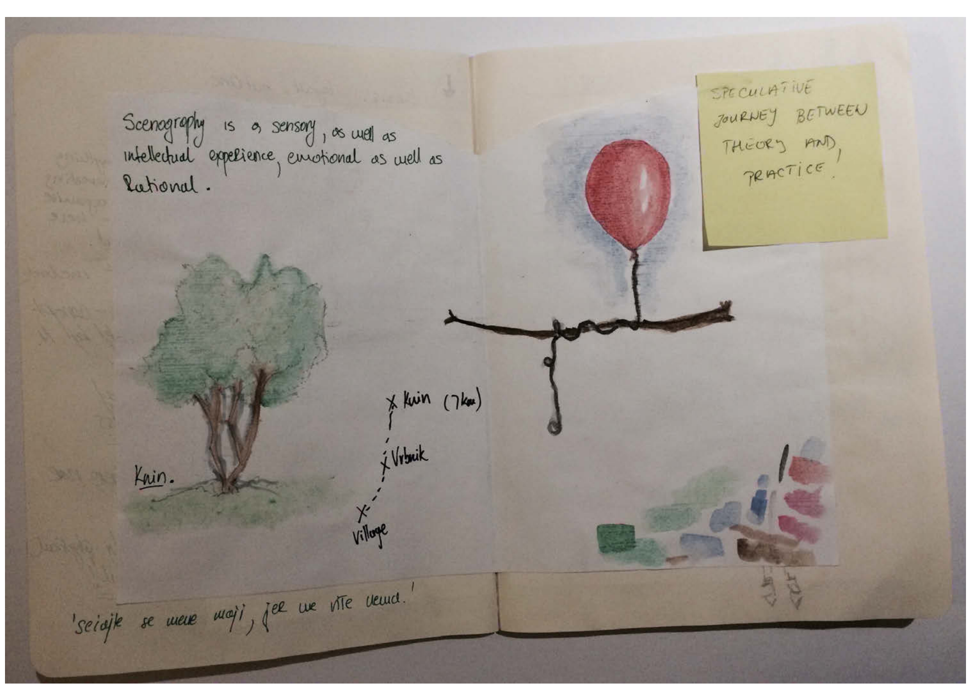

Figure 45: *TRAVEL* diary record (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

4. 2 *TRAVEL* 1. 1.

Performers:

Nevena Mrdjenovic, the main researcher

A. N., a 27 year old man; born in Knin, fled the town in 1995,

currently lives in Serbia

TRAVEL 1. 1. takes place on a hot summer afternoon, and begins as a slow stroll through the empty streets of Knin. The main action is set in an abandoned, war-torn hospital in the town centre. This vast building complex represents an important physical and psychological coordinate of A. N.'s childhood.

A. N., who is the main focus of this *TRAVEL*, now returns to his hometown for the third time after the war. *TRAVEL* 1. 1. documents a profoundly disturbing physical and psychological exploration of the past trauma. It begins as A. N.'s journey through his own memories of trauma, in which I act as a documenter. However, our physical interaction in the heavily violated space soon develops a strong bond between us, and I become a co-performer in this *TRAVEL*.

Our shared experience of trauma in a war-torn space becomes the main method of work in this *TRAVEL*. A. N. reconnects with his childhood trauma and explores his deepest wounds through the physicality of the space. I, on the other hand, experience the reality of the war and vulnerability of characters like A. N. - through the materiality of the building, tactile traces of violence and A. N.'s oral testimony.

Date: 28th of July, 2011.
Route: Belgrade to Knin.
Rationale: Investigation of the abandoned hospital in Knin.

On July 28 2011, during my stay at A. M.'s house (*TRAVEL* 1), I was introduced to A. N., a twenty-seven year old man. He was born in Knin and fled the town along with other Serbian refugees when ethnic conflict returned in 1995. During my visit to Knin, he was visiting his hometown for the third time since the war. He was intrigued by my interest in its ravaged domestic architecture, and offered to show me around. Since the 1995 war, A. N. had lived in Serbia. He explained that although he likes to visit the place of his roots, he still feels nervous every time he returns. He believes this tension stems from the fact that he now returns as a 'visitor'; in fact, he is constantly aware that he barely qualifies even as a tourist. Because of the trauma he has lived through, he curiously feels as if he is not welcome in Knin anymore. A. N. says that the tension is at its height when he walks around the town. He feels certain that he can feel it in glances of people. Despite this, he adds, he still feels proud of his hometown, and feels that Knin is the only place he actually feels 'at home'. I found this fact poignant.

A. N. and I began by driving through the town in an old borrowed vehicle. This afternoon journey, accompanied and led by a person who is now both 'insider and outsider', was a unique experience, and marked a new and deeper layer of my *TRAVEL*.

The equipment for this *TRAVEL* remained the same: the DSLR camera and my *TRAVEL* diary.

‘As we pass the main street and railway station, we head for the Knin Fortress, which rises above the town. Built around the 9th century CE, it represents one of the town’s most significant symbols. It was also the most important defensive stronghold during the conflicts of the early 1990s. As a young child, A. N. used to play with his friends near this edifice. Such monuments are rare in small towns like Knin, and for A. N., this fortress emerged as a particular symbol of his childhood.

After a short stroll around it, we drive back to town, and A. N. parks in a side street on the upper side of the inner centre. We tour the surrounding streets then stop in front of a house. A. N. explains that this is where he was born and lived his first eight years. It is clear the house is inhabited. A window is open, a curtain half-covers it, and the courtyard is well maintained. A car is parked in front.

A. N. does not know the people who now live here.

He is uncomfortable, and we move on.

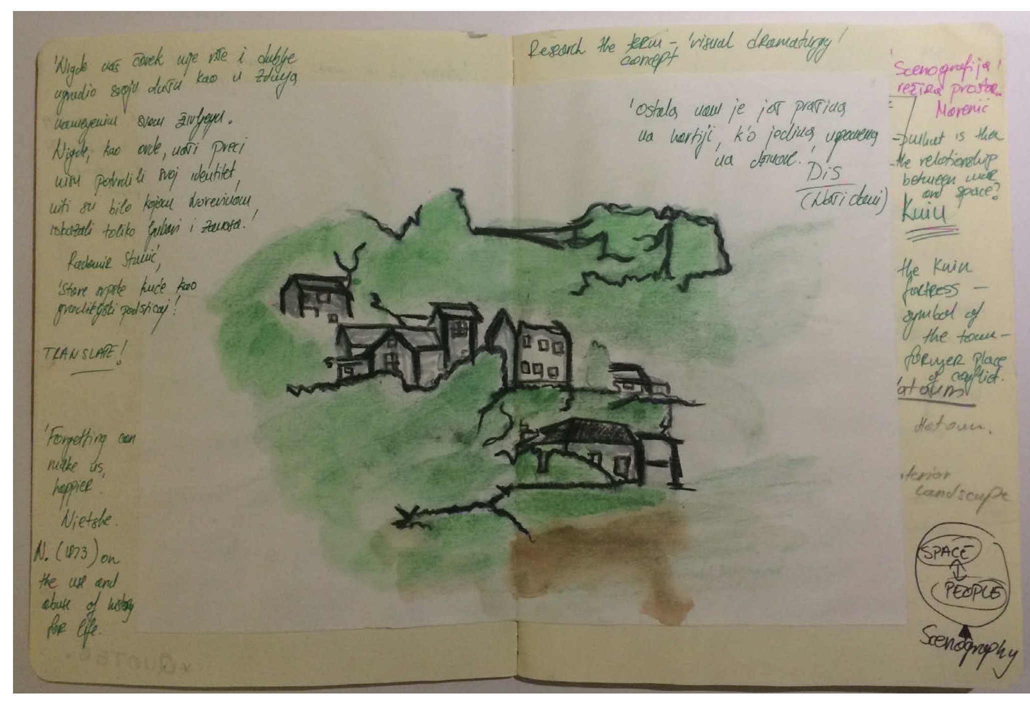

Figure 46: *TRAVEL* diary record (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

Figure 47: Knin Fortress (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

Late afternoon. It is warm, and the streets are almost empty. A few older men pass by. Three young boys are playing on the roadside. No-one pays attention to us. We head towards the town centre, and half-way to the main street walk past A. N.'s primary school - and a hospital on the other side where he was born.

A. N. is quiet. I hesitate to ask questions.

I want him to lead the conversation.

It is uncomfortable, and A. N. is tense.

These two buildings are monumental in his life. Physically the largest buildings on the street, they are the crucial architectural coordinates of his earliest memories.
The hospital is directly across from his primary school. Thus, he either passed it every day or observed it while playing in the schoolyard at lunchtime. A. N. first left Knin when the first ethnic conflicts broke out. He was seven years old. Yet in that period between 1991 and 1995, he used to visit often. Most of his memories of the town are in fact closely linked with his childhood memories.

This hospital in which he was born, now abandoned in the centre of Knin, is a large complex of two and three-storey buildings. From the street where we stand, it looks completely derelict. I ask A. N. if we can walk inside. He looks about, and after a moment's silence nods his head.

The tension is obvious.

He says nothing, generally avoids eye contact. The building is shaded, isolated from the street by copious vegetation, weeds and grass. Numerous big trees dominate the courtyard, and some are taller than the building. A concrete path leads from the gate to the main entry. As we come closer, I see piles of paper scattered about the courtyard. Almost every window is shattered. All signage has been removed from the premises.

Figure 48: Abandoned hospital in Knin (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

Figure 49: Abandoned hospital in Knin (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

On close inspection, it is clear that the scattered papers are medical files of past patients. I pick one up. It is a specialist report, dated 1.10.1993. It is in Serbian Cyrillic script. The patient diagnosis and proposed treatment is typed in Latin script. The patient's name (Milorad) and surname (unidentifiable) are handwritten. The stamp on the report is also in Cyrillic, yet the name of the hospital is illegible - except for 'KNIN', written as 'КНИН'.

We approach the main entry. The vegetation creates a membrane that filters any noise from the street, except for a distant car. The trees shield us from direct sunlight, and it is noticeably cooler in the courtyard.

We feel physically dislocated from the town.

Even before we enter the first building, it is obvious the hospital has been smashed and vandalised. Some areas look like they had been set alight. I pause at the front door, then proceed down long, narrow hallways, painted white and blue. Doors in each hallway lead to patient rooms and offices. The floors are littered with medical files, books, shoes, medical equipment, syringes, bottles. We cannot avoid this detritus, and step gingerly around it. Our steps create odd sounds according to the objects we stand on. Red arrows are hand-drawn on the walls, and these immediately pull our attention. They lead into a room on the right, which resembles a patient room. The scrawled arrows intensify the tension in the space. Here the ceilings are everywhere destroyed. It is obvious they have suffered from long abandonment and tough weather over the years. The sight of shoes in every room disturbs us. They are of different sizes, mainly black men's shoes. We repeatedly stumble across them as we walk.

Figure 50: Medical record in Knin hospital courtyard (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

Figure 51: Hallways of abandoned hospital in Knin (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

The interior atmosphere is poignant, tense.

A. N. is quiet. and leads me through.

I continually stop to stare about. I had anticipated a quick end to this investigation, but now, being inside feels strangely disturbing. The vast space is eerily quiet. Traces of violence are apparent everywhere I look. The building's scale adds to this dramatic moment in space. Windows are smashed everywhere. As we move through, we scare scattered birds nesting on destroyed windowsills. Their wings echo in the vast empty building. As I follow A. N. I continually look behind, as if someone is following.

Suddenly, the vandalised space swamps me in actual fear.
I feel as if we will be attacked at any moment.
I am enveloped by the presence of violence and destruction.

I photograph separate rooms as we move about. They vary in size, some narrow and small, others wider with large windows. Most floors are littered with medical files and literature. A book lies open, at page 22-23, on a pile of glass fallen from the window. The headline is 'Fever'; it lists different causes and symptoms in English. Next to it is a navy female shoe, a well-known design, 'Borosana'.

I recall that these are manufactured in the village of Borovo, near Vukovar in Croatia. These shoes were one of the most recognisable objects of Tito's Yugoslavia, typically worn by nurses, female factory workers, waitresses, hairdressers - in fact, nearly all women employed in service in SFR Yugoslavia. Developed by orthopaedists for women who worked long hours, it features an open toe and a heel… a symbol of Tito's socialism, redolent of the government's concern for its labouring population.

We stumble across another arresting image. A room's front wall is missing, the wall that separated it from the hallway. Clearly the wall was mined… or a bomb was thrown through the outer window. Parts of the timber window hang on, and the floor is nothing but bricks, bits of cement and traces of unrecognisable objects.

Figure 52: Objects found in the abandoned hospital in Knin (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

Figure 53: Destroyed patient room in the abandoned hospital (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

Soon, we find rooms with their floors covered by piles of cloths. Most garments are hard-textured, olive green and male: maybe military uniforms. There are no ethnic markings. In other rooms there are pieces made of noticeably softer fabrics, and some are cut in small pieces. A. N. tells me this is a particularly disturbing image for him. His father was in the army in Knin, and like most physically and mentally fit men, was mobilised as part of the civilian and territorial defence of the region.

A. N. finally begins to talk about this place, and explains that it is hard for him to articulate his feelings, and even more difficult to write or record them.

To start with, he is hesitant about my scribing his speech, saying he is happy to discuss issues, but having his sentences recorded is for some reason emotionally searing. These memories, he says, are profoundly personal, since his earliest memories relate to this building. His childhood evolved around this site: on one side of the building was his primary school, on the other a childcare centre he attended. A few doors down the street was his grandfather's firm, and on the hill is the medieval fortress that represents his hometown. He was born in this very building, and his old home is just minutes away…

A. N. explains that these facts add a degree of sacredness to the site and to our interaction with it. A. N. assumes the building dates from the mid-1960s[28].

Apparently it served as the main hospital until the late 1980s when a new hospital was built on the outskirts of town. The building remained as a complex to support the new hospital and was abandoned at the start of the 1990s. In the early 1990s, during the Republic of Serbian Krajina (1991-1995), the building was again used as a hospital. Medical records we have picked up date from 1993.

[28] Online research confirmed it was built in 1968.

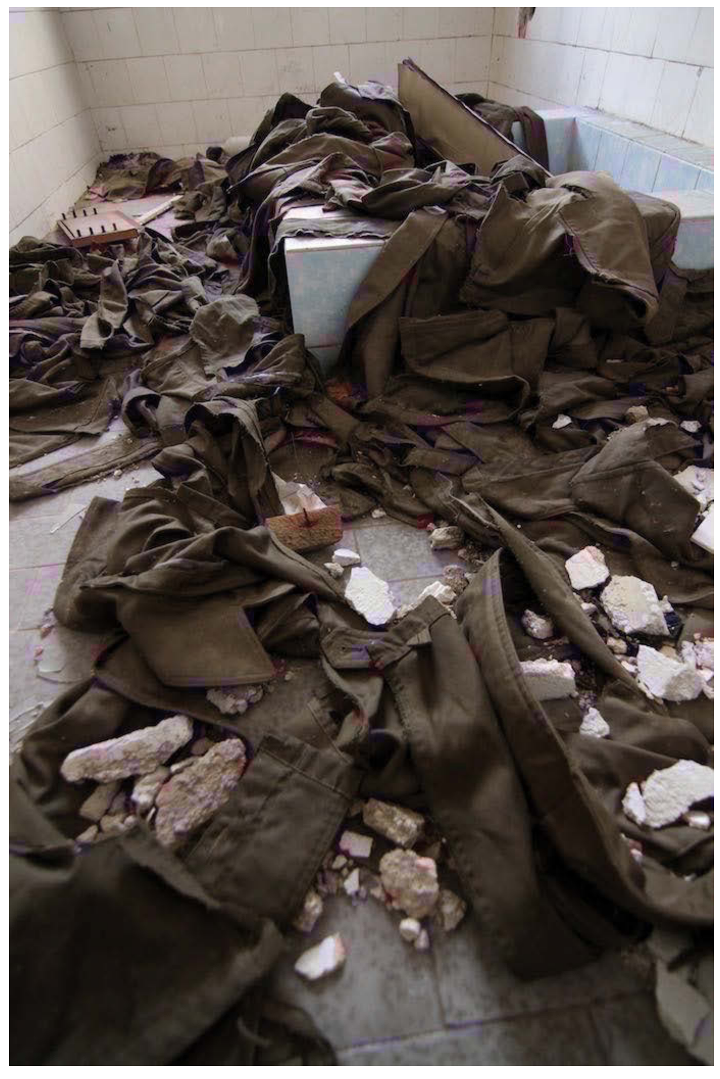

Figure 54: Army uniforms (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

A. N. looks away from me as he describes a moment when he first gave flowers to a girl. He was six, picked a bunch of flowers in front of the hospital, and waited for the girl he liked to finish her classes. She started crying when he approached her, and called her older brother.

A. N. stands in silence, then smiles as he recalls the moment.

After a few seconds though, he fiddles with his hands, contorts his face and edges to the other side of the room. I am not sure how to comfort him. I stand in the corner of the destroyed room waiting for him to break the silence.

I look through the window and see wild flowers in the courtyard, and experience the arresting scent of fresh air mixing with the pine trees. I can feel A. N. still in the room, immobile. I see the childhood event in my mind. I want to ask him if he has ever seen this girl again, but am afraid to…

Despite his brief imaginative interlude, he remains tense. As we enter the next room, he asks me to come to the window. He points to the courtyard, hesitates. Then he softly speaks about a first watch that his grandmother gave him, which he lost while playing behind the hospital. He spent hours looking for it. Now he examines his wrist and describes the watch. He slides his finger across the skin, as if showing it to me. Softly, he recalls that the watch had brown skin, a golden frame and a picture of a dinosaur.

It seems that this watch represents all the loss: his childhood, his *home*, his first school, his earliest memories.

As we move toward the exit, he tells me he never found the watch.

A. N. stares weakly at piles of papers scattered about the floor. I feel he is avoiding eye contact. This is a challenging moment, and I let him move away from me, recover his feelings. I feel deep empathy for his profound sense of childhood trauma in these seeming childish memories. I feel that a six-year-old boy is walking before me.

I am overcome by the real vulnerability of ordinary victims of war's atrocity. I battle tears, want to say something, am unable to. Standing here in this blasted place, I feel like I am reliving his trauma.

In a hallway, A. N. tells me that as a young boy he spent many weeks as a patient here. He tries to recall the exact room from all those years ago. He was five or six; he cannot remember. Now he moves on, looking left and right, to the head of the corridor. He watches his feet and counts steps, stops in front of a door. Now he inspects the window, looks at me and smiles. This is the room, he says. Back then he used to wander the building, as his condition did not allow him to play outside. He used to invent games - counting steps, tiles, and other objects since there were no other children about. At the end of this corridor, A. N. recognises an office where he sat with the nurses on their lunch breaks. He loved to speak to them, listen to them gossip about patients and read their newspapers, he says.

He gazes out of the window. During the 1990s war, sections of this hospital were turned into RSK army headquarters, he tells me. At one stage there was a prison in the basement, but A. N. is not certain what kind. He had already moved to Serbia with his mother and sister. From what he had heard, he says, it was for captured enemy soldiers, and probably for spies, though not many of those. In periodically peaceful months in the period between 1993 and 1995, A. N. tells me, he used to visit his grandparents, who remained in Knin. He would often go near the hospital to observe the soldiers, yet he never walked into the courtyard again. Although he was young and did not realise the full atrocity of war, he understood it was a prohibited zone. The first time he re-entered the courtyard and building was on his return to his hometown in 2003. He remembers the experience as ‘a quick run through the ground floor’. The atmosphere in town was still tense, and it was dangerous to enter conflict-abandoned buildings.

Figure 55: Former patient room in the abandoned hospital (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

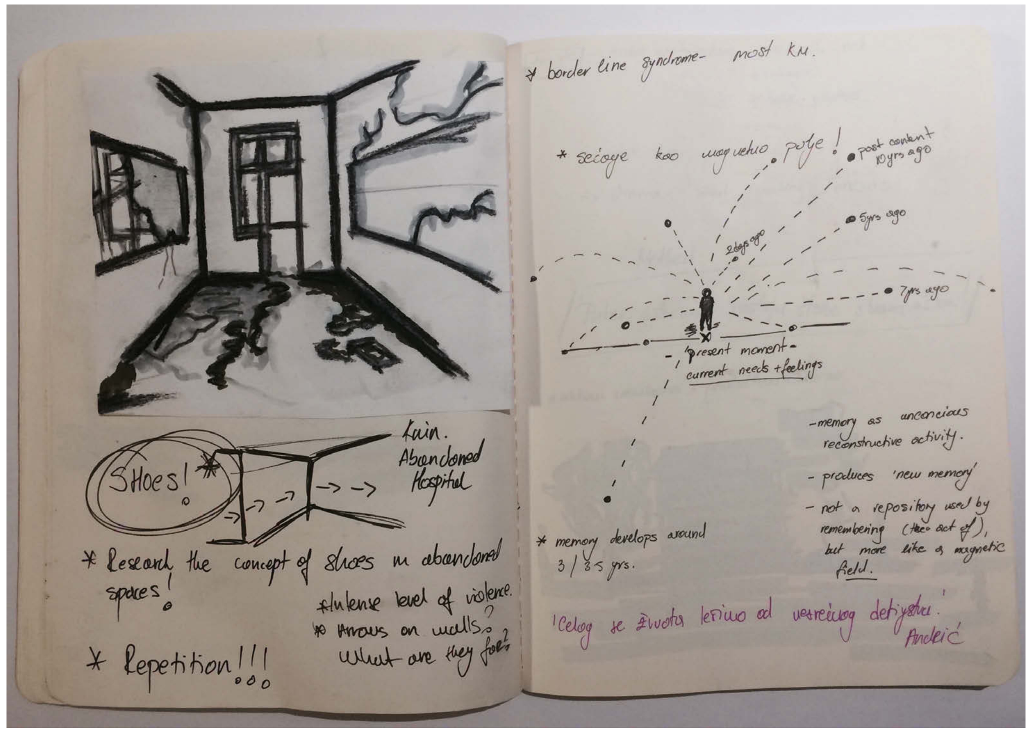

Figure 56: *TRAVEL* diary record (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

Our visit today is therefore A. N.'s first prolonged stay in the space. He has heard from local residents that only homeless people and drug addicts now dwell in sites like this, he tells me. Commonly, these people are new residents who moved here after the war. For most people, this building represents a 'disturbing' location. Continuing to be abandoned and vandalised after the war, its presence reminds them of their collective trauma. Today, many from both sides of the conflict pretend the building is invisible, and the local government has left it abandoned, overgrown in weeds and bushes. It is simply an obscure 'zone' in the middle of town.

As we mount to the first floor, A. N. confides in me that each step is meaningful and disturbing to him.

His hands are shaking.

He picks up a medical record from the floor and observes it quietly. I am not sure if he is reading or simply staring to avoid eye contact. Finally he passes me the document. This moment in space is 'absurd', he tells me. The two of us, in fact strangers, stand in this vandalised space and hold a document in our hands. The document reveals and summarises an entire life in a brief, rigid description: date and place of birth, medical diagnosis, by whom they were treated and for how long, the progress of their disease and recovery, improvements in their condition…

The town of Knin was bombed before being occupied by the Croatian army in 1995. As we walk about, I see numerous bullet holes in every wall. Some walls are entirely gone. Many civilians hid in this and other large buildings in the town, A. N. tells me. Many of them were killed during the shelling. I stare at the shoes and other personal objects that remain. I am petrified by the fact that people died in this very space. Though it is completely silent, for me it has become unbearably *noisy*. My heart thumps and I feel like I am losing balance.

I keep thinking about the moments of shelling, the panic amongst the people, running though the space moments before they were killed. This mute interior is inscribed with violence and destruction, with the trauma of these people. I experience intense symptoms of panic as I relive those moments. Wanting to calm down, to change my train of thought, I suddenly feel extremely physically tired…

A. N. reaffirms that it is hard to articulate thoughts about this building and his experience here. As we speak, birds suddenly fly through the space. The sound is dreadful. Sporadic voices from the distant street appear like unreal white noise in a movie. It suddenly seems absurd that life on the other side of that wall is going on as if nothing has happened here. Yet this place, as if seized by past moments of trauma, freezes the reality of war, suffering, psychological and physical loss. I stare at a lone shoe on the floor and cannot stop thinking of the futile deaths of so many people.

We walk slowly on, listening to the near-synchronous noises our feet create.
I am tense about meeting anyone here. The wind now and then blows more strongly, creating subtle sound effects. The colours of the walls, light blue and white, merge with the natural light that penetrates from diverse angles… The atmosphere feels almost staged. For a moment, the natural light's penetration creates an impression as if the interior were still on fire. Tall trees in the courtyard act as a natural filter, and demolished windows let in natural light. Light floods in too, through great holes in the walls. In one patient-room, sun flecks in through numerous bullet holes. Darker areas of walls look as if they have been scorched.

I move to one of the windows and am able to see a new, fully-functioning smaller hospital. A. N. explains that after the war new municipal leaders renovated part of this hospital and now use it as an emergency unit. The big old complex in which we stand, stayed abandoned though. A. N. cannot say why it never got renovated. Perhaps its past is too disturbing, he remarks. After all, the new government took over many other buildings that were adapted for various purposes in the war…

Leaving level one, we ascend more stairs, investigate all three levels. Yet, we avoid the basement. All the rooms are similar. Birds suddenly flit out of rooms as we come near. The sound of their wings cuts the silence. We are moving further from the exit, from escape.

We find a large roof terrace on top of the building. Here we encounter another absurd image: trees growing out of concrete on top of a hospital. I am reminded of famous images of the abandoned town of Pripyat in northern Ukraine. Pripyat was once home to thousands of families who worked at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. The April 1986 disaster caused radiation to leak from its nuclear reactor and the entire town was abandoned… My experience on this terrace seems to recall Tarkovsky's 1979 film *Stalker*, with its journey of three men in the 'Zone'. In *Stalker*, the men leave an East-European town and journey to a room located in the middle of a rural landscape (known as the Zone). The men have heard rumours that dreams are fulfilled in this room. The 'Zone', heavily patrolled by guards, represents metaphysical trauma. Twenty years before, an object assumed to be a meteorite has hit this site, and many people went missing. The 'Zone' remains strictly protected, and those who enter are often shot. Though it may appear safe, even joyful at moments, it is in fact guarded by obscure obstacles and dangers that destroy visitors. Stalkers thereby pose as professionals who lead people through. Tarkovsky's Zone seems deeply redolent of the 'zone' we enter in this hospital. Yet here, the aim is not to fulfill dreams, but rather to face our most intimate memories, our past, our trauma.

For A. N. this zone is physically and psychologically challenging in its *reality.*

Figure 57: Roof terrace in the abandoned hospital (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

Figure 58: Pripyat - Hotel 'Polissya'
(Michael Kotter 2012)

Figure 59: Exploring the Zone
(*Stalker* 1979)

As we explore the roof terrace, A. N. reflects on the fact that the new government is systematically erasing physical memories of the past, erecting monuments in the town and staging exhibitions that celebrate the Croatian army's success of August 4, 1995. Meanwhile, the actual trauma, suffering and loss is being erased. Human victims are degraded to the status of 'collateral damage'. Refugees, and those on both sides who stayed, are regarded as numbers and statistics. Memories of the war are reduced to a spectacle of military manoeuvres.

I make brief notes in my *TRAVEL* diary, reflecting on the physicality of the building, which, although smashed, retains its essential structure. Painted white and blue, it still appears almost sterile in some parts. Only a few rooms still have furniture; a simple metal bed sits in one. There is hate graffiti on the wall and the 'U' symbol of the Ustashe[29]. Electric wires hang off ceilings and from walls.

A. N. tells me he has never been to the basement. We decide not to do so. Instead, we go out to the courtyard and look down at it though a series of windows. It seems similar to what we saw elsewhere. The monotonous drip of water in the dim light creates an eerie atmosphere. We see old metal bed frames, garments, numerous human objects on the floor.

Figure 60: The basement viewed from a courtyard window (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011)

[29] A Croatian fascist ultranationalist movement, originally active between 1929-1945

As we exit the courtyard, A. N. mentions a memory of silhouettes that he saw in the courtyard through that basement window when he was eight years old...

He is quiet again as we head back to our car.

We have spent up to two hours in the abandoned building.
A. N. now tells me that he comprehends today's experience as if he had physically faced his past - in fact, the most traumatic segments of it - and feels that he wants to end the journey through Knin right here.

……

This journey through Knin has been a unique physical and psychological exploration of space, history and memory. The destroyed hospital has emerged as a physical embodiment of A. N.'s 'disturbed' childhood memories. Augmented by personal testimony, our two-hour spatial investigation has been an exploration of a site built precisely on his intimate memories and experiences. It has been an investigation caught up in the net of profoundly-blended experiences of past and present. Although some of A. N.'s memories appeared nostalgic, naive, even joyful, our interpretation of them has been rooted in awareness of conflict, violence and trauma.

Whilst physical traces of violence and conflict expose the building's traumatic background, its intense 'inscriptions' write our present experience of its abandoned interiors. The building emerges as a crucial witness to a collectively-lived trauma. Past narratives, acts of violence performed in its space, inscribe it with material and immaterial traces. These traces forever shift the present and future identity of the space. This *TRAVEL* has unmasked an abandoned, smashed, raped architectural object as a medium for understanding the intensity of trauma experienced by a community of people.'

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4. 3. *TRAVEL* 1. 2.

Performers:

Nevena Mrdjenovic, the main researcher

N. A., theatre director, creator of the original set of photographs

A. M., an elderly local resident, born & raised in Knin

The action takes place in an abandoned village near Knin, in which the original set of photographs was taken. This *TRAVEL* is performed in early spring, after a long and severe winter of 2014. Physical access to the abandoned houses is much easier and we manage to carve our way inside.

M. had known this village for many years. He provides crucial information about the past events: he tells us about the past of the region, vernacular architecture, and the events whose traces we're exploring in these war-torn houses.
N. A., on the other hand, visited this village once in 2011 and had taken an evocative set of photographs that serves as the main inspiration for this journey.

The physicality of the found locations and the disturbingly evocative traces of violence and trauma that haunt these domestic interiors initiate a profoundly moving experience. We spend hours in abandoned spaces, and as we stand amongst the authentic remnants of violence and trauma, we experience the deepest sense of empathy.

We can touch, smell and physically engage with the traces of violence, trauma and suffering. Physicality of the remaining objects and personal belongings represents the most important segments in this *TRAVEL:* ripped silk dresses, broken coffee mugs, children shoes, torn music diaries, stained old post cards, drenched dictionaries… all testify to the vulnerability of ordinary victims of war.

Date:	11 to 13 April, 2014.
Route:	Belgrade to (Knin) Abandoned Village, B.
Rationale:	Return to the abandoned village; continued search for abandoned interiors.

On April 11 2014, I left Belgrade at 5 o'clock in the morning to visit the abandoned village for the second time. This *TRAVEL* began almost three years after my initial visit to Knin. I was accompanied by N. A. in a private vehicle (plate no: BG 159 DS). This *TRAVEL* was shorter, and lasted around seven hours, and crossing the Croatian border was quicker and less complicated this time. N. A. had previously arranged accommodation at A. M.'s house.

The equipment for the *TRAVEL* includes a DSLR camera, *TRAVEL* diary, relevant literature, N. A.'s photographs from 2009, and my notes from the last visit.

Figure 61: Map of *TRAVEL* 1. 2.: Belgrade to Knin, B (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

Figure 62: Passport of Nevena Mrdjenovic, Number M8997322. Stamped at Croatian border checkpoint Bajakovo, 11 April, 2014. (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

The book I selected to accompany my trip was *From Victims to Survivors: Psychological support in tragedies* (2009) by Serbian professor Jelena Vlajković. The work deals with tragedies, disasters and catastrophes both natural and human-based. It explores the common triggers and consequences of diverse traumatic experiences and memories, specifically including those relating to events that occurred in the region of former SFR Yugoslavia. In fact, Vlajković writes about her own psychological and counselling work with victims who survived the war in Knin.

While N. A.'s set of photographs from the abandoned village depicted a degree of violence, my experience in Knin was brought home only by deeply resonant present traces of violence, trauma and psychological distress. Meanwhile, Vlajković's work offered me important references for insight into the current physical, psychological and emotional state of the region's people with whom I was going to interact. My awareness of their issues proved crucial both to my proposed 'deconstruction' of the abandoned spaces and to my overall planning of the *TRAVELS.*

Vlajković's work actually directed my analysis of the discovered abandoned interiors. The book provides detailed case studies of traumatic events, memories, and their current influence on victims. On reading the book, I realised that the former inhabitants of the abandoned interiors I had analysed, observed, 'deconstructed', sketched and questioned so many times, had most likely experienced similar traumas. Vlajković describes traumatic experiences of refugees who are suddenly displaced and lose all familiar social structures and functions. They discover their darkest memories in the events that immediately precede their physical displacement. The writer quotes Hannah Arendt in describing the trauma of displacement: 'If we are saved, we feel humiliated, if we are helped we feel degraded' (Arendt, cited Vlajković 2009, p. 89). Vlajković further analyses the different phases all refugees go through: euphoria, mourning, protest and stabilisation.

Two case studies, I found particularly significant. First, Vlajković describes the trauma of a 16 year-old boy who witnessed the death of his father and rape of his elder sister during the war in 1995. He subsequently moved to a town near Belgrade with his mother and younger sister. Memories of the past continually prevented his recovery process. Although he tried to adapt to the new life in Serbia, he felt as if he were betraying his family, his ancestors and their collective suffering. For this reason, the boy created a double life. With his friends, he 'became one of them', whereby no-one could ever recognise his trauma. Conversely, at his new home he remained 'one of those who suffered with the rest.' Meanwhile, at home he found solace in thinking about revenge.

The second case study concerns a family that fled the Knin region in 1995. All family members had expressed a positive will to return 'home' after the war. However, the father blocked such plans by continually bringing up contrary arguments. In a family meeting coordinated by psychologists and volunteers (from the Centre for Victims of Trauma and Violence), each family member was asked to write down their arguments, for or against. The father explained that he could not return 'home' because he had to face his neighbour. At the beginning of the war his family had fled the conflicted region in time, while their closest neighbour had stayed, and had lost his only son. The father felt guilty because his whole family was alive and he did not know how to comfort his old neighbour.

The second *TRAVEL* to Knin was performed in early spring, after the particularly long and severe winter of 2014. While April temperatures were still low, conditions proved suitable for visiting the abandoned village. Our private vehicle allowed us to freely discuss scenes we encountered along the way. Most domestic dwellings, we found to be inhabited. However, almost all still displayed traces of military clashes and destruction. Bullet-sprayed and vandalised facades proved a familiar sight. Our previous experience in Knin showed that people are still vulnerable and tense in small towns, particularly in areas that witnessed brutal clashes in the war. In cities like Zagreb and Belgrade, people from the former republics interact without major difficulties, and a vehicle with Belgrade number plates in Zagreb is neither rare nor provocative. However, such an occurrence in a small town or remote Croatian village is often interpreted as a provocation.

To avoid such risks, we agreed to *TRAVEL* on major roads only.

‘Our *TRAVEL* begins on the former ‘Brotherhood and Unity’ motorway between Belgrade and Zagreb. Exiting the motorway we enter the town of Karlovac, 53 kilometres southwest of Zagreb. It is an early Saturday morning and the town is still quiet. Karlovac and its surrounding villages marked a major conflict zone in 1995, and physical traces of it are increasingly apparent to us. Today, many houses display Croatian patriotic symbols in windows and courtyards, most commonly the chessboard coat of arms. The villages beyond the town become busier, and traces of vandalism are visible on numerous abandoned houses. Some have the Ustashe symbol, ‘U’, scribbled all over them. The ‘Ustashe’ was a Croatian fascist movement active between 1929 and 1945, and in the 1990s ethnic conflicts became a widely-used ideological reference for Croatian extremist groups. I seek an opportunity to stop and photograph abandoned houses, but many people are already outside and the road is busy; it doesn’t seem safe to interact with the abandoned sites. It is also clear that our car has attracted attention. N. A. slows down near a destroyed house, and I photograph it in motion.

Figure 63: Village near Karlovac - photographed from the moving car (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

Out of the municipality of Karlovac, we take a long and surprisingly pleasant drive through the captivating landscapes of the Lika region. We face no obstacles on this route, and the roads are quiet. It is early afternoon when we arrive in Knin. The town is quiet. We pass three young boys playing loudly and cheerfully beside the road. Despite my familiarity with the area, I feel like an alien. For a moment as we drive down the main street, I feel as if I have never been here. Aware of the instructions A. M. gave during our last visit, I feel tense and uncomfortable during the drive through town, and we head straight for A. M.'s house.

Knin to the Abandoned Village, B (12 April, 2014) At 7.30 am, N. A., A. M. and I leave A. M.'s house to visit the abandoned village. In A. M.'s old car, we take the same rural road of three years ago. Weather conditions are better this time. As we approach, we glimpse houses in the distance. A. M. parks near one of them and we continue on foot…

We enter the first courtyard and move towards the main entry of the house. I realise this is HOUSE C from the original set of photographs. Jackets, captured in one of the images, still hang in the hallway. This gives me a simultaneous feeling of excitement and fright. I stand in shock for a moment.

The materiality of hanging objects has suddenly exposed the reality of past trauma.

In this brief moment, I feel as if I have abruptly understood: these jackets are no longer an 'evocative image', but physical reminders of someone's real traumatic experience. I am deeply moved by the physical contact with a house that I saw for so long in photographs. I need a moment of silence. I place a hand on a wall, unconsciously, as if wanting to prove that the space is real.

I feel like I have been here before, and yet it also feels completely unknown. It is early morning, and still cold. I stand in front of the wall with the hanging jackets, stare at the image in front of me. I realise: one jacket is missing. I see a blue jumper that was hanging in the original image; it now lies on the floor.

Figure 64: House C - second visit **-** abandoned village near Knin
(Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

The room to the right is open. This room appears in one of the most captivating images (Figure 11. Abandoned home C - village near Knin). The destroyed bed is still positioned against the wall. The door lies on the floor in the middle of the room. It is obvious the room was violently broken into. It is relatively small. Traces of violence are intense; the interior is completely smashed. Standing inside this space is at once captivating and petrifying. I scan the room. At first it appears identical to the image. Now I see that numerous garments are in new positions.

Somebody has been here.

I cannot see the plaid shirt that was on the floor near the bed. In my initial analysis, this shirt represented an important visual reference. Early on, I found symbolic value in this garment since I associated the pattern with my grandfather, father and uncle who wore similar garments when I was a child.

My physical presence here unexpectedly turns emotionally challenging. I hesitate to move around, but stand in the midst and stare at the elements. I can now experience bodily, the atmospheric quality of this interior. I can smell and feel the cold, walk on its surface. Absurdly, I feel like an intruder in someone's private room. I hesitate to touch, but after a few moments begin to move about. I inspect garments that are spread about, smelling the ageing fabric that has lain here for years, exposed to dirt, rain, flood, snow, and most likely animals. All the garments are male and of similar size. It seems this bedroom once belonged to an elderly or middle-aged man.

Another room of similar size is directly opposite to where I stand, and the door is open. This room did not feature in the original set of photographs.
N. A. confirmed that it was locked during his 2009 visit.

Figure 65: House C - second visit - abandoned village near Knin (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

Figure 66: Personal items in house C (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

I scan the room from the hallway. It is in similar condition to the other. My first impression is even more intense; it is completely unfamiliar. Signs of violence are everywhere. I enter hesitantly, checking for possible hazards. Personal belongings, clothing, shoes, boxes, handbags, papers are scattered everywhere. All seem to be female. My feelings continuously shift as I move through: fear, shame, empathy, profound sorrow. The atmosphere of this space reflects a deep sense of loss, damaged and interrupted life, trauma. The scent of decomposing fabrics and damp wooden objects blends with the fusty odour of mould. Natural light penetrates from one side; the other remains dark and cold. Again, absurdly, I feel ashamed for being inside someone's personal space, even more poignant since it is completely wrecked. I feel as if it reveals their most intimate trauma.

Initially, I feel I am not *allowed* to be here; I am just another intruder.

A wide-open, broken wooden wardrobe leans against the wall.
An inside-out silk dress is draped over its precariously-hanging door.
This is the most disturbing image, embodying deep symbolic content.

The softness of the fabric contrasts oxymoronically with the violently pulverised and vandalised space. Its physical presence, almost casually tossed over a hanging door, speaks loudly of a former life. An inside-out dress? It may have been left here in haste. It looks like a nightgown. Scenario: the woman who lived here had to dress quickly and flee in the middle of the night. My heart starts beating very fast.

