HOW THE MISSING MATTER:

Gaps, absences and silences in two diaspora contexts

Supervisors: Prof. Hariz Halilovich and Prof. Katherine Johnson
PhD candidate: Amina Hadžiomerović
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies

AIMS

The project aims to:

- gain an in-depth understanding of how the issue of the missing (presumably killed) persons from the war in Bosnia has affected memories and identities among the surviving family members in diaspora;
- investigate the practices of long-distance mourning and memory performances by employing the comparative ethnographic methods.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

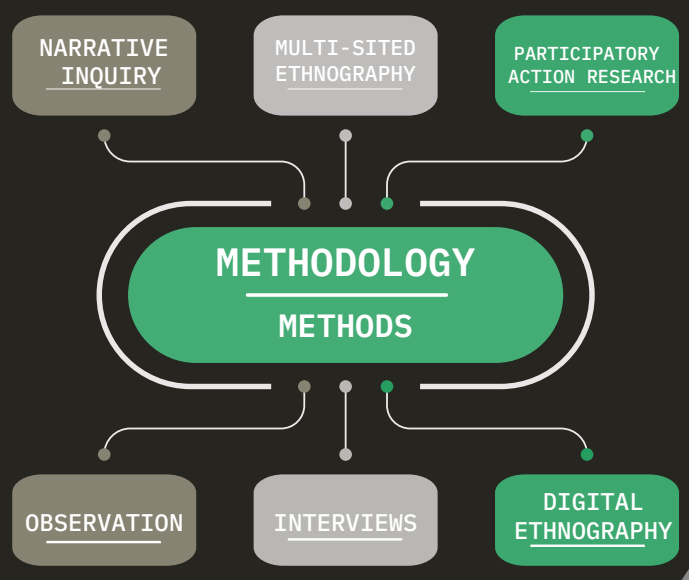
RQ1: HOW THE ISSUE OF MISSING PERSONS AFFECTS MEMORY AND THE IDENTITY FORMATION AMONG THE SURVIVORS?

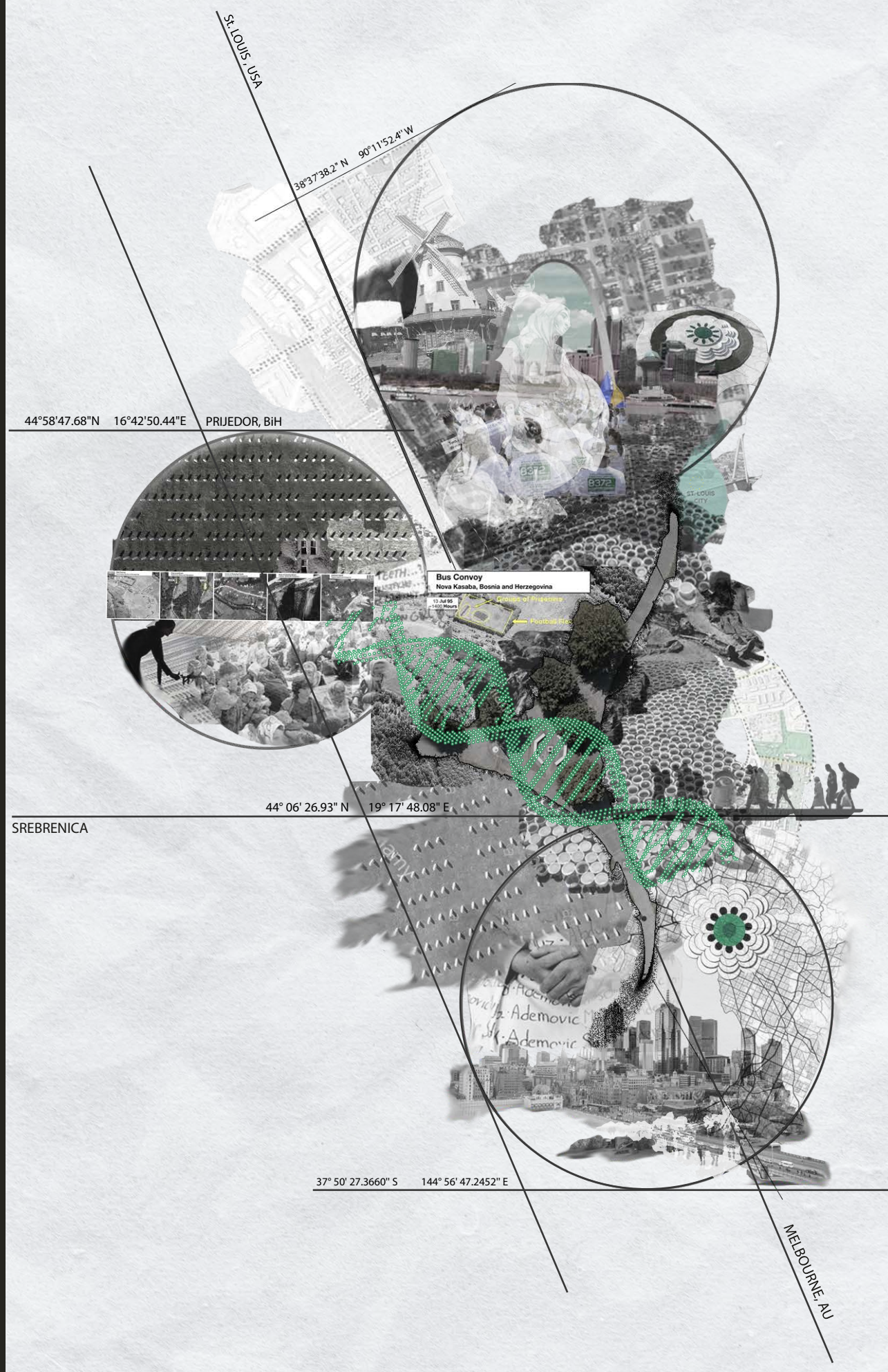
RQ2: HOW THE LONG-DISTANCE MOURNING, REMEMBRANCES AND COMMEMOTIONS ARE PERFORMED IN DIASPORA CONTEXTS?

BACKGROUND

- The 1992-95 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina culminated in Europe's worst massacres and the largest refugee crisis since the WWII.
- Losses: 100,000 killed, 2 million people (48% of its pre-war population) forcibly displaced, and 35 000 missing persons (Srebrenica losses comprise 25% of the overall 'missing score').
- Many survivors and families of the missing persons resettled in the Western countries such as USA (received 350,000 Bosnian refugees) and Australia (60,000).
- The research will engage with displaced survivors in two major Bosnian refugee diaspora communities—Melbourne (AU) and St. Louis (USA)—whose family members perished and remained 'missing' in the ethnic cleansing of the town of Prijedor (1992) and in the 1995 Srebrenica Genocide.

METHODOLOGY





POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT

Outcomes of this project will:

- expend knowledge via introducing the innovative theorising of memory, community, and missing persons in a global context;
- contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of disenfranchised grief by families of the missing;
- gain comparative insights into survivors' experiences in two different diaspora contexts, and raise awareness about refugee welfare;
- identify the gaps and inform the improvement of refugee resettlement policies and programs in the USA and Australia;
- honour the victims and recognise the agency and resilience of the survivors by allowing them to share their stories and bring them into the public discourse.

Australian Government
Australian Research Council
RMIT UNIVERSITY
Social and Global Studies Centre