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*The futures are much closer to us than any pasts we might want to return to or revisit.*

~ Jasbir Puar 2007: XXVII



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# 1. Introduction

The issues of LGBTIQ+/queer<sup>1</sup> migrants in Austria and queer activism in Serbia have recently grown in importance in queer and migration studies. It seems that an increase in LGBTIQ+ tolerance in Serbia has taken place since the Prime Minister of Serbia is an outed lesbian, which is raising the chances for Serbia to soon be a European Union (EU) member. Negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia, through the new economic deal signed in Washington, addressing the active decriminalization of homosexuality in another 69 nations, are pointing to the intersection of economic progress and the enhancement of LGBTIQ+ rights in Serbia (Exit News 2020). It is an index of the broader geopolitical dimension in which these processes take place. The EU accession of Serbia influences the policies on LGBTIQ+ people from/in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and this results in the NGO's usage of "European values" in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Considering these, little importance has been given to the intersections between the queer activism in these countries and the immigration politics for LGBTIQ+ people from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria. A lot of activist and academic literature concerns the image of the EU as a queer tolerant place as well as the status and lives of queer migrants in the EU. Whilst overlooking the association with similar images and perceptions of geopolitical locations as the Global South or European East.

Although there are existing similarities between sexual and migration politics, which are highly evident, the intersections are frequently overlooked. This similarity can be observed by looking at the visibility of queer people in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina on the one side and migrants in Austria and the European Union on the other. Aleksa Milanović (2017) for example emphasizes queer visibility in public spaces of Serbia, which are made invisible on purpose. The Belgrade Pride Parade is the only public space for them, which is politically instrumentalized to display tolerance within the state towards LGBTIQ+. In the same manner, migrants and refugees in Austria are also made invisible in the public space until they are instrumentalized and politicized too. Queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina living in Austria are caught between such political regimes.

The significance of this topic lies in the display of specific stereotypes and misconceptions which are still present in Austria – as well as in the EU in general – about the "Balkan" and are informing the policies about EU accession and sexual politics. Such policies have material effects on the lives of queer people in Austria, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Austrian citizens already see migrants from Serbia

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis I will refer to the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersexual, asexual, and queer people and will therefore refer to the shortcut LGBTIQ+ or to the terminus "queer" as an umbrella term. The plus in LGBTIQ+ is referring to any other person considering themselves not heterosexual, but also not identifying with the other terms.

and Bosnia-Herzegovina with a specific history, which shapes the relations between them. This thesis will explore these material effects in this master thesis by raising the following main research question:

How do queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina situate themselves in Austria vis-à-vis the Austrian queer communities, Serbian and Bosnian migration communities, the Austrian government, and society?

This thesis will not try to put people into categories, nor will it attempt to present the specific categories people are excluded from and included in as separate entities. Instead, it highlights the fluidity and the complex situatedness queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria are living in. Hence, it will not try to highlight differences between categories but explores the broad field in which their bodies are located and embedded. Further, it needs to be stated that this thesis is trying to investigate the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion rather than the discourses as those mark the other, and consequently, further marginalize the marginalized ones (Blagojević 2011: 33).

The research question will stand in connection with the role of the EU accession politics in their choice of discursive and material strategies to resist exclusion of the communities and societies. In this field, the research encounters migration policies concerning queer refugees and migrants in Austria with a certain image of the EU and Balkan region. The timeframe after the first Belgrade Pride Parade in 2001 will be significant as this is a big transformation in the perception of LGBTIQ+ people of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and maybe the Balkans in general. Planojević (2020) highlights, that it is possible to observe an “Evolution of Pride Parades” from the revolution aka. Stonewall of Eastern Europe and the upcoming Europride in Belgrade in 2022. Further Austria has a peculiar history and relationship with the Balkan. Though not having colonies and/or a colonial power as other European countries, Austria still had, during the Habsburgian times until now a big impact in the Balkan regions politics and policies (Petrović 2014: 6ff). Thus, it forms the perception of the geopolitical region to this date (Petrović 2014, Todorova 2009). Further, it contributes and builds on the perceptions through specific stereotypes and misconceptions which are still present in Austria about the “Balkan” and shape the involvement of LGBTIQ+ people in activism and their organization of their daily lives. Consequently, previous studies concerning the LGBTIQ+ rights (queer theory) have overlooked their bias in this matter. A lot of literature continued a specific “western” discourse on the topic of sexual orientation, which constitutes the “Balkan” as the “backward” “Global South” inside of Europe. Accordingly, the Balkan is displayed as in need of Europeanization and therefore in need for an egalitarian welfare society.

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To gather space for the intersections of the sexual and migration politics both literature angles need to be taken into consideration, that is why I want to focus on two main sides of literature which are of relevance for this thesis. Queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria are affected by different policies, politics and perceptions about themselves and their surroundings. This thesis will focus on the Belgrade Pride Parade and the policies around the EU accession of Serbia, on the one side, and on the (im)migration policy of Austria and the specific image of migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the EU, on the other side. They are interrelated with each other, because visibility, security and rights issues are worked out on the livelihoods of queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria. Accordingly, sexual and migration politics are entangled and cannot be explored separately. Their connotations are always framed in the light of the European West's superiority and consequently the European East's and Global South's inferiority.

To be able to analyse and work with these broad geopolitical structures, I want to ground my master thesis on two specific works and their concepts: the first one on the Balkanism by Marija Todorova (2009) and the other on the homonationalism by Jasbir Puar (2007). Todorova's work is important to show the assumptions that lie behind the understanding of tolerance towards queer people for the Europeanisation of the Balkan. Could Belgrade Pride have become a litmus test of being European enough for accession? Detailed examination of stereotypes and misconceptions about the regional context of the Balkan shows that the representation of the Balkan has a history and does not evolve and exist in a vacuum. For this reason, I will analyse and frame the perspectives of the European West and look at how the "Balkan" is perceived in a specific way because of its geopolitical situation. The Balkan is perceived as the "Other" inside of Europe, as "its inhabitants do not care to conform to the standards of behaviour devised as normative by and for the civilized world", which would not be the "barbarian" East but the European West (Todorova 2009: 3). Consequently, there exists not only a geographical distinction between the East and the West of Europe, but also an assumed evolutionist and progressive distinction (cf. *ibid.*: 10f.). This will be of importance when analysing and looking deeper on the assumptions of Serbian and Bosnian-Herzegovina migrants in Austria as homophobic vis-à-vis to the presumed queer tolerant Austrian citizens. These sexual politics build on these elusive but still connected presumptions of the binarity between the East and the West inside of Europe and consequently also between the Balkan and the "West" of Europe.

Not only the people but also the theory on LGBTIQ+ rights (queer theory) itself are affected by the images of the Balkan. As Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielińska (2011) highlight, there exists a "Western" discourse on the topic of sexual orientation and an image that the "backward" "Global South" as well as the "European East" is prohibiting these liberal thoughts. This is exactly where my work should attach the debate. Similarly, Jasbir Puar (2007) examines the relationship of queerness (sexual politics) and xenophobia considering the discursive and material strategies queer Muslims and queer Arabs in the U.S. are using to resist state and societal violence. The two main concepts issued in the

book of Puar are “homonationalism”, which is working in the intermediaries and paradoxes of heteronormativity and homonormativity, and “queer assemblage”, which offers an enlargement of Deleuzian theories of control societies (cf. Nyong’o in Puar 2007: xii). Immigrants and People of Colour are often deeply affected by control mechanisms of the state through structural violence and power hierarchies (Puar 2007: 151). Who is visible and heard when the livelihoods of queer migrants are at stake? The problem lies in the conception of identity as it assumes a static and uniform identity, instead of a negotiated one (Puar 2007: 24). Many scholars fail to provide an analysis on the livelihoods of queer migrants vis-à-vis the queer community of the nation state as they are assuming that if one group experiences exclusion it will be more aware of excluding or violating others. Puar delivers an alternative framework and conceptualization of identity, which doesn’t focus on categories, as they always create a normative side and an un-normative one (the “other”).

Accordingly, by using the work of Todorova on Balkanism and the work of Puar on homonationalism, I want to offer a differentiated view on the mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion concerning queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina living in Austria, which are not reflecting narratives of the EU and the European West as anterior of the world. This will help to work against the binarity of the “tolerant West”, which is an assumingly open queer space, and the “intolerant East”, or rather, “Global South”, which is prohibiting progressive sexual rights.

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In the beginning of this thesis, I want to address the methodologies and present the data I conducted to give an overview about my research site and research field. Moreover, it will include a reflection on my personality, my position and influence in the field, as well as, concerning on one hand the sensitive topic and on the other the time frame of the research during the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus, hence the ethics of a scientific research.

The third chapter will introduce the topic further by contextualizing the geopolitical dimension in which the research as well as queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria are situated. Therefore, I want to address the current developments concerning LGBTIQ+ Rights in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, which will be deeply embedded in the supranational politics of the EU and national politics in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to become the next EU member or candidate. The Belgrade Pride Parade as well as Pride Parades in general are always referred with issues on “Europeanization”, and in the media, politics and daily discourse it is always seen in context with the EU accession politics of Serbia (Mikuš 2011; Ilić 2015; Rhodes-Kubiak 2015; Bilić 2016; Ejodus und Božović 2019; Sloodmaeckers 2017). The supranational discourse on tolerance of queer people in Serbia as well as (but differently) in the diaspora shapes the Belgrade Pride Parade, which became a crucial indicator for the

value of Serbia as an EU membership candidate. Furthermore, the connotation with EU and “Europeanization” is intra-connected with an assumption of the “backwardness” of some countries, especially Eastern countries (Binnie and Klesse 2011), which is why the dichotomy between West and non-West is always immanent in activism across transnational ties (Hall 2000). In this chapter, Europeanization will be tackled as an assumption of backwardness of some countries, especially Eastern European countries, which can be overcome by integrating certain “European values”, which most of the time is not specified at all. In this part I want to go in depth to the Belgrade Pride Parade and the policies around the EU accession of Serbia as well as the Belgrade Pride history and its transformations and perceptions in queer communities of Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Austria, and the EU in general. It will aim to answer the question of how national policies in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Austria as well as the supranational policies concerning LGBTIQ+ rights affect the lives and experiences of queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria. What is the current situation for queer people and activist organizations in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Austria? How does their situation affect the EU membership qualification in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina? What does the perception of the Balkan tell us about the sexual politics in former Yugoslav countries?

The fourth chapter will be dipping into the migration politics and highlight the policies affecting queer migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, especially when facing prosecution or threats in their home countries. Nevertheless, these policies are shaped by certain regulations towards migrants from “safe” or “unsafe” third world countries, which are affecting queer refugees in a different kind, as they need to argue, how dangerous their country of origin is, to be granted asylum. Therefore, in context of migration politics, the thesis will take a deeper look into asylum processes to highlight which discourses and narratives are used. How is the EU defined in the context of queer asylum? The EU context is shaping a specific image of the Western Europe as a “queer positive space” for queer refugees and/or migrants, which influences the asylum politics of the EU (Raboin 2017: 14). Sexual politics and policies concerning the lives of queer migrants and refugees as well as problems with homophobia are therefore always handled as foreign issues, not as issues within Europe itself. Therefore, they are often instrumentalized for political purposes. How does the image of the Balkan affect the migration processes of queer migrants and especially on asylum seekers? Migration policies play an immense role in the livelihoods of queer migrants in Austria because previous studies have overlooked the intersections of migration and the activism for LGBTIQ+ rights concerning the Balkan region. For this reason, this chapter will therefore ask questions that draw attention to this relationship. What influence does the perception of the EU “immediate outside” (Jansen 2009) have on the migration process or on the application of asylum within the EU?

Presenting in the third and fourth chapter the complex in-betweenness of categories queer migrants face and the intermediaries of policies, which affect their bodies and lives, I want to deepen the sexual politics concerning the Balkan through the lenses of LGBTIQ+ tolerance. Immigration policies of Austria and

the image of Serbian and Bosnian-Herzegovina migrants in EU are allowing right-wing instrumentalizations of “homophobic migrants” to amplify antimigration politics. These have specific material consequences, because queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria are therefore excluded from queer communities in Austria, migration communities from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Austrian government and society concerning the citizenship rights. Therefore, the fifth chapter will deal with the term Balkan and how it is used in different contexts in more depth as it is used and has a connotation which is fuelled with perceptions of backwardness. Nevertheless, it is used as self-designation as well, which will become evident in my findings. On the one hand these ascriptions which affect queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are used in a way to generate space and amplify their voices in a field, where they are often unheard.

Resuming in the end, this master thesis will be trying to reveal the ambiguities of LGBTIQ+ rights and migration rights. Further, it should offer a new perspective outside of the presumed categories and assumption affecting the lives of queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria. Queer migrants often feel out of place because they don't fit the categories, they were put into. Neither the queer community nor the diaspora is offering the full support for their specific needs, which necessitates a creation of a new space.

## 2. Methodology

“Making knowledge is not simply about making facts about making worlds, or rather, it is about making specific worldly configurations – not in the sense of making them up *ex nihilo*, or out of language, beliefs, or ideas, but in the sense of materially engaging as part of the world in giving it specific material form.” (Barad 2007: 91)

How you gather the data is inherently intertwined with the methodological approach the researcher is choosing for the inquiry. Especially in a sensitive and vulnerable topic as mine, it is essential that the methodology I choose is trying to understand certain configurations, intersections, and intra-connections from within as part of it instead from reflecting the world from an outside point of view. That is why I am choosing the diffractive approach by Karen Barad to not barely reflect my position in the research but to see myself as part of the research, because “‘each of us’ is part of the interactive ongoing articulation of the world in its differential mattering” (Barad 2007: 381).

The research field I was engaging in, is not barely an open visible field, but consists of elusive relations which need to be grasped. “A good field site is made, however, not only by considerations of funding and clearance, but by its suitability for addressing issues and debates that matter to the discipline.”

(Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 10) My research field therefore is the broader field of queer movements in Serbia and Austria, which are situated within the context of national and supranational policies. The main empirical research was carried out between March 2020 till November 2020. In this time, I was able to get in contact with queer organizations in the capital cities of Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia. Therefore, I was in contact with HOSI Vienna, Sarajevo Open Centre and Da Se Zna Belgrade, which were willing to give me an interview and provide me with more information as well as data for the research.

Additional organizations were contacted as well but didn't had the possibility to be part of the research or didn't answer the request at all. Contacted organizations for the master thesis are: QueerBase, MiGaY, Blockfrei, Belgrade Pride Organization Coordinator, OESG, Serbian umbrella Organisation Austria, ILGA-Europe (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Trans and Intersex Association Europe). Some of them didn't reply, denied an interview and some didn't have the possibility to talk to me as their organization are dissolving. The Corona outbreak was limiting the possibility to get in contact in-person with further organizations as there was seldomly a possibility to visit their headquarters or to attend events, as most of them were cancelled. In total I had the opportunity to interview six queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria, four of them living in Vienna and two of them in Carinthia. I will certainly describe in the following chapter, how I got into contact with them and the other research partners.

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In preparation to my master research, I was conducting a preceding research between November 2019 and January 2020 in the Bosnian diaspora community concerning their experiences talking about LGBTIQ+ rights and sexual orientations in their community. Cautiously approaching the field and raising questions for the master thesis, I had two individual interviews and one focus group interview in this time. Of course, the interview participants were asked for consent concerning the usage of the interview data for the master thesis.

Although the Corona outbreak cancelled a lot of events, several did take place in Vienna, which I was able to attend. My participant observation is therefore focussed on the organization of informal gatherings through parties for and of queer migrants from the "Balkan" in Vienna by Balkan Love, which I attended in March and June 2020. On these three occasions, I was able to connect with people and to informally chat with them. They are taking place in different locations in Vienna depending which ones they could rent for the evening. Often, they could rent the same one, but sometimes they need to find another location to be able to organize this event. The participation at these events allowed me to put myself "where the action is" and collect data (Bernard 2006: 257). "Participant observation involves

going out and staying out, learning a new language (or a new dialect of a language you already know), and experiencing the lives of the people you are studying as much as you can.” (Bernard 2006: 258) This is precisely why it is important to at least participate on several occasions in-person, to get to know the people and to gather first-hand experience of the connection activities of queer migrants from the “Balkan” in Austria. Of course, my person in these gatherings was noticed as I didn’t attend previous meetings of Balkan Love, but it was also a chance to talk with people, as they seemed interested in me too. I was able to get to know people and create relationships through these events, because I, as a researcher and part of the diaspora, became “part of circles that are connected to one another and to which the researcher is also accountable” (Chilisa 2012: 113).

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With the same importance of the participant observations, the research will include semi-structural narrative interviews and irregular meetings with the people individually. As the research and connections with my informants take place during the government measures regarding the Covid-19 Virus, some of my interviews are taking place online. Thus, some of the persons I was talking to were suggesting creating an online survey, as some would not feel comfortable to talk about their experience in-person, I developed one through Lime Survey on a paid private website to ensure private data safety. To assure the questions were asked in a right way and not too long, my interview participant and research partner Marko Ilić helped me shape the survey, so it would be filling all the necessary gaps left out through the empirical data. In the end, the questionnaire was designed in a CASI (computer-assisted self-administered interview) format, where the people can answer the questions themselves in a time frame, they would feel comfortable with (Bernard 2006: 188). Unfortunately, no one participated in it, although it was shared through several platforms and was forwarded through interview participants.

However, the main empirical data consists of the qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted in the year of 2020. This interview form was chosen because the questions only guide the interview, but the interview participant can lead the researcher to the aspects, which seem relevant for them. As a tactic in these interview settings, Bernard suggests to “steer the interviews around the issue of interest and to let informants teach me what I need to know.” (2006: 215) Accordingly, I was choosing the prepared questions from my interview guide which are complementing the current topic discussed and was not too focused on the “correct” order. Nevertheless, a lot of unstructured interviewing came to use as well, as it is important to get to know the lived experience of the people. This interviewing method was helpful to get to know the persons better and to build a personal rapport (Bernard 2006: 158). Even though in-person interviews were not always possible, I tried to conduct the interviews at least online. Nevertheless, the role of technology and the researcher’s approach to build rapport needs to be taken



into consideration when conducting interviews online. Luckily all my participants had the necessary technological devices to allow a straightforward pathway for synchronous interviewing. However, beside the synchronous online interviews the asynchronous informal and formal discussions through social media and email took place, to get to know each other (Maddox in Lupton 2020: 6). As in-person interviews would include small-talk and a familiarization with the research participants, in this case a lot of these social practices were done through the internet.

In my perception it would feel unnatural to start with my interview guide and push forward all my prepared questions without checking in with the current dialogue flow. The composition of the interview setting should not be underestimated, because it has an enormous impact on the success of the interview (see Thomas 2019). The environment, in which the interview takes place, had a big influence for certain interview settings, especially the ones which took place online. Sometimes the semi-structured interviews turned out to be a focus-group interview or rather a group discussion. For instance, when I met Saša and Dalibor/Milica in Saša's flat, I was not prepared for an interview of two people together. However, it turned out to be quite interesting, as they had different experiences and therefore shared different opinions on certain topics, which is why they began to argue with each other on controversial issues.

Like the semi-structured interviews in this format, focus group interviews already turned out to be quite useful in my previous research, as the interview participants are acting upon the answers of the other and elaborating a discussion. It is a methodological tool which is receiving a lot of attention, because of its structure. Group discussions in this manner are enabling some correspondence "in the way in which opinions are produced, expressed and exchanged in everyday life" (Flick 2009: 197). It allows to reconstruct the individual opinions as they unfold. On some occasions they asked questions which became quite relevant for my research, which I was not sure how to ask. For example, during the interview with Vera and Ena<sup>2</sup>, which are in a relationship and living together in a flat, they asked each other questions, they would like to know as well about each other:

“Ena: This motivated me to come out. We were at the pride and there I first had the feeling to be myself in the public. Shortly after, I have had my coming out to my best friend. (...)

Vera: Can't you be in college like this?

Ena: No, not really. Maybe because I am introvert.”

(Vera and Ena 2020; my translation)

A conversation emerged which allowed other participants to enrich their knowledge and is not only benefiting the researcher interested in the topic. Especially in contexts dealing with marginalised

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<sup>2</sup> These persons are anonymized. Some wanted to be mentioned with their names in their research and some wanted to stay anonymous. Often it depended on the fact if they had already their coming-out to their family members.

communities this is an effective tool in methodology to share research findings with the community as well (Chilisa 2012: 240). However, there is a downside in this method too. In a group discussion the dominant opinion and/or dominant speaker get the overhand, which can lead to the silencing of some participants and/or opinions. Because of this, it is important that the researcher stays cautious and is observing the conversation precisely, to step in if necessary.

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Another important aspect in my research was the influence and the data gathered from social media. Because of the Corona outbreak a lot of consultation activities were transferred to Social Media Applications like Instagram as most people were not able to reach the queer organizations in-situ. This was a pleasant development in my case.

There exists already a lot of anthropological literature on the methodological changes concerning the possibility of being present in a certain location to do participant observation. Participant observation became the most important data gathering method since Bronislaw Malinowski, but there are a lot of situations where anthropologists cannot be present and therefore need to conduct the research online or remotely. Social Media surely has changed the possibility to do a so-called remote ethnography (Postill 2016: 65). Twitter messages and Instagram pictures are part of the digital archive of events, which allow to follow “live” events and be part of the event from a far (ibid.). Gray is concluding therefore that social media are “experienced – and remembered – in the body in ways that challenge the distinctions we might otherwise make between virtual and physical encounters.” (2016: 502).

Therefore, the data acquired through the research in social media plays an important role in my research as well. By participating in these applications, I am taking part in this knowledge production and sharing space. Information and testimonials have been shared online through official accounts of Belgrade Pride Parade for example concerning the application to be the next EuropePride candidate in 2022. During May 2020 live videos were shared by the coordinators of the Belgrade Pride Parade and the Europe Pride Parade for 2022 describing the queer discourses in Serbia and the application process for the Europe Pride 2022, namely by Goran Miletić and Marko Mihajlović. During these, followers engaged with the speakers by asking questions or chatting with each other about the topics mentioned. In this sense, it is important to look at Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter as “multitude of social media platforms”, which are shaping the knowledge of the research field (Gray 2016: 507; Postill 2016: 64).

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Additionally, the consideration of the policies of national states and supranational policies of the EU is of big importance for my inquiry. Policies have an important role in research, which is why I want to look at the beginning of certain notions and implications in them as well as how they affect bodies.

Policies have an affective role in the lives and relationships of the individuals, but they are not passive actors in this relationship, as they are used and reformed by individuals and institutions for different purposes. Feldman (2011) recognized it well by highlighting the intra-relation between the security apparatus of the EU concerning migration and the individuals in this apparatus. His distinction between connections (direct, immediate contact between entities) and relations (indirect, mediated contact between entities) are often elusive, but nevertheless can be put in the forefront (Feldman 2011: 379). Therefore, policies interact with individuals and integrate themselves into their daily routines. This interaction is not always onefold as migrants act upon these policies in a specific manner. These stereotypes and the assumptions informed by them shape the logics of these policies.

Because of the large impact of policies in the shaping of social realities and power relations, the policies concerning LGBTIQA+ Rights and migration were collected to be analysed and incorporated in this research (Shore et al. 2011: 2). Concerning LGBTIQA+ rights and their instrumentalization in Serbia, it is nevertheless interesting how the Pride is perceived and how the policies around them are in relation to the supranational politics of EU enlargement. Further, the European Organizations for LGBTIQA+ Rights as ILGA-Europe, EPOA (European Pride Organisation Association) as well as regional human rights reports by Sarajevo Open Center, Dasezna Gay Straight Alliance, QueerBase and HOSI are important to look at, as they deliver yearly status reports on the LGBTIQA+ situation within the European countries. Further, I analysed the migration reports by the Ministry of Interior Austria between 2001 and 2020 to highlight, how the law concepts as for example the safe country of origin affects the asylum processes.

These secondary resources of policy papers, statistics and newspaper articles are further important for the research as interviews with the officials were not possible. Above all, migration reports from the Foreign Ministry of Austria and laws governing migration in the EU are of value to understand how their experiences are shaped by these.

## 2.1. Introducing the research participants

For clarity through this paper, I want to introduce the participants and co-developer of this research and elaborate how the contact was established. Most importantly this excursion should be considered an attempt to explain why these people (and the organizations some of them represent) are important for answering the research question.

For this research 14 people were participating. Five joined the previous research in the winter of 2019/2020, while the rest of the interviews (in total nine) were conducted between March and November 2020.

The five research participants in the previous research are offering their insights on the surroundings my topic is placed. They will play an important role to understand the situation of the Serbian and Bosnian diaspora in Austria, because no Serbian or Bosnian diaspora organization was willing to talk or get in contact with me.

Six interview partners were queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina living in Austria. Further three interviews were conducted with queer activist organizations coordinators in the capital cities of Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia. I will introduce all my interview partners, to allow an overview of the ethnographic context of this master research. Most of the research partners were especially keen to be named with the full name in the master thesis and deeply requesting to ensure their names are mentioned. Some were cautious and didn't want to be recognized at all through the publication of this thesis. To give credit to the knowledge shared with me, but also assuring the privacy of several research participants, I will mark which names were anonymized. I will introduce the research participants in a chronological order.

### **Milica and Theodora**

Milica is the mother of Theodora, both very dear friends to me. I get to know them through a student college, which is the first daughter of Milica. Milica was a refugee from Bosnia-Herzegovina. Together with her former husband she was fleeing the Bosnian war on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 1996 and after some time she build up a life in Vienna, where her two daughters were born. Both still traveling to Bosnia-Herzegovina and being quite involved in a dispersed Bosnian diaspora in Vienna, the interview with them were very deep and thought-provoking. On the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019 in the evening, I was invited in their flat in Vienna, where two individual semi-structured interviews took place. The interview was about their life experiences and topics they feel free to share with others and they were willing to help me if their names were anonymized. Of course, the situation between those two are not only different in their age and experience (concerning the Bosnian war), but also in the topics addressed too. Sexuality is a quite intimate topic, but even talking about it in a broadly manner often seemed not possible for them too. For instance, Theodora is talking a lot about that homosexuality is an off-limit topic in most circles she encounters.

Milica describes herself as Serbian-orthodox but having a communist education and Theodora as a feminist activist. The mother encouraging her daughters to be open minded for everything by breaking rules herself in the family by marrying a Muslim within Bosnia-Herzegovina, Theodora is challenging

their grandparents in Bosnia-Herzegovina further to openly talk about LGBTIQ+ and human rights for all.

### **Aida, Selma, and Carina**

Through Facebook my previous research partner (A.H.) and myself were asking people to volunteer for a focus group interview about their experiences on sharing life stories. We were struggling to find research partners but by sharing our request and an overview of our topic in several student groups, five people were volunteering to be part of the interview. Carina was indirectly volunteering as she was tagged in the post by someone else, which she highlighted during the meeting. Selma was a free volunteer, because she was interested in the topic and wanted to contribute to it. Aida was asked by my research partner in person, as they knew each other quite well. Other people who were first agreeing and/or volunteering to be part of the research, cancelled shortly before the interview took place or didn't come on the agreed date.

The focus group interview took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2019 in the evening. We were organizing a suitable date for all and meeting in the university, in a seminar room, where the disturbances are limited. As my research partner had a similar master thesis topic to mine, we also asked for permission to use this interview for our master thesis as well. Luckily all participants agreed but wished to be anonymized in the paper. Especially concerning that the research was dealing with topics they didn't feel comfortable to discuss with family members or relatives, it was important that we ensured their privacy throughout the research. As a focus group interview needs further observation, the task was split up by us two: I was asking the questions and reacting to the answers, while my research partner was making notes about the dialogue structure.

All of them were second generation migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina. The family members of Aida and Selma were fleeing the Bosnian War and were searching for safety in Austria. They were living with their family until they started to go to university in Vienna. Carina's family on the other hand came to Vienna before the Bosnian War has started. Staying in Vienna she still moved out from their parents' home as well. To express the wish to live alone was accompanied by a lot of discussions within the family, which were not openly discussing the insecurities the parents felt but were uncovering the off-limit topics within the diaspora community. Especially sexuality and their choice of partners was an off-limit topic in their family homes and relatives' circles as there were certain demands on how they should look like.

## **Vera and Ena**

Vera and Ena are long-term friends of mine. I know Vera since we went together to cultural gatherings of Serbian diaspora dance festivals while going to school and becoming close friends. She is in relationship with her girlfriend Ena and living with her in a flat. Because Ena had not come out to her family, both were keen on being anonymized for safety reasons. Although we talked a lot about these topics, certain experiences in their lives were still new to me. Cautious but still interested in my topic, we organized a Zoom call on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. This date was shortly after the government restrictions concerning Covid-19 were implemented, which is why we chose to do it online. In the beginning they didn't turn on the camera and I was not sure why, but didn't want to give pressure on them, which is why during the small talk I didn't said anything. After a while I asked them to turn on the camera, because I had troubles to figure out who is talking right now, as their voices were quite similar.

