

# **The Underground Music Scene in Belgrade, Serbia: A Multidisciplinary Study**

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Milan Todorović

Department of Leisure  
Faculty of Leisure and Tourism

Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College  
Brunel University

December, 2003

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with its author under the terms of the United Kingdom Copyright Acts. No quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without proper acknowledgement.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	i
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 The multidisciplinary approach to Belgrade underground music	3
1.2 Theoretical implications of the terminology used in the study of Belgrade's underground music	5
1.3 Belgrade underground music in its social and historical context	10
1.4 Culture-production in Belgrade: discourse, power and the right to space	14
1.5 Stratification, power-relations and business practices in Belgrade underground music production	16
1.6 Signifying practices and communication in Belgrade underground music	19
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 Introducing the concepts of culture production	26
2.2 Hegemony, consensus, discourse and power	35
2.3 Local music scenes within the global culture industry	44
2.4 Subcultural practices and communication in music scenes	55
2.5 Managing cultural artefacts: a critical summary	60
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology of Research</b>	<b>65</b>
3.1 Articulation of distinct paradigms – addressing the totality	67
3.1.1 Crossing the boundaries between research methodologies	74
3.2 Political economy and the analysis of culture production	78
3.3 Power relations and discourse in observations and interviews	80
3.4 Semiotics of narratives and signifying practices	82
3.5 Reflexive methodology and participant observation	86
3.6 Conclusion: Methodology of Articulation or the articulation of methodologies	91
<b>Chapter Four: Belgrade underground music in its social and historical context</b>	<b>95</b>
4.1.1 Underground as a concept of liberty	98
4.1.2 Hegemonic practices and the genesis of Turbo-folk	101

4.2 Stratification and genres of resistance in Belgrade subcultures	112
4.3 Belgrade underground music scene and its foundations	113
4.3.1 Signs of subversion: a semiotic enquiry	120
4.3.2 Economic factors influencing independent culture production in Belgrade	123
4.4 Panopticon, music subcultures and the articulation of style	127
4.4.1 Knowing the Other: articulations of identity in Belgrade subcultures	128
4.4.2 Image and representation of conflicting subcultures	134
4.4.3 Events and lost narratives: The Fast Bands of Serbia, 1992-1994	139
4.4.4 Events and lost narratives: Akademija caught in the contests of power	145
4.5 The articulate noise: street protests and cultural change	153
4.6 Concluding the historical introduction	159
<b>Chapter Five: Culture-production in Belgrade; discourse, power and the right to space</b>	<b>162</b>
5.1.1 Street protests transformed into festivals	164
5.1.2 The city: commercialised communal spaces	170
5.1.3 Techno-raves in ready-made spaces, legality and permissive society	174
5.2 Nightclubs: membership and identification	179
5.2.1 Membership cards and the unwritten laws	182
5.2.2 Inaudible noise and discontinuity of space	189
5.2.3 A note on reflexivity in discourse	192
5.2.4 Spaces between: grey areas of subcultural discourse	195
5.2.5 City caves and loosely interpreted spaces	200
5.2.6 Ostentatious projects and freely associated positions	205
5.3 Conclusions: spaces of cultural contest	213
<b>Chapter Six: Stratification, power-relations and business practices in Belgrade underground music production</b>	<b>215</b>
6.1.1 The missed opportunity: music production and the Yugoslav market reform of late 1980s	217
6.1.2 Terminology describing underground music production: varying views	222
6.1.3 The 'reanimation' of the Belgrade's underground music scene: production, legal issues and business ethics	228
6.2.1 Promotional practices in Belgrade independent media	234
6.2.2 Belgrade underground music and promotional venues	239
6.2.3 The role of the State in the promotion of contemporary culture	245

6.2.4 Promoting new music from Belgrade abroad: a story from London	249
6.2.5 Promoting new music from Belgrade abroad: other, 'safer' territories	255
6.3 B92: a business affecting the production, promotion and the position of Belgrade underground music - some insights	259
6.4 Fieldwork as negotiation with entrepreneurs and authors	264
6.5 Conclusions: the point of departure towards 'style'	270
<b>Chapter Seven: Signifying practices and communication in Belgrade underground music</b>	<b>277</b>
7.1.1 Terms of underground authenticity in Belgrade and Serbia	279
7.1.2 Dance music: electronic, electrical and <i>electrifying</i>	286
7.2.1 Šišmiš radio or the <i>voice of the old Belgrade underground</i>	291
7.2.2 <i>The writing on the wall</i> , Belgrade graffiti and <i>overground</i> communication: 'AKADEMIJA - REPUBLIKA'	296
7.2.3 MTV and Belgrade graffiti: formal and informal music media	300
7.3.1 Coherence, articulation and signifying the Belgrade underground music scene	303
7.3.2 Metaphorical freedom and restrictions of form	311
7.3.3 Electronic means and Rock 'n' Roll aesthetic: Chernobyl in House	316
7.3.4 Escape form Utopia: Techno as a multilayered concept	322
7.4 Conclusion: signifying defiance and creativity in Belgrade underground music	327
<b>Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Implications</b>	<b>330</b>
8.1 The scope and limitations of research	332
8.2 Music markets	336
8.3 Signifying practices and authenticity	340
8.4 Social change, discourse and stratification	343
8.5 Methodological contributions	345
8.6 Summary of contributions and implications	348
<b>Bibliography and references</b>	<b>351</b>
<b>Appendices: Fieldwork and documentary data</b>	<b>367</b>
Appendix One: Reflexive diary	367
Appendix Two: Interview with Miomir Grujić Fleka	400

Appendix Three: Interview with Gordan Paunović	429
Appendix Four: Interview with N S Sabljar	437
Appendix Five: Interview with Dragan Ambrozić	454
Appendix Six: Interview with Dušan Petrović	465
Appendix Seven: Interview with Miloš Kukurić	471
Appendix Eight: Interview with Darko Matković	486
Appendices Nine to Twelve: Introductory notes	496
Appendix Nine: Interview with Goran Nikolić Orge	497
Appendix Ten: Interview with Vladimir Jerić	513
Appendix Eleven: E-mail correspondence with Vladimir Jerić	530
Appendix Twelve: Excerpts from other interviews (poor audibility)	540

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

## The structure of the research

The focus of this study is the underground music scene in Belgrade, Serbia. This work requires the exploration of varied cultural and market factors that have shaped the scene, resulting in its present form. The explored phenomenon is complex and achieving the necessary depth of analysis will involve the use of a wide set of theoretical sources and research methods. The fieldwork includes in-depth interviews, reflective accounts of longitudinal participant observation, data collected through email correspondence, and a large amount of documentary data<sup>1</sup>. Data analysis will be articulated into a single methodology (examined in depth in Chapter 3).

In this chapter the researcher will examine the rationale behind the focus of this study. This study analyses the various contexts affecting the independent music production and creative artistic authenticity within the Belgrade underground music scene. The scene will be explored through examining the principles governing its past development, current practices and future potential. Constituent elements of this work employ political economy, discourse analysis, ethnomethodology and semiotics. The phenomenon needs to be explored within its specific social and historical context<sup>2</sup>. This will provide the grounds for thorough analysis of spatial relations in Belgrade culture-production. The market for Belgrade underground music will be explored in connection with changing power-relations and the ongoing socio-economic stratification within the scene. Signifying practices and communication in Belgrade underground music will be employed with regards to the socially conditioned notions of authenticity and aesthetics.

The term 'underground' has been chosen purposefully as the most appropriate signifier of the examined structures, relations, practices, aesthetic

---

<sup>1</sup> This includes web forums, documentary films, autobiographies, journalistic accounts (books, magazines, online newspaper and magazine articles, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> The crisis of civil society in Serbia during the Nineties amplified the already existing tensions between the official and oppositional discourse in political, economic, ethical and aesthetic terms.

norms and modes of communication. The terminology used in this study is inextricably linked to the focus of research and will be explored in depth.

The researcher's continuous long-term professional involvement with the subject of this study allowed him to create a comprehensive study of the dynamic relationships that characterise various aspects of Belgrade's underground music scene and its production. The plurality of its manifestations will not be examined at length in this study. Rather than adopting a postmodernist approach that would allow for such an exploration, the researcher will combine structuralist and post-structuralist analysis, abstracting the underlying principles from the concrete phenomenon.

### 1.1 The multidisciplinary approach to Belgrade underground music

Various theoretical and methodological viewpoints are consulted in order to address the full complexity of the examined issues. The production of underground music in Belgrade is shaped by a set of diverse factors that belong to an epistemological continuum. These factors have to be defined as distinctly as possible in order to be explored effectively.

Belgrade was established as a point of cultural reference in South Eastern Europe by the end of the Eighties. Enterprises and movements in Belgrade music, cinema and art production had strongly contributed to this outcome. This study will examine the claims to authenticity in Belgrade's underground music scene by tracing its origins, practices and distinct organisational characteristics. The latter are seen in relation to spatial and discursive power-relations as much as in relation to the ongoing economic stratification of Serbian society. Such stratification affects the development of diverse businesses that control the media, music and other forms of culture-production in the current social and economic transition in Belgrade.

The methodology in this research is based on Stuart Hall's Theory of Articulation. He proposes the combined use of 'economistic' and sociological



approaches in the analysis of cultural practices (Hall, 1973, 1980a, 1980b). Kellner (1997) suggests that semiotics, discourse and content analysis, political economy and even psychoanalytical methods should be combined in cultural theory. He argues that business practices in culture-production affect all levels of discourse. Kellner agrees with Hall in taking the economic aspects of culture into account, insisting that this approach needs to be pursued consistently. He criticises Hall's position on emerging voices of marginalised groups when discussing the impact of global corporations involved in culture-production (1997: 15). There are, nevertheless, significant similarities between the methodological approaches of Hall and Kellner; both suggest the crossing of theoretical boundaries.

Social connotations of mass-culture in relation to political and economic structures will provide the understanding of the background against which music scenes in Belgrade have developed. Constructions of meaning in underground music scenes relate to global mass media; they are responding to economic power, discursive dominance and cultural hybridisation, even in their apparent resistance.

Signifying practices and authentic articulations of style are read in relation to minute social structures and practices specific to a given scene. Discursive and organisational power-relations in which these scenes operate will be read in relation to the spaces they contest to control. Accounts provided by prominent members of Belgrade's underground music scene will be compared and contrasted with the researcher's own insider observation. Respondents will be asked to scrutinise the notions of identity and authenticity implicit in the term 'underground', and organisational practices of the specified socio-economic environment. This research will analyse all such accounts in relation to social, economic and discursive conditioning of their sources. Archival data will also be assessed in respect of the authors' discursive positions, collection methods and reliability of sources.

## 1.2 Theoretical implications of the terminology used in the study of Belgrade's underground music

The definition of the term 'underground music' takes into account the unconventional and experimental nature of the socio-cultural activities it signifies. The definition adopted for this study is threefold. One relates to the unconventional approaches to musical style that do not conform to established norms. Secondly, 'underground scenes' relate to the relative autonomy of modes of production, distribution and consumption. Thirdly, 'underground' connotes counter-cultural, subversive practices in society.

The term 'underground' is used in relation to subcultures in both academic and non-academic texts. It appears in various forms and can have various interpretations: American Beat-generation writer Jack Kerouac titles one of his books "The Subterraneans". The word 'underground' finds its early academic usage in texts on youth delinquency (Matza, 1961; Matza and Sykes, 1961). Hebdige addresses the 'subterranean values' in adolescent delinquency in terms of ideological development (1993, pp. 35, 44, 154n). He discusses lifestyle as mythology that, paradoxically, reproduces the dominant discourses in society through the contradiction it creates. This reference to the reproduction of dominant discourses is taken from Althusser's 'teeth gritting harmony' (Hebdige, 1993, pp. 76-77, 133). Along with the analysis of subtler forms of subversion, Hebdige elaborates the illicit nature of such 'subterranean values' that form the said contradiction. The expressions of subterranean values are in some cases limited to violent machismo and drug-abuse. Kohn (1992) also employs the term 'underground' in relation to the abuse of illegal drugs.

The term '*underground music*' is associated with Beatnik<sup>3</sup> and Hippie subcultures in Cohen's seminal book (1972). Sarah Thornton is the author of an influential study on club cultures revolving around Acid House and other forms of electronic dance music in Britain. Thornton criticises the predominant

---

<sup>3</sup> For the sake of clarity, the names of musical genres (House, Hip-hop, Rock) and subcultures (Hippies, Dieselers, Punks) will be referred to in capital letters.

ways in which the term 'subculture' has been conceived in Marxist analysis (1995, 1997). She argues that Marxist approaches to subculture resulted in its theoretical over-politicisation: Marxist theorists focused on class connotations of subcultures, neglecting self-perceptions nurtured by their youth participants. Thornton uses the term 'underground' as a reference for a sense of membership in music-oriented urban youth networks. The word is used here to oppose the highly conceptualised academic notion of 'subculture'. This distinction is used to delineate methodological presuppositions that she believes could be harmful in research of subcultural phenomena.

Bennett (2000: 85) states that the accurate use of the term 'underground' depends on the specific characteristics of the social context in which it is defined and used. Bennett's (2000: 90) analysis of the exclusivity of the dance music scene in Newcastle upon Tyne acknowledges the relevance of Thornton's concept of 'subcultural capital' (1995, 1997). However, following his argument on the need for specific, context-sensitive definitions of meaning for the term 'underground', Bennett (2001: pp. 126-127) points to one shortcoming in Thornton's analysis. Thornton's reference to the heterogeneity of dance music communities, he argues, is the result of the fact that her research was centred on London clubs, where such heterogeneity is evident. On the other hand, the context-specific nature of official and spatial pressures in Newcastle resulted in relative homogeneity of the dance music scene. This implies that context-sensitive analysis is the prerequisite of effective and accurate exploration of socio-musical phenomena.

'Underground' is the central term in this study, recognising that there are some notable differences in the usage of the term as suggested above. Interpretations of 'underground', as listed in the Oxford Concise Dictionary of Current English, are "unconventional, experimental (*underground press*)", and "a secret group or activity, esp. aimed to subvert the established order". The first lexicographic definition corresponds to Thornton's interpretation of subcultural identity. This reading of 'underground' refers to musical practices that appear to stand outside the music industry's main straits. Other relevant connotations of the term are explored in the following discussion.

It is necessary to identify the distinctions of Serbian urban youth subcultures as political economy plays a significant part in this study. Only subcultures that do not conform to the form or the content of hegemonic discourse qualify as part of Belgrade's underground scene. 'Underground' includes signifiers of subversive, alternative group activity. 'Underground scene' in Belgrade implies some elitist connotations akin to those of 'avant-garde music'. Both terms are problematic for a number of reasons. Avant-garde has long been seen in musical and artistic circuits in Belgrade as pretentious. While 'underground' is not unanimously accepted in Belgrade and is sometimes also seen as exaggerated, it does bear connotations that imply non-conformity in economic, ideological and aesthetic terms. 'Avant-garde' is read in relation to intellectual elitism; it cannot be used to signify the many discourses explored in this study.

'Underground' is criticised for being overused and occasionally misinterpreted; for example the film by Emir Kusturica bearing the same title presents Serbia's traumatic Second World War experience and its relation to the break-up of Yugoslavia through a farcical metaphor. Underground tunnels where the past and present meet run below Belgrade and the whole of Europe. The tragi-comical antihero of the film spends forty years in a basement, oblivious to life and the fact that the war is over. The isolation of the basement and the perpetuation of the character's private war symbolise the conflict in Yugoslavia. Kusturica shows fascination with the sub-stratum of Yugoslav society, referred to as the 'urban peasants'<sup>4</sup>. The two main characters in the film are stereotypes of this sub-stratum. Urban peasants are commonly associated with some of the symptoms of Yugoslavia's economic and social decay. Metaphors used in the film seem muddled, identifying 'Underground' with 'Underworld', 'Isolation' and 'Undercurrent' at the same time.

Regardless of its shortcomings, underground remains the most appropriate signifier. This is because the term 'subculture' is too wide for the focus of this

---

<sup>4</sup> Novakovic (1994) and Gordy (1999, 2001) have elaborated on the deep social, political and cultural connotations of the term 'urban peasants' in former Yugoslavia. An in-depth analysis of politico-economic origins of *urban peasants*, 'Neofolk', 'Dieselers', etc., and their cultural connotations, is presented in Chapter 4 of this study.

study, whilst 'counterculture' and 'avant-garde' are too narrow. Counterculture signifies a small segment of Belgrade's music scene: the one directly involved in overtly subversive political activities. 'Avant-garde', on the other hand, connotes a stage in the development of early Eighties' club culture in Belgrade.

Although the Belgrade underground music scene is heterogeneous, its fragmentary constituents are identified and examined in this study under a common name. Social change in Serbia allows for a conditional use of the term. The notion of stylistic unity is as relative as that of ideology. In spite of its semantic imperfection 'underground' is specific enough to discriminate between music subcultures pushed into dissent and those incorporated into mainstream through hegemonic consensus, e.g. 'Turbo-folk'. The latter moved from the margins to become the 'subcultural mainstream' of Nineties' Serbia.

'Subculture' is too wide a term because it would inevitably encompass a variety of groups active in Belgrade. Apart from the city's underground music scene, Belgrade subcultures include the social phenomenon commonly known as 'Dieselers'<sup>5</sup>. Dieselers emerged in the Nineties, becoming a unique feature of Serbia's cultural landscape. They were the prime consumers of 'Turbo-folk', the mass-marketed stylistic crossover between Balkan folk and Western-style popular music. This youth subculture became 'The Other', a direct opposite of all groups that constitute Belgrade's underground music scene (Kronja, 2001; Gordy, 1999, 2001; Milojevic, 2002; van de Port, 1999). 'Dieselers' lay on one side of the imaginary spectrum. The underground scene

---

<sup>5</sup> The 'Dieseler' subculture is related to the former regime's apparatus of coercion and to realms of organised crime. At the same time, Serbian 'underground' youths were using subtle mechanisms of subversion and social criticism (Collin, 2001; Gordy, 1999, 2001; *NIN, August 2000*; B92, 2003). Parallel existence could connote the characteristics of a Belgrade underground scene as appropriately as 'opposition'. All cultural activity in Serbia became politicised through the build-up of social, economic, political and discursive tensions. This especially applies to the performance of public creative works, including the promotion of music. The regime limited and obstructed funding of independent media. The need to control information spread to music markets in Serbia (Gordy, 1999, 2001). Means of expression were restrained economically through starvation of funds. Aggressive advertising of Dieselers' mythology flooded the mass media leaving little space for the strangulated independent scene. It was this cultural pressure that forced independent music production underground.

in Belgrade remained associated with alternative forms of expression in music and art. Belonging to the opposite side of the subcultural continuum, it became marginalised in the turbulent social stratification in Serbia during the Nineties. Members of the Belgrade underground scene became the Dieselers' 'Defining Other'<sup>6</sup>. Dieselers saw them as degenerate, decadent and socially redundant. This led to the point of dehumanisation (Gordy, 1999, 2001), justifying the way Dieselers treated all other groups in Serbian society.

Although the term 'underground', as used in Matza's and Sykes' work might potentially apply to the Dieselers in relation to delinquency and aggressive machismo, it will not be used in relation to Dieseler subculture. Diverse connotations referred to by members of other Belgrade music subcultures justify 'underground' in its complex meaning. Where subcultural and counter-cultural contexts are defined through economic and discursive terms, 'Belgrade underground music scene' becomes more appropriate.

Whilst both extremes in Serbian urban youth qualify for the label of 'subculture', there is a clear delineation between the 'underground scene' with its countercultural connotations and the violent and exclusive populism of the 'Dieselers'. Political relations are important in this case. It is essential to stress the existence of grey areas between the Dieseler subculture and those associated with underground music scenes. Such grey areas represent an important part of the contested ground in the 'war of position' for social hegemony.

Gramsci (1971) identifies the 'mass of the apolitical' with reference to the contested ground in the crisis of civil society. Theoretical concepts of 'spectacle' and 'pleasure', criticised by Kellner (1997) as mere results of highly developed stages of Western capitalism, could not be applied to the theorisation of Serbian subcultures. Contrary to recent treatise in cultural studies that see class tensions, resistance and ideology as theoretically

---

<sup>6</sup> The claim that 'mainstream' is a construct rather than fact will be examined with specific reference to Dieselers' apparent move from the margins to mainstream in the Nineties.

redundant, political and economic structuring is evidently a defining process in Serbian urban youth subcultures as will be revealed in the course of this book.

Dieselers were complacent with hegemonic practices of the regime that ruled Serbia until October 2000. They identified themselves with populist rhetoric and supported the political status quo that led to the decay of Serbian society. The obsession with hedonism that characterised the Dieselers was in accord with the lifestyle propagated in government-controlled mass media. Turbo-folk created a glamorous iconography that seemed to ignore the severe economic and social crisis in Serbia. Kronja (2001) and Gordy (1999, 2001) see Turbo-folk's aesthetics as a form of escapism propagated by the regime that ruled Serbia in the Nineties. Collin (2001) addresses this phenomenon with less success, incorrectly associating Turbo-folk with nationalist traditionalism. A wealth of examples associates the Turbo-folk scene and the Dieseler subculture with organised crime (Kronja, 2001). Ideals of material success unattainable through legal means represented a significant part of the Dieselers' identity, while their nationalist traditionalism remains inarticulate.

### 1.3 Belgrade underground music in its social and historical context

The 2000 elections led to the popular uprising in Serbia and the country's first democratic government since before the Second World War. The need for alternative and indirect modes of artistic expression and communication was present in Serbia for almost sixty years. Dissent could not be expressed directly. Art, cinema and music production were often used as means of resistance to the hegemony under the communist (1944-1990) and post-communist (1990-2000) undemocratic reign. Gramsci's work addresses the wider political and social issues at stake. Applied to the contestations of strata for social dominance, it provides the means for analysing processes of constructing dominant discourse.

The work of Michel Foucault appears to contrast Gramsci's structural analysis. Disciplinary control of 'delinquents' and other forms of power-

exercise depend on knowledge gained through subtle mechanisms of sub-structural surveillance. Controlling information on groups and individuals is central to Foucault's understanding of power. He sees these mechanisms as ingrained in spatial relations. Consequently, power-relations could be read from spatial organisations of human activity. The need for detailed analysis implies that such spatial relations are to be read on a minuscule level. While Gramsci observes wider dynamics of social stratification, Foucault analyses social interaction through the observation of small, marginal groups.