Horrifying thoughts come at me, of war and the atrocities that are performed as part of it. I stare at the torn dress and keep thinking of this woman, attacked in this space in the very spot I am standing.

The disturbance deepens when I think of what such items represent in everyday life. Nightgowns, and similar delicate silky items, are carefully selected and cared for by women everywhere. They are expensive, often representing items of luxury and pleasure, associated with intimacy, love, relationship, moments of bliss and protection, worn either inside the house or on special occasions. This soft garment, hanging in an obliterated and abandoned interior, sums up for me the tragedy of ordinary lives caught up in the vortex of catastrophe… Many other objects also lie about the floor. Someone has likely gone through here and vandalised it after the inhabitants escaped the conflict. Intruders, soldiers or vandals who came after - perhaps stumbled into these rooms and rifled through all the personal items, looking for 'things of value'.

For the first time, I am alone in the house.

N. A. and A. M. remain in the courtyard.

I photograph the space, sketch elements in my *TRAVEL* diary, perform a scenographic 'decoding' of the space. I hear N. A. and A. M.'s conversation outside.

Momentarily, I realise I can no longer hear them. My aloneness terrifies me.
My instinct is to run out and find them. At last, I calm down and stay where I am.
I realise that my genuine experience of fear adds truth to my experience of the space.

The room belonged to a woman. She was young, or middle-aged. She cared about her physical appearance. Though she lived in a rural area, she had many elegant dresses, skirts and nightgowns - now scattered about on the floor. She also owned small leather handbags and black leather shoes with heels. Perhaps she worked in the town.
Her belongings suggest she was not just living the village life. A dressing cabinet with a large mirror frame stands against the back wall. The mirror is broken in pieces on the floor. A box full of books, newspapers and magazines sits in front of the cabinet.
They are damp and smudged. Titles and dates on them are unreadable. Mattress and quilts lie on the floor. The bed frame is missing. A floral patterned dress lies on top of the mattress…

I realise that it is easier for me as a woman to interact with this space. I feel more comfortable since the objects belonged to a woman. Absurdly, I feel as if I am less of an intruder because I *am* a woman. I feel a strong sense of respect, empathy for her pain, her trauma. Her intangible presence is truly here.

Even in this miserable aftermath, her things reflect enthusiasm and love for life, and for this precise reason, the overall sense of presently-inscribed trauma is intensified.

Figure 67: Female shoes in house C (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

Figure 68: Female personal items in house C (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

Figure 69: Destroyed bedroom in house C (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

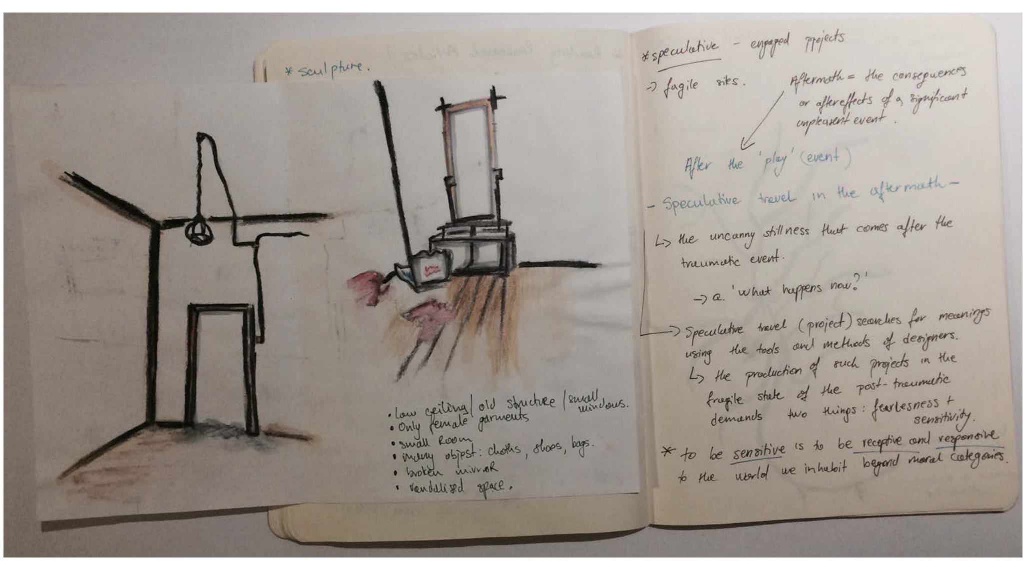

Figure 70: *TRAVEL* diary records (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

An hour has passed. I leave HOUSE C overwhelmed by a sadness I cannot articulate. I am physically tired and emotionally exhausted. I find N. A. and A. M. sitting under a tree in the courtyard. We continue on through the village, and I stay close to them, apprehensive of what we might encounter next. We discover a number of houses not included in the original photographs, and I spend about fifteen minutes in each. They are similar in size to House C, and the remaining furniture and personal objects suggest the owners led a similar lifestyle. Their state is also similar; all are smashed, with numerous personal belongings scattered about their floors.

I photograph the houses and mark notes in the *TRAVEL* diary, reflecting on the physicality of each new interior, and on my experience in each. Each new entry is shattering, simultaneously frightening and exciting. Entering these spaces for the first time intensifies the fear - of physical hazards and witnessable traces of violence. Intense traces of violence are everywhere: furniture demolished, broken in pieces and scattered about different rooms. As A. M. and N. A. stay outside while I take photographs, I keep talking to them, making sure they are still close to me.

The physical state of many interiors imply intense conflict within. A. M. explains that the Croatian army's Operation 'Storm' began at dawn on August 4, 1995, lasting until evening on August 7. Both Serbian and Croatian military forces moved through the town and surrounding villages. Both forces entered domestic dwellings and used them as shelters during intense fighting. Soldiers would stay in the houses for hours, or overnight. A. M. adds that soldiers commonly vandalised these interiors on purpose if they realised they belonged to the other side. A. M. tells me that the majority in this and other surrounding villages were Serbian. In some cases there were ethnically mixed-marriages, and Serbian and Croatian marriages were common in SFR Yugoslavia. The two groups shared very similar values and culture. Such marriages were particularly common during Communism, when religion was utterly suppressed by the government, and people were then married in secular ceremonies only.
A. M. adds that during and after the clashes, nearly the entire Serbian population of the region fled; that is, more than 100,000 people left the municipality of Knin. Numerous crimes were committed against the remaining civilians. Many people died while trying to escape.

Figure 71: Newly discovered houses in the abandoned village (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

Figure 72: Demolished bedroom (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

I enter a two-storey house and scan it for possible hazards.

The staircase is intact and N. A. and I climb to the first floor.

A. M. stays downstairs.

There are three bedrooms here, similar in size, all demolished. All floors are strewn with personal objects, books, notebooks, postcards, shoes. There is a sofa bed in one room, and a double mattress on the floor in a second. All rooms are painted light blue, with wide timber floorboards. Near one of the doors lie shoes of different sizes, a black leather female shoe with a heel, child's black canvas shoe, and a male leather shoe - representations of the family that lived here.

I am shaken by a rancid odour as I enter the next bedroom. Piles of dumped paper, books and notebooks cover the floor. Numerous torn and faded postcards are scattered about; they are addressed to 'the village of Vrbnik'. One is sent from Dubrovnik, another from Cologne. The latter is signed: 'Lots of love'…

My scenographic observation leads me to conclude that a family with children lived here before the war. Numerous books and textbooks in one bedroom suggest a high-school student. Closer scrutiny of the remaining books reveals this was a student of a technology high school. One textbook is published in Belgrade, the other in Zagreb. There is a 'Diary of music', and 'An overview of Russian grammar'.

Among these lies a male navy blazer.
The entire space testifies to intense violence, vandalism, destruction.

Figure 73: School books and other personal items (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

Figure 74: Postcards, school books and other personal items (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

I am now thinking this is House A from N. A.'s photographs. N. A. looks closely and decides it is not, since there is no furniture in the ground-level rooms. We leave, and continue through the village. N. A. recognises House B. It is locked with a large metal chain. A. M. suggests that the owners, or someone related to them, have protected the house. He explains that many people have begun to visit the region from time to time, particularly in summer. Some families have started to rebuild their properties here, and now use them as holiday houses since the region is less than an hour from the coast…'

. . . . . .

As primary interactions with abandoned domestic dwellings, my first *TRAVELS* to Knin emerge as turning points in my understanding of war-torn houses. My physical *TRAVEL* is at the same time deeply inscribed with conceptual movements. I began the first *TRAVEL* as an investigation primarily inspired by a set of eleven photographs, and they led me to locations of complex, traumatically-charged memory.

At the beginning of the first *TRAVEL*, trauma was not the dominant aspect of analysis. My search, established on N. A.'s original photographs, was concerned with the concepts of memory, inhabitation, human departure, and traces we leave behind through inscribed spatial narratives. However, my first visit to Knin and the abandoned hospital, assigned *trauma* as the most significant aspect of the region's collective past. In these sites I suddenly found myself interacting with and reliving people's most intimate experiences and memories of trauma.

Importantly, they were individuals I had never met. However, through the intense presence of material and immaterial traces of previous habitation of these discovered spaces, allied to traumatic experiences of conflict, here captured in obliterated domestic dwellings, I have learned the most profound meaning of empathy. In these recognition events, I was not merely reading about the traumatic nature of the past. Instead, I experienced the events sincerely as I stood in the midst of their genuine remnants. I stood in sites of brutal conflict, in spaces that embodied a broken life in its overwhelming connotations.

4. 4. *TRAVEL* 2

Performers:

Nevena Mrdjenovic, the main researcher

N. A., theatre director, creator of the original set of photographs

N. P., local resident in Mokra Gora, employed at the Mecavnik Hotel,
provides brief information about the region

P. I. , a Visegrad resident, employed at the Mecavnik Hotel, provides brief
information about the region

The action takes place in summer, just like the culmination of the ethnic conflicts in this region occurred in the summer of 1992.

The exploration of the town is predominately set around the inner centre.
Yet, the main action takes place in the surrounding villages.

It is our first visit to this region. N. A. and I experience the aftermath of conflicts by walking the same paths that were crossed by the fleeing civilians on a hot summer day in 1992, when the conflicts in the region escalated.

Each rural road is inscribed with layers of traumatic memories and experiences.
Large Muslim and Orthodox Christian cemeteries follow us on each side of the main road. All villages are extremely quiet, and we do not meet any local residents.

In this region, the abandoned and heavily demolished houses seem to be the *loudest* witnesses of past trauma.

Date:	23 to 24 July 2012.
Route:	Belgrade to Visegrad.
Rationale:	Visit to one of the principal 1990s conflict zones.

On July 23, 2012, I left Belgrade early in the morning to visit the town of Visegrad. I travelled with N. A. in a private vehicle (Plate Number BG 159 DS). This *TRAVEL* included a stopover in Mokra Gora, a mountain in western Serbia, 155 kilometres from Belgrade, near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our ride to Mokra Gora took about four hours.

Figure 75: Map of *TRAVEL* 2: Belgrade to Visegrad (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)[30]

[30] This map also shows the two entities: Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina & Republic of Srpska

Here, where the Drina flows with the whole force of its green and foaming waters from the apparently closed mass of the dark steep mountains, stands a great clean-cut stone bridge with eleven wide sweeping arches. From this bridge spreads fanlike the whole rolling valley with the little oriental town of Visegrad and all its surroundings, with hamlets nestling in the folds of the hills, covered with meadows, pastures and plum orchards, and crisscrossed with walls and fences and dotted with shaws and occasional clumps of evergreens…

…For this great stone bridge, a rare structure of unique beauty, such as many richer and busier towns do not possess ('There are only two others such as this in the whole Empire,' they used to say in olden times) was the one real and permanent crossing in the whole middle and upper course of the Drina and an indispensable link on the road between Bosnia and Serbia and further, beyond Serbia, with other parts of the Turkish Empire, all the way to Stambul. The town and its outskirts were only the settlements which always and inevitably grow up around an important centre of communications and on either side of great and important bridges.

Here also in time the houses crowded together and the settlements multiplied at both ends of the bridge. The town owed its existence to the bridge and grew out of it as if from an imperishable root.

(Andrić 1977, pp. 2 -3)

Preliminary inspiration for this *TRAVEL* came from one of the key novels of Yugoslav cultural heritage, *The Bridge on the Drina* (1945) by Ivo Andrić (1892-1975). Andrić is the only Yugoslav author to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature (1961). *The Bridge on the Drina* represents Andrić's most significant and certainly most famous literary work. It is composed of 24 chapters and stories, not necessarily following a linear thread but creating a united narrative of a small town in inner Bosnia. The novel treats the period from the 16th century till the start of World War I, and Andrić opens with a detailed description of the region of Visegrad, including legends that relate to the building of the 'Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge' over the river Drina.

For Andrić, the bridge symbolises strength, imperishability, stability and the continuity of life. Such notions will prove to be particularly significant in the contemporary history of this region. Andrić places the bridge in the middle of all relationships, of everyday life and the collective narratives of the people of Visegrad and its surrounds. Andrić points out that in comparison with the stability and steadiness of the bridge, human spans are short and 'irrelevant'. He portrays this vision by describing situations and moments of particular human struggle and misfortune in the life of Bosnia. The bridge as a silent witness becomes inscribed with, and memorialises, the ostensibly well-established relationships between different cultures, religions and ethnicities. Yet Andrić recognises the antagonistic reality of these relationships, and the bridge emerges as the only still point - standing in the midst and continuously inscribed with numerous tensions and conflicts between two civilisations, east and west. Contemporary interest in Andrić's novel has surpassed previous national and international levels, and *The Bridge on the Drina* has acquired the status of a 'code-word' in local, former Yugoslav and international academic, cultural, and political discourse. Andrić reveals genuine insights into the Balkan peninsula, historical, present and future. Centuries after his original settings, Visegrad has again became a prominent mise-en-scene, this time for the 1991-1995 ethnic conflict; the town and its surrounding villages marked a key conflict zone during the 1992 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina between the Serbian and Bosnian Muslim populations.

The core reason for my *TRAVEL* relates to the evocative remnants of these early 1990s armed conflicts. Equipment included a DSLR camera, *TRAVEL* diary, a copy of the novel *The Bridge on the Drina*, and a laptop.

‘N. A. and I spend the first night in the Hotel Mecavnik in Mokra Gora, where I finalise preparations for the *TRAVEL,* including further online research on the region’s background, conflicts in the early 1990s, and the current situation. I speak briefly to N. P. and P. I., local male residents employed at the hotel. Visegrad is located 25 kilometres from Mokra Gora, and residents of local villages and the nearby town of Uzice were heavily involved in the 1990s conflicts. Their lives remain strongly affected by them. Many people who still live in Visegrad work in the Mecavnik hotel complex and travel daily between the two locations. I am seeking definite advice as to my movements in and around the town, and the two men agree that my proposals for Visegrad should be sensitive to possible trouble. They advise that outside their inner circle of family or friends, people generally remain tense and silent about past events. They also offer practical advice on *TRAVEL* to the town, locations of war-damaged houses, and convenient times to cross the border checkpoint without long delays.

Today, Visegrad is a major centre in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina. Situated on the river Drina, it is 225 kilometres south-west of Belgrade. The town is in the Republic of Srpska entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is historically and culturally significant, and boasts the Mehmed Pasa Sokolovic Bridge (opened 1577). The bridge dates to the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922), and is listed in UNESCO's world heritage sites. The surrounding region is marked by centuries of complexity. Visegrad completely came under Serbian control during the reign of Grand Prince Stefan Nemanja (1113-1199) and throughout the Middle Ages a number of Serbian dukes, princes, kings and emperors fought over it. Around the middle of the 15th century the Ottoman Turks occupied most of Bosnia, and Visegrad gradually became a place with a Muslim majority, where those who wanted to keep their Christian faith settled on the outskirts of the town. A few centuries later, the position of the Ottomans weakened, eventually leading to the Berlin Congress (1878) where it was decided that the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1918) will take over Bosnia and Herzegovina in its entirety. After World War I, Bosnia and Herzegovina became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918-1943). This Kingdom was soon to be renamed Yugoslavia, and with the beginning of World War II Yugoslavia was conquered by Nazi forces. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was established after World War II under Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980) - with its 1946 constitution of which Bosnia and Herzegovina became one of six constituent republics.

In early 1992, with the formal disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia, a brutal inter-ethnic war began in Bosnia and Herzegovina, lasting till late 1995. In 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina was recognised as an independent republic, yet the region remains divided in two entities, Republic of Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mokra Gora to Visegrad

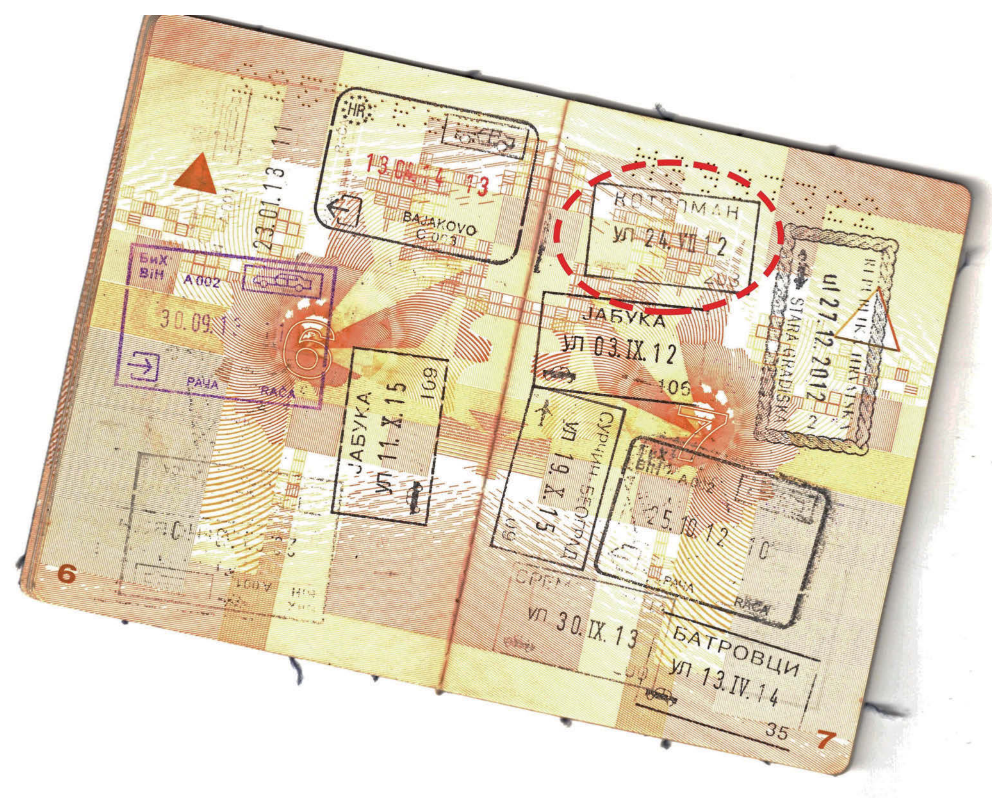

Figure 76: Passport holder Nevena Mrdjenovic, number M8997322.
Stamped at Bosnian Border checkpoint Kotroman, 24 July, 2012. (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

‘At 7 am on July 24 2012, N. A. and I continue the *TRAVEL* to Visegrad. The border crossing Kotroman, 8 kilometres from Mokra Gora, is a small checkpoint, and the procedure is quick and simple. We proceed through the captivating landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is my first visit to the region.

Figure 77: The landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina - views around Visegrad
(Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

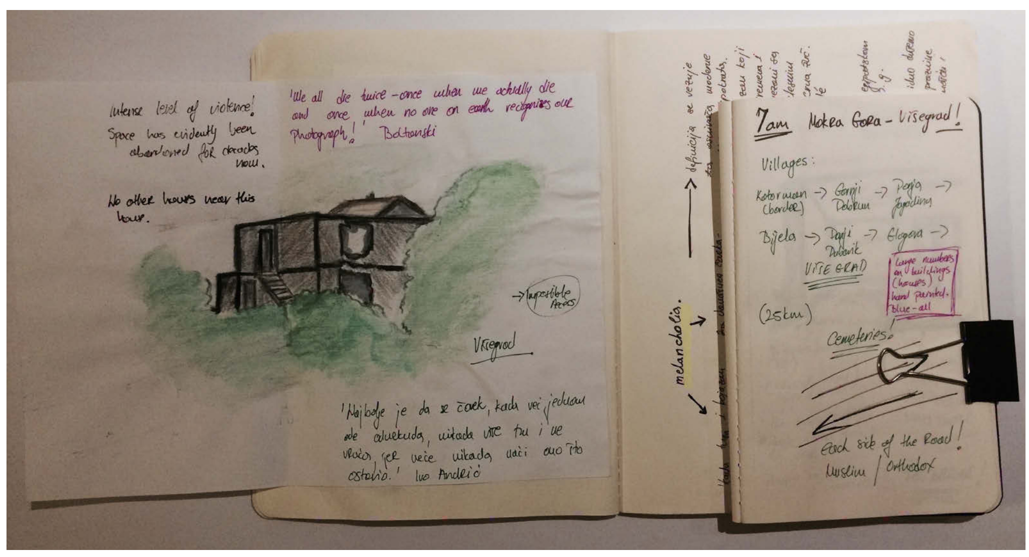

Figure 78: *TRAVEL* diary record Visegrad (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

After a few kilometres of striking natural surrounds, we encounter our first sights of destruction, violence and abandonment. Villages dot the main road, one after another, with domestic dwellings on both sides. Without signage to mark village names, they would easily be perceived as one big village. It is clear that those villages near the Serbian border are the worst hit. Houses in these picturesque landscapes evidently predate the contemporary wars by decades. Parts of villages are entirely abandoned. Levels of violence and destruction are higher than witnessed in villages around Knin, and remnants of human inhabitation are utterly erased in the region. Everywhere, demolished walls briefly indicate the layouts of original dwellings. Many houses have no roofs; they were evidently bombed and are burned completely. The level of destruction and vandalism against domestic space is intense and overpowering.

In 1990 the political situation and divisions in Visegrad intensified and Muslim extremist gangs began to persecute the Serbian minority population. When war broke out in 1992, persecution turned into mass killings of Orthodox Christians in the town and more so in the surrounding villages, leading the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) to intervene and take over Visegrad in April of the same year. The JNA withdrew a month later, after which Serbian paramilitary forces entered the town, committing revenge crimes, torture and killings of the Muslim population. Large cemeteries in almost every village we drive through, arouse powerful reminders of human loss on both sides. Sights of these, on both sides of the main road, emerge as the most captivating image of the entire *TRAVEL*. Muslim cemeteries are on one side, while Orthodox Christians are, without exception, on the opposite side. The main road from Serbia to Visegrad and to other big towns of Bosnia and Herzegovina, runs straight through the middle. All cemeteries appear almost symmetrically organised. In some villages Muslim cemeteries are notably bigger. They feature simple white gravestones. On the other side, Orthodox Christian graves have wider, predominantly grey or black marble and granite gravestones. The repetition of such large, well-organised and well-maintained cemeteries, along with abandoned, wrecked domestic dwellings, create the dominant impressions of the region.

Figure 79: War-torn and abandoned houses near Visegrad (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

Figure 80: Destroyed dwelling in a village near Visegrad **(**Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

In many places, physical access is a big problem. Many houses and their immediate surrounds are overgrown with weeds, bushes and grass. Trees grow inside many dwellings, most of which have been derelict since 1992, and nature has completely conquered and disguised the remnants.

We continue our ride straight to Visegrad. Most photographs and videos I have seen depict the famous bridge, and I expect the town to architecturally resemble its monumental style. This is not the case. The province is chaotic in aesthetic terms, and although the bridge and its natural surrounds are grandiose, the rest is worn out, modest and dull in comparison with spectacular views of the surrounding steep mountains and the intensely turquoise colour of the Drina river that nests and curves between the hills.

Figure 81: Abandoned houses in villages near Visegrad (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

Figure 82: Mehmed Pasa Sokolovic Bridge Visegrad *(*Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

Figure 83: Outskirts of the town of Visegrad (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

We park in a side street in the inner town centre near the bridge, and take a walk about for an hour or so. I have my DSLR camera and *TRAVEL* diary with me. It is still early and the town is quiet. A few people pass by; they show no interest in us. The scene appears like a typical summer's morning in a small town: people heading to work, buying groceries and daily newspapers, having coffee in cafes by the river. Behind tall fences, construction workers and loud machinery are working on buildings of the Andric Institute. Physical traces of a harrowing past are visible everywhere.

Bullet-sprayed facades, burned houses, smashed up domestic architecture; these are common in most streets. A majority of dwellings in the inner town centre are at least partially renovated, and most of these are now inhabited. Abandoned houses are dotted between them. People living nearby perform their daily round as if the houses of their neighbours were never destroyed or abandoned. They see me photograph the broken houses and completely ignore me. One woman greets me, and we speak briefly, but she is clearly not interested in talking in any depth.

Streets soon become busier, and although residents are familiar with the tourists who photograph the bridge, we can no longer move discreetly.

Figure 84: An abandoned house in Visegrad *(*Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

We now set out for villages we passed on the way to Visegrad.

Most dwellings in these villages are large, architecturally-simple and domestic, mainly built of the local stone and concrete. Most are two-storey and typical of the basic style of the region, including many vernacular elements. Such domestic architectural objects complement the natural surroundings. Large, almost monumental, they match the harsh natural surrounds and climate. They also mirror the mentality of the residents. This region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to which Visegrad belongs, is known for its stubborn and physically strong population. Their houses satisfy the need for physical shelter, and their scale, beyond responding to the harsh climatic conditions, crucially symbolise the concepts of family, heritage, belonging and identity.

We arrive at a village, turn off the main road, cross a small bridge and park out of sight. We then continue on foot. This shift, putting me in touch with the ground, intensifies the experience. I can smell nature, hear the noises, feel the heat.
I discovered during preparation for this *TRAVEL* that the worst clashes in Visegrad took place in the 1992 summer, and I wanted to visit in the same season to more viscerally feel the sense of aftermath of brutal conflict.

N. A. and I walk through the village where twenty years ago, troops walked these same paths and violently attacked the homes in front of us. The inhabitants - women, children and elderly - fled to avoid almost certain death. Every road is etched with layers of harrowing memory and experience. N. A. and I stay quiet, engaged in our own thoughts. The dry grass rustles as we walk. I am obsessed with the victims who fled along this same road twenty years ago. I was a young child at the time, and many children my age were traumatised or killed here. Women of my present age were tortured, physically exhausted. I struggle to silence my thoughts, to experience the present moment. I focus on the smell of grass, sounds of nature, the burning sun on my skin. My thoughts quieten at last, and I try to concentrate on feeling how each step connects to the ground.

Nobody is outside.

The entire village is intensely and uncannily quiet.
N. A. and I seem to become part of a 'silent aftermath'.

Figure 85: War-torn house in a village near Visegrad (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

Figure 86: A demolished house in a village near Visegrad (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

We notice a cluster of abandoned and wrecked dwellings, with a single inhabited house in the middle. It was obviously either completely renovated or built after the war. There are no traces of violence. One of the smashed dwellings is built in the specific vernacular regional style. Numerous houses have handwritten numbers on them, all in blue paint. Some display this number along with their old street number. The handwritten numbers are noticeably larger; we cannot tell what they represent. Recalling the experience in Knin, I make no attempt to enter houses that are completely overgrown with weed, bushes and wild grass.

Though these architectural objects no longer provide physical shelter, their atmospheric quality is still present. Once inside, I feel entirely isolated from the rest of the world. Each interior becomes a disconnected 'zone'. Inside, the houses appear as abstract concrete sculptures. Interiors are dark, and the copious vegetation, often inside them as well, blocks natural light. All traces of domesticity are erased. Scarce personal belongings, papers, shoes, and numerous obliterated and unidentifiable objects remain.

Many houses have no doors or windows. In some, sheets of nylon are stretched over a window instead of glass. While some lawns are maintained and courtyards protected by barbed wire, the houses within them remain shattered. Each new entry into these interiors is tense. Many houses are missing all dividing walls, doors, staircases, ceilings. Most are burned, bombed, mined, vandalised with graffiti.

To be inside is a horrifying experience. For a moment, I feel like I am moving through staged mise-en-scenes of horror. All notions of intimacy, protection or homeliness are violently wiped out. Instead, these interiors emerge as 1:1 scale-model boxes.
Sights of the picturesque landscapes beyond the windows intensify the power of each image. I keep looking at my feet and minding each step I take. It is as if I tremblingly anticipate what will happen next, as if I constantly feel danger still present in these spaces.

Figure 87: Views around Visegrad (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

Figure 88: Views around Visegrad (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

It is profoundly emotional to observe these killed domestic spaces… both interior and exterior. It is clear that horrific clashes occurred inside many. (Many of course were further vandalised after the official conflicts.) Such domestic sites were by no means collateral damage; they were precisely-selected targets of violence and murder. Many of them are located in the upper hill areas, off the main road. Those who performed these acts had to invest physical effort to climb up and systematically destroy them…

I cannot tell to whom the houses belonged. They are not distinct in style and bear no religious or ethnic markings. I observe the nearby graveyards and look for churches or mosques in villages to gain further insight into the populace before and after the war. As we drive from one village to the other, N. A. and I discuss the conflicts. I mark names of villages in the *TRAVEL* diary, and write notes to remember them by. They are all similar in size. As I sketch an abandoned house near the main road, I note that some drivers slow down to watch me. One young man shouts out as he drives past.

It is early in the evening when we cross the border checkpoint and return to Mokra Gora.'

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The town of Visegrad and its surrounding villages mark a state of 'aftermath' more strongly than any other location I have travelled to. Following the experience in Knin, this *TRAVEL* is established on the concept that past is an *active* material. Although I witnessed many very ordinary scenes on my morning stroll through the town, the experience was overwritten with the oppressive feeling of trauma and tragedy. In Visegrad, the mysterious silence that arises after traumatic events is still heavily present. After the visit, particularly to the surrounding villages, I began to understand the present 'bitter silence' of the people. Based on the shattering level of violence, the entire region appears to remain in the state of traumatic shock.

Experience in Visegrad implicitly defines the symbolic monumentality of destroyed domestic objects. While people of the region choose to remain silent today, war-torn domestic spaces are, in this *TRAVEL*, seen as direct ‘interpreters’ of the collective traumatic past. Domestic spaces that I saw and experienced seemed to be profoundly possessed by their disturbing past. It is evident, through their present state, that during the military clashes these domestic dwellings were assigned leading roles in the military actions. They did not act as backdrops of a collective tragedy. Events from the past that have so immensely shaped the present experience, are being remembered and communicated through the collapsing image of these demolished, riddled, mined, bombed and vandalised homes. This outrageous level of violence and destruction recorded during this *TRAVEL* initiated instant and lasting empathy in me.

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4. 5. *TRAVEL* 3

Performers:

Nevena Mrdjenovic, the main researcher

N. A., theatre director, creator of the original set of photographs;

M. S., a 55 year old Serbian native, returns from Australia to visit family
in Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina

The action takes place on a cold December day, and is entirely set on the former Brotherhood and Unity Motorway that runs through (the region of) the former SFR Yugoslavia.

M. S. is driving, N. A. sits in the front passenger seat, and I am in the back.
I have my diary and a sound recorder during the entire journey.

On May 1 1995, M. S. was mobilised with the rest of physically and mentally fit Serbian men as part of the civil and territorial defence. On this day, he had crossed this exact path on foot in the midst of conflict between Serbian and Croatian armies.

M. S. is the only performer in this *TRAVEL,* while N. A. and I document his journey *home.* Seventeen years after the exodus of the Serbian population from Slavonia, he returns to the region that he had always considered to be his only true *home*. However, M. S. now also returns to the sites of his deepest trauma.

M. S.' oral testimony visually echoes in the insignia of violence on all houses along the way. Traces of violence intensify as we get closer to the Bosnian border. We travel during the New Year holiday season. Passengers in the cars around us are cheerful. The atmosphere in our vehicle remains tense during the entire journey. Seventeen years ago M. S. was in a state of shock. In 2012, he relives his deepest trauma and finds this journey even more traumatic than the original tragic departure from *home*.

This shared experience becomes a profoundly emotional journey for all three performers.

Date: 22 December 2012.

Route: Belgrade to Banja Luka.

Rationale: A survivor's first return 'home'. *TRAVEL* through the mise-en-scene of past conflict.

At 7 am on December 22, 2012, I left Belgrade to visit Banja Luka, a town in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In early December 2012, I had been offered an opportunity to document the journey of a man known as M. S. who for the first time since the war in 1995, was visiting a region where he was born and raised.

I travelled in a private vehicle, Plate No. BG 159 DS, with N. A. and M. S. Equipment for the *TRAVEL* included a DSLR camera, *TRAVEL* diary, and a sound recorder.

Figure 89: Map for *TRAVEL* 3: Belgrade to Banja Luka (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

During the 1995 all-out war in former SFR Yugoslavia, M. S. was forced to flee the region of Slavonia, which now belongs to the independent republic of Croatia.
A 55-year-old Serbian native, M.S. fled the town of Okucani on May 2, 1995.
His hometown marked the front line between Serbian and Croatian ethnic groups, and is located alongside the former Yugoslav 'Brotherhood and Unity Motorway', half-way between the Croatian capital Zagreb and Serbian capital Belgrade.
Although small, it held a prominent strategic position. During the 1990s war this region belonged to the United Nations Confidence Restoration, UNCRO.
Initial conflict occurred here in 1991 as a result of increasing ethnic tension and sporadic clashes between the two ethnic groups. It then progressed following the formal break-up of the Yugoslav federation, and ended with the Croatian Army's operation 'Flash' in 1995. This was a brief offensive against the forces of the Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK), a Serbian parastate established in response to the official secession of Croatia from SFR Yugoslavia. The Krajina entity occupied a large section of the historical 'frontier' in an area mainly inhabited by Serbs. The term 'Krajina' ('frontier' in English) mirroring the historical frontier of the Austro Hungarian Empire (1867-1918), was originally a cordon to protect from intrusions by the Ottoman Empire. Under the newly-introduced rule of the independent Republic of Croatia, the status of people of Serbian nationality shifted from 'constituent citizens' to 'ethnic minority'. The republic was never internationally recognised. Operation 'Flash' began early in the morning on May 1 1995, and formally lasted until May 3.
It is recognised as a strategic victory for Croatia, who gained about 558 square kilometres of land held by the Republic of Serbian Krajina. The town of Okucani was a prime target of the Croatian attack. Between 1991and 1995 all fit men in the Republic were mobilised as territorial and civilian defence, including M. S., who was 38 years old. He survived and fled the region, along with fellow mobilised compatriots, on May 2 1995. After the war he moved to Serbia with his family.
No-one remained in their hometown, nor in the village of his ancestors.

Since 1995 M. S. has neither passed through nor visited any town in Croatia.

In 2012, he was visiting family in Banja Luka in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
He had visited the town many times, but had always avoided Croatia. This time though, his rationale lay in the fact that no other route would take him from Belgrade to Banja Luka but the 'Brotherhood and Unity Motorway' - that passes his hometown and goes directly through the villages that experienced the scenes of horror.

Figure 90: *TRAVEL* to Slavonia - car scene (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

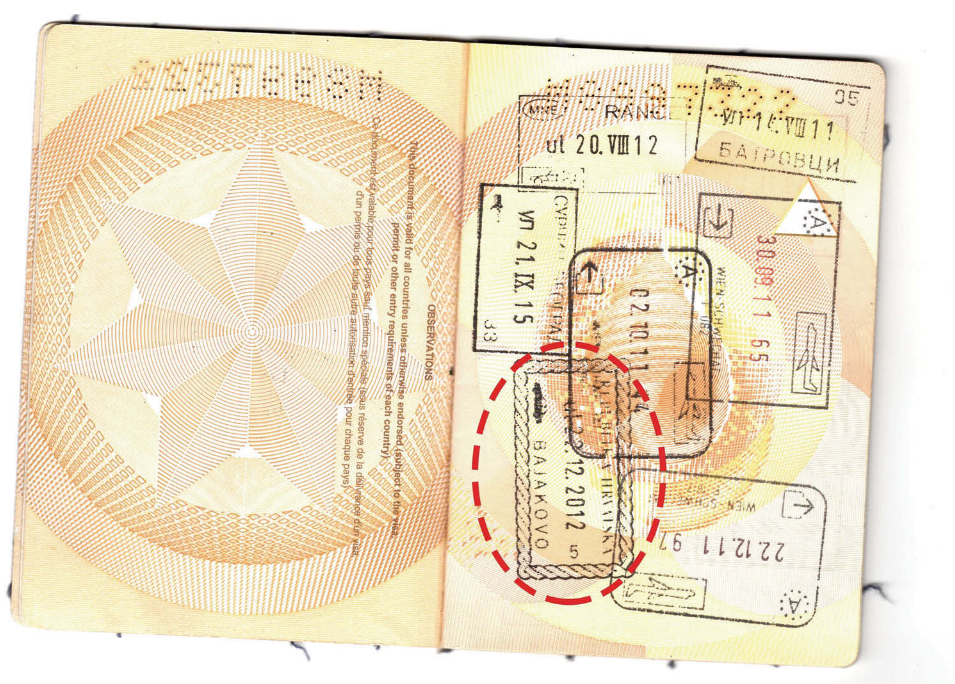

Figure 91: Passport holder Nevena Mrdjenovic. Number M8997322.
Stamped at Croatian Border, checkpoint Bajakovo, 22.12.2012. (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

Banja Luka, lying on the river Vrbas, is the administrative centre of the Republic of Srpska entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and is the second city after the capital, Sarajevo. Before the 1990s war its population was ethnically mixed. Following the war, the majority of the Muslim and Croatian population fled, and thousands of Serbian refugees from Croatia and other regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina moved in. Two decades later, Banja Luka is again becoming ethnically mixed, though people of Serbian ethnicity still predominate.

'We travel down the main motorway and enter Croatia at Bajakovo, the major border checkpoint. The procedure is quick. It is early morning, the temperature is cold and the roads not busy. Considering this *TRAVEL* is performed in late December, just before Christmas and New Year holiday season, progress is reasonably good. We will make two stops only, the first at Bajakovo and the second at Gradiska, the border crossing between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. I had aimed to interview M. S. along the way, but instead end up recording a near-entire journey.

As we get close to the Croatian border, tension in the car escalates.

The act of crossing this border means that M. S. is entering his homeland and heading for his home town after seventeen long years. Simultaneously, the moment marks the start of reliving the most traumatic day of his life.

A policeman and customs officer greet us. M. S. passes our documents through the car window. The officer smiled thinly. The two officials flip through our passports without a word. We three in the car wait in nervous silence. Thinking about M. S.'s emotional state at this moment, the moment seems bizarrely prolonged. The sound of the stamping of our passports is a relief. The officers smile and wish us a safe journey. We proceed, with caution. The moment of tension is over; in reality the procedure was quick and routine.

It is soon clear that the act of crossing the Croatian border heralds a prolonged state of anxiety. Though my sound recorder is on, M. S. stays quiet for some time. I observe the surroundings and anticipate his reactions. N. A. is also quiet and gazes out the window. As if suddenly aware that he is not alone in the vehicle, M. S. starts a conversation. Everything looks exactly as it was 'then', he tells us.

This term 'then', is inscribed with resonance. He keeps repeating it, unconsciously emphasising it. 'Then' clearly refers to 'before the war' or perhaps 'in my previous life', 'when I was young', 'before the trauma'. 'Then' in truth stands for 'the other reality'. M. S. explains that 'then', he travelled this route almost daily. He tells us about the towns we can see beside the motorway, and speaks about people and relatives who come from them. Often he would drive with his wife to Zagreb or Belgrade after work, for dinner or coffee with friends, he says.

'Then' he associated this route with joy, personal relationships, work-related trips. It is difficult to think about it now in any other way, he explains.

The motorway, now known as E-70, runs all the way to his home town. The final exit is a few kilometres from Okucani, and the route to Bosnia continues on a local road, E-661. As we take the exit M. S. turns quiet again. His hometown and ancestral village is minutes away. He takes the exit towards Bosnia and Banja Luka.

This road is precisely the one he took seventeen years ago, during the war.

Figure 92: Route E-661 to the Bosnian border (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

Figure 93: *TRAVEL* diary record on E-661 (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

As we approach the first village M. S. starts to talk.
Initially his sentences are brusque and his tone unpredictable.
He is tense, but step by step begins to relive his trauma.

Here the past is physically present. Remnants of violence are obvious: houses burned down, bombed, vandalised. Bullet-sprayed facades are common. Many houses have been renovated, yet traces of conflict remain on almost every one.