Vera and Ena are both second generation migrants and students. Vera's parents migrated from Serbia to Austria in 1991/1992. Ena's parents came from Bosnia-Herzegovina at the same year as well. They issued that their religion plays an important part in their identity and in their family, because Vera is Serbian-orthodox, and Ena is Muslim. While Vera is already an out-lesbian in her family in Austria, Ena has troubles to out herself to her family as they already pointed out that they are against LGBTIQ+ people in general. In Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia when they are visiting their relatives, both are afraid to show affection to each other, so they wouldn't be perceived as a lesbian couple.

## **Marko Ilić**

I know Marko and Saša four years already. During a research project in my bachelor's degree of cultural and social anthropology on queer refugees in Austria, I met them shortly after they arrived in Austria in 2016 at the Türkis Rosa Lila Villa, a house which is giving shelter to queer refugees. Through this group project we were becoming familiar with a lot of people there, but I stayed in close contact with these two. When I told Marko in February 2020 that I am planning to do my master thesis on the situatedness of queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, he was keen to help me, as it was an issue he was working on for a long time. We met at cafes and at his home several times, where we were talking about my research project, which data would be important to include in my research and who I should ask for information. Together we designed the online survey, which unfortunately turned out a flop. Nevertheless, all the talks with him prior to the interview were already shaping my knowledge on this topic and helping me structure it.

The interview took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 in the evening at Saša's and his flat in Vienna. As always it was accompanied by a lot of casual talks on our lives. I enjoy talking with him, which was maybe also a reason that this interview lasted for almost four hours. Additional to Marko's experience

as being a queer refugee from Serbia in Austria for six years, he had a lot of knowledge about the situation of LGBTIQ+ people in Serbia in general as he was working for the human rights department ensuring LGBTIQ+ rights in Belgrade. He was living in Belgrade since moving out from his parental house in Niš. Organizing the long-forbidden Belgrade Pride Parade made him one of the rare open queer activists in Serbia. This was opening some doors concerning negotiations with politicians, but made him also vulnerable, as he was recognized on the street and therefore involved in many assaults. The attack on Saša, being recognized as the boyfriend of Marko and without any juridical consequences for the attackers, lead to the decision to leave Serbia and apply political asylum because of their sexual orientation in Austria.

After the first negative decision on his asylum and Saša being in medical therapy because of his cancer, he reached out for help through Amnesty International and arrived at QueerBase. QueerBase gave them legal service and the first shelter after the refugee camps. Marko was always involved in human rights issues in Serbia and didn't think to stop in Austria. He was organizing and engaged in several activist projects and workshops from QueerBase and talking about his asylum case on national television in Austria, that is why he didn't want to be anonymized at all in my master thesis. Unfortunately, his asylum case is already processing for six years, which is why he doesn't have a working permit and holds the status as *gedultet* in Austria. Currently he is involved in a new attempt to get a visa for Austria and finally being able to gain a working permit and the right to choose the place to live. Till now he is not allowed to live in a shared flat with his boyfriend, although their partnership was registered in Mödling, Austria. He is only allowed to live in the room offered by QueerBase, while Saša is not allowed to live in this apartment. On the other hand, Saša lives in a flat in Vienna, where Marko is not allowed to live as well. Understandingly, this is making the law procedures quite difficult, as they need to ensure the administrative officials that they are still in a relationship.

### **Saša Stojković**

As mentioned before Saša and Marko are in a relationship for quite a long time already. Always socializing and talkative, he was happy to introduce me to all the people he knew at the Balkan Love gatherings. Being the DJ at these events, he needed to be there early to set up everything and invited me to join earlier so we could talk. Although we met in the year 2020 after the Corona outbreak, we adhere some social distancing measurements to ensure the safety. Although not being Corona positive, I was being cautious not to pass any disease onto him, because Saša already underwent two chemotherapies. Making jokes, that if the cancer he had two times didn't kill him, the Corona wouldn't either, I was carefully trying my best to provide as much distance between us as possible.

One day after the interview with Marko, I conducted the interview with Saša and Dalibor/Milica on the 12th of June 2020 in the evening. He was keen on helping me getting enough interview participants,

which is why he asked Dalibor/Milica to join us on that day too. In fact, the date was not planned at all. I went to meet Marko the day before and Saša was sad, that he was not able to join us, because he was invited to someone else's house. That is why he asked if I want to do the interview on the following day. Because he asked me in the morning, I had at least enough time to prepare and rethink the interview with Marko during the day. Nevertheless, I was surprised when meeting them in their flat, that Dalibor/Milica will come on this day too. Trying my best to cope with this situation, the semi-structured interview turned out to be a focus group interview.

Saša is born in Kosovo but moved during the wartime with his mother and his siblings to Belgrade. The amount of people and the lack of privacy soon lead to his decision to live on his own in Belgrade. He was working in queer-friendly bars and clubs as a waiter and DJ, but after the attack from a colleague at his workplace for his sexuality, he was fired. Moving to Austria, he was struggling with his medical condition, which on the other hand helped his legal procedure to gain Visa in Austria.

### **Dalibor Pajić / Milica Celzović**

During the first time I went to Balkan Love I get to know Milica<sup>3</sup>. She was working as a hostess for the event, which is co-organized by her. Saša introduced us to each other on that night, but we had several occasions to talk to each other again. As mentioned, the interview with Milica/Dalibor took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June in the evening at Saša's flat. Prior to this interview I only met her as Milica. Because Dalibor came directly from his day job as cleaner, I get to know him as Dalibor as well. He chose to use both names and during the talks he used for himself the female as well as the male pronouns.

Milica/Dalibor is from Serbia and came to Salzburg ten years ago and later moved to Vienna. In Austria he met his now registered partner, who is having the Austrian citizenship. This is ensuring him the residency and the working permit on a certain degree. However, as the relationship is currently in crisis, he is no longer living with him and has worries about the change it will have on his life, if he is no longer in a legal partnership anymore. Dalibor/Milica is defining him/herself as a Cross Dresser, but was introduced to me as a trans person, although he didn't mind this identification either. S/he was expressing that after the establishment of a stable life in Austria and having friends in the queer Balkan community, s/he felt safe to be Milica Celzetović on the street.

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<sup>3</sup> Depending on how I met Dalibor/Milica or rather in which gender s/he acted in the specific context, the appropriate pronouns were chosen.



## **Anna Szutt (HOSI)**

The contact was established with Anna Szutt long before the initial interview took place. I had some questions about the recent attacks on their headquarters and asked if someone from the HOSI organization would be interested to give me an interview. In this email correspondence, Anna Szutt was answering some questions, but didn't want to participate in an interview. When asking again (but mailing a different person of HOSI) for an interview request, she replied and volunteered to do the interview. On the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020 I arrived at Gugg, the headquarters of HOSI, and met her inside the entrance hall, where we had the interview.

HOSI<sup>4</sup>, short for homosexual initiative (Homosexuelle Initiative) was founded 1979 as a gay interest agency and representation in Vienna but now representing itself as a queer organization for “all letters”, which don't comply to the heteronormative ideals (LGBTIQA+). This organization has a big voice amplifying LGBTIQA+ rights in Austria and is responsible for the yearly organization of the so-called Regenbogenparade (Vienna Pride Parades), as well as the two Europe Pride Parades taking place in Vienna. Further they are offering consultant services for LGBTIQA+ people in Austria. Anna Szutt is the managing director of HOSI since 2014 and is working as consultant for LGBTIQA+ people as well as a contact person for the press and government.

## **Simeon Gazivoda**

During my research the Vienna state election and district election took place, which involved a lot of social media campaigning from all parties. Although the ex-Yugoslavian migrant population in Austria is quite high, this population seems not really represented in the parties or addressed in the campaigns. The right-wing Freedom party of Austria, FPÖ, as well as the Social Democratic Party in Austria SPÖ had already used migrant representatives to push forward their voting rates and split the voting population of the ex-Yugoslavian migrants in half. This year the green party with their first minister for jurisdiction being a Bosnian migrant, a campaign from the Green Party started which was called the *Jugös*. They tried to address the ex-Yugoslavian community to vote in this election and indeed for their party. The *Jugös* had a lot of participants and one of them was Simeon Gazivoda. He was a district candidate for the fifth district of Vienna (Margareten) and as a “queer Jugo” he mainly concentrated on LGBTIQA+ rights and migration. I contacted him through Instagram as we had some followers in common and asked him, if he would be willing to participate in the interview and keen on my topic, he quickly agreed.

Simeon is a second-generation migrant living in Vienna with his boyfriend. He is working as a teacher in school, actively engaging in politics for the Green Party and performing as a drag artist in Vienna.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hosiwien.at/> (8.12.2020)

We had two interview appointments, but the first one I needed to cancel because my sister was labelled as first contact person with Corona and I had dinner with her the day before. We postponed it one week later, on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and did it online as the Covid-19 outbreak was currently at a rise again. At the beginning, he was already stating his worries that he might not be a good research partner after all, as he doesn't share a Bosnian and Serbian migration history as the others do. His father is Serbian-orthodox from Montenegro and his Catholic mother migrated from Croatia. Because he encountered several discriminations regarding his father's origin and his involvement in the queer as well as in the migrant community is quite high, we agreed that he can still provide important information and insights for this inquiry.

### **Nikola Planojević (Da Se Zna)**

Marko Ilić told me in the beginning of February a lot about the work of the organization Da Se Zna<sup>5</sup>, which is collecting assault experiences of LGBTIQ+ people in Serbia since 2016. In the last five years, they anonymously publish the stories on their page and yearly issue a report of the cases as well as the current situation for LGBTIQ+ people in Serbia. I was planning to contact them before but was hesitating, as I didn't know they would like to participate. My worries were completely groundless. I send an interview request per mail and got a fast reply by Nikola Planojević, who would like to help me with my master thesis.

Nikola is living in Belgrade, where the organization is also located. In 2020 he finished his master's degree in human Rights in Vienna, which is why he offered to help me in the first place. The mail was shared by all members of Da Se Zna, where someone could volunteer to answer, which he did. After a short email correspondence, the interview took place via Zoom on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020, me being in Vienna and him being in Belgrade. This date was unfortunately also postponed once by myself as the previous date was issued one day after the terrorist attack in Vienna, where my sister was near, which is why I was not feeling well. Luckily, he was really understanding and flexible in time, which is why the interview was postponed within one week only.

### **Darko Pandurević (Sarajevo Open Centre)**

Doing research on the queer organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina I came across the workshop "Seeking political asylum based on sexual orientation and gender identity", which is providing LGBTIQ+ people with legal advices if they plan to leave Bosnia-Herzegovina and apply for an asylum. It was taking place five times in Sarajevo 2019 and was organized by Darko Pandurević, the project organizer

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<sup>5</sup> <https://dasezna.lgbt/> (8.10.2020)

and legal counselling of Sarajevo Open Centre<sup>6</sup>. Sarajevo Open Centre describes itself as “a society based on equal rights and opportunities for everyone”, which is evident by the rich and diverse programme they offer since 2012 (<https://soc.ba/en/about-us/>; 8.12.2020).

I contacted Darko after some thoughts and was not thinking I would get a reply, as a lot of workshop organizers I encountered in Austria didn't reply me either. He replied on the same day and was interested in my topic and the results of it when it is finished. We arranged an interview meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020. I was in Vienna and he was in Sarajevo, so we arranged an online interview via Zoom. He seemed busy and didn't had much time, but was keen on helping me with the topic, because it is not covered much in the society and in the academia. That is why the organization members of the workshop interviewed asylum seekers from Bosnia-Herzegovina in several countries 2019 and provided me with the transcripts to necessarily use them in my master thesis.

## 2.2. Interview data overview – Migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina

During my research I conducted the already listed interviews but was also provided by the interview data from Sarajevo Open Centre. The organization organized a workshop “Seeking political asylum based on sexual orientation and gender identity”, which is providing LGBTIQ+ people with legal advices if they plan to leave Bosnia-Herzegovina and apply for an asylum. During the workshop Hilma Unkić conducted several interviews with young queer people who left Bosnia and Herzegovina. These interviews were part of the project “Between Here and There: Migration of LGBTI Youth from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the West” and was in cooperation with the Foundation SHL from Berlin and Foundation Mediacentar from Sarajevo. In total they did 12 interviews and provided me with the transcripts of the interviews.

In the following table, I was entering all the interviews with people who migrated or fled the country because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. I was trying to locate the interviews as far as it was possible. I am using this table to give an overview of the different migration situations through my thesis, which will be useful when highlighting the migration politics of Austria. In total, there are 19 interviews which describe the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia concerning LGBTIQ+ people. From these 19 interviews, I conducted six and eight interviews with people who are considered “still migrants”. In total, this research will include the interview data of 27 people. However, only ten people did migrate from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (see table created by me). With providing this

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<sup>6</sup> <https://soc.ba/en/> (8.12.2020)

table, I want to emphasise the heterogeneity of the migration forms and an overview of the different stories, which will be included in the thesis.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Sexual orientation or gender identity</b>	<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>Country of arrival</b>	<b>Form of migration</b>
<b>Aleks</b>	transgender	Mostar in Bosnia-Hercegovina	Norway	Migration to higher education
<b>Ena</b>	lesbian	Bosnia-Hercegovina	USA	asylum
<b>Jasenka Suljetović and Aleksandar Dragojević</b>	Gay couple	Tuzla and Banja Luka; Bosnia-Hercegovina	USA	Asylum
<b>anonymous</b>	gay	Bosnia-Hercegovina	Canada	asylum
<b>B.D. (together with girlfriend; also because of cancer)</b>	LGBTI identity not dominant (mixed marriage: Muslim/Catholic)	Mostar; activist in Banja Luka; Bosnia-Hercegovina	Vienna, Austria	Migration (applying for working permit in Austria)
<b>Marko Ilić</b>	Gay	Belgrade, Serbia	Vienna, Austria	Asylum
<b>Saša</b>	Gay	Belgrade, Serbia	Vienna, Austria	Asylum
<b>Dalibor/Milica</b>	Transgender	Serbia	Austria	Migration (student visa; work visa)
<b>G.V.</b>	Heterosexual (mixed marriage)	Bosnia-Hercegovina	Austria	asylum

### 3. The ambiguities of sexual politics on the Balkan

“We do have this stigma but also the perception of people from Europe that we are a bit conservative or like a bit less progressive than the rest of the Europe but also there are some movements. There are some betterments, reconciliations, and everything. And there is Montenegro who legalized same sex partnerships this year. I would be totally confused. I would say how is this happening?” (Planojević 2020).

The history and the development concerning queer lives rights in the several states and nations on the Balkan is ambiguous and is not taking place in a linear development. Further, the sexual and queer politics often is shaped through different actors and has been shaped by different regional histories, which needs to be investigated to understand the involvement of the EU – supranational politics – and international politics influencing the regional politics in Serbia and Bosnia-Hercegovina. To be able to provide an insight and an understanding of these structures, this chapter will investigate the development and changes in the pride parades in Serbia and Bosnia-Hercegovina. The reason for the focus on the LGBTIQA+ activism in the Balkan lies in the high amount of academic literature already published, but also because of the legibility of a Europeanisation due to the implementation of pride parades, which is often in the center of queer activism. Especially, the situation of LGBTIQA+ people in Serbia and Bosnia-Hercegovina (as well as in the Balkan in general) is often put in relation to their civilized, or uncivilized behavior (Bilić 2016: 123). How civilized the countries on the Balkan but as well Central and Eastern European countries are, is depending on how the government and the society is treating LGBTIQA+ people. To be equally part in the European Union, therefore as a civilized and not barbarian equal, the government and the society needs to change.

In this debate of civilization, LGBTIQA+ do separate themselves from the “‘insufficiently civilized’ environment which they had to confront through the implementation of the Belgrade pride parade (Bilić 2016: 124). Therefore, the increase in tolerance towards queer activists in Serbia and Bosnia-Hercegovina is perceived as a “sign of civilization and modernity that are distant in both space and time” (ibid.). With the aim to deconstruct the imaginaries of the Balkan, this first chapter will highlight the LGBTIQA+ movements regarding the national, supranational, and international politics as well as its specific geo-political history.

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In this chapter, I want to give an outline of the geo-political history of the Balkan. What is understood with it and how is it imagined by the West? The imaginaries of the West play an immense role for the self-identification as they set the stone for what is and what is not the Balkan, which features are inherent and which not in order to be othered by the West? For this sake, I will turn in the first part of this chapter to the work of Todorova, who precisely highlighted the imaginary of the Balkan as the bridge between the East and the West, which will be important throughout the thesis, as the migration politics from Austria and the European Union are shaped by these as well. The Balkan as the inclusive outside of Europe has a particular role in supranational politics concerning the EU accession. Performing the border for the West towards the East, the Balkan not only separates two different geographical parts of the world, but two different ontological realities which discursively take part in a discussion of civilization.

However, the split between two words is not only done between the Orient, but also between the Soviet Union (Eastern Bloc). Yugoslavia under Tito's regime was a communist country but was however still distinct to the Soviet Union in many cases. Consequently, it is important to investigate the history for queer people in Yugoslavia, as most research on the LGBTIQ+ movement starts with the reference to Yugoslavia. What does the perception of the Balkan tell us about the sexual politics implemented in former Yugoslav countries? Where are the commonalities and where are the particularities?

Based on the geo-political histories outlined, I want to go deeper into the sexual politics of the Balkan by focusing on two nations within Yugoslavia: Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yugoslavia has developed distinct histories through the establishment of different imaginaries of the nation's themselves, but all inherent the relationship towards the European Union because of the EU accession. Especially, Serbia became one prominent example of how the LGBTIQ+ situation in the country needed to improve in order to become European enough for the European Union. To understand the fluidity and hypocrisy of being European enough, I want to highlight the Belgrade Pride Parades in particular, which were often contextualized within the EU accession politics. There exists a lot of literature on several Pride Parades, although I will be guided by the outlines of Bilić (2016) and Rhodes-Kubiak (2015). However, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, I conducted interviews with Pride Parade organization members, NGO activists and LGBTIQ+ persons from Serbia, which will contribute to the story telling of the litmus test of Serbia. Ending the historical section with the current organization of the Europride 2022 in Belgrade, I want to highlight how these Europeanisation discourses still have an enormous impact on the queer movement and on queer lives in Serbia.

Although much shorter, I want to address the development and the particularities of the LGBTIQ+ movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The reason for the shorter discussion of the queer history in Bosnia-Herzegovina lies in the less research that has been conducted. However, Safia Swimelar (2020) and Adelita Selmić (2016) have published and worked on this issue in full depth and will be contextualized with the interviews with NGO organizations and Bosnian migrants in Austria. However, this inclusion

is important, because the queer activism in Bosnia-Herzegovina is pointing to the bridge of sexual politics and migration politics affecting queer migrants from the Balkan.

The reason for the choice of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as the main sites of focus lies in the European accession context, as well as in the relation to the Austrian migration context, which will be of relevance in the next chapter. I did not include in this research an analysis of the other former Yugoslavian states, because of the difference in the discourse. Slovenia and Croatia although similarly affected by these discourses need to have a different contextualization because they are already part of the EU. Further, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo are not part of the EU, but were not put into consideration for this thesis either, because of their different EU accession discourses. As already mentioned, the discourse on sexual politics concerning EU accession politics is mostly evident in Serbia and offers an insight on the negotiation process in these fields, which is why the pride parades in Serbia will be more in focus in this thesis.

Further, this chapter will focus on the current situation for LGBTIQ+ people in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as well. The statistics and publications of the queer organizations, namely Dasezna, Belgrade Pride Parade, Gay Straight Alliance, Sarajevo Open Center, will be used as well as international databases such as ILGA.

### 3.1. The geopolitical history of the Balkan

Foremost, the perception of the Global South or the East due to the Orient is filled with conceptions of backwardness. However, it seems that the line between East and West or North and South in this manner is a static one. The Balkan is often referred as the bridge between those two worlds. Marija Todorova is describing the East as relational category, which can be applied to the Balkan in some regards as well, which consists of their specific orientalism. If the Balkan is the East or at least part of the East, where is the exact borderline from which the East begins, who has drawn it and how does the borderline become visible? Which mechanism take place to make a border be visible? The border between the East and the West, the North and the South is not fictional as it has material effects on the livelihoods of many people. Yet, they are still not the static lines drawn through the lands dividing countries, values, and people in a never overcoming difference.

The dividing border is a constant negotiated and generated relationship. However, in the sense as it is perceived, it is not consistent of its discursive moments as Mizielińska and Kulpa (2011) are describing it by pointing out to the discourses of the EU and their affiliation. Rather they are material manifestations of imaginaries becoming realities. The reality of the border is inherent in the everyday life through discourses, but also through materialities in form of the bodies living the border and drawing the border.

These bodies are evident in political discourses, in academic debates, in media and so forth constructing imaginations of the other not only by their words and talks, but also through their performances.

In this sense, I want to try to think about otherness not only in a discursive manner. How does the mechanisms of otherness of the Balkan within Europe affect the sexual politics implemented and how can we see these in the everyday lives of LGBTIQ+ people and their engagement in queer activism? Especially, in sexual politics the divide between East and West, South and North is more evident than ever, because “cultural attitudes and legal provisions for lesbian and gay people are becoming important factors in creating and maintaining modern divisions of ‘us’ (‘West’, ‘civilized’, ‘secular’, ‘liberal’ and supposedly ‘pro-gay’) and ‘Them’ (‘Orient’, ‘primitive’, ‘religious’, ‘fanatical’ and consequently ‘anti-gay’)” (Mizielińska and Kulpa 2011: 20). Indeed, the perspective of the academics often lies in the ‘us’ as part of the West as seldomly ‘them’ speak. However, it is not quite apparent, what is part of the West and what is part of the East hemisphere of Europe. To be capable to work with these terms but not to undermine the problematics and their relational as well as negotiable character, the concept of situatedness by Donna Haraway and the concept of relatedness by Trinh Minh-ha is helpful in understanding the two regional contexts as “phantasmagorical ‘there and now’; two regions impossible to enclose within fixed boundaries, neither geographical, nor temporal-historical, nor political.” (ibid.: 23). Therefore, knowledge needs to be situated in the historical and socio-political circumstances, but in a relationship with further geo-political situations affecting them. As the East or the Balkan are not fixed entities, the boundaries between the opposites is always a situated one, which is enabled through (re-)positions and relations between them.

The Balkan has a specific position in the East-West dichotomous relationship. It is often conceptualized as the bridge or as the mediator in between. Although it is not certain, if the term “Balkan” is developed and reimagined through self-reflection or shaped exclusively by the outside view (Todorova 2009: 39)<sup>7</sup>. It is hard to distinguish the borders of where Europe begins and where the Balkan as inclusive and yet exclusive part of it exists. Europe in this sense is not a neutral term to use, as it is entangled with connotations of the “civilized” in contrast to the rest of the world. Therefore, also certain “European values” are shaped by this configuration as well:

“[...] the sharing of so-called European values would be seen not as a mechanistic appropriation on the part of the belated peripheral elites of values intrinsically emanating only from a circumscribed geographical-historical entity (Western Europe) but would demand the treatment

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<sup>7</sup> Todorova distinguishes and analyzes these due to the contribution of elites of the Balkan nations, as in her understanding “representation can hardly come from those who give no attention to their stigma, or who are relatively unlettered.” (Todorova 2009: 38). I disagree with her limitation on who is woke enough to understand the present images of the Balkan. Who is defined as the elite in this sense? If the elite is found for example exclusively in the academic spheres, whose knowledge is perceived as valued enough to be graded as “reflexive” enough to understanding the political and societal surroundings?



of culture as an autonomous phenomenon within a universal human context.” (Todorova 2009: 41).

The Balkan is perceived as outside of Europe and still inside of Europe and this relational character displays the issue of the unstable and vague borders of Europe itself. When can we speak of entering Europe? Is the Balkan the Eastern entrance to Europe or are they, as described during the migration movements in 2015, the bridge to pass to enter Europe? At least Europe with all its features ascribed to it, doesn't fit the prescription of the Balkans shaped by the outside view upon them. Europe is a “synonym for progress, order, prosperity, radical ideas, that is, an image and an ideal, a Europe belonging to Time (understood as development), not Europe as a geographic entity” (Todorova 2009: 43). The time in which Europe is perceived is, as mentioned, always an after in developmental terms. It stands for all that is going to be in different parts of the worlds. Indeed, it stands for the current best development.

But where are the particularities towards former Yugoslavia in this relationship between Europe and the Balkan? By referring to the texts of Dubrovka Ugrešić, a Yugoslavian writer, Todorova is highlighting two main references toward former Yugoslavia. On the one side, it was the trump card because of its variety it offers to everyone. “[...] there [is] a bit of multiculturalism à la balkanique and some soft communism for university professors and other politically correct individuals who are curious about the dawn of humanity.” (Todorova 2009: 52f.). In an indeed sarcastic prescription, she describes the nostalgic moment of former Yugoslavia. On the other hand, former Yugoslavia had and, in a way, still has the “down there” label, as the “dark side within a collective Europe” (ibid.: 53). Especially after the wars and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, it added to these happenings a certain term called the “Balkanization”. In contrast to the term “Europeanization”, which stands for going forward, the term “Balkanization” stands for the opposite direction: backwards. Therefore, the projections of the pride parade towards Europeanization are seeming like an offer for a way out of the Balkan, although still being within the configuration of the inclusive exclusion or rather exclusive inclusion. The Balkan is always at the crossroads of either going forward (toward Europe) or backward (toward the Orient; East). What is important to take note with, is this feeling of inclusive exclusion which is persistent in the Balkan and makes the Balkan exist materially and not only discursively. Indeed, “there is something that can be defined as Balkan, although it may be an undesired predicament and region” (ibid.: 57).

Although this hegemonic discourse shapes the processes within the Balkan and its relationality and constant comparison to the West make it impossible to “create a liberal, tolerant, all-embracing identity celebrating ambiguity and a negation of essentialism” in the Balkan (Todorova 2009: 59). Because of the Balkans conjunction and relatedness with the Western history, I want to display the historical configuration of the Belgrade Pride Parade apart from them. How can we analyse historical processes, progress, and socio-political changes without referring and comparing them to the ideals and images of the West and/or the Europe as the progressive future? Especially for sexual politics and queer rights this

is an important aspect to take into consideration as the West is perceived as the liberation of traditional homophobic ideals. What is the history of queer activism and what is queer life without the prescriptions of the West?

### 3.2. The “queer history” of Yugoslavia

Countries in the central and Eastern European region were often researched on the economy and the political structures which were shaped by a post-communist era. If gender topics were investigated, it mostly concerned women’s rights and feminism, but seldomly sexualities (Kulpa and Mizielińska 2011: 1). Queer activism has since the Stonewall described through the success of Pride Parades, hence the Western queer history has been displayed as the progress development necessary for LGBTIQ+ rights universally. But how can the time frame of queer movement be perceived if the queer time didn’t start in the same way, as it did for other countries? Further, how can researcher investigate those processes without underlying perception of the backwardness of those countries, which were often evident in the research of this matter? How can queer be perceived without referring to terms of the West, but also how are those terms working as filler words or signifiers for a new start of movement? In the words of Kulpa and Mizielińska, we need to ask, “what is left of ‘queer’ in the CEE [Central and Eastern European Countries] context, where Stonewall never happened; where it stands as an empty signifier, a meaningless figure, and yet is still a pervasive and monumental reference” (2011: 2). That is why I want to offer a new and separate story of LGBTIQ+ activism of the Balkan which reads the history from a different point of view, the East. This practice is well known from post-colonial studies and should offer a new way of understanding queer movement through the eyes of the Global South in order to not only relate with the West but to establish relations (academically, because materially they are already there) between the post-colonial states of the European Empires and the East of Europe.

The fall of the Iron curtain was accompanied by the appropriation of “western” styles of political and social engagement” by the Central and Eastern European countries, without running through the historical particularities accompanied by them (Kulpa and Mizielińska 2011: 14). It seemed as just one timeline of two modalities ended, in this sense capitalism prevailed and communism was replaced by it too (ibid.: 14). This “end of history” (Fukuyama 1992) was perceived in the historical timeframe of Yugoslavia, but because Yugoslavia was not part of the Warsaw pact and through Tito<sup>8</sup> involved in the

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<sup>8</sup> There were a lot of biographies and papers about Tito and the particularity within communism through his regime in Yugoslavia as well as his involvement in movements to dismantle the hegemonic global hierarchies as for example through the Non-Aligned Movement. The historian Jože Pirjevec (2018) has recently conducted a detailed overview about Tito’s life, which offers great insights in the political regime of socialist Yugoslavia and offers explanation why the death of Tito left such a power gap.

Non-Aligned Movement (Pirjevec 2018), the queer movement had run a slightly different part. Therefore, Yugoslavia enjoyed a different status toward the Western European national states because it was the border and bridge between the East and the West. Accordingly, there were two counterparts of the West, where Yugoslavia provided the border for: the Soviet Bloc, and the Orient. Because there were similarities to the communist regime of the Soviet Union, this borderline needs to be highlighted and put into the geo-political history of Yugoslavia. Todorova highlights this separation as the reason for the division of Eastern Europe in two entities: East-Central and Southeast Europe, which became the more “neutral title” for the Balkan (2009: 140f.).