The use of these two models appears to give rise to theoretical contradictions. The Theory of Articulation<sup>7</sup> provides a link between the models. Social tensions are expressed in the continual change of codes that subcultures use to define identity and meaning. Underground subcultures evade repressive control through continual re-articulation of signifiers. This practice reflects the position of such groups within the wider social context (stratification). In subversive forms of music, art and cinema production, codes of signification are continually re-articulated. Underground activity remains observable but the 'Panopticon' cannot adapt to changing modes of communication.

The counter-cultural aspect of Belgrade underground music lends itself to Foucauldian analysis. Activities in Serbian urban subcultures, related to music, cinema and art production, have not been examined to the extent to which their role in contemporary Serbian society deserves. Texts on Serbia published in recent years focused primarily on the origins, causes and consequences of the conflict in former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Little analytical attention has been paid to the role of Belgrade's alternative media and counterculture. This theoretical gap needs to be addressed. Treatise dealing with recent Serbian history focused mainly on the Nineties regime and its politics. The mass media and popular culture in Serbia have primarily been analysed with regards to the hegemonic practices of the ruling regime until October 2000. Since the political change in Serbia took place in 2000, more work has been done to interpret the role of

---

<sup>7</sup> Theoretical foundations and methodological relevance of the concept of Articulation is explored in Chapter 3 in detail.



independent media and culture production. A well-known example is Collin's book, published in 2001, which focuses on Radio B92 and its media network<sup>8</sup>.

Agents of social and cultural change in Belgrade and Serbia cannot be reduced to the role played by B92 however significant that role might have been. One of the aims of this research is to examine the other, largely undervalued endeavours that were part of a wide civic movement in Belgrade and Serbia. Historical accounts in this study focus on the work of musicians, producers, promoters, artists and others whose work was part of a 'parallel reality'. Their efforts were under-funded to the extent that in many cases no formal record of their activity exists. The work of these independent groups and individuals can be categorised as 'micro-history'. They acted independently from all institutions including even the independent media<sup>9</sup>. Historical analysis proposed in this study aims at mapping such activities within their own 'micro-geographic' spaces that construct the visible body of Serbian civil society. These accounts and developments have to be positioned within the wider context provided by historical analysis. The dichotomy between agency and structure is resolved through the articulation of forces that have led to cultural change.

Theorisation of contemporary music-related subcultures in the West seems to abandon the 'traditional' notions of resistance and stylistic determination. This contradicts Hebdige's (1993) analyses of practices that characterised the Punk movement. Thornton (1995: 105) argues that class distinctions in contemporary clubbing subcultures are 'kept at bay' by different types of hierarchy from the ones identified by Hebdige and others. Thornton abandons the concept of social stratification in the formation of subcultures, in favour of 'subcultural capital', arguably the referential value in dance cultures. Subcultural hierarchies, she suggests, are based on choices of lifestyle. Kellner (1997) argues to the contrary. He sees the global culture industry's 'opening to the margins' as a deception. The motivation for such inclusive

---

<sup>8</sup> The many flaws of Collin's text are analysed in this study. However inaccurate his work is, it provides some insight into historical events.

<sup>9</sup> Such as Radio B92, Radio Index, and the opposition press.

change comes from economic interest. He states that political economy and the notions of control over the market of cultural commodities are as relevant as ever. He suggests that the same economic principles as the ones postulated by the Frankfurt School are still at play, only the forms have changed: homogeneity of culture-production had retreated in favour of product diversification. Miles (2000: 99) appears to doubt the concept of 'consumer sovereignty', suggesting that the market is increasing its control over the lifestyles of youth consumers. He seems to agree with Best and Kellner (1998) by stating that youth experience has become standardised (Miles, 2000: 53).

However, Bennett argues that "musical taste is rather more loosely defined than has previously been supposed" (2000: 83). The relationship between musical taste and visual appearance is no longer seen as homologically fixed, thanks to the evident visual heterogeneity of urban dance music scenes (Bennett, 2000: pp. 78-79). Individual identity now relates to consumer choice. Rather than a result of changes in music production technology (samplers, computers, etc.), the fragmentations of style are dictated by the audiences' already established patterns of consumption (Bennett, 2000: pp. 81-82). In retrospect, the conceptualisation of dance music as 'commercial' and 'disco' that no longer applied since the emergence of *Techno* and *House* (Bennett, 2000: 73) has removed the limitations to what is seen as 'authentic'. Nevertheless, Bennett suggests that there is no need for negating the 'subcultural tradition' (2000: pp. 74, 78). Rather, recent experiences have shown that the correlations between identity, style and consumption in youth market are becoming more loosely structured and eclectic.

While in the West this subject is debatable, recent Serbian history shows the importance of mass-culture in relation to the processes of economic and political stratification. The attention that Western theorists have paid to Turbo-folk and its ascent to 'mainstream'<sup>10</sup> in Serbia supports this (van De Port, 1999; Gordy, 1999, 2001). Turbo-folk has not been analysed in relation to the

---

<sup>10</sup> 'Mainstream' as a cluster of subcultures is addressed in the Literature Review.

postmodern notions of lifestyle plurality. The only way Turbo-folk could be competently analysed is in its correlation with oppression, consensus and hegemony. Furthermore, the historical specificity of Belgrade underground music scene provides the researcher with an opportunity to evaluate to what degree and in which way do global and local economic and discursive structures interact and affect cultural change.

#### 1.4 Culture-production in Belgrade: discourse, power and the right to space

Underground music in Belgrade and Serbia is not merely an unconventional form of entertainment. Conveying the messages that would otherwise be restricted depends on modes of subcultural communication. Lyrical and musical content, names of venues, bands or underground music projects were all used to trigger specific associations in the minds of 'initiated' individuals familiar with particular anecdotes and practices coded in slang.

The dichotomy between the normalised, mainstream mass-culture, and the underground scene's 'Deviant Other' cannot be clearly outlined. Between such divides lay specific exceptions to the rules that define the readings of 'mainstream' and 'underground' content. Preferences of musical taste connote the ideological and ethical oppositions between social groups founded on apparently irreconcilable subcultural discourses. Unrecorded and overlooked, negotiations between such groups and discourses determine the social, ethical and ideological allegiances that are recognised on a wider social scale. Negotiations and frictions between Belgrade youth subcultures can be read from their spatial interaction and different uses of communal space. In this study special relevance is given to varied uses of known music venues.

Student-controlled clubs have set the stage for counter-cultural activity in the Eighties. SKC<sup>11</sup> and Akademija<sup>12</sup> were the most important among those

---

<sup>11</sup> Studentski Kulturni Centar - Students' Cultural Centre, one of the leading organisations hosting a number of musical, artistic, theatrical and cinematic events in the 1970s and

venues. Far from being mere gatherings of enthusiasts, these organisations developed successful business decision-making practices. Attracting the curiosity of the media and the public, they developed into independent sources of subversion during the times of economic, political and social unrest. These venues were followed by a number of independent semi-private and private projects throughout the Nineties. The repressive authorities used judicial as well as illegal means to obstruct their functioning. Even when this was not done with political intention, the groups close to the regime were keen on taking them over or controlling them. Thus the volatile power-relations in Belgrade during the Nineties' have left their impact on spatial contestations. Even when there was no specifically articulate government policy the criminal activities of the dominant groups was indirectly affecting the use of communal space.

Examining these issues is conceptually linked with the street protests held in Serbian cities during the winter of 1996/97. These protests are seen as important in relation to their use of music as well as their role in cultural change. The protests of 1996/97 included contestations over the use of communal space, signifying the tensions between civilians and riot police. Furthermore, spatial contestations over several music venues will be read in relation to discourse and power in Belgrade underground music. The discursive analysis of spatial relations leads further into detailed participatory accounts of events strongly associated with the Belgrade underground music scene. The researcher consults his respondents for expert insight into the most relevant contemporary venues and events. Having a long-term insider participatory experience enables the researcher to accurately read his own observations and respondents' accounts within their appropriate discursive contexts.

Two theoretical avenues will be pursued in this analysis. One explores power-relations and practices and the other employs semiotics in the Belgrade

---

Eighties. Such events' importance went well beyond the activity of Belgrade student organisations.

<sup>12</sup> Club of the Faculty of Fine Art, founded in 1981. Gordy (1999, 2001) refers to it as one of the leading European nightclubs of the Eighties.

underground music scene. In the first, conflicted economic interests and shifting allegiances will be seen to transpire from the analysis of spatial relations. Subcultural identity and relations of power in underground music events will be read from the spaces that Belgrade underground music scene inhabits and claims as its own. A couple of events taking place outside Belgrade are also analysed because of their relevance and close relationship with the scene.

In the other theoretical avenue, semiotic analysis of live music events will provide insight into symbolic communication within the Belgrade underground music scene. Foucault had objections to the semiotic method suggesting that signs and language are mere manifestations that oversimplify the analysis of power. His objections to political economy, especially the Marxist one, have a similar root. Nevertheless, the author of this study recognises the relevance of sign-production in music-related events and spaces. Without the analysis of signifying practice the reading of space would not provide adequately accurate results. Interviewee accounts make strong references to musical connotations of power relations. The spatial dynamics of analysed events have to be seen with reference to the signifying practices embedded in musical style. Thus the spatial dynamics of events are inextricably linked with the readings of musical genre. The connotations of music are related to the wider social discourse. One of the main elements of this research is to articulate these discursive frictions that affect the music production in Belgrade, leading to the next section.

### 1.5 Stratification, power-relations and business practices in Belgrade underground music production

This section focuses on the interplay between the Belgrade underground music scene and interest groups involved with its business aspects (especially promotion). The 'economy' of the underground music scene will be discussed here in correspondence to a series of micro-events. Relevant business references to other events and practices are derived from interviews

and documentary data. Discursive models displayed in the underground scene relate to operational practices on higher levels of culture-production. Exploring the sets of belief rooted among decision-makers in culture-production brings to light covert economic and social developments.

Conversely, management discourse in marketing and promotion adheres to prescriptive models by instrumentally employing various 'economistic' disciplines and some elements of behavioural science. The assumption is that the outcomes can be predicted and calculated without reference to in-depth social or cultural theorisation. Shortcomings of such an approach are twofold. It acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy by short-circuiting the complex conditions on which effective media communication is based. Secondly, it addresses the concrete through case studies that often neglect wider socio-cultural contexts in which decisions are made. Contrary to their prescriptive purpose, case studies are most effective *a posteriori*.

Critical management studies use theoretical assumptions that are considered unorthodox in the prescriptive realm of management discourse. A number of authors in the former refer to the work of social historians, critical theorists, social psychologists and Marxist theoreticians among others. Unravelling the power-relations in business, managerial practices are seen as a set of voluntary and involuntary actions conditioned outside the decision-making process. This study analyses the power-relations within the independent music business in Belgrade by contrasting the conflicting statements derived from interviews and archival accounts. The data reveal intertwined discursive relationships on which competitors are conditioned to act. Their relative power conditions them to action in such a way that a 'higher hierarchical position' need not be seen as a long-term advantage. One example is the case of successful organisations close to foreign acquisition.

Since the political change of October 2000, B92 has evolved into the most influential media organisation in Serbia. Its steady shift into the mainstream<sup>13</sup> is related to the changes in Serbian society during the last decade. Until the change of government B92 was one of the strongest symbols of political dissent. Paradoxically, the very inception of Radio B92 is related to the somewhat 'benevolent' government policies toward the 'politically acceptable' student activists (Collin, 2001: 21). Starting as an experimental radio programme, this station had developed strong countercultural credentials.

Developments in Belgrade independent media have to be understood through social change. By 1990 different interest groups grew out of the obsolete Socialist Youth Student Union. Student organisations had split along ideological lines. Some groups stuck to the regime while many others sought change. During the Nineties, many young Belgraders became involved in the counterculture. The social and economic stratification had its origins in the late Eighties. The advantage of this study is that its author was involved in longitudinal observation of changes in Serbia<sup>14</sup>. Student groups and some prominent members of the underground music scene formed a wide front adamantly opposed to the hegemony and coercion of the regime.

Some of Belgrade's most prominent media practitioners started their careers in youth magazines during the Eighties. This study contains interviews with leading practitioners and authors involved in Belgrade independent music and media production. The researcher's insider standing enables him to identify relevant respondents among the innovators competing in the music and media markets. Hence the diversity of interviewees and responses enables the author of this study to create a credible 'map' of discursive stances. Such stances are conditional on the interviewees' position within the social framework. Archival data<sup>15</sup> used in this study will also be read as conditioned by the social and market position of their sources.

---

<sup>13</sup> The term 'mainstream' deserves attention because it relates to the notion of 'underground' central to this study (Tagg, 1980, 2000; Thornton, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> Participating in such changes makes the researcher fully aware of their impact.

<sup>15</sup> Archival material consists of documentary and interpretative accounts on related subjects, as well as the promotional material provided by the businesses examined in this study.

When contrasted with other sources on the subject, the findings of this aspect of analysis will show the dialectic relationship between the market competition within the Belgrade underground music scene and the subjective accounts<sup>16</sup> of competing practitioners consulted in research. These findings will enrich the scope and depth of this research.

#### 1.6 Signifying practices and communication in Belgrade underground music

The term 'underground' becomes multifaceted and truly justified in this study. Underground music practitioners have developed discursive patterns of 'non-compliance'<sup>17</sup>. 'Non-compliance' refers to a conscious decision taken among many in the Serbian disaffected middle class. In 1991, a few months before the war began, student demonstrators pressed for the transformation of society and democratic change. The protesters hoped to stop the tangible and swift decline of Serbian society. At that point, the Serbian democratic movement had started to formulate its aims. Artists and intellectuals were within its core. Playwrights, filmmakers, visual artists, writers and critics were active in their open and uncompromising criticism of the regime. The most tangible impetus to the democratic movement came from rock musicians.

The analysis of independent music production in Belgrade has to take into account the discursive foundations of culture-production in their appropriate social, historical, cultural, and business contexts. Political, economic and ethical foundations of Serbian civil society were visibly shaken in the Nineties. Subcultures had strong ideological overtones in recent Serbian history. Aesthetic references to subcultural discourse were related to ethics. Equally, any reference to lifestyle in Belgrade subcultures has to be related to the state of the economy. Such an approach becomes justified having in mind the severity of the divide that had arisen in Serbian society during the Nineties.

---

<sup>16</sup> Note that this work, due to its approach and focus, does not comply with stylistic features of an introspective account; thus the use of first person voice is limited to quotes from reflective diaries, somewhat undermining the book's literary appeal. Nevertheless, the adoption of an impersonal tone was mandatory and has thus strengthened this work's analytical rigour.

<sup>17</sup> A text based on a series of interviews conducted in 1999 and 2000 (Milos-Todorovic, 2000) uses the term 'non-compliance' as its central theme.



Belgrade underground music scene came to represent the libertarian tendencies in Serbian society and opposition to the politics of the regime that ruled the country. This study has to take into account the scene's internal stylistic diversity. Its shared sense of identity was construed through resistance to hegemony. The scene's stylistic fragmentation corresponds to the tendencies in global music and media production. Taking that into account, the discussion on signifying practices in Belgrade underground music will assess its autonomous development and claims to authenticity.

The semiotics of musical content will not be addressed directly in this research. The semiotic enquiry here aims at exploring the modes of communication, rather than musical sign-production. The latter would involve music psychology, structural analysis of musical content, the analysis of timbre and other sonic properties of contemporary music. Other studies of popular music address these issues successfully (McDonald, 2000; Tagg, 1980, 2000; Whiteley, 2000, etc.). Therefore, the researcher will focus on respondents' subjective accounts on authenticity and style. Subjective notions behind the terms of 'musical genre' and 'artistic integrity' will be examined through semiotic analysis of subcultural narratives. The need to identify the notions behind such terms will therefore be fulfilled indirectly. The works of Dick Hebdige, Roland Barthes and Stuart Hall successfully address the notions of communication, signifying practice and style.

Musical forms and other signifiers of subcultural style are often changing quickly and without an obvious origin or cause. Such floating signifiers connote different subcultural meanings in an apparently arbitrary way. Shifts of meaning and signification in forms of communication determine the changes that define the relative autonomy of the subcultural forms of expression. The semiotic analysis of 'authenticity' will assign such change to the shifting allegiances in social conduct, however insignificant those shifts might appear to be. Short-lived television programmes done by enthusiasts, demo recordings of unsigned musicians that had a concert or two, do influence the 'reality' of music, media, and art production. Their impact is hard

to trace precisely because these are likely to be genuine 'underground' artefacts.

Different interest groups and music scenes that shape the production of underground music in Belgrade will be analysed as the agents that articulate the notions of authentic and distinct musical style. Media texts and public events will also be seen as generators of meaning. A sample of archival data, whether a book, documentary film, news article or an analytical account has to be seen to be nesting within its position in the social context from which it originates. This would apply to any other product of discourse. Analysing the claims to legitimacy is done by asking, how is a text articulated through the tensions between structure and agency. Its authors have to be seen as persons within a linkage between and within discourses. Determining its relevance will involve the consideration of discourses, group or individual factors that have affected a text written by a journalist or an academic.

All respondents are well informed about contemporary music production and the underground music scene in Belgrade and Serbia. Respondents' comments on the promotional potential of Belgrade underground music in the international market will help identify the influences that have shaped its contemporary stylistic forms. Their opinions will also help evaluate the potential contributions of Belgrade underground music to world culture. This may allow the researcher to show Belgrade underground music as authentic and representative of its place of origin.

**Chapter Two**  
**LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter contains several distinct though interrelated theoretical disciplines. Multifaceted phenomena encompassing independent modes of culture production within a concrete socio-historical context could only be addressed with the aid of diverse theoretical models. This study employs heterogeneous theoretical disciplines. Such heterogeneity comes as a result of the epistemological and teleological diversification of knowledge in contemporary academic research<sup>1</sup>. Structural constraints of academic enquiry impose theoretical distinctions whilst the examined phenomena represent a continuum. It is therefore difficult to draw clear distinctions between the areas where, for example, political economy overlaps with studies of discourse and cultural identity. Discourses of cultural identity are communicated through practices in sign-production.

Academic consensus on analytical methods dictates that disciplinary boundaries need to be recognised. However, discursive conditions imposed on academic research make multidisciplinary studies feasible only if the confines of analytical foci have been clearly defined. The term 'foci' is used intentionally in its plural form; a multidisciplinary approach only becomes justified once the complexity of the phenomenon is presented within a unified methodology. Varied disciplines need to be explored with regards to their respective relevance and interrelatedness.

The focus of this study is Belgrade's underground music scene and business practices that have developed around it. The choice of the notion 'underground' was explored in Chapter 1. The author believes that the term 'underground' is more suitable than 'subculture' for the purpose of this study. The notion of 'music scene' has also been chosen as stylistic and communicational issues involved in Belgrade's independent music production are major considerations.

The reference to the term 'music scene' is drawn from definitions offered by Straw (1991), Kahn-Harris (2000), and Shank (1994). Straw suggests that the concept of music scene represents a significant point of departure from the notion of 'community' (Straw, 1991: 373). A music community is restricted to a geographical area and exercises a particular set of musical idioms. Such idioms fall within a set of specific geographical and historical factors that in

---

<sup>1</sup> Discursive foundations of analytical diversity will be critically appraised in Chapter 3 (Methodology).

turn create a distinct musical heritage. Conversely, a music scene represents a cultural space formed by the interaction between, and cross-pollination of, a number of musical practices. Such practices are subjected to diversification and take a variety of appearances articulated through forms of communication that shape musical alliances. However, inherent stylistic boundaries do not prevent collaboration. A 'community' is restricted to forms and practices that stem from a socially concretised musical heritage. A 'scene', on the other hand, is not restricted to one tradition only. 'Scene' as a concept is discursively more inclusive than community; communities can co-exist within a scene.

Kahn-Harris (2000) suggests that scenes encompass a plethora of forms, "from tight-knit local music communities to isolated musicians and fans". He argues that it is no musical phenomenon could be placed within a single scene. Scenes "exist quasi-autonomously within each other". Musical texts and individuals can simultaneously circulate through a number of scenes; their 'trajectories' are constantly changing. Thus "any stability [of scenes] can be only momentary" (Kahn-Harris, 2000: 25). He stops short of asserting that scenes define *all* music activity, because what does, or does not represent a scene could be debated into infinity. Even purchasing a record affects a scene, he suggests, making it hard to draw strict delineations between its 'passive' and 'active' members. Focusing on communication, Shank (1994: 122) defines a scene as "an overproductive signifying community" that overcomes localisms in the expression of generic cultural development - "beyond stylistic permutation" and toward possible cultural change.

The stylistic diversity and interplay of varied interests in the production of independent music in Belgrade points to the concept of 'underground scene' as the most suitable one for this research. Having identified the terms that signify the focus of this study, the theoretical underpinnings of this research will now be introduced. This chapter's main theoretical notions relate to power structures within culture-production. These notions are derived from the works of a number of authors whose approaches range from political economy to genealogies of discourse, narrative and communication, and cultural history. They encompass critical theory, power relations and social change, and cultural hybridisation.

Other theoretical concepts explored in this chapter refer to subcultural practices. These relate to disparate accounts of people involved in music production. Some of these practices are structured around the notions of resistance and subversion with theoretical influences drawn from Marxist approaches. Others dismiss the relevance of resistance and class-position and instead refer to cultural diversity and lifestyle. However, the notion of discursive practice comes as a unifying factor as explored through examples of cultural authenticity in popular music. Belgrade underground music will be looked at as socially conditioned signs. Connotations of such signs (and not the sound structures) will be explored with regards to the construction of meaning and communication.

The management of cultural artefacts will be summarised in the final section of this chapter. Management practices in music production will be seen within a critical theoretical framework that draws upon methods and experiences from cultural studies. The work of Theodor Adorno forms a major reference point for the examination of the concept of culture production and power relations. Section 2.1 will deal almost exclusively with Adorno in order to outline some basic theoretical tensions arising from his work and its critique.

Antonio Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and consensus will be compared and contrasted with Michel Foucault's theorisation on discourse and power in Section 2.2. It will be seen that these two methods of analysis, though apparently different, share significant common features. Resolving the theoretical ruptures between the two authors, results in one of the justifications for the use of a multidimensional methodology in this study.

It will be seen that the difference of theoretical emphasis found in Foucault's and Gramsci's work is one of 'ascent'<sup>2</sup> and 'descent' respectively. While Foucault's analysis of the principles involved in the distribution of power starts from the specific and the minute, Gramsci is more interested with structures of power. Arguing that these have to be taken in their most specific manifestations, Gramsci discovers the principles of social change by descending into the concrete. The difference between the two approaches serves as a relevant metaphor for local and global developments in culture production. In Section 2.3 the author will look at the work of Anderson,

---

<sup>2</sup> Foucault speaks of 'ascending power' in his analysis (Foucault, 1980: 99). The researcher has found this term to be doubly suitable, lending itself for the comparison between the two theorists' approaches to analysis of social structures.