M. S. explains that May the First was an important day for Tito's Yugoslavs, and the entire country celebrated International Workers Day. People would hold picnics with friends and family in parks, on mountains, near lakes and rivers. Many also got married on this day, as the entire country was on holiday. M. S. was one of them. May 1 1995, was his thirteenth wedding anniversary.

He now points out to us the 'banality' of our present situation. He could have easily lost his life on this road seventeen years ago, he says. Now he travels freely through the same villages and has no fear for his own or anyone else's life. Perhaps, for this absurd reason, he finds this *TRAVEL* even more traumatic than his tragic departure from Slavonia…

Seventeen years ago he was in a state of shock, unable to comprehend the trauma.
At the time of the attack, survival was all he could conceive, his own, his family's and that of his countrymen. In such events of traumatic intensity, people tend to become psychologically numb to events. All focus is on protecting and helping the victims, on stabilising the situation. After the war, in his newly-established life with his wife and two children, M. S. had time: to face his trauma, think through it, experience these events again in his mind.

Villages here are almost symmetrically organised, with the main road running through the middle and houses positioned on a linear thread. They follow one after another, and all carry significant traces of violent acts, most with heavily damaged facades. Most are examples of simple regional domestic architecture, and many incorporate vernacular elements. Dwellings differ in size, but are generally single storey.
Interior layouts seem to be repetitive: two large windows facing the road, large courtyard, fences and gates of diverse colours. The two-storey dwellings are spacious, similar in structure and with two windows on each level facing the road.
Most have a long narrow balcony with exits from the upper rooms.

The day of our visit is cold, no more than 2 degrees Celsius.
Few people are out.

As we drive through the villages, M. S. talks of the region's background and population before and after the war. Many Serbian people who fled the region in 1995 sold their houses to Croatian refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, he says.

After the war it was also common for the Serbs from this region to exchange their households with Croatians that lived in Serbia or in other parts of the former unity. Villages are now mainly populated by people who came after the war.

Figure 94: Demolished houses on E-661 (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

Figure 95: Traces of violence on domestic objects on E-661 (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

M. S. explains that he finds the physical traces of violence deeply disturbing. Sights of smashed and vandalised domestic architecture spark memories, and through these tactile traces he feels the reality of past violence.

For him, this *TRAVEL* is a specific journey through time and memory.

Our ride along E-661 lasts about half an hour. M. S. explains that last time he travelled this route, on foot, it took him 24 hours to get to the Bosnian border crossing. He walked with his friends, none of them professional soldiers, through the bushes, canals and surrounding woods. They ran and crawled through rain, mud and grass. Many were injured, wounded, some killed. Groups of soldiers, including M. S, carried wounded men between locations.

This road marked the main scenes of brutality.

Croatian tanks, military transports and troops were on and near the main road and in many houses, nearby woods, and numerous structures along the way. They conquered, village by village, starting near Okucani and expelling the population in the direction of the Bosnian border.

People chaotically fled in cars, buses, tractors, vans, motorbikes and bicycles.

The frantic and traumatised motorcades were bombed repeatedly by military aircraft as they neared the Bosnian border.

M. S. witnessed all of this.

He ran from one house to another in search of shelter from attack. Each time he entered a new house he had no idea if the house was occupied by the enemy. A house could be a saviour or a killing-place; there was no other choice but to risk it. In moments of such terror and trauma, he tells us, one does not take time to judge the situation, but relies on pure instinct.

I scribble continually in my diary. M. S. speaks quicker and his tone becomes irregular.

Figure 96: Smashed house on E-661 (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

Figure 97: Villages on E-661 near Okucani (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

The insignia of violence intensify as we get closer to the Bosnian border.
Destroyed houses are like ghostly badges of collectively-lived trauma.
M. S. notes that many local soldiers, international peace keepers and civilians lost their lives on this very road. A few days after the exodus a new layer of asphalt had to be applied because it was impossible to wash off the blood. These acts were never screened on TV or reported in regional newspapers; they were witnessed solely by the people involved. M. S. reiterates that scenes he witnessed here explain why he avoided this route for so many years. Yet it is not just the fright of being in danger again if he returns, he tells us.

The fact is, he has suffered from these traumatic memories for such a long time. He cannot forget the people he has seen die on or near this road. He could not help them. And it is more than disturbing to think that people take this road like any other road in the region of former SFR Yugoslavia, or the world for that matter. He cannot comprehend that foreigners and people unfamiliar with this road now travel here as if nothing ever happened.

This road is the place of his deepest sorrow, the place where he experienced the most profound sense of loss.

We drive slowly.
I ask M. S. if we might stop and walk through one of the villages.
M. S. refuses outright. He is not ready to walk through this region, he says.

Also, he wants to avoid meeting someone he might know. He is also not sure how the new residents would react. He wants to avoid any possible conflict, he tells us.
We drive on but slow down when I want to photograph broken houses. Some people stop to look as I photograph a house. M. S. does not recognise anyone. However, he is familiar with many houses and tells us about their former owners; he had visited some of them often before the war.

On that May day in 1995, entry to houses that he knew were particularly difficult, M. S. explains. These were sites of bliss, family gathering, celebration, all generally associated with positive feelings. Suddenly their identity shifted and they turned to battlegrounds. M. S. was armed, and moved through familiar spaces with his fellow soldiers in military uniform. The experience was absurd, unreal, he says.

In many of the spaces, although he visited them often, he had only seen the public areas, dining and living rooms, kitchens or bathrooms. He had never entered their private areas or been upstairs. During the attacks he would rush through their kitchens and bedrooms in search of protection. He and his comrades would run upstairs to get a better view of the overall situation. M. S. was perpetually anxious about what he might encounter in a room. He hoped that the owners had managed to escape.

Curiously, M. S. explains, though many interiors were already demolished and vandalised, he was always conscious not to break anything. At that moment, he had no idea that no-one would ever return home. Now, he explains, these violated facades evoke powerful memories. Yes, he is curious to see the interiors again, but is not ready to face them; memories and experiences have unavoidably inscribed a level of fear in him. He also believes his presence might provoke new residents, and he wants to avoid any triggers for possible conflict.

As we approach the Bosnian border, M. S. clarifies that he did not want to visit the village of his ancestors for the same reason. This day is overwhelming, he reminds us, and he wants to avoid speaking to people. He knows that some people have moved back to their village.

The experience of this *TRAVEL* is too much at once, he says, and he needs peace and silence to relive these moments and to grapple little by little with his bitter memories.

Figure 98: Attacked house in E-661 (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

Figure 99: Gradiska Crossing - entering Bosnia and Herzegovina from Croatia (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2012)

As we arrive at the Bosnian border the tension in our car intensifies again.

We are all quiet. Last time M. S. was here he was struggling for his life.

He knew many people who never managed to get across this bridge.

I expected a large and monumental structure. Instead, we arrive at a fairly narrow construction of green metal. Below is the river Sava. M. S. tells us, back then many people tried to swim across. Some got through, many drowned. M. S. tells us that at that moment seventeen years ago, the act of crossing to the other side was filled with peril; he kept thinking of his family since he had had no news of them for 24 hours. He did not want to cross to Bosnia in case they had not yet crossed… I reflect that this is the same river that runs through Belgrade, near to my own apartment, and I often take morning or evening strolls along its banks…

Right now we are in the Christmas holiday season, and many people are travelling from Europe for holidays with families and relatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The occupants of other vehicles seem cheerful. Most number plates are Serbian, German and Austrian. I note that many refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina now live in Germany and Austria. The war ended two decades ago, and for those not deeply involved (like M. S. was), this is just an ordinary chore of crossing from one country to another. We wait at the checkpoint. I observe the surrounding woods and mull over the stories M. S. has told us. He is quiet meanwhile, and as we progress the emotion becomes overwhelming. M. S. hands our passports to the customs officers. He stares forward, avoids eye contact, grips the steering wheel. The moment is deeply poignant. We get our passports; M. S. nods to thank the officer and we drive forward. In reality, our position on this bridge is immaterial… Yet the moment marks the climax of our *TRAVEL*.

We enter Bosnia and Herzegovina and drive towards Banja Luka. I mark notes in my diary. M. S. remains quiet. N. A. studies his mobile phone…

We avoid eye contact.

The *TRAVEL* has been oppressive for all of us.
We seek to comfort each other by being quiet and offering time to heal.

The radio is on, and a popular pop band from the former SFR Yugoslavia is playing. After half an hour, we see the panorama of Banja Luka in the distance…’

It took M. S. another couple of days to make the decision to visit his hometown and the village and house of his ancestors.

On December 26, 2012, on my return to Belgrade, I received a phone call from him. He was calling from the village, from the house of his former next-door neighbour. He wanted to let me know that he'd decided to visit the place of his roots…
He had come 'home'. He sounded content.

……

TRAVEL 3 proved a thoroughly complex event. Persistently active as a psychological investigation, it was deeply emotional for all three travellers. M. S. was the central figure, and I assigned myself the role of documenter of his 'return home'. The journey also meant a revisiting of M. S.' most complex traumas. Thereby, my role was strongly interwoven with his experiences; in fact our *TRAVEL* rendered all three of us part of a collectively-lived trauma. It was a physical and psychological movement through traumatically-charged locations. M. S. often seemed displaced from the physicality of our moments in the car. In fact, he was *physically* facing the terror of his trauma for the first time since the actual event. M. S.' experience defined our moments of recognition of war's physical remains, captured in the destroyed domestic dwellings along the way, as relics of physical and psychological trauma previously experienced by a community of people. This *TRAVEL* therefore*,* established a conceptual dialogue with the past. Attacked, isolated and vandalised domestic spaces are not simply traces of history. Instead, they represent a luminous fact of a given time, a record of past moments. In this present, they emerge as flashes of trauma that themselves remain 'abandoned' - as commonly-felt 'black holes' in the psyches of trauma survivors.

In the years before our *TRAVEL,* M. S.' understanding of 'home' had been violently disrupted. SFR Yugoslavia, his 'motherland', had vanished in the flames of brutal civil war. Slavonia, as the region he previously recognised as his sole 'home', no longer represented the region to which he belonged. Borders have shifted here, and in the process have distorted the individual and collective sense of identity and belonging. For this reason, borders in this *TRAVEL* acquired monumental significance. Maps, as visualisations of these borders, emerge as key artefacts of the present experience of this region. They form the essence of our personal interrogation of crucial human concepts: identity, belonging, 'home'. This *TRAVEL* represents an event in which M. S. appears as a *foreign traveller* in the region that for the formative decades of his life was his homeland. After the event inscribed in memory as his core trauma, he returned to the region that formed the basis of his understanding of the concept of 'home'.
He returned as a survivor - yet also as a foreigner.

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4. 6. *TRAVEL* 4

Performers:

Nevena Mrdjenovic, the main researcher

N. A., theatre director; creator of the original set of photographs;

The action takes place on a rainy autumn day. N. A. and I set on a journey through the towns and villages of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which once were the locations of intense ethnic conflicts. These locations were most commonly disguised behind the other similarly tragic events in the bigger towns of the region.

The population in these locations remains ethnically mixed. For this reason, our interactions with local residents are less tense than in the other *TRAVELS*. It is also impossible to determine to whom the space belonged before the war.

N. A. and I drive from village to village, and spend time inside the houses.
We move through the abandoned houses freely. There are limited or no personal objects left in any of these former *homes*. In many houses, not a single piece of furniture or a personal item remains inside.

For this reason, N. A. and I see these abandoned dwellings as a canvas to project our own memories of the former country. We fill the vast, demolished spaces with our memories, personal losses and traumas of the war in 1990s.

This fact shifts the focus away from the trauma of an individual character.
Rather, this *TRAVEL* engages with the holistic trauma of the region.

Date:	30 September, 2013.
Route:	Belgrade to Derventa.
Rationale:	Investigation of conflict sites beyond the official front lines.

At 6 am on September 30 2013, I left Belgrade to visit specific towns and villages in both Republic of Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These locations marked significant 1990s conflict zones where events were generally disguised behind official versions of events in bigger or historically more significant cities and towns in the region.

Figure 100: Map of *TRAVEL* 4: Belgrade to Derventa (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

My previous field research in Bosnia and Herzegovina (*TRAVEL* 2) showed that many civilians, particularly in the municipalities of Derventa and Brcko, suffered greatly in the 1990s conflict, but that these facts remain widely neglected in the post-war period. I posit that this neglect stems from the high and simultaneous intensity of conflict in many regional towns and cities, particularly the widely-publicised front lines of Sarajevo, Mostar and Srebrenica. Let there be no mistake: ethnic war in this region caused atrocious human loss, major psychological trauma, and a ghastly legacy of destroyed towns and villages.

This was a one-day *TRAVEL,* undertaken in a private car, plate Number BG 159 DS. Once again I was accompanied by N. A.. My equipment included a DSLR camera, sound recorder and *TRAVEL* diary. We entered Bosnia and Herzegovina at Sremska Raca border checkpoint, 113 kilometres from Belgrade. We took the main road alongside the Sava river, and the scenery was pleasant during our drive.

Figure 101: Passport holder Nevena Mrdjenovic; Number: M8997322.
Stamped at Bosnian Border, checkpoint Sremska Raca, 30.09.2013. (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

The river Sava marks a natural border between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. This region was deeply ethnically-mixed before the war. For decades, Bosnian Muslim, Serbian and Croatian people lived together on a small sliver of land. However, as soon as conflicts started in other regions in the early 1990s and overall ethnic tension intensified, the situation here quickly escalated into all-out war.

Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina borders Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro. The terms 'Bosnia' and 'Herzegovina' refer to regional rather than ethnic distinctions. The region comprises two entities: Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, (51% of its territory) and Republic of Srpska (49%). The division was defined by the Dayton Agreement 'General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina', in November 1995.

The Bosnian war lasted nearly three years, flaring up as a direct consequence of the instability of SFR Yugoslavia. 1992 saw armed ethnic clashes between Serbian and Bosnian Muslim populations. Violent events in 1993 heralded an outbreak of clashes between the Croatian and Bosnian Muslim population. These conflicts, that lasted for almost two years (1993-1995), are often referred to as a 'war within a war', and claimed vast numbers of victims. Discrepancies in numbers are still significant. Today, human losses of the Bosnian conflict are estimated at over 100,000. The United Nations Protection Force, 'UNPROFOR', entered the region in June 1992 to protect refugees and deliver humanitarian aid. Thousands of local residents from both Bosnian entities were fleeing daily. Many went to Serbia and Croatia depending on their ethnicity, while many went to Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Norway, and Sweden as part of major refugee programs.

'Our drive to Derventa lasts about five hours, and we make many stops along the way. As soon as we enter the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, traces of intense conflict become visible on all sides, particularly in the villages near the main road. I have prepared a loose schedule for the *TRAVEL,* although it will clearly evolve spontaneously, dictated by the levels of destruction in the villages and towns. I have previously travelled through some of these towns, but have also done research in preparation for this *TRAVEL.* Brcko, Orasje, Derventa: these names continually come up as climactic sites in the 1990s conflicts.

Figure 102: Demolished house near Brcko (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 103: Destroyed house in a village near Brcko (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Our first stop is a village near Brcko, the administrative seat of the Brcko District, which featured strongly in the Dayton Peace Agreement. Today, Brcko District has a unique status and its own institutions, while it falls under joint administration of both Republic of Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the period of SFR Yugoslavia, the population was highly ethnically mixed, with similar numbers of Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats, including many mixed-marriage couples. For this reason, Brcko, with a population just above 90,000, represented a major 1990s flashpoint. Numerous battles took place inside and around the currently-abandoned domestic dwellings. As part of peacekeeping operations, US-led Implementation Forces set up Camp McGovern on the outskirts with the aim of implementing peace, safety and freedom of movement for civilians in the region.

N. A. parks in a side street and we explore the village on foot. The population remains ethnically mixed, and since local residents are accustomed to this, we hope our interactions with locals will be less tense than in other regions of the former unity. This first village is very quiet. It is cold, raining sporadically, and no-one is out. For a full half-hour we are alone. Lights burn in some houses, the only sign of activity. All domestic dwellings carry significant marks of violence and many are abandoned. Even those evidently inhabited are heavily damaged; the whole village effortlessly evokes its turbulent past. Empty streets seem to suggest the whole is deserted, yet the natural surroundings add a contrasting aura of peace. For a moment these vistas appear as abandoned mise-en-scenes of an ended performance… The net effect is disturbing.

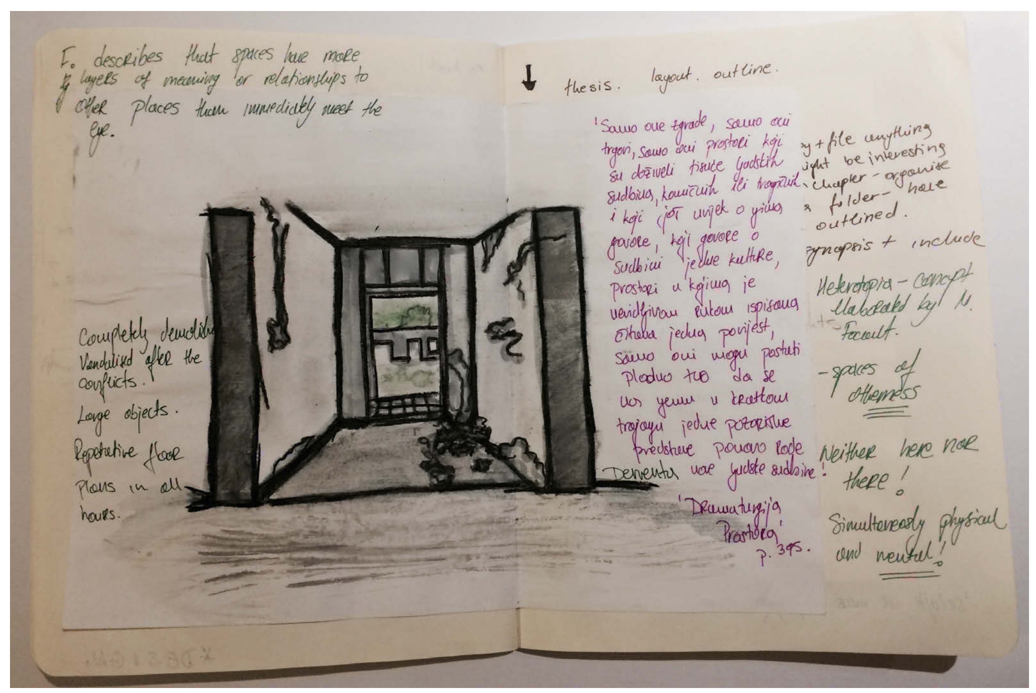

Figure 104: *TRAVEL* diary record (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 105: Abandoned and stripped houses (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

N. A. and I move about freely. It seems the dwellings have also been vandalised over the years; bullet-pocked facades, mined, destroyed and burned interiors form a holistic present image. Nature has conquered most of the structures, and trees, grass and weeds infest many dwellings. Twenty years on, the foliage perhaps serves as a physical disguise for painful memories. Remaining walls, columns and doorways appear now as architectural follies. Access to these houses is limited, but we manage to enter some. The only human reminders are shoes, and we repeatedly come across them: different sizes, colours, styles. Male, female and children's shoes.

We drive to the next village. Here the scene is the same. The level of violence and destruction is intense. This village is closer to Brcko, and houses are large, mainly two-storey. We park and explore. Access to the houses is much easier. They all have identical, simple interior layouts. All ground levels feature public areas: a large open-plan kitchen, pantry, dining and living areas. Some houses include a small bathroom, storage rooms, and spacious separate dining room for family gatherings and celebrations. Such rooms are common in this region. Level one also features simple layouts, with two or three bedrooms and a large bathroom. All bedrooms are spacious with large windows. Large bedrooms face the street. Some bedrooms have their own balcony; others share a long and narrow one. Some houses have a balcony overlooking the courtyard.

All the houses are deserted. Not a single piece of furniture remains. As we move through spaces I sketch and photograph. All are similar. Floor and wall finishes are violently removed, purposely destroyed. Numerous houses are burned inside, and wall textures carry clear traces of fire. Scenographically, these textures are aesthetically compelling, yet in this historical context are deeply melancholy and disturbing.

I spend half an hour or so in each house. These are all spacious, two-storey dwellings with large windows. All glass, timber framing, doors and windows are destroyed and in many houses completely removed. These large openings now offer a strong connection to the outdoor world. Despite the rain and gloomy day outside, interiors are suffused with natural light. Such conditions curiously affect my experience of the space. As I move through each room I feel connected with the outdoors and with the street, creating a sense of safety. I can see if someone is coming near, and can call for help in case of danger, reassuring me while I investigate each room. For the first time, I feel safe to walk through rooms alone. N. A. is in the house too, but exploring elsewhere.

Traces of human habitation are limited or non-existent in many houses.
In one, tiles clinging to a wall are the only real sign of former domesticity. These tiles, in the old kitchen, offer a subtle and evocative reminder of daily activities that are long gone. One section is intact while the other side is broken. Traces and holes on the wall indicate the positions of old kitchen cabinets. I notice a simple drawing of a pig above the tiles, hand-drawn on a bare concrete wall. Grass and weeds grow on the floor, in sections where floor tiles are removed. This natural floor covering seems as if placed here with an aesthetic awareness. It instantly reminds me of bouquets that we lay on graves and memorials, acknowledging those who have passed on. This kitchen, the former epicentre of a domestic existence, now initiates deep sorrow and empathy for an unknown family's loss.

Figure 106: A former kitchen (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 107: A former bedroom (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Experience in these spaces differs from my investigations on other *TRAVELS*.
My constant fear of what I might encounter is less present here. I even feel momentarily excited, due to the fact that I can move freely and spend time analysing each room. These spaces are deprived of personal objects and traces of human life. While this fact highlights the intensity of violence perpetrated here, it shifts the focus away from direct experience of the human trauma. In these dwellings I find no scattered personal objects that shout out such physical and psychological trauma, so that my experience is less about actual human loss. Yet traces of direct violence against architectural and interior structures are obvious. Entire rooms, walls, floors, doors, windows, ceilings and staircases have suffered gut-wrenching violence and vandalism. Most structural architectural elements are completely destroyed.
Clearly, many interiors were set on fire, bombed, mined or attacked with hand-held weapons. Moving through these viciously smashed rooms, I realise that such acts of violence reach beyond the aim of 'conquering the other'. Not confined to the physical and psychological defeat of the enemy, there is implied the clear aim of extermination, and crucially, the prevention of possible return of anyone linked to the inhabitants. Here is the strategic demolition of domestic space as the most intimate human realm, as the prime infrastructure of the human sense of belonging and identity.

Although I have never seen these spaces before, I experience an unusual sense of intimacy, of attachment, of empathy. These homes have been stripped of all previous identities, and without furniture, painted walls or wallpapers, floor coverings or personal objects, they appear as blank architectural structures. Empty and vast, their bare interiors shape no image of the inhabitants in my imagination. Yet they remind me of houses I used to visit as a child. Suddenly, they emerge as a blank physical canvas for my own (and N. A.'s) intimate memories of the trauma of the disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia. Here, I consciously and unconsciously translate memories of spaces, experiences and people that I personally knew well, into these unknown sites. Each room prompts new *personal memories,* that become symbols of an 'interrupted' Yugoslav life.

I enter another house.
Again I find no trace of human actions prior to the attack. Upstairs, I enter a small corner room, probably the smallest in the house. It is pulverised. Through a big window opening to a narrow balcony, I note the quiet streets beyond. There are similarly destroyed houses to the left near the main road.

I watch the nearby intersection.
It starts to rain and I hear distant car noise.
A young girl runs near the house.
It is cold inside, and I move to a corner to avoid the sharp wind from outside.

Despite the destruction in the house, this room still embodies notions of intimacy; its atmosphere is still somehow pleasant. In a brief moment, as I tremble in the corner, I sense that it once belonged to a child. I now sketch and photograph, imagining the child's experience of this interior. This person now probably lives in another country, and recalls this exact milieu of his or her childhood memories. Bullet holes pock the walls. I stand directly in front of one, and natural light penetrates, glows in my face. Two decades ago these bullets sought to kill a person who stood in this very spot. The moment haunts me.

Figure 108: Vandalised walls in a former bedroom (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 109: A former bedroom (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Our drive through the region is noticeably less tense than in previous *TRAVELS,* and we proceed along the Sava river towards the town of Derventa. En route we discover many villages where the houses are in similar condition to the ones I have described. We stop once more, park off the main road, and take another walk through a wasted and ravaged unmarked village. Croatia is just across the river, and we clearly see villages with people moving about. Yet this village on the Bosnian side is empty of people, reduced to unerasable traces of violence against its domestic architecture. Most dwellings were abandoned in 1992 and 1993. Again, interiors are stripped to the bare walls, and all reminders of human habitation are utterly erased. Wall colours have long since faded, and textures have begun to rot away. Most houses are reduced to their interior structures, mere walls and ceilings covered with endless bullet holes and marks of vandalism from after the war. Floors are flooded and strewn with brick and grass. Walking here is hazardous and we must move slowly. It is not easy to see what is underneath, and in some sections there are large holes, traps for the unwary.
Our feet scuff and grind and slither on slimy floors that seem to have no solidity left in them.

The town of Derventa is 95 kilometres from Brcko, and Derventa municipality comprises the town and 57 surrounding villages. It belongs to the Republic of Srpska. Historically, it was part of the Vrbas Banovina (1929-1939), of the Banovina of Croatia, and of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1939-1941). During the Bosnian War, the town and its villages suffered huge material and human loss. Most residents fled, and many have never returned. Akin to what we witnessed in Brcko, domestic architecture here has been sacked, pillaged, razed and gutted - both during and after the war.

Figure 110: War-torn, flooded interior (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

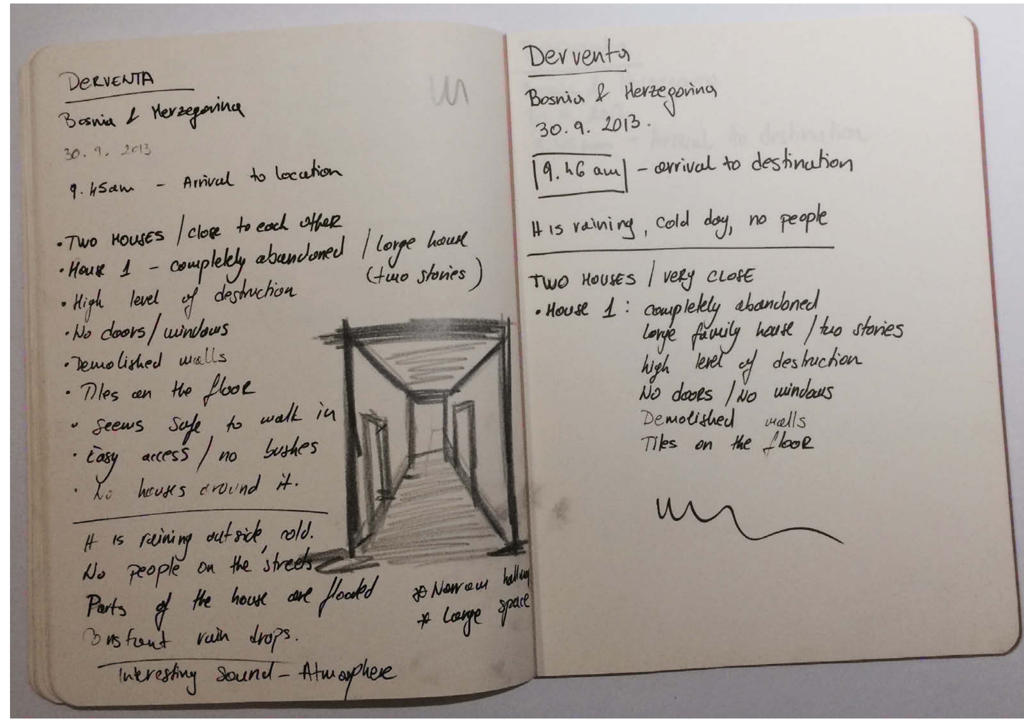

Figure 111: *TRAVEL* diary record Derventa (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

In one village along the way, a resident walks slowly down the street pushing his bicycle, on which he carries a large metal bucket. He comes near while I am photographing a house. He wants to know my reasons for photographing this private dwelling, and what I want to do with the photographs. I explain that I am undertaking scholarly and artistic research. He ignores this, stating that he can no longer stand journalists and TV reporters - from any ethnic side. He is clearly not interested in engaging in a sympathetic chat. Still, he tells us that most houses in the village were abandoned during or soon after the war, and that former residents never returned. Some, he tells us, come to visit their homes once every couple of years, while many never return. Tellingly, many have sold their houses to people who have also abandoned them later on. For years after the actual war, he says, 'passers by' (as he sarcastically names them) 'finalised' the process of ruination: they have vandalised and burgled what remains. Most houses were abandoned between 1992 and 1993, and no later than 1995. The old man adds that the population is again ethnically mixed, just as it used to be.

Initially, N.A and I feel the old man is needlessly unpleasant. With his complaints against journalists who reported from here during the conflicts, I assume he thinks my interest to be insincere. We continue on, exploring other streets. Soon we encounter the old man again, this time with three other elderly men. They talk loudly and seem cheerful. As we walk nearby he waves and smiles at us, laughing loudly with the others. I realise he was not 'unpleasant' at all, nor wanted to make us feel unwelcome in his village. In this moment, watching the three old gents laugh and chatter, I realise our interaction of fifteen minutes ago was simply a result of a mute inability to discuss the traumas of the past. Memories here are very much alive, and violence has affected these people forever and in multiple buried ways.

N. A. and I enter a number of abandoned houses. Again, most are large and of two and three storeys. Inside, their vast emptiness intensifies their scale. Walls and ceilings appear higher than they are, and light penetrates through the windows, stripped doorways and tiny bullet holes that fleck the walls. Houses no longer have street numbers or any other signs of recognition. In many villages even street names are removed. It is as if these villages, streets and houses are officially erased from the life of the region. Many courtyards are overgrown with weeds, bushes and branches, making physical movement through streets, and access to houses, very difficult.

Inside the homes there are few personal belongings, nothing but a few scattered, broken and faded objects.

Most homes have graffiti on the walls - personal names and patriotic slogans from all three ethnic sides of the conflict. In one house, an entire wall is inscribed in multiple layers. Personal names crossing over patriotic symbols and slogans from all the sides… a large three-fingered salute, originally an expression of Serbian Orthodoxy, sits on a wall next to a five-pointed star that was once the key symbol of SFR Yugoslavia's Communist regime.

Slogans and names in Roman alphabet are crossed out and covered with new writing in Cyrillic and vice versa. Here, even such banal acts of intimidation and provocation of 'the other', are heralded as little victories.

Figure 112: Graffiti in an abandoned house (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

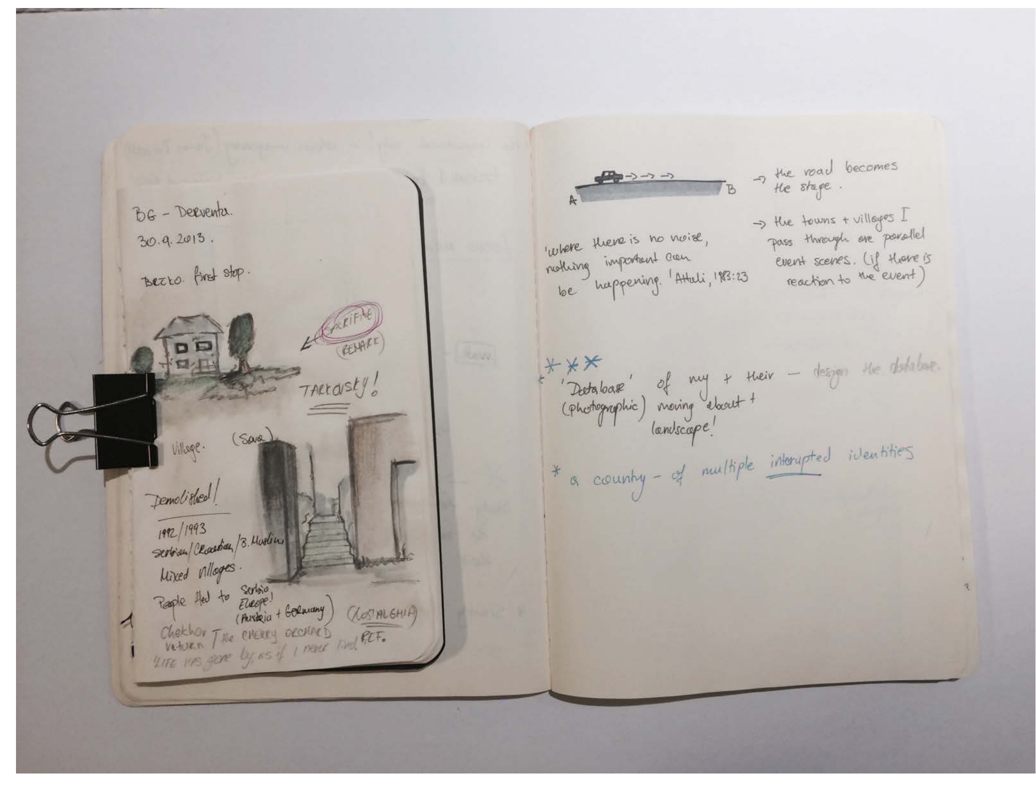

Figure 113: *TRAVEL* diary record (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

A roofless house near Derventa particularly compels us.

The two-storey structure is wasted, its roof completely gone. Rain spatters my face as I stand in the midst of someone's former home. The space resembles a big model box, with a staircase located near the main door. It is overgrown with layers of grass, giving it a curious naturalness, and grass covers the ruined staircase like a carpet.

Female and children's shoes are scattered near the stairs. I slowly climb, watching for hazards. I gaze at open sky and feel rain on my face. Meanwhile, N. A. walks through the rooms below. We are quiet; the moment is highly theatrical. I pause on the landing, decide to go no further. The staircase is not safe. It seems to me that the house has been bombed. Level one has huge holes in the floor and appears to be falling apart. The afternoon rain intensifies. I cover my head and walk through this roofless castle… and the place brings back to me scenes, interiors and atmospheres of the films of Andrei Tarkovsky: decaying structures, barren abstracted silences, mould, dribbling rain, humidity…

In fact, I feel I am standing in a scene from his *Stalker* (1979).

Figure 114: Three characters in the Zone (*Stalker* 1979)

Figure 115: Roofless house near Derventa
(Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 116: Staircase in a roofless house
(Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

As evening approaches we prepare to return to Belgrade. I mark notes in my diary and sketch moments I felt were significant. The rain intensifies, and visibility on the road is hampered by fog. We drive slowly beside the Sava river, retracing our steps from the day. Villages already experienced, appear like ghosts in grey light. This time we make no stops before the Serbian border, and after a brief routine at the checkpoint, we head for Belgrade.'

. . . . . .

The region in which this *TRAVEL* was performed was strongly ethnically mixed before the war. When conflict escalated, the question of 'otherness' reemerged - the negation of the concept of 'self', 'us' and 'the same'. 'Otherness' is here understood as the state of being that is foreign to the personal, social, cultural, ethnic and religious identity of a person. For ethnic groups living in such a small diameter of land, 'the other' unavoidably became 'the enemy', and was marked for extermination.

Attacks on domestic architecture are here closely related to attacks on 'the other'. The region is dominated by images of pulverised domestic structures, vandalised interiors, bullet-sprayed facades, burned and mined houses. My experience in this *TRAVEL* reveals that each ethnic group used similar strategies of extermination. Instead of killing people, opposed groups performed violent attacks on objects of personal significance. They destroyed and vandalised each others' 'homes' as the principal infrastructure of human belonging, to prove their regional power and ownership and to prevent any possible return of the enemy. The attacks are to be read as a means of exterminating 'otherness'. They indisputably identify as modes of ethnic and cultural cleansing.

My *TRAVEL* confirmed that architectural objects are defined by their physical attributes and tectonic qualities, as well as by the events that take place within their walls. We should also note that in their present state, these broken structures have acquired notions of architectural and epistemic 'otherness'. Thereby they embody haptic visualisation of violent extermination. From a scenographic perspective, they emerge as concurrent physically and psychologically monumental sites, that is, they represent genuine artefacts of past trauma. It is now impossible to determine to which ethnic group any of these houses belonged, and I could not differentiate them on an ethnic, religious, or any other level. These wasted 'homes' remain as vain structures that now stand as 'loci of memory' of a collective traumatic past.

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4. 7. *TRAVEL* 5

Performers:

Nevena Mrdjenovic, the main researcher

N. A., theatre director, creator of the original set of photographs

DJ. B., freelance photographer from Belgrade, an active member of a humanitarian organisation

I. D., local resident in the village of Banjska, DJ. B.'s friend

A local teenager, a high school student we meet on the road in the village

V. M. , DJ. B.'s friend, resident of North Kosovska Mitrovica, originally from the South side of the town

The action begins on a cold winter night, when N. A., DJ. B. and I board a bus to Kosovska Mitrovica. This is my first *TRAVEL* to Kosovo, while N. A. and DJ. B. had visited multiple times before

DJ. B. knows the region very well. Since this is the region of ongoing conflicts, DJ. B.'s part in this *TRAVEL* is highly significant. Strong ethnic tension remains between the Serbian and Albanian population, and clashes still happen on daily basis.

In this *TRAVEL*, we explore the ethnically mixed village of Banjska and the absurdly split town of Kosovska Mitrovica. Both of these visits are tense and profoundly physically and emotionally challenging, and we constantly remain alert of possible ethnic conflict.

The exploration of Kosovska Mitrovica is highly theatrical: simple daily settings, conversations with locals, strict division of the town and strictly divided navigation paths for Serbian and Albanian population, constant military vehicle patrols and presence of armed KFOR soldiers.

Date:	11 and 12 November 2013.
Route:	Belgrade to Kosovska Mitrovica.
Rationale:	*TRAVEL* to an area of ongoing conflicts.

On 11 November 2013, I boarded a night bus from Belgrade to Kosovska Mitrovica. This was one of the few regularly-operating services between Belgrade and northern towns of Kosovo (three days a week). A full bus left Belgrade at 10.45 pm.
I was accompanied by N. A. and DJ. B., a freelance photographer from Belgrade.

Equipment for this *TRAVEL* included a DSLR camera, sound recorder and *TRAVEL* diary. Since we planned to visit remote locations, we wore warm protective clothing and high winter boots.

Figure 117: Map of *TRAVEL* 5: Belgrade to Kosovska Mitrovica (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Major Serbian news outlets aired daily updates of the ongoing tension in Kosovo, intensifying the anxiety I felt prior to the *TRAVEL*. Nevertheless, such ethnic and political tension should be seen as a core reason for this *TRAVEL*. The roots of the Kosovo conflict can be traced to those in other regions of the former SFR Yugoslavia, and Kosovo has remained an unresolved conflict zone since the federation's collapse, so that this *TRAVEL* (to Kosovska Mitrovica and surrounding towns and villages) significantly differed from my previous ones. While those were performed in the aftermath of conflict, this one was shaped by ongoing tension, continuing ethnic conflict and overall unpredictability and risk. Accumulated media tension as well as numerous testimonies of people who visited the region, led to my decision to perform a one-day *TRAVEL*. I decided not to spend the night in any town, but to return to Belgrade as soon as I had finished the performance.

Kosovo is officially known as the 'Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija' within the republic of Serbia, and is also referred to as 'K and M', or 'Kosmet'. Located in the south of Serbia, it borders Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania. It consists of two regions, Kosovo and Metohija (which in translation stands for 'Monastic Estate'), a smaller area in its west. Kosovo is today known as a disputed region whose territory is run by UNMIK and the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo. Tension between the Serbian and Albanian populations in Kosovo dates back to the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922), when the majority of Albanians here converted to Islam. Tensions grew during the Communist period in SFR Yugoslavia, and with the outbreak of ethnic conflict in SFR Yugoslavia's other regions, tension in Kosovo escalated, exploding into all-out war in 1998. The war ended with a military operation performed by NATO in 1999. Named 'Noble Anvil', the operation was not authorised by the UN, and from March 24 till June 10 1999, NATO carried out attacks in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. The operation marked NATO's most significant historical combat after its 1995 bombing of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and led SFR Yugoslav forces to withdraw from Kosovo. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was then implemented with the goal of ending the 1990s Yugoslav wars. Kosovo became a UN protectorate under UNSCR 1244.