During the communist times under Tito’s regime, activism in any kind proposing different identity attitudes was not welcomed. The idea was to satisfy the citizens with basic needs, as employment, health care and so on, so that identities outside the policy of “*Bratstvo i jedinstvo*” (brotherhood and unity) would not establish (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 92). For that matter, homosexuality wasn’t banned in Yugoslavia and only in some parts, including Serbia, after the new criminal code was established 1977, homosexuality was prosecuted. These new rulings were already argued by the Communist Officials to be products of the West, which don’t apply to a “more homogenized Yugoslav citizenry” (ibid.: 95). Although this new regulation was never enforced through prosecution, Rhodes-Kubiak states that the lives for LGBTIQ+ people in the years after became difficult. My interview partner Saša and Dalibor/Milica also confirmed this statement and issued, that under the Tito-communism, being gay was not that restricted as it was in the war times or after the war:

„In the communism, being gay was in some way recognized. At least more than during the wartime period. If you were gay, if you were orthodox, catholic, or Muslim, you do that at home, we don’t care. As long as you are useful for the community, you work, you are important. “  
(Stojković and Pajić/Celzetović 2020; my translation)

The death of Tito in 1980 led to a “boom” of activist organisations and movements, especially concerning feminist and anti-war movements (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 98). It opened floors for panels, conferences and events dealing with gay and lesbian culture, rights, and existence (ibid.)<sup>9</sup>. After 1990 two important events were happening for the LGBTIQ activist movement: the first was the implementation of the new Serbian Criminal Code in 1994, which dropped article 110 and by that decriminalized homosexuality again and the second event was the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995, which turned the activist movement away from the war (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 107ff.). There

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<sup>9</sup> I want to emphasize the history of Lesbian Activism in Post-Yugoslav societies / space, which is often excluded in the activist claims in Belgrade and in the organizations of Belgrade Pride Parade. However, as my research here is limited in time and possibility, I will not refer to that in detail, but would like to highlight the article of Ivana Paržić (2012) and the book by Bojan Bilić and Marija Radoman “Lesbian Activism in the (Post-)Yugoslav Space: Sisterhood and Unity” (2019). Especially the anthology offers a differentiated perspective on the regional histories.

is still no explanation why the article was dropped and not replaced. Some argue that it was one of the first occasions of the so-called “pink-washing”, because Milošević’s regime faced international pressure (ibid.: 107). Soon after, the first official organizations beside Arkadia, which was initiated in 1990, were founded, for example Geten (Gayten)<sup>10</sup>, which was founded 1999 and is still operating today. The appropriation of the termini from the West for instance LGBT at that time, was allowing the queer movements in post-Yugoslavia to include bisexual and trans-people from the start (Kulpa and Mizielińska 2011: 16). The focus was on visibility, which seems to be still important in the LGBTIQ+ movement today.

### 3.3. The Belgrade Pride Parade as a “litmus test” for Serbia?

Similar to other LGBTIQ+ activists from Central and Eastern European states, the time period after 1990 was a queer time, “a time of mismatched models and realities, strategies and possibilities, understandings and uses, ‘all at once’ [...] when ‘real’ and ‘fake’, ‘the original’ and ‘the copy’ collapse into ‘the same’/‘the one’; and yet, nothing is the same, nothing is straight any more. (Had it every been?)” (Mizielińska and Kulpa 2011: 16f.).

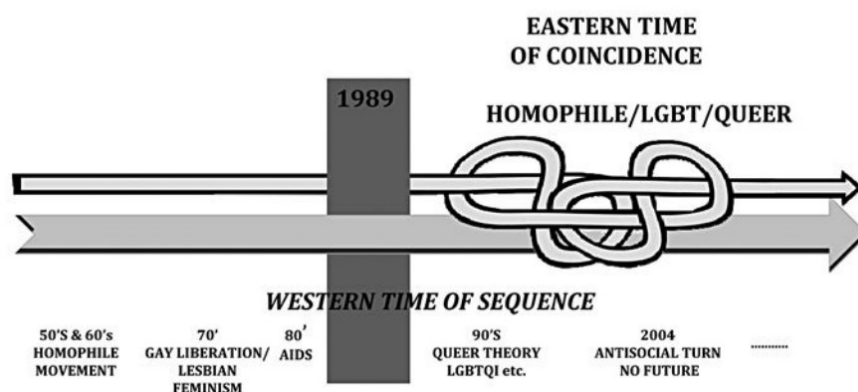


Figure 1. Western 'time of sequence' and Eastern 'time of coincidence'. In: Mizielińska and Kulpa 2011: 15.

The frame in which the Belgrade Pride Parade is established, is already queer in relation to the “straight” time (in metaphorical sense) of the Western queer activist movement. In the Figure 1, two geopolitical-temporal modalities separated from each other can be observed. While the upper arrow is disrupted by the end of the communism period around 1989, the arrow below doesn’t seem to be affected by these developments at all. The history of the activist movement in Serbia can be described by this knotting

<sup>10</sup> <https://transserbia.org/> (22.1.2021).

visible in the post-communism period. This “knotted time” represents equally the “queer experience of CEE” as well as the “embodiment of sexual desires and pleasures” through a linguistic game (Mizielńska and Kulpa 2011: 16). This figure is highlighting how discourses are seen from the Western perspective, where the histories in the “West”, although they do not fit a linear development either, seem to have a chronological and logical order (progressive), while the Eastern discourses are a constant going back and forth (chaotic). In the case of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the geo-political context of the Balkan as well as the wartime through the disintegration of Yugoslavia were responsible and evident in the perception of their degree in civilization.

Therefore, I want to give an overview of the queer activism in Serbia and on the pride parades in more depth. A lot of research has been done in this field and many authors focused on the pride parades when analyzing the queer movements in Serbia. To provide the context for understanding, what lies behind those supranational practices concerning the EU accession negotiations, this chapter will contextualize the sexual politics with the discourse of civilization. Evaluating Serbia’s Europeanness was often bound to the success of the Belgrade Pride Parades. For this analysis I will focus more precisely on the pride parades (Bilić 2016, Rhodes-Kubiak 2015) of 2001 (Bilić 2016, Mizielńska and Kulpa 2011), 2010 (Krstić et al. 2017, Ejodus and Božović 2016, Mikuš 2011, Parzić 2012), 2013 (Ilić 2020), 2014 (Bilić 2016, Igrutinović et al. 2015, Milanović 2017, Sloetmaecker 2017, Kovačević and Planojević 2020) and the upcoming Europride of 2022 (Planojević 2020, Mihajlović 2020) in more detail, but the other parades will play a role in this thesis as well<sup>11</sup>. The reason for those pride parades emphasis is that a lot of research has been carried out and that these played important roles in the history of LGBTIQ+ activism<sup>12</sup>. A detailed analysis of the pride parades is important as the relationship between Europeanisation and LGBT activism is quite hegemonic because it often functions as an “litmus test” (Bilić 2016: 117f). “Pride parade constitute a matrix which waves together sexual, political, legal and religious dimensions and in annual cycles sharpens and exposes the complexities of LGBT-related politics and activism.” (ibid.: 118). On the one side, they are localized events, but on the other they envision a globalized ideal (Sloetmaecker 2017: 5). The need for this analysis lies in the understanding of the trauma people have faced due to organizing and participating in Pride Parades.

Chapter 3.3. is titled with the question if the Belgrade Pride Parade is a “litmus test” for Serbia to be considered European enough for the European Union. If the Pride Parade is the litmus test, which pride

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<sup>11</sup> I want to highlight, that I did not attend these parades. On some I was still a child and during my research time, the pandemic did not make it able to attend at pride parades. The information about the parades is based on the interviews I did and the literature about them.

<sup>12</sup> It needs to be pointed out that different scholars working and analyzing the effects and imaginaries of the Belgrade Pride Parade had different points of entry into the historical particularities necessary to look at in order to understand. While some start by the Yugoslav period and consequently at Tito’s regime in socialist Yugoslavia (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015; Bilić 2016), others begin their analysis with the Milošević era (Ejodus and Božović).

parade was evaluated and put as the basis for further evaluations of the Belgrade Pride parades? Many highlighted literature and activists would argue and have taken the observation that the Belgrade Pride Parade of 2010 was considered a litmus test. If so, how did Serbia pass and did the imaginaries of Serbia and the Balkan change?

### 3.3.1. The first Belgrade Pride Parade 2001 – The “massacre parade”

Unfortunately, the rise in nationalism, warfare, and religion in the 90s leading to the Yugoslavian war created an intense homophobic surrounding in Serbia. Although the religion played an important part in the Yugoslavian war, as it split the national identities on the individual religious beliefs (Serbian people = orthodox people, Bosnian people = Muslim people, Croatian people = Catholic people) (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 115). In Serbia, the orthodox church still had an important impact to the present day, which can be perceived in 2009 where Serbia tried to introduce the antidiscrimination law and which was withdrawn due to objections by the orthodox Church (ibid.: 116). Indeed, these homophobic surroundings became persistent after the downfall of Milošević’s regime in 2000. However, this didn’t stop the queer activist movement, namely activists of the queer organization Labris (the lesbian organization for human rights)<sup>13</sup> and Gayten, to organize a public statement by holding the first Belgrade Pride Parade in 2001. The parade ended violently due to right-wing and far-right protestors attacking the pride participants, which is why it is often referred to as “massacre pride”. A lot of participants of the pride parade were injured and left a lot of them traumatized for a long period (Bilić 2016: 119). „Participants felt that Serbia was not educated enough about human rights and the protection of minorities given that it was only a year since the removal of Milosevic’s regime [...]“ (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 123). However, this lack of information was still mentioned during the interviews. Although a contradiction could be perceived. On the one hand, the lack of knowledge on LGBTIQ+ people, their rights or human rights in general was reasoned with the lack of education in Serbia. On the other hand, highly educated people were not eager for including LGBTIQ+ people or accepting people who identify as LGBTIQ+ in their family either:

„My mother, for instance, an economist woman, who was raised and befriended with a higher societal level in Serbia, has now in Austria gay friends, with whom she goes to a coffee [...] When she asked me directly and when I gave her a direct answer, she was shocked. Up until today, she still has problems with two things: what will people say and that I won’t be able to have children.“ (Pajić/Celzetović 2020; my translation).

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<sup>13</sup> <http://labris.org.rs/> (22.1.2021)

This argument in the lack of education or in some other references as not mature enough to be European (Bilić 2016), is pointing to the perception of the regional context of the Balkan in itself. It resembles the image of a region within Europe, but not sharing the “values of Europe” or at least not being able to project them in a way the international community is satisfied with. Being on the “road” or in the “process” of implementing the values necessary to be part of the European Union produces the image of being trapped in the “immediate outside” (Jansen 2009). This state of being in the “immediate outside” of the EU is a status deeply inherent of the Balkan imaginary, of being part of Europe, but still not, a stasis of excluded inclusion.

Bilić (2016) argues that the transfer of the form of queer activism from Western European countries to Serbia was already the indicator of a fatal outcome. He criticized that the „commodified (transnational) activist instrument that has lost a lot of its political charge even in the environments in which it was originally conceived as the most potent means of LGBT emancipation” (Bilić 2016: 120). The problem therefore lies in the transfer of the form of protest without sharing the same historic relationship to it. It points to the queer asynchrony described by Mizielińska and Kulpa (2011), where the creation of the pride parade was split from its original context by implementing it in the Central and Eastern European context. The Western context for LGBTIQ+ activism was a different one than in the Central and Eastern European countries. One of the indicators is the development of the pride parades, because in the Western context they are referred to the “Stonewall era”<sup>14</sup>, whereas in the Central Eastern European context and other non-western countries it is often used for symbolic politics (Mizielińska and Kulpa 2011: 13). Further, the inclusion within the organization was differently performed, whereas in the Eastern context transgender and bisexuals for example were always included in the activist organizations. This different inclusion mechanism existed because of the different temporalities of the West and the East, which often lead to a “uncritically transfer” as seen at the Belgrade Pride Parade 2001. “[...] when the first lesbian and gay groups began to self-organize in the early 1990s, they looked at the Western models and their categories (LGBT), rather than trying to figure out their own terminology.” (ibid.: 14). Could it be that the Belgrade Pride Parade in 2001 was therefore the “Stonewall of Eastern Europe” which introduced changes to the LGBTIQ+ rights developments?

Although an overall lack of visibility and knowledge of LGBTIQ+ was mentioned in Serbia, the pride parade in Belgrade of 2001 had already brought a big change in the public attention by showing that those people do exist (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 124). Unfortunately, the fear among LGBTIQ+ was deepened as well, because of the violent attack which led to several injuries (Bilić 2016: 119). Therefore,

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<sup>14</sup> As observed by my second examiner Manuela Ciotti here, the Stonewall Riot is not a European history, but has their points of departure in a different context (USA and in relation also with Anti-Black violence). Although the genealogy of the pride parade is more complex (which I cannot address fully in this thesis), there exists a strong relation and reference in LGBTIQ+ activism in Europe to the Stonewall Riot as the beginning of the pride for the West. I want to refer here to these explicit shared histories.

the parade was named by many authors as the “massacre parade” and led to a generational trauma, as Rhodes-Kubiak describes (2015: 124). That is why the next demonstrations and pride parades in Belgrade needed to wait for the next generation to organize them.

### 3.3.2. 2002 – 2009: No parades, just laws

Till 2010, no pride parade was taking place and several queer events were banned as well, for example the conference of the Gay Straight Alliance at Sava in 2009 (Belgrade Pride Organization 2021). Although the pride parades were banned and events were prohibited due to the fear of violent outbreaks like the one in 2001, the first laws were introduced 2003 to prosecute discrimination, hate speech and violence on grounds of sexual orientation. These new laws were an outcome of the “growing involvement in international institutions that required such changes, such as the Council of Europe.” (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 126). This gave queer activists new motivation to organize a new pride parade in 2004, which was cancelled as the conflict in Kosovo began to raise the attention of the public. That is why the activist movement were more concerned on the legislative changes.

Although there were a lot of laws implemented concerning equal rights for LGBTIQ+ people, several new laws had the opposite effect, which would be the case for marriage. On the one side, in 2006 the age of consent for sexual intercourse was equalized between heterosexual and non-heterosexual activity, but on the other, a new regulation on marriage through the Article 62 was introduced: “Marriage shall be entered into based on the free consent of **man and woman** before the state body.” (Serbia’s Constitution of 2006: 21; highlighted by me). This new article development set a new target for activism, as before marriage was not regulated in this way<sup>15</sup>. However, an important change for the activist movement for LGBTIQ+ rights and people happened during the presidential, parliamentary, and local election in Serbia 2008, where those rights were included in the political debates and pro-EU parties won the elections (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 128f.). Further, the Eurovision Song Contest was taking place in Belgrade, which is highly popular among the queer community (ibid.: 129). Therefore, the media began to cover those issues in a neutral way as possible and through that allowed a higher visibility for LGBTIQ+ issues (Gay Straight Alliance Annual Report 2008: 3). The attention of the media on LGBTIQ+ issues was concentrated around the day of the pride parade events, mostly before the event is taking place. This brought more visibility for the activist issues, but further generated a reaction from the far-right and ultranationalist organizations in Serbia (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 131).

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<sup>15</sup> Article 190 in The Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic: “A marriage shall be validly contracted before a competent agency by free consent of the prospective spouses.” (1974: 183). There is no reference towards a heterosexual monogamy.



At the same time, what does it mean for the other to be visible in a space, which is designed and organized in a way to not participate and to be invisible? What does it mean to get out of the invisibility and be visible in the public space? Is it really something spectacular to present their sexuality? In a “heterosexualization of space” it indeed is (Milanović 2017: 114). It is not the case that the society is not used to certain configurations and norms of sexualities, but which sexuality and which norms you introduce through the acceptance of presentation is significant. Through repetition of simple performances of normative models of sexuality, a heterosexual space is produced (ibid.: 114f.). Through this naturalization of practices in the society the constant presentation of certain normative norms becomes invisible (ibid.: 115). Therefore, “the legal system of most countries, through the legal framework, either directly prohibits or does not acknowledge other forms of sexuality apart from heterosexual, hence making them invisible” (ibid.: 116). Through the invisibility and the normalization of certain performances and habits, otherness is created and visible through the creation of differences (ibid.). The creation of visibility for the LGBTIQ+ population in Serbia was the key goal for the request of the Belgrade Pride Parade in 2009. Not only was the repetition of certain performances amplifying the heterosexualization of certain places, but the other became an intruder of this place as well. This shapes the perception of the city of where to go safely and where not and how to present yourself (as it was also stated that not being gay doesn’t prevent attacks, but you also need to “look not gay”). The Gay Straight Alliance has published a map with all the homophobic assaults in Belgrade and through that a certain cluster is perceivable (Figure 2):



Figure 2. Map of homophobic assaults in Belgrade between 2000 and 2009. Gay Straight Alliance.

Because of the threats towards the organization committee of the Belgrade Pride parade and their activist colleagues, the government decided to prohibit the event for safety reasons. Under the slogan “It’s Time for Equality” the gathering was relocated to a place more outside of the town, which the pride parade organization members didn’t agree to (Milanović 2017: 120). This and the report of threats, calls for lynching and violence by the media, were decisive for the cancellation of the Belgrade Pride Parade 2009.

Although introduced in 2003, the anti-discrimination law was passed in 2009 with a lot of controversy because of the pressure of the Serbian Orthodox Church as one key actor in this part. This year is remembered and often contextualized as the turning point for LGBTIQ+ issues and socio-political movement (Ejdus and Božović 2016: 6). Although the political environment run through big changes in their influence on people’s lives, the orthodox church remained an important power in the geopolitical region in their role of the moral authority (Blagojević 2011: 29). There were other movement of distancing by government officials as mayors of different towns in Serbia towards this law, but it was amplified that it is however, important to fulfil it. This law played an important role for Serbia to get a step closer in the EU accession discussions. It already provided a VISA free movement for Serbian citizens within the EU, because Serbia was put on the white Schengen list, which persuaded most of the population to vote in favor for this new legislation (Blagojević 2011: 34; Ejdus and Božović 2016: 5). Not only negative attitudes toward participating at the pride parade were issued by the political authorities and public figures, but also hate speech by politicians, representatives, and the orthodox church (Milanović 2017: 120). Although this new legislation was passed in 2009, the pride parade in Belgrade was still banned in this year due to safety reasons. Labris argued at that time, that the government officials showed that they couldn’t distance enough from the far-right protestors and hooligans, instead distanced them on several occasion from the queer movement, which led to more homophobic sentiments within the country (Blagojević 2011: 37).

Therefore, Serbia is still and will be far away to “join the family” of the European Union, because up till now, it didn’t “prove its maturity” (Bilić 2016: 131). The inclusive exclusion of the Balkan is the basic understanding of the „matrix of Europeanisation of the Balkans” itself (Blagojević 2001: 39). By resisting of the Balkan to change its (what Blagojević calls) „provincial mind” is already the exposure, that the Balkan is the different other within Europe (ibid.). Referring to Derrida, the other is never a specific identity and/or specific being stuck in a constant relationship of othering but a different living. Therefore, the other “has no shape. No sex. No name. It is neither a man nor a woman. It is not selfhood, not ‘I’, not a subject, nor a particular person. It is another Dasein“ (Derrida 2001: 465 in Blagojević 2011: 40). The Other is a separate living through the difference to the self.

### 3.3.3. The lack and need of security for LGBTIQ+ people – Belgrade Pride Parade 2010 or the “state pride”

High pressure was exerted by the EU and the Council of Europe because of the failure to provide safety for the demonstrations, which is why 2010 the pride parade in Belgrade took place and was organized cooperatively with the government (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 132). The European Parliament issued an open letter, highlighting the importance of this pride parade to share European values (Bilić 2016: 133). Therefore, a lot of scholars were looking at different aspects of the pride parade and analysed either the political collaboration between the state and the queer activists (Mikuš 2011), the influence of the police on the pride (Ejdus and Božović 2016), the news coverage around the pride parade (Krstić et al. 2017) or the queer politics concerned with human rights surrounding the pride parade in Serbia (Parzić 2012). Although there were different starting points in the analysis and different angles to look at, almost all of them highlighted the influence of the Europeanisation process onto the pride. It was issued as a litmus test for democracy and tolerance, which Serbia passed internationally, but which was a “watershed moment” for the queer population (Mikuš 2011; Krstić et al. 2017).

Although the parade could happen, it was “war in Belgrade”, because of the protestors against the Belgrade Pride Parade (Ilić 2020; Ejdus and Božović 2016: 9). The police presence was quite high and Bilić estimated that for every pride parade participant marching on the street, six policemen were installed for their protection (Bilić 2016: 134)<sup>16</sup>. Through the policy link between the queer activism organizations and the EU integration process of Serbia, this highly presented police alliance was established (Mikuš 2011: 834). The police as the protector of the city became the dominant protagonist in the news coverage around the pride parade in almost every national TV network (Krstić et al. 2017). Especially after the brutal outcome of the pride parade in 2001 and the receiving threats, a big focus lied on security. However, the Ejdus and Božović argued that the police provoked such need for security through a process of “hypersecuritization”, which defines “a tendency both to exaggerate threats and to resort to excessive countermeasures” (2016: 7). Further, there was a practice of shaping the threats by right-wing extremist groups as risks of holding a pride parade (Ejdus and Božović 2016:11). By not naming the extremists groups and their threats as what they are, the government called them irrational “hooligans” and the police framed them as risks of the pride parade and therefore, transferred the responsibility always to different actors in this socio-political event (Parzić 2012: 102; Ejdus and Božović 2016: 11).

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<sup>16</sup> Here it needs to be noted, that various academics, who wrote about the Belgrade Pride Parade 2010 have estimated the police presence differently. Ejdus and Božović (2016) and Mikuš, who attended the pride parade in this year, estimated the relation between police officers and pride parade participants to be 5:1.

Because of this highly (in)secured status, the pride parade invoked trauma by the resemblance of the situation of Yugoslavia in the 1990s as the pride attended Parzić writes:

“I could not help the traumatic memory of the 1990s in Belgrade, where the sight of police in large numbers was an unmistakeable call to “run for your life” [...]. It was difficult for me to maintain the unconditional faith that the police would not turn against the participants on the one hand, or open up their cordons to let the angry mob in on us on the other [...].” (2012: 102).

The anthropologist Marek Mikuš attended the Belgrade Pride Parade 2010 and delivered a detailed analysis of what he calls the “state parade”, because of this collaboration between the queer activists and the government. The critique issued for the pride parade was that its only purpose was the European integration of Serbia (Mikuš 2011: 836). This strategy was an important and helpful tool to “externalise the responsibility for the Parade while taking the credit” (ibid.: 842f.). The pride parade allowed the perception of the representation of “distant, alien rights”, which are not part of the Balkan itself, but need to be enabled to be part of the supranational wider power (ibid.: 844). It was a show for Western viewers to demonstrate the willingness of Serbia to accept and protect minority rights to improve their image in the EU accession politics. The situation of the pride parade must have been at odds judging by the description of Mikuš:

“Surrounded by the globalised iconography of the LGBT movement and cheesy Western pop, I could not help feeling that almost the only local thing about the Parade were the militarised, violent conditions under which it was happening. If the speakers mentioned Serbia, they mostly denoted it negatively, as a site of deviation from the European norms of respect for human rights that the Parade begins to rectify.” (2011: 836).

Not only did the Europeanisation context, in which those practices took place, enact a discomfort in the population, it also created the rights of LGBTIQ+ people as something foreign. LGBTIQ+ rights were perceived as pure influences of the West and a launch of certain norms onto the Serbian society.

Further, this image of Serbia being inside of the Europe, but still not ready for the European Union is accompanied by an evolutionist perception of the Balkan region itself. How European is Serbia and what are the European values it needs to have to become a member state? In what way does these values have already underwent a symbolic and discursive character and are manifested as checkboxes of a to-do list to enter the European Union. “Europe has become a ‘cliché’ and a ‘solution for everything’” (Mikuš 2011: 840). Further, the European values felt like an enforcement on them or at least were expressed in that way by Serbian politicians. A lot of queer activist, however, saw this integration process of Serbia as a chance for progressive social transformations. So, there were two contradicting arguments resolving around the relationship between EU integration and LGBTIQ+ issues. On the one side, it is seen as an importation from the “Western culture” and that the European Union pushes Serbia to change rapidly. “On the other hand, people who are more Europe oriented and are just progressive in that sense, they

perceive that European Union is pushing not enough for Serbia to implement a lot of laws or a lot of regulations” (Planojević 2020).

Mikuš issued a high critic that the pride parade was only undertaken to satisfy the concern of the international bodies, that Serbia is in fact protecting minorities (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 132). Nevertheless, it seemed that the purpose of the pride parade was to “check the boxes”, a recalling of Nikola Planojević (2020), of the European Union conditions (Bilić 2016: 135). Indeed, it has been analysed in a lot of works as the litmus test per se for Serbia to either see if they overcome their wartime era becoming a democracy or at least tolerant enough (in a sense of European enough) to be part of the EU (Parzić 2012; Krstić et al. 2017). Because of this, a distance towards the queer organizations by the local institutions and politicians was recorded, which leads to the speculation that it was one form of pink-washing (Bilić 2016: 135). It was in the interest of the government to improve their EU accession status by fulfilling the criteria set by the EU. Further, it seemed like a big political carrier leap for the organization members from queer activist movements. For instance, one of the founders of the Gay Straight alliance and main organizer of the pride 2010, Boris Milićević, joined the Socialist Party of Serbia (ibid.: 135f.). In return, the party gained a presentation of a “modern pro-European and leftist political party”, which seems at odds when thinking of the former leader of this party, Slobodan Milošević.

Nevertheless, the Belgrade Pride Parade in 2010 seemed to have passed the litmus test to become “Europeanised” (Ejdus and Božović 2016:7) or to establish a democracy by moving away from the violent politics of 1990 (Parzić 2010). Therefore, it would be important to ask the question, if 2010 truly was the litmus test for Serbia, where does Serbia stand now? Did it surpass the litmus test and became an “equal” European country or is it still floating in a “liminality” space between the country torn by the wars and becoming a liberal democracy (see Van Gennep 1908)?

After the outcome of the Belgrade Pride Parade in 2010, the queer movement was calling out for a new generation of activists once more, to grasp energy for this social movement: “People who were participating in 2009 and 2010 was the generation with burnout. Most of them don’t live in Serbia anymore. I was a new face at that time for a new generation.” (Ilić; my translation). Instead of setting the stones for a more unified or a more inclusive approach towards minority rights the parade “materially actualised and reified rather than transcended the enduring polarisation of Serbian society” (Mikuš 2011: 845; Parzić 2012).

### 3.3.4. Belgrade Pride Parade Bans – 2011 till 2013

In the following years, all the pride parades in Belgrade were banned due to security reasons. Already in the year before, it was amplified that the bureaucratic measurements were enormous to organize a pride parade due to the “technical obstructions” by the police (Ejdus and Božović 2016: 10). They requested various licences, documents, and papers to hold the pride parade. Marko did a study on the discrimination when trying to register the pride parade and summarized that in a long list, which he and his organization displayed in the city centre of Belgrade. He was trying to figure out, which documents other public gatherings need to be able to hold an event and how much documents are needed for a pride parade. The action was called “which way is longer” and highlighted the bureaucratic struggles queer activists faced in comparison to other, often nationalistic ones (Ilić 2020). In 2011, 2012 and 2013, pride parades were allowed to organize and be planned, but were shortly (sometimes only minutes before) prohibited or relocated, because of the impossibility to negotiate a date and location with the pride parade organization members (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015, Bilić 2016, Ejdus and Božović 2016: 10). This was not in the interest of the activist organization participants, which Nikola Planojević from Dasezna explains this period:

„[The Belgrade Pride Parade 2010] was the first, I would say the zero pride because that was the isolated [one] and then for the next four, five years they were forbidden. There was a move to have them, and people were organizing them, like the organizations, but when it came to the day or the week of it to happen, police said it is not a safe event, we cannot allow it, you cannot have your right for peaceful assembly and protest. One year they allowed it, but to put it in Novi Beograd, in some park, but the organizers did not want to accept this, because that's not the point. It needs to happen in the centre and needs to be visible.” (2020).

Not only the local queer organizations were criticizing these decisions, but also the officials of the European institutions stated their discomfort (Bilić 2016: 137). Relating in that way, that by banning the demonstration and the pride parade, it would not fit the description of a modern democracy (ibid.). Other issued their concern, that maybe Serbia wasn't ready to join the EU after all, as the Serbian government didn't show enough support towards basic human rights (Bilić 2016: 138). The European Parliament Rapporteur for Serbia Jelko Kacin went so far as to state the Belgrade Pride Parade as “one of the key tests for the Serbian institutions”, which was adding “European pressure” on government authorities (ibid.). Bilić highlights in that manner, that the fact that Kacin is a Slovenian official is no coincidence either. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Slovenia positioned itself apart from this history and presented itself “as a country that is profoundly familiar with the region and can help it on its way to the EU” (Bilić 2016: 139). The Yugoslavian historical context plays an important role in the perception of their degree of civilisation or barbary in the Balkan countries.

However, this political pressure by the EU on government officials lead to a stigmatisation of the queer population as the reason for the failure of the EU accession, which amplified the homophobic sentiments even more (Bilić 2016: 139). It also led to a split in the perception of the pride parade by the queer community itself. A high percentage issued that the pride brings more unpleasant visibility towards the community, which is seldomly resulting in benefits (ibid.: 140). This is also confirmed by Sloetmaecker who emphasizes that the organizers and activists have less time to engage with local queer people, because they are pre-occupied with the Pride (2017: 10). However, it needs to be noted that not all queer activist organizations are involved in the same activities, as for example Dasezna is collecting law cases and hate crimes, while Labris focuses on the education of governmental institutions about LGBTIQ+ issues (ILGA 2018 and ILGA 2019).