Hannerz, Maas, Mazarr and others, some for their in-depth explorations of local and national identity in relation to colonialism, migration and globalisation, others for their concerns with the affect of policy-making on culture's global production. Some of these writers stridently oppose globalisation while others strongly support it.

There are two reasons for reviewing discussions on cultural and economic globalisation. Firstly, such an overview serves as an introduction to the notion of authenticity in *local* music production. Secondly, authenticity of a local and national scene within a globally structured music industry has both cultural and economic significance. The notion of authenticity implies questions of membership and modes of communication in subcultures and scenes. Therefore, the works of Barthes, Hebdige, Kellner and Thornton will be compared and contrasted in Section 2.4. Culture production will be approached in Section 2.5 from a critical management studies viewpoint where relevant theoretical avenues dealing with corporate and independent music businesses will be examined. In Section 2.5 the author will summarise the theoretical contributions made in the chapter while also critically evaluating the effects of power-relations in music and media management. He will draw on the work of Alvesson, Booth, Hall, and others.

## 2.1 Introducing the concepts of culture production

The Frankfurt School had a significant impact on the understanding of popular culture with its introduction of the concept 'culture industry' - a notion that subsequently served to lay the foundations for contemporary cultural studies of music. It examines the production, distribution and consumption of 'cultural products' based on a Marxian approach to culture and political economy. It draws an analogy to mass-production of commodities in a highly industrialised and developed capitalist society (Adorno, 1973, 1991 and 1997). It views the 'production of culture' with respect to its specificity and its distinctiveness from manual labour. The offered theorisation of mass-culture is not, however, sufficient enough to allow a thorough examination of subcultural phenomena. Negus (1999) suggests that culture production is far from static. Inverting Adorno's concept, he states that the ways in which the *industry affects culture* cannot be understood without arguing that *culture affects the industry*. This

argument clearly points at less tangible, ethnographic elements of culture production.

Adorno (1991) identifies the production of culture with power relations in modern society. He establishes an analogy between popular culture and the control of production and distribution of commodity goods through alienation. Thus socially constructed aesthetic preferences are influenced through economic means. Alienation is here conceptualised as a relation between the producer and those who control the means of production. Adorno sees the production of modern culture akin to material production, as defined by Marx - the model of production to distribution, exchange, and consumption presented in "Grundrisse" (1973: 89). Distribution of products depends on social laws. Exchange corresponds to individual needs, further fragmenting the share of products. The consumed product is finally freed from social mediation. It becomes an immediate object of individual need that is satisfied through consumption. Adorno points out that the listener, by 'consuming' a musical piece, "initiates the whole process anew" (Marx, 1973). He believes that the listener is alienated from the product in the same way that a production-line worker is estranged from the end product of his labour. The product differs from a natural object in that it becomes what it is only through consumption (Marx, 1973: 91). The consumer 'gives the music product a finishing touch' through listening.

Adorno (1973, 1991, and 1997) suggests that mass production of cultural commodities resulted in their alienation from both producers and consumers. Culture is thus treated as a commodity and consumed as any other industrial product. He offers a structural theorisation of popular culture based on economic power-relations. Market exchanges are conditioned through the control of the means of production (Marx, 1973). Conditions in which cultural 'products' are developed influence both their form and content. This implies that control over cultural commodities affects the construction of meaning in society. Adorno argues that the broadcast media serve the market by advertising the mass-production of recorded music. Music that receives greater attention in the mass media becomes more familiar to the public. This attention increases its commercial potential and so more advertising ensues.

The result is a 'fatal circle' of public attention and success. He suggests that music becomes commodified while the 'fatal circle' serves its commercial purpose. Music is advertised as a product but it also serves as an advertising



vehicle to push associated technological products (Adorno, 1991: pp. 32-33). Negus' analysis (1999: pp. 40-43) of corporate strategies that Sony and Philips employed in music markets partly confirms Adorno's suspicion. Both corporations were attracted to music production because of their competence in consumer electronics used for reproduction of audiovisual contents. Thus the concept of 'synergy' is not dissimilar from Adorno's 'fatal circle'.

This dialectic relationship is further observed in relation to the role that popular music attained in the twentieth century. Adorno (1991: 86) speaks of products of the culture industry as becoming self-advertised, bearing a purpose of and in themselves. He extends the argument by noting that the constant changes of the culture industry are a mere disguise – they “mask a skeleton which has changed just as little as the profit motive itself since it first gained its predominance over culture” (Adorno, 1991: 87).

Adorno analyses the form of the pop song in modern society. He suggests that its form is developed from the 'catchy tunes' of the 'street ballad' that emerged in the 'bourgeois era'. He points out that such musical forms initially 'attacked the cultural privilege of the ruling class'. However, their function has changed, helping 'banal' and 'vulgarised' approaches to culture to spread over society as a whole. Even the music of Beethoven and Brahms become treated as pop tunes, their recognisable themes taken out of their compositional context and marketed as standardised produce, (Adorno, 1991: pp. 30, 36). He argues that the pop song is fully standardised and structured in duration right down to the number of beats. Therefore both the music and its listeners are denied all individuality (Adorno, 1991: pp. 31, 43). The use of lyrics to address common places of day-to-day life corresponds with the production of 'hits' based on musical phrases.

In Bradley's analysis (1983), Adorno “saw the real possibility that 'jazz' could evolve into an imitation of classical music, with rules, academia and intelligentsia to match”. He does make a distinction between 'usual, commercial' and more developed jazz music. Although he points out that jazz music 'frees teenagers' from the 'idiotic... Johan Strauss-type operetta', Adorno concludes that jazz is 'organised and multiplied by special interests, and comes to misconceive itself as modern, if not as an avant-garde'. He believes that jazz is 'a captive of the culture-industry'. The listeners have

learned to become docile and passive, denying the attention to what they hear even while listening.

Adorno argues that the way in which musical forms have changed in modern society creates an appearance of immediacy: buying the ticket to a concert or obtaining a copy of a record supports the illusion that the listener has a direct relationship with the music and its performance. He states that such a direct relationship between music and listener does not truly exist. The use value (enjoying the performance) is exemplified through exchange value obtained through the purchase of the product (a concert ticket, a recording, etc.). The appearance of immediacy affects the social coding of mass-produced music that becomes effective in mass marketing of culture. Adorno argues that the identification of the listener with the product is imposed through covert mediation (1991: pp. 34-35). The culture industry promotes music as an object of desire. Thus the appearance of immediacy enables the existence of the fetish-character of mass-produced cultural commodities.

Adorno was the first theoretician to conduct a critical analysis of the cultural value assigned to products. This assignation leads to an inverted relationship between commodities and culture: while culture becomes commodified, conventional products attain cultural status. The metaphor he uses to depict this is one of religious adoration and servitude. The audience's relation to hit-songs is superficial; the cohesive function of commodities is a result of the identification with the exchange value, rather than use value. The exchange value becomes related to social status and prestige. This is how commodities become venerated, justifying the term 'fetish character' of cultural products. Fetishisation of products is characterised by an addiction to acquire more and more commodities.

Adorno poses a dichotomy between the affirmative and distractive ideological functions of music. The commodification of music reflects the latter. The audience has no deep relation to the object: music and lyrics of a hit-song are standardised to the point at which all personal experience of music is vulgarised (Adorno, 1991: pp. 27, 36 and 43). A 'worn out', 'decomposed' cultural product is considered 'out of fashion' once its potential market interest is exhausted, making space for the exploitation of a new product. Advertising new music releases to the point of saturation resembles this 'wearing out'

process. The 'finishing touch' in this case is the moment when the most remote potential listener is reached.

Bradley (1983) argues that Adorno oversimplified the flow of influences between producers and consumers. Negus (1999: pp. 52-53) explores the tension between consumption and production of musical genres, which are, as he argues, not static; he thus contests the concept of standardisation as a form of reductionism. Bradley (1983) insists that Adorno's 'patterns of standardisation' and the relative autonomy of art-music should not be understood as generalisations but only as part of concrete circumstances. He adds that both sides of the creative process should be analysed with regards to specific social positions of its agents. Negus, moreover, questions Adorno's assumptions based on the 'omnipotence' of culture industry. One such example relates to the market data meticulously collected by present day entertainment conglomerates (Negus, 1999: 61). Such data often cannot provide crucial answers to the question preoccupying management boards, i.e. why does the audience like or dislike a particular musical 'product'. This observation challenges Adorno's concept by which trends or fashions are *imposed on consuming audiences*. The issue of trend or genre is arguably a result of *mediation* – a two-way negotiation between corporations and consumers (Negus, 1999: pp. 61, 130, 151, 172).

Moreover, Bradley (1983) argues that Adorno, through his application of the concept of product-alienation to music, does no justice to his otherwise effective reasoning on the interaction between performers and audiences. Marx's (1973) concept of alienation relates to the labourers' inability to claim ownership or authorship of the products of their manual labour. In Adorno's view, the culture industry (e. g. a multinational record company) alienates the music-product from the audiences<sup>3</sup> by mass-producing it and thus abolishes the audiences' active participation. The audiences are left with the mere freedom to consume or abstain. This comes as a reward for the exchange value they have acquired through employment. The 'social code' and 'social reception of a musical content' could be understood as the very appearance of immediacy that Adorno examines.

---

<sup>3</sup> Had Adorno applied Marx's concept of alienation to songwriters rather than audiences, the analogy would have been both clear and correct.

In his analysis of the postulates on which Marxist political economy is based, Eco identifies the exchange value and human labour as interchangeable parts of the Marxist 'semiotic diagram' (1976: pp. 25-26). The salary, 'plus value', constitutes the gap between the human labour and exchange value stored up in commodities. Plus value is one of the main concepts in Marxist political economy, representing the social effects of profit-making in Capitalism. Eco points out that the contribution of such an economic model is the impact it makes on the understanding of cultural processes.

Adorno follows Marxist attempts at generalisation that are bound to fail; neglecting the concrete, which is its main methodological feature, Marxism tends to prescribe the course of action in overcoming social contradictions. This tendency of Marxist theory to generalise is its main aberration, analysis ceases and ideology takes over in the guise of scientific objectivity. Such is the problem with Adorno's interpretations of the inescapable indoctrination of consumers and the quasi-scientific classification of listeners.

The culture industry 'hammers' the concept of status quo into humans, while at the same time it propagates freedom and democracy: 'the consensus it propagates strengthens blind, opaque authority' (Adorno, 1991: 91). The culture industry proclaims conformity to the existing order. 'The power of the culture industry's ideology is such that conformity has replaced consciousness', he argues (1991: 90). The indoctrinated listener could not be 'freed' from a pre-determined social position. Such indoctrination is inescapable in a society ruled by the culture industry. Adorno appears to take a pessimistic stance on the possibility of an audience's critical participation in music markets but there is evidence to the contrary. Concluding that broadcast media serve the purpose of creating docile and uncritical audiences, Adorno anticipates an advent of a new interactive medium. Radio 'wears out' and 'overexposes' music, but 'clever fellows' might demand an 'improvisatory displacement of things' that will replace the ready-made material waiting to be switched on (Adorno, 1991: 52). Decades after this speculation was made, events have rewarded the logical consistency behind his analysis. This new, developing, interactive medium is already reshaping the nature of the culture industry. The perceived threat for the oligopoly which is the music industry today might come precisely from the 'clever fellows' utilising this 'improvisatory displacement', the Internet.

This analysis shows how Adorno's theorisation stretches over the boundaries of time and technology, proving a significant impact on contemporary cultural studies. However, a critical evaluation of his work needs to take the shortcomings of his analysis into consideration. Adorno's most problematic suggestions relate to the classification of listeners. He identified six types of listeners: 'the expert', 'musical person', 'culture-consumer', 'the emotional listener', 'resentment-listener' and the 'entertainment listener'.

The layman's appreciation of emotions and ideas in music stands inferior to the connoisseur's focus on harmonies, melodies and form. Marx ('Grundrisse', 1973) inverts Hegelian dialectics but continues to use its methodological core. Adorno is therefore not only conditioned by the Marxist interpretation of Hegelian dialectics; he directly adopts his hierarchy of pure form over conditional context, denotation over connotation. His classification of listeners is more intricate yet the 'expert-layman' dichotomy remains at its core.

Having offered this typology without serious empirical research, Adorno, nevertheless, admits that there is no proof that culture industry products have regressive affects on consumers (1991: 91). Expert listeners in Adorno's classification are highly aware of what they perceive. Listeners of such competence belong to an idealised model. He suggests they are no longer to be found even among composers, musicologists and classically trained musicians. No fieldwork of his supports this statement. The 'entertainment listener' is at the opposite end of Adorno's classification, 'an extreme case when music becomes a habit like smoking'. In Adorno's view, this is the lowest possible approach to music. It mirrors involuntary and compulsive consumption of commodities.

In its monopolistic phase, Adorno states, developed capitalist society is brought to a 'consumer revolution'. The proletarianisation of intellectual labour on the one hand, and an improved position of the working class on the other, were conditions that saw cultural commodities come into existence. From the presented framework it seems that the history of original art-music ended at some point in the mid-19 century, and that the consumer society is degenerating into intellectual numbness. The compulsory use of 'revolution' and 'proletarianisation' in Adorno's analysis shows that the structural appraisal of profit-making economic relations in culture-production has been replaced with an extra-structural ideological residue of Marxist discourse.

Adorno's theoretical limitations are further displayed in his general dismissal of popular music in the development of musical forms (1991: 51). He appropriately identifies the standardisation of forms in popular music<sup>4</sup>, evident in the packaging and mass-marketing of sound recordings. Nevertheless, his assertion that standardisation stifles creativity and individuality stands in direct contradiction to a comment he makes with regards to the consumption of commodities. Pleasure emancipated from exchange value takes on subversive features (Adorno, 1991: 34). Exchange value is circumvented in certain music subcultures and their identity constructs. Self-receptions of underground status shared within subcultures are structured through the opposition between underground and mainstream (Thornton, 1995: pp. 109-115). Once a musical act conforms to the mass market and the mass media, it loses the aura of immediacy, a privileged 'subcultural status' (Thornton, 1995: pp. 109, 121, 123-126, 128-129, 155). These rules of subcultural identity assertion stand in accord with Adorno's concept of 'vulgarisation' (1991: 36). Vulgarisation strips a musical work of its purity because it destroys spontaneity of performance. Spontaneity is incompatible with exchange value of cultural products. This is why some of the most influential music subcultures of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century have been structured around immediacy and subversion of their docile, conformist Other<sup>5</sup>.

While *Othering* is a notion seen as embedded in the fabric of social relations, the process itself depends on rules of recognition, status and social contest. The highly structured set of rules behind the formation of underground status and 'subcultural capital'<sup>6</sup> can hardly be considered spontaneous (Thornton: 1995, pp. 11-14 and 98-105). Thornton illustrates subcultural capital in its objectified form as consisting of carefully assembled record collections and fashionable haircuts. These (commodity) signifiers of subcultural prestige provide their owners with a conformation of membership.

---

<sup>4</sup> Kellner (1997: 28) observes the processes of standardisation imposed by the formative contents of music television and commercial radio. This is just one of the much disputed concepts introduced by Adorno that are still relevant, Kellner argues throughout the text.

<sup>5</sup> Since the terms of 'The Other', 'Otherness' and 'Othering' will be used frequently in this work, they need to be introduced. One of the most notable definitions of 'Otherness' is developed from the work of the influential French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan (1966, 1994). The child in its 'mirror stage' gains recognition of self by distinguishing itself from the immediate environment. Recognising that its parents are other, distinct beings from the child, prompts it to define the boundaries of its individual identity. This pattern repeats itself throughout life: arguably, social groups define themselves through the processes of Othering, whereby such processes seal the group's self-identification. The process ends with mutual recognition of groups and strata as the 'Other'.

<sup>6</sup> Thornton had based this concept on 'cultural capital' developed by Bourdieu (1991).

This statement stands in direct correlation with Adorno's comments on the fetish character of commodities. In his words, a Rolls Royce limousine becomes a point of religious awe among 'all men'. Going to a hairdresser or beautician is far more relevant to women as a rite than its end outcome. The jazz enthusiast revels in his 'inescapable' knowledge of the subject (Adorno, 1991: pp. 34-35). The subcultural capital is embodied, Thornton argues, in the appropriate use of slang, dance routines, yet "nothing depletes [it] more than... trying too hard" (Thornton, 1995: 12). 'Trying too hard' refers to a question of authenticity, a formulation which will be discussed in relation to subcultural identity and communication.

The degree of correlation between Thornton's and Adorno's analyses of the cultural role of commodities poses a couple of questions. One relates to the theoretical significance of Thornton's definition of subcultural capital, relevant to the discussion on subcultural communication. The other relates to Thornton's view of subcultural capital as being 'convertible' into economic capital (1991: 12). Thornton's argument is that the concepts of resistance and subversion have been overemphasised and over-politicised in Hebdige's work. She also considers Hebdige's approach to difference and resistance 'ahistorical' (Thornton, 1995: pp. 9, 93-94).

However, in the exploration of subcultural capital, she suggests that public-school educated youths would often adopt a working class accent in order to assert 'hipness' in subculture (Thornton, 1995: 13). This indicates a desirable identification of class position in relation to subcultural authenticity. It is certainly not an indicator that political and economic relations became irrelevant since Hebdige wrote his accounts of the Punk subculture. It was argued earlier that ideological prescriptions in Marxist theorisation had a negative impact on analytical rigour.

Marxian theory made its greatest contribution to academic work in the field of political economy, only when freed from ideological aberrations. In such works, especially in Gramsci's writings, social contestations are seen in a pragmatic, Machiavellian form. Gramsci observes a number of means that serve to allow achievement of the leading role in civil society. Hegemony of a social stratum transpires from economic dominance, which, in turn, is accomplished through cultural absorption of other strata (Gramsci, 1971: 260). Political and economic structures are, furthermore, governed by culture

(Gramsci, 1971: 276). Thus, if cultural capital converts into economic might (Thornton, 1995) then neither of the two can be detached from politics.

## 2.2 Hegemony, consensus, discourse and power

Adorno criticised the emergence of mass culture from the standpoint of political economy. While Adorno approaches popular culture from a critical position, Althusser's postulates are close to orthodox and prescriptive Marxist analysis<sup>7</sup>. In Althusser's work (1965) 'common sense' is a concept analogous to the processes that determine the construction of meaning. Common sense is a relevant concept because it suggests a way in which society conforms to the rule of dominant strata. The notion of meaning conditioned by social constructs is an essential part of the study of Belgrade's underground music scene. The definition of 'consensus' in Gramsci's work is similar to Althusser's concept of common sense. The former is much more relevant for the analysis of social change. Gramsci (1971) introduces a dynamic analysis of power relations between forces that affect social change. Dialectic 'manoeuvres' of such forces affect civil society through social stratification.

In Gramsci's view hegemony and consensus are the main characteristics of social stratification. They represent the main tactical stages in the contest for dominance in civil society. Resistance and subversion, propaganda and public relations, the media and social change, all correspond with the Gramscian concept of social stratification. According to Gramsci, the norms of consensus are constantly changing. Social strata form structured relationships; however, their positions within the structure are not fixed. Althusser's concept of hegemony is static. It is seen as an outcome of dominance: hegemony imposes the rules of common sense. The advantage of Gramsci's analysis is its dynamic approach: consensus is the outcome of social stratification as well as its main driving force. Hegemonic practices depict a drive toward social dominance; consensus is seen as both method and outcome.

---

<sup>7</sup> Svensson (2001: 10) makes a crude error stating that "Althusserian thoughts [were] subsequently developed by Gramsci". Gramsci died in prison during Mussolini's rule; Althusser wrote his most notable texts in the Sixties. However, this material error indicates a more significant reading. Svensson clearly assumes that Althusser precedes Gramsci, *because the latter had far more developed theoretical concepts than the former*.



These concepts contrast with discursive exercise of power through the 'Panopticon': 'surveillance', 'delinquentisation' and 'normalisation' (Foucault, 1980: pp. 70-72, 107; Foucault and Rabinow, 1984). Foucault's work focuses on 'microscopic' historical developments while methodologically opposing the concepts of political economy as unjustifiable generalisations. Foucault dismisses the proposition that economic power-relations lay at the foundation of social conduct. He sees social structures as complex 'surveillance systems' whose primary interests lay in the processes of 'normalisation'. There is a significant theoretical correspondence between Gramsci and Foucault.

Gramsci addressed social change through the concepts of consensus and hegemony. These notions provide effective analysis of social stratification and resistance through subversion. Propaganda, advertising, mass media and many of modern society's other processes lend themselves to exploration if consensus and hegemony are appropriately applied. Foucault's theoretical approach opposes Marxian generalisations and focuses on microscopic developments and social relations. His unusual readings of social structures as subtle 'surveillance systems' and interest in 'normalisation' processes as a power-exercise of societies over marginalised groups, could be applied to the exploration of subcultures. Such surveillance systems are embedded in the very structure of society. There are several areas of correlation between Foucault and Gramsci's analyses.

The first salient similarity is their almost identical approach to qualitative historical change. While Gramsci (1971: 222) talks of passages through innovations, to new, revolutionary forms of society, Foucault discusses discontinuities and their historical impact on new forms of knowledge and social organisation (Foucault, 1980: pp. 84-85; 1984, pp. 53-54; Foucault and Rabinow, 1984: pp. 253-254). The second significant correspondence between Foucault and Gramsci's theoretical approaches relates to the examination of the concrete. This stems directly from how both see the genealogy of revolutionary changes. While Gramsci sees the term predominantly within its social connotations, Foucault analyses technical innovations within their historical contexts. In one such example he does this with reference to the invention of the chimney and its importance in the development of human social organisations (1984: pp. 253-254). In other cases he refers to other uses of space as structured forms of power exercise.

Both Gramsci and Foucault stress the inappropriateness of generalisations in the analysis of historical developments. Gramsci (1971, 241) refers to the theoretical weakness of prescriptive Marxist concepts in a way very similar to Foucault's questioning of the 'verifiable procedures' of Marxism (1980: 85). Both authors question the 'scientific' notion; they occasionally use strikingly similar terms. Gramsci insists that every set of real events needs to be analysed in its "individualised", "almost 'unique'" form (1971: pp. 215, 217, 231, 241). Foucault discusses the "local" and the "discontinuous" when referring to the same concepts (1980: pp. 81, 84-85, 102), while the term "concrete multiplicity of facts" appears with reference to "genealogy" (1980: pp. 84, 87). The similarity becomes more significant when Gramsci (1971: 221) talks of 'molecular processes' and Foucault refers to 'micro-mechanisms' of power (1980: 101).