In March 2004 violence broke out again, whereby ethnic Albanian extremists conducted 24 hours of attacks on Serbs who remained in Kosovo after 1999. This was known as the 'Kosovo Pogrom'. Its touchstone was the deaths of a Serbian teenager and three Albanian boys. On March 15 an 18-year-old Serbian boy was killed in the drive-by shooting in the village of Caglavica. That day, the local Serbian community staged demonstrations and blocked major traffic routes in protest.

Next day, media reported that three Albanian children had drowned in the river Ibar at the village of Cabar. Serbian teenagers were accused of chasing the boys into the water as revenge for the killed Serbian teen, and the pogrom spread from there. UN police spokesman Neeraj Singh and UN Mission Press Secretary Derek Chepel denied the allegations in a public appeal. In fact, one of the 'drowned' boys was found alive the following day. According to the spokespersons, his testimony was inconsistent and suspect. The riots spread to many towns and villages and marked the biggest clash of 2004. Offical records show that 935 domestic dwellings, 35 Orthodox churches and monasteries and 10 municipal objects were wiped out in a single day.

Following extended conflicts of varying intensity, the Kosovo interim administration under Albanian domination unilaterally declared independence on February 17, 2008. The world remains divided on the recognition of Kosovo as an independent state. Although Serbia has not formally recognised its independence, it has closed all its institutions in the Autonomous Province. The two governments signed the 'Brussels Agreement' in 2013, a declaration on the regulation of their relations. This received mixed international acknowledgment. Serbia's continued rejection of independence stems from its belief that Kosovo has for generations represented the cradle of its spiritual, historical and cultural heritage and identity. Historians say it is the region most densely populated with spiritual architecture, containing up to 1400 churches and monasteries of diverse categories and periods. Four monasteries: Decani, Patriarchate of Pec Monastery, Our Lady of Ljevis, and Gracanica, are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. They represent a unique fusion of eastern Orthodox Byzantine, western Romanesque ecclesiastical and Palaiologian Renaissance styles. In 2004, UNESCO acknowledged the Decani to hold outstanding universal value, and since 1999 has been continually guarded by Italian NATO soldiers following ongoing harassment by local ethnic Albanians towards the monks and their visitors. These monasteries are also on the World Heritage in Danger list (2006), due to continuing difficulties in conservation, management and political instability in the region.

'At the time of my visit to Kosovo, strong ethnic tension and sporadic conflict remain. The province is now strictly divided into the southern Albanian-controlled and northern Serbian-dominated zones, with the latter holding the town of Kosovska Mitrovica as its administrative centre. The Serbian population can move freely in their zone, but in the south may only travel under police or international peacekeeper escort.

This is my first visit to Kosovo, though N. A. and DJ. B. have been here many times. DJ. B. is an active member of an organisation that provides refugees in remote enclaves with essential living necessities, household equipment, humanitarian and medical aid. He also photographically documents their activities and (often inhumane) living conditions and exhibits the work in Belgrade and beyond. DJ. B. is profoundly aware of the situation in the region and knows the terrain well. DJ. B.'s presence during this *TRAVEL* is truly valuable.

The situation on our bus is not tense. Although this is a night journey, most people stay awake and talk. Everyone speaks Serbian. DJ. B. explains that the young people from Kosovska Mitrovica and its surrounding towns and villages mostly study at the Serbian Universities of Belgrade, Kragujevac and Novi Sad. Many are on our bus, returning home. DJ. B. says that their living conditions and financial situation do not allow them to afford accommodation and expenses in their university cities, so that most live at home and travel only when they have to sit exams or attend important lectures. Conversations are mainly casual, like what one would hear on any Belgrade bus, with people talking of things at university, of general living conditions, places they visit in Belgrade, films, TV shows, football games.

Our visit to Kosovo has had to be postponed several times due to regional elections, which have caused various intense incidents. Discussion on the bus informs me on the current situation between Serbians and Albanians. DJ. B. explains that the situation in Kosovo remains tense, and that many people lost their jobs due to political turbulence and overall instability. He cites experiences of people he knows well. Some fellow passengers join in, telling of clashes on the streets of Kosovska Mitrovica just days ago. My reading of bits and pieces about these in the Belgrade media has made me nervous. After a six-hour drive we arrive in Jarinje, a village that marks the border between central Serbia and Kosovo. In 2008, an 'administrative line' was established here by NATO troops after riots stemming from the declaration of Kosovo independence. The area was smashed up, then witnessed new clashes in July, 2011. In 2013, the Brussels Agreement set permanent guards and customs agents at the checkpoint.

It is early morning when the bus arrives. It is still dark, cold and foggy. I vaguely make out silhouettes of the surrounding landscape. The bus crawls towards the checkpoint's neon lights. This checkpoint is familiar to me from constant news updates screened in Belgrade. I am not allowed to photograph. The checkpoint is narrow with a blue metal roof and high pillars in the middle. Metal containers housing agents and international peacekeepers are located to one side and in the middle of the road. Barbed wire surrounding the metal containers under bright neon light intensifies the apprehension I already feel about this *TRAVEL*. This resembles a military base rather than a regular border point. It implies a tense and uncomfortable experience in Kosovo. An armed KFOR (Kosovo Force) soldier enters the bus and reservedly greets the driver. We stay quiet. The situation seems tense, unpleasant. Passengers are asked to hold their passports up as the soldier walks down the aisle and checks them. Most have Serbian passports. The soldier moves slowly, thoroughly checking each. Mine is Australian. The soldier stares at it, and without a word to me takes it and exits the bus. It is the only one he has collected. I feel somewhat stressed. Everyone is quiet, waiting, avoiding eye contact. The soldier returns after five minutes and hands my passport to the driver, who calls out my name. I collect it - and note a new 'Republic of Kosovo' stamp.

We move forward. To me this drive is uncomfortable, but regular passengers seem relaxed and continue chatting. The sun rises and I study the villages we drive through. Many houses carry traces of violence. Still, I am impressed by the natural surrounds: steep hillsides covered with stands of tall trees. Our first stop is 50 kilometres after Jarinje, the small town of Zvecan. N. A., DJ. B. and I exit here. The town is quiet in the early morning. No-one is about. We walk for 15 minutes to the town centre and find a taxi. Next, we head for the village of Banjska, 12 kilometres away. This village remains ethnically mixed after the conflicts, although since it is close to the border most people are Serbian. My goal is to find an abandoned sanatorium, famed during the SFR Yugoslavia period for its natural thermal springs. DJ. B. also has friends here, and he gets them to help us with transport for the day. The taxi has dropped us near the Banjska monastery (1317), located on a hill near the sanatorium. We are briefly greeted by I.D., DJ.B.'s friend. DJ. B, N. A. and I continue on foot towards the abandoned and vandalised Banjska Sanatorium.

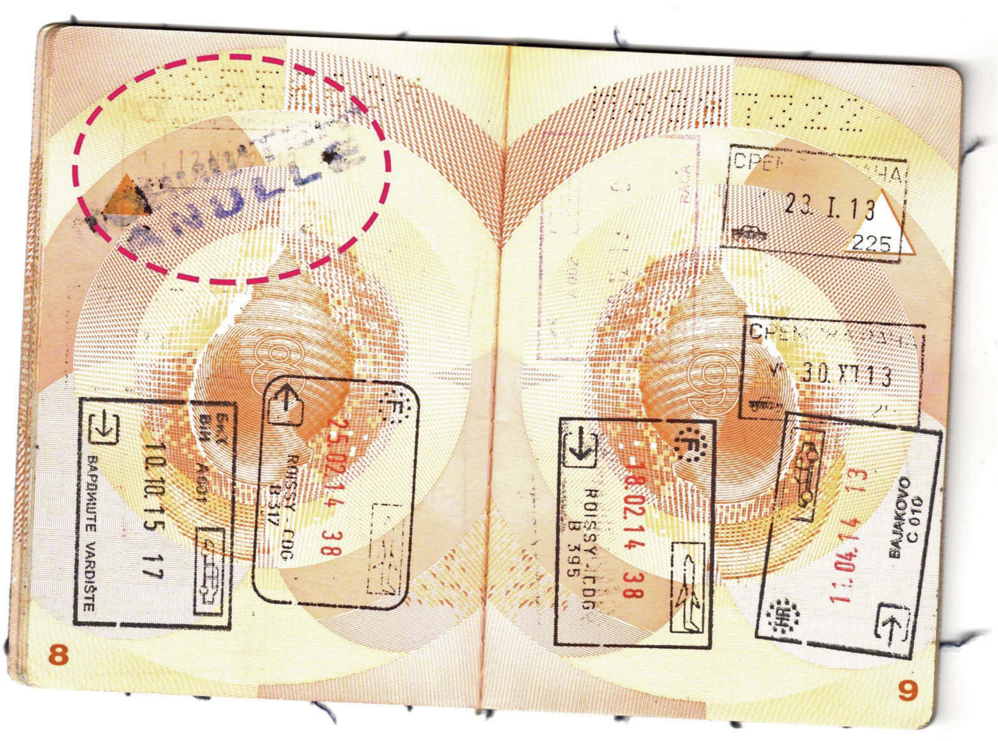

Figure 118: Passport holder Nevena Mrdjenovic, number M8997322. Stamped while crossing Administrative Line checkpoint Jarinje on 12.11.2013. Stamp annulled when exiting Serbia at Nikola Tesla Airport for Paris on 18.02.2014. (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2014)

Figure 119: Map of *TRAVEL* 5: Zvecan to Banjska Sanatorium 2013 (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

The entire Zvecan municipality is rich in thermal springs. One of these is located just two kilometres from the sanatorium complex. Before the war, this sanatorium was internationally renowned for its successful natural treatments, particularly of sterility and gout. Its best years were in the period of SFR Yugoslavia (1945-1992).

My research for this *TRAVEL* showed the earliest local medical use of mineral water was in the Middle Ages. Archeological exploration of the ancient town, established by Serbian King Milutin (1253-1321), revealed spa baths from this period.

Figure 120: Views of the Banjska village (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 121: The walk to the sanatorium at Banjska (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

The sanatorium complex is a large one-storey building set in a beautiful landscape with views from all sides. It includes thermal pools, patient rooms, consulting rooms, small lounge areas and a restaurant. A few streets down is a hotel that once belonged to the sanatorium. Although I aimed to visit the hotel, we were strongly advised it was not safe as conflicts occur on daily basis. Banjska village remains ethnically mixed, and the hotel is in an area populated by Albanians.

The main building has been abandoned since 1999, when it was badly smashed. Traces of its long dereliction are evident. It has no signage on the outer wall or at the main entry, and it is vandalised and gutted. Glass at the front door is scattered about. Nearby is another entry, above which a few broken letters imply the word ‘Reception’. The complex is vast, and its scale intensifies the apprehension we feel as we enter.

The front door opens to a large open space with columns in the centre and many glass walls, doors and windows on each side. I stand in the corner and observe. I can feel that years ago this open, naturally-lit space was inviting. Even in this moment my first impression is not entirely unpleasant. Large windows and natural light offer connection to the outer world. This open hall fans out into many narrow halls on all sides. For a moment it reminds me of the entry hall in my primary school, creating an odd sense of familiarity and easing the tension. I realise that this entry resembles the architectural aesthetics of many formal institutions in the communist SFR Yugoslavia. Walls are painted in mint blue and white, which despite its destruction, points to its former identity: such colour schemes were common in hospitals, medical centres and similar institutions.

DJ. B. stays outside and explores the surrounds while.
N. A. and I explore within. We hesitate in the big hall, unsure which way to go.
All signage is gone.

A cold breeze blows through the space, and its sheer scale intensifies my anxiety.

I am not comfortable to move about alone.

The interior is vandalised, with smashed glass, broken doors and widespread wall graffiti. Blue paint chips from the walls and in many places reveals the brick.
The ceiling is blighted and plaster has fallen to the floor. There is no furniture in any of the rooms. N. A. and I begin by walking through a narrow hall, observing each room as we go. Many doors lead to other areas: empty patient rooms, rooms with single bath tubs, rooms that look like former offices. We scan each for possible hazards. The narrow halls block our view and we cannot see at a distance.
Continual doors and narrow passages intensify the tension, and the space appears to us like a kind of maze. Most rooms signify intense wreckage, and the building has clearly suffered numerous post-war acts of vandalism. Patient rooms, offices and treatment rooms are utterly gutted, and personal belongings and patient files are thrown about.

In some rooms the entire floor is strewn with documents.

Figure 122: The entry to the sanatorium at Banjska (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 123: Banjska sanatorium (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

I enter a patient room and take photographs. The room is quiet, insulated from the outside. It is cold and breezy since the window glass is gone. The floor is obscured by medical files, books, scientific research on thermal springs and mineral waters and various other documents… All are in Serbian. They include patient names, personal information, dates of birth, general medical conditions, reasons for visiting the sanatorium. Some patients have had entire booklets made of their files, bound and labeled with their name on the front. Files show that patients came from all regions of the former federation and from other European countries. Although most came for treatment of sterility and gout, many came with diverse skin conditions, including psoriasis and vitiligo. One document analyses the thermo-mineral waters of Banjska and their most successful applications… I note that balneotherapy involves swimming in appropriately temperate waters to aid the treatment of chronic skin problems.

At the end of a narrow hallway we arrive at a large space with a pool in the centre - one of the main treatments rooms. The pool is full, and the fetid smell of water is intense. We move about, trying to olfactorily adjust. The presence of still water in the ruined interior creates a weird effect. The space is bright yet feels isolated due to the high windows. We conclude that such windows ensured patient privacy as well as ensuring proper airflow through the space. On the side are numerous identical narrow passages leading to changing rooms, patient rooms, showers, toilets and doctors' consulting rooms. Opposite the entrance, in front of the pool, are two showers with a small toilet in a corner. This pool, we discover, is but one of several in the sanatorium. Each would have had a different water temperature, and patients were prescribed their pool depending on their condition. A document reveals to me that patients with severe gout and bone ache required this pool.

Numerous doors on each side lead to smaller rooms with individual bathtubs. These narrow rooms, each tiled and with a small high window, feature one or two tubs. Patients were here treated alone or in pairs. The rooms are all wrecked. In one, tiles remain mostly in place but are smashed off the back wall. Floor coverings are gone, though window glass remains. Views of nature offer the only reassuring sight. Despite the view, the white tiles and natural light, the room is sombre, claustrophobic. Rooms with single tubs are the most intense. I exit them quickly, as the smell of water, decay and fusty air is unbearable. Shoes, bits of clothing and a few personal items lie about. Window glass is often broken and scattered about. Floor coverings are gone, yet the wall tiles remain, suffering the consequences of long slow neglect. I know that these rooms were designated for chronic patients who had to lie in tubs for prolonged periods, in temperatures adjusted to their need.

Figure 124: Interior of Banjska sanatorium (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 125: Thermal pool in Banjska sanatorium (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 126: Individual treatment rooms - Banjska sanatorium (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 127: Individual treatment rooms - Banjska sanatorium (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

We arrive at another thermal pool, almost identical to the last. This one is empty, letting us understand their structure and the way they were used. Concrete stairs are located on each side for easy access, and long concrete benches are built left and right. Patients could sit here, often next to each other, resting between exercises. This room also has many passages leading off to individual treatment rooms, changing rooms, doctor consulting rooms. A broken timber desk stands in front of the pool, the last piece of furniture in the entire area.

Torn curtains still hang on some windows. Flapping softly in the breeze, these pieces of simple fabric hold the most significant sense of the space's former habitation. Against the stillness of the ruined interiors, this subtle motion represents the only notion of life. Scenographically, it adds to the theatricality of the moment… I stay close to N. A. The space is huge, and I cannot predict what awaits me in other rooms. Traces of violence are intense, and only after seeing many interiors do I feel confident to walk alone. Still, I constantly call out to him, to be sure he is near. I photograph and sketch each new room. The place is eerily quiet.

Documentation, scattered about, unsurprisingly reveals nothing about the climactic events that took place near nearby during the Kosovo conflict. I search in vain for evidence that this complex was specifically used by any ethnic side, although it is clear that major physical battle took place here. It is also clear that the interiors were heavily vandalised afterwards.

Despite the tension I feel, the scale of the space curiously adds to a sense of free movement, derived from the sight of numerous corridors, doorways, smashed windows - as well as reassuring us that we can get away if any kind of danger comes. We take a good two hours to investigate all the rooms in the complex, and the place is silent for the entire time. Even when I look out to the surrounding lands, I see no-one anywhere near us. Yet, that view of nature, framed in voided windows edged with shards of mangled glass, is quietly poignant. Finally, we descend to the basement. This area was evidently used for storage, but is now totally decrepit. The ceiling looks ominous, and it does not seem safe to venture any further.

Figure 128: Thermal pool - Banjska sanatorium (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 129: Former patient rooms - Banjska sanatorium (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

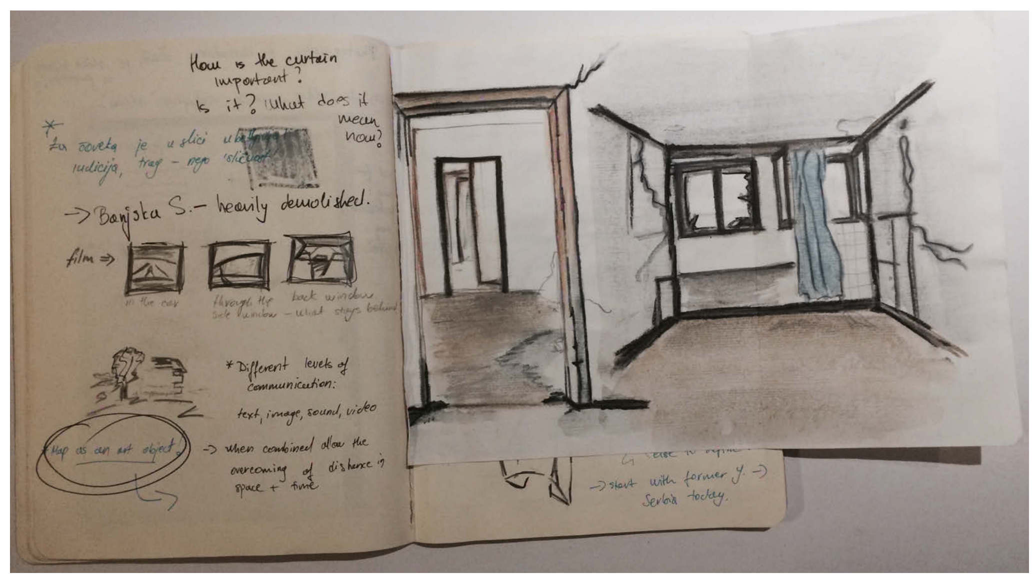

Figure 130: *TRAVEL* diary record Banjska sanatorium (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 131: A local bus (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

At last we leave and walk back to the village centre. It is a cold day and few people are outside. We spy a young man walking quickly from the bus station. At that moment we also run into DJ. B, who has been exploring the streets while we were in the sanatorium. We shout to each other, and the young man hears our Serbian, smiles and approaches. We speak for a while. He explains that he attends high school in Kosovska Mitrovica and travels on a daily basis. He stands with us, reflecting on his life in the village. It is quiet here, he says, and there is hardly anything for young people to do. To attend events or see people, he has to travel to the nearby towns of Zvecan and Kosovska Mitrovica. But even such short trips can be too expensive since household income is low; he often misses such opportunities. He enjoys his time in school, because then he can see other young people and hang out. He explains that he spends his time studying, watching TV and helping his family around the house. He studies hard, he says, to get into a degree course and win a scholarship to cover his costs in one of the big Serbian cities. On leaving, he warns us to be careful with our movements, as ethnic clashes regularly happen here.

A number of dogs tail us as we walk on. My initial reaction is fear when they approach, but they soon start running about us and playing. We give them food from our backpacks. We walk on down the main road and observe our surroundings. There are abandoned houses in the upper part of the village, and we look for a discreet road where we can get a closer look. Soon we realise that the only way in is though a courtyard. This proves very uncomfortable and we start running as we exit the yard. A light is on inside, and three dogs run behind us.

I am already tired by this psychologically and physically challenging *TRAVEL*.

We have set big aims for this day, and I don't want to spend the night in Kosovo.
I don't know anyone here anyway, and feel anxious about staying overnight in a hotel in Kosovska Mitrovica. I am exhausted by the constant fear of possible flare-ups and from following the signs of possible risky situations. I am continually tense about every person I meet on the street.

Figure 132: Torn Serbian flag (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 133: House in Banjska (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

As we crawl up the hill to the abandoned houses, we see that nearly all houses in this part of Banjska are wrecked. Reaching the first house, we can see the entire village and beyond. The view is beautiful, with shades of late autumn brown, goldenrod yellow, maroon and different greens. From here, the village seems bathed in peace.

In contrast, the domestic dwellings carry intense marks of violence. Houses are destroyed inside and out. In most, traces of human inhabitation are entirely erased. Only structural skeletons remain, with many houses retaining only load-bearing walls, while roofs, staircases, ceilings, doorways and other interior parts are obliterated. I analyse these remaining wall and ceiling structures and roughly sketch floor plans to understand the former interior layouts, seeking any sign of long-gone domestic activities. It is abundantly clear that these houses have been exposed to the highest level of violence I have witnessed in my entire *TRAVELS*.

A number of derelict houses are grouped together. Signs of violence are extreme in all of them. Trees grow through windows and roofs. Such absurd images add to the macabre theatricality of the experience. Grass and weeds create a natural carpet across entire floors. Cement, plaster and concrete cling on in scarce bits. Red brick (common to domestic architecture in SFR Yugoslavia) is exposed left and right. Sights of trees growing in the middle of houses reminds me of that ancient regional vernacular custom in which a tree is planted near the house as a guardian spirit. Ironically, sardonically, long abandonment has let nature devour this whole built environment.

All these houses are two-storey, but we cannot get upstairs in many of them. In most, level one is smashed up and walking upstairs is not safe at all. In one house the entire staircase is blasted out. These houses were most likely mined and razed by fire.

We spend an hour and a half exploring here then descend back to the village centre, where we meet I. D., who will take us to Kosovska Mitrovica.
This town is our last destination for the day.

Figure 134: Destroyed house in Banjska (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 135: Demolished house in Banjska (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Banjska to Kosovska Mitrovica

Figure 136: Map of *TRAVEL* 5: Banjska to Kosovska Mitrovica 2013 (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Our drive to Kosovska Mitrovica in I. D.'s car is quick. The roads are narrow, one lane in each direction. All vehicles travel pretty fast. Many do not have number plates. Some oncoming cars flash their headlights and I. D. waves back. He explains that these are Banjska people, and they recognise each other's cars. During the ride I am given a brief background to the region, with the recent history of ethnic conflicts between Serbs and Albanians. These clashes happen daily, and most are entirely ignored by both the KFOR and the media.

Between 1981 and 1991 Kosovska Mitrovica was called Tito's Mitrovica. Often referred to simply as Mitrovica, it remains a main centre in northern Kosovo. The 2011 Census tells us that 101, 369 (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe n. d.) souls live here, the majority being Albanian. Since 2013 the town has been split, and the river Ibar represents a physical and symbolic divider. At 2 pm, we arrive in North Mitrovica, the administrative centre of the Serbian part. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission in Kosovo reports a total population of 29,460 here, with the majority being Serbian.

The town seems to be functioning as normal, with busy streets and shops and many people shopping, returning from work, sitting in cafes with friends, with children in groups returning from school… At first glance the scene appears no different from any town in central Serbia. Moments later, military peacekeeping vehicles and armed police drive by. We are told they patrol the town at all times.

I. D. goes to meet friends while DJ. B., N. A. and I take a walk along a main street in the direction of Mitrovica Bridge. Numerous traffic lights are not working, and people simply slow down to dodge other cars. This seems coordinated and quite natural, and despite evident chaos there is no tension between drivers. Number plates are scarce here. Two young boys rollerblade along the main road, making themselves scarce as soon as a car looms. The experience is highly theatrical, and I am not unrelaxed; I merely muse at a chaotic atmosphere out of which people devise some sort of structure in their daily activities. Residential buildings on this tree-lined street date from the 1970s or 1980s, and are still reasonably maintained, given the overall context. Small Serbian flags hang from numerous street lights, and posters of Serbian politicians and parties grace many buildings. Patriotic slogans and symbols appear as graffiti on many residential buildings as well. They are mainly in Serbian, with many covered over with Albanian text. A few cars sport KM Kosovska Mitrovica number plates. People on the street all speak Serbian. No-one pays any attention to us. Teenagers walk by with basketballs, chatting cheerfully… In ten minutes we are at the Mitrovica bridge. Formerly connecting the town's north and south, it is now the key symbol of Kosovo's division - a border between the northern Serbian enclave and the rest, dominated and ruled by Albanians. The bridge is constantly guarded by peacekeepers and police, and snipers infest the high buildings on all sides. This simple steel-truss structure was rebuilt in 2001, funded by the French government. Their contract specified that the construction team must be multi-ethnic. Sixty workers from Kosovo, both Serb and Albanian, worked on its reconstruction.

Figure 137: Town Centre - North Mitrovica (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 138: Mitrovica Bridge (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

The bridge and its surrounds appear to me highly theatrical. Piles of sand on each side block the main access points. I have never seen the like in my life, and I find the scene to resemble obscure stage scenery. Yet I soon become aware of the fierce reality of the situation. Armed peacekeeping officers (KFOR) stand in the centre of the bridge. We are permitted to walk to the edge, and stand for a few minutes looking at the river and the southern part of Mitrovica. People are crossing to our side from the south; they walk directly past the officers and face no issues. Soon I walk (gingerly) to the middle of the bridge, wanting to photograph the other side. An officer comes up and asks me to leave. He is heavily armed and approaches with stealthy and offensive gait. I apologise and walk away, feeling constrained from mentioning the fact that people from the 'other side' are crossing uninterruptedly. I content myself with snapping South Mitrovica and the river Ibar from 'our' side, then rejoin my 'fellow Serbians' N. A. and DJ. B.

Actually, the bridge is pretty small, and one can easily view the other side of town and the people moving about there. It seems pretty much the same as the north. DJ. B. explains that many people from here actually used to live south of the river before the war. He knows people on this side who can see their own houses on the other side yet are never allowed to return. One friend (who is to meet us later) refuses to come anywhere near the bridge. He is a Serbian refugee who lived all his life in the southern part, and after the recent clashes had to move and never went back. Now he avoids going near the river for fear of spotting his old neighbourhood. DJ. B. explains that his friend finds these issues psychologically tortuous and will not readily discuss them with other people.

Figure 139: Mitrovica Bridge from the North (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 140: Barricades on the Mitrovica Bridge (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

After the visit to the bridge, we head for the upper side of town. On the main street we meet DJ. B's friend V. M. He talks a bit about his life in Kosovo. He recently received a degree in medicine, then gained a job in an emergency unit of north Mitrovica hospital. However, he lost the job because of political turbulence during the recent Kosovo elections. The main street is still busy; people are finishing work, having coffee with friends, and many children are outside. Despite all this 'ordinariness', the vibe in Kosovo is highly theatrical, rooted in the constant presence of conflict and violence. Basic interactions are restricted to one's ethnic belonging, people's movements and interactions are strictly controlled and observed, and people only move around familiar areas of the town during regular business hours, that is, 7 am to 5 pm. Most cars have no identification plates, the legal system does not function, peacekeeping patrols monitor the town at all times, and clashes between Serbians and Albanians happen on a regular, almost daily basis.

This absurd situation instantly resembles something dreamed up by that major figure of the French post-war theatre, Romanian-born playwright Eugéne Ionesco (1909-1994). Such echoes of his *Theatre of the Absurd*, bring home the inanity of the human condition. Ionesco's plays tangibly depict the loneliness and insignificance of our existence, and here in Kosovo elements of his oeuvre seem to be replicated in real life - in simple daily settings, in the conversations of people. In any other context, such acts and conversations would be judged absurd.

A number of destroyed abandoned houses are to be found in upper north Mitrovica, visible from the town centre. DJ. B., N. A. and I head that way, joined by DJ. B's friend. On our way we cross an old basketball court where some young men are playing. They greet V. M. There is a large residential building, partially abandoned, behind. I want to photograph the empty apartments through their windows, but V. M. insists we should not go anywhere near. Although this building is located in north Mitrovica, he tells us, many Albanian families still live inside, and conflicts occur on a daily basis. V. M. also feels that the residents would probably recognise him, and view it as another trigger for conflict.

Figure 141: River Ibar - Mitrovica Bridge (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

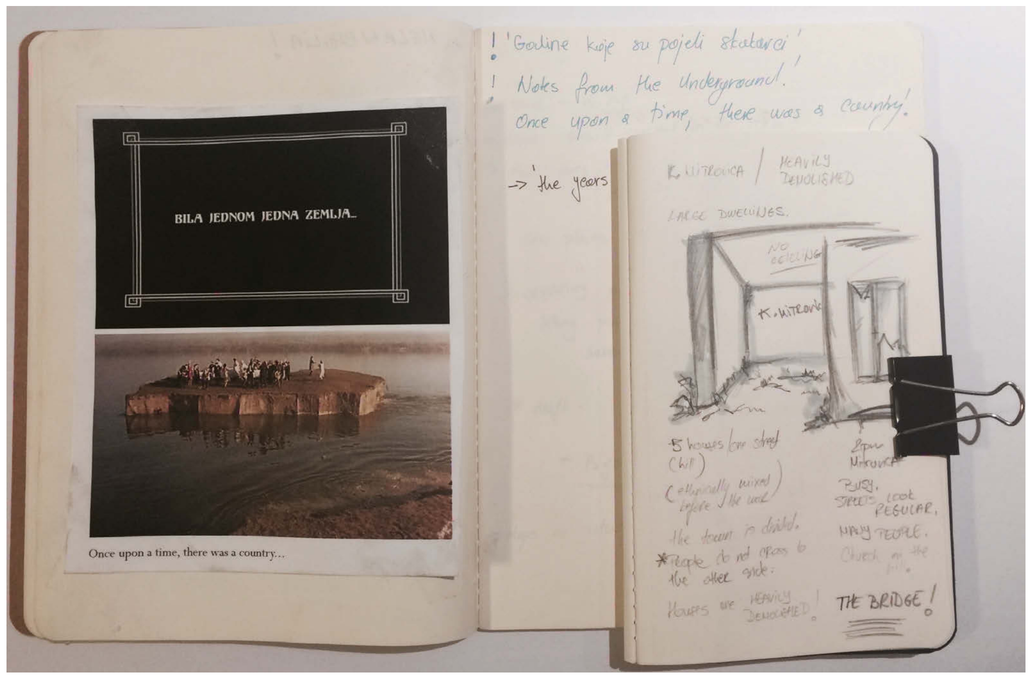

Figure 142: *TRAVEL* diary record Kosovska Mitrovica (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

We walk slowly through narrow and steep streets, and people generally avoid eye contact. Inhabited and abandoned houses are jumbled together. V. M. is not sure to whom the houses belong. He tells us: this part of the town was ethnically mixed before the war, so these houses could be both Serbian and Albanian. Attacks on domestic architecture are mutual. Serbs often attack Albanian homes in north Mitrovica as revenge for destroyed Serb houses in the southern sector. Albanians often attack and vandalise Serbian homes in the north sector to warn them they are not welcome in Kosovo. Attacks even happen within the same ethnic groups: Serbs attack dwellings of their fellows known to cooperate in illegal acts with Albanian ethnic groups, as well as the reverse.

The abandoned houses here are badly smashed. In numerous sites only structural parts plus bits of brick and mortar remain. There are no traces of habitation, no furniture or personal items in any of the houses. They seem like scale models, left behind after a violently-staged performance. Three men are observing us while we photograph deserted interiors. They whisper to each other. We cannot hear which language they speak, but are certain they have heard us speak Serbian. As we exit a house, two of them follow us to the next. They stand off and silently watch. I am anxious and want to leave. Yet I empathise: the people of Kosovska Mitrovica face such events every day. DJ. B. and V. M. try to spontaneously approach them, but they don't want to engage in any kind of conversation. Following our next investigation, we get back to the road and they are gone.

From this hill we have a panoramic view of all sectors of the town. It actually looks calm and quiet. Below the destroyed houses are new apartment blocks. They look no different from those in Belgrade or in any other town in the region. I see people on their balconies. Lights are on, and silhouettes move within.

Division and conflict seems absurd, unreasonable.

Figure 143: Abandoned war-torn houses in North Mitrovica (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

Figure 144: Abandoned, war-torn house in North Mitrovica (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

As afternoon comes on, fewer people are out. V. M. explains that people avoid being outside in the afternoon or evening, and if they have to go somewhere they drive or walk in groups. People seem to hurry to do as much as possible during the day, then spend evenings inside.

Figure 145: Side streets in North Mitrovica (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2013)

We head back to the bus station, taking a bus to Belgrade early in the evening. After crossing the administrative line at Jarinje, we see on Serbian news that a bomb has been thrown at an abandoned house in North Mitrovica earlier this evening.
The broadcasted images feature streets we just visited.'

B92 - Vesti - KM: Bačena bomba na napuštenu kuću 14/11/13 4:04 PM

KOSOVO | UTORAK 12.11.2013 | 14:54

KM: Bačena bomba na napuštenu kuću

IZVOR: TANJUG

Kosovska Mitrovica – Nepoznate osobe bacile su danas eksplozivnu napravu na jednu razrušenu kuću u severnom delu Kosovske Mitrovice, a u eksploziji nije bilo povređenih.

Foto: Tanjug

Regionalni šef operative kosovske policije Željko Bojić izjavio je Tanjugu da je naprava eksplodirala u Bosanskoj ulici, u severnom delu Mitrovice i da povređenih nije bilo.

Na mesto eksplozije odmah su izašli pripadnici kosovske policije, Euleksa i Kfora, a na području na kome se incident dogodio, policija je razvukla žutu traku.

Eksplozija je bila jaka i čula se u većem delu Kosovske Mitrovice.

Komentara 1

Čitajte: Novi Preporučeni Nepreporučeni

Figure 146: News Update, Tuesday 12 November, 2013, at 14.54 pm. (TANJUG 2013)

English Translation: ‘Unidentified people threw an explosive device into an abandoned house in the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica. No-one was harmed. The head of regional operations of Kosovo police, Zeljko Bojic, reported to Tanjug that the device exploded in the Bosnian Street in the northern part of Mitrovica. Officers of Kosovo police, Euleks and KFOR arrived immediately at the scene. Police marked the crime scene with yellow tape. The strong explosion was heard across the entire town.’

……

My *TRAVEL* to Kosovo differed from others in the region of former SFR Yugoslavia, in that it was a unique journey to an area of ongoing ethnic conflict. Towns and villages, in which I spent this intense day, atmospherically resemble a conceptually-separate secluded 'zone' in which ordinary laws of reality no longer apply. Although it may appear ordinary at first sight, this zone is charged with obscure traps and unforeseeable hazards. People here, like their physical surroundings, are worn down and depleted. The prolonged ethnic tension in Kosovo affects numerous aspects of life, and constitutes an inhumane environment. Here we have continuous violent clashes between Serbs and Albanians as well as between members within ethnic groups where the pressure makes them express opposing ideologies. Kosovska Mitrovica appears to function like other towns in the region, but we soon found the actual experience to be utterly odd. Tension is present in all interactions, brief conversations, banal movements. The strict division of north and south sectors assigns a layer of theatricality. Everyday movements and actions of residents and their visitors are strictly limited, controlled, orchestrated and observed at all times by authorities the locals rarely meet in person. Movements are without exception based on ethnic belonging. People interact and perform daily activities within assigned areas, and are always aware that the course of daily events, or even their entire life, can change in a flash. This way of life is utterly absurd to visitors, yet for local residents, constant ethnic tension and violence has become almost an accepted mode of living.

This *TRAVEL* was physically and emotionally challenging. Continual tension due to possible conflict allied itself to shock and sorrow at the living conditions I witnessed in Kosovo. I heard numerous stories about the conflicts, loss of family members, loss of freedom of movement and inability to visit old homes. I felt as if these people are captured in a forgotten 'zone' between two worlds. For the rest of the region, war and ethnic conflict now predominantly represent the past. Not many people in other regions of former SFR Yugoslavia think about these forgotten 'pockets' in which people continue to struggle on a daily basis. After having been here for a mere day, spending time with people who live in this secluded tense reality, I realised they themselves are aware of the world's neglect. This affected me deeply, and I was overwhelmed by the feeling of remorse for being part of this collective ignorance and forgetting.

My *TRAVEL* to Kosovo revealed that the present situation here mirrors the stages of conflict that previously took place in other regions of the former unity; that is, the aftermath of violent actions sums up the reality of Kosovo now. Memories of these events remain through traces of attack on domestic architecture. Those dwellings I visited were broken and violated to their bare walls, so that the outlines of walls and ceiling structures were the only architectural elements left, and everywhere bare earth was exposed as well. Crucially, such levels of violence are capable of shifting our analysis of domestic dwellings as architectural, to a forensic expose of violence as a phenomenon of domestic obliteration and systematic ethnic cleansing.

CHAPTER FIVE: FORENSIC SCENOGRAPHY

5. 1. Inscriptions of violence, war and trauma

> No one engaged in thought about history and politics can remain unaware of the enormous role violence has always played in human affairs, and it is at first glance rather surprising that violence has been singled out so seldom for special consideration. (Arendt 1970, p. 8)

As military and ethnic conflicts between autonomous republics wear on, they are increasingly prone to greater extremes of violence and destruction. While violence is seen as synonymous with such wars, Hannah Arendt reminds us that it is 'a phenomenon in its own right' (Arendt 1970, p. 19). This research embraces violence as a multi-layered phenomenon that refers to intentional physical, psychological and emotional harm to people and/or their environment. In civil wars, the most common deliberate violence includes robberies, vandalism, kidnapping, hostage-taking, torture, beating, rape, arson, detention and homicide.

This research is particularly concerned with violent attacks against domestic architecture, and notes that such acts have become a prominent dimension of contemporary political and ethnic violence. This phenomenon is here explained as a means of cultural and ethnic cleansing through domestic, often vernacular, architecture. This research proposes that inscriptions of violence on domestic dwellings assign a social and political perspective to the analysis of abandoned 'homes'. It is noted that intentional repression of national minorities, or targeted societies, is common across the globe. This process often involves implicit or explicit destruction of cultural values and language, as well as religious, ethnological and historical customs. Importantly, these issues represent a common topic in contemporary discourses. Yet scarce discussion is dedicated to the destruction of domestic dwellings as a direct means of cultural violence and an indirect ethnic, cultural and historical cleansing of selected regions. As a response, this research argues that there is a physical and psychological link between erasing material reminders of human habitation - which reflect personal and collective memory, identity and sense of belonging - and the killing of people directly. Domestic dwellings, as direct reflections of human presence in a selected region, are not political by nature.

They however become politicised through inscriptions of their past and present narratives. In times of conflict, 'home' marks the presence of a community that is marked for erasure. To enemies, the house then emerges as a target for destruction.

This research identifies two dominant types of violence prevalent in these attacks, 'expressive' and 'coercive'. While the aims of 'expressive' violence are clearly related to destruction of a hated symbol, 'coercive' violence seeks to impact on the behaviour of the targeted group. In ethnic conflicts, acts of 'coercive' violence emerge as communicative techniques that aim to discourage targeted ethnic groups from remaining at 'home'. Conquerors openly communicate to the people that they are not safe nor welcome in the conflicted region. As a result, people flee their attacked homes, and the attacking side gets closer to its goal of an ethnically-cleansed region.

Stathis N. Kalyvas proposes that: '… although violence in civil war may fulfil a variety of functions, the instrumental use of coercive violence to generate compliance constitutes a central aspect of the phenomenon' (Kalyvas 2006, p. 28). This research proposes that in civil wars 'coercive' violence can be defined as tactical and strategic. Attacks are planned and directed as part of overall military manoeuvres that may involve complex operational patterns. Violent attacks in the name of ethnic and cultural cleansing of an area are inevitably strategic. Violence on domestic architecture constitutes a strategy to conquer and exterminate targeted ethnic groups. 'Coercive' attacks relate to overall tactical goals, involving careful constituent actions for a desired military end. To target and attack domestic dwellings to instill the fear of death, demoralisation and physical and psychological conquering of the enemy, is tactical.