Further, the European pressure was not always expressed in a negative way. Ejodus and Božović highlighted that without the EU pressure, the police training in 2012 in Serbia towards hate crime wouldn't be implemented (2016: 11). It was framed in these contexts only when the Europeanisation process was framed as neutral or even positive, as Ejodus and Božović did: "Europeanisation can be defined as 'a process by which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policy-making' or 'the change within a member state whose motivating logic is tied to an EU policy or decision-making process.'" (2016: 2). Although other scholars have pointed out, that this connection between the LGBTIQ+ issues and the Europeanisation process had fatal consequences for actual queer activism (Parzić 2012; Mikuš 2011; Krstić 2017), Ejodus and Božović explicitly argue, that without the EU and the supranational pressure towards Serbia, the LGBTIQ+ rights wouldn't change at all (2016: 3).

### 3.3.5. Belgrade Pride Parade 2013 - The Stonewall of Eastern Europe

The Stonewall was a historic event in the Western hemisphere towards LGBTIQ+ rights. However, these events did not affect the Eastern or in this case the Balkan geopolitical region in the same way. Although the same connotations are used, thereby to develop the relationship necessary to be part of the European Union, the historical implementations are still different. While the Stonewall in 1969 in New York started as a riot towards police violence, the "Stonewall of Eastern Europe", as the Belgrade Pride Parade organization is calling the parade in 2013, started as a protest towards the years of pride parade bans in Serbia (Belgrade Pride 2021; URL). However, often it is referred as the midnight Pride Parade ("noćni prajd") (Blic 2013). Marko Ilić, one of the organizers of the pride parade in Belgrade in this year, was describing this as a revolution moment. For all the traumas and pain, the queer activism has caused him and with how lack of recognition he received by the Austrian government when applying asylum, I want to allow his words to describe the event. After organizing all the necessary gadgets, a

pride parade should be equipped with, for instance rainbow flags on the streetlights and so on, Marko was preparing himself at home.

“The pride parade was revolutionary. I will describe you, how it went. Saša, my father and my cousin from the US and I were in Belgrade. They were there and I was preparing for the Pride Parade tomorrow. It should have taken place in the park Manjež.” (Ilić 2020; my translation)

In contrast to the organization of the parades in the previous years, the organization members were now willing to hold the Pride parade more outside of the town centre in the park Manjež. A lot of people were already gathering in the city centre and the police security was already tripled. All the streets toward the park Manjež were closed and heavily guarded. Marko could look at this organization from his flat, as the park was nearby. He wasn't paying too much attention on what was going on, as he was too nervous and focused on the outcome of the parade: “You cannot imagine which level of patience that was. It was really stressful. The media, the whole city, all the people, who are angry because of all the chaos in the city, are cursing you in that moment.” (Ilić 2020; my translation).

Throughout this stressful event and the pressure, soon the negotiation with the police started as well, concerning the cancellation of the pride parade of the year 2013:

“My phone was ringing. The police were calling me to come to the station to receive a paper. I was asking which paper. I already knew what they were referring to. He [the policeman on the phone] was saying, that I should come to the police station to receive the paper. I was replying again: ‘Which paper? I don't have time. Tomorrow is the pride, and I cannot come to get a paper.’ He said: ‘But you need to come because of the pride parade tomorrow to receive the paper.’ ‘What is the paper about? What? How is the paper called?’ ‘Decision’ ‘What is on this decision?’ I wanted him to tell me. He said: ‘Decision of the pride ban. Marko, come!’ I said that I couldn't come. ‘Read out at the bottom of the decision, why the pride is banned!’ ‘Because of security.’” (Ilić 2020; my translation).

The decision on the paper stated following:

„The organizer of the public gathering and the public gathering in the movement Ilić Marko and Savić Ivana, representatives of the Association ‘Pride Parade Belgrade’, submitted PS Savski venac, PU for the city of Belgrade, on October 5, 2012. an application for holding a public gathering and a public gathering in movement, on September 28, 2013. year, starting at 09.00, in the park ‘Manjež’.

In the conducted procedure according to the report, it was determined that the reasons from Article 11, paragraph 1 of the Law on Assemblies of Citizens of the Republic of Serbia were acquired, respectively that the gathering may interfere with public traffic, endanger health,



public morals or safety of people and property." (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Police Department for the city Belgrade 27.9.2013; my translation).

Instead of having a Belgrade Pride Parade during the day and in the location agreed upon with the government officials, the event was cancelled. However, the officials still wanted him to get to the police station to receive the decision to make it official and to announce it in the evening news report. Marko was not amused by the policeman demands and the conversation went on:

“‘How should I come? In this decision it is stated that a gay person cannot go outside, because it is not safe enough. You gave me the paper from the government officials, that it is unsafe for gay people to go outside and for that reason cannot walk and the pride is banned. How should I now go outside and to the police station?’ I was waiting for them to send me a police car and to let the police wait for me outside the building of my flat to take me to the police station through all this traffic. Because of all that, the news was reported late. They brought me there. I received this decision. The news began and from this moment it was official. Then they said fine. That’s it. I said: ‘How do you mean this is it? I am now going to the office to give my colleagues the decision.’ He said: ‘Ok. See you!’ I said: ‘No ‘see you’. Car! I have a paper now that it is not safe for me to go outside. I need a police car to drive me. I want police security now, please.’” (Ilić 2020; my translation).

The government decision is now also used as a statement of the status quo. It is not new, that queer people have difficulties to go outside and to present or display themselves as LGBTIQ+. However, the decision by the government officials made the situation those people face in Serbia, a recognized problem through the prohibition of the pride parade. On the one side, the Serbian government didn’t want the European officials to criticize them for the Pride Parade by shifting away their responsibility for not upholding the Pride, but on the other hand, prohibiting the Pride Parade enhanced the critique by the international community. It appears that the Serbian government tried to achieve a different outcome with this decision.

Marko afterwards went to his colleagues in the Belgrade Pride Parade office. After the third pride parade ban, the people felt demotivated and were sad and devastated because of this decision. In their perception it felt that all the effort in these three years was useless until Marko decided to turn the table and said:

“People, the gathering was prohibited for tomorrow. Today is today. It is not tomorrow. Till 12 o’clock it is still today and from 12 o’clock the gatherings are forbidden. I am going in front of the government to protest with my gay flag. Let someone kill me, let the park be named after Marko Ilić, the fallen fagot.” (Ilić 2020; my translation).

Evoking the feelings of all the members present, Marko was talking “like a partisan” to be unstoppable now. Then the decision arises to contact all the people they know through social media channels to come to the protest in front of the parliament. “Because of the Pride ban, we will meet at 11 in front of the

government of Serbia” was texted to all the nearest members of the queer community (BLIC 2013). The problem was not to raise awareness of the protest, but how to structurally raise it, so far-right protestors and hooligans would not be provoked to come as well. They chose to contact the individuals they know and trust separately. Marko somehow managed to get into a taxi and in front of the parliament in all this traffic. That is when the “chaos” began due to the gathering of several individual people of different organizations affiliated with queer rights. The protest began with flags and shouting. The head of the police department went to Marko and said to him, that he should not fear prosecution now for the holding of an unauthorised public gathering:

“‘We will not write you anything. Just tell us what you planned.’ ‘What kind of planning? Nobody is planning. We are staying in front of the government. I said I was going onto the street and there I am. They lowered down the police security because the pride was cancelled. I am going out of the still guarded crossroad in front of the government. You must imagine the tramways and busses were still going. I said that we are going to the parliament. Then we went uphill and were standing in front of the parliament. There we hang up the transparent. Some people gave interviews, I could not. Then we separated.’” (Ilić 2020, my translation).

Arriving at home, the family was surprised as they could watch the whole procedure through their window. He didn’t have the energy to talk about that in this moment and went to bed. However, he felt relieved as from now on, no one could prohibit the pride 2013, because it already happened. Luckily, nobody was hurt, as the hooligans arrived after the separation of the protest. “We have achieved the goal. We went from the government to the parliament.” (ibid.).

### 3.3.6. Arriving in Europe? The queer liberation in the Balkan – from Belgrade Pride Parade 2014 toward the Europride 2022

After this year, a new coalition was formed in 2014 with the current president of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić being the new prime minister. The political reference towards the pride parade didn’t change. Same as Dačić, Vučić referred to the pride parade 2014 only in terms of security but refused to participate in it by stating his democratic right to not even consider it (Bilić 2016: 141). It seemed that the pride parade 2014 was a somewhat copy of the „state parade” in 2010 considering the police presence. The feeling on the pride parade felt not that accepting by the LGBTIQ+ population, but the officials of the European Union were satisfied. A lot of queer organization members issued the parade to be fake „in a sense that it was just organized to show that Serbia, as a country, is capable of obeying demands of patrons such as the European Union or any other international body” (Marinković 2015 in Bilić 2016: 143).

Nevertheless, the praise of the European officials allowed the organisation Belgrade Pride parade to become a member of the European Pride Organisers Association (short EPOA) in 2014 and InterPride in 2015 (Belgrade Pride Parade 2021; URL). This is the moment, since when a lot of organizations started to record data to use it in governmental negotiations (Meaker 2016;). On the one hand, it pressured the governmental authorities to listen to them and persecute the laws they implemented. On the other hand, it is also used to back up the governmental reports send to the EU officials about the current state of LGBTIQ+ people and hate crimes in Serbia in general.

Despite these legislative changes, it was not clear if the Pride Parade in 2014 will occur, because the government didn't give the official go, but the deadline for the ban of public gatherings expired (Ilić 2015: 19). The Ministry of Police reserved the right to cancel the pride, but the Pride Parade took place and was accompanied by several thousand policemen (ibid.) Although the pride parade 2014 had a lot of similarities to the parades in 2010, one distinction still occurred, which put the pride parade organizers in a position of exclusion by the nation state. As already mentioned, the Serbian Orthodox Church had and still has an enormous impact on the national identity in Serbia, which is why it causes the thermology as "religious nationalism" (Igrutinović et al. 2015: 210). This influence is highly evident through the case of Jasenko and Aleksandar, who needed to apply for asylum in the USA because of a lawsuit issued by the former Serbian Patriarch Irinej for a banner raised by the gay couple on the Belgrade Pride Parade 2014:

"On that occasion, Jasenko had carried an image of the Patriarch as a banner with the inscription 'I'll give you a million dollars to be mine'. The lawsuit itself was not a problem, Jasenko explains, because he knew that he did not do 'anything bad', but the fact that he was now even more of a target as someone who had insulted an important person and brought upon himself the anger of many, made leaving BiH [Bosnia-Herzegovina] a certainty." (Jasenko and Aleksandar in Unkić 2019: 18)<sup>17</sup>

The opposition of the Church is not shaped by teleological reasons, but by "secular"<sup>18</sup> ones, mostly focusing on the demographic "problem" of the Serbian people by approving either the separation of Kosovo, the pride parade and abortion (Igrutinović et al. 2015: 210). In this sense, it was important to "increase the number of ethnic Serbs and thus strengthening the Serbian nation state" (ibid.). Because of this strong connection in the identity configuration in Serbia, it often seemed impossible for queer activists to criticize the procession after the Pride Parade, as there was one in 2014 to "'purge' the city

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<sup>17</sup> Jasenko and Aleksandar's story has been published on the website at the BH LGBTI Info Portal (lgbti.ba).

<sup>18</sup> The term "secular", however, is misleading, as I don't want to propose a distinction between religious and secular reasoning in this sense as I do believe these are intertwined. For a profound critique on these distinctions see Talal Assad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler and Saba Mahmood (2013) "Is critique secular?". Nevertheless, as to follow the historical particularities, I left the term to emphasize that there has been a difference in reasoning.

of the Parade” and to “clean” it (Igrutinović et al. 2015: 214). Criticizing the religious procession after the Parade means that you criticize the Serbian Orthodox Church and, in this sense, question the national loyalty. “The strong connection of religious participation, nationalist discourse and a conservative stance on sexuality and gender in Serbian Orthodox rhetoric might be one of the explanatory factors of the reluctance of LGBT-activists to openly criticize the church.” (ibid.: 219).

Further, the nationalistic discourses represent homosexuality as a Western threat, which is important to take in consideration as well, as the perception and the imaginary of the West and East is not only one carried out by the West. They are still related as the same imaginaries pop up but are covered with different values upon them. In this sense pro-gay becomes negatively connotated while as anti-gay positively in this so-called Anti-Westernism propaganda (ibid.: 205). This was not always the case, as the queer activist Goran Miletić is highlighting, as the pro-gay sentiments were previously associated with the Orientalist images, which were brought upon through Turkey or rather the Ottoman Empire (Miletić 2020). However, after the EU accession context, it became something which the West is been



*Figure 3. Sign for the city market was sprayed over with "You will not walk", which is referred to in publicly debates exclusively to the Belgrade Pride Parade.*

associated with, although histories show, that the West previously had contributed to homophobic environments in post-colonial states. In every instance, it seems like the Balkan was never queer.

However, queer people are already facing tremendous hate, which is nothing new and which as Gay Straight Alliance has pointed out, “do not need research to find out” as their daily lives are shaped by their trauma due to the homophobia surrounding it in the structure of the public space itself (2010: 9). The tremendous homophobic environment can be perceived as Milanović (2017) and Igrutinović et al. (2015) argue, by the repetition of cultural norms to enable a perception of the public space as natural, while indeed they are sexually marked. However, it is also marked by the ongoing presence of hate messages sprayed with Graffiti on every corner (Gay Straight Alliance 2010: 9; Figure 3). Especially for public outed persons,

the homophobic environment became unbearable. Marko was interviewed in the TV news coverage of N1 and became therefore a publicly outed gay person in Belgrade, which had its consequences:

“You know, people began to avoid you. You are the one who gets the attention, then you are also out all the people around you. People were thinking that all the people you talk to are gay, lesbians or whatever. Then they endure unpleasant situations, witness threats and assaults when you are with them. Then they need to give statements at the police and are dragged through the courts and so on. You bring people in this insecurity of your life. My partner was attacked, my

family. They attacked my family house, where my retired father in my place of birth lives.” (Ilić 2020; my translation).

Because of the constant threats faced upon him as well as on his relatives, friends, and partner, they chose to apply for a political asylum in Austria. Needless to say, the police weren’t a collaborate partner during legal proceedings of him or his partner, who was attacked in a gay-friendly club while working:

“I experienced an assault. A colleague hit me at 2 am. We have finished our shift and he knew that my boyfriend was the organizer of the pride parade at that time. [...] I am still in a judicial process, but I gave a statement at the police. They saw the video, where he was hitting me, and that people were trying to push him away from me, but nothing happened.” (Stojković 2020; my translation).

Even though the pride parade 2015 happened and the Trans Pride was also possible with highly police security, it didn’t change the fact, that the laws against Anti-Discrimination and Hate Crime were not persecuted (Belgrade Centre for Human Rights 2015). Because the jurisdiction didn’t change much, queer people began to wonder, if it has positive effects at all to organize the pride parade in the first place (Pajić/Celzović 2020; Planojević 2020). Most of the queer community still supports the Belgrade Pride Parade (Planojević 2020), although this can be reasoned with the EU accession politics as well, because the pressure holds the governmental officers accountable at least in a represented way. However, the next pride parade years had different new achievements, as the Belgrade Pride Parade is announcing (Belgrade Pride Organisation 2021; URL). It was also explained by Planojević, who attended the pride parade in 2016 and 2019, that the acceptance of the pride parade was higher and through a larger participant group, they feel they have encouraged more people to out themselves:

“Before also those who wanted pride and were for pride were afraid to go or like did not want to participate, ok it should happen. It is a good thing. But now more and more people do come [...], that did not go to pride, [because they] were like afraid that [...] their family would see them on TV, because there is a big media coverage and it’s in the news, on the TV, in the papers, like photos. They were like: ‘Yeah, I would go but what should I do, if my grandmother sees me there? How could I explain it?’ But besides that, a lot more like cis straight people came, like friends, also families that are supporters and allies they did that.” (Planojević 2020)

It was issued that the pride parade gets safer every year and that participants don’t feel that intimidated to attend them anymore. However at least for the parade parades till 2016, it was highlighted that the high police security enabled people to freely attend the pride parade (Planojević 2020; Belgrade Centre for Human Rights 2015). This led to a “security bubble” at the Pride parade which turned the state parade into a “ghost parade”, because of the highly militarization and securitization of the Pride (Sloetmaecker 2017: 13). One pride organizer described the situation as following: “there is you, the circle of police and the rest of the world” (bid.). The pride parade in 2018 was reported to be the first pride event in

Serbia, which had more participants than security guardians (ILGA 2018). Till then, to attend the parade an identification card was necessary, which was checked by the police at certain entry points of the pride parade. Further, it was still important to yearly announce in the media, that there were no incidents at the pride parade, which sometimes is highlighted as Serbia's change toward tolerance and liberal democracy. Sloetmaecker emphasizes this point as he argues, that the "Pride became a form of activism, an outcome rather than a tool to achieve change and devoid of LGBT politics" (2017: 15). When no violent assaults were reported, the year was termed as success for the LGBTIQA+ movement, rather than if legislative change occurred. The assaults on the pride parade became the only indicator, if Serbia is not fit enough to be perceived as liberal democracy which expresses high values on tolerance, while the yearly reports presented for example by Dasezna show that incidents are happening not only during the event and are rising yearly (Kovačević and Planojević 2020). What is important to highlight is how the right to assemble is deeply connected with the LGBTIQA+ rights in a human rights context. As there is no EU standard on pride parades, because not all member states have them, the EU wouldn't have the possibility to pressure Serbia for organizing a pride event (Sloetmaecker 2017: 11). Indeed, the event of the Pride Parade itself is considered a success, because of its human rights framework, which is why the quality of the Pride is seldomly questioned (ibid.).

### 3.3.7. The danger of symbolic solidarity for the LGBTIQA+ community

A lot of high hopes were risen when the prime minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabić, was outed by the president of Serbia, Alexander Vučić, as a lesbian politician for better negotiation bases in the EU accession process. Further, by Brnabić attending the Pride Parade at 2017, she became the first governmental official to openly support the pride parade in attending it (Belgrade Pride Parade 2021; URL). However, she became famous as well, for issuing in international media coverages that she is not "LGBT politician", but a "politician who happens to be LGBT" and by that justifying her low impact and the loss of progressive changes for the LGBTIQA+ community (Wintour 2017; BLIC 2019). Because of her lack in political change toward the LGBTIQA+ community, 120 people from the queer community signed an open letter toward Brnabić amplifying that with her position she didn't achieve any benefits for the queer community, but still send out messages that the lives of queer people are tolerated toward the EU (Dasezna 2020).

"It like send a I would say wrong message because she is a person who enjoys all the privileges that a person can possibly have. She is de facto living in a partnership with a woman, she has a child with that woman that also caused different reaction. That is a funny thing. Now when there are anti-governmental protests, people say like go away Vučiću and it's not your child Brnabička [the declinations of the Serbian language were used in the interview]. [...] She [the partner of

Brnabić] gave a birth to her child and then two of them are raising the child. But this people are saying this is not your child, because legally she is nothing to that child. And then we sometimes say ‘you are just roommates’ like legally you are not in any kind of partnership but de facto they are living as partners. They enjoy all the privileges and benefits of being partners, raising a child, living together. [...] a different and a wrong message is sent that [...] LGBT people can enjoy all the rights when in fact we cannot.” (Planojević 2020).

The queer life the prime minister is seeming to have doesn’t apply to the other queer people living in Serbia and being affected by these judicial laws prohibiting them is part of life. It highlights moreover, the importance of the EU accession in these politics. Another example would be the gender reassignment surgeries, which are still highly regulated by the state. However, Serbia still has one of the best medical reputation for this kind of procedures (Planojević 2020). As Saša would say, Serbia is itself full of paradoxes. Therefore, it seems like that the financial and class status plays an important role for the possibility of a queer life. However, it had a positive impact that Ana Brnabić was the prime minister through the visibility she brought on the queer community, as Planojević argues. Therefore, it was often argued that the announcement of Brnabić as prime minister has indirect positive effects for the queer community, as they saw them daily in the news and political negotiations. Rhodes-Kubiak (2015) already analysed this through the interviews he conducted between queer activists across Serbia, by observing discrepancies in the opinions. While some saw the changes as a political strategy to win international approval, others were more opportunistic towards the political changes because of the possibilities for activism and legal recognition of LGBTIQ+ issues (Rhodes-Kubiak 2015: 135).

Opposing views toward the EU accession by the queer community became rarer, because the LGBTIQ+ activism benefited from the symbolic solidarity towards them. It surely helped in the application process of Belgrade for hosting the Europride in 2022. Marko Mihajlović described the application process in detail and highlighted the reasons for the audience on Instagram, why Belgrade Pride Parade was the winner for this competition and how the imaginaries of the Balkan helped to achieve this goal:

“The first impression should be shocking. Our idea was first to start the presentation with a movie with brutal scenes of assaults. Because we think that it is important to show what our realities on the Western Balkans are, what is it that we face for years and to not show a tralala story how Belgrade is a great city, but to be realistic. First, this was tactically good, because people were still focused on our story [...] [after the 16 minutes presentation about the situation in Belgrade] We showed two minutes of a movie displaying some nicer scenes, which were filmed two days before at the Belgrade Pride” (Mihajlović 2020; my translation).

Marko Mihajlović and Goran Miletić, two of the organizers of Belgrade Pride Parade, were sent to Bilbao to propose in front of the EPOA committee to be the Europride candidate for 2022. The image

of the Balkan as a dangerous, but also romanticized place, helped the organizers to get the EuroPride title of 2022. It is important to highlight here, that these imaginaries are also inherited and instrumentalized for the activist gain as well. In the EPOA bidbook of Serbia it is stated that no-where in Europe, the “geographic crossroads between East and West” are that evident, which are described as equivalents to “crossroads of values” (EPOA Belgrade Pride 2019: 10). The already mentioned discrepancies and imaginaries of the West and the Rest were played out and intensified in order to gain the title for the EuroPride 2022. “To its West, rainbow flags decorate town halls while [...to] its East, members continue to be harassed, beaten and persecuted by the institutions intended to protect them.” (EPOA Belgrade Pride 2019: 10). It is argued that by allowing Belgrade to be the next Europride candidate, it would make a big difference in LGBTIQ+ issues within Europe (EPOA Belgrade Pride 2019: 10). Often the Belgrade Pride Organization portrays itself as the most progressive organization in the Western Balkan and through that has a leading role in advocacies (EPOA Belgrade Pride 2019: 12). It is recorded, that the queer organizations on the Western Balkan have a high solidarity base due to the collaborative organizations and supportive acts, as for example in issuing recommendations for EPOA to consider Belgrade for the Europride 2022. However, it works into the imaginary of the bridge between East and West, as Belgrade serves as the bridge towards the democratisation and liberalisation of the Western Balkan.

### 3.3.8. Conclusio: Belgrade Pride as a litmus test for Serbia

“Central and Eastern Europe is a ‘contemporary periphery’ because it is ‘European enough’ (geographically), ‘yet not enough advanced’ to become ‘Western’ (temporally)”  
(Mizielińska and Kulpa 2011: 18).

Although the Central and Eastern European countries are transforming the jurisdiction, it will always be below, anterior and prior to the West and look up to it (Mizielińska and Kulpa 2011: 18). It doesn’t matter what Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina will implement, will become in terms of jurisdiction, will be or is going to become through their ongoing processes, the West will always already have been there. How can a queer movement exist outside the normative indoctrination of the West? Mikuš argues that for Serbia to be able to tackle down the inherit homophobia, it needs to work against ethnonationalist, class-based structures as well. “What is needed is a grassroots, ‘populist’ social transformation.” (Mikuš 2011: 846). By referring to public figures in the media of Serbia, for instance the pop-star Jelena Karleuša, who is emphasizing the links between homophobia and football, a new possibility can emerge



to work for an equal future for all sexualities and gender identities. New contexts need to be highlighted which are imbedded in the regional LGBTIQ+ activism.

Therefore, the Pride Parade became a goal to achieve to be part of the European society, which on the other hand, needs to be instrumentalized for political gain as well to fit nationalistic ideals:

“[In the beginning] there was a narrative like ‘We need this’, ‘we need to do this in order to integrate into European society.’ So, this is, we are not very happy, that [...] the democratic parties [...] were saying like, we are not for this, but European Union asks us, so this is a step on our way to Euro-integrations of Serbia and now they are like now, ‘ok we respect rights’. [...] That right of peaceful assembly is protected in that sense but the general feeling is that they only want to send the message that Serbia respects the rights.” (Planojević 2020).

Other activist possibilities were pushed aside by political institutions, as the real goal was not the equalization of all sexualities and gender identities, but the improvement of the image towards those rights for the EU accession. Therefore, the sexual politics of the Balkan need to be put in context of the national, supranational, and international politics, the national and international queer movement as well as the geo-political history, specifically of Yugoslavia. As mentioned earlier in chapter 3.1. and 3.2. this relation and connected approach are important because Balkan but especially Yugoslavia is seen as the bridge between civilization and barbarism.

### 3.4. The space for LGBTIQ+ issues in post-war Bosnia and Hercegovina

The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the post-communist period resulted in religious nationalism in that area (Igrutinović 2015), but because the Yugoslavian war in the 90s occurred on different places in a different degree, the degree in nationalism was different as well. Safia Swimelar points out that not only did the religious nationalism evolve in Bosnia-Hercegovina because of the war, but also the ethno-national nationalism that was further fuelled and kept alive by the Dayton Agreement in 1995 (2020: 768). This served an opponent view towards the LGBTIQ+ issues and rights as they stand in connection with “Europe” and therefore in contrast to the ethno-nationalist identity of Bosnia-Hercegovina. The national position of Bosnia-Hercegovina toward the European Union is more complex because of the Dayton Agreement, which allowed European officials to have continuous influence on Bosnia-Hercegovina. Further, the governmental split on ethno-nationalistic lines, which in the agreement should guarantee self-determination to all ethnic groups, turned out to be an anti-democratic solution. According to the European Court of Human Rights the Dayton constitution is not only antidemocratic, but also discriminatory (Swimelar 2020: 774). Not only because it leaves out any other ethnic and religious group living in the country, but also because the Veto right of the three ethnic

constituents in the parliament, every progressive change in the country could be circumvented in order to prevail the political power (ibid.). The state being compromised by two “entities”, Republika Srpska (RS) and the Federation, already points to the difficult national identity process, as for example citizens of the former do not identify in the same amount as “citizens of Bosnia” as the latter (Swimelar 2020: 775). Further, it highlights the injustices through the Yugoslavian war, as cities where genocides by the Serbian military occurred, for example Srebrenica, were distributed to Republika Srpska by the Dayton Agreement. Hence, awarding the genocide with the land rights for Republika Srpska.

Further, because of the still threefold ethno-nationalistic identity of Bosnia and Hercegovina constituent of Bosniak (Muslims), Serbs (Orthodox) and Croats (Catholic), it “lacks a strong national identity”, which served the queer community as well, as the backlash of the far-right and religious groups in this case struggled to oppose one enemy, as it is the case in Serbia (Swimelar 2020: 769). However, the European Union and the perception of the queer positive space in the West, lead to a correlation of LGBTIQ+ issues with the Europeanisation process and European Union in general, which turned every LGBTIQ+ issue in a European issue. Bosnia-Hercegovina was recognized as a potential candidate in 2000 and the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) was issued 2008 and ratified in 2010, whereby the country accepted the EU conditions for membership (Selmić 2016: 92). The EU Council set four conditions which need to be met to be able to apply for EU membership at all. The Adoption of the State Aid Law and the Law on Census of Population, Household and Dwellings was already implemented and are considered as the two conditions fulfilled, while the other two still need to be implemented, which would be on the one hand the Sejdic-Finci ruling and the establishment of coordination mechanisms for EU-related affairs (Selmić 2016: 92f.). The Sejdic-Finci of the EU Council ruling is one of the most important, but also the most difficult ones, as it involves the end of the Dayton peace agreement, because of their discriminatory practices.

Because Bosnia-Hercegovina is imbedded in these ethno-nationalistic and religious nationalisms and their pushbacks for LGBTIQ+ issues and rights, the European pressure was higher, which in turn helped the queer community raise awareness much faster than in other parts of former Yugoslavia (Swimelar 2020: 768). That explains the paradox of the Pride Parade taken place in Bosnia-Hercegovina 2019, as one of the last countries to join these events, but with one of the most participants of former Yugoslavia<sup>19</sup> as well (Pandurević 2020). Further, the police securitization was much lower in relation to the pride participants with the ratio of 3:1 than in the Belgrade Pride Parades (ILGA 2019).

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<sup>19</sup> There exists a high solidarity among the queer activists in former Yugoslavia. It is common that for example LGBTIQ+ activists of Serbia would attend the pride parades in Bosnia-Hercegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro etc. and vice versa. The solidarities within the different LGBTIQ+ activism and towards each other are actively reshaping nationalism in the countries, which is a parallel discussion to the one between the Balkan and the West.