The third correlation between Foucault and Gramsci relates to links between politics and military practice. Foucault (1980: 90) inverts Von Clausewitz's famous maxim by stating that politics are a continuation of war by other means. Foucault sees social relations of power in terms of struggle, conflict, and war. Politics exercises the protection of the disequilibrium of forces displayed in war. Conflicts waged for power in 'civil peace' are contests of strength related to positions attained by factions through episodes and displacements (Foucault 1980: 91), akin to Gramscian 'war of manoeuvre' of guerrilla forces (Gramsci, 1971: 231), which are intermediate stages of political contestation.

Foucault (1980: pp. 85, 1984: 54) focuses on micro-events and discontinuities in development, "hastenings in evolution". Gramsci differs in that his focus is on 'trench warfare' within civil society's superstructures. While recognising that Ghandi's passive resistance occasionally takes the form of underground warfare, he sees this form of political struggle as yet another example of the *war of position* (Gramsci, 1971). The common feature between Foucault and Gramsci in this respect is that social structures are seen as forces in combat. The question is not one of legitimacy and illegitimacy but of struggle and submission (Foucault, 1980: 92). Foucault further rejects the idea that any given order of things would be axiomatically equated with 'liberation' while other forms of social conduct are reduced to 'oppression'. Possibilities of disobedience are always present while nothing liberates by its very nature (Foucault and Rabinow, 1984: 61). Functionally, he concludes, liberty is a

practice, and is therefore conditioned and limited by its discursive presuppositions within a concrete setting.

The fourth set of links between Foucault and Gramsci relates to notions of discourse and consensus. These are introduced through Foucauldian concepts of surveillance and control, leading the discussion into relations of power in discourse (Foucault, 1984) and further into the Gramscian notion of consensus (Gramsci, 1971). Space determines all forms of human relations and is instrumental in any exercise of power (Foucault and Rabinow, 1984). Allocation of people in space serves to channel and code the circulation of relations between them. Foucault makes this statement in the interview with Rabinow (1984, p. 253), bringing his analysis close to one of semiotics ('coded relations of power'). However, in light of his conceptualisations of social contests as akin to military battle, Foucault sharply criticises semiotics on several occasions. Reality of conflict, he argues, is reduced to a 'calm Platonic dialogue' (Foucault, 1984: 57). The history that determines the lives of individuals cannot be seen as a construct of meaning but as a result of power-exercise. He blames semiotic and dialectic theorisations for averting the grim reality of power play.

The social control applied to marginalised groups in society is read from spatial organisations that Foucault identifies with the 'Panopticon'. Foucault (1980: pp. 70-72, 1984, 217) sees the Panopticon as the theme encompassing "surveillance and observation, security and knowledge, individualisation and totalisation, isolation and transparency". Civil, military and penal architecture reveal the past changes within the social structure and its established networks. Foucault rejects generalisability of scientific findings on numerous occasions, but the concept of Panopticon lends itself to the way in which processes of 'normalisation' are applied outside penal institutions. Spatial relations reproduce social hierarchies<sup>8</sup>.

Spatial relations recreate the coding of social structures; social structures live and relate to physical structures. Movements in music could be abstracted as

---

<sup>8</sup> Bentham's 'Panopticon' is here freed from its circular form. Not just the insides of modern prisons (or traditionally styled student lodgings, with a central courtyard resembling this structural solution) count in this proposition. Networks of society live through a structure. If the Panopticon has a circular structure, this in no way means that spatial aspects of unveiling covert and personal actions (surveillance) in society had to be attached to this circular form. Radial and semi-stable structures can be found in urban society, rather than the concentric circle structures of conservative power. Some of the structure is revealed, says Foucault (1980), in architecture and urban composition.

amorphous parts of social architecture. Furthermore, they are 'non-necessary', yet mostly voluntary articulations of power-relations in society (Hall, 1980a, 1986, and 1996). However amorphous an underground music network may be, it remains linked with the spatial, as well as the architecture of power. It does so through relations, events, and information exchange. It could therefore be argued that the radically new forms in both popular and high culture come to appearance through a relatively fluid and mobile form of communication, such as music. Music movements are also subjected to observation of their dominant structures of social conduct.

Functional spaces associated with marginal cultural practices are observed more easily when they purport to remain hidden. This apparent paradox is based on Foucauldian surveillance developed from his exploration of the Panopticon. It allows the researcher to examine the 'capillary' path of power in its local forms and institutions (Foucault, 1980: 96). It will be seen in this study that the importance of power-relations in the Belgrade underground music scene is twofold. On a societal level, they are an inextricable part of the social contract; on an economic level, they are affected by the economic aspects of power exercise in Serbian society, feeding their influence back into the distribution of cultural goods. This economic impact of the Belgrade underground music scene and its independent production is microscopic but not insignificant. The 'capillary' (Foucault), 'molecular' (Gramsci) exchanges of power are an essential and organic part of social contests and should not be neglected. Indeed, both authors recognise the importance of discourse in society, though their terminology differs in this respect too. Through the exploration of Adorno's work it was already seen that music could not be seen in isolation from the social conditions in which it is produced, distributed, performed and listened to. This makes music a phenomenon of multiple layers one of which is its discursive role.

Foucault seeks the implicit function of discourse, leaving the analysis of its 'texts' to semiotics and focusing on the techniques and tactics of discourse. He is interested in the discursive regime; 'the effects of power peculiar to the play of statements' (Foucault, 1984: 55). His main focus is on the disciplinary forms of power to which even the forms of scientific knowledge are subjected - this becomes evident in the incidents of 'insurrection of subjugated knowledges' (Foucault, 1980: 81). Disciplines, being the principal bearers of power in modern society, have their own discourse, engendered in the apparatuses of knowledge (Foucault, 1980: 106). The code that characterises

this relationship between knowledge and power is one of normalisation. This exploration stands in close relationship with Gramsci's understanding of the role of consensus. He relates the 'art of governing men' to their 'permanent consent', this consent being organised around the 'educational' role of the State (Gramsci, 1971: pp. 249, 259).

Recognising that the different terms, 'consent' and 'education' (Gramsci) and 'discourse' and 'normalisation' (Foucault) act as disparate signifiers of the same signified is one of the contributions to semiotics of the reflective aspects of this Literature Review. However, as the methodological discussion will reveal (Chapter 3), Foucauldian critique of knowledge-systems should be applied to semiotics as well. Gramsci's and Foucault's explorations of discourse/consensus, both implying that culture is conditioned on power, share with semiotics the notion that communication cannot be seen outside its specific social context.

The advantage of the approaches developed by Gramsci and Foucault is that they do not attempt to claim that their analyses should be seen as scientific. On the other hand, the complex, over-signified diagrams that Eco (1976), Barthes (1977) and Tagg (1980, 2000) tend to use in their structural analyses indicate the claim to the 'scientific'. The other advantage of Gramsci and Foucault is that they are able to extract the principles by which dominant discourses are formed and exercised while still focusing on the concrete. This makes their analysis highly effective. Discourses, in Foucault's view, permeate society through capillary forms of power-exercise, while Gramsci sees consensus as a result of cultural assimilation of subordinate strata to the values and practices of the dominant groups in society.

This difference in the exploration of the same phenomena reveals the fact that Gramsci's work is conditioned on his principally dialectic approach to socio-economic analysis of historical developments; abandoning dialectics, Foucault's analysis is better equipped for the dynamic explorations of small-scale relations of power. Reading Foucault's work reveals a methodologically consistent development of his concepts and it is difficult to find flaws in his theorisation. However, although he consistently criticises interpretation in social sciences and insists on the empirical, there is little evidence of empiricism in his work. His method is consistent in its eclectic nature. It could be noted that, by arguing against generalisations central to empiricism, while disapproving of interpretative methods of social sciences, Foucault leaves

himself in the 'no man's land' between paradigms. He denies being associated with 'discontinuity' (Foucault and Rabinow, 1984: pp. 53-54) while the most advanced elements of his analysis are focusing on the discontinuities in historical development and singularities in society.

However, Foucault describes the solution to these epistemological problems as relating to the 'ascending' analysis of the 'capillary' forms of power (Foucault, 1980: 96-99). While power-relations are essential for the analysis of the forms of discursive practice conducted in the study of Belgrade underground music and its independent production, the author does not fully subscribe to Foucault's comments (1984, pp. 56-57) on semiotics as unfit for the analysis of events. It will be seen that the structures of meaning do not contradict but rather complement Foucauldian analysis of the role of music in Serbian urban society. Thus a wider theoretical model will be adopted in Chapter 3 to include the relevant approaches of Gramsci and Foucault to social frictions while respecting the need to explore communicational patterns<sup>9</sup>.

The full relevance of the work of the two authors will become evident in this study. Gramsci stated that the fundamental forces of social strata, interest groups and their alliances, form the equilibrium at the advent of a new social paradigm. This equilibrium is not seen as the only or main condition of an intervention introducing a new social form. New social structures are established through sets of contradictions between, and within social strata. These contradictions have to become unbearable to all of the actors and forces involved so that they set the conditions for social change. The principle hidden behind a Caesarist intervention is the one of consensus. The tendency towards social change, regardless of whether it is embodied in one person or a coalition government is visible through compromise. This compromise forms the unstable equilibrium that has to be overcome (Gramsci, 1971: 220).

The equilibrium established in such a way rests upon the consensus between the contrasting interests of social forces involved. This compromise is maintained throughout the period of illusory stability. Positions of social strata are re-asserted time and time again until one of them prevails. The Caesarist action ends the unstable equilibrium of social forces. The consensus that is

---

<sup>9</sup> Thus the relevance of Hall's Theory of Articulation (Hall, 1980a, 1980b; Hanczor, 1997; Trimbur, 1997) and Kellner's (1997) calls for transdisciplinary analysis.

thus established is formulated during the organic crisis of society preceding it. The set of conditions on which social consensus is based is what Althusser (1965) refers to as 'overdetermination'. Consensus need not be acquired from all of the participating social strata<sup>10</sup>. Hegemony represents the social and cultural leadership exercised by an oligarchy, class, or class alliance. It is established through a combination of consensus and coercion. This coercion can have various guises. It takes the forms of control over the means of production (Marx, 1973) and surveillance (to which Foucault refers). Hegemony could be imposed brutally, through judiciary and executive power combined with 'arbitrary actions on the part of the police' (Gramsci, 1971: 246).

The form of hegemony that is considered in the development of Belgrade's historical underground music scenes is not the one expressed through mere physical coercion. However, 'arbitrary police actions' are relevant in the case considered in this study. This is supported by a number of accounts of the social change in Serbia in the 1990s (Collin, 2001, Glenny, 1996, Gordy, 1999 and 2001, Silber and Little, 1995, Kronja, 2001). Symbolic forms of resistance to hegemonic practices are akin to the 'episodes' (Foucault) in 'guerrilla warfare' (Gramsci). The Belgrade underground music scene has acted as one of the progressive catalysts in social change in Serbia while the wider strata were still passive and demoralised, referring to the metaphor Gramsci used in relation to partisan warfare (1971: 231). Developments of dominant cultural forms in recent Serbian history are addressed in the socio-historical analysis in Chapter 4. The concepts on which the social role and determined position of the Belgrade underground music scene were based during the past decade will be seen as deeply rooted in the concrete circumstances of social and cultural crisis in former Yugoslavia under its Communist and post-communist regimes.

The analyses of Jaksic (1994, 1995), Kronja (2001), Madzar (1994), Novakovic (1994), Stojanovic (2001b) and others, although belonging to the realm of political economy in a broader sense, do not form theoretical and methodological contributions of the scale and significance of Gramsci's work. Nevertheless, they form a significant source of accounts of the various aspects of social, economic and cultural aspects of the organic crisis of late Yugoslav society. These works are drawn upon in Chapter 4, placing Belgrade underground music in its social and historical context. Gramsci's

---

<sup>10</sup> The history of former Yugoslavia provides a vivid example of this.

approach to contestations of power during the crisis in civil society provides a relevant model for the understanding of the rise of chauvinist oligarchies during the break-up of Yugoslavia. More significantly, it provides a genealogy of the cultural practices that have supported the rise of these undemocratic regimes. Under the guise of national liberation and tackling social injustice, cultural forms that have helped suppress freedom of speech throughout former Yugoslavia were instrumental in providing the 'educational' support for the regimes' coercion.

The case of underground music in Belgrade cannot be seen only with regards to the choice of lifestyle and stylistic diversity. It will be argued that ideological bias of the Serbian oligarchy ousted in October 2000 has roots in its dominant economic position that could only be maintained through a combination of consensus and coercion. In this respect, marginalised groups represented in the Belgrade underground music scene have to be seen as conditioned and constrained by the circumstances inherited from the past and imposed on them as a result of hegemonic practices. Without disregarding the contributions that Thornton makes to the explorations of 'mainstream' in music and the media, I will argue that they form a specific case that applies to the concrete circumstances she has analysed in her study. While Adorno focuses on politico-economic factors and, admittedly, makes an error of generalisation, Gramsci's work, though not related to cultural studies per se, provides a strong framework for placing concrete cases within a wider social environment.

Foucault makes numerous references to the way forms of expression are conditional on discourse, which is in turn defined by the exercise of power. The theoretical advantages of Gramsci's work could also be seen in this light. The fact that his most developed works were written under direct surveillance had taken them outside of the most immediate discursive power relations at the time of their inception. Works of different theoreticians can be seen in the light of power relations that have shaped them. In this study, such an approach especially applies to the accounts that purport to be 'factual' documents of events. Thus Foucault's approach to discourse as practice creates significant methodological implications that spread from identifying the power relations in a particular setting within a wider structure (discussed in Chapter 5) to the discursive conditioning of the notions of authenticity (explored in Chapter 7).



### 2.3 Local music scenes within the global culture industry

The Belgrade scene and the independent music business associated with it appear insignificant within the context of global culture industry. This study will consult some relevant theoretical accounts in relation to cultural globalisation. Levinson (1997) and Negus (1999) critically evaluate marketing practices in multinational corporate media, and it will be contrasted with other relevant approaches to power structures in culture production. A similar distinction will apply to other analyses of local/global dichotomy (e.g. Kahn-Harris, 2000; Levy, 1992; Maas and Reszel, 1998; Rutten, 1991, 1993; Wallis and Malm, 1983, 1984; Wicke and Shepherd, 1993).

Levinson (1997) observes MTV's recent global strategy in penetrating and securing new local markets. He takes the examples of Latin America and East Asia, showing that MTV's regard for regional diversity had helped it shape its programme policy to accommodate cultural specificities of these new markets while still retaining its core corporate image. In a similar manner, Negus (1999) describes how Latin-American musical genres, most notably Salsa, found their place in the US, and other national markets around the world. This pragmatic reasoning is in line with the arguments of some writers that refer to the practices identifiable with the positive effects of globalisation (Hannerz, 1996; Mazarr, 1996; Rothkop, 1997; White, 2001). Opinions on globalisation, ranging from strongly in favour (Rothkop, 1997) to moderately critical (Mazarr, 1996) clearly conveys the theoretical diversity between these authors.

Hannerz (1996) states that there is widespread evidence to the decline of nationhood in favour of new, 'transnational' identities introduced and reproduced through economic and cultural globalisation. One of the proofs of that trend is, he argues, the increasing number of academic texts dealing with nationalism and nationhood. National identity in such treatise is seen as an anomaly of modernity. One of the most notable examples of this, referred to in Hannerz's book "Transnational Connections", is the work of Benedict Anderson. Anderson argues that the emergence of nationalism came as a result of several intertwining processes related to technology, social organisation and 'particular meaningful forms' (Hannerz, 1996: 20).

National identity is seen as imagined, limited, and sovereign. Moreover, the members of a nation imagine it as a horizontal and not hierarchical community

(Anderson, 1991: pp. 6-7). A nation is imagined and not concrete, Anderson states, because it goes beyond the immediate, face-to-face communication. It is likely that even in the smallest of nations, their members never get to know all of their compatriots. Wherever such a construct of identity exists, the sense of nationhood will arise. An imagined sense of kinship, whether justified or not, could be "indefinitely stretchable". A nation is limited, because even the most powerful of nationalisms do not have an ambition of encompassing the whole humankind (as opposed to, for example, Mediaeval Christendom that imagined a stage at which the whole world would become Christian (Anderson, 1991: 7). Although the limits of a nation are stretchable, they also are finite. The nation is defined and limited by a conceptual boundary, beyond which stand other imagined communities of nations.

Anderson argues that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, although it claims historical legitimacy by reinventing the genealogy of a nation and extrapolating its origins back into time. Such practices represent good examples of essentialism. Essentialism breeds political power in nationalist discourses, in spite of their philosophical incoherence (Anderson, 1991: 5)<sup>11</sup>. The modern nation is imagined as sovereign: its philosophical foundations lay in the Enlightenment, the historical epoch characterised by revolutions and the decline of political and economic powers of the Monarchy and the Church (Anderson, 1991: 7). Thus the cultural roots of nationalism lay in the political economy of early modernity. One of the main means by which nationalist discourse was disseminated was the development of the commodified press. Anderson concludes that nationhood is structured as an imaginary community because, regardless of gross political and economic inequalities existing in every nation-state, there is a sense of comradeship and a shared destiny. Such sense of common identity was once reproduced by printed communication, from press to literature.

The press and other media are instrumental in dissolving the sense of nationhood during the present 'interregnum' between the epoch of the nation-state and the early stages of cultural globalisation (Kellner, 1997: 17). Hannerz argues that cable and satellite television act as the formative forces of the 'Global Ecumene' (1996: pp. 21, 23). The latter is constructed as a new form of imagined community. Drawing on Anderson's concepts of identity, Hannerz argues that all communities (and not only nations) are imagined.

---

<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, Anderson does not dispute the ethnic origins of language.

Adherents of new youth styles (e.g. musical genres mass-promoted through the media) represent a new, global, form of imagined communities (Hannerz, 1996: 90). Kellner (1997: 15) suggests that in spite of diversification of youth music styles, the seemingly inclusive 'global postmodern' (concept attributed to Hall) operates under the control of transnational corporations.

Kellner states that the cultural diversity of Hall's global postmodern remains a mere appearance and not fact. He further argues that the apparent openness of global media corporations towards marginal discourses conceals new forms of hegemonic homogenisation of culture. This comes as a result of the restrictive control that multinational entertainment companies impose on the content of cultural products based on marginal, 'pluralist' discourses (Kellner, 1997: pp. 14-17). He discusses the moral and aesthetic codes developed in Hollywood between 1934<sup>12</sup> and the present. In relation the (un)acceptable contents in culture production, such codes transform over time. Kellner links the change in television discourse to the political economy of sign-production in the culture industry.

While criticising Hall's recent reluctance to fully include political economy in his analysis of popular culture, Kellner recognises the methodological contribution to textual analysis outlined in Hall's seminal article, "Encoding/Decoding" (Hall, 1980b). Levinson's text on MTV (1997) provides other examples of diversification in global media that result in greater control of their content. Levinson (1997) and Kellner (1997) observed the rise of MTV Latino during the mid-Nineties. One of its promotional practices was to short-circuit the local differences in Hispanic cultures and amalgamate them with cultural references to the English-speaking world<sup>13</sup>. Thus Kellner argues that cultural constructs cannot be successfully read without the help of semiotic analysis of the concrete. Objects and not only practices reveal the constructs of meaning and identity.

---

<sup>12</sup> The year in which censorship was formally imposed on problematic topics in Hollywood production. Such contents included sex, drugs, forms of inequality and moral ambiguity of narratives.

<sup>13</sup> A musical genre represented by the Argentinian band 'Cadillacs' was coined 'Coolismo' in order to encompass all the different names a crossover between Rock, reggae, salsa and samba would have across Latin America (Levinson, 1997). 'Coolismo' is a Hispanicised version of the term 'cool', connoting subcultural membership (or a form of 'subcultural capital', as Thornton would define such a concept). Kellner (1997) observes the phrase 'chequenos' which exists neither in English nor Spanish but indicates to a viewer that it might mean 'check us out'.

New forms of political allegiance are emerging at the present, based on common economic interest (Hannerz, 1996: 90). One such example is the notion of 'Europeanness' that stands in dialectic relationship with the preservation of national identity among the citizens of EU states. Globalisation results in the tendency to abandon old cultural forms: this process is frequently a voluntary one. Mourning over diversity lost in such a manner Hannerz sees as 'self indulgent' (Hannerz, 1996: 61). If this line of argument is to be pursued, the suggestions made by Rothkop (1997) might appear plausible. This US policy-maker writes in favour of cultural imperialism as a force that will eventually resolve the roots of conflict - ethnic, religious and the conflict between 'cultural cousins' (Rothkop, 1997: 2). He states that the intermediate stage of globalisation will safely lead into multiculturalism. Using the recent examples of EU, South Africa, India and the USA (Rothkop, 1997: 3), his optimistic picture of cultural amalgamation represents the opposite pole of Kellner's (1997) and Schiller's (1998) arguments.

Rothkop sees the exposure to different cultural stimuli as a progressive trend ("Russian viewers are hooked on Latin soap operas"). He sees the cultural protectionism of some governments as regressive, using the metaphor of 'commanding the waves to flow backward' (Rothkop, 1997: 4)<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, White (2001: 4) sees the theory of cultural imperialism as methodologically flawed and factually inconsistent. On the other hand, one of the known critics of globalisation, Herbert Schiller (1998) criticises Rothkop's text cited above as an example of hegemonic policy-making. Presented as a major theorist of cultural imperialism and a critic of globalisation, Schiller draws a pessimistic picture of contemporary media in an interview conducted by Geert Lovink (1997)<sup>15</sup>. The main shortcoming of Rothkop's and Schiller's opposing views is their politically oriented bias<sup>16</sup>.

Mazarr's (1996) review of theoretical approaches to cultural homogenisation accompanying globalisation bears two points of special significance. First,

---

<sup>14</sup> Rothkop explicitly refers to France and Canada. In the case of the latter such policies are likely to be referring to French-speaking Quebec.

<sup>15</sup> It must be said that Lovink's introduction to the interview is poorly written, revealing a lack of academic rigour. However, Lovink concisely introduces the reader to the potential flaws of Schiller's analysis, embedded in left-wing bias.