It is here proposed that coercion fails as both a strategy and a tactic if its acts of violence merely destroy the object. This research links such acts of violence to Arendt's 'banality of evil', through which she suggests that violence fundamentally withstands thought (Arendt 2006). While covering the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, Arendt analysed three thousand transcript pages of the pre-trial interrogation. She concluded that Eichmann was an utterly banal yet extremely diligent bureaucratic criminal. With this portrayal Arendt shifted the generally-accepted view of Eichmann as one of history's most monstrous criminals to a notoriously faceless, brainless bureaucrat of death. Arendt justifies this shift of vision in multiple statements Eichmann gave during the trial, where he stated that the murder indictments were incorrect:

> With the killing of Jews I had nothing to do. I never killed a Jew, or a non-Jew, for that matter - I never killed any human being. I never gave an order to kill either a Jew or a non-Jew; I just did not do it. (Arendt 2006, p. 22)

The indictment itself claimed that he acted on purpose and 'out of base motives and in full knowledge of the criminal nature of his deeds' (Arendt 2006, p. 25). For the entire trial, Eichmann sought to clarify this point, continuously claiming he was not guilty. The fact that he, by fulfilling orders, was one of the main links in the organisation of transportation of millions of men, women and children to death camps was irrelevant in his understanding. For Arendt, Eichmann's involvement with the program of genocide stemmed from his failure or inability to think and judge in his own terms. Importantly, her intention is not to claim that his actions were ordinary in any respect. Instead, Arendt defines his criminal deeds as being motivated by his personal moral and intellectual shallowness.

This research goes on to trace the meaning of violence in Arendt's essay *On Violence* (1970), in which she critically analyses the nature, causes and significance of the concept in the twentieth century. Arendt notes that despite the fact that contemporary society lives amid escalating destruction and war, the concept of violence remains highly neglected. As a response, Arendt investigates theories of violence against the backdrop of historical events. She proposes that violence, by nature an instrumental phenomenon, is rational only to the extent to which it is potent in reaching its final goal, which then must justify the essential presence of violence. Arendt stresses that during the process of performing particular acts, perpetrators can never be entirely certain about their potential consequences. Thereby, violence can only remain rational if it seeks short-term goals.

By investigating the relationship between violence, war and power, Arendt established a framework for understanding the turbulent nature of the contemporary epoch. She defines violence and power as opposing concepts, explaining that although political theorists commonly perceive violence as a radical manifestation of power, the two terms are distinct by nature:

> To use them as synonymous not only indicates a certain deafness to linguistic meanings, which would be serious enough, but it has also resulted in a kind of blindness to the realities they correspond to. (Arendt 1970, p. 43)

Arendt argues that political science embodies five aspects, two of which are power and violence, and the other three, strength, force and authority. Here, power is the ability to act in concert (Arendt 1970) and is never the property of an individual. Violence, on the other hand, embodies an instrumental character. Arendt proposes that power derives from collective will and is not dependent on violence to achieve any of its goals.

Rather (and importantly for this research), Arendt stresses that violence is discovered when power is absent. In the realm of politics, when governments face loss of legitimacy, violence is often introduced as an artificial instrument to achieve goals. Arendt suggests that while power is an essence of all governments, violence is not. That is, as violence is instrumental by nature, it requires guidance and justification (like many other tools) and this is commonly achieved through the final goal it pursues. For Arendt, anything that needs justification by something else is essentially incapable of being an essence of anything. She concludes by saying that power is conceptually inherent in political communities: it requires legitimacy, but not justification. On the other hand, violence is often justifiable but never legitimate.

5. 1. 1. War: stages of destruction, shock and fear

The contemporary French cultural theorist Paul Virilio opens his book *Art as far as the Eye Can See* (2005) with a quote from French philosopher Albert Camus (1913-1960): 'The seventeenth century was the century of mathematics, the eighteenth, of the physical sciences, and the nineteenth, of biology. The twentieth century is the century of fear' (Camus, cited in Virilio 2007, p. 1). Taking Camus' comment as a departure point, Virilio expresses his own view of society: 'So wrote Camus in 1948. I would add that, since that date, fear has become a dominant culture, if not an *art* - an art contemporary with mutually assured destruction' (Virilio 2007, p. 1).

Virilio also acknowledges Arendt as a major post-war thinker, assigning particular significance to Arendt's conceptualisations of the phenomenon of terror[31], embracing it as '… the realisation of the law of movement' (Virilio 2012, p. 21) accepting her reference to the fact that any relationship to terror is interwoven with life and speed.

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[31] Arendt initially proposed these concepts in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951)

Virilio further proposes:

> For someone like me who lived through the Blitzkrieg[32] and the war of the radio waves, it is clear that terror is not simply an emotional and psychological phenomenon but a physical one as well in the sense of physics and kinetics, a phenomenon related to what I call the 'acceleration of reality'.
> (Virilio 2012, p. 21)

Virilio interprets Arendt's 'law of movement' as 'the law of speed', so that speed comes to dominate his scholarly discussions. He also coins the term 'dromology', which originates from the Greek 'dromos' or 'racecourse', and thereby interprets the world and our existence in it as a product of speed and its logic, which for Virilio is crucial for understanding the structure of societies, warfare and contemporary media. This research concurs that the concepts of 'speed', 'terror', 'spectacle' and 'surprise' emerge as highly significant within its framed historical context. Many violated domestic dwellings were demolished as part of military operations that embodied these exact principles. Croatian operations 'Flash' (May 1995) and 'Storm' (August 1995) were brief offensives conducted to cleanse the terrain of ethnic minorities in the shortest possible time. This urge for speed is not identified as a need to resolve the conflict in a strict time frame. Instead, speed acts to create psychological disturbance, to shock and disorient. Virilio suggests that the speed of an event will determine its nature, and that something that moves with speed will dominate that which is slower:

'Whoever controls the territory possesses it. Possession of territory is not primarily about laws and contracts, but first and foremost a matter of movement and circulation' (Virilio, cited in Armitage 2001, p. 173).

In *War and Cinema The Logistics of Perception* (1989), Virilio also offers a new perspective on the dramatic role that 'image' plays in military conflicts, namely its ability to impact on perception and thus act as a weapon. Virilio also embraces that every political revolution is inscribed with notions of drama. The current research identifies that conflicts in which domestic dwellings are destroyed, exemplify a spectacle in which violence and power are intended less as a savage force against the material environment of the other, but rather a psychological one.

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[32] Blitzkrieg (or 'lighting war') is a German military tactic developed to create disorganisation among enemy forces. The aim was achieved through the use of mobile forces and concentrated firepower.

For Virilio: ‘There is no war without representation, no sophisticated weaponry without psychological mystification’ (Virilio 2009a, p. 8). Weapons are not mere instruments of physical destruction; they simultaneously represent instruments of perception. While weapons mechanically serve to destroy targets, they are also employed as stimulants that target the senses of the victim. Weapons use various predeveloped strategies to target chemical and neurological process in the sense organs and central nervous system. Victims react to these stimulants, and their perceptual identification is affected. Virilio illustrates this tactic of war with a World War Two example, the German use of the Stuka dive-bomber[33]. This aircraft, debuted in 1937, was notorious not only for its inverted gull wings and fixed spatted undercarriage but for its ‘Jericho-Trompete’ wailing sirens.

That sound became the propaganda symbol of German air power and its ‘blitzkriegs’, staged between 1939 and 1942. The Stuka was unique in that it was stable in the air, which helped the pilot’s bomb aim, and its good cockpits views aided precision in targeting roads, bridges and convoys of supply ships. During attack the aircraft produced an overwhelming siren noise, deliberately intended for profound psychological effect, intensifying fear and paralysing victims on the ground. The tactic disoriented the enemy, making them less efficient in fighting back and easier to defeat[34]. This research notes in turn that violent attacks on domestic architecture in the studied region had multi-layered aims. The destruction of domestic dwellings sought regional ethnic and cultural cleansing by destroying physical reminders of the ethnic groups marked for erasure, and diminishing the options for people to remain in their houses. This tactic also sought psychological and moral defeat of ‘the other’. By facing attacks on their ‘homes’ as core symbols of heritage, belonging and security, people suddenly lost the solid foundation of these concepts in their own motherland. Facing destruction and violation of structures that for decades stood as exemplifications of belonging and identity, people faced the wiping-out of permanent existential footholds. Hereby, attacks on the psychological level are at least, if not more, significant. By facing the ultimate end of ‘home’, people face their own end. Driven by the urge to save their lives and those of their families, they flee. In civil-war terms, the terrain is thus successfully conquered.

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[33] Also known as Junker 87.

[34] Virilio suggests that, in World War II, this tactic was successful until the enemy eventually became used to the sound of Stuka.

5. 2. 'Home' in war: the transformed nature of war-torn dwellings

The phenomenon of violence against domestic architecture continues to be neglected in the area of architectural studies. Bechir Kenzari, in *Architecture and Violence* (2011), finds that the main reasons for this neglect are related to boundaries between disciplines, particularly in political, psychological and law studies. Meanwhile, he assigns the origin of this neglect to the fundamentally constructive nature of architecture, whereby any relation to violence and destruction is often perceived to be 'non-architectural'.

Contemporary architectural scholar Andrew Herscher investigates the phenomenon of violence against architecture in general, and particularly architecture of the 1990s Kosovo conflict. In 1999 Herscher visited Kosovo on behalf of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which was investigating indictments for war crimes in Kosovo. In *Violence taking place: the architecture of the Kosovo conflict* (2010), Herscher proposes: 'Destruction was regarded as politically rational, an instrument knowingly applied as a means to achieve a specified end' (Herscher 2010, p. 3).

Supporting Kenzari's proposal on the transformed nature of war-torn architectural objects, Herscher argues that when architectural objects are destroyed they are regarded as 'products' and 'effects' of violence, rather than architecture. The current research concurs that the act of violence displaces architectural objects from the realm of architectural discourse. Remnants of violence are placed in the realm of violence itself. Herscher explains that violence in ethnic conflicts is simply classified as 'rational' or 'irrational', that is, it is perceived as either an instrument employed to achieve previously-established goals, or as 'an exit from instrumental logic altogether' (Herscher 2010, p. 4).

Herscher defines violence as a particular kind of inscription, positioning it as equal with other cultural forms. He discovers theoretical foundations in the work of political science professor Anne Norton and her *Reflections on Political Identity* (1988). He proposes that violence is an inscription in the sense that it represents an investment of material that embodies particular identity and meaning. He argues that the meaning of such inscriptions is not easily explained by defining the intention of an author, the determination of context in which violence occurs, or the reading of an interpreter.

Herscher proposes that the destruction of architectural, design and building objects is to be recognised as an inscription in that the act of destruction transforms their existence. Architecture in its prime form initiates critical interpretations. However, when it is destroyed, the act of destruction prompts the contextualisation of violence as an expression of complex social, political and economic conditions. He suggests that the International Criminal Tribunal for Kosovo took the same approach. The warfare against architecture simply questioned what was destroyed, when, and who destroyed it. 'Why' was once again fundamentally disregarded.

5. 2. 1. Attacked 'home': from target of violence to witness of trauma

Acts of violence and destruction inscribe ordinary domestic dwellings with complex political and social connotations, just as acts of human inhabitation have previously inscribed them with cultural and ideological narratives. German physicist Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976) noted the impressions of his friend, Danish physicist Niels Bohr (1885-1962) during a walking tour of Denmark in the spring of 1924, that included Kronberg castle:

> Isn't it strange how this castle changes as soon as one imagines that Hamlet lived here? … Suddenly the walls and the ramparts speak a quiet different language. The courtyard becomes an entire world, a dark corner reminds us of the darkness in the human soul, we hear Hamlet's 'To be or not to be'. Yet all we really know about Hamlet is that his name appears in a thirteenth century chronicle. No one can prove that he really lived, let alone that he lived here. But everyone knows the questions Shakespeare had him ask, the human depth he was made to reveal, and so he, too, had to be found a place on earth, here in Kronberg. And once we know that, Kronberg becomes quiet a different castle for us. (Heisenberg, cited in Tuan 2011, p. 4)

This research concurs with Tschumi's argument that architecture is irreducible neither to the physical form nor its socioeconomic and functional constraints. For Tschumi, the definition of architecture inevitably expands into the urban dimension, whereby space represents a framework for all social activities. He points to the gap between 'ideal space', which is 'the product of mental processes' and 'real space', 'the product of social praxis' (Tschumi 1996, p. 31). For him, the only attempts that succeeded in diminishing this philosophical gap were those 'that introduced historical or political concepts such as 'production', in the wide sense it had in Marx's early texts' (Tschumi 1996, p. 31).

This research embraces both Tschumi's proposal and the ideas of Henri Lefebvre, who sought reconciliation between mental space and real physical space. Lefebvre wanted to diminish the gaps between theory and practice, between the mental and social, and between philosophy and reality. In doing so, he moved from metaphysical and ideological understanding of space to its role in everyday life and human interaction, using spatial forms such as home and city. In *The Production of Space* (1991) Lefebvre proposes that there are different spatial levels, ranging from very abstract, crude and natural, to more complex spatial forms whose significance is socially produced.

He suggests that '(social) space is a (social) product' (Lefebvre 1991, p. 26), a product of complex, multi-layered social constructions established on values and the social production of meanings that affect spatial practices and perceptions. If space is perceived as a social product, it is produced in a specific manner and serves as a tool of thought and action. For Lefebvre:

'… every society - and hence every mode of production with its sub-variants (i.e. all those societies which exemplify the general concept) produces a space, its own space' (Lefebvre 1991, p. 31).

Each society, according to Lefebvre, produces its own, authentic abstraction that is incapable of escaping the ideological and cultural spheres of the time. Space is not to be perceived as a technical object, but as a 'living organism' (1991). As social products, physical spaces are built with deep, multi-layered dialectic relationships with societies that inhabit them:

> … the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power, yet that, as such, it escapes in part from those who would make use of it. (Lefebvre 1991, p. 26)

This research embraces that architecture is a 'living organism' (Lefebvre 1991) engaged in constant relationship with its users. It discovers further conceptual inspiration from the late British social scientist and geographer Doreen Massey (1944 - 2016). In *For Space* (2005), Massey defines space in three ways. (1) Space is a product of interrelations and as such is constituted through interactions. (2) space is the sphere of possible multiplicity, of 'contemporaneous plurality' (Massey 2005, p. 5) representing the coexistence of distant trajectories. (3) space is always under construction.

For Massey, space is a product of ‘relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out’ (Massey 2005, p. 9) and thus are constantly in the process of being made. She defines space as ‘a simultaneity of stories so far’ (Massey 2005).

If we perceive space as ‘the sphere of a dynamic simultaneity’ (Massey 2005, p. 107), any definition of it must be continually interrupted. Through constant redefinition by new arrivals and events, its nature is forever unfinished, always waiting to be determined by multiple constructions of new relationships. It seems fair (in light of the current research) to propose that even abandoned spaces are unfinished.
Although the abandoned space appears static and disconnected from the continuum of a region’s contemporary history, it is certainly open to new interpretations and relationships. The fact that its essential domestic function has ceased does not imply that it now represents a functionless ruin. Massey asserts:

> Space, then, can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established, in which everywhere is already (and at that moment unchangingly) linked to everywhere else.
> (Massey 2005, p. 197)

The present state of space, which we encounter ‘now’ or ‘then’ or ‘there’, is a product of pluralities of histories and established relations which must be understood. ‘Histories’ do not merely refer to established and ceased past concepts; space is also defined by histories that are in the process of being made. Massey illustrates this by an example of a train journey from London to Milton Keynes. The passenger is not simply travelling through or across space from the place of departure to the proposed destination. Since space is a product of social relations, the passenger is taking an active part in altering the space within the present production of space. She is taking part in the constant process of creating and breaking links. At either end of the passenger’s journey is a place made up of multiple trajectories, according to which the passenger is travelling:

> The London you left just a half an hour ago … is not the London of now. It has already moved on. Lives have pushed ahead, investments and disinvestments have been made in the City, it has begun to rain quite heavily …, a crucial meeting has broken up acrimoniously, someone caught a fish in the Grand Union canal… And you are on your way to meet up with Milton Keynes, which is also moving on. Arriving in a new place means joining up with, somehow linking into, the collection of interwoven stories of which that place is made. (Massey 2005, pp. 118-119)

Massey's proposals confirm the shifting point at which abandoned, war-torn domestic space is (re) framed as an 'unfinished location'. This research also discovers philosophic grounds in Walter Benjamin's concepts of history, whereby he suggests that the metamorphosis of history does not happen in 'homogenous empty time' but in the moment of immediacy, which he names 'jetztzeit'. This historical transformation expels moments of past and present from their common linear sequence. The current research therefore constructs a new relationship with 'history', redefining it as 'active material'.

Benjamin argues:

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger'. (Benjamin 1969, p. 255)

For him, the prime aim of a revolutionary historian is to seize the image of the past as it flashes by. One should seek to rescue a tradition if conformism threatens to overwhelm it. The aim is to seek hope in the past, for images of the past threaten to cease forever if the present does not recognise them as competent. Therefore, a redefinition of abandoned spaces initiates a metamorphosis from useless locations of rubble, to solid remnants of collectively-lived trauma - and these can reshape our everyday relationship with history. These authentic domestic dwellings emerge as symbolic spaces of transition between the past and the 'now-time' - our present experience.

In *Thesis IX*, Benjamin delivers an allegory of ruins as an emblem through which he illustrates history. *Thesis IX* also represents the analytical foundation on which a redefined interpretation of abandoned 'homes' can be established. Benjamin analyses Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus*[35] (1920). This piece lets observers create intimate interpretations, and Benjamin sees in it an 'angel of history', looking back at the past and perceiving it as a single catastrophe rather than a sequence of separate events. Benjamin suggests that the angel sees a pile of rubble called 'progress':

> His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. … His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet … (The angel would like to stay), awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin 1969, p. 257)

This research recognises a significant allegory whereby Benjamin portrays history as the accumulation of ruins. The angel's inability to resist the winds of the future implies repetition of the past: new catastrophes, even more violent and destructive.
Yet the strength to resist this cumulative aggravation is healing, revealing and energising by nature. Benjamin's ruins are not those of the romantic painters and poets. They are not objects of aesthetic appreciation but evocative sights of catastrophe, of personal and collective trauma - that must be engaged with, reimagined in this 'jetztzeit', this immediate moment, this living history.

5. 3. Reframing the meaning of war-torn 'homes'

Interest in the aesthetics of decay, a particular aesthetic form that emerges amongst architectural objects as a result of the continuous absence of human interaction and use, originates in the early European Renaissance. Before ruins were recognised as aesthetically compelling, they were regarded as objects of knowledge. This research seeks a conceptual foundation in the study of ruins in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, where they were basically seen as a new way to gain primary knowledge in support of formally-written history, not in terms of their aesthetic or symbolic aspects.

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[35] *Angelus Novus* is a mono-print, a method of oil transfer developed by Klee. Benjamin owned the art piece, and often referred to it as one of his most valuable possessions. Today, *Angelus Novus* belongs to the collection of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

The climax of our interest in ruins is associated with the eighteenth century Baroque. Here, ruins commonly emerged as inspiration for painters and poets, who began to use them as tools to manipulate time and space, to develop mythical, romantic associations; that is, ruins were interpreted as mythic and romantic elements of landscape rather than as architecture. Decaying structures increasingly became design features in so-called 'English Gardens[36]'. This increased aesthetic longing for the romantic qualities of decaying structures, partly-destroyed arches and bridges, was also expressed in the development of artificial ruins, which originated from German interpretations of the Baroque and from the 'English Garden'.

Ruins were thus interpreted as reminders of the vanishing nature of materiality, as ambiguous standing points, their essential nature divided between the attributes of buildings and those of nature. They were further assigned value as physical manifestations of the destructive consequences of temporality. As such, ruins were commonly read as exemplifications of history, so that a number of artificial follies were conceived in the transitory decaying image of the past, romantic symbols of the evanescence of civilisations and the human condition. Architecturally, follies signify artificial structures, incomplete buildings or parts thereof, developed purely for the evocation of cultural memories, for aesthetic purpose, sharing no functional attributes with ordinary architectural objects.

In their literal sense ruins represent collapse and destruction, yet this research proposes that they can also be perceived as reminders and remnants, linked with concepts of memory and identity. Nowadays, perception of ruins is usually shaped through film, literature, visual art and poetry. The presence of destroyed or decaying buildings in works of artistic quality emerges as stimulus for the mind, triggering questions about past, memory, history. They evoke thoughts about what has been, or could have been, what is about to happen, and what will never be. This research finds contemporary interest in ruins to be simultaneously intellectual and sensual.

This research also finds that the 'romantic' identity of ruins discourages and obscures historical truth. It follows Benjamin's refusal to give preference to age value in regard to the aesthetics of ruins. Here we dismiss the aesthetic value of found objects, in terms of their interpretation as sites inscribed with monumental quality. The research frames ruins whereby traces of trauma are tactile, physically visible.

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[36] 'English Gardens' represent a unique style that emerged in England in the early 18th century, and represented a romanticised approach to nature. It drew inspiration from the works of famous painters of the time (i. e. Claude Lorrain (1604-1682), and commonly included a lake, perfectly maintained lawns, recreations of classical buildings, ruins, decaying bridges, and similar picturesque architecture.

According to Benjamin's approach to history through reduction 'at the expense of romantic aesthetics' (Stead 2003, p. 51), our focus shifts from individual events of trauma and personal memories of them, to a critical understanding of the remaining historic sites. These become implicit monuments to the collectively-lived past. Ruination and its present consequences emerge as means of revealing the foundations of truth. Aligned with Benjamin's approach of striping away the commonly-accepted mystical and spectacular nature of ruins, they acquire the 'positive state of poverty' (Stead 2003). Ruins are no longer romantic images, but significant critical tools.

For Benjamin, ruins are never mere remnants whose monumentality has forever ceased: 'Allegories are in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things' (Benjamin 2009, pp. 177-178). Benjamin understood allegories as focal points, perspectives from which to look at things. Allegories are able to transcend notion of beauty by entering historical worlds. This research asserts that ruination does not necessarily mean 'loss', but instead initiates a shift in perception and meaning, for both the object and for its monumentality. Violent attacks alter the established domestic nature of dwellings, and in the aftermath, when the last inhabitant leaves, they acquire a new and profoundly monumental identity. While domestic identity was also monumental in the context of personal memory and identity, of belonging and being in the world, brutality redefines that monumentality, shifting it to the collective level. Domestic dwellings thus emerge as valid sites of history.

Benjamin's perspective of ruination breaks any conventionally-established 'continuum' of history in its inevitable violence and destruction, the aftermath of which exposes realms of fragmented trauma. The act of ruination also alters the relationship between social and historical phenomena, shattering old histories and making them accessible to investigation. In the words of contemporary Australian architectural scholar Naomi Stead:

> Benjamin's conception of the ruin is a means of laying bare a truth buried beneath layers of false romantic aesthetics. It provides the basis for further examination of the interrelations between aesthetics and politics, allegory and symbol, monument and ruin, criticism and myth. This is the lasting value and relevance of Benjamin's idea of ruin and ruination.
> (Stead 2003, p. 65)

5. 3. 1. The monumentality of domestic ruins

Contemporary French historian Pierre Nora implies the loss of real memory in our contemporary existence:

> Acceleration of history: the metaphor needs to be unpacked. Things tumble with increasing rapidity into an irretrievable past. They vanish from sight, or so it is generally believed. The equilibrium between the present and the past is disrupted. What was left of experience, still lived in the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom, in the repetition of the ancestral, has been swept away by a surge of deeply historical sensibility. Our consciousness is shaped by a sense that everything is over and done with, that something long since begun is now complete. Memory is constantly on our lips because it no longer exists. (Nora 1996, p. 1)

For Nora, memory and history are far from synonymous. Memory is unavoidably embodied in living societies, and being vulnerable to appropriation and manipulation, is open to the dialectics of remembering and forgetting. History meanwhile is a reconstruction, unavoidably problematic and incomplete, of a subject that no longer exists. While memory is a present phenomenon, history is always a representation of past. Memory, as a phenomenon of 'emotion and magic' (Nora 1996, p. 3), that is, affective and magical by nature, accommodates the facts that suit it. Conversely, history as an intellectual and secular activity demands critical discourse. Memory puts notions of remembrance in the realm of the sacred, while history, prosaic by nature, releases them. Finally (says Nora), while memory is multi-layered yet still specific by nature, it is collective and plural but still individual.

History conversely belongs to everyone and no-one, and therefore may claim universal authority. While memory discovers its roots in the concrete - in spaces, images and objects - history binds itself to 'temporal continuities' (Nora 1996, p. 3). History is therefore related to changes in things, and the overall relationship between them.

Nora stresses that a merging between memory and history is necessary to establish his concept of 'lieux de memorie' (places of memory). For him, a result of this is mutual determination. Nora suggests that without this point of reference, the concept would include almost any potentially-remembered object. Without the intervention of history, 'lieux de memorie' would refer to mere memorials. Instead, these are hybrid sites, established around notions of both life and death, and thus are temporal and eternal (Nora 1996).

For Nora, the significance and goal of 'lieux de memorie' is to 'stop time, to inhabit forgetting, to fix a state of things, to immortalise death and to materialise the immaterial' (Nora 1996, p. 15). We may claim that the aim of such concepts is to capture profound meaning with the fewest available signs.

The conceptual significance of 'lieux de memorie' is in their capacity to initiate change, to resurrect past meanings and produce new ones. The new meanings inevitably embody shifting, unpredictable relationships. Thereby, only particular works of history are considered to be 'lieux de memorie': the ones that transform the memory in their own authentic way. This research suggests that the meaning of discovered architectural objects has evolved. Our war-torn dwellings shift from being targets of destruction to becoming witnesses of violence in the present. Tactile inscriptions of previously-lived traumas emerge as evidence, and evocatively testify to the orchestrated acts that caused them.

The field of forensic architecture, that is, the work of expert witnesses delivering spatial analysis in different legal forums, developed around the interpretation of violated architectural objects and their presentation in evidence. This field signifies formal attempts to transform the meaning of destroyed architecture from an illustration of violence to a valid source of knowledge. However, the field tends to treat buildings of particular 'approved' significance. Domestic dwellings in the aftermath of conflict are commonly defined as 'collateral damage', merely mentioned in passing.

As a response, this research embraces Benjamin's and Nora's conceptual framings and reinterprets present inscriptions of violence and trauma as monumental qualities of the found architectural object. Through 'decoding', interaction and documentation of these evocative inscriptions, layers of intimate experience are comprehended by the witness. Interaction with these spaces inevitably alters one's relationship with the past; apparently-ended events emerge as active aspects of present experience. Abandoned, war-torn spaces are no longer understood as links disconnected from the continuum of present history. Instead, they become eloquent witnesses, objects that are 'allowed to speak'.

5. 3. 2. Inscribed trauma

Conflict in the former SFR Yugoslavia claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and left a bitter legacy of architectural debris and psychological devastation on all sides. These events, part of a war with no true victors, initiated among all ethnic groups complex traumas that were inscribed in almost all aspects of life. This research recognises that domestic space, the absolute realm of human interaction and experience, has absorbed the intensity of trauma previously experienced by people.

Trauma, from the Greek 'wound' originally related to circumstances beyond the ordinary, and was commonly associated with physical injury. Late in the nineteenth century, the term was introduced to describe less visible, internal, psychological, emotional wounds that impact the nerves and mind. Psychological trauma was explained as trauma in itself, caused by the physical - and established as the contemporary definition. Although the definition has evolved, we still lack a precise version. American professor Cathy Caruth offers one:

> In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena ... The experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him … who suffers the sights in a numbed state, only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares, is a central and recurring image of trauma in our century. (Caruth 1996, p. 11)

American-born historian Dominic LaCapra (2001) notes that traumatic events essentially numb the senses at the time of the event. The consequences cannot be registered at the moment of their occurrence. It is only after a period of latency that their impact is felt.

Traumatic events can cause convulsive effects on victims' comprehension of reality, and trigger complex existential crises such as the questioning of established relationships and attachment to family and community. Traumatic events will initiate disruption in perception of oneself and one's relationships, deeply affecting belief systems.

The field of clinical psychology (Ehrenreich 2011) defines the difference between victims and survivors of trauma. Victims are defined as passive actors who heavily depend on the help of others, while survivors represent those capable of actively attempting the cure of themselves and others affected by the same trauma.

These are prolonged processes, in which victims may eventually become survivors. For both, the traumatic event often becomes a ‘black hole’. In some cases this stage lasts a while, while in others it remains for life.

Werner Bohleber (2010), a German analyst of trauma and its effects, argues that victims are unable to comprehend reality. Instead, they act as if time stopped at the traumatic moment. He proposes that victims and survivors often live in dual realities. They attempt to live in accordance with reality, but face moments in which ‘the second reality’, the reality of their trauma, becomes dominant. It is common (Bohleber says) for victims and survivors, particularly those attacked by another person or group, to destroy their established net of meanings, and are thus unable to overcome entrapment in the fatal moment.

Contemporary scholar Dylan Trigg offers a response to the tension between trauma and its place of occurrence by considering the relation between embodiment, materiality and testimony. In his essay *The Place of trauma: Memory, hauntings and the temporality of ruins* (2009), Trigg investigates the tension between trauma and place through a phenomenological investigation of the testimonial attributes of ruins. He begins by acknowledging that architectural objects are capable of containing memory, and proposes that sites of trauma articulate memory by breaking the continuous temporal narrative. Trigg unites the concepts of embodiment, materiality and testimony by perceiving them from the perspective of traumatic memory. He proposes that a ‘spectrality’ of place informs the understanding of traumatic memory, here understood as both embodied and cognitive practice. He proposes that: ‘… the place of trauma and the subject of trauma form a structurally parallel unity’ (Trigg 2009, p. 88).

Trigg focuses on the physical appearance of ruins, essentially the locations of memory; that is, the identity of sites is established through the key event. He stresses the close relationship between physical remnants and the building’s identity before the current ruined state: ‘It is in this sense that ruins have come to assume an aesthetic presence, inviting the viewer to fill out the broken form through the active dynamism of the imagination’ (Trigg 2009, pp. 88-89).

Trigg employs an approach opposite to the one applied in this research. His investigation is from the perspective of the traumatised subject rather than the materiality of the location. Trigg frames his exploration around a Holocaust survivor, French writer Charlotte Delbo (1913-1985), and the testimony of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, in his *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1999).

Through dialogue, Trigg aims to discover uniting testimonial attributes of the 'surviving subject' and 'the surviving place'. By employing the notion of 'spectrality', he concludes: 'the ruin's capacity to haunt the viewer, effectively undercuts a claim of temporal continuity and, instead, offers a counter narrative in which testimony becomes guided by voids rather than coins of presence' (Trigg 2009, p. 89).

This research, meanwhile, frames space as the traumatised subject, whereby focus is shifted from individual trauma events and memories to a critical understanding of the remaining historic sites. Although precise detail on the traumatic events may remain hidden, the tactile fusion of physical traces of inhabitation and violence creates a strongly evocative sense of trauma. The war-torn space is able to conflate the reality of the traumatic event, in which the act of destruction seems continually active, with the 'after the fact' memory of it. Particular powerful experiences, along with the memory of them, yield to the march of time. Thus, experience of the past is redefined as if it were the present, and discovered domestic dwellings emerge as rare constants in a collective past narrative.

Professor Caruth (1996) defines trauma as an overshadowing experience that defies representation and symbolisation. Victims are unable to achieve a healthy distance from their shock. In Caruth's terms, trauma is defined through its symptoms. In the authentic spaces in which traumatic events occurred, we face true and tangible 'reproductions' of memories experienced by people who lived through the events. What in psychological terms are understood as intrusive flashbacks, are here discovered as concrete, though belated, images of trauma in the places of their origin.

The discovered violated domestic dwellings can be defined as a 'silent aftermath'. This study embraces the views of contemporary New Zealand-born architect and scholar Mark Wigley, who refers to the concept of 'loud silence', maintained in the intervals between disturbing events. The sense of disconnection amid war-torn dwellings is in fact that mysterious stillness that occurs in the aftermath of catastrophic events, and is still strongly present in the region in question. Wigley (1993) urges that to confront the complex relationships between bitter violence and the domestic space, this strategic 'silence' needs to be broken, and replaced with a different approach. This study responds by seeking meaning through the tools, methods and strategies of scenography. It shifts the focus to a 'decoding' of space itself as a tangible remnant of past trauma.

The research discovers parallels in a proposal of Antonin Artaud:

> The problem is to make space speak, to feed and furnish it; like mines laid in a wall of rock which all of a sudden turn into geysers and bouquets of stone. (Artaud 1958, p. 98)

Thus, this research gives voice to abandoned spaces by proposing a new interpretation of them as implicit monuments of the past, as authentic sites of history.

5. 4. Framing the aftermath

Architecture, among its other qualities, represents a solid form of history, supposedly a persistent, 'eternal' historic image of the society in which it exists. Destroyed domestic dwellings, despite intense violation, and though they were for decades almost entirely obscured by the language of regional political, economic and social discourse, represent perhaps the only aspect of the collective past that remains - albeit 'silently' - in their original traumatised state.

The concept of defining architectural ruins as monuments was established in the period where the major ruins of Rome began to vanish. Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1858-1905), argued that the value of physical monuments lies in their ability to communicate historic value in temporal terms: 'The historical value of a monument arises from the particular, individual stage it represents in the development of human activity in a certain field' (Riegl, cited in Price, Talley & Vaccaro 1996, p. 75). Although Riegl refers to monuments of common historical, cultural or artistic significance, this research extends his definition to include discovered abandoned sites, such that these war-torn dwellings can be reinterpreted as powerful implicit monuments of both the collective traumatic event and its collective memory.

Austrian writer Robert Musil (1880-1942) noted that nothing is more invisible than a monument: 'The remarkable thing about monuments is that one does not notice them' (Musil, cited in Carrier, 2005, p. 15). Musil's proposal is based on three arguments: (1) Any concept that endures essentially loses its ability to influence the sense of the viewer. The familiarity of a monumental object, encountered on a regular basis, eventually acquires notions of banality. (2) At the time of Musil's proposal (1927), public monuments increasingly became obscured by media advertisements, and essentially had to compete against each other for attention. The actual settings of the monuments became problematic.

(3) Placing symbolic or heroic moments of history in busy streets or public squares tended to redefine the heroic nature of the events and 'effectively precipitated them into the ocean of oblivion' (Musil, cited in Carrier 2005, p. 15).

This research concurs with Musil, suggesting that the monumental nature of the discovered sites renders them 'invisible' for several reasons. Many of them are in rural locations, implying their disconnection from the progress of regional contemporary life. These dwellings are also being conquered by nature, which often leaves them completely disguised. Also, 'the acceleration of history' (following Nora) renders the sites incapable of expressing the rhythms of a continuous striving towards the future. In fact, the abandoned sites as true places of memory, are being replaced with an urge to remember the past through archives, texts, and historical and political discourses. These have become the 'acceptable' forms of remembering in the region today. At the same time, the overall state of transition in which the region lives, seems to dissolve the essential monumentality of the war-torn sites into the general chaos. Abandoned sites are common there, and it seems that they have become banal. Finally, in a society in which 'the spectacle is not a collection of images, rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images' (Debord 1995, p. 12), even if the sites are noticed, they are commonly interpreted as objects of mere aesthetic quality.

This research therefore proposes a shift in perception: to frame the 'trivial' aspects of the collectively-lived past as crucially significant for understanding history. To define the abandoned spaces as monuments to collective trauma we return to Riegl's definition, the distinction between 'intentional' and 'unintentional' types of monuments:

> In its oldest and most original sense a monument is a work of man erected for the specific purpose of keeping particular human deeds or destinies (or a complex accumulation thereof) alive and present in the consciousness of future generations. (Riegl, cited in Price, Talley & Vaccaro 1996, p. 69)

Riegl explains that unintentional or historical monuments are discovered in the remnants of structures or works of art in which the monumental significance was not specified by the creator. Instead, it is derived from contemporary perception of the object. The historical value of the monument derives from an authentic, specific stage in the development of human activity to which it testifies.

Riegl in fact implies that all monuments are ‘unintentional’ since creators can never determine their ultimate meaning at the moment of creation. Their meaning inevitably evolves from their historical context into the cultural memory of the present: ‘We modern viewers, rather than the works themselves by virtue of their original purpose, assign meaning and significance to a monument’ (Riegl, cited in Price, Talley & Vaccaro 1996, p. 72).

Riegl notes that history covers a vast number of events that leave direct and indirect evidence behind. Since this number multiplies infinitely at every moment, historians strictly limit their attention to examples that seem to represent ‘significant’ stages in the development of human activity. In his analysis of ruins, Riegl defines a monument by age value, which ‘… reveals itself at first glance in the monument’s outmoded appearance’ (Riegl, cited in Price, Talley & Vacccaro 1996, p. 70). This age value is documented through imperfection: the incompleteness, the obvious dissolution of elements such as shape and colour.

Following Riegl, this research asserts that the monumentality of abandoned war-torn sites derives from the unique identity of their locations. This identity has inevitably shifted according to past destructive attacks. The violent events, therefore, actually constitute the present monumental nature of the sites’ identities. These domestic dwellings have shifted from being targets of violence to being direct witnesses of personal and collective trauma. The notion of their monumentality comes from the merging of concepts of embodiment, materiality and testimony. Trauma unites these three concepts; that is, through the embodiment of traumatic memories, evocatively captured in physical inscriptions of violence against the most intimate domains of our existence, the material remnants of past attacks testify to a collectively-lived trauma.

CONCLUSION

This research frames, as its central concern, the wanton destruction of domestic architecture. Following an original set of eleven photographs that caught the aftermath of violent attacks on domestic dwellings during ethnic conflicts in SFR Yugoslavia, the region is framed as a particular case study. Yet a phenomenon leading this research is that such attacks have become a major aspect of political, ethnic and cultural violence across the globe. This research identifies that this mode of violence remains widely neglected in political, social, spatial and architectural discourses.
At the same time, war-torn domestic sites represent powerful tools for our comprehension of history. In our redefined relationship with these locations, in which the past becomes active material, they emerge as emblematic survivors of history. In these 'homes', the trauma of interrupted narratives remains atmospherically and physically present in the unique fusion of traces of habitation and graphic inscriptions of violence.

This research proposes that violated interiors are inscribed with layers of spatial narrative, while arguing that such acts of violence have transformed the meaning of 'home'. These acts were staged, orchestrated and performed as part of an all-out war, the principal event that shaped the region's recent history. The research traces the transformation of the meaning and significance of 'home', before, during, and in the aftermath. In the process it combines theoretical framing, historical context, field trips and a practical component.

The analysis of 'home' begins from a phenomenological perspective. Chapter One frames this as an aspect of philosophy deeply concerned with our experience of architectural objects, and a force capable of integrating sensory perception of space as a significant architectural function. This chapter traces the theories of significant phenomenologists, establishing that 'home' represents 'the quintessential phenomenological object' (Bachelard) and a 'foothold of identity' (Norberg-Schulz). This research argues that 'home' transcends the physical dwelling unit, that it imbues the functions and qualities of the site with emotional significance, belonging and identity. Here, 'home' physically and psychologically marks the territory of our existence.

Chapter Two specifically defines the scenographic framework proposed above, offering key reasons for selecting scenography as the principal research framework. Wherein scenography is established on relationships between human and spatial narratives, this research links firmly to acts and strategies of 'seeing' and 'presenting'. The chapter shows that even an abandoned space can convey notions of theatricality, and that the absence of human figures is no obstacle to decoding the theatrical nature of war-torn mise-en-scenes, past events, and disrupted human narratives. Chapter Two asserts that space and event are deeply interwoven, and that the abandoned mise-en-scenes represent indelible after-images of crucial events. Our scenographic decoding, performed through an inverted application of common scenographic strategies, reframes our relationship with trauma and with the past.

Chapter Three defines the physical, historical and conceptual contexts in which this research is performed, inscribing analyses of 'home' with concepts of war and violence. This is critical for full understanding of the practical component documented in Chapter Four.

TRAVEL, as the practical component presented in Chapter Four, is born out of the initial physical search for abandoned homes featured in N. A.'s set of photographs. In this investigation, photographs are framed around the philosophy of an English artist and art critic, John Berger, who argued that images are the most accurate and richest sources about the past. In Berger's opinion: 'No other kind of relic or text from the past can offer such a direct testimony about the world which surrounded other people at other times' (Berger 1990, p. 10). Aligning with this concept, the entire investigation was established on the set of eleven photographs.

While the set of photographs represents the origins of the investigation, the practical component is, in fact, established in the field - as a physical search for the spatial narratives captured in presented images. The practice is established on the idea that both architectural and scenographic spaces hold the capacity to house and engage all human senses, and should not be reserved purely for the intellectual and visual analysis. Space allows us to experience ourselves as 'complete embodied and spiritual beings' (Pallasmaa 2015, p. 11). For this reason, *TRAVEL* is framed as a physical and psychological exploration - established on live actions and direct experiences.