Bosnia-Herzegovina seem to have a short history of LGBTIQ+ activism, as little academic awareness has been given to the issues of sexual and queer politics. Even though when focusing now on the LGBTIQ+ issues it seems that the focus is still grounded in the aftermath of the Yugoslavian war and the consequential nationalism out of it (see Swimelar 2020 and Selmić 2016). This history is important as it emphasizes the particularities of the LGBTIQ+ struggles present in the country, but it obscures the queer activism by focusing solely on those issues. Therefore, the LGBTIQ+ activism and its visibility became in the mid-2000s important (Swimelar 2020: 770).

While the Belgrade Pride Parade was the turning point for the LGBTIQ+ activism in Serbia, the organization of the Queer Sarajevo Festival in 2008 by the first LGBTIQ+ organisation Q, was the turning point for the queer activism in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The festival was attacked by Wahabi Muslims and football hooligans (Swimelar 2020: 778). They gained that much attention by the extremist Muslim community for organizing the festival in the time of the Ramadan festivities, which by the activist's opinion, was accidental (ibid.). However, the violence had positive and negative consequences for the queer community. On the one hand, the violence led to higher EU pressure and therefore the governmental institutions needed to work with the queer activists to improve the situations. However, the pressure towards Bosnia-Herzegovina was differently issued than in Serbia, as in 2014 the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina ruled that the freedom for assembly for the queer activists of the festival was violated and consequently is in need for protection (Selmić 2016: 90; Swimelar 2020: 781). The consequences ended not in the ruling, but also in a penalty fine, which was urged to be paid as a compensation toward the organization Q for the damage. This ruling was seen as a high victory as it is one of the seldom cases, that queer organizations were paid because of the violent attacks they survived (Selmić 2016: 90). However, the downside of this violent attack is the security threat endured by the organizers of the event, which led to a high emigration of the LGBTIQ+ activists and a disruption in the activist organization (ibid.: 91). It is often argued that first events in the queer activist history are often embedded in these consequences, which was similar for the first pride parade event in Sarajevo as well. Pandurević describes how he tried to convince queer activists and queer people to join the parade in his workshop "Seeking political asylum because of sexual orientation and gender identity" (Sarajevo Open Centre 2019):

"The Pride is coming and usually on the Balkans the first Pride is very violent, you know, and it goes very badly, which was the case for Montenegro, in Belgrade, in Zagreb, in Split and everywhere. So, I said this is the best asylum card for you to play now, come to the pride. If there is a violence there, it is perfect, you know, for you to look for asylum. And if it goes well it will be just one additional prove that ok LGBTI people have their place in Bosnian cities. So, come that is one of your last trains to Germany and Scandinavia." (2020).

For the Sarajevo Pride Parade, it seems that there are just positive scenarios that can occur, either it turns out violent which is offering participants the possibility to argue for asylum in a different country or it

raises the visibility for LGBTIQ+ issues in Bosnia- Hercegovina. The second scenario took place as no violent attacks were recorded and the pride raised visibility as it was issued in television broadcasts and newspapers all over the country (Pandurević 2020). In fact, the queer activists argue that the invisibility of the LGBTIQ+ issues was the main reason for the inequality and exclusion of LGBTIQ+ people (Pandurević 2020; Selmić 2016: 87). For example, there were laws that criminalized homosexuality till 1998 in Republika Srpska, but the prosecution of those is not well documented (Selmić 2016: 98).

Because of this invisibility and the difficult identity constellation for citizens in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Sarajevo Open Centre also demonstrated that the LGBTIQ+ community itself struggles to identify in these norms. Accordingly, 73% in a survey of 545 people stated that they do not declare themselves along those ethnic lines, which is dividing the country already (Selmić 2016: 87). The queer population constituted themselves as the other in all main ethnic groups and by that turned out to be one of the seldom organizations which is not divided by the ethnic lines but also not solely on the activist goals, because of the links it built with for example women's rights and other civil society organizations (Swimelar 2020: 776). It could be argued that the queer community in Bosnia-Hercegovina allows an overcoming of ethnic divisions. Through their solidarity contributions and collaborations within the country, it is possible to properly highlight the dysfunction of the governmental institutions (Selmić 2016: 87). However, the potential downside of not identifying within these ethnic groups, is the potential risk of being framed as outside and therefore as an imperial, Western and European product (ibid.). It already offers this image when observing the interviews of the news coverage and the article highlighting the US and European officials and embassies attending the pride parade (Wood 2019; Radio Free Europe 2019). This can fuel the opponents of the queer movement, which would be the religious nationalistic and ethno-nationalistic counter-protestors.

It is somehow delusional to not point to the problematic situations in Bosnia-Hercegovina for LGBTIQ+ people, because the positive development is evident as well. Next to the invisibility, there is isolation, exclusion, and unacceptance of the LGBTIQ+ people in the country which puts the people in a position, they hardly seem to be able to break out (Povorka Ponosa 2019). The slogan of the Pride Parade "Ima izaći" ("we will go") explicitly pointed to those frustration and the unacceptance to endure it longer, therefore, to fight back (Brezar 2019). Sarajevo Open Centre provided me with interviews of LGBTIQ+ persons in Bosnia-Hercegovina, who are "LGBTI migrants and young activists" (Pandurević 2020; email correspondence), which were conducted by Hilma Unkić 2019 in the project "Between Here and There: Migration of LGBTI Youth from Bosnia and Hercegovina to the West" in cooperation with the Foundation SHL from Berlin and Foundation Mediacentar from Sarajevo. The intention for conducting the interviews was to inform the public about the everyday struggles and situations for LGBTIQ+ people, but especially the LGBTIQ+ people about migration challenges. What becomes evident here is the invisibility of LGBTIQ+ people perceived by a lot of interview

participants as a taboo, which in turn means to question the rationality behind a prohibition or rule in a society (Knight 2010: 683):

“Whatever sexuality, when in any public discourse it is mentioned in the context of today's Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is taboo itself, which is very negative for society, because it creates a variety of complexes and fears. This creation of a taboo leads to the creation of social pressure because sexuality is simply a natural part of a person, but under the influence of, I would say, some social circumstances that are here marked by essentially religious, political and ideological structures, sexuality is erased from public life.” (Vrebac in Unkić 2019: 15)<sup>20</sup>

This correlates with the taboos migrants face when living in Austria and visiting family members in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well, as my research participants accounted (Theodora 2019). Taboos are however a good indicator to point at certain rules and norms, as societies subconsciously become aware of them as they are “passive consumers of experiences” (Palmberger 2016: 10). Ena and her girlfriend visited their relatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where she is not outed, and her girlfriend is seen as the best friend of her. Being LGBTIQA+ is taboo, which also meant that any indirect reference of them being together, was not seen that way. “Once at the dinner table, you called me babe and I was thinking like: ‘Oh, shit. What will happen now?’ But they didn’t react because they thought this is a new language of the youth.” (Ena 2020; my translation). Ena and Vera try to be cautious, when they are visiting relatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is why they don’t hold hands, when walking on the streets. The invisibility of LGBTIQA+ people in Bosnia-Herzegovina leads to the fear of being caught, of being visible in the wrong moment.

### 3.5. Conclusion

The geopolitical history of the Balkan is complex and often put in relation to its Western and Eastern counterparts, which is why the history of the region was often framed in the other. The Orient is “invoked into the current stereotype of the Balkan” (Todorova 2009: 162), which is why the Balkan is imagined through the Ottoman Empire as well. However, the Balkan as the bridge to the Orient is not the only geopolitical context that plays a role in the imaginaries of Yugoslavia and the now separated nations. Because of the communist regime of Tito, which was against Stalin and the Soviet Bloc, Yugoslavia was also the border of the West to the East, the border between capitalism and communism. The categorization of Yugoslavia at that time, was not easy. Because of the position of Yugoslavia, it was often not referred as the Balkan, as Todorova highlights (2009: 136). After the Yugoslavian war,

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<sup>20</sup> Matej’s story was published on the website of BH LGBTI Info Portal (lgbti.ba).

however, it was not that difficult to categorize the individual entities to the Balkan peninsula, because of the war crimes, which correlated to the barbaric image the West had about the East.

As I tried to point out in this chapter, it can be problematic to analyze the queer movement only through Western temporalities, as Mizielińska and Kulpa are already pointing out:

“It is troublesome for the latter, who are trying to ‘catch up’ with the West (although living in the ‘common present’, the feeling is of being sort of ‘retarded’, in the ‘past’); but also for Western communities, who see CEE as ‘lagging behind’ or ‘dragging the progress down’ (equally here, CEE is seen as ‘contemporary’, but somehow ‘hindered’ and ‘behind’.” (2011: 16)

Although the communist time is non-existent anymore and that capitalism has pervaded the post-communist era, it doesn’t mean that the modalities emerged into one, as they still are perceived as separate unities (Mizielińska and Kulpa 2011: 17). In all current developments around the EU accession in the East, the different temporalities can be perceived. The West is always identified as the “post”, as something for the East and the Global South to become, the future.

After the Yugoslavian war, the nations needed to prove, if they are European enough to be included in supranational agreements, like the European Union. It was measured by the success of the Belgrade Pride Parades in Serbia as those became the indicator if Serbia shared the values of tolerance and diversity as the European Union does. The next chapter will highlight, the tolerance of the European Union ends at the border. Considering the migration politics of the European Union and Austria in particular, it becomes evident, that the values of diversity which are highlighted to be the core values of Europe are only enhanced if the individual who wants to be included matches the classification and the imaginary the West has about them.

#### 4. How safe is the country you come from? Asylum applications confronted with the safe country of origin concept

In the previous chapter, I highlighted the ambiguous imaginaries of the Balkan and how this is manifested internally with the so-called “Europeanisation” process. The self-designation of the different former Yugoslavian countries is shaped by these processes, but they also shape migration politics in the European Union as well. As I already highlighted the situation for LGBTIQ+ people in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is important to keep in mind, that these imaginaries in the previous chapter are used on the EU enlargement level, but, as the data will show, don’t apply to the migration policies applied in the European Union, or Austria specifically. The supranational politics are influencing the

law and jurisdiction in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina concerning LGBTIQ+ rights. As Pandurević points out, the legal rights of queer people are not only depending on the activists regionally who fight to change the laws and implement regulations, but also on the foreign policy of the EU, “the climate that is in the EU institutions and EU commissions” (Pandurević 2020: paragraph 45).

Since the implementation of the safe country of origin concept in the European Asylum Law, asylum applicants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are facing the difficulty to prove their country of origin is not safe for them. Especially queer activists are put in a difficult position as they were working together with government officials to be able to organize LGBTIQ+ events, but on the other side are not assured the protection needed. As the countries are aiming to be a European Union member candidate soon, they are not going to highlight the issues LGBTIQ+ people face but will focus on the success in this matter. The asylum processes are therefore shaped by these supranational politics, which often lets the asylum applicants case left out or unnoticed, regardless of how much prove they could offer for their prosecution in their state of origin.

The question of sexuality and LGBTIQ+ rights is not defined by the individual emancipation for equal rights, but by a country score of who is more liberal. Which country gets the higher score and can therefore be perceived as more liberal, civilized, and advanced, despite the individual's different experiences within those countries concerning this matter. Implementing equal rights is deeply connected with the national image rather than with the recognition of inequality of certain groups. This becomes evident through the practices of surveying countries based on their law developments for equal rights. ILGA the International Lesbian, Gay, Trans and Intersex Association in Europe, is issuing yearly reports on the current development of homophobia in every European country and offers a map, the so-called Rainbow Index, where countries and their legal and policy situations of LGBTIQ+ is surveyed. Every country is surveyed on five categories: Equality and Non-Discrimination (Constitution, Education, Health, Law, etc.), Family (Marriage, Partnership, Adoption, etc.), Hate Crime and Speech (Laws and Policies), Legal Gender Recognition and Bodily Integrity (Self-Determination, Depathologisation, etc.), Civil Society Space (Freedom of Assembly, Public events, etc.) and asylum (law and policy measures) (ILGA 2020; Appendix A). Looking at these aspects every country is surveyed and given a certain percentage number depending if they fulfilled the points or not. Serbia got 33% and Bosnia-Herzegovina 37% in the Rainbow Index (ILGA 2020). It was highlighted, that in the category of Civil Society Space, both countries guarantee freedom of assembly, enough public protection, freedom of external funding and queer activists are not at risk (ILGA 2020). This map as well as other reports by ILGA are often used to highlight the current status of queer people in certain nation states and based on that evaluating if queer asylum applicants are legitimately seeking asylum because of prosecution in their country of origin. Therefore, the ILGA map and reports are a strategic homonationalist tool, which “relies on imaginary geopolitics of sexuality emphasizing homophobia as a problem to be understood mainly in relation to the nation state – not only homogenising separate

countries as part of the same more or less safe spaces, but also homogenising the countries themselves as ultimately ‘green’ or ‘red’ places.” (Raboin 2017: 64). The maps are used to distinguish if a country is safe for queer people by evaluating the general law and policy regulations of certain nation states. However, it doesn’t consider the heterogeneity of queer people in the different states by excluding law and policy regulations for example queer migrants and queer disabled people<sup>21</sup>.

Indeed, not only the law and policy regulations in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are affected by these maps and reports of ILGA and the supranational politics of the European Union, but also the asylum process for queer migrants from those countries migrating to the European Union or specifically to Austria. In the same manner as ILGA is trying to homogenize countries based on certain categories and points they fulfil or not fulfil, Austria and other EU states evaluate, which countries can be considered as safe countries of origin and safe third countries and which not. Based on this evaluation asylum seekers are neglected or accepted. Especially queer asylum seekers tend to be in a complicated relationship within these procedures, as the country of origin can be considered as safe country of origin regardless of them facing individually prosecution or not.

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This chapter will first highlight the legal aspects of the concept of safe countries of origin and how they influence LGBTIQ+ people in particular as they need to argue how dangerous their country of origin is to be granted asylum. Mathew Hunt (2014) has delivered a precise critique on this concept by evaluating the legal problems with this law application in the EU. To be able to grasp the effects of this policy, I analysed the data given by the Ministry of Interior from the years between 2002 and 2020 concerning migration and asylum applications. What does the European Union’s situation and geographical position and history tell us about their migration politics as well as about the EU enlargement politics? How does the Balkan and here specifically Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, fit in the history of the EU development?

In the second part, I want to amplify how the policies affect people from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina by highlighting the current asylum policies, as for example the safe country of origin concept. What influence does the perception of the EU “immediate outside” (Jansen 2009) have on the migration process or on the application of asylum in the EU? How do queer refugees and migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia experience the immigration process and what are the specifics in relation to

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<sup>21</sup> Disabled people are often excluded in the queer movement too, as a lot of activists and scholars have shown. However, the thesis is limited, which is why I won’t be able to go deeper into this topic. I would like to refer to the book of Alison Kafer “Feminist Queer Crip” (2013).



other forms of migration and towards other places in the world? During the asylum-seeking process it is necessary to provide proof, why you need an asylum. In the case of a political asylum because of sexuality and / or gender identity, this becomes a question of credibility and authenticity. To highlight the problematic in those asylum interviews, I am turning to Thibaut Raboin (2017) with his analysis of the discourses on LGBT asylum in the UK and Jasbir Puar (2007) to highlight the intersection between migration politics and sexual politics in this matter. However, the focus will lie on the conducted interviews during the research.

As stated before, the European Union is often shaped and imagined as a “queer positive space” for queer refugees and/or migrants, which in fact reveals the homonationalist regime by using a “binary distinction between tolerance and queer happiness that can be afforded by liberalism, and the death-worlds to which queers in the rest of the world are confined” (Raboin 2017: 45). By putting the asylum process of two of my interview participants in the forefront of this chapter, I want to pinpoint on the particularities of queer migration from the Balkan region and their struggles in the asylum-seeking process. Being within Europe, but also not part of the Western hemisphere, or the Global North, queer asylum seekers from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina often face a different trial, when applying for asylum because of their sexual orientation and/ or gender identity.

#### 4.1. The concept of a safe country of origin or safe third country

The concept of safe country of origin is deeply connected with the further three legal concepts – safe third country, first country of asylum and super safe European country –, because all of those have the same intention: to restrict the access of asylum for refugees on the EU territory (Hunt 2014: 505). Mathew Hunt (2014) asks what the reason behind the safe country of origin concept is and if there is any possibility to consider any country safe in the context of asylum. Therefore, he states that “[b]ehind the concept lies a belief that a large amount of asylum applications in Europe are ‘bogus’, and that there is a need to identify these people and limit their access to substantive asylum procedures” (ibid.: 503). In this sense, the argumentation for this clause is that the more countries are listed as safe, the fewer applications will get through the asylum process. After the first use of this concept in a ‘Danish Clause’ in 1986 concerning the refugees from the divided Germany, some years later other countries implemented this concept in the legislature as Germany and Austria (Hunt 2014: 504). Although in the academic migration discourse, it is often argued to not propose the migrant as a helpless object, but as an acting subject, these restricted asylum policies argued for this concept, because they saw refugees as “rational actors, acting as law consumers” through pull factors (ibid.).

In 1992, the London Resolution implemented the Safe Country of Origin, safe third country and “manifestly unfounded applications for asylum” concept as nonbinding resolutions within the European

Union (Council of European Union 1992). The Safe country of origin was defined in Article 1 as “a country which can be clearly shown, in an objective and verifiable way, normally not to generate refugees or where it can be clearly shown, in an objective and verifiable way, that circumstances which might in the past have justified recourse to the 1951 Geneva Convention have ceased to exist” (The European Parliament 2000: 19). Although the article 3 notes, that the asylum applicants should not be automatically refused and that they should be guaranteed an individual examination (The European Parliament 2000: 19), these “procedural guarantees” as basic safeguards channelled the focus away from effective protection (Hunt 2014: 505).

The definition of which country is a safe one, became a competitive and political gamble for the European Union members and it seemed that the goal was to add as many countries as possible on this list to restrict the access for asylum. Hunt noted in the analysis of the Statewatch report during the implementation of the concept in the London Resolution that the negotiations within the EU did not focus on an objective assessment of safety (Hunt 2014). “Instead, this entire process would seem to support the conclusion that the main objective was to garner support for a policy that would facilitate the almost automatic rejection of asylum applications, without the burden of proper examination” (Hunt 2014: 508). This was exemplified by the data used to rule a country as safe. The data was not provided by UNHCR or any local human rights observers but by the US department and mostly those sources were not made public at all (European Association for the defence of Human Rights et al. 2016: 6). Often human rights violation on several grounds were noted by civil organisations, but nevertheless the countries were ruled to be a safe country, because theoretically laws for protection are provided, as it was the case for Ghana and Botswana (Hunt 2014: 508f.). “Safe countries of origin practices enable European countries to make generalised assumptions of safety and to reject asylum applications as ‘unfounded’ without complete or individualised examination procedures.” (Hunt 2014: 500).

The concept of safe country of origin and their implementation is therefore inconsistent with human rights law and general principles of Community Law (Hunt 2014: 522). Due to the current Corona pandemic, this ruling unveils more than ever the lack of logic on the ruling of the safe country of origin. During the global corona restrictions, several prohibitions were issued to limit the travel to different countries on the grounds of the individual and public safety. However, the safe country of origin article was still implemented when deporting refugees to the same countries, EU residents were prohibited to visit because of safety. The argument in safety is ruled differently depending if the ruling is affecting European Union citizens or not. Therefore, it allows to ask, if the ruling was ever about the safety of refugees or rather a migration restriction for the Global South and the East.

When looking at the asylum processes from within Europe specifically, the perception of the country towards the degree of “Europeanness” becomes evident. Since the often-referred migration crisis in 2015, the European Commission proposed to create an EU common list of safe countries of origin to be able to accelerate the asylum procedures by excluding applicants from agreed safe countries (European

Commission 2015). The focus was on migration management and migration control by excluding asylum applicants from safe countries of origin and focusing on the applicants from countries, which are not listed in this category.

“The Council strongly recommends that priority should be given to an assessment by all member states of the safety of the Western Balkans, in order to support the swift processing of asylum applications of persons having the nationality of third countries designated as safe, even if the authorities of member states must examine each specific case on its merits.” (Council of the EU, Justice and Home Affairs Council 2015)

Although Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia scored a relatively high score on the ILGA revue for LGBTIQ+ rights and established a lot of framework, it doesn't provide a guarantee for legal aid and anti-discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender, as I already highlighted in the previous chapter. As Hunt already pointed out in his conceptual criticism of the concept, the assumption on the safety of a country in asylum processes is failing “to account for discrimination and prosecution of ethnic and religious minorities” (Hunt 2014: 516). However, it needs to be added that especially sexual politics and legislations in theory doesn't protect people who are discriminated, experience unsafety and fear for their life because of their sexual orientation and/or gender. The legislative changes on the rights of free assembly and hate speech for LGBTIQ+ people do not protect their lives tremendously, if progressive policies and strategies by the government and local authorities are implemented to protect them and enable a safe life.

Especially vulnerable groups are being left out in the concept of “safe country of origin”. When the country is listed as a safe country of origin, the asylum-seeking procedures are decided up until few hours. Marty Huber from the organisation Queer Base, which is providing legal, social and financial aid for LGBTIQ+ refugees in Austria, argues that the “‘fast-track procedure’ leads to a black box that makes it impossible for particularly vulnerable groups to take courage and secure themselves appropriate, specialized support and representation” (Queer Base 2021). These biopolitics, to use the term of Michel Foucault (1978: 139) or rather necro-politics (Mbembe 2003) not only decide which queer lives have the right to live in asylum, but how they should live. Which life is relevant and which deaths don't even deserve punishment? Which lives don't “even have archetypal weight within the scope of normative liberal democracy” (Puar 2007: 143)?

Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that the national immigration politics play an immense role if the asylum process is rushed through or not regardless of the safety of the country of origin. Marty Huber for example emphasizes the case of a lesbian woman applying for asylum in Vienna 2021 from a country which is not listed as a safe country of origin. However, her case was rushed through in the asylum-seeking process, because of the current asylum policy of the Austrian government (Huber 2021). The

anti-immigration politics by the Austrian government often overrules the already exclusionary mechanisms to apply asylum in Austria, as it is emphasized by many activists.

#### 4.2. The shifting image of former Yugoslavia

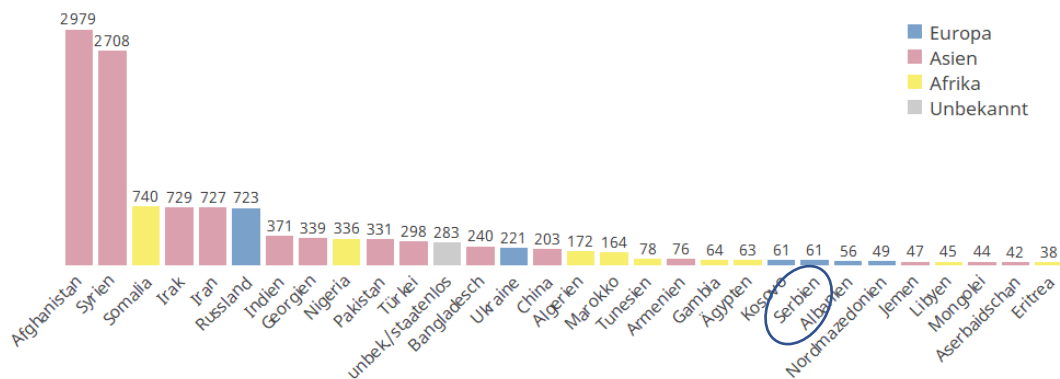
How many do apply for asylum from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria and how is this depending on the imaginary of the Balkans and in particular Yugoslavia? In comparison to the UK as Raboin shows (2017:3), it was not possible for me to receive any publicly open data specifically for LGBTIQA+ asylum in Austria (neither for acceptance nor rejection of their application). The Ministry of Interior is publishing yearly data on how many asylum applicants applied from different countries for asylum or subsidiary protection as well as how many of those received this status and how many not (Ministry of Interior 2002-2020). Looking at the statistics of the Ministry of Interior and Eurostat, I want to highlight the asylum applicants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in this case and give an insight how the imaginaries and stereotypes of the Balkan as the bridge starts to shift depending on the socio-political situation in the region. In comparison with other countries which didn't receive the status of country of safe origin, this led to a high refusal of the application for asylum and subsidiary protection regarding people from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The statistics is further data to affirm the claims by my research participants, that it is hard for people from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (or from former Yugoslavian countries in general) to apply for asylum and to actually receive it, despite the actual case of the asylum applicants.

The Asylum Act is active in Austria since 1998 and was developed again in 2005 (Asylum Law 2005 RIS). Since the implementation of the Asylum Act the concept of safe country of origin was implemented and used in asylum procedures (Oakley 2007: 6). The concept of safe country of origin is stated in Austria under the fourth paragraph under the second section, where it is reasoned with less expanse of the Austrian bureaucracies. With the third country safety concept (*Drittstaatssicherheit*), asylum applications will not be considered, if the applicants are not facing persecution in the country of origin, because of legal assurances (Asylum Law 2005 RIS). Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are on the list of safe countries of origins in Austria and in many European Union countries as well who are using the concept of safe country of origin (AIDA and ECRE 2020).

I gathered the data of the yearly asylum reports of the Ministry of Interior and wanted to look, how often asylum applicants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina got an asylum, a subsidiary or humanitarian protection or were rejected at all. In migration reports those two countries are often not mentioned and if they are, the percentage is quite low, as it is evident on this graphic (Asylstatistik Österreich 2019, Figure 4):

## Herkunftsstaaten von AsylwerberInnen in Österreich 2019

Asylanträge pro Herkunftsstaat (für die 30 Staaten mit den meisten Asylanträgen)



Datenquelle: BMI

Grafik: Stefan Rabl

Figure 4. Asylum statistic of Austria of 2019 divided by the countries of origin, where the asylum-seekers are coming from. The graphic was modified by me with a circle. 20.3.2020.

In sum 24.077 people from Bosnia-Hercegovina and Serbia applied since 2002 for asylum in Austria. The majority was from Serbia. However, it needs to be noted that until 2005 the Ministry of Interior was listing the country together with Montenegro building the remnant of the Yugoslavian state. In this period the most asylum applicants arrived, as it is evident in the graphic below. During this time, the image of the Balkan was the one of war and cruelty, which was reasoned with the proximity to the East (see Todorova 2009). That is why, the Balkan and therefore Yugoslavia shifted their bridge status and crossed more to the East site concerning the perception by the West. It is obvious that the imaginary of the collaborative Yugoslavian state shifted and displayed the stereotypes the West had of the Balkan region by emphasizing the cruelty in the Yugoslavian war as inherent for this region, as the “Balkanization” of the region (Todorova 2009: 32). The term Balkanization often was used in the context of decolonizing movements, because of the ongoing unease in the former colonial states of the European Empires (ibid.: 35). The relation to these regions is the continuity of problems inherent in these countries (ibid.). The cruelty of the Balkan was always explained with the reference of the East (Todorova 2009: 118). However, the asylum cases were benefiting this imaginary, as the people were seen in need of protection.

Since the implementation of the safe country of origin concept, the positive decisions in the asylum processes have dropped. Serbia and Bosnia-Hercegovina were listed as safe countries of origin which is why the lives of refugees from those countries weren’t in danger anymore. The individual cases became less and the geo-political region, the refugees were coming from, more relevant. After the war, the countries that evolved out of Yugoslavia were in need to prove how European they are. Therefore, they needed to work against the Balkanization through implementing LGBTIQ+ laws that secured the lives of queer people in Serbia and Bosnia-Hercegovina. This new political aim in these states benefited the restricted migration regime of the European Union and Austria in particular, as they had the possibility

to withdraw asylum cases from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina because they were now considered safe countries of origin. This decline can be observed in Figure 5.

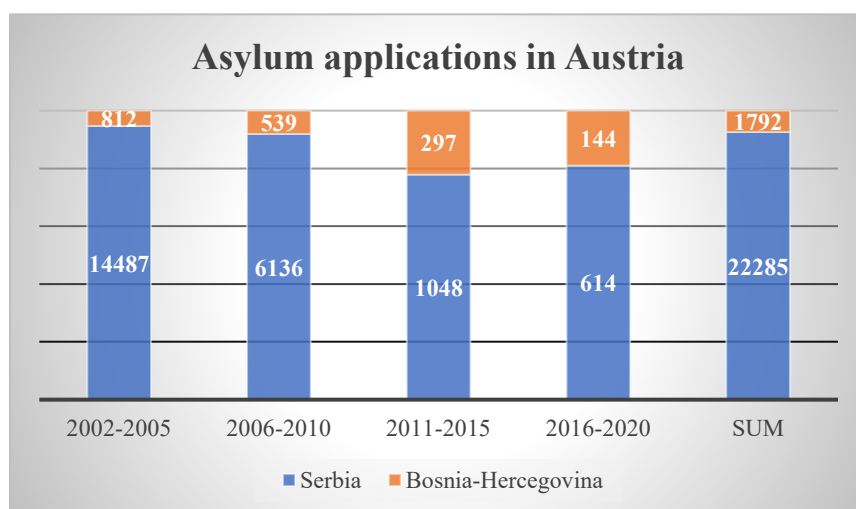


Figure 5. Asylum applications from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria in total numbers. The numbers are gathered by me through analysing the public data by the Ministry of Interior (reference in bibliography). 20.3.2020

However, because of the concept of safe country of origin most of the asylum cases and later subsidiary and humanitarian residence permissions were not granted. More than 80% of all asylum applications, including applications for subsidiary and humanitarian protection were neglected. Only a short percentage of asylum applicants, which is a little bit higher in Bosnia-Herzegovina than in Serbia, but nevertheless quite low in comparison to the negative decisions, were granted an asylum, subsidiary, or humanitarian protection. I divided the asylum decisions in “permissions to stay” and “no permission to stay”, as it is shown in the graphic below (Figure 6 and 7).