<sup>16</sup> The two texts belong to the wider range of treatise on opportunities, threats and challenges of globalisation. Discursive analysis of both articles, relating the text to context through the means of political economy, reveals a lack of analytical rigour characteristic of Public Relations statements. The method adopted from the approach suggested by Kellner (1997: pp. 19-25).

culture is increasingly becoming an important aspect of international relations. Secondly, the transition to an age of homogenised world culture is burdened with risk. The ease with which information exchange affects different societies around the world leads to occasional adverse effects. These occur when not enough attention is paid to the preservation of cultural diversity. If such risks are not addressed appropriately, negative cultural responses could interrupt the transition to a common homogenised global culture (Mazarr, 1996). However, Mazarr and Hannerz share positive opinions on the eventual outcome of cultural globalisation, expecting it to evolve through a gradual diminishing of cultural differences.

Hannerz sees individuals as important agents of the new 'transnational' culture (1996: pp. 61-62, 90, 98-101, 103, 111). He refers to them as cosmopolitans, whose migrations are induced by the opportunities offered in the new global economy. However, uneven distributions of wealth and labour, closely connected to such migrations, pose a threat to the whole process of globalisation. 'Peripheral elites' fight the tendencies within their societies oriented towards the 'alien' global culture and its distant centres (Hannerz, 1996: 60). Perpetuating the notion of local authenticity, such elites represent the negative cultural responses Mazarr discusses, warning against the possible knock-on effect of the 'information age'<sup>17</sup> (1996). The migrants and the 'ones who stayed' (Hannerz, 1996: 100) negotiate the new, homogenised world culture. Hannerz (1996) argues that transnational communities spanning continents are based on small-scale relations forming, in aggregate, a global phenomenon, based on the diversity of its 'multi-local' constituent parts and is conditional on the distribution of meaning (Hannerz, 1996: 99).

The homogenised global culture becomes coherent through discursive activities of its cosmopolitan members (Hannerz, 1996: 111). Contrasted to Hannerz, whose principal interest lay in community aspects, Mazarr (1996) finds the sources of threats of cultural conflict in uneven distribution of wealth and labour. Both Hannerz and Mazarr take elements of political economy into account. However, using Kellner's terms (1997), their discussion seems to neglect the new hegemony of multinational corporations. Hannerz and Mazarr slide into prescriptive discourse, while the relationship between their texts and corporate policies remains inconclusive. Levinson's analysis of MTV and

---

<sup>17</sup> The 'knowledge society' opens opportunities to such individuals. Note that both terms 'knowledge society' and 'information age' could be further analysed in relation to Foucauldian concepts of Panopticism and capillary power.

Murdoch's channels in Asia epitomises Kellner's (1997: 16) observation that "difference sells". Hannerz sees some cosmopolitan approaches to 'alien' cultures as stage shows of openness ("some would eat cockroaches to prove the point, others only need eat escargots", 1996: 104).

Hannerz doubts the survival of local cultures in their present form; the overriding influence of new transnational communities would lead to global cultural homogenisation. One could become a cosmopolitan "without going away at all" (Hannerz, 1996: 111). Hannerz identifies youth music movements as an example of the integrative elements of transnational communities. Making a direct reference to Hannerz, Negus (1999: 171) takes an optimistic stance on this process: international success could be attained through the agency of enthusiastic members of such transnational communities. An other study suggests that the work of enthusiasts and small industry operators as a factor in international music promotion (Wallis and Malm, 1983, 1984). However, Slobin (1993: 61) is critical of Wallis' and Malm's approach, stating that the two authors treated 'whole societies as subcultures'. Moreover, he suggests that the industry 'plays with two partners – the consumer *and* the nation state' in 'small countries'.

Outlined in the examples of Jamaica, Tunisia and Sweden<sup>18</sup>, Wallis and Malm suggest that 'cultural nationalism' and internal political critique played a significant role in the development of local forms of transnational styles. However, in terms of authentic genre, Wallis and Malm point out that only Jamaican Reggae attained global success global measured in media presence and record sales. This, arguably, is inextricable from the concept of 'transculturation' defined by Wallis and Malm (1983: 24). Transculturation is a process of mutual influence between international (global) and local music forms; the process is facilitated by the transnational music industry. Slobin's analysis shares another 'optimistic' feature with Hannerz (1996). Globally successful 'outsiders' – musicians turned producers – 'scout' local talent and bring it to a global audience.

Defined as such, transculturation creates, and is created by Hannerz's 'cosmopolitan locals'. In relation to cosmopolitan locals, it is worth consideration whether adopting the transnational modes of expression could

---

<sup>18</sup> Burnett (1996) explores the case of Sweden but the examples he uses are now well out of date. Moreover, the researcher finds his work of marginal relevance to the focus of this study.

increase the chances of survival of local popular music in international markets. According to Rutten, the principal activity of the Dutch ('local') music industry in 1991 was to distribute and market the musical products imported from abroad, mainly from the USA (Rutten, 1991). Exploring the possible misunderstanding of the term 'local', he argues that 'local music' implies indigenous and static forms<sup>19</sup>. Thus Rutten suggests a different reading of 'local music' as dynamic and intertextual, inherently connected to all of the aspects of music production, promotion and distribution. Furthermore, local popular music is closely related to mass-communication and democracy and is not to be mistaken with narrow-minded cultural nationalism (Rutten, 1991: 295). Music corporations were investing in Dutch music production only for the purpose of local consumption. It was not supposed to be promoted in the international market. Major record companies preferred to distribute already successful acts from established industries in smaller national markets such as Holland. However, exploring a related case, Negus (1999) shows that Latin-American *Salsa* whose global success was conditional on initial growth in local markets. *Salsa* eventually overcame economic and social obstacles once it was legitimised through criteria of market eligibility.

Rutten (1991) analyses the IFPI<sup>20</sup> statistics in which live performances of music are seen as mere promotional tools for recordings. This resulted, he argues, in problematic policies: countries with small phonogram markets are not seen as important to the industry<sup>21</sup>, while major music industry circuits dismiss their potential for innovation. Consequently, whole sectors of cultural activity in a number of countries could disappear as a result of such conditions outlined above. Moreover, Rutten (1991) suggests that a competent analysis of any national music market has to include concrete structural factors affecting its operations. Rutten's argument relates back to another relevant concept developed by Wallis and Malm (1983, 1984). 'Mediazation' is the transformation of musical forms through the adaptation to the demands of recording technology and the media without which they cannot be disseminated in international markets. Though akin to Negus' (1999) concept

---

<sup>19</sup> Straw (1991) suggests that the term 'music community' implies restrictions similar to the ones that concern Rutten. A music community is limited to a geographical area and a specific cultural tradition. A music scene includes the notion of local while connoting stylistic openness. A music scene is not homogeneous; its members collaborate yet retain their individual forms of expression.

<sup>20</sup> IFPI = International Federation of the Phonographic Industry.

<sup>21</sup> Rutten (1991: 300) states that in respect of these criteria most countries in the world fall within this category.

of mediation (spatial, social and technological), mediatization could be detrimental to local music production. Wallis and Malm suggest that specific problems affecting music in small countries depend on economic, cultural and technological forces beyond their control, for these are related to policies implemented by the transnational music/media industry.

Addressing such policies, Rutten (1993) provides a historical overview of the development of the Dutch Rock Foundation (SPN). Discussing the problematic definitions of Rock music as a non-commercial art form, he argues that such an approach needs to be adapted to the reality of competition in the open market for musical products. Rutten (1993) suggests that government interventions could improve local production of popular music, on the condition that they comply with market criteria. Frith (1993) analyses such practices as forms of counter-hegemonic activities, arguing, however, that the SPN act as a state substitute for Artist and Repertoire departments of record companies. He suggests that such state-funded commercial enterprises seek musical acts with international marketing potential based on their 'difference'. Furthermore, Rutten (1993) criticised the SPN for adopting policies that are too similar to traditional government interference.

Nevertheless, 'Dutch experience' appears quite successful in comparison to some cases observed in former communist countries. Maas and Reszel (1998), Wicke and Shepherd (1993), Szemere (2001), Pilkington (1994), Levy (1992) and Mitchell (1992)<sup>22</sup> explore those cases in relation to political, cultural and market conditions. The transition between directed and free market needs to be addressed in order to further explore the local/global dichotomy. There are some similarities between the case of Hungary (Szemere, 2001) and former Yugoslavia. As will be seen, however, the differences that divide them are so significant that comparative analysis would not create significant results. This has led me to examine the case of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). The correspondence between the music scenes in eastern Germany and former Yugoslavia is limited by their concrete characteristics. Two features they share are their subversive

---

<sup>22</sup> While Mitchell provides some insight into the failure of Russian rockers to capture the attention of Western audiences, some elements of his argument reflect ingrained stereotypes and consequent dismissal of culture ex-communist countries. Failing to address the concrete and to examine each case on its own merit, Mitchell's analysis is confined to the analysis of political factors of cultural change in the Soviet bloc. Thus it does not lend itself to the exploration of the local/global dichotomy in the case of Belgrade.



roles during the Communist rule, and the management problems both face in economic transition.

The accounts provided by an East German Rocker (Tony Krahl) illustrate the inadequacy of the myth of 'GDR [Rock music] revival' (Maas and Reszel, 1998). Only three of the original East German Rock bands are presently active. An 'authentic' East German pop song cannot be written in retrospect, Krahl suggests. Commenting on the phenomenon of '*Ostalgie* partying'<sup>23</sup>, he labels it a mere 'carnival gag': no one truly wants to turn back time and return to the 'good old' days of repression (Maas and Reszel, 1998: 272). Similarly, Gordy (1999, 2001) refers to the escapist approach to music embraced by the youth of Belgrade during the 1990s<sup>24</sup>. One of the most frequent appearances of escapism was related to popular music from the 'better past'<sup>25</sup>, reconstructing and reinventing an idealised image of the country before its break-up. On the other hand, the concrete circumstances of the Serbian case point to another correspondence with the former GDR. After the reunification musicians from the former communist state were to 'perform music of any sort anywhere'; nevertheless, the local scene started losing its audiences, while clubs and venues were shut down<sup>26</sup> (Maas and Reszel, 1998: 269).

It is important to note another significant difference between the cases of former Yugoslavia and East Germany. Political and economic control of culture in Yugoslavia was far more sophisticated than in any of the countries of the Warsaw Pact. Vidić-Rasmunssen (1995) states that Yugoslav record companies, though founded by the State after 1949, had received little or no subsidy and were "economically self-generating" (1995: 246). Moreover, she argues that, from the early 1960s, Yugoslav cultural politics steered toward greater cultural integration with the West. National radio followed the policy of 'representative diversity', which meant that Western pop culture received significant media presence. Anglo-American music accounted for 50% of all national airplay by 1991 (Vidić-Rasmunssen, 1995). Moreover, Collin (2001),

---

<sup>23</sup> Wordplay coined from the German words for 'East' and 'nostalgia'.

<sup>24</sup> In global popular culture, the influence of alternative Rock music reached its peak by the early 1990s, coinciding chronologically with the beginning of war in Yugoslavia. Escapist glorification of the past, the so-called 'Yugo-nostalgia' is not merely a Serbian phenomenon; it appears to a lesser extent in other parts of former Yugoslavia. It is discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>25</sup> It is no coincidence that Petar Lukovic, a well-known Belgrade journalist gives this title to his book on the history of Yugoslav pop published at the time when the crisis in Yugoslavia was gaining momentum. This title articulated 'Yugo-nostalgic' escapism.

<sup>26</sup> Quoting Tony Krahl: "In Western Germany everything was four sizes larger and there was more money in the game" (Maas and Reszel, 1998: 275).

Glenny (1996), Gordy (1999, 2001) and Szemere (2001) referred to the thriving music scene in Belgrade during the Eighties. Exploring the hegemonic practices of the former Serbian regime in the Nineties, Kronja (2001) refers to aggressive promotion of a new, hybrid musical form. Known as 'Turbo-folk', it was based on the elements of Balkan, Mediterranean and Middle-Eastern folk traditions combined with contemporary Western pop<sup>27</sup>.

On the other hand, alternative forms of popular music - predominantly Punk-Rock<sup>28</sup> and post-Punk - served a subversive purpose in a manner similar to the one described by Krahl (Maas and Reszel, 1998). East Germany was 'overpoliticised': musicians' livelihood depended on political decisions (Maas and Reszel, 1998: 271). Wicke and Shepherd (1993) refer to the same phenomenon; 'The cabaret is dead', a song-statement by an East German band in 1987 addresses the failing relationship between the state bureaucracy and Rock musicians it tried to control<sup>29</sup>. Social criticism in East German Rock was concealed in double coding of musical and lyrical content (Maas and Reszel, 1998: 269; Wicke and Shepherd, 1993: 34). Wicke and Shepherd (1993: 35) argue that the oligarchy construed artificial 'abstract concepts' of authenticity in music, attempting to preclude the perceived threat of Western 'commercialism'.

In the case of Russia, this was ever more evident (Pilkington, 1994). The Soviet government exercised far greater political, social and economic control over cultural activity in comparison to any other country of the Bloc<sup>30</sup> (Pilkington, 1994: pp. 42, 44, 80, 84, 102-109, 113-116, 138-141, 182-187). She argues that youth movements in the Eastern Bloc were even more 'politicised' than the ones in the West. Communist control of the youth of Bulgaria seems as strict (Levy, 1992): the Beatles, seen as relatively 'benign' elsewhere in Eastern Europe, were considered 'degenerate'.

---

<sup>27</sup> However, Kronja shows little understanding of the social role of the Eighties' 'New Wave' in Serbia.

<sup>28</sup> While the case of Hungarian Punk was triggered by economic crisis (Bennett, 2001: 68), in the case of Yugoslavia it was the death of President Tito that created the opportunities for much more articulate critique expressed in Punk and New Wave movements (as will be seen in Chapter 4).

<sup>29</sup> Ideological presuppositions behind the government's ambivalent support for 'local', 'authentic' Rock musicians bred new contradictions that became unsustainable. The real processes of production create their own political economy, aside from the interventionist actions of the ideologised State (Wicke and Shepherd, 1993: 30).

<sup>30</sup> Which Yugoslavia left as early as 1948.

The Bulgarian media had shown open hostility to Rock; so did “the only concert agency and the only record company” (Levy, 1992: p. 211). A band called “Shtourtsite” (The Crickets) survived more than two decades of censorship, creating an authentic style, which combined “the beat” with an “original Bulgarian sound” (Levy, 1992: pp. 211-212)<sup>31</sup>. While the cases of USSR/Russia and Bulgaria are irrelevant for the study of (post)Yugoslav music scenes, some similarities to Hungarian underground music are worth mentioning (Szemere, 2001). This especially applies to Punk scenes in the latter two countries. However, differences outweigh the similarities, their respective paths of development arguably standing as ‘inversions’. A brief list of such inversions is presented in the following paragraph.

Stimulated by economic crisis and the loosening of political control of culture (Szemere, 2001: pp. 30-31), the universal Punk slogan ‘NO FUTURE’ signalled the change of musical expression in both Yugoslavia and Hungary. However, respective geopolitical developments in the two countries were notably different even before the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia. While Hungarian mass media shunned alternative developments in popular culture, their counterparts in Serbia and Yugoslavia were far more receptive. Moreover, while there was no professional Rock criticism in Hungary (Szemere, 2001: 33), a group of Belgrade authors released a book on Yugoslav New Wave (titled ‘Drugom Stranom’ – ‘On the Other Side’). Szemere states that the subcultural style in Hungary remained inarticulate. This was not the case in Yugoslavia, where the phenomenon was so well developed that this prompted the publication of books, journals, magazines, academic articles, as well as specialised TV programmes. The business infrastructure of Rock was far more developed in Yugoslavia than in Hungary, as Szemere accounts (2001: pp. 33-34, 222-223). Significantly, Serbians faced geopolitical isolation after 1990, while this was the time when the isolation Hungary ended. Finally, the intellectual, ideological and aesthetic foundations of Serbian Rock became far more important than ever before during Milosevic’s reign (Szemere, 2001: pp. 222-223).

In the study of the Belgrade underground music scene, authenticity is evaluated as a complex notion. On one level, it is conditional on the hybridity of musical genres heavily influenced by the cultural influences coming from

---

<sup>31</sup> Levy argues in favour of cultural hybridisation. Moreover, she suggests, the influences of a dominant culture assist cultural progress: “nothing is lost” in culture.

English-speaking countries. The music production in the United Kingdom and the US accounts for more than fifty per cent of the global market (IFPI Annual Reports, 2001, 2002 and 2003) the cultural influence coming from the two countries could be identified with global trends. In the light of these market estimates it becomes clear that any claim to authenticity of small national music scenes needs to be taken with caution. However, on the second level of theorisation, concrete circumstances influencing underground music scenes could be seen as discursively autonomous.

It will be argued that some 'misreadings' of the connotations of style imported into the Belgrade underground music scene induce independent developments of musical forms, creating new implicit meanings. Arguably, many involved in a small music market read 'authenticity' without recourse to the economic and cultural origins of adopted form of expression. Viewed from the 'metropolis', such local interpretations of style might appear both culturally and economically insignificant, as suggested by Rutten (1991). However, they could evolve into authentic articulations of cultural specificity within local contexts in which the effects of globalisation are reproduced. Hall (1986) analyses Rastafarianism and its claim to authenticity. Adopting the elements of dominant culture, its sign-production becomes communicable to outsiders. On the other hand, authentic codes of the Rastafarian subculture are articulated through historical contradictions that have affected its formation.

#### 2.4 Subcultural practices and communication in music scenes

Both Foucauldian and Gramscian approaches have been consulted in the studies of subculture (e.g. Becquer and Gatti, 1997; Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts, 1997; Gelder, 1997; Hall, 1980a; Hebdige, 1993, 1997; Lipsitz, 1997; Stallybrass and White, 1997; Tolson, 1997). The Birmingham Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) bases subcultural practices on notions of hegemony, resistance, delinquentisation and surveillance. Hebdige's (1993) approach to Punk leans towards post-structural semiotic theorisation. Nevertheless, he considers power-relations and resistance as defining elements of 'spectacular subcultures'<sup>32</sup>. Thornton (1995, 1997) dismisses the idea that sense of subcultural membership needs to be placed

---

<sup>32</sup> Although the term 'spectacular subcultures' remains in use, its original theoretical foundations are now scarcely recognised as relevant.

around rebellion and symbolic resistance. Her theoretical stance is not isolated in UK and US cultural studies<sup>33</sup> (Bennett, 2000, 2001; Muggleton, 2000; Miles, 2000). Thornton chooses to address the methodological problems of subculture research in terms of size, historical position, identity and narrow-scale power-exercise.

The study of Belgrade underground music scene adopts some elements of Thornton's work. This applies to the discussion on subcultural communication channels and the diversification of mainstream, which Thornton sees as a 'cluster of subcultures' rather than a monolithic phenomenon (Thornton, 1995: 109). She illustrates this finding through the examples of 'mainstream clubbing' related to dance venues owned by corporate leisure chains. Thornton argues that Mecca-Rank Leisure Corporation, commonly associated with mainstream clubbing had a significant role in the formation of several British youth subcultures in the past.

Her fieldwork research is based on ethnographic participant observation and conceptualised around the notions of gender, age and the elusive subcultural capital. Thornton almost fully dismisses the theorisations on politico-economic structuring of subcultures, considering such approaches generalised and ahistorical<sup>34</sup>. On the other hand, Kellner (1997) criticises approaches that fully disregard political economy. He employs critical evaluation of management practices in the media, arguing that they affect aesthetic preferences of consumers grouped around different lifestyles. Furthermore, Hall (1980b) argues that the transmission of meaning within the communication circuit depends on social articulations of emitters and receivers.

The notion of authenticity in the Belgrade underground music scene will be articulated from various respondents' receptions of musical style. All related forms of symbolic action will be explored within their concrete historical setting. Such reference to the use of music in a specified socio-political context indicates the importance of semiotics in this study. One of the main analytical models in Hebdige's 'Subculture: The Meaning of Style' (1993)

---

<sup>33</sup> There are fine nuances and points of disagreement. For example, Miles (2000) does not dismiss the possibility of corporate control of music products. Furthermore, Bennett (2000, 2001) disagrees with Thornton's conceptualization of subcultural heterogeneity of dance music scenes.

<sup>34</sup> However, Kellner (1997) and Miles (2000) enrich their arguments by analysing complex relationships between consumer choice and corporate interest.

adopts semiotics, focusing on the changing role of signifiers in subculture<sup>35</sup>. Hebdige addresses British youth subcultures through the analysis of 'floating signifiers' associated with the concept of 'polysemy'. He combines the Marxian approach to structures of class and ethnicity with the analysis of signifying practice in order to explore the ambiguous social connotations of spectacular subcultures.

Hebdige explains polysemy as the source of potential for 'infinite ranges of meaning' (Hebdige, 1993: 117). Therefore, elements of any discourse could be torn out of their original context and repositioned within any other discursive practice. Thus transformed, the very notion of meaning is questioned through deconstruction of signs and their connotations. Positioning determines meaning, and in polysemy neither is fixed. Signifiers and 'signifieds' are the two main constituent elements of semiotic methodology. The principles connecting signifiers to signifieds are referred to as 'langue', the intangible underlying structure of symbolic communication. In subculture, the language of signs could serve as a test of identity, membership and authenticity<sup>36</sup>. Moreover, the rules of coding evolve and change, shift or cease to apply.

In signifying practice, an object could be treated as a word within a statement. Examples of safety pins and dance practices as signifiers of Punk are but some of the elements that Hebdige considers in relation to 'bricolage'<sup>37</sup> (1993: 104). Some subcultures of spectacle (e.g. Punk) intentionally use visual signs in order to emphasise their Otherness. Moreover, as Frith (1996: 93) argues, "a... hard core [Punk] musician has to be 'outrageous' socially". Through the display of their own codes, they intentionally position themselves outside socially prescribed roles and options (Hebdige, 1993). The 'villainous clowns' of Punk had intentionally reduced to absurdity the very notion of appropriate dressing codes (Hebdige, 1993: pp. 87-88, 96-97).

Punk's perceived "working-classness" (Hebdige, 1993: pp. 121) was juxtaposed with other signifiers in order to cover the traces and prevent an outsider from putting it into an easily recognisable context. Rather, Punk represented a whole cluster of contemporary issues (Hebdige, 1993: 87).

---

<sup>35</sup> For example, Hebdige observes the perceived social and sexual deviance of Punks signalled through their unusual approach to fashion; the elements appropriated from Teddy boy subculture, combined with bondage-wear indicated the Punks' resentment towards normalisation.

<sup>36</sup> Shank (1994) talks of scenes as 'self-imposed minorities'.

<sup>37</sup> A term Hebdige borrowed from the cultural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss.