Scenographic decoding of the discovered abandoned spaces is feeding from the sum of personal and collective experiences and memories. *TRAVELS* urge to activate all of the human senses through the connection with the physicality of space. The research findings then respond directly to the proposed aims - through the intervention of scenographic strategies during *TRAVELS*, abandoned homes are reinterpreted as sites of history and are unchained from the ceaseless flow in which they were trapped for decades. By being entirely reoriented in this new reading, and through the activation of the senses that allowed for truth of emotion and comprehension in direct encounters and live experiences - war-torn domestic spaces emerge as a legacy for the future. Such an approach allows for deeper findings, than what the written and oral accounts of the history of the region could offer. While the official historical texts, formal and informal oral testimonies represent an important part of the research process, and offer a range of highly relevant facts - *TRAVELS* allow the participants to directly engage with the remnants of violence and trauma. Historical texts and factual sources speak to the intellect and 'to the conceptualising capabilities, instead of addressing the sense and the undifferentiated embodied response' (Pallasmaa, 2015, p. 15). On the other hand, *TRAVEL* participants engage with the remaining scenographic afterimages intellectually, emotionally and sensually.

TRAVELS foster a genuine experience of the traumatically inscribed interiors, and participants endure this through the 'polyphony of the senses' (Bachelard 2015).
In this process, often without any knowledge about the ethnicity of the former inhabitants, participants learn the most profound meaning of empathy. As we stand in the midst of the traces of somebody's shattered life - we could engage all of our senses in the most direct experience of the inscribed layers of the past violence and the present inscriptions of trauma. Without any formal staging, former homes, domestic objects, garments, books and other personal belongings acquire monumental performativity. Connection with the physicality of space, 'natural materials - stone, brick, and wood - allow our fusion to penetrate their surface and enable us to become convinced of the veracity of matter' (Pallasmaa 2015, p. 31). Materiality of the abandoned space exposes the vulnerability of traumatised lives and testifies to the previous human suffering.

At the same time, the performances of *TRAVELS* include literary and film inspiration and references. These sources are included as supplements to the live experiences, rather than independent research sources. Books are shared between the participants and discussed in the field: we talk about specific characters, periods in history, locations, and events.

The physicality of the location initiated a deeper experience of the text, while at the same time, text often fulfilled the gaps of information in the field.

The experience of reading is always unique. The world that a writer creates through symbols and lines on pages comes to life through contact with the reader. During *TRAVELS*, the experience of reading also renders the live experience of the place. Preparation for *TRAVELS* included thorough literature analysis. Books taken to the field and read during the performance of *TRAVELS* represent direct links to knowledge of the past.

Some directly relate to history of the region and are based on historical facts (*Theatre as a Creation of the World* (2008) and *From Victims to Survivors: Psychological support in tragedies* (2009)). On the other hand, the two novels (*The Houses of Belgrade* (1970) and *The Bridge on the Drina* (1945)) involve history, analysis of the mentality of people of the selected region, their relationship with other ethnic groups, and their perception of *home* and identity. In this context, these books add to a more profound experience of the current situation and act as *silent* participants in the *TRAVELS*.

Along with the books, Andrei Tarkovsky's poetic imagery of *home* represented another dominant reference for the practice of *TRAVELS*. His conceptual and visual framing of home deeply affected the exploration of abandoned dwellings. In Tarkovsky's terms, *poetic* refers to the holistic nature of his cinematic expression. In the three films analysed in section 2.5. *'Home' as poetic scenography*, Tarkovsky portrayed *home* in relation to concepts of security, peace, contentment, childhood, family, and motherland. These ideas guided the *TRAVELS* in their exploration of *home* through the means of experiences, emotions, and the remaining visual references.

Tarkovsky's films present domestic interiors as concepts much more profound than simple backdrops of action. He places his characters in spaces that represent direct consequences of profoundly intimate states, and physical and historical circumstances in which they are set. These mise-en-scenes are also commonly rendered with associations deeply interwoven with concepts of dreams and memories. For this reason, even frames without any human figures in them are not static - as space itself continues to deliver elements of the scripted narratives. Explorations of abandoned dwellings in the field were observed as remnants of the missing persona's narrative. From this perspective, inscriptions of their previous lives, experiences and traumas remain in space as afterimages of previously performed actions.

Chapter Five establishes a theoretical framework from historical, social, political, psychological and architectural perspectives, and proposes that domestic dwellings are not inherently political but become so through inscriptions of past and ongoing narratives. In time of conflict, ‘homes’ become representations of ‘the other’, which here represents the group marked for extermination. ‘Home’ emerges as a target for destruction; that is, the method for ethnic and cultural cleansing of a terrain by means of domestic, vernacular architecture. While the actual target is the person, the ethnic group to which the space belongs represents a direct victim of violence. This argument assigns notions of personal and collective trauma to this research, and frames ‘trauma’ as not only a physical but a deeply psychological wound. Chapter Five in its final section introduces ‘places of memory’, ruins and architectural decay, in terms of their monumental and memorial qualities. The chapter confirms that violated ‘homes’ remain as witnesses and implicit monuments to collectively-lived trauma.

Implicit Monuments

Memories of SFR Yugoslavia are officially preserved in the ‘Museum of History of Yugoslavia’ in Belgrade, the only institution for this purpose. Significant events, battles, historic and cultural figures are honoured through remaining monuments across the region. Memories of individually-celebrated events, and rulers of the period of disintegration, are preserved through monuments in town squares and other public venues[37], and through individual museum exhibits. Each now-independent republic reflects on a collectively-lived traumatic period through individually-framed perspectives. Previously-constituent republics now organise independent interpretations of ‘approved’ information through which they present ‘appropriately orchestrated’ perspectives on history.

This research involved visits to official places of memory, and notes that they offer an experience in which independent assumptions and personal interpretations are strictly limited. Here, one is continuously led by visual or acoustic effects through which the new countries attempt to impose their interpretation of the collective past. A good example is in the museum of the town of Knin, which frames and exhibits collectively-lived trauma (1995) exclusively from the perspective of the current Croatian military and political establishment (2011).

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[37] E. g. Monument to Franjo Tudjman, Leader of Croatia 1990-1999 , in the main town-square in Knin.

Events celebrate the strategic victory of the Croatian army while personal and collective traumas are entirely ignored. The exhibit is mere biased political propaganda, intentionally preventing independent interpretation or questioning.

This research notes that along with their function of preserving historical memory, such official places seek to shape a desired image of the past, achieved by filtering and 'designing' information for the public view, which in turn influences the latter's associations. Through 'uniquely framed' perspectives of the period, events or figures, they create a 'future image of the past'. Such places of memorial and their selected artefacts take the lead in the construction of individual and collective identity. This research proposes that while individual forgetting is commonly involuntary, collective oblivion is often deliberate and regulated.

Museum exhibits are supposed to remove visitors from the present and allow experience of a lost time. However, these exhibits of collective trauma promote a defined, artificially-framed, 'appropriately presented' view, involving strictly limited, didactic engagements with exhibits, abandoning genuine emotive and intellectual experience and presenting a realm of constructed meaning, of imposed associations and emotions.

Such orchestrated experiences initiate both rational and emotional reactions to past events, presenting a 'desired face' that seeks to shape the group who share ethnic, religious and cultural identity with those who created the exhibits, and with survivors traumatically involved in the conflicts. They also seek to influence those unfamiliar with the context and content. Official places of memory orchestrate the vision of founders who aim to present a specific view to foreign visitors, directly manipulating how a selected event, town or figure is to be comprehended by 'others'.

Ceremonial monuments also apply rigid methods in preserving the past. Like religious architectural objects, they arise as spatial coordinates and references of belonging. Each country constructs the heroic code of their monumental past through statues of the rulers, military figures and significant battles. These represent a physical system of memory, established by assigning ceremonial qualities to architectural objects, and are meant as materialisations of individually-framed 'immortal' ideals.

This research proposes that officially orchestrated and approved locations represent 'staged places of memory', derived from the fusion of material remnants and an 'appropriated' perspective of the past from the present view. Interestingly for this research, such places of memory manipulate strategies common to traditional applications of scenography. Hence we find: 'illusion, simulation, immersion and appropriation, which are among the central design strategies in contemporary mediated spatial practice in scenographies of theatre, architecture and art - with complex relationships to truth/reality, representation and mimesis' (Brejzek, Greisenegger & Wallen, 2009, p. 6). Such places are not sincere testimonies of collectively-lived trauma, but testimonies of power.

This research acknowledges that such places of memory acquire compelling significance in creating perspectives of the past. This derives from the fact that visual and physical 'interaction' with history through museum exhibits and structural monuments is more convincing than written fragments.

This might also relate to the fact that contemporary society is experiencing radical changes in modes of communication, characterised by our urge to replace critically-infused thinking with 'consumed', 'predesigned' information. In this respect, even the mere presence of a monument can encrust memory with deeper validity.

As a response, this research claims that despite their obscure position in the life of the region, abandoned war-torn domestic sites are the true survivors of history. The distinct nature of their monumentality lies in the fact that they hold no formally-orchestrated intent to impose opinion, emotion or association. Visitors are informed by the physical presence of the remaining objects, which forcefully illuminate previous human narratives with evidence of violence and trauma. Thus, these smashed dwellings, these inscriptions of memories and experiences, these collective experiences of the past, embody both unity and complexity. On one side they bring up unitary, personal traumatic experience, and on the other manifest collective trauma. This research defines them as sites charged with physical and psychological experience, far more significant than 'officially predesigned' artefacts.

Direct interaction with authentic locations creates unplanned experiences that initiate sincere feelings and associations. These transcend political propaganda and biased interpretation of preselected information. Through the unguided experience of physical remnants and the atmospheric density within abandoned and violated 'homes', we get to a genuine relationship with collectively-experienced horror.

These pulverised interiors offer interpretable signs of the past, and through their inscribed traces, visitors may grasp the intensity of uncanny experiences on both a personal and collective level. Such independent visits and interactions with these sites deepen our relationship with the region. Visitors interact with silent, intimate places, standing in awe in the face of the worst trauma in the missing inhabitants' lives. One's physical presence here allows for true experience of aftermath, of deep imaginative empathy. These educate the visitor, but not in the manner of formally-orchestrated places of memory. The ethnicity of former inhabitants of these places remains unknown, and this fact has no bearing on the experience of a 'monument'. Instead, these implicit monuments offer raw and real narratives of true loss, trauma and suffering.

This research offers a significant perspective on our interpretation of architectural decay, and shifts from facile contemporary allegories of the evanescent nature of materiality and our being in the world, to illuminating war-torn domestic ruins as genuine sites of history. By highlighting awareness of conflict and violence, this research assigns a new dimension to the comprehension of 'home'.
Moreover, it opens a new prospect for scenographic practice. Its strategies employ an inverted critical context: they decode found spatial narratives that are inscribed with layers of genuine human traumatic experience. Finally, this research casts light on the widely-ignored phenomenon of violence against domestic space, and sets the stage for discourses framed from the perspective of space as a direct victim and witness of violence.

A digital version of Volume II - *Implicit Monuments* - can be found on a USB stick, stored at the end of this thesis.

A physical copy can be viewed upon request.
Please contact UTS DAB Faculty (HDR) for further information.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Scenographic Influences

This research discovered significant conceptual influences in different ideas, realised works, and theories of numerous theatrical and scenographic figures.
This section presents ideas and theories that were not directly referenced in the thesis, but have in different ways inspired the development of this research.

A. Andre Antoine (1858 - 1943)

Andre Antoine, who is often considered the founder of the modern mise-en-scene in France, represents one of the early conceptual influences of this research. Although he was involved in different areas of theatre (writing, acting, directing), his influence is here most significant because of the principles that he introduced in his own 'Theatre Libre', a unique laboratory theatre in Europe (based in Montmartre, Paris; 1887-1896).

In Antoine's understanding, human individualism of the time was obscured with a substantial layer of pretentious facade. In his view, a fresh urban culture that was booming in Paris in the mid 1800s evolved into a specific lifestyle, which was established around the 'new' life in Parisian boulevards. Antoine noted that this lifestyle was primarily concerned with senseless shopping in the newly established department stores, and seeking entertainment at plays and concerts, which were constructed around facile political correctness and commonly ended with superficial moral lessons.

As a response, 'Theatre Libre' refused to portray the bourgeoise sparkle of the Parisian boulevards, and it sought inspiration in the lives of 'ordinary' people, who lived in modest apartments in the outskirts of the metropolis, away from the extravagant lifestyle, elegant concert halls, and glittering department stores.

Antoine shaped his method around the idea of the workshop theatre, and produced plays regardless of the popularity of the subject within the established theatre scene in Paris. As a result, his work became known for its realism and natural expression. 'Theatre Libre', therefore, offered 'honest' and 'raw' alternatives to the sterile mainstream theatre scene.

In the context of this research, Antoine's conceptual influence comes from his rejection of sterile topics and pretentious locations. His work is also significant because of his method of framing the narratives of 'ordinary', seemingly 'irrelevant'

human figures, who then emerged as significant characters through his productions. On the other hand, he is also introduced because of his view of space, its influence and relationship with people. Antoine believed thats space, and our physical environment in general, are highly significant for our personal and collective development. As far as he was concerned, our immediate and distant environments can strongly influence and significantly shape human characters on various levels. Based on this belief, he developed a method that was based on beginning each production by designing a set or a number of major elements of the future physical environment, which performers will inhabit. In his view, this approach allowed performers to explore and develop their characters more authentically. As a result, they achieved profound emotional, sensual, and intellectual relationship with characters that they played on stage.

Antoine created authentic sets, which imitated an entire room. Antoine developed sets with all four walls, in which his actors rehearsed before the play opened to public. Eventually, one of the walls was taken down just before the play was ready to premiere, and this represented an opening through which the audience saw the play.

In the context of this research, Antoine's work represents inspiration for the definition of *TRAVELS,* as a practical component in which the narratives of real traumatic experiences found in real (often remote) locations were framed as significant elements in the process of rebuilding our relationship with the past. *TRAVEL* participants were able to experience authentic locations in which the traumatic events had taken place years ago, and by directly engaging with the remnants of violence their experience intensified on sensual, emotional, and intellectual level.

B. Adolphe Appia (1862-1928)

Adolphe Appia, Swiss architect, theorist of stage lighting and scenography, represents another early influence. This research initially turned to Appia because of his proposal:

> The dramatic art of tomorrow will be a social act, in which each of us will assist. And, who knows, perhaps one day we shall arrive, after a period of transition, at majestic festivals in which a whole people will participate, where each one of us will express our feelings, our sorrows, our joys, no longer content to remain a passive onlooker. Then will the dramatist triumph. (Appia, cited in McKinney and Butterworth, 2009, p. 17)

Keeping this proposal in mind, this research proposed a shift in defining the meaning, influence and use of 'theatricality' in the contemporary context.

It proposed that today we can utilise the principal elements of theatre as a social act - we can apply its concepts and strategies in fields that represent 'our sorrows' and 'joys' as Appia proposed. In this light, this research manipulates scenographic strategies, which are inherently derived from theatre, to give voice to the abandoned, disrupted human and spatial narratives, and it frames them as significant remnants of history. Through these acts, this research aims to reestablish our relationship with the collective past, and to define the forgotten sites of trauma as significant remnants of the past conflicts and thus to move them from the realm of 'collateral damage'.

Moreover, this research also frames Appia as a significant influence because of his view of theatre as the fusion between space and performers, which this research also reads as a relationship between space and human bodies. Appia perceived sets as living environments, and rejected to paint two-dimensional backgrounds for three-dimensional worlds on stage. He believed that light and shade create the essential fusion between performers and their environment, and emphasised that, on stage, shade is as necessary as light. In his understanding, the only way to create truthful narratives on stage was to manipulate these two theatrical elements.

In the context of this research, Appia emerges as a reference in tracing the scenographic relationship between people and space. This research, therefore, discovered preliminary inspiration in one of his statements:

> We should no longer try to give the illusion of a forest, but the illusion of a man in the atmosphere of a forest. Man is the reality and nothing else counts. Whatever this man touches must be intended for him, everything else must contribute to the creation of a suitable atmosphere around him. And if, leaving Siegfried for a moment, we lift our eyes, the scenic picture need not give a complete illusion. It is composed for Siegfried alone. When the forest, gently stirred by a breeze, attracts Siegfried's attention, we - the spectators - will see Siegfried bathed in ever-changing lights and shadows but no longer moving among cut out fragments set in motion by stage tricks. (Appia, cited in McKinney & Butterworth, 2009, p. 12)

Appia here urges that scenographers shall abandon the superficial set decoration and metaphoric visual interpretation of the written drama, emotions, character and narrative development. Instead, in his opinion, scenographers should aim to portray the pith of the overall concept, atmosphere, and the fusion of the spatial and human relationships. In a relating manner, this research aimed to decode and understand the essence of this human and spatial relationship, from a scenographic point of view.

At the same time, this research aimed for comprehending and experiencing an actual aftermath, and the essence of its atmosphere, by interacting with real sites in which remnants of violence and trauma remain tactilely present. In this understanding, these remnants represent the pith of the human experience of war, conflict and intense physical and psychological trauma.

Theatrical elements, such as light and shadow, become important aspects of these experiences. In many abandoned domestic interiors light and shade now represent the only elements that continue to alter these spaces. Light penetrates through the common openings, such as doors and windows, but also through the numerous holes on demolished walls and ceilings. *TRAVEL* participants move through, between and around shadows created by the remaining objects in space, while their moving bodies also create shadows within the abandoned spaces. Through these simple acts, they (unconsciously) become a part of the present life of the space, and add to the history of spatial narratives.

Appia was specifically influenced by the concepts of 'Eurythmics', which is known as a system of exercises developed by the Swiss composer and musician, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950), who developed a system to help musicians enhance their feel for playing rhythmically. Appia embraced this method as an answer to his desire for the overall synthesis in spatial contexts, and proposed a concept of 'rhythmic space'. Appia's spatial concepts explored a manipulation of three dimensional space by introducing architectural elements, such as steps, pillars, walls, and platforms, and employing them in conjunction with light. He achieved a powerful spatial rhythm by contrasting the rigid, sharp lines and stillness of different stage levels and walls, with the 'soft' and 'subtle' nature of the human body and its movement across and between these structures.

This research recognised aesthetic and conceptual resemblance between Appia's rhythmic space and the abandoned domestic spaces in the region in question. Conceptually, this research recognises the significance of the contrast between the remaining solid architectural elements (walls, staircases, columns), which now stand as violated and distressing spatial images, and the 'softness' and 'vulnerability' of human beings in such locations. Importantly, this research also acknowledges the significance of the noted 'representations' of the missing bodies in space, which are evident through scarce personal belongings, garments, books, shoes, glasses, cups, etc. These 'representations' imply to the 'vulnerability' of the missing human figures.

Appia's rhythmic designs

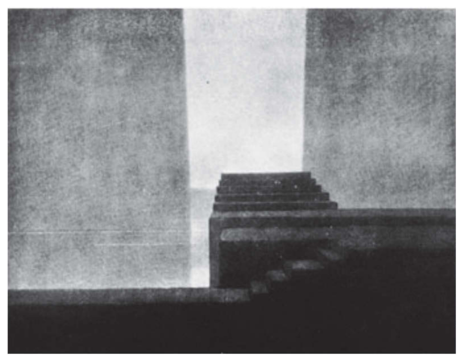

Figure 1: Adolphe Appia, Rhythmic Space, *The Staircase* 1090 (McKinney & Butterworth 2009, p. 14)

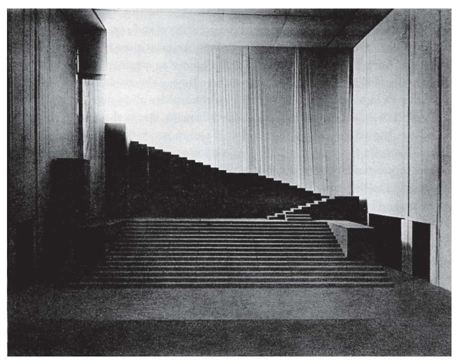

Figure 2: Adolphe Appia, Orpheus and Eurydice, by C. W. Gluck. Hellerau, Jacques-Dalcroze Institute, 1912-13 (McKinney & Butterworth 2009, p. 14)

War-torn abandoned interiors - *TRAVELS*:

Figures 3, 4, 5, 6: War-torn spaces discovered during *TRAVELS* (Nevena Mrdjenovic 2011 - 2013)

C. Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) and Caspar Neher (1897-1962)

Brecht, as one of the foremost theatre figures of the twentieth century, and Caspar Neher, artist and scenographer, have achieved a rigorous approach to staging. Brecht's significant contribution to theatre has resulted in the framing of the term 'Brechtian', which is now commonly used in theatrical discourses. This term fundamentally reflects a particular style and resembles the essential principles of Brecht's view of theatre. In this light, 'Brechtian' commonly refers to the 'economy of stage', which in scenographic terms refers to the idea that only the objects that are necessary to 'tell the story' are placed on stage.

The two theatre practitioners have developed a particular scenographic style, which was established around selecting real materials (often containing wood, metal, leather, earth pigments, along with similar organic and raw materials); avoiding set decoration and creation of descriptive scenographic images; selecting, designing and producing costumes from materials that are capable of implying life, suggesting past, and 'destinies' of characters, so that the spectators gain the wholistic image, that transcends the presented scene in front of them.

Importantly in the context of this research, Neher argued:

'The words picture and stage are incompatible. A picture is never realistic, the stage is always realistic. That's why I maintain that the realistic stage picture is a nonsense' (Neher, cited in McKinney & Butterworth 2009, p. 44).

As a response to this proposal, the two collaborators coined the term 'Buhnenbauer', which in translation means 'stage constructor' or 'designer'. The term was established on the commonly adopted German term 'Buhnenbildner', which refers to 'stage painter'. 'Buhnenbauer' emphasised Brecht's and Neher's unique approach to scenography, which relied on structural instead of decorative nature. Their productions urged for reality on stage, but they also urged for spectators to observe the play objectively and aim for changes and challenges. One of the most significant strategies of the 'Brechtian' theatre was his desire for spectators' constant awareness of the present theatricality on stage. Brecht manipulated various staging strategies (half-height walls, exposed lighting equipment, instruments, and curtains, etc.) to ensure that his spectators are constantly aware of the theatrical nature of the moment they are witnessing on stage.

Brecht's notes on scenography suggest that scenographers should aim to develop sets that will become 'actors', and in order to achieve this a scenographer needs to work slowly and experimentally, read the text, but also 'read' the subtext and engage in deep conversations with other artists who are involved in the play.

This research embraced Brecht's proposals as inspiration for the development of its practical component, in which scenographic strategies were applied in an inverted manner. This research utilised scenographic strategies to 'read' and 'decode' the inscribed spatial narratives, through the analysis and interaction with the remaining objects in space and evident inscriptions of violence and trauma. This research, therefore, treated the abandoned interiors as previously active 'actors' (not containers of action) in the past violent events, while all objects in space are seen as 'valuable' pieces of information for the process of 'decoding' the past narratives. In Brechtian terms, therefore, abandoned interiors, along with the remaining objects, transcend their aesthetic qualities, and are here embraced as objects that remain 'to tell a story'.

D. Arnold Aronson

American professor and theatre historian, Arnold Aronson identifies the need for a new home for the new theatre. He proposes that, in terms of theatre, the twentieth century is most significantly characterised by its search for new forms of theatre spaces. Aronson traces different directions that theatre has taken through decades: from proposing spherical, endless and total theatres, to placing spectators onto moving conveyors and rotating rings, and finally moving theatre to streets, in old factories, on rooftops, in open fields, parks, and beaches.

Aronson here argues that the proscenium, as the most conventional theatre space that we know today, is 'without doubt, the most awkward and irrational stage space ever conceived' (Aronson 2005, p. 38). In his understanding, this type of theatrical space is complex because it is partially derived from illusionistic paintings, but also from the need to mask the technology in the backstage. Aronson notes that the proscenium stage functions in the way that distances spectators both physically and psychologically. Hence, through his search for the new homes for contemporary theatre, Aronson questions why does a form of theatrical architecture that essentially belongs to another time and was developed for significantly different social and cultural circumstances still dominates the life of the contemporary theatre.

In response to his own question, Aronson proposes: ‘When we face a stage, we are facing a reflection of ourselves and our society’ (Aronson 2005, p. 40).

Aronson here proposes that theatre represents a particular kind of a social mirror. He explains that the distinctions between the theatre of different époques through history is reflected in the way in which the arrangement of social elements is reflected in the spatial configuration of a society as a whole. Aronson provides an example of Athenians whose theatre gathered around the ‘agora’, which represented the central point of the Ancient Greek city-states. In literal translation, ‘agora’ means ‘gathering place’. Hence, in the world of Athenians all significant events took place around this open interactive space, where citizens gathered to hear important announcements, assemble for military campaigns, discuss politics, and other important social issues.

On the contrary, during the Renaissance period most significant events took place in closed, dark, often ducal palaces and churches. Similarly, theatre of the time was also set inside a ‘hermetic world’, as Aronson defines it. Importantly, for this research, Aronson proposes that the theatre of the contemporary century lives ‘at home’. He, thus, defines the domestic architectural object as the home of the theatre of our time. Aronson explains that the domestic private dwelling has never been such a dominant architectural object as it is today. In his view, contemporary society has abandoned the market squares, churches, and community halls as their central gathering and sacred locations. In this light, Aronson proposes that the contemporary theatre shall seek for the elements of ‘homeness’ in theatrical expressions.

This research followed Aronson’s proposals and explored the potential of applying theatrical and scenographic strategies outside the theatrical context. In this respect, if we perceive theatre as a social mirror, than we certainly need to take its concepts outside the proscenium space. In a world in which we face destruction, loss, violence, and shock on a daily basis, seeing an orchestrated reflection of it framed within a proscenium arch does not appear relevant. Instead, this research proposes that elements of theatre need to move into the authentic sites of trauma, destruction and violence to be able to act as a mirror of our contemporary existence, and to reflect on these issues genuinely.

Appendix 2. SFR Yugoslavia

A. Complex History

In its initial period (1918-1943), Yugoslavia was a kingdom. It was established as a 'Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes', and was lead by King Peter I (1844-1921). He sought a formation of this new kingdom after the 'Kingdom of Serbia', with its allies, defeated the Habsburg Monarchy in Wolrd War I. Eventually, King Aleksandar I Karadjordjevic (1888-1934) renamed it to the 'Kingdom of Yugoslavia' (1929).

Following the Nazi occupation in World War II, the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia ('AVNOJ') announced that it aims to rebuild the country as 'Democratic Federal Yugoslavia' (1943). At the time, the dilemma between a 'republic' and 'kingdom' was still open.

In the aftermath of World War II, the country evolved into a federation consisting of six republics and two autonomous provinces within the republic of Serbia (Kosovo & Metohija and Vojvodina). This period marked significant changes in the region and territorial modifications were followed by notable political shifts.

The federation changed its name a number of times:

- 'Democratic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia' (1945)
- 'Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia' (1946-1963)
- 'Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia' (1963-1992)

'Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia' was recognised as a communist country in 1945, in Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its first leader was a Yugoslav politician of Croatian descent, Ivan Ribar (1881-1968), while Josip Broz Tito (leader of the Yugoslav Partisans) was a prime-minister.

In 1953, Tito became a new president for the first time, and in 1974 he was named a lifetime president of the unity. The country was often referred to as 'Tito's Yugoslavia'.

B. Josip Broz Tito

Figure 7: Tito and Jovanka Broz 1960 (VECER 1960)

Tito was born in Kumrovec, a village in Croatia (at the time a part of Austro-Hungarian Empire), as the seventh of fifteen children. In 1913, he was sent to a school for non-commissioned officers, and became a sergeant. In 1914, he was imprisoned, in the Petrovaradin fortress, for taking part in anti-war propaganda. In 1915 he was conscripted into Austro-Hungarian army, and sent to fight on the Eastern Front, in Galicia. In 1920, Tito returned to Yugoslavia, and joined the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), and eventually became the Secretary of the Zagreb Branch. He was once again arrested in 1928, this time for illegal communist activities.

During the World War II, Tito was the leader of Yugoslav Partisans, one of the most significant anti-Nazi resistance movements in Europe. As a leader of the group, Tito was known as the chief founder of numerous military strategies and tactics of the Partisan type of warfare. He took part in major political decisions of the time, and by the end of the World War II he was a respected political figure. From 1939 until his death, he was the General Secretary of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

During his presidential service, Tito became known as a leader with an extravagant lifestyle. He was married a number of times, yet his most famous wife was Jovanka Broz (1924-2013), whom he married last. By the early 1970s, Tito had 32 residencies at his disposal across the entire federation.

In Belgrade, he resided in the official state residency, ‘The White Palace’ (‘Beli Dvor’), while he also maintained a separate private home. ‘The White Palace’ (1937), which was built in neo-Palladian style, was inspired by the eighteenth century English dwellings, and designed by Aleksandar Djordjevic (1890-1952), a well known Serbian architect of the time. Aside from Belgrade, Tito spent months in Brijuni Islands (Croatia), in the ‘State Summer Residence’ - a luxurious palace designed by the Slovene architect, Joze Plecnik (1872-1957). Finally, the third most significant architectural object was Tito’s residence at the lake Bled in Slovenia.

Tito was often publicly referred to as ‘the greatest son of our nations and nationalities’, and was officially named a national hero three times. Nonetheless, he was also targeted by numerous conspiracy theories. Ever since he was first appointed as a president, up until his death in 1980, there were concerns about his actual identity. Numerous conspiracy theories from the time tell us that the real Tito was killed in the battles and that the ‘Comintern’ (The Communist International) replaced him with a double, who was in fact a spy. Another theory proposes that Tito died in Russia in 1920s, while other sources suggest that he was killed in the ‘Battle of Sutjeska’ in 1943. Some argued that Tito was replaced by an impoverished Polish nobleman.

Tito's his specific pronunciation of the Serbo-Croatian language represents the main argument for questioning his Croatian background. It was suggested that his pronunciation was closer to Russian and Polish native speakers. On the other hand, those who denied these proposals explicitly argued that Tito’s pronunciation is specific to the region in which he was born, which is the area of the distinctive ‘Kajkavian’ dialect. This reflected on the way in which he pronounced the conventional Serbo-Croatian language, which was established on a significantly different, ‘Shtokavian’, dialect. Another significant argument was that the real Tito had three fingers on his right hand, while his assumed double, Tito that we know as the leader of SFR Yugoslavia, had no defects of such nature.

C. Population

At the last census of 1991, the population of SFR Yugoslavia was 23, 528, 230. Until the 1960s the country marked rapid population growth, which is typical for developing countries. From then on, it faced a negative population growth due to migration. Yugoslavs predominately migrated during the 1960s and 1970s, when SFR Yugoslavia was known as one of the most significant ‘sending societies’ of international migration. Its citizens most commonly migrated to Switzerland, Germany, Australia, and North America.

D. Lifestyle and Culture

Federation's lifestyle varied in accordance with its ethnic composition, diverse histories, religions and landscapes. Even though universal values and traditions were created in the post World War II period, individual customs, architecture, cuisine, social and cultural values varied significantly among the different ethnic groups. Traditional clothing, which previously distinguished local as well as regional communities, was replaced by globalised, contemporary clothing in all regions. Furthermore, traditions in which extended families with numerous children and several generations lived in the same household, gave way to the nuclear family with two parents and, most commonly, one or two children in each household.

The country was established on rich history of its previously existing forms and the cultural heritage varied significantly across the region. Orthodox Monasteries, such as Studenica (1190), Gracanica (1321) and Decani (1327) (located in Serbia and its Kosovo Province) contain remarkable frescoes and icons, which demonstrate the virtuosity and originality of religious art and architecture prior to the conquest of the Ottoman Empire in the 14th century. Similarly, ruins of the ancient city of Stobi (Macedonia), act as evidence of a two thousand years old civilisation, while the Roman amphitheatre 'Arena' in Pula (Croatia) represents one of the finest examples of Roman architecture, today. Moreover, medieval artisans produced unique tomb markers across Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

Yugoslav cultural production remained regional in character, despite numerous calls for a unified approach. Cinema was a rare exception to this and through the 'Avala Film' studios based in Belgrade, the ruling elite was able to create the 'Yugoslav illusion'. Federation's film industry was established in 1947 and its main aims were to use cinema for ideological shaping of masses, to promote Yugoslavia internationally and to fullfill Tito's obssesive interest in film.

It is often noted that Tito evidently understood cinematic language as a testimony that will once be used as a reflection of another time, and he cleverly manipulated film to write and rewrite history, and to provide visual identity which later became the most unifying definition of SFR Yugoslavia. He often used this method for his ideological propaganda and the construction of the greatly admired 'Tito cult', which ultimately emerged as the most significant element of his ruling principle.

E. Symbols and symbolic events

One of the most significant symbols of the Yugoslav identity was its 'red passport'. At the time, this passport was highly regarded, primarily because its holders could travel freely and seek employment in many European countries. It was also described as 'convenient', being one of the few documents that allowed people to travel freely through both the East and the West.

'Youth Labour Actions' - discussed in the thesis, Chapter Three, p. 79.

Figure 8: Youth Labour Actions SFR Yugoslavia (KONTRAPRESS 2013)

‘Relay of Youth’ (‘Dan Mladosti’, 1945 - 1988) marks another highly significant event in the history of SFR Yugoslavia. This event was held every year as a celebration of Tito’s birthday, 25th of May, when a symbolic race began in Kumrovec, continued through all the major towns of the region, and finally ending with a spectacularly orchestrated event in Belgrade, at the Yugoslav People’s Army Stadion (JNA). The event was famous for its mass cultural and sports events, which were organised to celebrate people’s admiration and loyalty to the country.

Figure 9: Relay of Youth in Maribor 1961 (Joze Gal, 1961)

F. Tito’s Death

Tito became increasingly ill over the course of 1979, and died in Ljubljana (Slovenia) on May 4th, 1980. On a Sunday afternoon, a TV program was disrupted with a blackout after which a famous *Radio Television Belgrade* newsreader, Miodrag Zdravkovic, read the formal statement. On this day, SFR Yugoslavia experienced a collective state of shock.

Tito’s funeral represents one of the best orchestrated events in the history of the country. It was held on May 8th in Belgrade, and according to the number of attending politicians and state delegations, this was the biggest funeral of the twentieth century. In the context of this country, Tito’s funeral certainly was the most significant political event. It is said that this event marked the biggest television audience, after the broadcast of the man landing on the moon.

Figure 10: Tito's Funeral, 1980 (Janja Glogovac 2001)

Appendix 3. *TRAVEL*

A. Early Analysis - Belgrade
Observation Reflection July, 2011

I return to the most significant remnant of the country that no longer exists, its former capital, Belgrade (Beograd).

I begin my analysis of this region with an observation of the city itself. In this early process, I note that this capital is heavily bound to the past. Although its inhabitants lead a contemporary lifestyle, elements of the collective past, which are evident everywhere on the streets of the city, constantly disrupt the threads of these newly established narratives. I detect that people of Belgrade, along with its collective spirit and overall atmosphere, seem deeply and intimately connected to the notions of the past.

Conceptually, I note that the overall spirit of the city is strongly established on the concept of 'resistance'. Perhaps, this is just an initial impression. Yet, this concept seems to be inscribed on multiple levels, individual and collective. I find that it is directed towards 'the other', 'independently established countries', and what I find as highly significant - to the 'new self'.

I perform this observation, which shifts from participant to non-participant and vice versa, from a scenographic and theatrical perspective. In this light, I am interested in relationships that develop between people, as well as between people and space/place.

It is evident that space is here often absurd, chaotic, suffocated and irrational. Perhaps, this is a result of people's numerous attempts to overcome the noted 'resistance'. People adopt, alter and modify - seeking ways to change their lives, and to make sense of their current existence.

On the other hand, it is important to keep in mind that the past centuries brought invaders from all sides, and that these warlords passed through the region unaware of existence of the 'ordinary' people, space, and place unless these 'ordinary' elements 'interrupted' their military aims. From this point of view, the aim of the collective aesthetic and spatial disharmony is for the future conquerors (as they will most certainly return to this region) to get lost in the curves of the maze, in which after endless circulation, they would lose the desire for conquest, or at least they would not conquer as much as they aimed.

My re-immersion in the life of Belgrade, its habits, traces of the past, and spirit of the ongoing narratives discovers an astonishing predisposition for survival.

Through these observations, I discover elements of dramatic characters, themes, and motifs.

It is, therefore, here found that many concepts that I discover in Belgrade could be mirrored with the dominant themes of the Russian playwright, Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), who kept his principal themes in the realm of transition, end of an era, relationships between people (and importantly between classes), human displacement, ideological distinctions between generations, and longing for the past, as well as an obsession with the future. Observed in this context, from the theatrical and scenographic perspective, the city of Belgrade appears very close to many Chekhov's characters and situations.

A) I initially identify resemblance with Chekhov's last play *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), which presents an aristocratic Russian woman, Lyubov Andreievna Ranyevskaya, who returns from France to her family estate in Russia, just before the estate is auctioned to be sold. After a series of events in which Mrs Ranyevskaya fails to save her home, the estate is bought by the former serf's son. The family leaves the estate, with the sound of the orchard being cut in the background. The play ends with a scene in which the eldest character, a manservant Firs (87) lies ill after all of the other characters have abandoned him. After a life of submissive and generous devotion, Firs points that: 'This life has gone by like I ain't lived' (Chekhov, cited in Snelick 2006, p. 1643). In this scene, Firs is accidentally left behind in an old estate, and passes away alone, with the sound of axes intensifying in the background.

In Chekhov's original context, Firs' death represents the final end of feudal life in Russia. However, in the context of this research, Firs' abandoned death scene conceptually resembles the death of an era - 'selling of ideals' in which people of the former unity genuinely believed, brutal break up of the former motherland, and the tragic loss of the previously established concepts of identity and belonging.

Perhaps we can establish parallels between the abandoned Firs and the abandoned 'homes', destroyed and vandalised during the violent events that were staged during the war. In simple terms, the most significant location of human existence is here taken over, vandalised, and finally destroyed in the flames of violent clashes.

B) Conceptual parallels are also discovered in Chekhov's portrayal of the Prozorov Family, in *Three Sisters* (1901). This play portrays a family (three sisters and a brother) a year after the father has passed away. Following the death of the Prozorov father, Olga, Masha and Irina, along with their brother Andrei, are finding life in a Russian province monotonous and immensely dull. In fact, the Prozorov children see their only hope in selling the house and returning 'To Moscow, To Moscow!' (Chekhov, cited in Senelick 2006, p. 884). The three sisters hope that their brother will become a professor, and that the family will finally be able to return to Moscow, as the only place to which they ever belonged.

In the context of this analysis, death of the Prozorov father is conceptually linked to the 'death' of SFR Yugoslavia, motherland, and the Yugoslav illusion. I often witness that, just like the Prozorov family mourns the death of the father, former Yugoslavs mourn their motherland. I discover here that, for many people, it took years to adjust to the new lifestyle, new countries, and hence to the new identity. Indeed, since the former country disappeared in such a traumatic manner, the new life was being established on what seems to be poorer moral, cultural and economic level, when compared to the life that people were used to in the federation.

In this light, it is here found that just like Moscow (for the Prozorov sisters) represents an ultimate idea of a civilised society, culture, and good taste, where people are acquainted with philosophy, art and beauty - SFR Yugoslavia for years represented almost a utopian ideal of a peaceful, secure country, with an ideal living standard, in which material goods are not the prime interest. I find that often this last generation of Yugoslavs is struggling to project their roots, and establish a new life in the chaotic environment, deeply impacted by a collectively lived trauma.

In a closely relating manner, a poor local girl Natasha, who becomes Andrei's wife, and whom the sisters ridicule in the beginning, manipulates the whole family over the course of the play. She does this to achieve her own, mainly materialistic, aims. By the end of the play, Natasha manipulates Andrei to mortgage the house to maintain her extravagant taste. This excessively selfish and self-indulgent character is here understood as a metaphor for the new governments, who now rule the newly formed countries, manipulate and sacrifice *people* in order to achieve their own goals.

When the house no longer belongs to the family, Masha observes their misery by saying:

‘We’re left alone to begin our life anew. One has to go on living… One has to go on living’ (Chekhov, cited in Senelick 2006, p. 956).

Irina adds: ‘A time will come when everyone will realise why all this is, what these sufferings are for, there won’t be any mysteries, but in the meantime a person has to live… Has to work, nothing but work’ (Chekhov, cited in Senelick 2006, p. 956).

Similarly, people of SFR Yugoslavia also adopted their imposed mantra - to forget the past in the name of the, once again, *new history*.

Hence, this once successful and noble Prozorov family declines and breaks into fragments. Chekhov portrayed the collapse of the family as a metaphor for the end of the aristocratic world. However, this concept is here translated to the break up of SFR Yugoslavia and all its bitter consequences when all the former members had suddenly lost their material, spiritual, and cultural wealth.