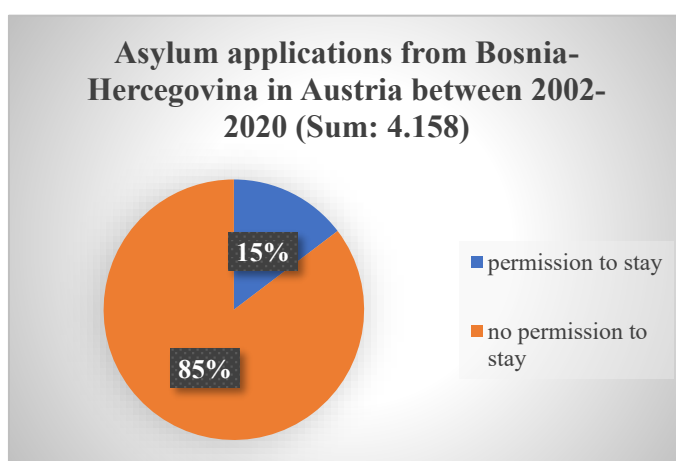
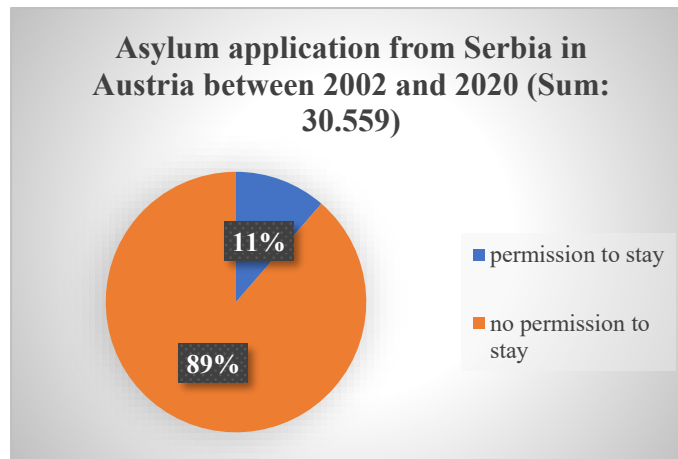


Figure 6. Asylum applications from Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria between 2002 – 2020. The numbers are gathered by me through analysing the public data by the Ministry of Interior (reference in bibliography). 20.3.2020.



*Figure 7. Asylum application from Serbia in Austria between 2002 and 2020. The numbers are gathered by me through analysing the public data by the Ministry of Interior (reference in bibliography). 20.3.2020.*

Analysing the not so transparent data by the Ministry of Interior, I was nevertheless able to draw some conclusions out of it. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia are considered as safe countries of origin, which is why the percentage of accepted asylum applicants is low and many get their application denied. The reason lies in the concept of safe country of origin on the one side and on the other on Serbia as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina's role in the EU accession process. It was necessary to implement some laws on prohibition of discrimination on paper to enter the VISA free system of the EU and to be considered a safe third country by the EU member states (Pandurević 2020). "It is much easier for you to come to the EU, but you cannot of course ask for asylum that easily." (Pandurević 2020).

This had positive as well as negative impacts. The LGBTIQ+ issues were tackled, as described in the previous chapter, more directly, because there was international pressure and political benefit to do so. However, because these rules were implemented in the law, the foreign policy of the EU categorized Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as safe countries, although human rights violations still exist. As Pandurević explains, this has a tremendous effect on the possibilities to apply asylum in the EU, but not in the USA or Canada, because "we [Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia] are still viewed and will be viewed by them for a long time as a third world country" (2020). This explains why a lot of interview partners questioned by the Sarajevo Open Centre highlighted that asylum will be granted much easier in the USA or Canada, then in the European Union if you apply because of your sexual orientation or gender identity from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

#### 4.3. Applying for Political Asylum based on sexual orientation and gender identity

“If you ask me, I don’t want to be a citizen second class. If you ask me, if I am better off being an asylum seeker than gay, I hate both. I don’t like both categories and to be put into a box, only this time in a different box.” (Ilić 2020; my translation).

Talking with Marko about his asylum process again after five years, gave me the feeling that there hasn’t been a significant change. We were sitting in his flat, chatting, and drinking coffee. I am still a student and he is still in the asylum-seeking process. It seems that time flies, but some things don’t change, unfortunately. He applied for a political asylum because of his sexual orientation together with his boyfriend in 2015. That is where we met in the Rosa Lila Villa House, while I was working on a research project collaboration concerning LGBTIQ+ Refugees in my bachelor’s degree in anthropology. We became close friends as we went to parties together and met irregularly afterwards as well. He left Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina like many others, because of being publicly LGBTIQ+ and a queer activist organizing Pride Parades as well as other queer events and activities. They applied asylum in Austria with the presumption that Saša wouldn’t feel that homesick and most importantly that they would be safe which they were not in Serbia. Beside the missing recognition of their asylum status, they didn’t experience the feeling of safety in Austria.

On IDAHOBIT Day 2021, Marty Huber from Queer Base emphasized again that the government doesn’t take the situation of LGBTIQ+ refugees during asylum processes in consideration (Huber 2021). It is still common practice that all people are put in initial reception centres (Erstaufnahmezentren) and in rooms based on the gender inscribed at birth, which is especially traumatizing for trans people (Huber 2021). In those first housings, asylum seekers experienced a lot of human rights violations, which especially Marko found shocking, because of his work in human rights organisations in Serbia and whom the European Union served as an idol figure in this regard:

“There were a lot of [human rights] violations, for example using searching dogs inside the camp while sleeping, which is not allowed. Further, they had electroshock weapon, which they used often. You often heard the electroshock weapons and they used that on people. [...] I was already traumatized by those electroshocks before, which is why it bothered me more. Even now I get goosebumps when I imagine the sound of these.” (Ilić 2020, my translation).

This story exemplifies that security, and the feeling of safety is more than expressing your sexuality. Safety means having a roof and to not be afraid to be persecuted. As Marko already pointed out, there is no difference, if you are treated badly because of your sexual identity, your country of origin or your residence status within a country. The goal by applying for asylum was to live a safe life despite



expressing one's sexual identity, which became almost impossible through the asylum decision process. During the questioning in the asylum process, it became evident, that they didn't reach the safe haven, they thought they would when entering the European Union. The migration process for LGBTIQ+ people is filled with credibility tests: either of their own sexuality or the unsafety of your country of origin. How you can make yourself naked by demonstrating how insecure your country is and how queer you really are, will influence the asylum process outcome. To quote a newspaper: "who is gay enough for Austria" (Brickner 2018; Mader 2018)?

Therefore, I want to give space in this chapter, to highlight the expectations of the asylum seekers when entering the European Union. What were the reasons to leave and how the "LGBT heaven" of the European Union was perceived? Subsequently, the imaginary will be replaced by the reality of the asylum-seeking participants. The openness asylum seekers expected in the European Union turned into an exposure of oneself. Making oneself naked in order to prove you are queer and that your country of origin truly isn't safe for you, becomes the predominant image of the European Union.

#### 4.3.1. Becoming invisible: Searching for a safe haven

„Well, I think first of all the freedom to hold your partner by the hand. And simply nobody will look at you reprovingly. Because there are so many open-minded people who, when they see that, just do not see anything, they only see a couple holding hands.“ (Tagić in Unkić)<sup>22</sup>.

The Pride Parades goal is to achieve awareness for the LGBTIQ+ community. In a way, the goal is to be seen and to be as visible as possible in order to advocate for your rights. Since in Belgrade several Belgrade Pride Parades were held and Sarajevo organized Pride Parades as well as other queer events too, the visibility concerning the EU accession politics is constantly evident. In the interview Darko Pandurević (2020) notes that since the Sarajevo Pride Parade, no institution can provide the excuse, that they don't know, who the LGBTIQ+ people are and if there are some in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, a lot of people don't see a future in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and often fear for their lives. Sarajevo Open Centre therefore organized a workshop named "Applying for Political Asylum based on sexual orientation and gender identity" in the year 2019. During this workshop series, they informed interested people about the asylum-seeking processes around the world, offered a chance evaluation and interviewed participants about their reasons to leave and how their experiences were in the asylum application process.

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<sup>22</sup> Leila's story was also published on the website of BH LGBTI Info Portal (lgbti.ba).

The fear for the lives, especially as publicly outed queer activist, made everyday life difficult. Interview participants report about being not able to go on public transport or to go out grocery shopping (Ilić 2020; Unkić 2019). Coming out of the closet publicly had a huge effect on life quality for the people. The safety of the individuals was not given as many interview partners recall. This narrative of “broken pasts” and suffering is always inherent in the life stories of queer refugees and often (but not always) in the stories of queer migrants as well (Raboin 2017: 19). Leaving them no choice they were looking for a “safe haven” to live a “gay life” somewhere else. This was being romanticized and constructed, but also used in a specific frame in the LGBTIQ+ asylum processes. The perception of the countries the asylum applicants arrive is important for the sexual politics of Human Rights by establishing the narrative of saviours (Western states, politics, and organisations) by granting asylum for LGBTIQ+ refugees and therefore fleeing the “savage” environment of the perpetrators (Raboin 2017: 53). The queer refugee embodies the “relationship between savages and saviours” (ibid.). Thibaut Raboin is going further arguing that in this process human rights itself shift from the legal framework into being the culture itself due to the culturalization of human rights violation (2017: 54). Through the culturalization of the politics of tolerance a binary is established, as mentioned in the first chapter, to highlight the Western liberalism and the West in general as modern and the non-Western countries as pre-modern (ibid.: 60).

Similarly, as Spivak is highlighting the white saviour complex in the postcolonial discourse, “the white men who want to save brown women from brown men” (Spivak 2016: 98), it is possible to draw analogies to the LGBTIQ+ asylum process: liberal and modern countries saving queer lives from barbaric ones. Concerning the asylum process of queer refugees, the saviourism becomes especially evident, “because of their spatial and temporal journey (to the West, and towards modernity)” (Raboin 2007: 60). To allow such a perception and imagination, the state needs to be imagined as a queer haven by queer asylum seekers and refugees (ibid.: 63). Mostly this is done through public symbolic measurements.

The representation practice of LGBTIQ+ openness through symbols in the public space is often equalized as political strategy against homo-, trans- and queerphobia. In Vienna for example the pedestrian crossings get coloured in rainbow colours or the colours of the trans pride flag, the so-called *Ampelmännchen* are changed into hetero- and homosexual couples in the inner city of Vienna and rainbow flags have been waved during the pride week/month. However, it is often used to present the city or the state in a specific image which is seldomly accompanied by political strategies to improve the live situations of LGBTIQ+ people (Raboin 2017: 59). These practices in the public space suite a symbolist politic instead of an actual political strategy to change the political, social, and socio-economic situations of LGBTIQ+ people and even less of queer migrants.

Representation and symbols are allowing public awareness, which is important to establish normality of non-normative lives. Yet representation practices without political change and improvement can lead to

the obscuring of actual and urgent problematics in the field. Symbolism that the state is overall supporting queer lives doesn't guarantee safe spaces for queer people and even less for queer migrants. In Serbia the lesbian prime minister is a perfect example for how symbolism will not change the life situations of queer people alone. Nikola described that the presence of a lesbian prime minister opened awareness towards the LGBTIQ+ people, but on the other hand shaded the struggles they face in the country (Planojević 2020). The simple representation practices are not providing societal change those people need, but they allow a political reputation in international politics, like Serbia is using in the EU accession negotiation and the European Union as the queer haven of the world.

#### 4.3.2. Making oneself naked

Applying for asylum because of your sexual orientation and gender identity is often split up in providing proof for two ontological manifestations. In the beginning of every asylum applications because of sexual orientations and gender identity, the decisions are always upon ontological grounds of the asylum seeker and the second part connects it to the situation in the country of origin itself. Is the person applying for asylum here, really that what s\_he claims to be?

The asylum seekers are pushed in the position to prove their sexuality and/or gender identity and this is often quite difficult: "You have to prove that you are a member of a specific protected social group, either religious, sexual orientation, race, political opinions and so on. You have to prove that you are part of a specific group that is persecuted." (Pandurević 2020). In contrast to the sexual politics discourses in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, where LGBTIQ+ people needed to prove and emphasize that they are, as everyone else, part of the society, the asylum seekers from these countries now need to provide evidence that they are in fact not part of the society but of a specific group, which is excluded and persecuted by the society, state, and government. On the one hand, the queer refugee needs to amplify their inclusion in certain queer movements, organizations, and social groups, but on the other hand, there is the need to provide the evidence that they are experiencing exclusion in their country of origin. This paradoxical state of being is often hard to prove in the migration interviews when applying for an asylum and is accompanied by a lot of mistrust from the governmental and bureaucratic point of view. Applying for asylum because of your sexual orientation or gender identity often leads in opening every little aspect of your life, which was often described as "making oneself naked" in front of the interviewers, the court, and the government. To give proof of your existence and your experiences, you need to lay down parts of your shell. You need to make yourself small and vulnerable. However, the bare being and the naked self can still be denied asylum, because there was no rightful category its existence could fit in.

Thibaut Raboin is highlighting this “exclusionary nature” in the asylum systems by describing them as homonationalist politics which are building the “transnational regime of truth” through exclusion of people from safe countries of origin (2017: 72). Further, he defines the “transnational regime of truth” as an embodiment of different bureaucratic relations within politics, law, intelligence agencies and the military, establishing the expert speech in the field of migration politics (ibid.). Therefore, the truth about your asylum-seeking status is not provided by the asylum seeker alone (seldomly this experience is recognized at all), rather than by the national and international political analysis of the state through concepts like the safe country of origin. Besides the evidence collection on the individual level, the second problem lies in the credibility of the information, data and narrative provided.

#### *4.3.2.1. Presenting oneself as LGBTIQ+*

Queer refugees need to present themselves in the asylum process in a certain way and will be managed accordingly. To represent refugees as LGBTIQ+ refugee subjects, the government is analysing the credibility of the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of the asylum seeker. This credibility is produced and reproduced through imaginations of certain queer livelihoods as “true” and others as “fake”. It is “based on a series of sexual ontologies, affects and modes of projection that (re)produce certain forms of liberal queerness as ‘true’” (Raboin 2017: 71). It allows the question similarly raised by Murray: does the safe country of origin concept “recognize the impact of differently positioned subjects in the multiple hierarchies of oppression of any nation-state”? (2009: 190). If we recognize that within nation states there are hierarchies, inequalities, and oppression, how can asylum cases be decided by evaluating the safety of a country?

The issue with credibility of one’s own trauma and persecution because of one’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity is essential in the asylum process. To recognize “truthful claimants” of asylum seekers by the state, the asylum seeker is in depth to make oneself naked by exposing intimate details of love, partnership, and body. As Darko boldly but precisely points out: “How do you prove that you are a trans person? Do you pull of your pants?” (Pandurević). The process also highlights that there is one acceptable and recognized way in proving one’s sexual orientation or gender identity. The body itself is presenting itself with all the imaginaries about their matter. A queer body has a specific way to look, be and behave as well as a migrant body has a specific way to look, be and behave. The combination and interrelation of both ontologies and imaginaries is what provides the ambiguity in categorizing the person and giving their existence credibility. The “credibility is based on a series of sexual ontologies, affects and modes of projection that (re)produce certain forms of liberal queerness as ‘true’” (Raboin 2007: 71). To maintain a certain perception of queerness it needs to exclude claimants, who fall out of certain categories, as for example a person who claims to be gay but is not appearing feminine enough.

These mechanisms are important to maintain a “true” and universal way of being queer (ibid.). However, it needs to be highlighted, that truths are not basically the reality told by the person, who experienced it, but that the truths need to be compatible with the imagined truths of the state. The inter-relation between the security apparatus and the queer refugees, becomes evident through these direct contacts of laying their lives bare in the asylum-seeking interviews (Feldman 2011).

Queer migrants from the Global South and / or the East are often in need to display their sexuality to gain belief (see Raboin 2007). This was already emphasized during the asylum-seeking process in the previous chapter. Indeed, there are a lot of trials within the asylum-seeking process that are established to prove, if someone is truly gay. The UK serves as a perfect example to display those practices as well. Although UK presents itself as the saviour of LGBTIQ+ refugees from Global South countries, it nevertheless, tries to neglect the experiences from queer refugees as well or tries to find out, if someone is “truly” gay. Through so-called “gay asylum tests”, LGBTIQ+ refugees were shown homosexual pornographies and checked, if they would get an erection or not (BBC 2014). Other tests included questions how they sexually interact with men, to check if they already had homosexual experience (Townsend and Taylor 2014). Indeed, those tests were ruled out by the European Court in 2014, but other tests to prove one’s sexuality are still persistent. The questions within the asylum interviews only focus on the sexual experience and not on the sexual identity, which is separate from one’s experiences. Similarly, Pandurević issued that during the asylum-seeking process, applicants were asked to explain the meaning of the colours of the Pride flag.

“There was a gay refugee [...] and one of the questions is, can you explain the rainbow flag. I work five years in the LGBTI human rights, I really don’t know the origin for the rainbow flag and what it represents, you know to give it some proper definition. [...] You can imagine the position [of the person questioned, ...] he had to probably hide it from himself and family and let alone have a flag and know what it means.” (Pandurević 2020).

These questions do not prove if someone is queer or not. It only proves the lack of understanding the governmental institutions have of the lives of queer refugees. To express their sexual identity openly is a process itself and can be tremendously difficult if people are denied their free expression of their sexuality and/or gender identity. Denying their identity because of their hiding practices in their countries of origin will not benefit this process. Further, it highlights the reference of LGBTIQ+ with the Western hemisphere and removes the possibility to present sexual identities and/or gender identity outside the West. Because the sexual politics are in a deep relation of the national imaginary of the state, it doesn’t allow queer refugees to be perceived without referring to terms of the West. Indeed, it highlights that if the saviour cart (the West saving the victims of the East) could not be played, the bare lives are not relevant anymore and their decision is more likely to turn out negative as Marko and Saša have experienced.

Marko and Saša both arrived in Austria together by plane and applied for asylum at the airport in Vienna. Managing to get in contact with some LGBTIQ+ activists from London, providing them information about LGBTIQ+ refugee organisations, they were able to leave the refugee camp in Traiskirchen after three months. Saša's fast spreading cancer was helpful for their fast transfer out of the refugee camp, which is why he got a treatment in a hospital very soon. To establish the truthfulness of the asylum claimant during the interviews by immigration officials, the government uses a set of technologies in the decision-making process. Often asylum seekers encounter those through fast-track processes and especially in detention by gathering further information through medical examination to use it against the refugees in the court (Raboin 2017: 73). In the week of Saša's first chemotherapy in the hospital, Marko received a letter, that his asylum application was rejected and that he will be deported within the next week, representing a tendency within the European Union that LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers being more likely refused at the first decision (ibid.: 72)<sup>23</sup>. This hasty decision was reasoned because of the implausibility to face persecution in Serbia and of him being homosexual. They were able to appeal to the court but needed to provide again the basis that they are a gay couple. Referencing Pandurević again, how do you prove that you are in fact a gay couple? The reason of credibility is used to exclude asylum seekers but to still maintain their imaginary of human rights state and culture (Raboin 2017: 72). Queer Base Vienna emphasized the problematics in the stereotypical questionings of queer asylum seekers by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA) (Queer Base 2021). To be able to distinguish if an asylum seeker 'truly' is queer, private questions concerning their sexual intimacy were asked during the interviews, e.g., how does the person have sex with their partner (Queer Base 2021).

Indeed, those practices are not limited to LGBTIQ+ asylum couples nor asylum seekers in general. Intermarriages are marriages between a person with a passport outside of the European Union border and a person with a passport from a certain EU national border. Immigration politics are constantly checking if those couples are living together and didn't undergo so-called "Scheinehen", meaning marriages out of certain reasons as for example to gain residence permit. The artist Tanja Ostojić (2008) analysed the process of migrating into the European Union from the "immediate outside" (Jansen 2009), the Balkan, through her story and her marriage with a person, who had a German passport, which was part of the art project as well. In relation to LGBTIQ+ intermarriage couples however, the waiting period was much shorter to get an asylum than it was the case for my research participants.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, these marriages are often put the surveillance of the immigration police to unveil sham marriages, through what Ostojić calls "checking-the-warmth-of-bed-sheets" (2008: 441).

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<sup>23</sup> I was not able to provide the concrete data for the Austrian case, because the Ministry of Interior or other organizations differentiated the asylum seekers mostly into the binary opposition of male and female excluding any information about their sexual orientation.

<sup>24</sup> 2002 the political situation towards migration is different to the immigration situation between 2015 and 2020, which could have influenced the waiting period for asylum seekers.

In the case of Marko and Saša, it required a lot of photos from the apartment, the fridge and bathroom. Based on these photos the asylum interviewers tried to evaluate if they are living together and if they truly are a homosexual couple. Through this monitoring and questioning, they become “bodies of data and information”, which are “produced through experiences of surveillance” (Puar 2007: 130). In the case of Marko and Saša they were not allowed to live in the same flat together, because of their different residence permission and asylum status. However, they were in need to provide pictures of their flat, how they share the bed or the food in the fridge. It became their duty to provide enough information about their partnership, which was, however, not recognized in the asylum-seeking process. The interview goes to a level of providing intimacy to government officials through “proximity, in/security, anxiety, quality, abstraction, particularity, porousness, opacity, and transparency” to be granted the belief and the trust of the immigration officials (Puar 2007: 130).

To be worthy of asylum in Austria and to be believed that your life is in danger in the country of origin, it is not enough to propose that you are queer and have suffered. Although they are questioned to reveal if they are as queer as they propose they are, the asylum application can still be denied because of their country of origin.

#### *4.3.2.2. Presenting the country of origin as homophobic*

LGBTIQA+ refugees arriving in Austria from non-safe countries of origin have a higher chance to be granted asylum, because of the presumption that they have been threatened, suppressed, or can be killed in their country of origin. This paper should not downsize the problems queer people face in countries that are considered non-safe. Rather the intention lies in the emphasis on the problematic handling of asylum applications based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which is seldomly based on individual experiences. Instead, the focus in the decision to grant a person asylum or not, lies predominantly on the assumption of the country of origin. The Balkan as part of Europe but also as bridge to the Orient, has a specific position in this context. On the one side, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina need to implement rights and laws to secure LGBTIQA+ people in their countries to be able to participate in the EU accession process. On the other side, those EU accession processes are stuck because of the lack of law implementations and safety conceptions for LGBTIQA+ people in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. To put it boldly, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina lack in law regulations and practical implementations to protect LGBTIQA+ people, which is why they are still not able to be part of the European Union. However, the law regulations are enough to protect LGBTIQA+ people in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina if those people want to apply asylum in the European Union and specifically in Austria. These ambivalent positions are putting asylum seekers in a difficult position, to prove to the government officials in Austria, that their country of origin is in fact not safe for them. It

goes against the local undergoing of the Serbian and Bosnian-Herzegovina government as well as some non-governmental organisations, which are trying to prove that their country is safe and does have enough laws to protect and ensure a safe life for queer people. Ilić describes his position as a gay asylum seeker from Serbia in the asylum system in Austria as not compatible with the pre-existing imagination of an LGBTIQ+ asylum seeker:

„We applied for asylum, but as Serbians we were not compatible. The asylum was subordinated exclusively to people who are Muslims, who are from Iraq, Iran and so on. We did not fit into any of them, but it was not our fault, we did not fit into the system. We didn't have any privileges. [...] We passed the same procedure, meaning: camps, collective accommodation... [...] However, when they needed to pay us attention, they were saying something like 'Well you don't need that because you're socialized and you're like from Europe. You know that and don't need that.' So, we may have lost some benefits at the expense of that, but the obligations were always the same.” (2020; my translation).

Concerning asylum cases based on the sexual orientation or gender identity presumed notions were involved in the asylum process. If the country of origin is a country with a Muslim majority, it is already believed that the LGBTIQ+ situations must be devastating. Islamophobia and sexual politics are deeply intertwined, as the reason for deadly sexual politics are often seen in predominantly Muslim countries and not within the European border. Jasbir Puar (2007) has criticized this often-done correlation between the Muslim and Homophobia. This imaginary is important to emphasize the West as the saviour of the barbaric ideologies of the East. This tactic can be described as playing the saviour which is a “conception of tolerance as a cultural trait” (Raboin 2017: 53). Indeed, hospitality needs three actors: saviour, savage, and victim (ibid.). In this context the saviour is the European Union, and sometimes a precise country within it, who is liberating the victim, which would be the queer refugee, from the savages, the countries from the East or Global South. The queer refugee is the mediator and the reason for the existence of the saviour and the savage.

“In other words, LGBT refugees are the centre of attention in the sexual politics of human rights since they are the indispensable victims allowing for the (narrative) production of the civilisational discourse of LGBT human rights, which is based on a world opposing modernity (secularism, sexual freedom) and barbarism (fundamentalism, sexual oppression).” (Raboin 2017: 53f.)

These imaginaries are important to establish the so-called homonationalist regime as they deliver the justification for the governmental decisions.



#### 4.4. Conclusion

“But they don’t get that we stayed here for a long time.  
We don’t want to leave this place. We want to stay here.  
They don’t understand that this could either be five years, ten years or more.  
We want to stay.” (Stojković 2020; my translation).

In this chapter, I tried to highlight the ambiguous relationship of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia being included and excluded of the EU concerning the sexual and migration politics. On the one hand, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina lack in developing juridical standards for LGBTIQ+ people to grant them safety, which is one of the reasons why the EU enlargement process is extending. On the other side, because Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are part of Europe and are considered safe countries of origins, queer refugees are denied credibility, because the legal basis for LGBTIQ+ is already provided. Refugees from safe countries of origin are denied their individual experiences and their sufferings. It puts queer refugees at an unease:

„For me it is illogical if you look at a country where you know there have been violations of human rights, recognized violations of human rights and you don’t take it into account. Then someone comes from another country, where there exists theoretically the possibility that his life is endangered, and you simply accept it.” (Ilić 2020; my translation).

Individual experiences are denied credibility and the perception of the countries of origin become the scales to evaluate if someone is truly and rightfully in danger because of his sexuality and/or gender identity. This often leads to a limbo status or rather a status of liminality. Marko didn’t get his asylum status granted and is currently allowed to stay in Austria, because he is “tolerated”, which is a broad translation of the term “Duldung” in German. The status of Duldung in Austria is the liminality status, where people still did not receive their negative asylum status. With this permission, they are according to the paragraph 46 of the Fremdenpolizeigesetz 2005 allowed to stay in Austria, if the deportation is unlawful concerning the paragraphs 8, 50, 51 and 52 of the Fremdenpolizeigesetz. This status often is described as an imprisonment itself, as they are not allowed to work, earn money, rent a flat, and so on. Therefore, Marko was denied moving in with Saša although they needed to provide proof, that they are still a couple. The ambiguous stories are indeed created by the immigration officials themselves, as the categories they are trying to put queer refugees in are not based on real life experiences. Marko was further denied paid work in LGBTIQ+ organisations, as his residence permission is not allowing him to earn money in Austria. However, he is in need to provide the relation and work for LGBTIQ+ organisations and events, so the government officials believe that he has worked for similar organisations in Serbia as well. They need to face juridical procedures which are not representative of

the tactic of “innocent until proven guilty” but are in need to provide evidence as their trial is in the device of “guilty until proven innocent” (Puar 2007: 143). Tanja Ostojić is highlighting this status through her art project quite well:

“[T]he absolute majority [of asylum seekers in Germany] are without resources and without working permits, forced into the black labor market to pay off their debts, and targets for more stringent police tactics. Yes, they are tolerated by the German authorities for a while, but like spring cleaning of its own prisons, out of fear and anger, the occasion comes from a seasonal sweep, and being illegalized, the asylum-seekers find themselves imprisoned again.” (2008: 443).

However, this is not the story, the EU wants to tell. The EU wants to be perceived and for some it still is, as a “queer haven”, where your identity and how you express yourself is your choice. This imaginary does not go hand in hand with the feeling of imprisonment of queer refugees, who are not allowed to get paid for their work in LGBTIQ+ organisations and to live with their partners. This exclusionary mechanism of the so-called “gay life” leads to a search for a different “queer positive space” without the perception and the categorization of their country of origin.

## 5. Sexual and migration politics in Austria: Beyond inclusion and exclusion

Although ILGA gave Austria a 50% Rainbow score for the legal and policy on the human rights situation of LGBTIQ+ persons (Rainbow Index 2020), the country is perceived within and outside of Austria similar to the European Union in general as a “queer positive space” in the terms of Raboin (2017). Those scores and statistical reports, differentiate nations, in either more or less tolerant towards LGBTIQ+ communities and individuals and “produce a geopolitical mapping of neoliberal power relations in the guise of sexual expression and repression” (Puar 2007: 29).