Bennett states (2001: 40) that the intellectualisation of authenticity in Rock genres indicated in Harker's work (1992) dismisses the tastes and practices of the working class traditionally more orientated towards 'commercial pop'. The formation of Punk was rooted in the concrete aspects of social and economic relations of the time in the United Kingdom in the latter part of the Seventies. While not dismissing the impact of economic decline in the formation of Punk, Bennett argues that a variety of sources dispute Hebdige's reading of this subculture as a working class phenomenon. Furthermore, its apparent links to anarchist ideology should not be taken seriously.

The connection that Thornton (1995: 13) makes between subcultural capital and the practice of adopting working class accents in pursuit of 'hipness' does not substantially differ from Hebdige's analysis of the use of similar signs in Punk. Some of the latter refer to class and others to lifestyle (e.g. 'kinkiness', Hebdige, 1993: 121). Subcultural capital as defined by Thornton (1995: pp. 11-14, 98-105), in respect of the use of slang or the possession of a record collection, especially of '(not) trying too hard' bares little difference from the rules of subcultural communication as described by Hebdige.

Alongside polysemy and signifying practice another concept Hebdige uses is especially relevant for the study of Belgrade underground music. This is the notion of 'bricolage', relating to improvised structures of meaning used without apparent premeditation. Acting as ad hoc responses to the environment, objects are re-positioned and thus assigned an unexpected meaning within a discourse (Hebdige, 1993: pp. 103-104). The relationships between signs and their meanings are loosely structured and subjected to constant modification through deconstruction. The changing meaning of style occurs most regularly in the informal modes of communication characterising music scenes and youth subcultures. Shank (1994: 120) suggests a "subjective, experiential difference between simply dancing and being in the scene". Hence the scene acts as a "signifying community, marked off from the surrounding world" (Shank, 1994: 122). The 'shocking' spectacle of the Other in subculture is conditional on concrete social conditions in which signifying practices take place.

In specific cases addressed by Thornton, politico-economic issues are of lesser significance than in the ones explored by Hebdige. This, however, does not justify outright dismissal of political economy. On the other hand, class

tension<sup>38</sup> in Marxian critique of culture is yet another concrete, and not generalisable, case. The main shortcoming of semiotics, criticised by Foucault in “Two Lectures” is the attempt at establishing a scientific system, i.e. a rigid structure that tends to fit the concrete into its presuppositions. The polysemic approach that Barthes (1977, 1993) adopts from Kristeva is sensitive to microscopic changes in narrow social groups instrumental in the formulation of meaning. Signifying practices generate ‘seemingly endless’ sets of meaning (Hebdige, 1993: 117). Only insiders are capable of understanding where and when, how and why does this slippage of signification end. However, the ‘concretisation’ of signs and their seemingly arbitrary use is not an exclusive invention of Punk.

At least two other 20<sup>th</sup> Century movements, Dada and Surrealism had used bricolage as a foundation of communicative practices. Hebdige refers to Breton’s<sup>39</sup> “The Crisis of the Object”. This text explores the method and purpose of collage and automatic writing, essential in the work of both Dadaists and Surrealists. Breton advocates the ‘total revolution’ of the object (Hebdige, 1993: 105). Furthermore, Duchamps<sup>40</sup> challenged the notions of ‘art’ and ‘use value’ by creating ‘ready-mades’: he tore everyday objects out of their utilitarian context and placed them in art galleries (Richter, 1966). Without guarantees of intent, signs become self-sufficient and their interplay turns into the purpose of the whole exercise (Hebdige, 1993: 127).

Today, ‘extramusical’<sup>41</sup> stylistic elements of Punk<sup>42</sup> are assimilated into the wider pop culture, just as Rock and roll became included into the mainstream before the inception of Punk Rock (Hebdige, 1993). The threat coming from the spectacle of the Other is defused once the floating signifiers that disorientate the normative readings of style are adopted into the mainstream (Hebdige, 1993: 126). Referring to Barthes (‘Mythologies’, 1972), Hebdige sees such incorporations of symbolic practices as a way to domesticate the alienated Other (1993: 126). Disturbing at first, the subversive objects originating from subcultural practice become trivialised when the main

---

<sup>38</sup> Specific implications of the term used here represent the frictions at the edges of strata, not ‘class’ as a reductionist concept.

<sup>39</sup> Andre Breton was one of the founders of the Surrealist art movement.

<sup>40</sup> One of the founders of Paris and New York Dada, Duchamps was one of the most influential 20<sup>th</sup> Century artists.

<sup>41</sup> Tagg (2000) uses the term to describe social connotations of musical genres.

<sup>42</sup> Marcus (2001) elaborates on the conceptual links between use of shock-effect in Punk and the French ‘Situationist’ art. The use of signs ‘abruptly’ juxtaposed outside their ‘normal’ context (e.g. the safety pin) is one of their common features.



streams of popular culture appropriate and use them in day-to-day communication. Regardless of the form in which a subversive practice is expressed - stage behaviour, clothing, film, visual art, or music - its destructive potential is no longer a threat to the established normative order.

Two journalists of the influential NME magazine pronounced “the death of youth cults” (Cigarettes, 1998; Saunderton, 1998) reflecting on the inclusion of manifold signs of diverse subcultures into the mainstream. From ‘deviant’ clothing incorporated into high street fashion to ‘aggressive’ music discords accepted in pop music, the former signifiers of subversive Otherness no longer induce alarming effects among the populace. The feature titled “Tribal Ungathering” (Cigarettes, 1998) indicates that the problem of terminology remains pertinent in writing on culture. The issue of terminology is a necessary part of rigour in academic research. Journalists are far less likely to comply with such rules; the two NME feature writers have used the term ‘tribe’ in its traditional anthropological context.

Bennett, however, writes on related phenomena indicating a far more complex reading of the terms ‘*tribus*’ and ‘*neo-tribes*’ (Bennett, 2000, 2001). His conceptualisation of changing urban dance scenes was developed from Mafesoli’s *tribus* (1996) and Hetherington’s (1992) understanding of *neo-tribes* (Bennett, 2001: pp. 79-84, 80-81). Bennett developed the concept of *neo-tribes* mainly in relation to urban dance music. Neo-tribes represent the temporality of loosely structured urban dance music events. The processes of othering still exist, but on a more sophisticated level than before (Bennett, 2001: pp. 80, 88-95). Neo-tribes indicate the change in consumer habits, whereby the notions of taste and style are not as clearly cut as before. Times change and what was once justifiably politicised (Hebdige, 1993) becomes a matter of ‘hipness’ (Thornton, 1995) in its own concrete temporal, spatial and discursive setting. ‘Difference sells’ in the present ‘interregnum’ (Kellner, 1997) and the multitude of musical genres available to the consumer public is arguably the evidence of this.

## 2.5 Managing cultural artefacts: a critical summary

This Section addresses discourse and practice in strategic management in music and the media as well as the role of social research in organisational theory. Levy, Alvesson and Willmott (2001) draw theoretical references from

several schools of thought, recognising Gramsci's historical materialist perspective as the most relevant reference in forming the analytical framework for critical evaluation of discourse and practice in strategic management. Levy *et al* also refer to Hall's concept of articulation as a significant contribution to Gramsci's critical exploration of social change. Seeing management strategies as conditional on both discursive and economic relations, Levy *et al* accordingly noted the relevance of Hall's analytical concepts<sup>43</sup>.

Levy *et al* show that, leaving behind the limitations of managerial discourse requires the use of methods derived from Foucault, Gramsci and Adorno. Based on the Frankfurt School's legacy, Critical Theory (CT) made a strong impact on the critique of strategic management<sup>44</sup> (Levy *et al*, 2001). There are notable points of correspondence between Levy *et al* and the theoretical implications of Kellner's (1997) text on contemporary issues in cultural studies. He states that the contributions of the Frankfurt School are currently under-represented in this theoretical area. However, Levy *et al* argue that Gramsci's and Hall's theorisation have greater relevance in critical management studies than CT<sup>45</sup>.

Levy *et al* made an overview of strategic management, criticising its prescriptive functionalist nature. They state that the dominant discourse in strategic management draws heavily from patriarchal concepts of power. Furthermore, practices and discourses in strategic management, they argue, systematically reproduce the privileged position of managers. They identify Porter's work as the most notable representation of the technocratic, prescriptive school of strategy that advocates 'rational' planning in

---

<sup>43</sup> The study of the Belgrade underground music scene is significantly affected by the methodological implications of Hall's Theory of Articulation, as will be seen in Chapter 3. Hanczor (1997), Kellner (1997), Trimbur (1997) and Levy *et al* (2001) provide relevant pointers for this study in justifying the methodological importance of Hall's work.

<sup>44</sup> Levy *et al* refer to the integration of economic and cultural production through the example of Disney-ABC corporation (2001: 16). Retail chains promote consumer products; these, in turn, promote the theme parks; the latter generate interest for television shows, which promotes the corporation. Similarly, Adorno finds that radio promotes musical products, i.e. recordings and consumer technology used for their reproduction, feeding back into the popularity of radio. The two statements (Disney-ABC CEO, 1999; Adorno, 1991), the former factual, the latter analytical show that Adorno's analysis of some aspects of mass culture are still relevant to a degree, in spite of undeniable shortcomings.

<sup>45</sup> Adorno abandons emancipatory practice and appears content with the analysis of the cultural impact of corporations on society. His concept of dominant ideology is out of balance: the dominated, 'docile' consumers (Adorno, 1991: 27) are denied any agency in this model (Levy *et al*, 2001: pp. 3, 12).

management. Porter is criticised by CT as neglecting the wider goals and values of organisations. He focuses on techniques rather than concrete contexts in which they are implemented (Levy *et al*, 2001). Even the theorists firmly positioned in the strategic (military) perspective are suspicious of the linear logic of Porter and his followers<sup>46</sup>.

The notion of manoeuvre in strategic management discourse differs from the one that Gramsci uses in his work, where military metaphors represent the contestations for power in civil society. On the other hand, organisational 'military' discourse eschews broader social and political structures, thus reconstructing managerial elitism (Levy *et al*, 2001: pp. 1-2). Furthermore, managerial discourse is widely adopted in non-profit organisations, education and other parts of the public sector. The capillary analysis of power, drawing from Foucault, is criticised in Levy *et al* as limited to the symbolic nature of managerial discourse rather than its instrumentality. While such criticism might apply to critical management theorists influenced by his work, Foucault did not discard instrumentality; his prime interest was in the concrete 'how' of power. Writers that combine CT and post-structuralism (Levy *et al*, 2001) deconstruct strategy as a rhetorical device (Booth, 2002) of organisational theory. He addresses its incoherence using Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK). However, collapsing the concrete aspects of management practice into *discursive analysis of discourse itself* could lead to ineffective reflexivity, curtailing power exercise.

Gramsci, on the other hand, sees the dialectic relationship between the social forces in constant flux. Domineering alliances of managerial elites are kept distracted by subordinate groups (e.g. consumer groups), which use their understanding of potential 'points of instability and leverage' (Levy *et al*, 2001: pp. 3, 16-18) in hegemonic alliances, e.g. corporations<sup>47</sup>. This is an example of Gramsci's 'war of position' applied to market economy. His concept of consensus (1971) is not merely a wilful subordination; it is based on a realistic assessment of power (Levy *et al*, 2001: 13). Strategy is the embodiment of

---

<sup>46</sup> Contemporary theorists of strategic management make repeated references to 'The Art of War' from the classical Chinese tradition, where the advice on military practice is expressed through proverbs, indicating the contradictory non-linear logic of warfare. Thus the 'art' and not the 'science' of war, Levy *et al* argue (2001: 5).

<sup>47</sup> Thus even the powerful oil companies have to negotiate their public relations strategies with the consumer public and pressure groups such as Greenpeace, making concessions and shifting the terrain from one contestation of commercial power to another (Levy *et al*, 2001: pp. 16-17).

power, integrating material and discursive practices, a linkage between capillary power (Foucault) and dynamic structural systems (Gramsci). This provides the researcher with the way to overcome the apparently unsolved problem of agency in Foucauldian analysis, criticised by Levy *et al* because his model abandons any possibility of insurrection (2001: 12).

Hall balances out the rigidity of CT and the post-structuralist 'slippage' by recognising that power persists on the margins. Media integration is not monolithic: marginal groups avoid futile 'frontal assaults' on dominant discursive structures (Levy *et al* 2001: 13). Articulation of meaning relates to political and economic structures, depending on the concrete circumstances. The configuration of relative positions, rather than possessing playing pieces in chess makes the difference between players (Levy *et al*, 2001: pp. 12-13). Long-term strategies of subordinate/marginal groups are co-ordinated across multiple bases of power, articulated together through Hall's 'non-deterministic' alliances (Trimbur, 1997: pp. 9-11). Exploiting present opportunities, they "challenge hegemonic thinking yet resonate sufficiently with extant cultural forms to mobilise support" (Levy *et al*, 2001: 14) through autonomous organisational structures formed on political, economic and discursive levels. Such economically autonomous structures could develop as independent media, record companies and other sub-corporate businesses.

Hesmondhalgh (1998) explores the business practices of independent record companies associated with the post-Punk label Rough Trade. As the music corporations only paid attention to clearly profitable acts, small companies like Rough Trade filled the market gap for marginal genres<sup>48</sup>. Hesmondhalgh (1998: pp. 255-256)<sup>49</sup> argues that their form of 'alternative media activism' introduced economic and aesthetic diversity into the industry in which corporations exercise strict division of labour through the hierarchies they command. Independent distribution networks supporting this parallel market were based on specialised record shops led by young entrepreneurs subscribing to countercultural discourses and ethics. Hesmondhalgh evaluates their effectiveness in introducing an alternative to standard practice in

---

<sup>48</sup> Major record corporations have acquired large distribution and retail chains during the 1970s thus advancing the processes of vertical integration. Little room was left in such distribution chains for alternative forms of popular music. A new segment of the market had thus emerged and small shops have started collaborating with independent distributors (Hesmondhalgh, 1998).

<sup>49</sup> This statement corresponds to Kellner's (1997) analysis of hegemonic practices in corporate production of culture.

entertainment corporations. Questioning Hesmondhalgh's concepts of 'democratisation', Negus (1999: pp. 34-35, 177) suggests that distribution deals and corporate takeovers led to the blurring of boundaries between the two business models, 'major' and 'independent'.

Yet in the EMI/Virgin takeover, 65% of Virgin's signed artists were 'dropped' by EMI (Negus, 1999: 37), a cost-cutting action resembling mass redundancies. However, there is clear evidence that the entertainment corporations adopted some practices from the independents. Thus 'risk-spreading' is addressed through genre diversification (Negus, 1999: pp. 47-48). Arguably, the music industry became more 'open to the margins' (Kellner, 1997) as a result of the past success of independent record companies (Hesmondhalgh, 1998: pp. 258, 271). Originating from micro-events, such organisations have a potential to make a lasting impact on the social and economic structure in which they operate. Shank (1994) suggests the term 'semiotic disruptions'. Encouraging new and radical signifying associations, a local scene could transform dominant cultural meanings within which it is nested. Similar developments will be analysed within the context of Belgrade music and media production.

The examples of government intervention in music show the potential pitfalls of placing the 'artistic' outside the 'commercial'. Furthermore, cultural globalisation affects small national music markets and local scenes, which increasingly depend on multinational corporations that hold dominant positions in international music markets. The focus of this study is not on traditional indigenous music but on the music production stylistically nested in transnational youth culture. The two examples indicate that small regional music productions could achieve best results by promoting their 'difference', articulated within the homogenising global culture. The representations of style in local music scenes are conditioned on social, historical, economic and discursive factors. Therefore, methodology of research has to address these varied factors, encompassing them through a single philosophical model. The ways in which this needs to be done will be explored in the next Chapter.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Methodology of Research**

The multidisciplinary study of Belgrade underground music scene is a complex one, requiring the deployment of various research paradigms. These are drawn from political economy, discourse analysis, semiotics and reflexive ethnomethodology. Thus in this study the author aims to present a credible, dependable and consistent account of youth subcultures and independent production of underground music by articulating the relationships between the named paradigms. In this endeavour, several methodological practices have to be joined into a complex multidisciplinary unity. Arguably, the existence of complex phenomena justifies such transdisciplinary<sup>1</sup> attempts in the applied field of cultural studies (Kellner, 1997).

The task of conducting a research project of this kind is difficult as some of the schools of thought suggested for this research are seemingly incompatible. Theoretical ruptures exist between historical materialist approaches in political economy and the more loosely structured, reflexive ethnomethodology; Foucauldian analysis of discourse and semiotics are similarly opposed to one another. Furthermore, Foucault seems to dismiss the structural analysis used in political economy as a source of misleading generalisations. Identity constructs, social change and power relations in practices related to culture production could be analysed separately, using any of the listed research paradigms. Regardless of this, a question of feasibility arises for a methodology that encompasses a number of them. The methodology developed for this study is based on Hall's Theory of Articulation.

Articulation is a non-necessary, i.e. non-reductionist system that lends itself to the inclusion of various lines of enquiry while retaining a structural form allowing for the exploration of causal relationships. In the article that challenges theoretical oppositions, Hall (1980a: 305) argues that different theoretical paradigms are interrelated as "inverted mirror images of one another". In this article he deals with the theoretical opposition between 'economic' and 'ethnographic' analytical approaches (Hall, 1980a: 307).

---

<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, the reference to the term 'transdisciplinary' relates to Kellner's (1997) methodological text.

Furthermore, Hall suggests that in many cases where real-life occurrences are conceptualised through theoretical analysis, methodological tensions reveal the inadequacy of each of these paradigms to successfully address the totality of such phenomena. Hall's methodology of articulation introduced in his 1980 article was later to develop into a recognised theoretical concept employed by cultural theory and media studies (Grossberg, 1986; Hall and Grossberg, 1986; Hanczor, 1997; Kellner, 1997; Slack, 1996; Trimbur, 1997).

Although Hall initially applied the concept of articulation to racial inequalities in post-colonial societies, he suggested that this model could apply elsewhere. The author will first examine the development and importance of articulation in contemporary culture in its manifest forms; the discussion will then focus on its specific analytical applications to the distinct aspects of this study. Articulation (as developed by Hall) will first be introduced as a theoretical concept. The relevance of articulation to this study will then be explored through examples. The first paradigm to be addressed is the analysis of concrete aspects of culture production through political economy. Discourse-power relations derived from analysis of interviews, reflective participation and related narratives will then be articulated with signifying practices.

### 3.1 Articulation of distinct paradigms – addressing the totality

The Theory of Articulation<sup>2</sup> was chosen for this study because it provides the means to resolve tensions between different paradigms. In order to utilise the contributions of varied disciplines, it is necessary to apply an overall methodology that would deal with the research problem as a totality. The concept of Articulation will be deployed as the methodological approach to data collection and analysis. The origins of the concept of Articulation could be traced back to Althusser (1965), Gramsci (1971), Laclau (1977) and Marx (1973). However, in cultural studies the concept gains its full methodological relevance in the work of Stuart Hall (Grossberg, 1986; Hall, 1980a, 1980b;

---

<sup>2</sup> Further in the text, references to *'articulation'* as social process will differ from *'Articulation'* as a theoretical and methodological concept.



Hall and Grossberg, 1986; Kellner, 1997; Slack, 1996, and others). In his 1980 text 'Race, articulation and societies structured in dominance', Hall elaborates the concept of Articulation in relation to interdisciplinary tensions and multidisciplinary treatise in social sciences and humanities.

Exploring the term 'articulation' through connotations of its common use offers an appropriate metaphor for its methodological significance in Hall's work. Hall (1980a: 328; Hall and Grossberg, 1986: 141) suggests that the term 'articulation' in his work is primarily read as 'connection'. The very term 'articulation' will be subjected to semantic analysis, in order to explain its methodological significance. According to Slack (1996: 115), 'the word suggests some kind of joining of parts to make a unity'. Conveniently for the focus of this study, Slack quotes that the meaning of the word 'articulation' relates even to the 'clinging together' of notes in sounds and utterances. The dual meaning of the word 'articulation' in English at the same time relates to speech and expressions characterised with clarity, coherence and distinction on one hand, and to the action or formation of joining, on the other.

Hall explains his concept of non-necessary links, or 'articulations' manifest in the analysis of society and culture, using the example of an "articulated lorry", whose powered part can, but need not, be connected to the trailer. While this was his original operative reading of the term, Hall also refers to social practice that acts '*like* a language' (Hall and Grossberg, 1986: 146). Not equating with, or condensing the complex issue of articulation into its linguistic metaphor, Hall evades the prescriptive reductionism that Foucault ascribes to semiotics.

Hall suggests (1980a: 311) that the inadequacies of reductionist tendencies both in political economy and pluralist 'culturalist' discourse should be overcome through an 'adequate historically-specific abstraction'. Hall cautions against neglecting either of the aspects of dominance, economic or cultural, as it would be detrimental to the effectiveness of analysis. He thus seeks to develop a theoretical model that would encompass both. Reconciling the theoretical frictions in exploring complex social, economic and cultural

phenomena is therefore seen as essential. In this, Hall draws upon the work of other authors that have developed concepts from which he defines the methodology of Articulation. Among them, Gramsci's notions of hegemony and consent have notable importance (Hall, 1980a: pp. 331-335).

Hall defines articulation as consisting of both lateral and hierarchical relations within a structure, which is more changeable than Althusser would suggest (Hall, 1980a). While the final determination of social domain in Althusser's work is the economic one, Gramsci argues against any type of formalist economic reductionism (Hall, 1980a: pp. 328-329, 332-334). Gramsci's reference to the cultural-ideological leadership of hegemonic social strata is not defined *a priori* on their economic position nor is their economic position its primary function (Hall, 1980a: pp. 332, 334). Hall therefore recognises Gramsci's pragmatic approach to ideologies as 'sites and stakes' in social contestation as more effective in analysis than Althusser's 'dominance ideas' of the hegemonic strata (Hall, 1980a: 334).

Formative relations between economic structures and ideological superstructures should be analysed as concrete and specific in their manifest form (Hall, 1980a: 332). In arguing that shifting alliances between the social strata articulate hegemony and consensus in their economic and cultural forms, Hall achieves three results. One contributes to the dialectics of agency-structure debate. The second identifies the methodological rationale for multidisciplinary research in cultural theory. The third points at practical implications of the theory and method of Articulation. All the three significant theoretical, methodological and practical applications are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Hall enables the analyst to address creative individual and group agency within a historically determined structure (Grossberg, 1986; Hall, 1980a; Hall and Grossberg, 1986). The Theory of Articulation instructs researchers to pay attention to concrete, specific social relations while still analysing them within their structural, hierarchical position. Unlike the post-structuralist approach of Foucault, the relations of power are not seen as fully fragmented microscopic

occurrences (Grossberg, 1986: 155) whose plural explorations end in *description not analysis* (Hall, 1980a: 308). The Theory of Articulation acknowledges a variety of interconnected discourses and social forces while retaining the capability to identify and trace their causal hierarchy (Slack, 1996: pp. 177). Articulated into a unity, the social forces cannot be reduced to one another, nor ascribed the same determinations, conditions or contradictions of existence and development.