Sadly, at the close of the play, each sister is left alone in her own misery, just like each new country had to deal with the brutal past, and with the ways of inventing the new life on the ruins of an old identity.

The play ends with Olga’s words:

> Time will pass and we’ll be gone forever, people will forget us, they’ll forget our faces, voices and how many of us there were, but our suffering will turn into joy for those who live after us, happiness and peace will come into being on this earth, and those who live now will be remembered with a kind word and blessing. (Chekhov, cited in Senelick, 2006, p. 956)

B. Daily observations captured during the process of *TRAVELS* (2011-2014) across the entire region of the former SFR Yugoslavia (with an emphasis on the city of Belgrade), can be viewed at:

https://speculativetravels.wordpress.com

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IMPLICIT MONUMENTS

'WORDS CAN NOT EXPRESS EVERYTHING.'

Andrei Tarkovsky, '*The Mirror*', 1975

'UNSPOKEN FEELINGS ARE UNFORGETTABLE.'

Andrei Tarkovsky, *'Nostalgia'*, 1983

'THE CURTAIN IS OPEN; THE ACTORS ARE ABSENT.'

Josette Feral

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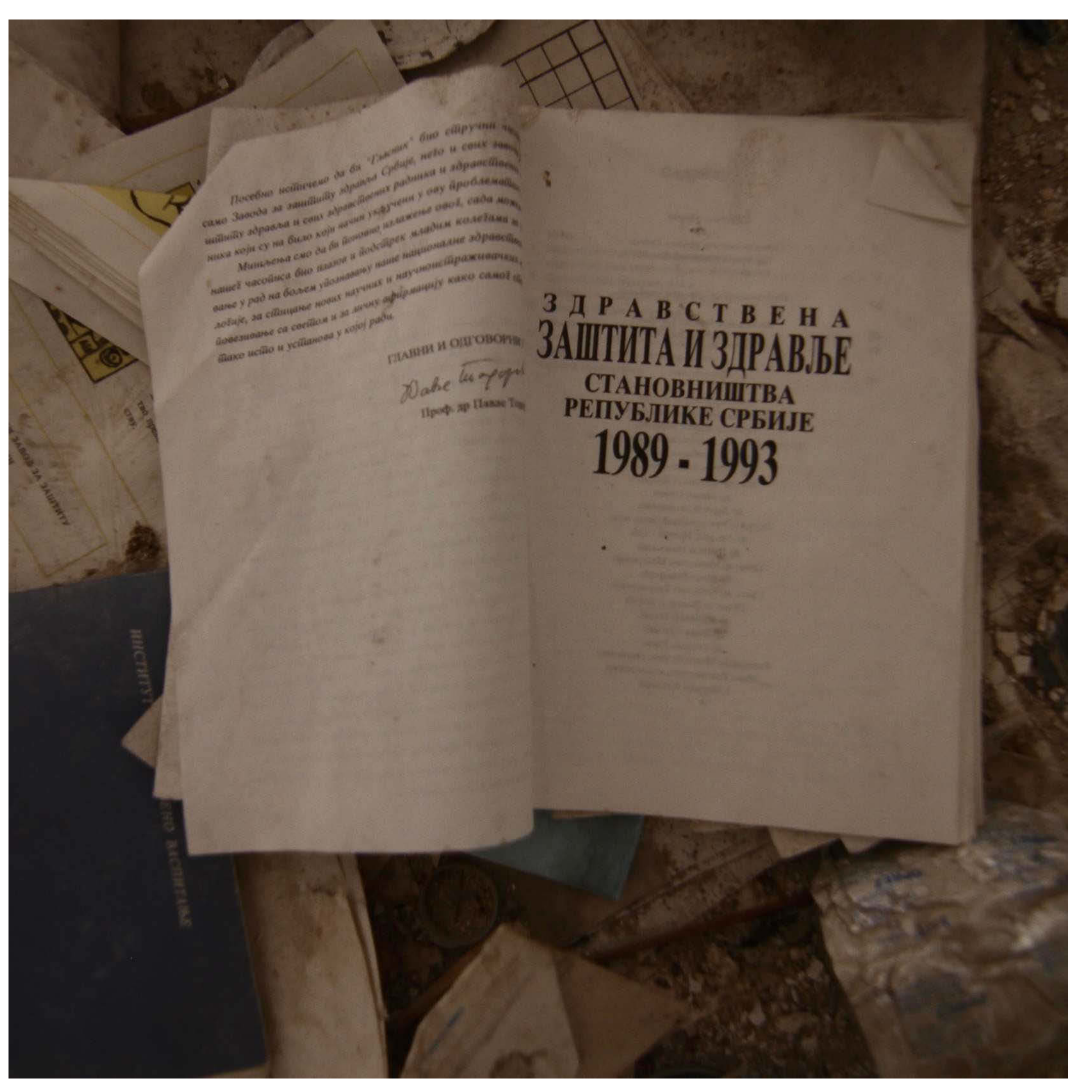
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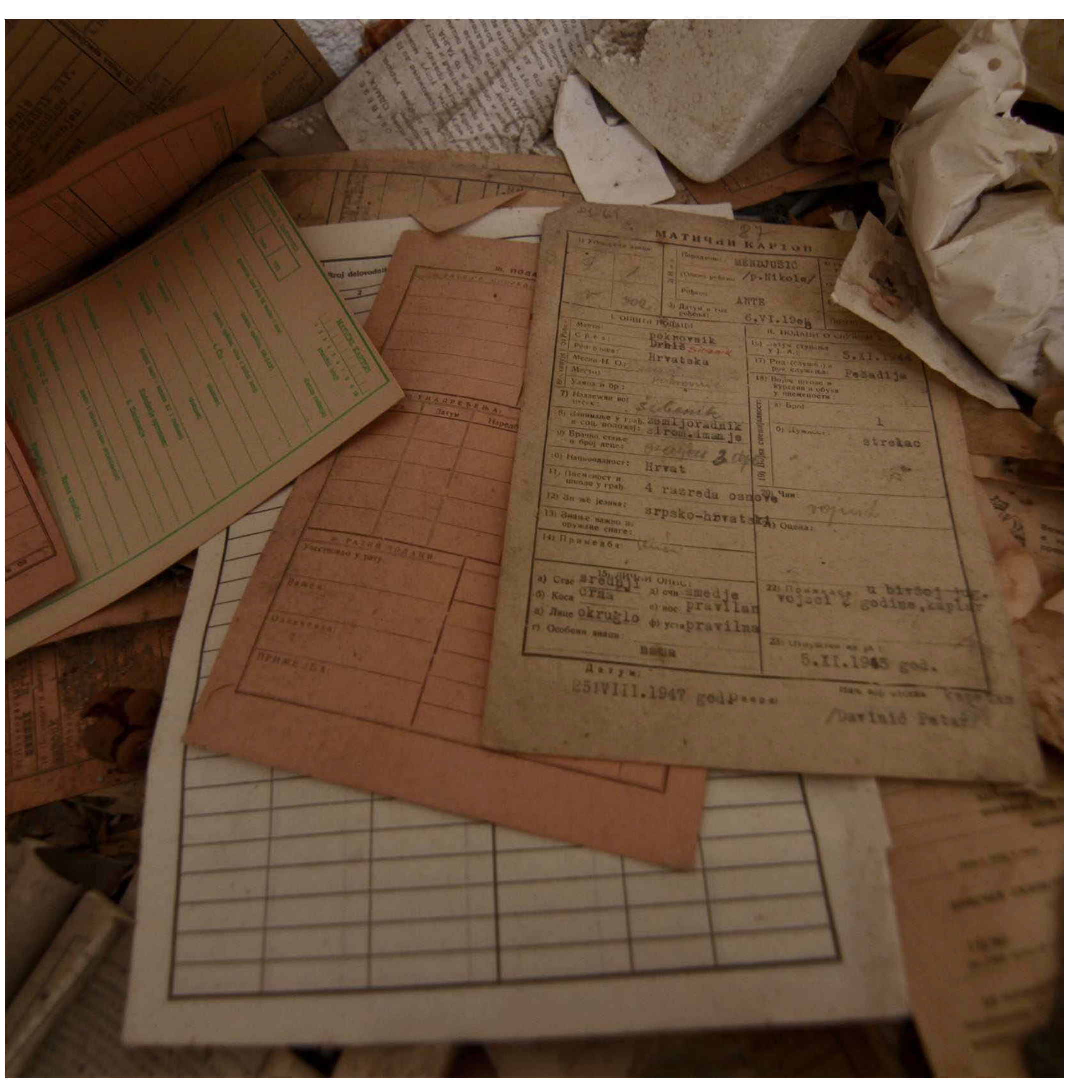

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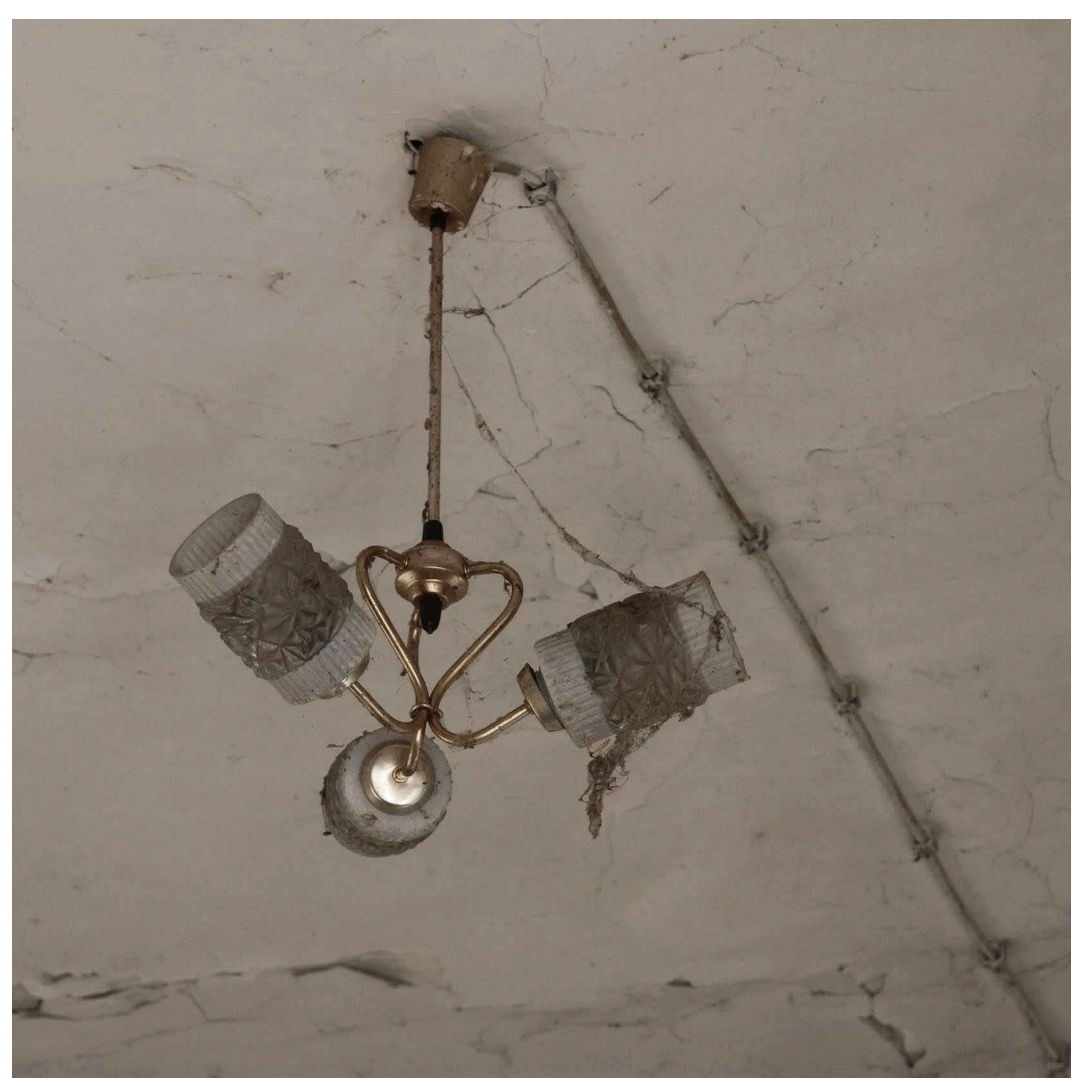

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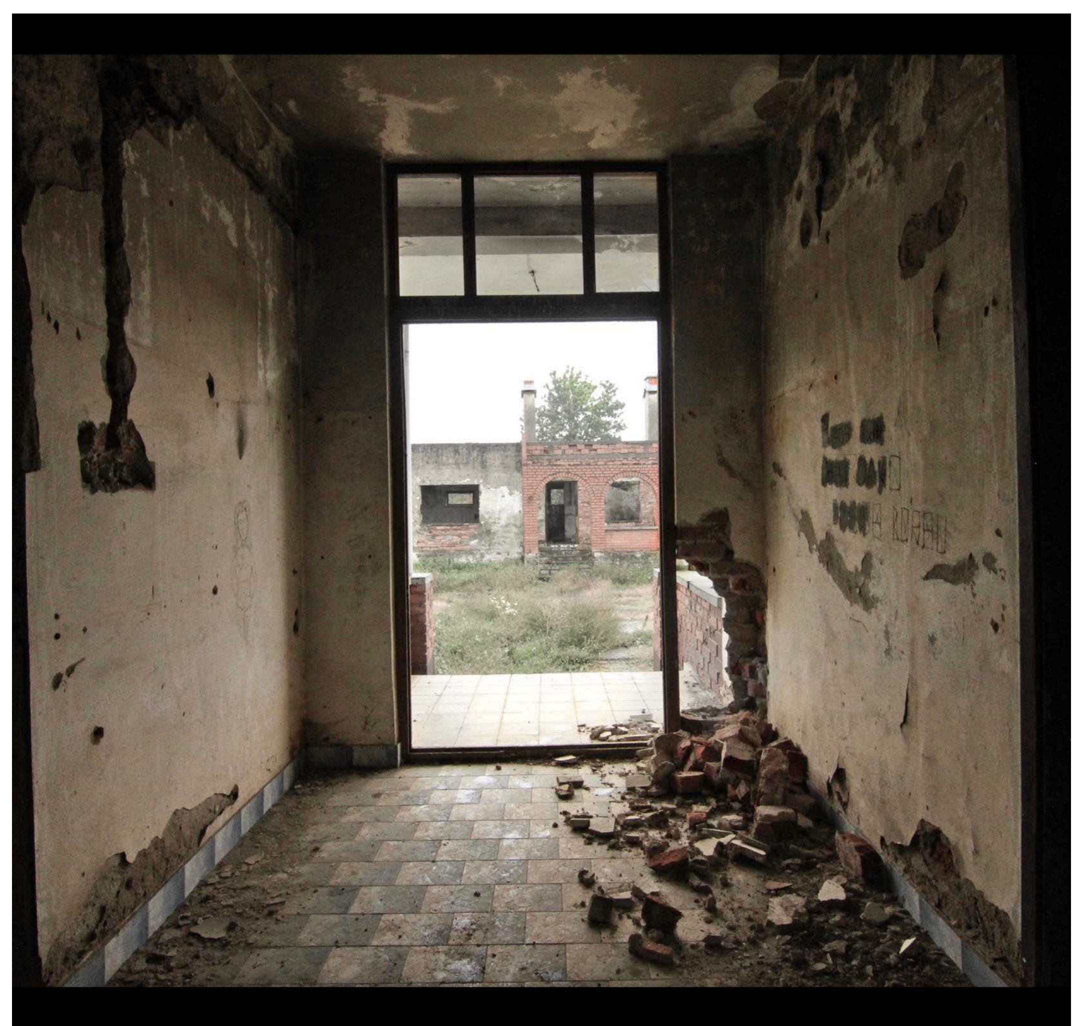

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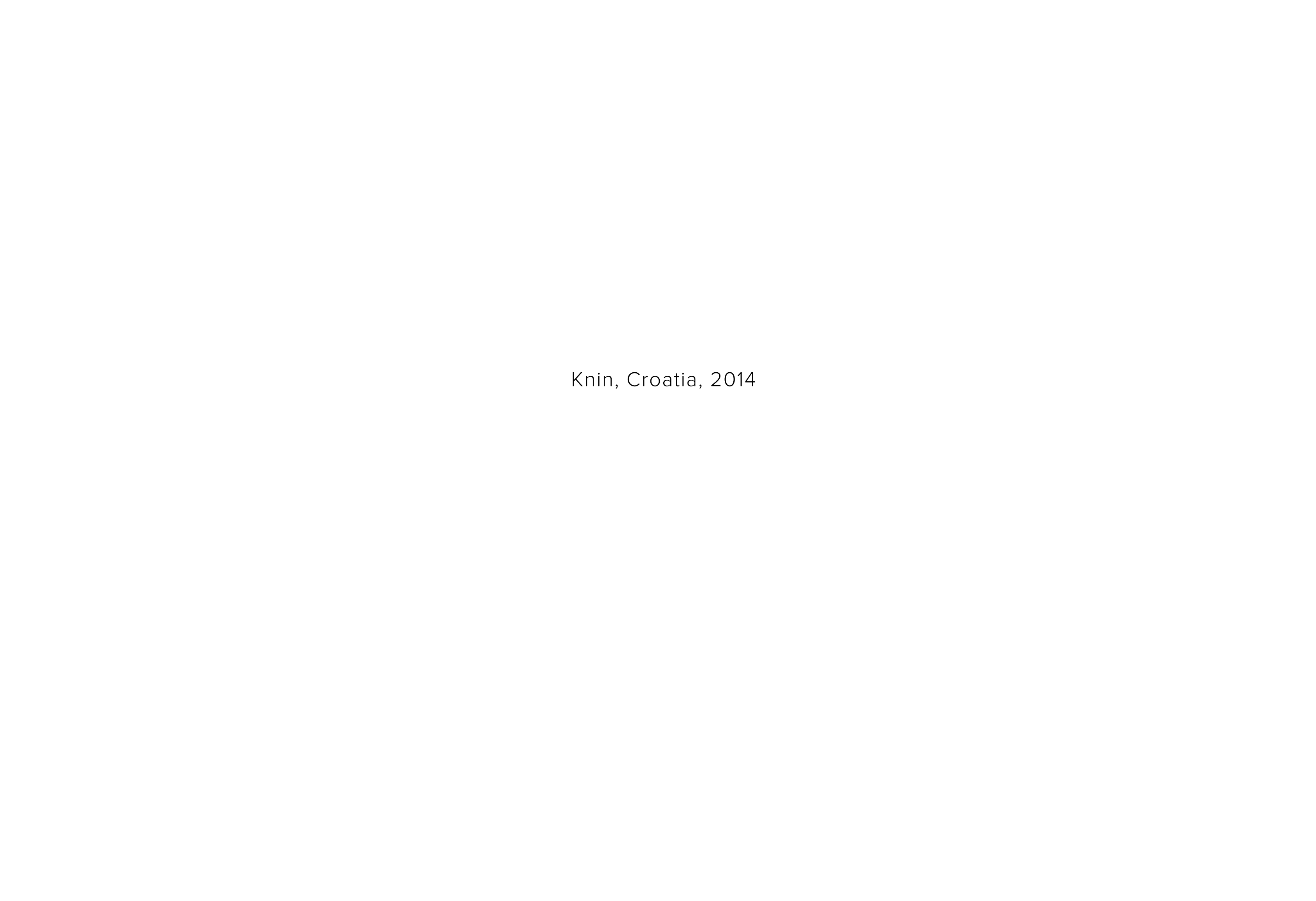

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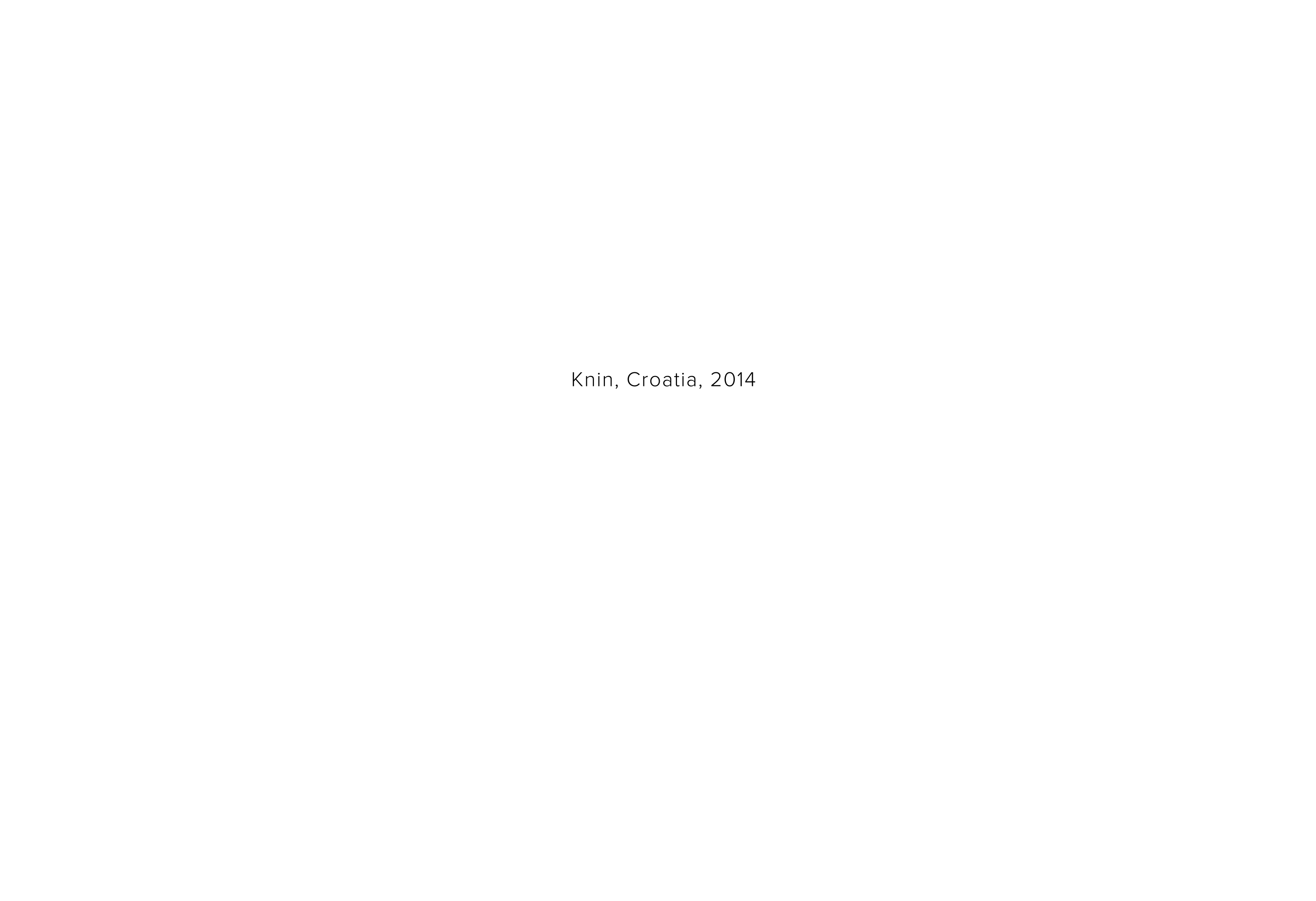

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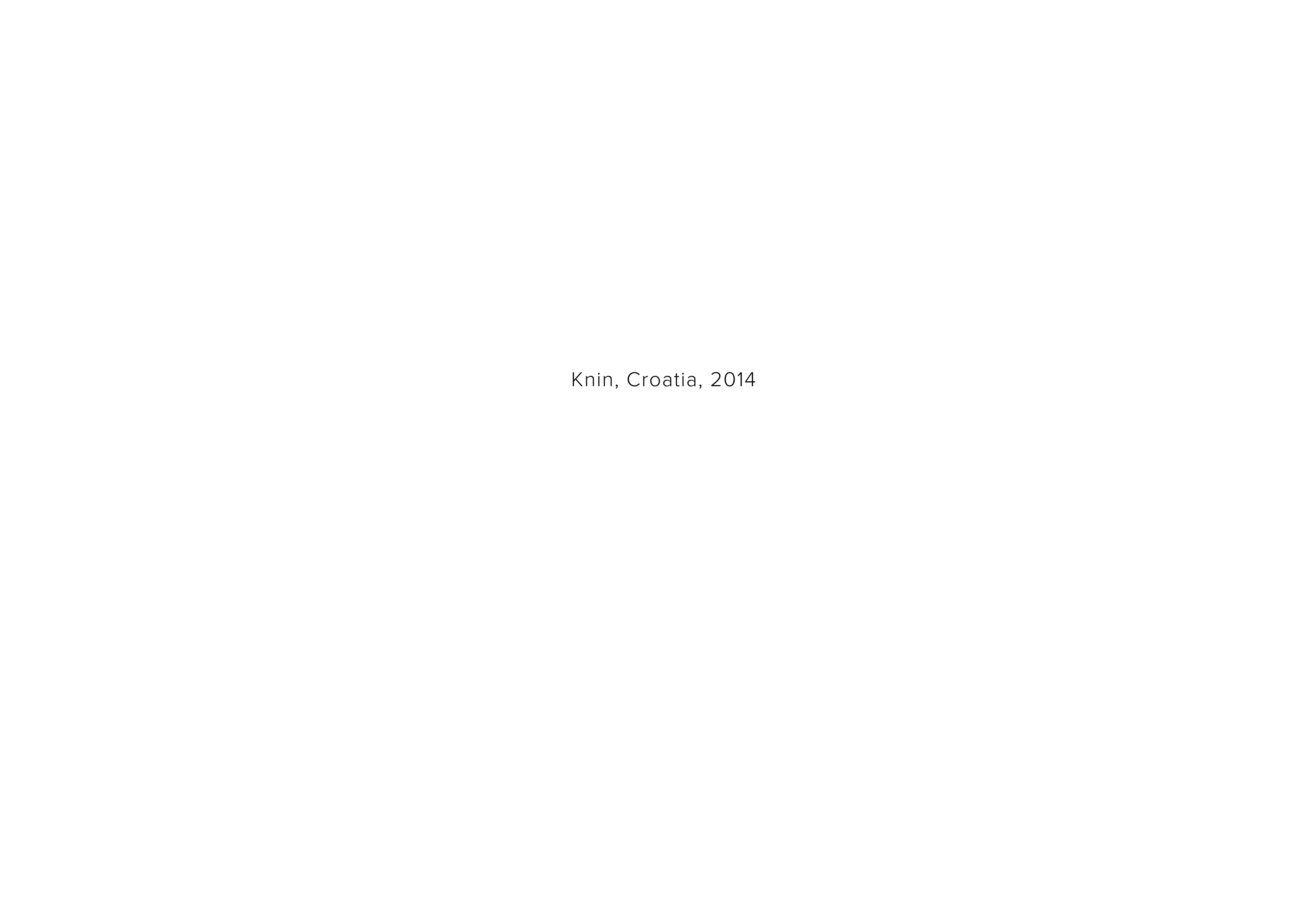

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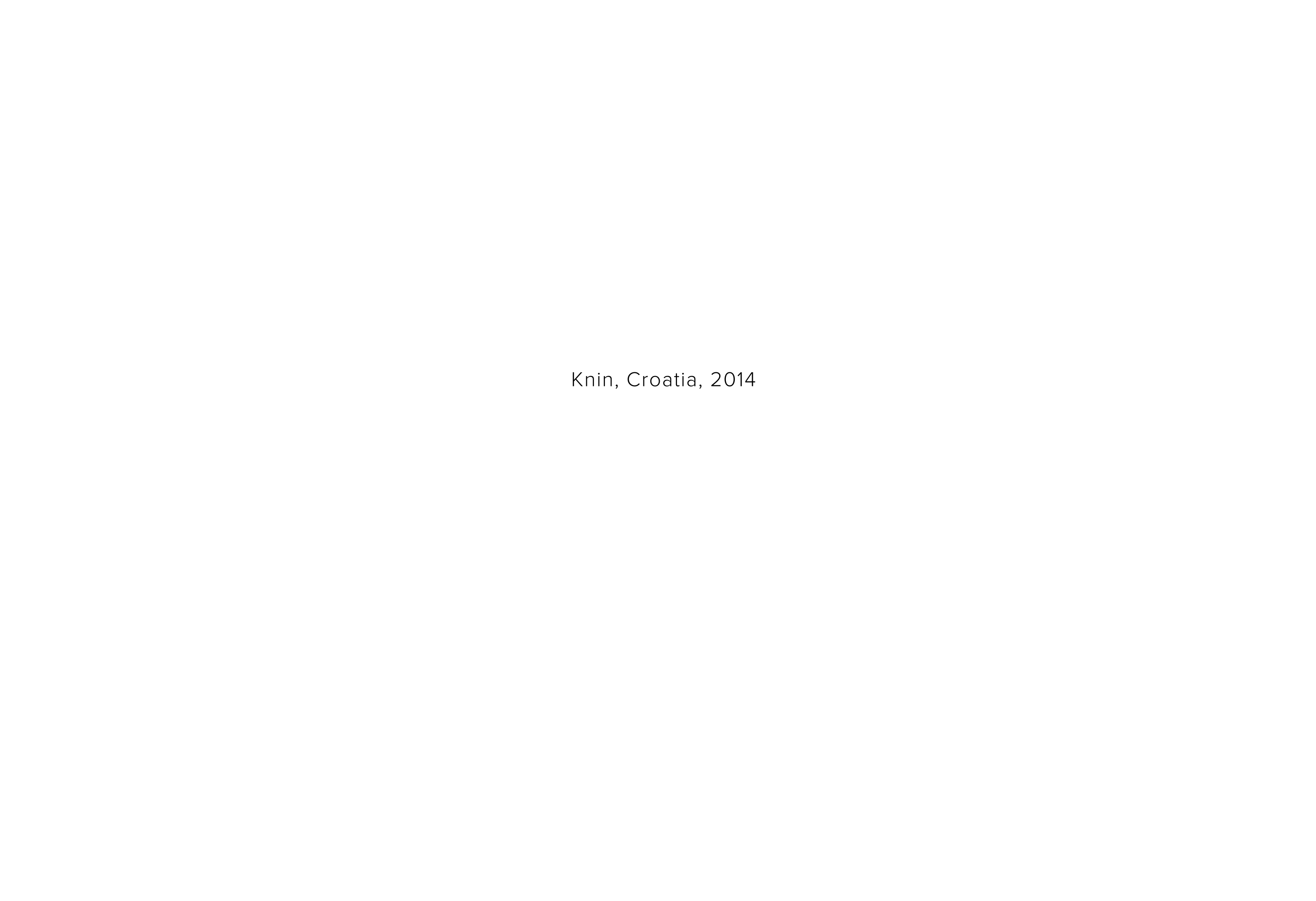

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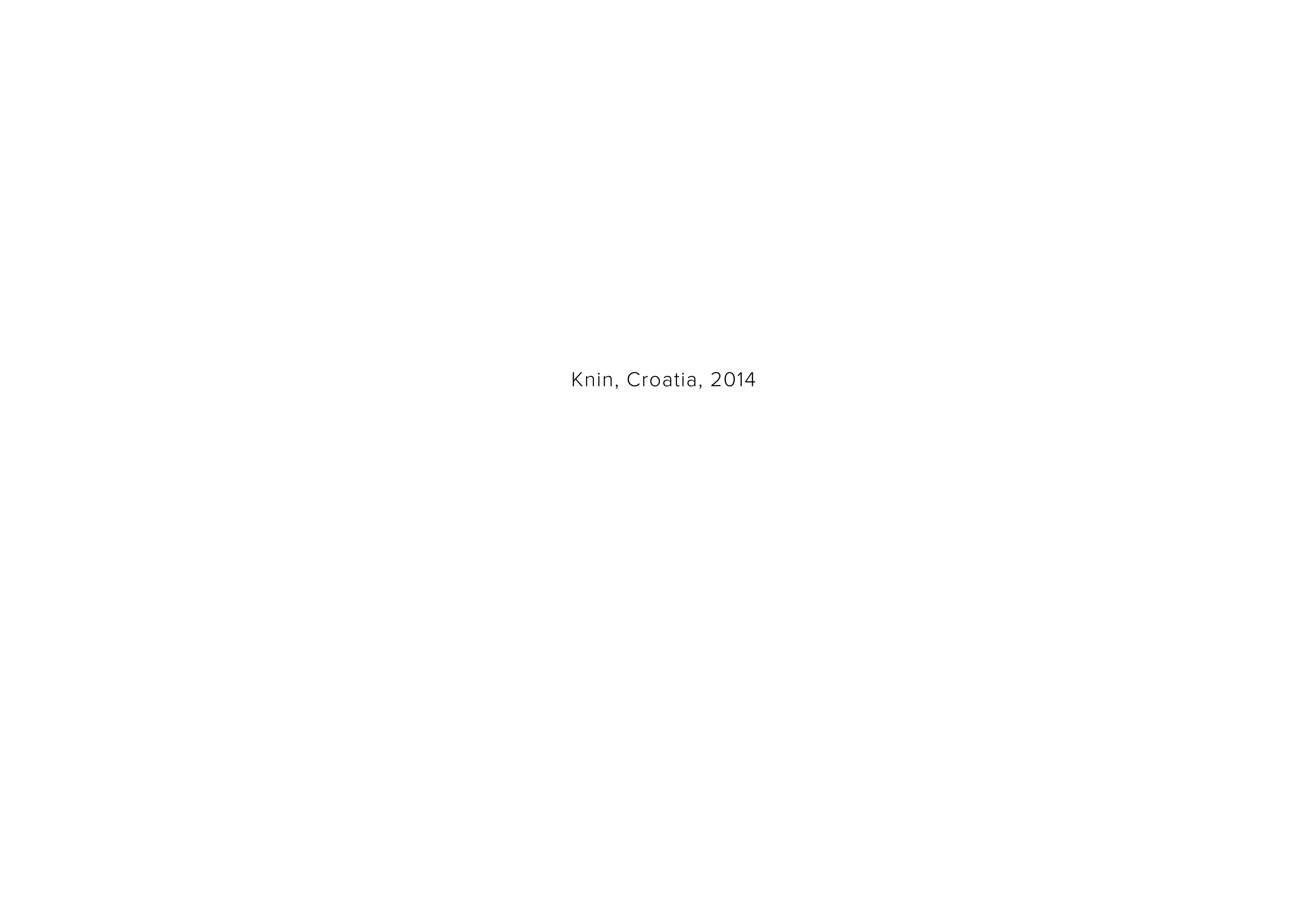

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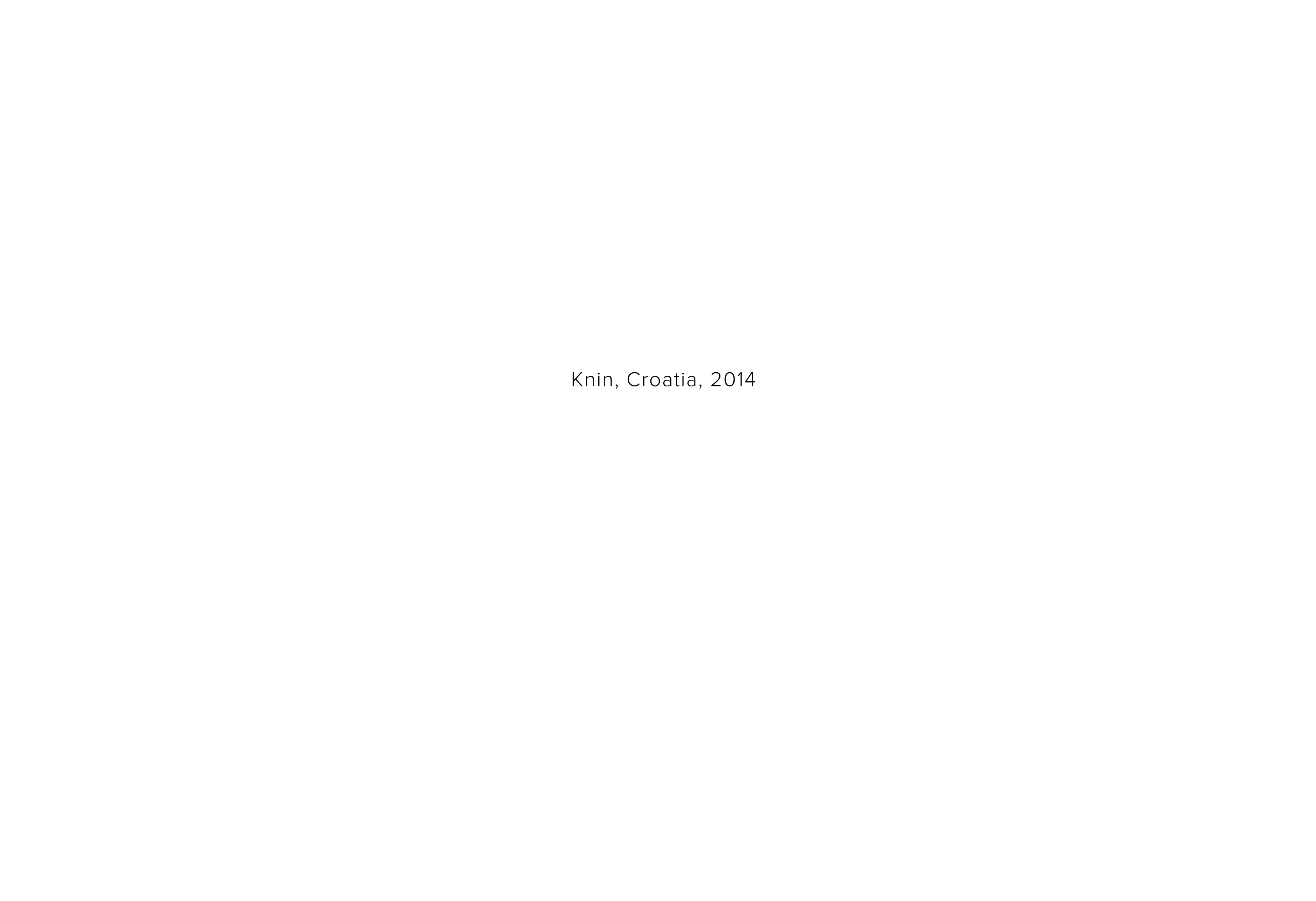

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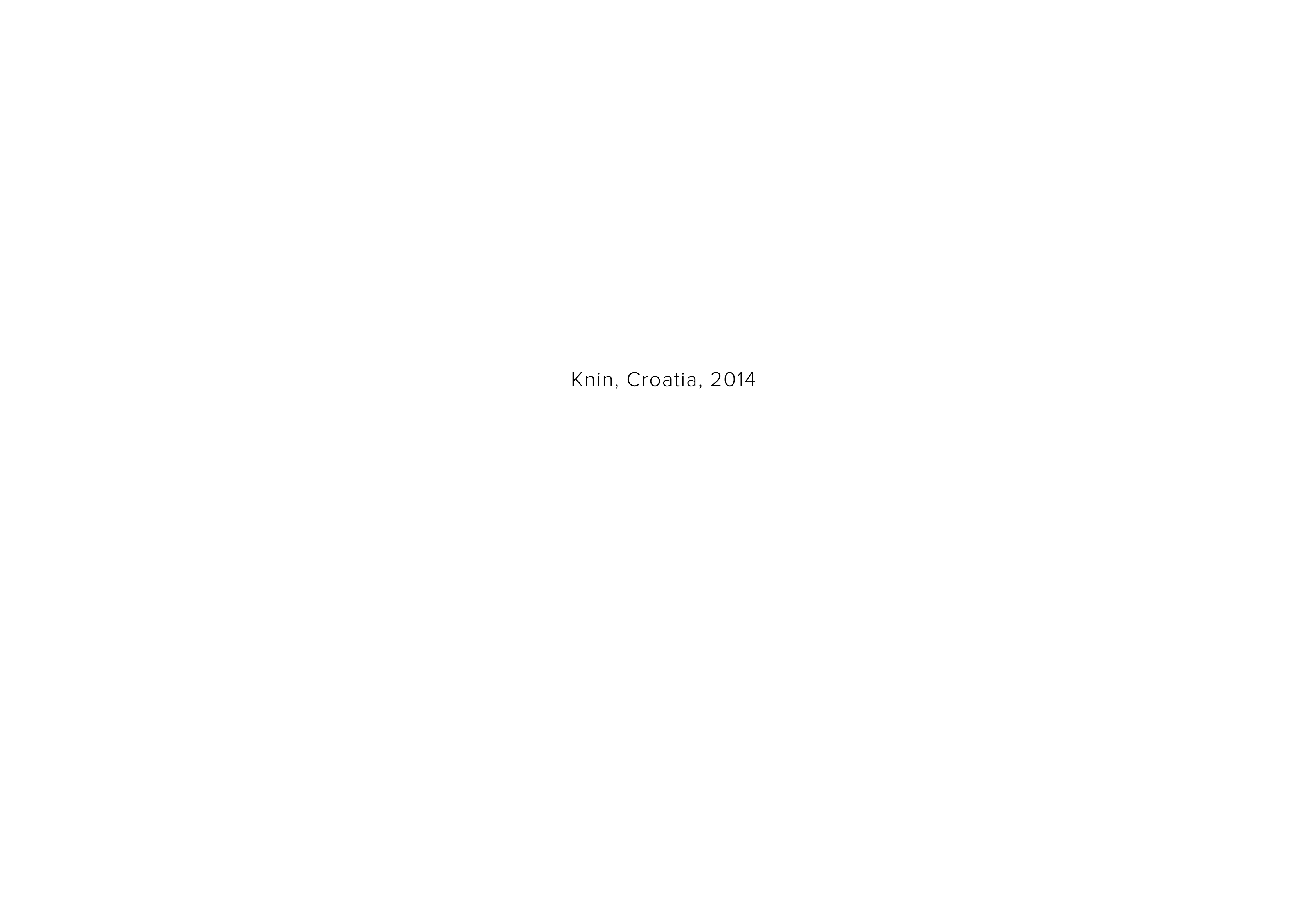