To look at the specific material realities of LGBTIQ+ refugees and migrants in the European Union is a way to challenge the exclusionary practices in queer and migration politics. Karma Chávez points to queer migration politics to “challenge normative, inclusionary perspectives at the intersection of queer rights and justice and immigration rights and justice” (2013: 6). The goal does not lie in the mere critique, but in the search for “making lives livable” through understanding queerness as a mix of “identity, subjectivities, power and politics located on the dirt and concrete where people live, work and play” (Chávez 2013: 6f).

Therefore, an intersectional approach towards sexual politics is important to distinguish the different experiences LGBTIQ+ people in Austria face. Consequently, the intersectional analysis Puar (2007) offers is important, which highlights the differences in oppression, exclusion, and discrimination. The “queer liberal” described by Puar as the “homonormative subject” which “inhabit a particular myopic queer identity from which race is cleaved”, experiences the exclusionary mechanism, differently than queer migrants do (Puar 2007: 125). Not every space is open to every individual, as the sexual identity is not the only marker of queer migrant’s body, who are also racially profiled by their appearances and / or their names. The “inclusion” of LGBTIQ+ people in Austria were at the expense of migrant communities.

“Those who already enjoy to some extent unmediated or taken-for granted access to the public and zones of public space, whether it be cruising areas, sex clubs, restrooms, parks, rest stops, or other spots where queers rendezvous, or the prospect of seeing themselves reflected in popular media, are subjects whose queer visibilities are not compromised by racial profiling, undocumented status, or gender-queer phobia.” (Puar 2007: 125)

This chapter should highlight the experiences of LGBTIQ+ migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria. What identities are they trying to have or to represent? Which identities are impossible for them to be part of? Therefore, where are the safe spaces for queer migrants and where do they enable a new category and identity besides and in relation to their exclusionary and inclusionary experiences. Further, it should highlight the relation of heteronormativity and homonormativity, which are necessary for a national state to state their liberal and civilized values. While the heteronormativity is defined by Puar as “indispensable to the promotion of an aggressive militarist, masculinist, race- and class-specific nationalism” (2007: 40), the homonormativity suites the promotion of the tolerance of LGBTIQ+ people and the protection of those by the “immediate outside” or the danger from within (the racialized other within the national border).

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In the first part of this chapter, I want to lay bare how the homonationalist state is deeply imbedded in the presumptions of homo-, bi-, trans- and queerphobia. Austria serves as a good example to highlight the homonationalist tendencies evident in the European Union context, in which “LGBT asylum becomes the site for the mise en scene of cultural difference, where culture is invested by race” (Raboin 2017: 56). Therefore, it is important to first highlight the theoretical basis on queerphobia and how the “civilization discourses” are interrelated, before heading into the analysis of the homonationalism in Austria.

Puar highlights three characteristics that highlight homonationalism in a state. As the first feature, heterosexuality needs to be highlighted as the norm that one may try to equalize homosexuality with. Puar describes this through the example of “gay marriage”, which inhabits an “equal but different” position for the heterosexual marriage (2007: 51). This point will be broadly discussed in the second part of this chapter, because in Austria the levelling up of the registered partnership for same-sex couples was broadly discussed in this manner. Austria has a long history of homophobic laws and regulations, which are often forgotten in the discourse of civilization. This part should highlight the peculiar history of Austria towards LGBTIQ+ rights and how those laws are still seen as preserved for a particular group of people.

The second homonationalist characteristic is that the state “fosters nationalist homosexual positionalities indebted to liberalism [...] which then police (through panopticon and profile) non-nationalist nonnormative sexualities” (Puar 2007: 51). This was broadly discussed in the previous chapter through the immigration processes of LGBTIQ+ refugees from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria. However, this chapter should highlight the civilizational discourses, that lead to an imaginary of the West as the saviour. Through the imaginary as a “state of exception”, the homonormativity is part of the national imaginary and therefore homophobia and queerphobia is part of the “immediate outside” and the other from within. In the third part of this chapter, I want to highlight this discourse and how these effects the lives of queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

At least, the last feature points to a transnational discourse of the queer liberal West vis-à-vis “perversely racialized bodies of pathologized nationalities”, which can be within as well as outside of the national border (Puar 2007: 51). This point should be highlighted in the last part of this chapter through the experiences of LGBTIQ+ migrants in Austria. Two stories will suite to highlight this ideology, the establishment of safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia through the Balkan Love club and the enactments of Simeon Gazivoda, who tries to combine the twofold history – the ex-Yugoslavian and the Austrian – of himself in his drag shows.

## 5.1. Homo-, Bi-, Trans- and Queerphobia and the development of the homonationalist state

Within anthropology most of the research on sexual orientation and gender identity was concerned on the unveiling of the heteronormative societies by providing ethnographic proof that homosexuality, trans and inter identity is not something created through modernisation but was inherent in every society. Although this is true and those studies are important, anthropology tends to exclude homophobia, but also biphobia, transphobia and queerphobia. David Murray describes this blind spot cynically in anthropology on homophobia as “a (Margaret) Median ‘look how open-minded they are’ approach”

(2009: 2). The goal often was to highlight how in non-western societies gender and sexuality is perceived as more diverse and to provide the West with this knowledge to combat the heteronormative societies they are living in. I am not keen on invoking this romanticism in my research as well, but I want to emphasize the hierarchical notion on how sexuality in colonized contexts is being perceived and controlled. The Orient, but also the former colonies on the American and African continent were affected by the norm of the sexuality in the European continent, because of the raced perception on gender. Maria Lugones (2008) demonstrates the colonial hierarchies in the gender system through the introduction of sex as biological and therefore fixed category. It is crucial to understand that the heteronormativity is not barely there but shaped through time and space. Therefore, biological sex as well as sexual orientation and their presumption of it, is created and shaped through time:

“The sense is that the reduction of gender to the private, to control over sex and its resources and products is a matter of ideology, of the cognitive production of modernity that understood race as gendered and gender as raced in particularly differential ways for Europeans/’whites’ and colonized/’non-white’ peoples. Race is no more mythical and fictional than gender, both powerful fictions.” (Lugones 2008: 12)

When heteronormativity is shaped through time and space, then homophobia and all its allies are as well. Murray defines homophobia as an “analytical concept and as a cross-cultural, transnational phenomenon” (2009: 2). Further, there are big disputes over the terminus itself, because of “phobia” the perception arises, that it is a natural behaviour to be afraid of different sexual orientations and gender identities. Homophobia is not an individual fear, but a “socially produced form of discrimination located within relations of inequality” (ibid.: 3). However, the LGBTIQ+ movement didn’t agree on an alternative term, which is why I choose to use this term during my thesis. Further, if fear has a role in the term, then it is interrelated with the fear of loss of dominance in hegemonic gender roles, rather than of the sexual practices and identities itself.

“Homo hatred arises out of historical confluences of diverse political, economic, and cultural dynamics; it does not sit uniformly, timelessly, or completely within any cultural, sociopolitical, or economic formation, although it most certainly occupies a privileged or legitimized position within some of them.” (Murray 2009: 190)

Since homo-, bi-, trans- and queerphobia is not developed timelessly, it cannot be conceptualized without other systems of oppression and dominance. There is no strict line which separates e.g., homophobia from racism, sexism, or classism, because people are prescribed more than one identity. Since the introduction of the intersectional feminist movement, it has been highlighted that systems of oppression don’t act singularly but multiply and create new and unique forms of oppression in order to monitor, control and punish the lives of most people, meaning people who do not fall under the humanist ideal of mankind often portrayed by the Vitruvian model (Braidotti 2013: 13ff). Therefore, homophobia

is interrelated and deeply interconnected with other forms of oppression, which are instrumentalized to benefit the oppressive politics. The punishment of homophobia through the colonisation and imperialization of the world by the European settlers suited the imagination of the superior Western world in contrast to the “other”. By highlighting that the other was different in norms crucial to mankind, for example as the hegemony of gender roles, the colonial other was depicted as non-human and therefore exploitable. With the coat of “civilization” it was possible to exploit, oppress, enslave, and thereafter kill the colonized “other” as it was not seen as morally equal to the Western counterpart.

Since the “War on Terror” from 9/11, the Muslim subject was objectified in the same way and discourses of civilisation became the justification for war crimes (Puar 2007: 137). It was necessary to prove that minorities are oppressed by Muslim states to justify the war. Therefore, Islamophobia is central to a homonationalist state (ibid.: 91). For violence to become a norm, it needs legitimization which is going beyond strategic, political, and economic interests (Yilmaz-Günay 2014: 8). The identity of an oppressive masculinist misogynist region of countries needed to be created. The Orient got an important position in this regard, which is situated always as the opposite of the West. The West is imagined as the civilized, while the East or the Orient is perceived as the barbaric counterpart. The West sees everyone equal and empowers LGBTIQ+ people, while the Orient suppresses or punishes them. The free will and choice so to speak is only possible in the West. However, these binarities are not so easily drawn as they are always imbedded in a lot of ambiguities as well, as Puar notes: “I maintain that Muslim masculinity is simultaneously pathologically excessive yet repressive, perverse yet homophobic, virile yet emasculated, monstrous yet flaccid.” (2007: xxxiii). Therefore, the studies on homophobia need to be addressed as a “product of crisscrossing gendered, racialized, sexualized, and classed interests, forces, and subjectivities.” (Manalansan 2009: 45). Women’s and LGBTIQ+ rights were equalized with a modern and democratic nation state and heighten the moral superiority of this nation states which were mostly Western. Those rights became the gauge for modernity and enlightenment and the indicator for civilization regardless of other inequalities within nation states (Yilmaz-Günay 2014: 8). Similarly, as noted in the previous chapters, the West/Global North is seen as the anterior of its Other (East/Global South), which still needs to become the West. The understanding of the development of law in a universal time frame is deeply rooted in the Enlightenment ideal of the humanities, that if the rationalist thought is established, the inequalities would disappear. Needless to say, that by looking at the current right-wing developments in the world this is not the case. However, in those right-wing political formations new collaborations of exclusion are risen.

Heteronormativity as well as homonormativity became central roles in the production of liberal national states (Puar 2007: 77). The practice to remove the homosexual and the non-normative sexual out of the national image is not relevant anymore, as the homosexual becomes an inherent part of the national imaginary in order to be perceived as the liberal civilizational country. Without homonormativity it wouldn’t be possible to use LGBTIQ+ people as well as women to enhance anti-immigrational politics

with the aim to protect them and their freedom. Therefore, the rights of LGBTIQ+ people became a powerful instrument for the political right to vocal anti-immigration rhetoric. According to Birgit Sauer and Birte Siim (2020), Austria in particular seems to have incorporated this homonationalist and the so-called “femonationalist” (Farris 2011; quoted from Puar) narratives to validate anti-immigration politics. The migrant becomes the danger “to contaminate the other’s nation (their women)” (Puar 2007: 99) as well as their developments in the fight for equal rights. Queerphobia and sexist perceptions are perceived as intolerance, but more importantly in this matter, as a problem from outside; a “problem within specific cultures” (Raboin 2017: 56). The contradiction in the perception of the homophobic East and/or Global South is so evident, as it is obscured by the West, as Jasbir Puar is demonstrating: on the one hand, the Orient, as the magnitude of the East, has served for centuries as the “place of original release, unfettered sin”, however, on the other hand, the Orient now “symbolizes the space of repression and perversion, and the site of freedom has been relocated to western identity” (2007: 94). If the Orient is described with sexuality, it is either as a “bad kind of sexuality (pseudo-divine act of creation), and also a cancerous disease” (Said 2003: 313) or through “Oriental clichés: harems, princesses, princes, slaves, veils, dancing girls and boys, sherbets, -ointments, and so on” (Said 2003: 190). The West emerges as the site of freedom for LGBTIQ+ people and the place to grant more tolerance towards non-normative forms of sexuality. Therefore, it is on the opposite side of the repressed and homophobic East.

## 5.2. Legal Situation for LGBTIQ+ in Austria

The article 7 of Austria’s constitution is highlighting that Austria is ensuring an equal treatment of all people in front of the law. It is prohibited to discriminate based on the birth, sex, class, or religion; however, sexuality is not mentioned and leaves a blank box in the constitution concerning this matter (RIS; Federal Constitutional Law of Austria, Article 7). However, as stated before, the Rainbow Index of ILGA is highlighting that Austria reached a rainbow goal of 55% considering the rights for LGBTIQ+ people. Since 2019, same-sex marriages became legal and the Europride was held already two times in Vienna.

However, this legal situation for LGBTIQ+ people was not like this for a long time. During the second World War the criminalization of homosexuals continued through punishing homosexual activity (Kreiner 2016: 31). On national remembrance days, the cruelty towards the homosexual community during the Nazi regime is remembered, but it is often not thematized that the punishment of homosexuality persisted after 1945. The paragraph 129 of 1852 was implemented in the second republic of Austria again and punishing every “Unzucht”, which was defined as sexual intercourse with person of the same sex (Kreiner 2016: 43). Puar goes further, as to equalize sodomy (Unzucht) as a racialized act, “whereby the act itself is already read through the raciality of the actors even as it accords raciality

to those actors” (2007: 132). This is also the reason, why the punishment often is separated from the sexual identity of the person, but deeply connected with class, age, race, migrant sociability in public and so on (ibid.). During this period people in Austria were imprisoned, if they were caught in a homosexual activity or suspected to be in a homosexual relationship, because it was seen as something in opposite of their imaginary of civilization and superiority. There was no reparation for the people imprisoned in the first years of the second republic, until recently the Ministry of Justice Alma Zadić openly apologized on twitter (Zadić 2021).

“The abject invention of homosexuals had given coherence to late-nineteenth-century nation-ness, and their systematic eradication had been a constitutive aspect of the Nazi quest for total national purification. The severity of persecution may have eased with the onset of the Second Republic, but the structures of exclusion remained in place.” (Matti 2004: 60).

There were several reforms in the second republic of Austria considering the punishment of homosexuality, which only dealt with the intensity or the kind of punishment rather than the decriminalization of the punishment. Therefore, the punishment for homosexuality in 1968 was three years imprisonment due to the change of the offense dealt as a misdemeanour rather than a crime (Kreiner 2016: 48). The ethnographic movie by Katharina Miko and Raffael Frick (2012) is greatly demonstrating with the story of Friedemann, who was imprisoned because of his sexual orientation for several months before the abolition of the “Totalverbot” paragraphs of homosexuality. In 1973 four crucial paragraphs were implemented which discriminated same-sex intercourse and punished it by the law: §209, 210, 220 and 221 of the Austrian Criminal Court StGB (Kreiner 2016: 53). §209 regulated homosexual behaviour under minors (below 18 years) and was punished up to five years imprisonment. §210 punished homosexual prostitution with two years imprisonment, §220 prohibited the advertisement homosexuality and §221 prohibited organizations, which are favouring homosexuality (ibid.). In 1996, the so-called “Totalverbot” of homosexuality was initialised through a citizen’s initiative (Kreiner 2016: 55). However, those laws were politically and publicly opposed as well. There were a lot of political discussions on how those laws merely should be adapted to the new ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, adding to the article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), that indeed sexual life is part of private life, therefore protected (Valentiner 2019: 15). The Court has recognized the right for family life for queer people, however, there exists not a right for same-sex marriage (Margalit 2018: 243). Since 1999, the European Court has also included sexual orientation in the antidiscrimination article 14 of the ECHR, however the ECHR was not so precise in the contextualisation in this matter. For example, the right to marry or the impossibility of a same-sex marriage does not violate article 14 (European Court of Human Rights 2020: 36). The article 8 and article 14 became relevant for the decision, if a right or law is discriminating non-heteronormative sexualities. For a long time, the lives of LGBTIQ+ have been deeply regulated by these paragraphs to maintain the heteronormative order. Although these discriminatory practices are deeply remembered by



the affected LGBTIQ+ people in Austria, the national image of Austria changed towards homonormativity to highlight their superiority towards the East. It became relevant to propose that Austria is part of Europe by obscuring the fact these laws existed and that the discrimination LGBTIQ+ people in Austria face, are coming from the other within: the migrant from the East.

Furthermore, Austria during the Habsburger Empire was the law and order in a big part of the Balkan hemisphere, including the area of former Yugoslavia. The image of Austria being responsible for the civilisation of the Balkan has a long tradition, which was also used as the justification of the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 (Todorova 2009: 118). It was issued that Austria at that time was not strict enough in disciplining the Balkan region, which was termed as “the triumph of Eastern over Western culture and would be a fatal blow to progress and modern development through the Balkans” (ibid.). As highlighted in the previous chapter, the reference to the East was always undertaken, when issues of war and violence, were appearing. However, Austria’s rule over the Balkan was not cruelty-free, as the other European colonial empires weren’t. Nevertheless, these actions were referred to the fight for civilization, emancipation, and freedom. The civilisation of the East meant punishing sodomy and homosexuality in different forms present in the society. However, when referring to the LGBTIQ+ successes, the Stonewall riot and consequently, the Western history of developing into the progressive and liberal state has been told and consequently, obscuring the violent and homophobic history of the past. From this moment on, it was possible to highlight tolerance and diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities as deeply inherent within the West and again condemning the East for its homophobic laws, despite the fact most of those laws were established during the colonial rule (Lugones 2008).

Going further in the legislation development for LGBTIQ+ people in Austria, same-sex marriages were allowed in Austria in 2019. Therefore, up to 2020 there were 612 same-sex marriages in Austria and 56 registered partnerships were converting to marriages (Statistic Austria 2021). There was a long debate, if the registered partnership was not already equalizing the partnerships married couples have. However, the marriage process is not that cheerful and rainbow colourful as they are presented. Especially, LGBTIQ+ migrants emphasize that the situation was mostly awkward and degrading. Dalibor is narrating his marriage experience in the 21. district of Vienna:

“She [registrar] called us in on our wedding date. We gave our documents, but I don’t remember which ones. She looked at it and everything was alright. Gabriel [partner] had problems with his birth certificate because he was born in Iran and he cannot go back to issue a new one. [...] He was already an Austrian citizen for many years, but now they want new documents and papers. I said that this is not right. [...] Then she saw my Serbian papers and looked at his name which was not typically Austrian and was very unfriendly from this point. He reacted in this moment and she dropped the ball. I mean he has their passport, and she cannot speak with him as she wants to.” (Pajić 2020; my translation).

Based on the papers they had, the registrar for the registered partnership was acting harsh to them, so that they felt treated badly. What needs to be pointed out, that migrants already know when they are having more rights and therefore can invoke those, to be treated equally and when not. With an Austrian passport and therefore being Austrian, even though you are perceived in this case as migrant, there is the understanding and knowledge that you cannot treat people with Austrian papers the same as people who don't have Austrian citizenship. Similarly, as Puar is highlighting out the "state of exception" of the US in this context, it can be said that Austria has a big interest and undertakes a lot of investments for a heteronormative state, but "claims to be exceptionally tolerant of (homosexual) difference" (2007: 10). The state of exception is defined as "neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other." (Puar 2007: 9)

### 5.3. Queerphobia and migration

Laying down the homonationalist structures of Austria, I want to highlight how these interrelate with the perception of the migrant as well as how this affects the queer community in Austria. This part of the chapter should highlight that the practices of homonationalism do not provide the queer community with safety they need. To the contrary, it enlarges the divide between those groups, because of the emphasis of the impossibility of connectivity. There exists a problem with homophobia from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, but this problem is deeply inherent with the assumption of the homophobic migrant. Marko explains this connection as followed:

"I see it as a failure of Austria. Why? [...] Those people are not integrated in the way if you really want to highlight the worth of diversity in Austria. Austria represents itself, that they value diversity in the society. If you didn't conduct this through your schooling because the people are born here and they still become homophobic after those years of schooling, then it is a problem of the government and society. That is the responsibility of the government." (Ilić 2020; my translation)

For this reason, queerphobia and racism is deeply interrelated, connected, and rooted in the tactics of the homonationalist state to shift the responsibility to the dangerous migrant. This is the intersection where the migration politics meets the sexual politics, which are affecting the lives of queer people in Austria.

### 5.3.1. Queerphobia as a migrant problem

Although it should not be surprising that queerphobic sentiments are issued in Austria, it needs to be highlighted because of the perception that Austria has undergone already all the changes it needs for equality of all sexual orientations and gender identities. I don't want to undermine the developments in the LGBTIQ+ movement as they challenged the government to invoke equal rights and succeeded in a lot of aspects. Indeed, the Rainbow Pride Parade in Vienna is a big event, which goes hand in hand with political officials highlighting their support for LGBTIQ+ communities. The rainbow flags are waved from every corner, which with no doubt increases awareness of the LGBTIQ+ community. Anna Szutt from the organisation HOSI, however sees a counter-movement as well which needs to be faced proportionally: "Overall, the situation [for queer people] has improved in the last years and there is a development for more acceptance, but however we are aware of the development in the East and other countries, which could roll to Austria as well. Who knows?" (Szutt 2020, my translation). Szutt was talking about the counter-developments in Poland and Hungary, which are decreasing the already existing LGBTIQ+ rights, but was also mentioning Russia and the Balkan states. The developments were seen as something which can easily swap over to the West and influence the progressive developments in LGBTIQ+ matters.

Puar emphasizes this narrative through the term "sexual exceptionalism" in the US, where the rights for homosexuality is in danger because of the Muslim immigrant and the Muslim population:

"Sexual exceptionalism also works by glossing over its own policing of the boundaries of acceptable gender, racial, and class formations. That is, homosexual sexual exceptionalism does not necessarily contradict or undermine heterosexual sexual exceptionalism; in actuality it may support forms of heteronormativity and the class, racial, and citizenship privileges they require." (2007: 9).

This can be observed in Austria, as the right wing and right extremist party FPÖ is supported by every one in five gay men in Austria as one survey highlights (Mader 2019). Further, the right-wing party earns the second highest votes in a poll study 2015 in concerning the local council election in Vienna (Olteanu et al. 2015: 3). In this deeper election study of the University of Vienna and the Justus-Liebig University Giessen, the reasons for this choice becomes clear. "Every assault on gays in the last years were done by Turkish/Serbian migrants or refugees", writes one study participant (ibid.: 14). It needs to be highlighted that the study wanted to amplify the heterogeneity of the queer community by pointing at the different opinions and fears within the queer community. This is well known by the political parties which are using this fear for elections as well as for Pink-Washing during Pride Months. By emphasizing that Austria is already tolerant, the problem for homophobia strictly lies in the other within: the migrants. However, the "projection of homophobia onto other spaces enacts a clear disavowal of

homophobia at ‘home’” (Puar 2007: 95) and is downplaying the efforts LGBTIQ+ activists had put into the fight for queerphobia, and discrimination based on their sexual identity. This perception of the migrant as the problem for misogyny, queerphobia and sexism is allowing to shift the focus away of the long-ward tradition of discriminatory laws and regulations in the country and the ongoing struggles LGBTIQ+ people have in Austria.

There exists a problem with homophobia in the Serbian and Bosnian migrant community as well, however, even though it is used politically in this manner, the asylum procedures were not easier for Marko and Saša as explained in the previous chapter. Therefore, the ambiguous situation of Austria concerning immigration needs to be highlighted: On the one side, the migrant is to blame for the homophobia in Austria, as Austria itself is tolerant for other differences, but on the other side, if refugees seek asylum because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in Austria, the country of origin is presented as a safe country for LGBTIQ+ people. The anti-immigration politic stands above the sexual politics in Austria. This ambiguity plays hand in hand with the homosexual normativity, so called “homonormativity” that is highlighted in the Austrian politics and is in danger by the migrant other. Puar defines the term as following:

“Homonormativity can be read as a formation complicit with and invited into the biopolitical valorisation of life in its inhabitation and reproduction of heteronormative forms. One prime mechanism of sexual exceptionalism is mobilized by discourses of sexual repression [...] that are generative of a bio- and geopolitical global mapping of sexual cultural norms.” (2007: 9).

Another example of homonationalism is often pointed out by the immigration policy in the Netherlands. Since 2006, the requirement for a citizenship in the Netherlands were a Dutch language test and a “liberal test” in order to find out if the applicant is compatible with the Dutch liberalism. To pass this “liberal test” the applicants were required to watch a movie which showed a kissing gay couple and topless women on the beach (Brush 2012). This test was not a requirement if the applicants are coming from the United States, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand (ibid.). Therefore, the policy only tried to check if applicants from non-Western nations, especially from countries with a high Muslim population, can be westernized, liberalized, and therefore overcome their “barbaric” homophobic state they lived in. Homophobia was portrayed as something inherent within the Global South and the East. Therefore, within the politics and media coverage, the migrant from the East and / or the Global South is perceived as the import of homophobia. Homophobia becomes therefore an issue of immigration affairs and not one that needs to be tackled within every nation. Queerphobia needs to be separated from the immigration politics and not issued as a problem from “outside”. The Pride Parade as well as every emancipatory and progressive step against queerphobia needs to include the society as whole and not divide certain groups as enemies for a liberal society. Homosexuality and being queer was and still is not that openly discussed and presented as the European Union might highlight through their homonationalist developments.

### 5.3.2. Queerphobia in the migrant community of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia in Austria

Because of the political implications and perceptions of the migrant as the importer of queer- and homophobia, it was important, to highlight how these suites the anti-immigration politics of Austria. The migrant is perceived as homophobic, which should distract from the anti-LGBTIQ+ politics and the queerphobic sentiments within the nation. Because of this imaginary, that the homophobic danger always lies on the other side, the victims of abuse by migrant communities in Austria often trouble to communicate their experiences. Nevertheless, their identity is shaped by the immigrant other, and they are racialized in the same way as well.

The Serbian and Bosnian migrant community is not a safe place for LGBTIQ+ people either. This was mostly evident for the second-generation migrants from Serbia and Bosnia for two reasons. First, the migrant communities I contacted, as for example OESG as well as Serbian umbrella Organisation Austria were not able to provide me with insights from their institution on this matter, as mentioned in the second chapter. Second, during the interviews, the participants issued that they are or were deeply afraid of their coming-outs and that this would lead to a complete disconnection from their family. In the focus group interview, it was mentioned that although homosexuality is accepted by the family, if they come out as LGBTIQ+ people, they would be excluded by their family members. Further, Ena described that she is afraid to tell their parents, that she is lesbian, because of the negative resentments in her family. That is why she finds herself in the position to justify it by referring to religion or their traditional beliefs. Many issue that this is one of the biggest reasons why they are not coming-out in their family. These stories don't reach the outer circle of good friends, because the stigma of the queer homophobic migrant still lies deep in the self-definition. However, the wider family often is described as a form of anchor in coming-out times, as Gazivoda describes for his coming-out:

“I had cousins, which were living in Germany. [...] I was not afraid to tell them I am gay, because they were grown up liberal and where protective to LGBTIQ people and communities within the family even before my coming out. I knew that I am safe there. [...] I know who my allies in the family are and I know where my sexuality doesn't matter.” (2020; my translation).

Gazivoda (2020) describes that he doesn't feel safe in public spaces in general to express his sexuality and is more intimidated to do so, if he is recognizing someone speaking Serbian-Bosnian-Croatian. Further, acting as drag, often lead to abusive comments on the street and violent attacks as well as sexual harassment in the metro station. However, he never reported those crimes at the police station, as he doesn't feel safe to go to the police station in his drag outfit. Indeed, it emphasizes that Austria is not the safe queer haven as it always presents itself.

Remaining with these homonationalist tendencies will not improve the status and the laws for LGBTIQ+ people in Austria, rather it shifts the responsibility from the government to the dangerous

migrant. This tactic is often done, when the discriminatory practices are at hand, but the responsibility is not allowed to stay with the government, because it would worsen the national image of tolerance and diversity, e.g., homophobia and antisemitism. There are homophobic attacks on queer institutions, and they are not mentioned in the political debates, however, the symbolic solidarity towards the LGBTIQ+ community is always immanent during the elections and the Pride Months.

Talking with Anna Szutt, we discussed the recent attacks on the Türkis Rosa Lila Villa and on the Gugg, which are LGBTIQ+ places provided by the organization HOSI. The Türkis Rosa Lila Villa is a place for LGBTIQ+ refugees, where they can find shelter, legislative consultation and can connect with other queer refugees. Therefore, it offered a safe space and help for a lot of people, which is why Marko and Saša were also transferred to this place after the camp in Traiskirchen. In 2015 and 2017, the Türkis Rosa Lila Villa was vandalized with spray paint containing homophobic threats in Serbian language (Mader 2017; Mader 2015). This was reported and highlighted in the news, but the political solidarity and the outcry was quite low. However, during the Pride Month, every political party was eager to highlight that they support the queer community, even though some party members have stood out because of homophobic statements. Further, the elections are often an on-site for political figures to gain votes by highlighting in the right places (mostly only in the queer community centres) that they are supporting LGBTIQ+ people and condemning the attacks of homophobic migrants, which don't have a place in this tolerant and diverse society. Therefore, consequences for homophobic harassments and assaults are quite low and doesn't lead to a structural change in the society, as the problem of queerphobia is not faced by the government as an inherent problem of the society.