This unity of interconnected forces and discourses is neither necessary (determined) nor accidental (Hall, 1980a: 325). Total determination would imply lack of agency; randomness of interconnections suggests a total lack of hierarchical structure. Neither of these extremes, it may be argued, could be found in reality. Furthermore, the analysis of power-relations leaning on Marx's laws of tendency and counter-tendency rather than necessity leads to the second result of Hall's methodology of Articulation (1980a: 331). "The economic level is necessary but not sufficient for explaining the operations at other levels of the society"; Hall thus (1980a: 329) redefines 'struggle' and 'determination' (Grossberg, 1986: 154).

A very good example of abstracting the concrete that Hall achieves by using Articulation Theory comes from his account of the political connotations of religion (Hall and Grossberg, 1986: 142). Here the non-necessary connections characterising his theory and methodology of Articulation are explained. Political connotations of religion are not a necessary part of it: historically pre-dating present rationalist approaches to 'reality', religion has served as a cultural system that helped human beings "make sense of their world". However, in numerous social formations, religion has been associated with the political, economic and ideological structures of power. While in these historical social formations religion was articulated with power in such a way that detaching the two was not possible, these connections were not *a priori* "necessary, intrinsic, transhistorical" (Hall and Grossberg, 1986: 142).

However, the determination of social structure in its various guises - economic, political, ideological - in these historic societies, has religion as one

of its main underpinnings. Furthermore, cultural models developing from the interaction between religion and society have resulted in creative agency - in artistic, musical and other forms. This short exploration of a complex phenomenon applying the concept of Articulation shows its methodological potential. Because the links - articulations - of religion and social power are not necessary, they could be subject to transformation. When such transformations occur, the articulation of meaning (in its semiotic sense) is bound to happen.

This leads to the third, pragmatic implication of the concept of Articulation. Hall refers to the changing notion of religion in society using the example of Rastafarians in Jamaica. The re-articulation of religion in power-relations would first have to override their present and past articulations. In particular societies, religion has been ideologically *valorised*, leading all actors in social conduct into its discourse. Popular political movements in such social formations are conditioned by the use of the 'religious question' creating a "certain kind of [community] consciousness" (Hall and Grossberg, 1986: 143).

Such consciousness enables these communities to remake, re-articulate their history. The narratives arising from such discursive patchwork help a community connect its past and present. Hall elaborates articulation as concrete cultural practice in relation to Rastafarianism. The position it has secured in global music and media production is directly related to the re-articulation of religious texts (of the Bible). Such articulations were made in order to fit religious meaning with concrete historical experience of community members, positioning them as new political subjects. Referring to Rastafarians:

"[T]hey learned to speak a new language. And they spoke it with a vengeance. They learned to speak and sing. And in so doing, they did not assume that their own cultural resources lay in the past. They did not go back and try to recover some absolutely pure 'folk culture', untouched by history, as if that would be the only way they could learn to speak. No, they made use of the modern media to broadcast their message... This is cultural transformation."

(Hall and Grossberg, 1986: 143)

Hall sees the Rastafarians as using the new means of articulation, communicating a new message through new music. This music and its connotations are articulated with the specific historical moment through “a reorganisation of elements of a cultural practice” (Hall and Grossberg, 1986: 143). The music and its connotations are not totally new, nor are their developments following an undisturbed, linear historical development. Furthermore, their elements do not have *a priori*, necessary political implications. Hall argues that specific articulations of these musical elements acquired in combination with religious discourse represent what is new and politically engaging in Rastafarianism (1986: 143). Thus the process of re-articulating cultural models results in the creation of new and effective cultural forms.

Hall's argument lends itself to pragmatic methodological theorisation, and shows how ‘organic intellectuals’ (Gramsci, 1971) affect society: theory leads to direct or indirect practical consequences (Hall, 1980a: 307). Theory cannot be radically separated from the concrete socio-historical context in which it operates. Implications of this are both political and epistemological (Grossberg, 1986: 153). The subject of theory is part of specific social and historical factors, which, in turn define and condition the existence of the theory itself.

The famous apocryphal account of Galileo pronouncing ‘EPPUR SI MUOVE’ in front of the Holy Inquisition Court serves as a multifaceted illustration of the dialectic relationships between theory and fact: scientific fact was denied by religious discourse that has stuck to an outdated theoretical model. This denial is rigorously enforced through articulations of power between the Church and the State. These power-relations were exercised on the judicial, political, economic and discursive planes. Articulated combination of coercion (Holy Inquisition) and consensus (the ‘true Faith’) corresponds to power and ideology. Affecting social conduct through religious ideology was linked to enforcing specific interpretations of Classical Philosophy (discourse). This controlled scientific research to the extent to which it is disputable if Galileo, risking death at the stake, really spited the Court with the alleged words. A

further implication of this myth leads to the modern discourse of scientific ethics, reconstructing science as the highest exercise of freedom, a liberty-practice that defies all oppressors. Fact, however, frequently denies such beliefs.<sup>3</sup>

Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK), a radical stream of reflexive methodological theorisation (Booth, 2002) explores the discursive foundations of natural and social sciences. Booth's text on reflexivity will show the inadequacy of postmodernist methodology for this study (see Section 3.5). These accounts provided by Booth, Alvesson and Skoldberg show that radical postmodernist forms of reflexivity could follow an endless spiral of self-examination resulting in methodological powerlessness. While essential in social research, especially with regards to ethnographic data, narratives and discursive relations, this form of self-regulation needs to be contained in its immediate applications when examining the concrete.

Hall does not negate the contributions of postmodernism and post-structuralism in describing the multiplicity of meaning in contemporary culture. Indeed, Kellner (1997) criticises his occasional shifts towards pluralist discourse, stating that this is done at the expense of structural clarity thus undermining the very advantages brought in by the concept of articulation. Hall acknowledges that the multiplicity of readings and discourses lead to new forms of self-consciousness and reflexivity (Hall and Grossberg, 1986: 137). Nevertheless, he does not accept "that representation itself has collapsed". Rather, the process of encoding ends in an arbitrary 'closure' (Hall and Grossberg, 1986: 137; Slack, 1996: pp. 115-117). No form of signifying practice could become effective in communication within or between discourses without the voluntary, arbitrary closure of its potentially endless polysemic connotations<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Nazi abuses of Medicine; applying Physics to war technology since early civilisation.

<sup>4</sup> That these polysemic connotations are radically shifting from one historical setting to another, is well illustrated in the changing interpretations of the signifying practices in Belgrade subcultures between the Seventies and the Nineties (Andjelkovic, 1983: pp. 117-124; Gordy, 1999, 2001; Kronja, 2001; Milojevic, 2002; Prica, 1991; Prodanovic, 2001).

### 3.1.1 Crossing the boundaries between research methodologies

The applications of Articulation Theory to the Belgrade underground music scene will be explored with regards to concrete forms of analysis. This is because a concept that has the capacity to resolve difficult methodological gaps is hard to grasp without being illustrated through concrete examples. Hall traces the theoretical foundations of Articulation as an approach used in social sciences back to its origins in Marx's work. In 'Introduction to Grundrisse' (1973) Marx deals with the complex totality of social relationships of production, consumption, distribution and exchange in early Capitalism. Gramsci (1971) develops the concept of hegemony based on Marx's analysis of the relations of power stemming from capitalist control of market exchange. The notion of hegemony in social relations, dealt with by Gramsci is more dynamic, Hall argues, than in Althusser's concept of 'contradiction and overdetermination'. Gramsci sees hegemony as a crucial concept for exploring concrete phenomena in political and cultural relations. Hall outlines the shortcoming of Althusser's argument as theoretically formal and not pragmatically orientated.

Concurring with Hall, Savic (2001) approaches the tensions in theoretical and pragmatic discourse in Serbia in relation to the events of 5<sup>th</sup> October 2000. The meaning of "5<sup>th</sup> October", Savic argues, legitimises social transformation that enabled the political change on that day. Savic's analysis bears some semblance to Hall's concept of Articulation. The complementary, contradictory and conflicting narratives exploring the events that brought political change in Serbia share numerous theoretical and discursive references.

'Almost paradoxically', these accounts legitimise themselves by referring to the elements of rival narratives and 'translating them into their own language' (Savic, 2001: 4). Savic expresses doubts that any 'meta-narrative' could encompass all the different - even mutually exclusive - 'stories'. This does not counter the existence of fact, nor does it deny that the event as such had happened. A social fact of importance in one narrative could be diminished

even erased in other, competing narratives<sup>5</sup> (Savic, 2001: 2). Although denying the existence of a meta-narrative that would offer the solution to this contestation for discursive dominance, Savic suggests that a contemporary event will structure the way in which these interpretations lead to changes in social economic, cultural and other practices.

Specific aspects of an event do not evolve separately: they are integral parts of one another. Thus an event is synthetic by its very nature (Savic, 2001: 3). Savic argues that analytical interpretation calls for the necessary separation of different aspects of an event, which in turn causes apparent theoretical ruptures. Such ruptures are explored in Savic, Hall and other works. However, Savic (2001: 3) argues that every story returns to synthesis in its attempt to outline the conclusions of necessary analytical segmentation.

The tendency of opposing paradigms to 'translate' and thus incorporate elements of one another is expressed in this final synthesis, which can be both theoretical-reflexive and pragmatic-prescriptive. This leads to the synthetic domination of one interpretative system over the others. Disparate social forces were involved in the event of 5<sup>th</sup> October 2000, forming one resultant, legitimising the political change in Serbia that was concretised in the replacement of the old regime. However, Savic argues that the event could not have had one single consequence and the contestation of dominance among political discourses would take years to unravel. This contestation for dominance is akin to the processes that lead to the establishment of consensus explored by Gramsci. Consequently, it can be argued that the articulation of social forces that have worked in accord in a 'non-necessary alliance' resulted in the recorded political change (Hall, 1980a, 1986; Hall and Grossberg, 1986; Grossberg, 1986; Slack, 1996; Trimbur, 1997). While this political change is evident, the question of predominant social, economic, technological and cultural paradigms remains open (Savic, 2001: pp. 4-6).

---

<sup>5</sup> Savic offers an example from the 1999 Nato military campaign against Serbia. What one narrative describes as 'humanitarian intervention', the other structures as 'aggression'.



Practical interpretations affecting these changes are linked to the functional plane, such interpretations are valid as long as they are 'successful', i.e. as long as their effect is the consistency of power (Savic, 2001: pp. 5-6). The use of power in a concrete social context is providing subsequent readings of the 'causal relationships', construed *a posteriori*. This brings the argument close to Foucauldian constructs of power/discourse, differing in that the works of Hall and Savic explored here do not fully dismiss the possibility of some forms of prediction. Hall's 'Marxism without guarantees' (Trimbur, 1997: 9) is

“... [A] *guide to action*<sup>6</sup> that relies not on the predictive certainties... but on a reading of those linkages and how they articulate, at specific times and places, interests, subjectivities, and social forces.”

In this quote Trimbur clearly suggests that Hall is not abandoning the idea that analysis should remain outside practical discourse though it is equally clear that Hall departs from the rigidity of 'scientific', prescriptive ambitions of Marxism that Foucault had rigorously criticised. Indeed, it could be argued that Hall returns to Marx's position on 'laws of development and motion', tendency and counter-tendency, abandoning prescriptive attempts (Hall, 1980a: 331). Questioning the 'democratic narrative' of political changes on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2000, Savic asks, will the course of events confirm that democracy is realised in Serbian society. Consequently, narrative interpretation of events becomes a proactive form of prediction, for it has to be confirmed by subsequent developments.

This is close to Hall's exploration of the pragmatic role of theory in concrete events (Hall, 1980a: 307; Hall and Grossberg, 1986: 144; Grossberg, 1986: 153). The dominant discourse, emerging from the contestation of 'truth' appropriates, 'translates' the signs and methods of other narratives and using them pragmatically imposes itself as the articulation of the general will (in politics) and consensus (in culture).

---

<sup>6</sup> Emphasis added.

“[I]t is the articulation, the non-necessary link, between a social force which is making itself, and the ideology or conceptions of the world which makes intelligible the process they are going through, which begins to bring onto the historical stage a new social position and political position...”

(Hall and Grossberg, 1986: 144)

‘Conceptions of the world’, Hall talks about, need not be ideological in the strictest sense of the word; they can be explained in terms of subcultural identity and micro-politics of informal cultural formations. It is not difficult to subdivide any of the disciplines used in this study. On the other hand, some of the discipline-specific methods are shared across disciplines. For instance, semiotic analyses are frequently used in cultural theory (Barthes, 1977, 1993; Cohen, 1980; Gelder, 1997; Grossberg, 1986a; Hall, 1986; Hebdige, 1979, 1983, 1993, and others<sup>7</sup>). Similarly, in the case of ethnographic data, observations and interviews can be analysed as narratives (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Bruner, 1997; Ochs, 1997, and others). Signifiers of cultural practice are accounted for in Geertz’s ‘thick description’ (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998; Geertz, 1993, and others).

Narrative structures of interview contents are also considered important in the study of the Belgrade underground music scene. Interviewee accounts in Bruner (1987) are analysed as ‘self-narratives’, ‘autobiographical narratives’. Interviewees are expected to represent their opinions and experiences in a subjective manner. The presence of self (‘I’) as the central point of each of these accounts could be concealed when discussing ‘fact’ and overt when talking of ‘authenticity’ and ‘artistic merit’. In both cases, the narrative is construed in relation to the position of interviewee within the social, economic and discursive structures associated with culture-production in Belgrade and Serbia. The interviewees are actively involved as agents in the articulation of these structures. This is because the main criterion in choosing the interviewees/respondents for this study is their deep involvement within the scene<sup>8</sup> and its business aspects<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> While Laing (1985) and Walser (1993) draw from Barthes’ approach to music, Mercer (1987) relates to style in spectacular subcultures, appearing to draw from Hebdige.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Scene’ versus ‘community’ was already explored in Chapters 1 and 2.

Special attention is paid to the contradicting points in interviewee narratives when two or more informants (including the researcher) discuss the same event, process or issue. This is where the “articulation of contradictory forces” (Hall, 1980a: 325; Slack, 1996: 117) would become recognisable in informants’ narratives. It was analysed that cultural practices are conditioned by the articulation of disparate forces and discourses. Therefore, the analysis of cultural practices accounted for in the researcher’s reflective participation will be subjected to methodology of Articulation. The key question would in this case relate to the formation, as well as the conditioned reading of these practices: ‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’<sup>10</sup> (Hall, 1980b). Kellner (1997: pp. 25-27) reviews Hall’s definition of the distinctions between encoding and decoding of media messages, leading to the links between political economy and culture, explored in the next section.

### 3.2 Political economy and the analysis of culture production

Kellner states that political economy structures the way in which cultural artefacts are encoded and decoded. He suggests that political economy can contribute to textual analysis and audience reception of media texts. The system of production determines the encoding process, Kellner argues. Furthermore, the choice of operative codes in constructing media texts is dependent on the political economy of culture-production (Kellner, 1997: 25). The production-consumption-production circuit (Hall, 1980b) depends on the political economy of culture (Kellner, 1997: 26). ‘Code’ as a concept represents the articulations between media organisations, modes of culture production and their receivers. Codes created by media businesses are then consumed and subsequently reproduced by receiving audiences. The third link in this chain is the most problematic one: this is the audience’s participation in production-reproduction of codes. Audiences affect further production of culturally codified texts through changing demand (political economy).

---

<sup>9</sup> More on this in Section 3.5, where special attention is paid to researcher as participant.

<sup>10</sup> The researcher is here the main source of interpretation and therefore has to subject himself to reflexive strategies (Section 3.5).

Furthermore, the articulation of social forces to which receivers/audiences belong defines the recognised cultural codes.

An example, Kellner (1997) cites, is the success of low-budget films such as *Easy Rider* in America during the 1960s when social change and the antiwar movement have articulated the demand for specific coding characterising these products. In a similar way, the consolidation of media industries in the US, supported through legislation and politically promoted in the Reaganite era (Kellner, 1997: 29-30) had resulted in changing of codes: this time the initiative was on the side of media corporations, rather than audiences. The result was the upsurge of films like *Rambo* that have produced a very different set of codes than the ones used in *Easy Rider* (Kellner, 1997: 31). The audience reception was different in this case because civil society was undergoing change, followed by changing values and expectations, wilfully reproducing the 'Rambo-code'<sup>11</sup>.

The use of Hall's Theory of Articulation in its 'encoding-decoding' formulation becomes clearer in the light of Kellner's argument. Kellner insists that combining political economy of culture defined on a model developed by the Frankfurt School with textual analysis of cultural artefacts utilises the achievements of both analytical systems. It overcomes the reductionist tendencies of political economy while focusing the discursive/semiotic arguments on the specific (concrete) characteristics of explored phenomena. This has significant bearing on the discourse analysis set in specific social circumstances in which Belgrade underground music scene operates.

Observations of organisational and market-structures in Belgrade independent music production will affect the analysis of subjective accounts on authenticity, creativity, artistic credibility and originality of musical products. The tensions between mainstream music production and the entrepreneurial networks of musicians, independent producers and promoters is addressed

---

<sup>11</sup> Phenomena such as Turbo-folk's mainstream success in Serbia should be observed in a similar light while media texts of marginal groups such as the Belgrade underground music scene have consumed, reproduced and perpetuated a different set of codes, forming a parallel, independent discursive pattern.

and analysed as the use of signifying practices by the media, clubs, and small record companies. These tensions will also be referred to in textual analyses of academic and documentary publications related to music-production in Serbia (Albahari *et al*, 1983; Collin, 2001; Gordy, 1999, 2001; Janjatovic, 1998; Kronja, 2001; Vujovic and Kanjevac, 1996). This provides a complex picture of the position of Serbian underground music production within the structures of market and society. The purpose of creating such a picture is to understand the main characteristics of the processes of sign-production in the Belgrade independent music sector. Furthermore, this provides the researcher with information for the analysis of possible problems in presenting Belgrade underground music scene to audiences in the country and abroad<sup>12</sup>.

Structural analysis of production and consumption of underground music in Belgrade and other Serbian cities is set in the overall social, political and economic framework. In order to firm up the links between entrepreneurial production of underground music and the structural changes in Serbian society, the analysis should include some of the findings of ethnographic methods used. These will deal with 'confessional' accounts (autobiographic texts, unstructured interviews, participant observation) of participants in the underground music scene (entrepreneurs, artists and followers). Such accounts are articulated with the changes in Serbian civil society in the 1990s, revealing the effects that concrete social structures have on cultural practices.

### 3.3 Power relations and discourse in observations and interviews

The methodological approach discussed here deals with the analyses of concrete social structures; these analyses should include socio-political and economic circumstances, events and structures in both wide and narrow cultural 'landscapes' related to the Belgrade underground music scene. Foucaudian 'micro-geographies' and 'micro-histories' provide the analyst with minute and specific accounts of the role of space in discursive practices

---

<sup>12</sup> This is one of the desired practical implications of this study.

(Foucault, 1980; Foucault and Rabinow, 1984). Ethnographic accounts of independent music business practices and the relations within the Belgrade underground music scene should include data collected through participant observation of the use of space. Space does not only reveal power-exercise in social relations, but is also indicative of the relative positions of power exercised in business. Music venues, clubs and live events held in urban communal areas are all subject to the economic undercurrents that govern them.

Where first-hand accounts of participant observation are not sufficient for the examination of these events in their totality, they will be corroborated with documentary sources. Keso *et al* (2001: 7) suggest that the most suitable sources for exploring discursive subtleties come from 'naturally occurring data' such as official documents and media texts. Foucault relied predominantly on documentary sources. However, he suggested that interviews could provide invaluable insight into the distribution of power in various discursive strategies (in Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: pp. 232-233). This refers to the relative positions of power of the interviewer and interviewee as well as the specific institutional context in which a speaker is placed. It further gives rise to the notion of micro-politics of the text (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: pp. 194-195).

Elements of the negotiation between the interviewer and interviewee can be found in the subtleties of the language used (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 194). Mills refers to transitional moments in conversation as 'discourse-markers' (Mills, 1997: pp. 135-137). Such discourse markers can indicate that an interviewee/respondent desires change of topic, encounters a set of statements that place him/her in an unpleasant or unfavourable position.

In both interviews and participant observation, discourse markers include comparing and contrasting respondents' statements with their behaviour (Bastin, 1985: 99). This could provide some insight into authenticity of their accounts. Rather than statements of fact, interviews should be analysed as 'arenas for interaction'; what remains unsaid could be as important as the

expressed statements of opinion and ‘factual’ accounts (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: pp. 206, 233). Authentication of interview content should include comparison and integration (Jones, 1985: 63-67), along with ‘triple-hermeneutics’<sup>13</sup> used in Critical Theory (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: pp. 143-145). This reflective approach to analysis includes a political dimension, positioning the research process in discourse that reflects power-relations.

### 3.4 Semiotics of narratives and signifying practices

‘Triple-hermeneutics’ in Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) relates to critical awareness of the nature of interpretative accounts. Critical Theory promotes reflection and emancipation, seeing social science as the interpretation of interpretative beings within an ideological-political context. Interpretations reproduce the social context in which they are embedded. Critical *interpretation of interpretative accounts* (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: pp. 144, 261-262) does not conform to the self-evident in interviews, observations and documentary sources. It includes reflection on the unconscious processes that indicate irrational and changeable power-relations (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 144). Alvesson and Skoldberg suggest that applying this model of reflexive analysis makes effective field research difficult. However, this statement is arguable, and I would suggest that, rigorously placing the interviewee interpretations within appropriate social/structural context provides pragmatic implications for research findings. Applying ‘triple-hermeneutics’ to interviewee narratives provides a structural evaluation of power-relations in culture production, articulating the relationships of power between the producers, disseminators and recipients of coded content. By referring to the ‘politics of interviewee accounts’ Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000: 268) contradict their statement on the effectiveness of ‘triple-hermeneutics’.

---

<sup>13</sup> Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000: 144) define ‘double hermeneutics’ as the process of integrating communication in interviews and participant observation into the ‘intersubjective reality’ of social contexts, in order to develop knowledge of this reality. ‘Triple hermeneutics’ would consequently involve *reflexive accounts of such reflections* (e.g. examining the *politics of the text*).