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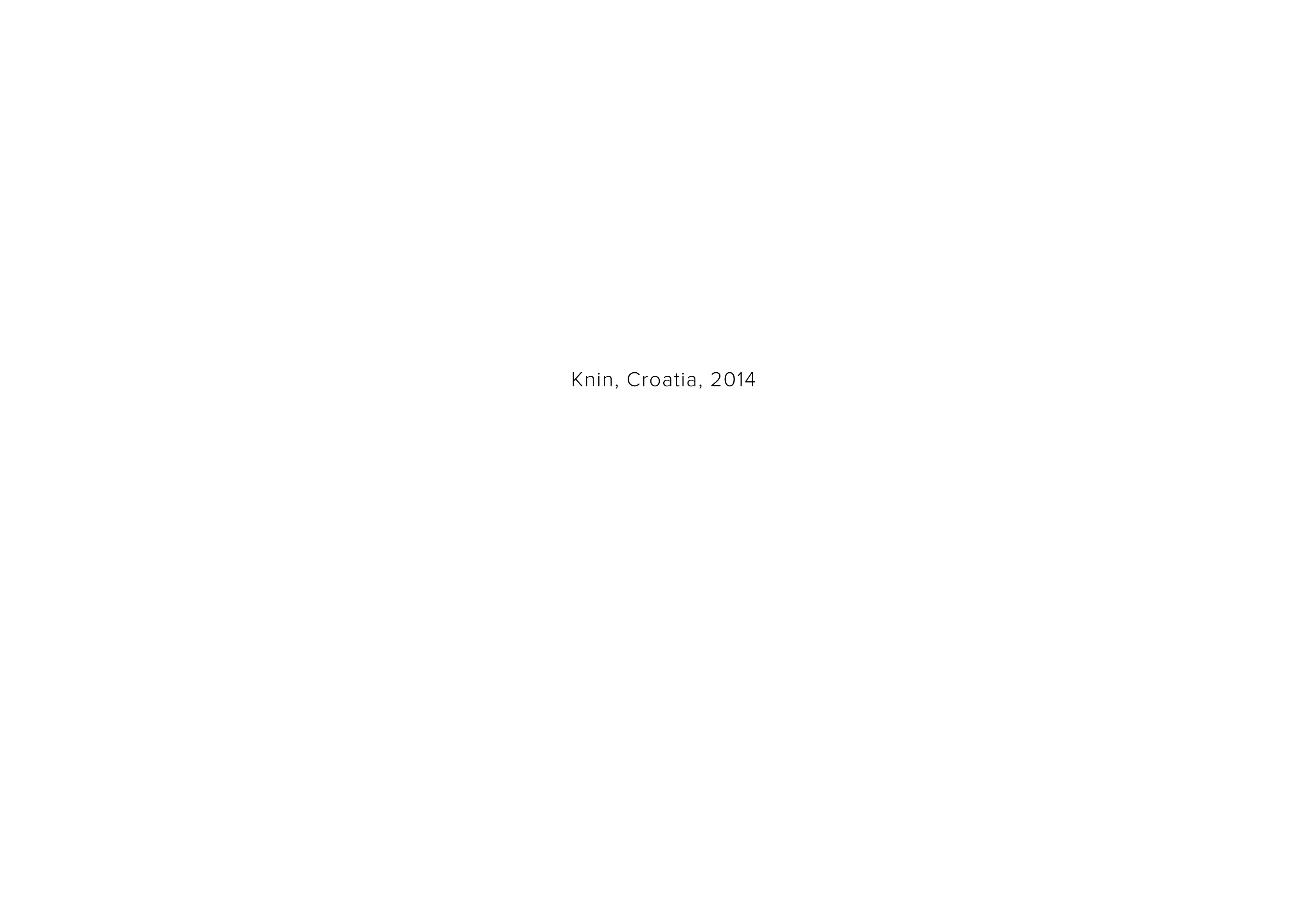

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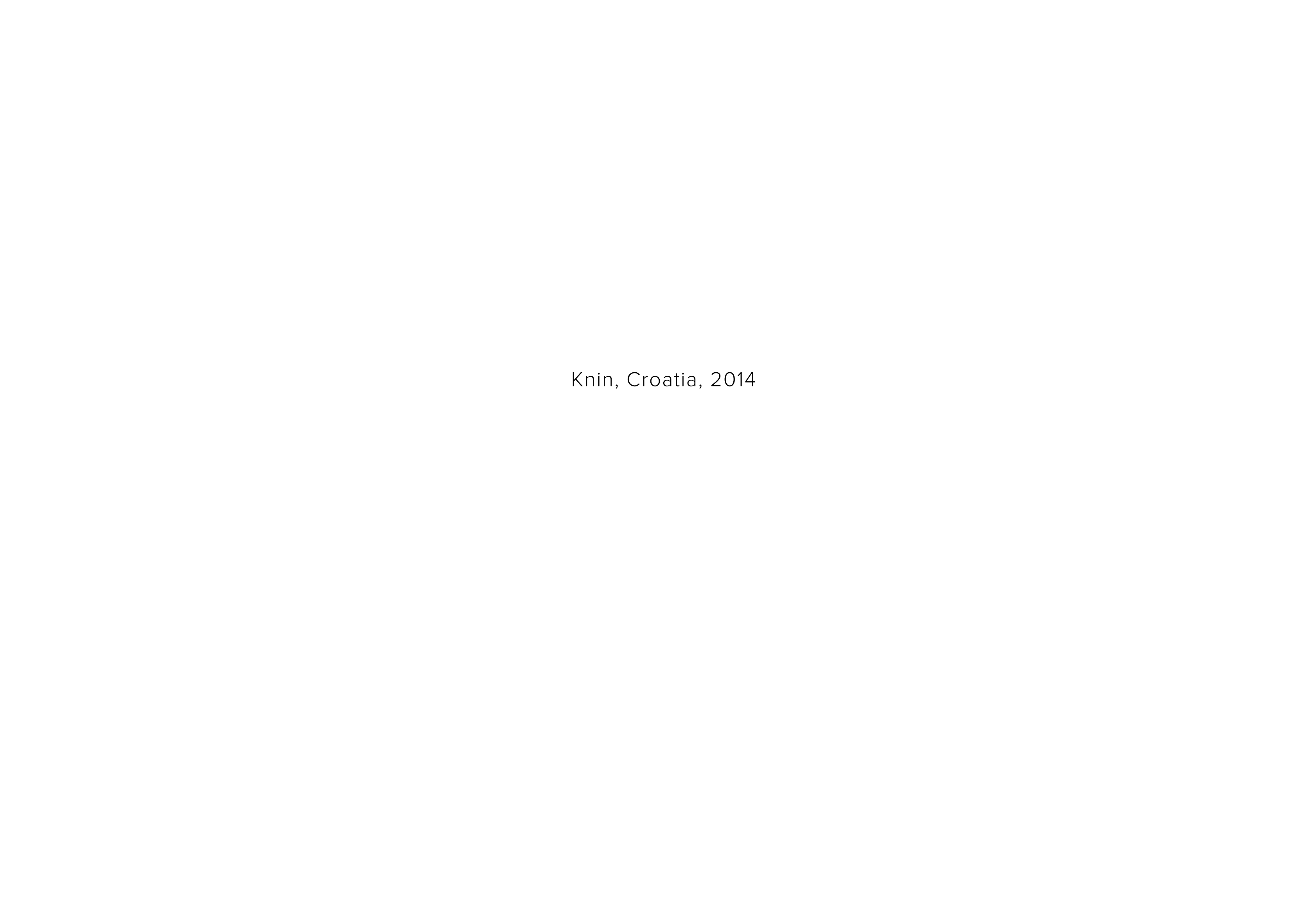

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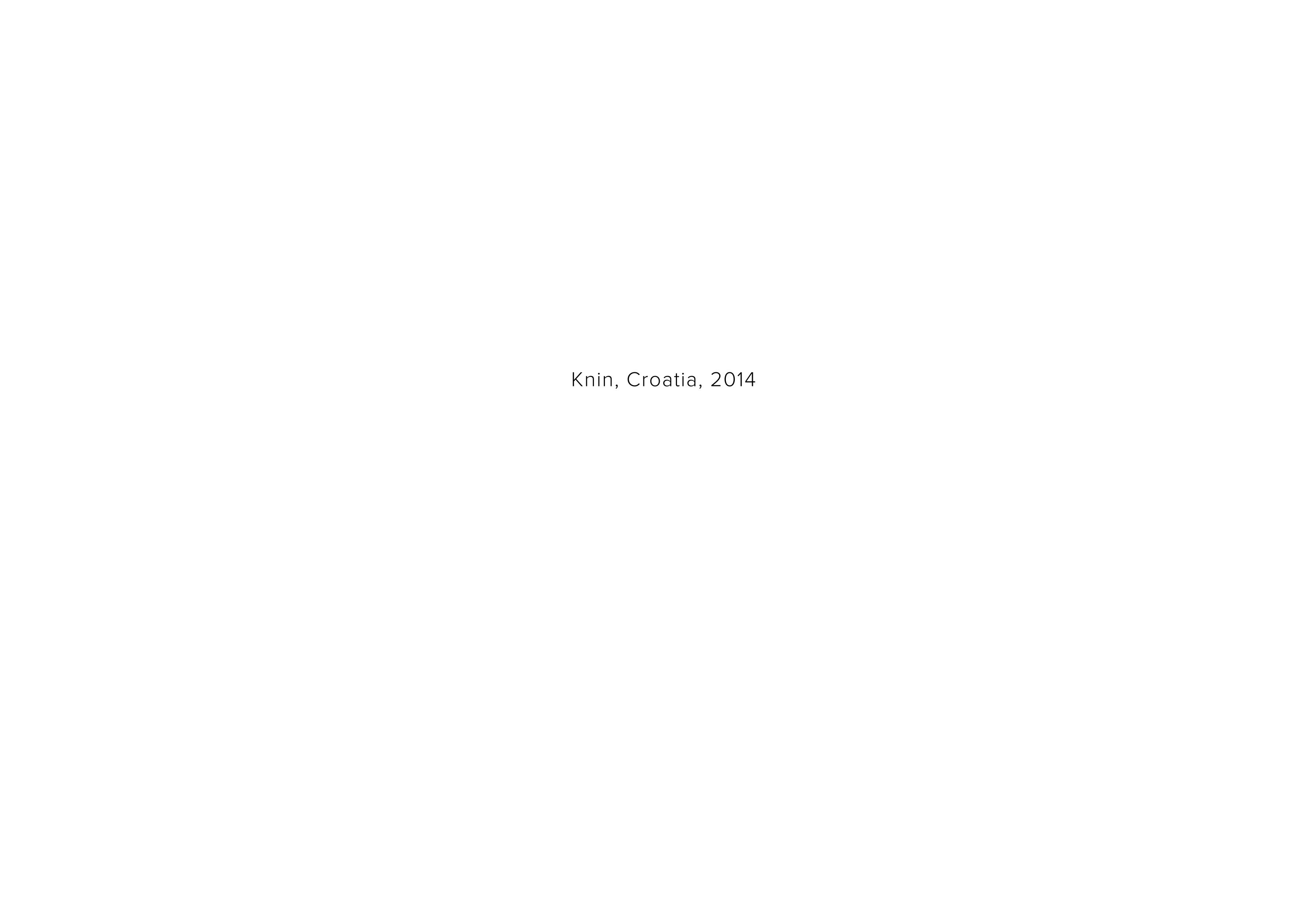

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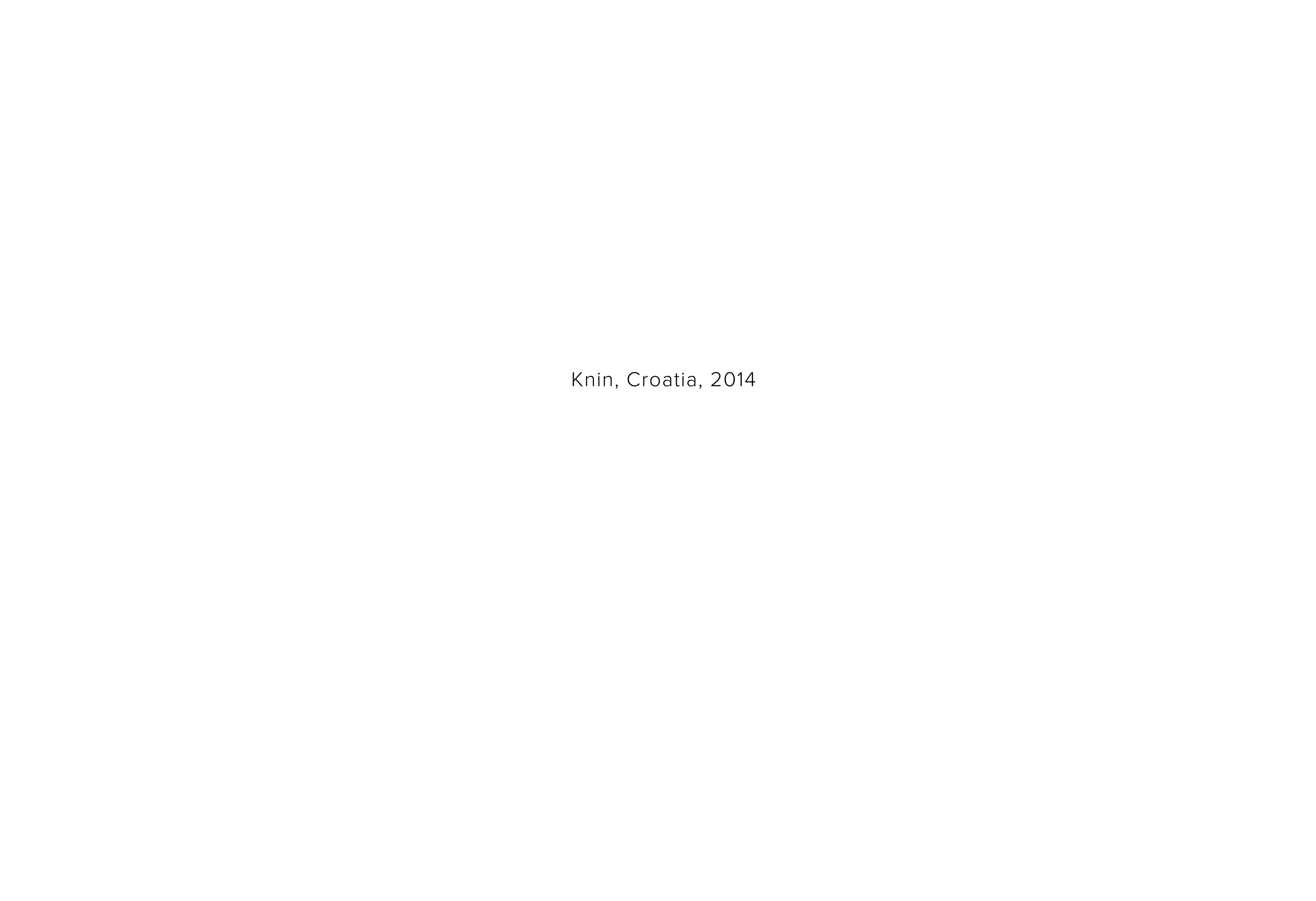

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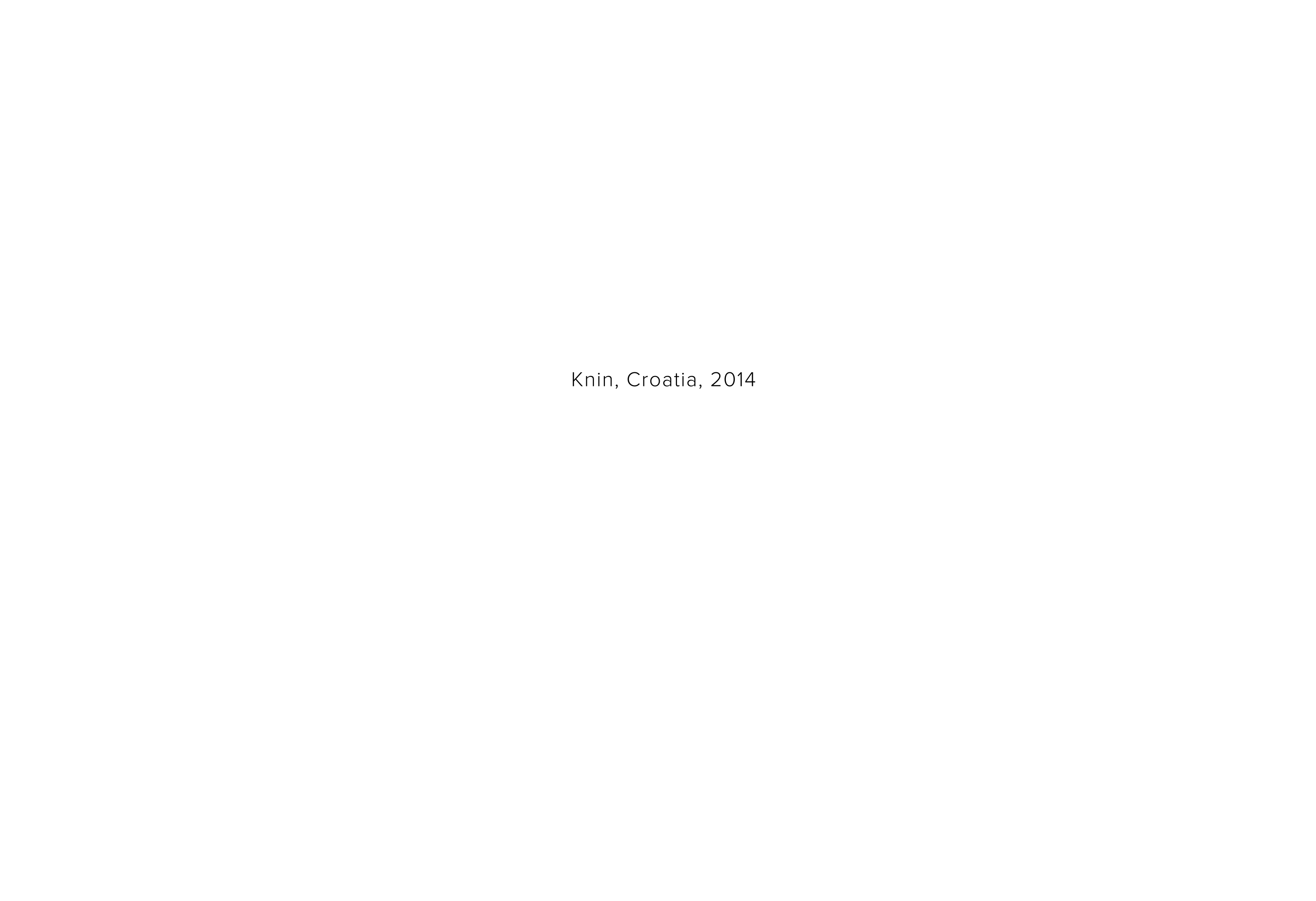

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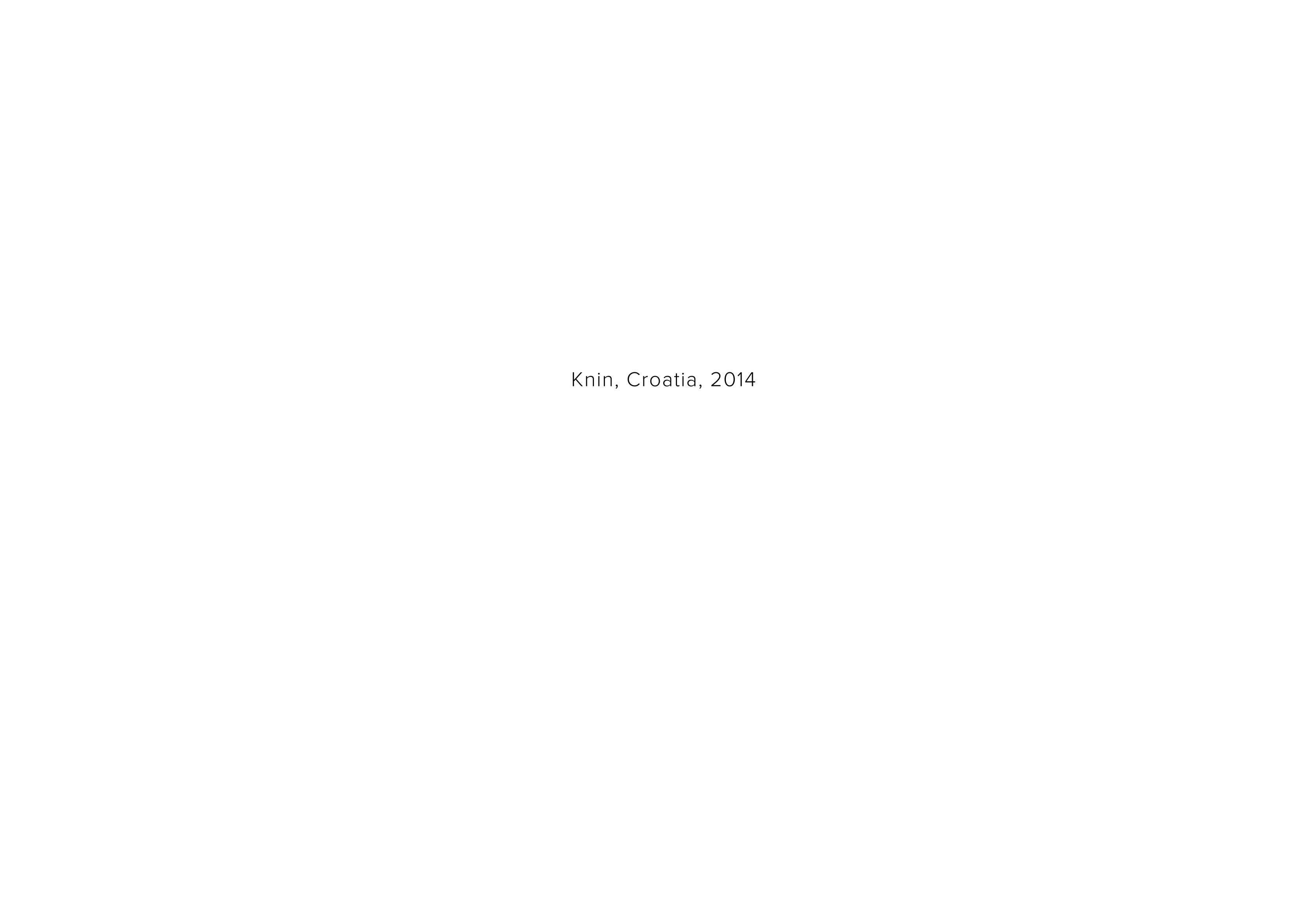

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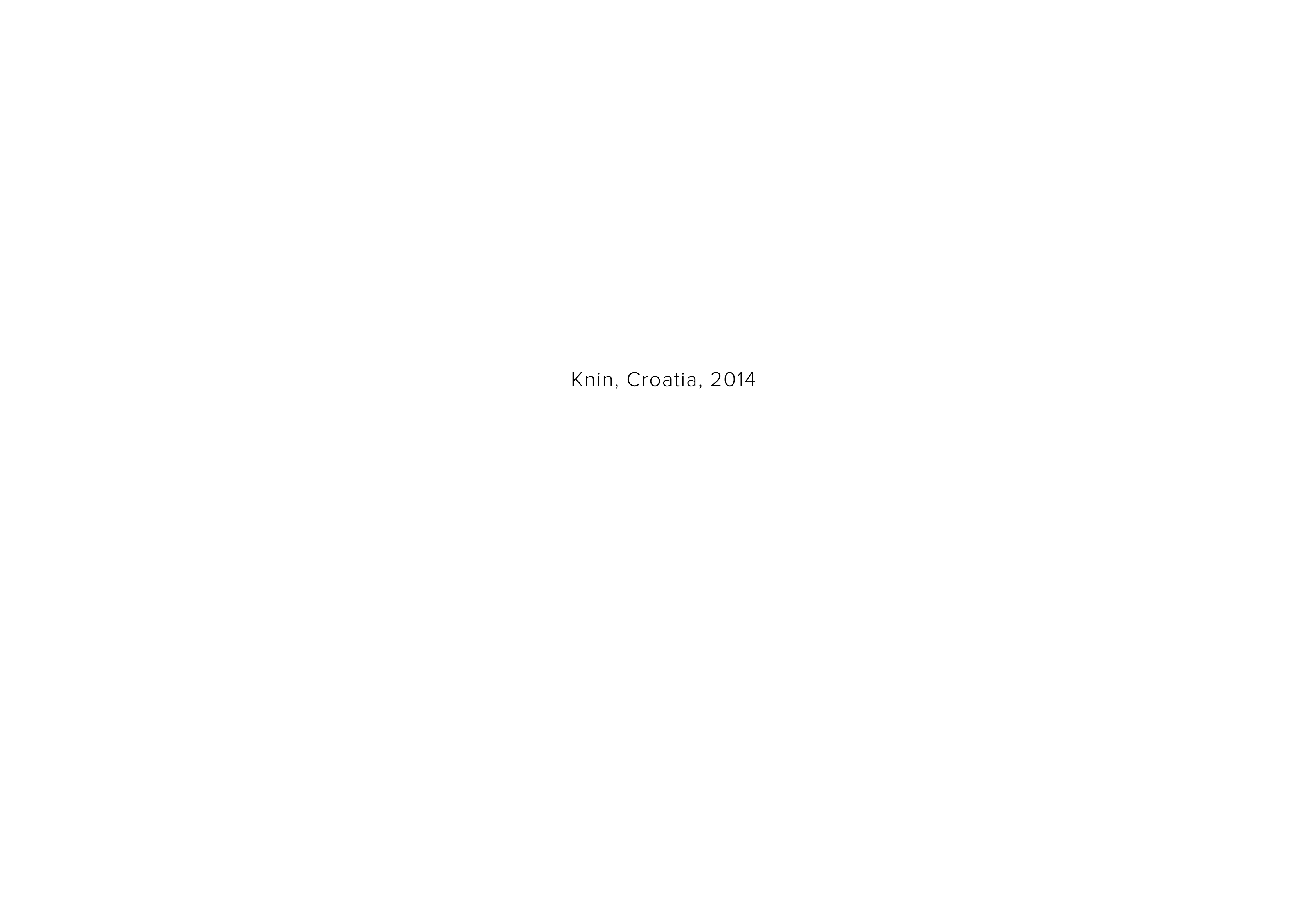

Knin, Croatia, 2014

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Knin, Croatia, 2014

Unit 12
Step 3
Can you skate?
Ann Look! There's David! And Ben, too!
Susan Hi, David! Do you like
You can eat a hamburger or a cheeseburger.
You can ski or you can swim.

Knin, Croatia, 2014

at the door
bicycle /baisikl/ bicikl
bye /bai/ zdravo
car /ka:/ automobil
house /haus/ kuća
in front of /in' frant əv/
in /in/ y, na
tree /tri:/ drvo

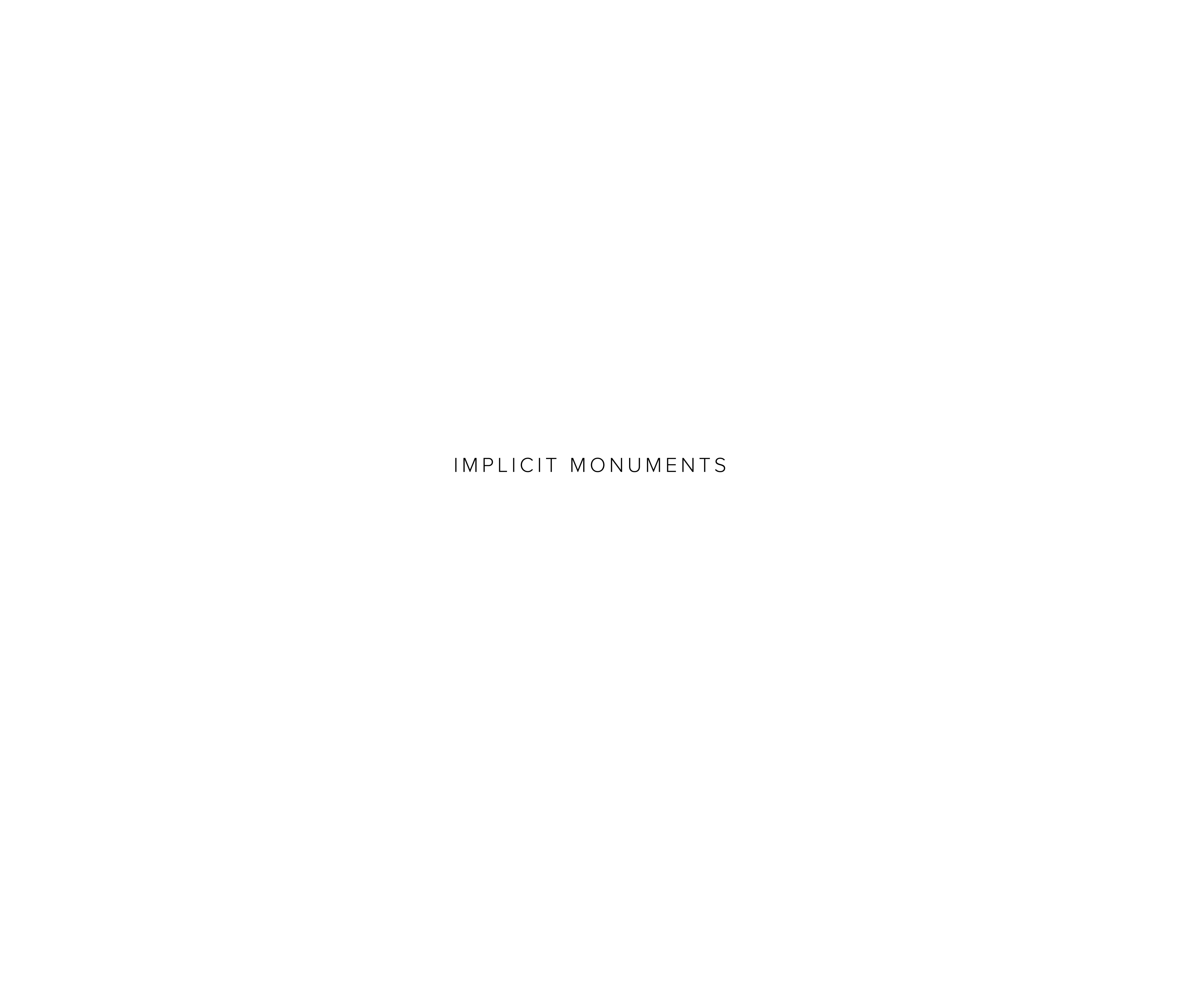
foot feet shoe because
foot feet shoe because

horse

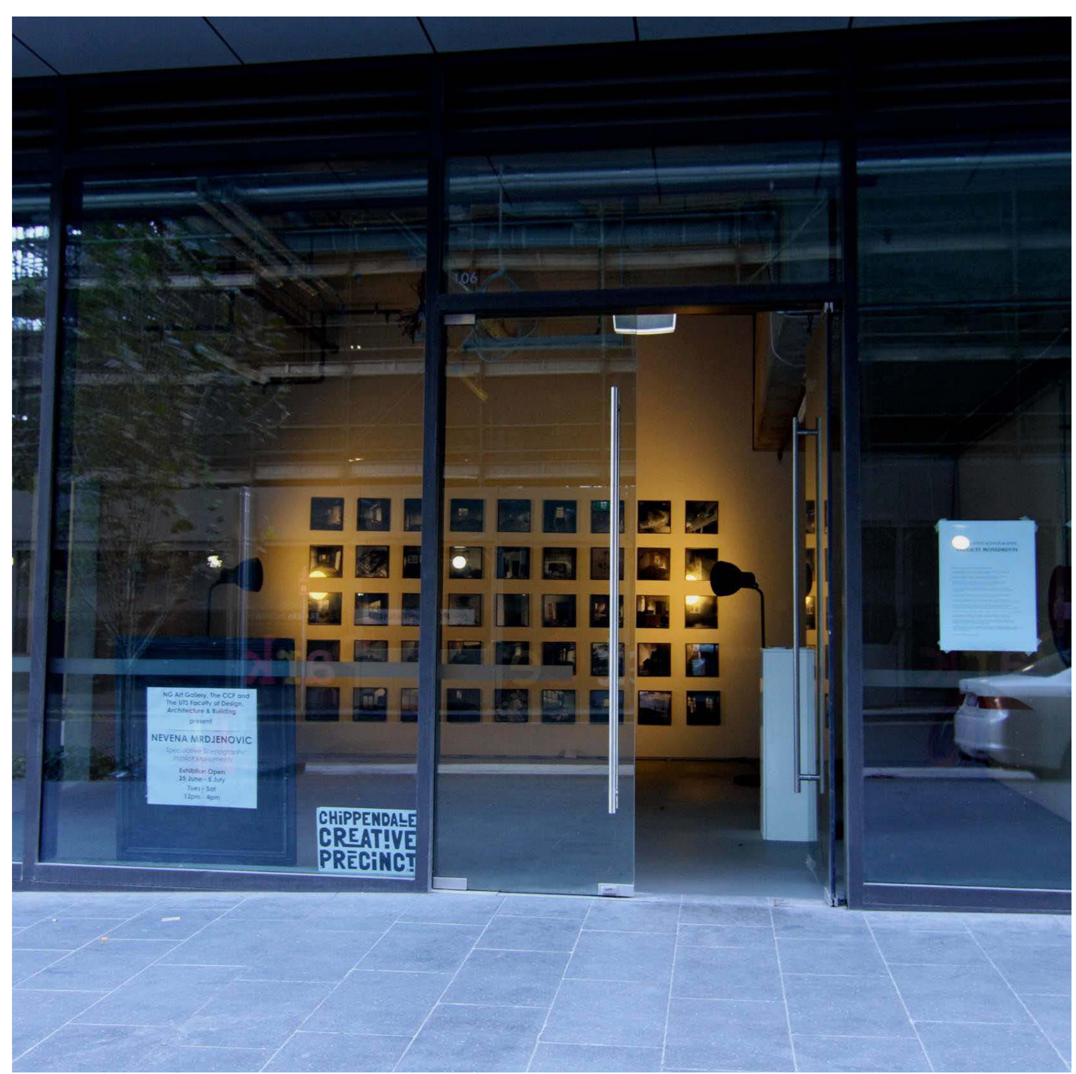
2. clock chair bicycle

Good bye!

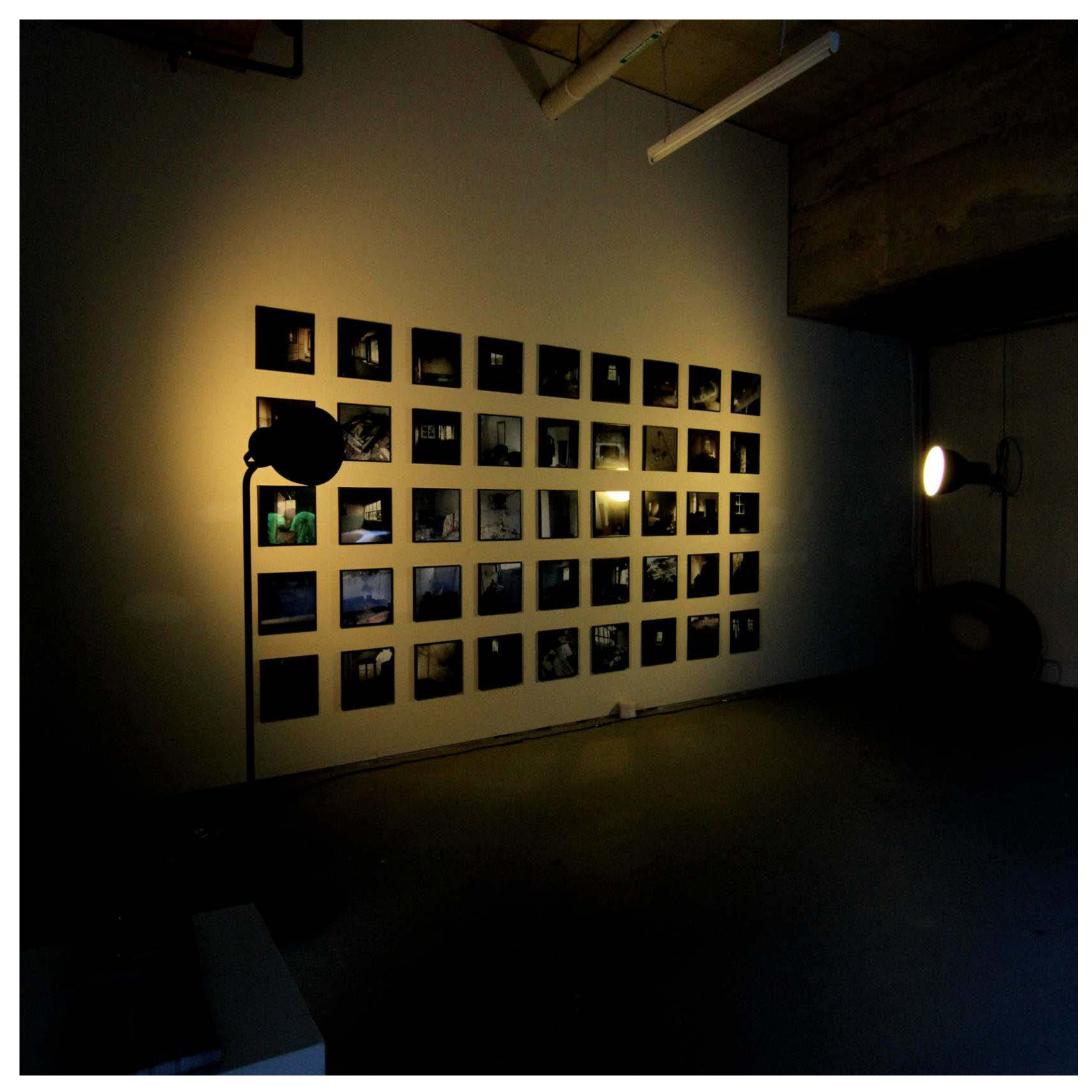
There is a garden in front of house?
Is there a garden in front of house?
Yes there is.
No, there isn't.
There are two dogs in front of house?
There are two dogs in front of house?
Are there two dogs?
Yes, there are.
No, there are not.


IMPLICIT MONUMENTS

Sydney, Australia, 2014


NG Art Gallery, The CCP and
The UTS Faculty of Design,
Architecture & Building
present
NEVENA MRDJENOVIC
Exhibition Open
25 June - 5 July
Tues - Sat
12pm - 4pm
CHIPPENDALE
CREATIVE
PRECINCT
106

Sydney, Australia, 2014



'A BOOK READ BY A THOUSAND DIFFERENT PEOPLE IS A THOUSAND DIFFERENT BOOKS.'

Andrei Tarkovsky

WAR ON ARCHITECTURE:

Scenographic strategies in tracing post-war domestic space in the former SFR Yugoslavia

VOLUME II

Nevena Mrdjenovic

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