This is also the reason, why there is almost no education for police officers in Austria concerning sexual harassment. This is either evident through the femicides (Mayer 2021; Têkoşîn 2015) happening in Austria in a high range or in homophobic accusations, as Simeon describes one incident, where a civil policeman assaulted him in a club.

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While LGBTIQ+ refugees and their status are perceived as saved from their "barbaric states" in Austria, migrants become the problem itself for the homophobia within the country. This leads to exclusion in informal gathering places for queer people, as for example queer party locations and clubs in Vienna. However, as migrants are expected to be in a certain place and therefore affiliated with certain activities and locations, the places where they can feel safe and secure is hard to find. This is tremendously difficult for LGBTIQ+ migrants, who further experience exclusion in their migrant communities as they don't feel safe in them and are in constant fear of being outed, consequently being harassed, or violently attacked.

Therefore, in the case of queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia, new rooms were established to provide safe spaces for Balkan queers and to break the borders of how a queer person or a migrant should look and be like. The rooms are disconnected from the activities they are often subjected to, which influence the mobility and the bodily safety, as Puar enumerates: religious affiliation, internet and telephone communication, mandatory registration, closed deportation hearings and so on (Puar 2007: 149). New rooms were established, which are distinct from then and enable a new interconnection with different identities outside the normative categories.

#### 5.4. Queer Balkan Migrants as space invaders: Queer Balkan Room and the Queer Jugo Critic

“I always felt like a stranger because of my gender identity  
and now I feel like a stranger in a foreign country.”

(Aleks in Unkić 2019: 2).

How does exclusion evolve and become? Which mechanisms lead to exclusion? Blagojević is arguing that the blindness of differences already leads to exclusion. “The politics of inclusive exclusion operates through various procedures of assimilation and integration. This means that it is politics that embraces cultural, political, sexual, national and all other differences through erasing them.” (Blagojević 2011: 33). The discourses around exclusion and inclusion already mark the other, which is marginalised and identify it as the threat. The other is therefore always created through the construction of the differences and the living habits of these differences:

“The construct of otherness includes the creation of differences which become the key element in the process of construction of meanings and the construction of subjectivities in relation to otherness, as well as the construction of the specific relation of a subject toward the Other.” (Milanović 2017: 116).

But what processes take place when othering is performed? What certain practices are necessary to construct the other as a dangerous counterpart to oneself? Milanović argues that in order to create otherness, a subject finds differences towards the Other and declares it as an essential one as well (ibid.). Not only does the subject need the process of othering to create the border between the self and the other, but it also needs it for the identification of itself. It is necessary for the identification process of the subject because the other is always inherent in the self: “The Other, which the subject rejects during the creation of its identity, is actually constitutive to the subject; the subject needs otherness in order to distance itself and affirm its difference.” (Milanović 2017: 117). Because the borders between the “I”

and the “Other” is unstable and always crumbling, the process of othering becomes an ongoing and never ending one. Further as the identity starts to crumble with the imaginary wall constructed through the othering, the identification the subject has created seems less stable anymore. Therefore, every difference resolving in sameness, is a potential threat and is handled in that way to preserve the stabilized identity of oneself. This is the reason why I wanted to highlight the intersectional analysis by Puar in my research, as it emphasizes that identity is fluid and not an entity.

During my research, I was looking to find the so-called “space invaders” (Puwar 2004) of the queer community as well as the Serbian and Bosnian migrant community. I was desperate to find official LGBTIQ+ migrant organisations which are thematising their specific situation through art, political activism, or any other form. However, the only organisation that was mentioned to me was Queer Base and MiGay. Queer Base is an organisation which is giving legal, social, and financial aid to LGBTIQ+ refugees in Austria. However, the saviour trope was highlighted in a lot of instances, as the organization was primarily for people who fled their country of origin and came to Austria to apply asylum. MiGay on the other hand, tried to offer LGBTIQ+ migrants “a platform of support for those who face discrimination both as LGBTIQ\* individuals (in their respective ‘communities of origin’ as well as in Austria in general) and as ‘immigrants’ (in Austria in general as well as in local LGBTIQ\* communities)” (En and En 2019: 214). In 2009, the organisation was founded, but it was inactive during my field work as I tried to establish contact and organizations told me that MiGay is basically not existent anymore. Indeed, beside the Facebook page, I didn’t find any website or activity of the group. The search became devastating until Saša has brought me to the Balkan Love Party in March 2020.

The Balkan Love Party was an informal organisation, which started in August 2019 and tried to form a platform for informal gatherings for queer people from the Balkan sphere in Austria. There is no physical place where they have the gatherings regularly, which is why they change the locations and announce them online through Facebook and Instagram. The reason for the mobility is twofold: on the one side, there is the security reason and on the other, the financial reason. The organisation is dependent on entry fees because they must rent the rooms for a day, but the earnings would not be enough to rent a room permanently. Further, it was issued, that if they would succeed to have a fixed place, they would be vulnerable to homophobic attacks. Through the location shifts the possibility to be attacked intentionally is lower. The idea of the organisation was to provide a party for queer Balkan people, where they can enjoy music and dances from the Balkan region, but will not have to deal with homophobic sentiments, which they would in other migrant clubs in Vienna. It was mentioned that they wanted a place where they can be themselves and where they are not excluded. Although Vienna has LGBTIQ+ clubs, being a queer migrant often leads to closed doors. The reason for the denial of the entry was that they didn’t believe their sexuality and accused them of lies to be able to get into fights inside. It seemed like a security measurement for the queer clubs in Vienna. Saša, for example, was sent home when he wanted to enter the “WhyNot?” LGBTIQ+ club in Vienna with the argumentation that he for sure, is not gay.



“They said I wasn’t gay. In Whynot? That was in 2017 and at that time I called a friend, who was already inside to help me get in. That is how I got in at that time, but in 2013 they just sent me home.” (Stojković 2020; my translation). Saša explains his resentments to go to the LGBTIQ+ clubs in Vienna, because they tried to send him home with the reason that he didn’t look gay enough for the security personal. Interesting enough, a friend, who entered the club before, served as a guarantor for his queerness, which is why he could enter. These experiences invoked memories from the past in Serbia, where structural discrimination was an ongoing problem in nightclubs. However, the reason of the exclusion in Austria is more embedded in a racialization of his body, because, as mentioned earlier, there are presumptions and imaginaries of how a gay and how a migrant body looks like.

Therefore, the Balkan Love Party suites as a safe haven for the community, where they can exchange helpful advices for immigration documents, student fees and discriminatory experiences. That is why a lot of people are already meeting before the beginning of the party itself and sitting in round tables. People were often talking how to extend their student VISA and what documents they need to be allowed to stay longer. Others were discussing, where it is possible to meet new people, who are also queer and from the Balkan without being exposed by the migrant community from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Interestingly, although the Balkan is always confronted by its history and imagination, as pointed out in the third chapter. However, the term “Balkan” here serves as a self-definition. It can be read as a new reading of the term Balkan. The Balkan as the “crossroads between two different worlds – the West and the East” exists and often is defined as an undesired region (Todorova 2009: 57). The feeling of inclusion and exclusion at the same time, is an inherent feeling of the Balkan peninsula as well as of the migrant body itself.

In the same way, the word “jugo” leaves a print of interrelation and connection with histories of migration, exclusion, and inclusion. Simeon Gazivoda, a LGBTIQ+ political activist within the Green Party, highlights the deep connection toward the Balkan or ex-Yugoslavian community in Austria. For Gazivoda, it was important to highlight the so-called Jugo identity and not specific nationalist identity, because “jugo” implies that you have a relationship with a specific part of the world which is not bound to national borders. To the contrary, the term allows to transcend national borders by identifying as a so-called queer Jugo-Viennese. However, it was important for him to find a connection between the ex-Yugoslavian and the queer part of himself, which he established through his re-enactments as a Drag Queen in Vienna.

“This is a moment where I make room for my ex-Yugoslavian and queer part of myself, which is giving me joy. Further, I bring a part of ex-Yugoslavian culture into a room or in a club in Vienna, where you wouldn’t find it otherwise or where people don’t have the relations towards it.” (Gazivoda 2020; my translation).

The term Jugo indicates this history and relationship through time and space. During the Gastarbeiter wave in the 60s, the term “jugo” was implemented as a term for people from Yugoslavia. The term “Tschusch” in Austria as slur for people from Yugoslavia was soon almost equated with the term Jugo. However, instead of the hard-working implications of the Gastarbeiter in Austria, the Gastarbeiter turned into Jugos with the implications of robber and macho (Hamiti and Sadiku 2018: 173). Currently, it is often used as a self-identification term, similarly as the term Balkan in the Balkan Love community. It is used as a term to identify with a specific transnational history and experiences, which would be of the former Yugoslavian state, where they lived, and Austria or Germany, where they live now and where this term has evolved. The term is transformed from a slur into an emancipatory term, which is used in election campaigns from the migrant community in the Green Party as well (Kosmo 2020).

The question of one’s own identity is filled with the geopolitical context the bodies live in. When asking Vera and Ena, what identities are playing an important role for their lives, Vera truthfully asks, what are identities though (Vera 2020). Sexuality is not so much present in their identity and in their self-awareness as their migration background is. That is why Vera and Ena would describe themselves in this relational term as a Bosnian or as a Serbian Austrian. This resonates with the experience of “still migrants”, Ayşe Çağlar points out: “It still inscribes an a priori difference between a group of people and others in the society through this cross-border mobility. Though the experience is in their ancestry, this experience is still thought to be distinctively formative for post migrants.” (2016: 6). Ena and Vera both never migrated directly as both were born in Austria. The same is valid for other research participants as for example Theodora and Simeon. However, they are still categorized as migrants because “there was once a cross-border movement though they themselves do not have a direct experience of it” (Çağlar 2016: 6).

Furthermore, this migration background of post migrants is not always in context with a specific nation, but with a specific history of migration, which is why Gazivoda for example talks about the Balkan Community or the Jugo Community on purpose, as the term “Jugo” contains a specific transnational history, his family experienced. Through referencing both identities and belongings, he is including the discrimination migrants in Austria face, but also what it means to be a migrant from a former Yugoslavian state in Austria. The image here (Figure 8), is a photo Gazivoda provided me, which highlights the connection he tries to establish between being Austrian, being Jugo and being Queer. The queer and migrant identity which leads to exclusion in certain spaces in Austria, in the queer movement or in the migrant community, becomes the first signifier of this image and by that surpassing the exclusionary nature a national flag inherits. It offers the audience a peak in the struggles of inclusion and exclusion queer migrants face.



*Figure 8. Simeon Gazivoda in his Drag Outfit holding the Austrian national flag which he modified with the two words "Cevapcici" and "Tschusch" in the year 2020. Simeon provided me with this picture.*

## 5.5. Conclusion

The main goal of this chapter was to highlight the intersections of identity that shape the bodies and the experiences of queer migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. Through the intersectional approach towards two political processes concerning the transnational and supranational discourses, it is possible to highlight how the exclusionary mechanisms are established. Beyond the understanding of the political changes and enforcements in the sexual and migration politics in Austria, I tried to display the exclusion of LGBTIQ+ migrants, but also how those who experience these exclusions, experience inclusion and / or try to express their exclusion and their belongings through their in-betweenness.

However, the chapter also tried to come clean with the Austrian representation of itself as the queer heaven. Since the winning of Conchita Wurst at the Eurovision Song Contest 2014 at least, Austria valued their representation of sexual and gender diversity, although obscuring the fact, that the homophobic legislature is not that long ago. Further, through the Habsburger rule over parts of the

Balkan peninsula, Austria being superior to the Balkan was keen on providing justifications why the Balkan is still more affiliated to the East, then it is to the West. This history plays an important role in the discussion of civilisation and barbarism that shaped the relationship of Austria to the East, and to the Balkan in particular.

Further, through this analysis, the emphasis was given on the homonationalist state of Austria and how it affects the lives of LGBTIQ+ migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. Puar defines three categories of the homonationalist state: the heteronormativity, the surveillance through the homonormativity and the imaginaries of the queer as either free (in the West) and oppressed (in the East). With these definitions I tried to structure this chapter and offer an analysis of queer migrant movement in the European Union, but also how the affected become the “space invaders” through creating their own safe spaces without but also through these categorizations of the Balkan and the queer migrant from the former Yugoslavia. Through two field examples I encountered during my research, I tried to highlight this inter-relation between several entities and how LGBTIQ+ migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia structure their belongings in their own way.

Indeed, the question of identity remains open, but it leaves a creative space, which can be the encounter beyond the categories described through the imaginaries of the West. In a way the question of identity is one of inclusion and exclusion, which is particular for the experiences of LGBTIQ+ migrants as well as for the Balkan. The safe spaces arise consequently in the crossroad of these presumed identities and highlight that the question of identity is never a static one, but fluid and inhabits more than one category, as well as no category at all.

## 6. Conclusion

„Can we keep our senses open to emergent and unknown forms of belonging, connectivity, intimacy, the unintentional and indeterminate slippages and productivities of domination, to signal a futurity of affective politics?“ (Puar 2007, xxviii)

How can different forms of knowing, belonging, and coming together be established without invoking colonial thought? This thesis tries to give an answer to these questions amongst others by highlighting different forms of identities which evolve through the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion by laying out the life experiences of queer migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina living in Austria. It is important to highlight the discursive construct of the West and the other, which is always negotiated (Hall 2000: 141). Nevertheless, these discursive negotiations of what is considered West and what not,

is affecting sexual, migration, transnational, supranational politics and interrelates with the lives of LGBTIQ+ migrants through immigration policies and LGBTIQ+ policies.

In this research the aim was to understand the geo-political situation LGBTIQ+ migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia are living and embodying through displaying the sexual and migration politics that are an inherent part of their lives. Consequently, the paper looked at the sexual politics on the Balkan and tried to highlight the stereotypes and presumptions this geopolitical region entails. The research literature, the NGO reports and the interviews had been analysed using the concept of Balkanism by Todorova (2009). The Balkan playing the bridge role between the East and the West for centuries resulted in the assumptions of the evolution of the region itself, as either being not yet part of the West or still part of the East. Especially Yugoslavia has entailed a particular position in the Balkan because of its communist history during the Tito regime. The communism in Yugoslavia was distinct and separate from the communism in the Soviet Union, because of its various alliances towards the Non-Alignment Movement, but mainly also to the West, which was rare for a communist state at that time. Concerning Yugoslavia, not only did it have the bridge role that the Balkan encompasses between the Orient and the Occident, but also between the Western ideology of life (capitalism) and the Eastern ideology (communism). During the Cold War, this in betweenness of Yugoslavia became politically important.

However, after the Yugoslavian war and after the Yugoslavian segregation in seven countries, the association towards the East or towards the West became more important. Especially looking at the sexual politics in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, it becomes evident, that they are deeply entangled with the political negotiations of the EU accession of both countries. Serbia as an EU member candidate needed to lay down, that they are European enough to become part of the EU. The government needs to prove, if they highlight tolerance and diversity as much as the West does, through establishing LGBTIQ+ rights and successfully holding a Pride Parade in Belgrade. In particular, the Belgrade Pride Parade became a litmus test for Serbia in order to prove that non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities were protected. Therefore, the European Union evaluated the Pride Parades with high police security as a success, but the LGBTIQ+ organizations as a failure of the state. Further, the visibility of LGBTIQ+ people in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina was part of the struggle NGOs faced, as they wanted to highlight that they are part of the society. The highly securitized pride parades didn't leave the impression of inclusion and being part of the society, although the outcry for these parades were lower than for the years where no pride parades were allowed. The Stone Wall of Eastern Europe in 2013, as it is often titled in the LGBTIQ+ activism in Serbia, allowed a different connection to the struggles of queer people. After this midnight pride parade, the LGBTIQ+ activism had a relation to its own queer history and fights, which are distinct and particular to this place and region. I termed this Pride Parade as the litmus test from Serbia, as from this period the symbolic solidarity of the Vučić regime started and where it was important to outline, that the rights of LGBTIQ+ people are ensured

on paper. Ana Brnabić became the first female and the first lesbian prime minister of Serbia, which sparked hope for the LGBTIQ+ community. However, they have been disappointed by the lack of action this symbolic gesture entailed.

This symbolism of LGBTIQ+ solidarity is quite evident in many homonationalist countries and especially in right-wing and right-extremist parties. This research wanted to highlight this similarity through the migration politics of Austria. Austria in accordance with the European Union is perceived as the queer haven, as tolerance and diversity are key words for every liberal country of the West. However, looking at the migration politics, tolerance seems to stop at the border of the European Union, as the LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees are not presumed to be queer enough to seek asylum. For this reason, the intersectional analysis, and the concept of the homonationalist state by Puar (2007) was important.

Furthermore, looking and analysing the migration politics of Austria made it possible to highlight that the negotiations around the LGBTIQ+ rights in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina concerning the EU accession are in contradiction to the asylum policies for LGBTIQ+ refugees in Austria and in the European Union in general. Through the safe country of origin concept, which was established and implemented by Austria to improve the asylum decision process, individual cases got categorized and framed in the context of the political situation of the country concerning LGBTIQ+ rights. Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have been categorized as safe country of origin, which is why LGBTIQ+ refugees seldomly have the chance of a positive outcome in the asylum decision. The safe country of origin does not highlight or distinguish different individualities in the asylum-seeking process, which is why as Ilić (2020) points it out, “you just were put in another box”. The categorization of his sexual orientation didn’t play an important role in the asylum-seeking process at all, but the migration pattern, the country he is coming from, did. In this context, being from the Balkan didn’t have the connotation of the East in the same way as it had during the negotiations of the EU accession concerning the sexual politics of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the migration politics, being from the Balkan and being from Yugoslavia had the context of being within Europe. The connotation with the East were not evident anymore, as the goal of the migration politics is to allow the less people inside of the European Union as possible. Analysing the migration pattern into Austria from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, it is possible to see the change in the image of this geopolitical region. The experiences of LGBTIQ+ refugees can highlight how these shifts affected the asylum processes. The asylum interviews were less about the individual experiences of prosecution they experienced, but about how they can prove that the country of origin is discriminating LGBTIQ+ people. Nonetheless, the lived experiences of exclusion and persecution were neglected, as the image of the queer person the European Union has in mind, was not given.

Being migrant and queer leads to different exclusionary experiences. The intersectional analysis of Puar (2007) allows to highlight these experiences and to offer an analysis of the homonationalist state of

Austria. The migrant is serving the image of the danger and the homophobic to allow the image of tolerance and diversity. Through shifting the problems of homophobia towards the other within, it is possible to obscure the homophobic past as it is done with different other political failures in Austria as well, for example antisemitism (Haritaworn 2012, Yilmaz-Günay 2014). This points to the obscuring practice of the West in general, as the discriminatory laws against LGBTIQ+ people during the colonial rule have been downplayed and the progressive changes towards a queer heaven have been highlighted. That is why the queer in the European Union is entangled in specific assumptions of LGBTIQ+ people and the homophobic migrant from the East. LGBTIQ+ migrants from the Balkan do not play well in this storytelling as they blur the lines of the existing categories. The difficulties they face become elusive as they are facing exclusion from the queer community as well as from the migration community as well. Because there are homophobic sentiments within the Serbian and Bosnian migration communities, they don't feel safe in these spaces. Further, the safe spaces from the queer community become unreachable, because of the presumption of the homophobic migrant of the East.

Further, the imaginary of the Balkan affects the perspectives of LGBTIQ+ organizations of Austria towards the LGBTIQ+ organizations from the Balkan. These orientalist discourse affects LGBTIQ+ communities as well as feminist groups from the Global South and East in general, which is why looking at the specific situation of queer migrants from the East in Europe is of importance for understanding broader social dynamics. Migration issues are very much defined by sexuality, openness to sexuality and a particular understanding of masculinity, which became an indicator of being foreign in this context, although those questions are not highlighted within the country when discussing the sexual politics. The thesis can therefore be a contribution to masculinity studies and offer a fruitful connection, because refugee males are often contextualised in this context as we can observe in the current discourse on Afghanistan refugees. In this manner, sexuality in migration politics is often reduced to a threat to an open liberal European space.

Therefore, new spaces have been created, which embody the in-betweenness of LGBTIQ+ migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. In my research, I participated therefore in the Balkan Love Party and had thought-provoking discussions with LGBTIQ+ people who are trying not only to overcome the categories they were put into, but to embrace them through artistic performances and networking possibilities. In order to be able to move beyond classifications of identities, it is important to highlight the structures of the socio-political environment and to enable new belongings and affections. LGBTIQ+ migrants are invading the spaces, which excluded them, because of their sexual orientation and their migration histories and build new spaces of belonging and identifications. Looking at the material realities of LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees allows to look at the intersection of the exclusionary practices of the sexual politics and migration politics, but also at the possibility to go beyond those and establish new forms of inclusion and connectivity by highlighting the identities that do not fit the categories.

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## 7.5. Table of figures

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**Figure 3.** Photograph provided by Marko Ilić (27.3.2016). Sign for the city market was sprayed over with "You will not walk", which is referred to in publicly debates exclusively to the Belgrade Pride Parade.

**Figure 4.** Migration, Info und Grafik. 2020. Asylstatistik Österreich 2019. 20.3.2020. Herkunftsstaaten von AsylwerberInnen in Österreich 2019. URL: <https://www.migration-infografik.at/at-asylstatistiken-2019/#asylantragszahlen-pro-jahr-und-monat> [23.3.2021].

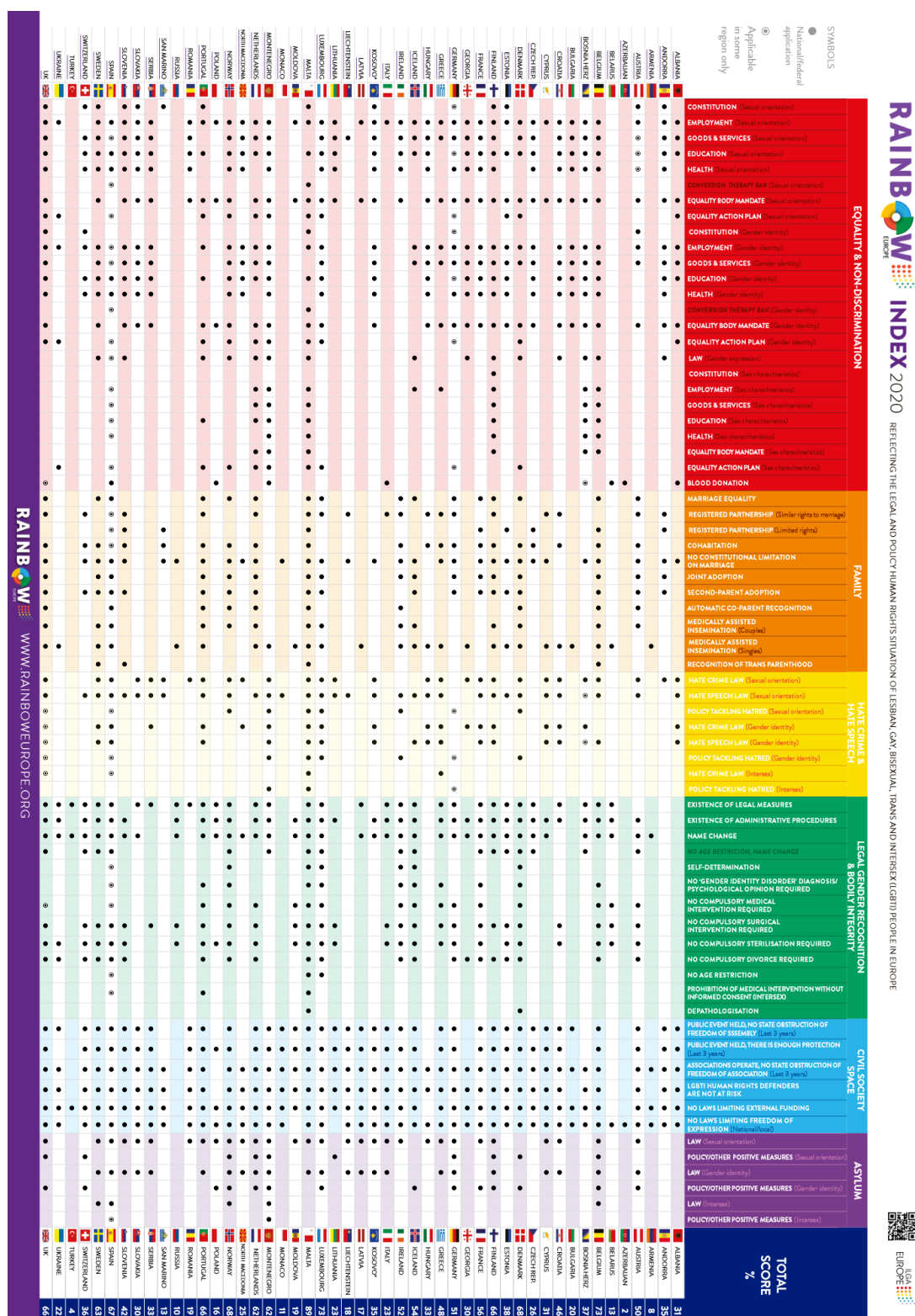
**Figure 5.** Asylum applications from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria in total numbers. The numbers are generated by myself through analysing the public data by the Ministry of Interior (reference in bibliography). 20.3.2020.

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**Figure 7.** Asylum application from Serbia in Austria between 2002 and 2020. The numbers are generated by myself through analysing the public data by the Ministry of Interior (reference in bibliography). 20.3.2020.

**Figure 8.** Gazivoda, Simeon. 2020. Private photograph.

# Appendix A



**ILGA Europe. 2020.** Rainbow Index 2020. Reflecting the legal and policy human rights situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) People in Europe. URL: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/Attachments/ilgaeurope-rainbowindex-2020-interactive.pdf> [20.2.2021].

## Abstract

LGBTIQA+ migrants from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Austria are in situated in the in-between of sexual and migration politics concerning the Serbian, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Austrian government as well as supranational politics.

The perception of Yugoslavia and the Balkan as inferior towards the European Union and the West shapes the sexual politics affecting queer people in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also those who migrate to Austria or the European Union in order to find the “queer heaven”. The in-betweenness of the Balkan between the East and the West and the in-betweenness of Yugoslavia between two welfare systems (capitalism and communism) materializes in the supranational politics of today. For the countries of the former Yugoslavia to be part of the European Union, they need to provide proof that they are part of the tolerant West. However, the proof lies in symbolic practices of LGBTIQA+ politics rather than concrete changes for the lives of LGBTIQA+ people. The reason behind these conditions lies in the migration politics of the European Union; especially concerning asylum. Countries are put in categories between safe and unsafe countries of origins based on laws, which are not necessarily practiced. The tolerance praised by the European Union seems to end at the borderline. Queer migrants seeking asylum and / or migrating from former Yugoslavia to the European Union don’t have adequate reasons for asylum, as the Balkan is included in the image of Europe and therefore partly West.

Consequently, the sexual and migration politics affect the lives of queer migrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia in Austria through the inclusion and exclusion in different spaces. Throughout these exclusions and the impossibility to fit only one category of identity, queer migrants create their own space.

## Zusammenfassung

Die Wahrnehmung von Jugoslawien und dem Balkan als der Europäischen Union und dem Westen unterlegen formt die Sexualpolitiken in Serbien und Bosnien-Herzegowina. Dies betrifft insbesondere queere Personen in Serbien und Bosnien-Herzegowina, aber auch jene die nach Österreich oder in die Europäische Union migrieren, um den sogenannten „queer heaven“ zu erreichen. Die Dazwischen-Situiertheit des Balkans zwischen dem Osten und dem Westen und die Dazwischen-Situiertheit von Jugoslawien zwischen den zwei Ordnungssystemen (Kapitalismus und Kommunismus) materialisiert sich in den supranationalen Politiken von heute. Damit die Nationen des ehemaligen Jugoslawien Teil der europäischen Union werden können, müssen sie Beweise erbringen, dass sie Teil des toleranten Westens sind. Der Beweis liegt weitgehend in symbolischen Praktiken der LGBTIQ+ Politiken anstelle von konkreten Änderungen für das Leben von LGBTIQ+ Personen. Die Gründe hinter diesen Konditionen liegen in dem Migrationspolitiken der europäischen Union (insbesondere Asylpolitiken). Nationen werden in Kategorien zwischen sicher und unsichere Ursprungsländer gesteckt, basierend auf Gesetze, die nicht notwendigerweise praktiziert werden. Die Toleranz, die die Europäische Union so lobt, scheint an ebendieser Grenzlinie zu enden. Queere Migrant\*innen aus dem ehemaligen Jugoslawien, die um ein Asyl in der Europäischen Union ansuchen, haben keine adäquaten Gründe für ein Asyl, da der Balkan in der Vorstellung von Europa inkludiert ist und deshalb westlich ist.

Demzufolge betreffen die Sexual- und Migrationspolitiken die Leben von queeren Migrant\*innen von Bosnien-Herzegowina und Serbien in Österreich durch die Inklusion und Exklusion in unterschiedlichen Räumen. Durch diese Exklusionen und der Unmöglichkeit in nur einer Kategorie der Identität gesteckt zu werden, kreieren queere Migrant\*innen ihren eigenen Raum.