For example, senior managers tend to portray their own organisational practices as rational, creative, dependable, benevolent and forward-looking. This is often the source of systematic bias (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 269): prescriptive managerial discourse emerging in Strategic Management literature criticised by Levy *et al* (2001) is a common result of uncritically incorporating such interviewee statements into research findings. Therefore, the accounts provided by both the respondents and the researcher need to be scrutinised in pursuit of authentication. Distortion of memory is one of the most common sources of problems with the authenticity of accounts (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 262).

Barthes (1977: 119) states that narratives distort 'life' in establishing 'logical time' in which a sequence of events is built. Taking this form of distortion into account is essential because it directly affects data reliability. This problem can be turned into an advantage if various sources of interview data coming 'from a common landscape' are compared in order to ascertain how subjects construct their self-narratives (Bruner, 1997: pp. 108-109). In this respect, the use of metaphor is relevant to interpretation especially when their conjoined narratives are structurally analysed (Bruner, 1997: pp. 105-111; Gill and Whedbee, 1997: pp. 172-173).

Barthes (1977: pp. 79-124) provides the methodology for the analysis of narratives. He pays special attention to *functional units* of narratives, dividing them into *nuclei, catalysts, indices and informants*<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, he divides narrative units into 'horizontally' and 'vertically' associated ones. A sequence of events in 'horizontal' aspects of the narrative constitutes narration, the story itself. Its core units are the nuclei. Sequences are made up of mutually dependent nuclei (Barthes, 1977: 101), defining narration. Indices, on the other hand 'always have implicit signifieds', affecting the story's vertical structure (Barthes, 1977: 96). While catalysts and informants serve as supplementary parts of a narrative, the sequence (of nuclei) and signification (of indices) are its necessary elements. Finally, signifiers burdened with

---

<sup>14</sup> Not to be mistaken with 'informants' in ethnographic research.



connotations, merging *indices* and *informants* are effective on the level of discourse forming metaphorical relations between narration and event.

Barthes (1977: 115) argues that, “narration can only receive its meaning from the world which makes use of it.” Levels on which socio-economic systems and historical facts coexist are beyond narrative. These systems are interconnected with discourse determining the form of individual narratives. The interviewees’ and respondents’ narratives of events will be juxtaposed. This is done in order to reveal different sequential accounts (stories), as well as contradicting forms of signification (*indices, informants and metaphors*). The former indicate ‘facts’ and trace their distortion. The latter reveal the interviewees’, respondents’ (and the researcher’s) position within the examined structures of discourse production.

Statements and opinions will be seen as self-narratives (Bruner, 1997: pp. 105-111; Ochs, 1997: 201-203). Ethical considerations<sup>15</sup> are an important element of the conduct of interviews. These include anonymity in cases in which respondents do not agree to be interviewed or where the information presented can potentially damage them in any way (Fetterman, 1998: 141). Along with the examination of business practices, the interviewees are asked to comment on the relevance of style, perceived degree of authenticity and the possible prospects of successful presentation of Belgrade underground music abroad. Interviews are conducted in a natural and uncontrolled environment.

The questions are asked in a seemingly non-directive manner in order to leave the flow of ideas and comments open. The discussion is, however, funnelled to the research foci. The following issues are raised in relation to the potential success of Belgrade underground music abroad. Could it compete in the global markets for similar music genres? Could the respondents acknowledge any signs of originality? Is it more likely that music produced in

---

<sup>15</sup> Deceptive tactics will not be used (Fetterman, 1998: 139). However, in participant observation of events, the sound recording device will be placed out of sight, in order to avoid the confounding ‘social desirability’ effect (Coolican, 1999) although some participants will be made aware of researcher’s observational role.

Serbia would be more easily accepted if it were labelled 'exotic' and more reliant on indigenous musical influences of Serbian, Balkan and Byzantine<sup>16</sup> origin?

Lyrics, where present in Belgrade underground music production, are frequently sung in Serbian. This is assumed to represent a significant problem for presenting such musical products to foreign audiences. Nevertheless, even in cases where lyrics are accessible to the native-speaking populace, this issue remains complex. Lyrical connotations of concrete developments in Serbian urban society are used as part of the process of articulating the elements of communication. What is lost through incomprehension of connotations is as important as what is seemingly communicated. It is important to state the distinction between polysemic and *obtuse* meaning. While both relate to *signifiante* (Barthes, 1977: pp. 54, 65-66, 137, 141, 182-186, 207), the former is in constant flux, cryptic, a result of growing familiarity of the audiences with semiotic systems, the "change of the object *itself*" (Barthes, 1977: pp. 165-169). The latter is "the representation which cannot be represented" (Barthes, 1977: 64).

Modern semiotics interpret the 'meaning-bearing unit' as polysemic and context-dependent (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 39; Barthes, 1977: pp. 55-56; 191 Heath, 1977: 10; Hebdige, 1993: pp. 104, 117, 127). The 'obtuse meaning' takes no part in communication, as opposed to the 'obvious' (symbolic) meaning (Barthes, 1977: pp. 52-55). The dichotomy between the perceived and 'lost' (also 'third') meaning in music, lyrics, visual arts and film relates to the perceived authenticity of style (Barthes, 1977: pp. 62-65). Hebdige (1993) defines semiotic tests of subcultural membership by drawing on Barthes's concept of 'lost', *obtuse meaning*<sup>17</sup> (Barthes, 1977: pp. 52-68)<sup>18</sup>.

---

<sup>16</sup> Countries of the Balkans and East Mediterranean still contain significant cultural influences of the Mediaeval Byzantium - especially in Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria.

<sup>17</sup> Barthes identifies the lost meaning in music as 'the *grain* of the voice', the *signifiante* in a particular performance where the signifier itself mutates beyond the purpose of connoting meaning (Barthes, 1977: pp. 179-189). Laing (1985) analyses *signifiante* in Johnny Rotten's singing, applying Barthes's model in a somewhat mechanistic manner.

<sup>18</sup> It must be said that two shortcomings characterise Barthes's semiotic analysis. His singular style is cryptic and inconsistent in its own right. Moreover, in the "Introduction to the Structural

Musical genre is a far more elusive concept than lyrical structure and context. Respondents and interviewees will provide subjective accounts of music and related cultural products with frequent references to 'sound' and 'style'. The former relates to 'timbre', the specific sonic signature of musical instruments, vocal performances and other types of sound utterances<sup>19</sup>. The latter relates to both musical structures and their social connotations. Direct analysis of musical structures will not be available in this research study. The researcher therefore indirectly<sup>20</sup> draws connotative relations of musical signifying practices. Sources used for the analysis of such signifying practices are threefold: subjective accounts of informants and interviewees, documentary, analytical and media sources, and reflexive accounts of the researcher's own experiences as participant observer.

### 3.5 Reflexive methodology and participant observation

The circumstances under which this study is conducted are at the heart of the debate on methods and ethics in participant observation accounts. Specific circumstances of conducting participant observation in this study are expected to contribute to the methodology of ethnographic research. One of the problematic processes in participant observation is obtaining and confirming of the 'insider' status within the observed community. The second distinct process is the 'surrender' of the observer to the 'Other', the observed community. The third, flowing from the second, are the debates on

---

Analysis of Narratives" terminological inconsistency is coupled with attempts to structure transmissions of meaning through diagrams that resemble mathematical logic.

<sup>19</sup> Timbre escapes definitions but is essential in determining musical genre. Texts in Deliège and Sloboda (1997) focusing on perception of timbre suggest that future research in the area of music psychology has to pay full attention to the definition of this sonic property of music. Modern popular music cannot be recorded nor coded through classical notation only (Hajda *et al.*, 1997; Middleton, 1990, 2000; McDonald, 2000; Tagg, 2000) Implicitly, the analysis consults sound properties, such as sound-wave polarisation.

<sup>20</sup> Tagg (2000) states that traditional Western musicology does not provide the tools for the analysis of popular music. Technology brings 'mechanical low-fi soundscapes' that seek 'reflection in electrified music' in everyday life. He further argues interpreting music through subjectivist hermeneutics 'degenerates into unscientific guesswork'. Tagg argues that music itself, the actual channel of conveying meaning, has not been sufficiently analysed (Tagg, 2000:74). His diagram of the intersections between musical content and music-related activities is confusing not revealing. This model, representing structured 'scientific' analysis remains questionable in addressing social complexities of popular music.

representation, rhetoric and ethics of involvement. Recent treatise in a number of ethnographic research texts question, whether the ethnographer could ever be able to represent community practices reliably (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998; Denzin, 1997; Fetterman, 1998; Geertz, 1993; Hammersley, 1992; Marcus, 1998; Prus, 1997).

This gives rise to the problematic of reflexivity. Reflexivity has a long genealogy predating current ethnographic debates. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000: pp. 54-55) suggest that natural events fall outside human capability of understanding 'from the inside', since they are not a result of human creation. The two authors note that the need for distinction between the natural and social sciences was first identified in the philosophical work of Immanuel Kant. Furthermore, it was he who identified the role of the subject's mental processes in the construction of 'reality' (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 54). In "The Critique of Pure Reason" Kant (1932: 188) suggests that an analyst needs to be constantly aware of the 'transcendental illusion'. For example, the human mind tends *to think the 'beginning of Time'*. The human individual traces his or her biographic narrative 'back to the beginning', to the 'first memory' conditioned by the concepts of 'birth' and 'conception'. Assuming that Time *'has'* to have a beginning is a transcendental illusion inherent in the human mind.

*If Time does have a beginning outside experience*, then the transcendent is a *given* (Kant, 1932: pp. 187-188; Popovic, 1932: pp. 7-8, 11-14) and thus unrelated to the transcendental illusion as described above. If the human mind is conditioned to structure events through the model of cause and effect, then this conditioning governs all analysis as causal. Analysis of observed events is based on linear time, a direct consequence of the transcendental illusion. The very foundation of this ontological concept could be a result of the human condition of conception, growth, ageing and dying. Therefore, analytical discourse is based on 'causality' and 'development'. Thus the concept of causality underlines the discourse of history. Following causality, participant observation of social events interacts with the events themselves, deeming objective analysis inadequate.

Participant observation is remarkably illustrative of ethnographic enquiry, disputing positivistic objectivity in social research and even suggesting that interpretation as such should be abandoned. Discursive characteristics of ethnographic methodology need to be addressed in this study. Ethnographers argue that scientific discourse is far from open; it is, they say, highly structured and formal. Following the confessional style of many ethnographic accounts, especially in participant observation, it is not 'scientifically' appropriate to refer to oneself as 'I', as 'I' is a confession of attachment, which falls outside academic discourse.

Distinctions between theoretical approaches that construct ethnographic discourse could be seen as based on the 'politics of scientific methods' (Foucault, 1980: pp. 80-83, Marcus, 1998: 393). As ethnographic research is deeply rooted in the narrative position of the observer (e.g. partisanship, interference), these distinctions should be taken into account (Bastin, 1985: pp. 93-95; Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998: pp. 112, 122-131; Fetterman, 1998: pp. 133-135, 143-144; Hannerz, 1997: pp. 99-101; Marcus, 1998: pp. 398-401; Prus, 1997). This directly applies to the justification of data analysis methods in participant observation.

The author of this study is the 'participant observer' referred to here. The planned fieldwork commences with a two-month continuous participation, initiating in the re-familiarisation with the observed scene. Further visits for complementary interviewing were anticipated if proven necessary. A two-month period might appear too short for participant observation. However, this is not the case. Bastin (1985: 93) and Atkinson and Hammersley (1998: 116) suggest that applied field research (consultancy work, participation in political struggles) and studies relying on unstructured interviews could be condensed and of shorter duration than traditional investigation. This study clearly satisfies not one, but all of these criteria. First, the direct practical applications of this study will be in the field of cultural and business policy. Secondly, the specific nature of the Belgrade underground music scene makes it highly politicised. Thirdly, a significant amount of field data is collected through in-

depth interviews (researcher's status of 'reflective participant' enables him to make an informed choice of respondents and interviewees).

The researcher's position has yet another notable characteristic relevant to participant observation. Because of the previous, more than a decade-long involvement and strong identification with underground music and art scenes in Belgrade and Serbia, the negotiations of participant status were remarkably rapid. In such a case, members of the observed scene were not expected to contest the researcher's 'membership' status. However, the discontinuity of more than two and a half years of absence might have created a problem regarding the 'insider position' the author of this work had earned in previous years. This was even more likely to happen having in mind the ambiguous relationship between members of a scene that operates on two levels, as members of a social group as well as market competitors. It was therefore anticipated that renewed negotiations between the community and the observer as to his status within it; the 'insider' position had to be reasserted. Reflecting on this process as it unfolds was essential in this study.

Not only temporal and spatial discontinuities matter in this scenario. The concrete socio-historical specificity of events in Serbia between 1998 and 2001 impose some more interesting methodological questions regarding the 'insider' status. The shared experience of total war, life under threat from the (recently ousted) regime's increasing violent repression and the experience of insurrection that ended with a radical socio-political change (5<sup>th</sup> October 2000)<sup>21</sup> constitute strong emerging ties inside the society at large.

This especially applies to the underground music and art scene for its active involvement in these processes and events. All of this has happened during the period of temporal/spatial discontinuity between the observer and the observed. These recently created shared experiences constitute a new sense of identity, which might be exclusive (Anderson, 1991; Hannerz, 1996; Woodward, 1997). The reception of the observer-as-Other might be

---

<sup>21</sup> Numerous documentary sources could be quoted relating to 5<sup>th</sup> October 2000.

expressed in a much more complex way than in the case of admitting a stranger (van De Port<sup>22</sup>, 1999) into the community.

This complexity of renegotiating membership is expected to produce another set of implications for future research as well as significant contributions to experiential knowledge. Hannerz (1996: pp. 61-62) discusses the advantages of theoreticians whose research benefited from their status as 'marginal men'. People who experience contrast between concurrent cultural traditions could contribute to their analysis. Bridging and scrutinising cultures is the result of applying more than one line of thought. Furthermore, the social tensions between transnational migrants and their original local communities are likely to provide a model for future ethnographic research in the increasingly globalised world. The Othering of friends can be fraught with difficulty but in research terms it provides invaluable insight (Hannerz, 1996: pp. 99-101)<sup>23</sup>.

In re-negotiating the participant status, the *gaze* of the observer as narrator (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998: 126; Geertz, 1993) should be focused on tensions related to the shift of signifiers. The signifiers of identity and meaning should especially be monitored in relation to the involvement of subcultures and the artistic *underground scenes* in the process of social change.

However, one methodological precaution is easy to identify in advance. The dichotomy between creating accounts of the observed/experienced social life on one hand, and of representation and rhetoric on the other warns of pitfalls of bias (especially in this case!). A recommendation should be sought in the introspective and reflective control of the narrative. One simple example of a reflective strategy is applied in interviewing: although the conversation is seemingly spontaneous, the interviewer never loses sight of his intended focus of enquiry. Furthermore, an interview differs from a conversation in that, discourse-markers (linguistic and others) are noted, reflected and scrutinised

---

<sup>22</sup> Methodological qualities of Van de Port's text on Serbian attitudes toward Gypsy music could be observed in the light of ethical discussions on the nature of participant observation. This criticism is addressed in relation to the subtle manipulation and exercise of power of the participant observer over the observed community (Fetterman, 1998: pp. 134-135, 141, 144).

<sup>23</sup> This is one possible interpretation for Pruss's assertion (1997: 202), that participant observation is a very time consuming and *emotionally draining activity*.

during the process of communication itself. This could advise the researcher to adapt the focus or line of enquiry in order to gain deeper insight. Reflection applies to participant observation in a similar way, e.g. noting salient features of contests over communal space that might reveal signifying practices or power-exercise.

Moreover, communicating each element of the transmission of meaning depends on the articulation of agents involved. Discovering these transformations of meaning should be supported through participant observation of practices in the Belgrade underground music scene. In respect of signifying practices, reflexive interpretation of participative experiences will enable the researcher to analyse the emitted and received message by exploring the relations between emitters and recipients. The effectiveness of this level of analysis will be enhanced as a result of the researcher's longitudinal membership within the scene.

### 3.6 Conclusion: Methodology of Articulation or the articulation of methodologies

All of the above place the researcher in a privileged position to observe the change in social structures, groups and individual agents forming and affecting the Belgrade underground music scene. This may be a case *par excellence* for testing Articulation Theory by resolving methodological dilemmas explored in this chapter. A way to look at the forces and events within the Belgrade underground music scene is to understand their joining.

Interaction on the margins of social strata in micro-historical contests of power represents the first link in articulating different models of analysis. This link is further reinforced through similarities between the concepts of consensus and discourse<sup>24</sup>. Different forms of subcultural identity will be seen in relation to discursive contestations, reflected in observed spatial relations, respondents'

---

<sup>24</sup> The correspondence between Gramsci and Foucault was explored at length in Chapter 2.



narratives and media texts. The relative power of individuals and organisations involved in underground music markets will be examined with regard to the dynamic interdependence between their economic and discursive positions. This configuration forms the second stage of articulation of the Belgrade underground music scene. The correlation of economic and discursive power in music and media markets might thus influence the notion of authenticity, by supporting or obstructing certain signifying practices (e.g. musical genres). However, some signifying practices might evade such structural limitations by articulating new 'parallel' codes. This process of authentication will be examined as the third and final point of articulation of phenomena encompassing the scene.

Dialectic relationships between the music scene and structures in civil society will be read as distinct manifestations of the examined phenomenon. One of them will relate to dissent and subversion through symbolic action. The second will be extracted from the analysis of the role of space in power-relations. The third will be examined from the market competition within the scene. The fourth and final will be addressed in relation to modes of communication and authenticity of style. The three stages of articulation examined in the previous paragraph will link these four aspects.

The scene will be seen in relation to concrete factors of historical significance. Political and economic conditions of the crisis of civil society cannot be excluded from the analysis. Stratification and contest for social dominance in Serbia, and formerly in Yugoslavia, need to be explained in order to position the scene within the structures determined by concrete historical issues. This will provide the grounds for further analysis of the scene's role during the crisis of civil society. Arguably, the scene communicated dissent through symbolic means that could not be examined in detail without addressing the notion of dominance. Special attention will be paid to social coding of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses.

Nevertheless, belonging to the cultural superstructure of society, underground music cannot be reduced to a mere politico-economic phenomenon. A

number of factors included in this study address discourse and communication in relation to power-exercise. The analysis will thus focus on minute indicators of power-relations read from the notion of space in articulations of subcultural identity. Discourse relations will be examined, from symbolic contestations of space in political protest, to the changing role of commercial venues accommodating Belgrade youth subcultures. This aspect of analysis will be set against the previously examined structural relations in the attempt to disentangle the scene's freely associated actions from its historically predetermined constraints. Purporting to reveal the non-necessary links between them, discourse-formation will be analysed as a dynamic process arising from tensions between structure and agency.

Comparisons between discursive positions of various individuals and organisations competing within the scene will then be explored with regards to their relative position of power in music and media markets. Such power-relations will be evaluated through two main criteria: involvement in alliances of sub-strata, and discursive practices in culture-production. In order to determine the degree and form of competition within the scene, special attention will be paid to minute nuances in data analysis, examining capillary power in both discursive and market practices.

Ethical issues are expected to emerge throughout the analysis. These may relate to political discourse, business practice, and artistic integrity. The latter will be explored with regards to the notions of relative autonomy of music and subjective authenticity of style. Articulations of authenticity are expected to be affected by social stratification, discursive practices, market position and ethical considerations. Thus conditioned, authenticity of style will, nevertheless, be examined as a voluntary signifying practice that has a potential to overcome predetermined conditions through free association of codes. It was explained above that making sense of such ambiguous polysemic signifiers depends on acts of *arbitrary closure*.

The methodology of Articulation developed in this study will differ from Hall's model in degree of complexity and utilisation of data. Adding the notions of

discourse and signifying practice to Hall's dichotomy of 'economic versus ethnographic' will entail meticulous analysis of a greater number of linkages. Furthermore, utilising interviews and reflexive participation alongside secondary sources will enable the author of this work to explore concrete relations between different agents operating within the scene. Articulation forms a structure that does not place any of its ingredients in a dominant position *per se*. Its exact form depends on configuration. Four methodological models described in this summary correspond to the stages of analysis employed in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 respectively. However, each of these chapters will contain all four paradigms (political economy, discourse analysis, reflexive ethnomethodology and semiotics) articulated into an analytical continuum.

The four methodological models employed in analysis seem epistemologically diverse. However, all four represent different constituent elements of the complex phenomenon examined in this study. While these disciplines cannot be reduced to one another, their elements could be articulated in the same way in which the non-necessary links between the forces and events shaping the Belgrade underground music scene are articulated in social reality.

## **Chapter Four**

# **Belgrade underground music in its social and historical context**

## Prologue

"I spoke to Jimmy Cauty on a warm September evening in Belgrade, 1995. K Foundation, the organisation Cauty co-founded with Bill Drummond, was at the time virtually unknown in wider popular culture. Yet K Foundation emerged from the self-demise of influential pop project, The KLF. It attracted a lot of attention from the British art public through the controversy created around the Turner Prize in 1993/94. Being a young artist interested in media manipulation - and also deeply involved in the independent music business in Belgrade - I was drawn to the subject. The apparent reason for Cauty's and Drummond's<sup>1</sup> visit to Belgrade was 'the world premiere' of a K Foundation film. The event was heavily advertised on B92 Radio thanks to the capable influence of Miomir Grujić Fleka, a significant figure on the Belgrade underground art scene.

However, the event seemed to mean little to people living in isolated Serbian society. Despite the first illusory glimpse of hope that UN sanctions might be lifted, people continued to go about their business. Life was still hard<sup>2</sup>. Many of the potential viewers could not be blamed for their lack of interest; at the time, B92's radio signal covered only central areas of urban Belgrade and a few of the city's suburbs. Yet, keeping in mind the full context, the irony about this lack of interest was within the film's very subject. The rumour around town was that legal reasons prevented the screening of this film anywhere else in the world. It did not matter much whether this was a fact or a result of Fleka's subversive promotional strategies.... It was what we did know about the film that mattered - the burning of one million pounds Sterling.

The film itself was rather boring to watch. It was a record of meticulous work that apparently included burning stacks of money and other goods- all products of the globally successful KLF project of the early Nineties. Some of the people I spoke to believed this act to be a criticism of the global music & media industry. Some were enraged that such a film was to be shown in Belgrade- a place where for years people were struggling to make ends meet under the constant threat of war. The opinions among interested parties were diverse, but the controversy was clearly working. What I found most interesting about it was that the vast

---

<sup>1</sup> Drummond was the other leader of KLF and co-initiator of the K Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> This is not entirely accurate - the author has omitted a point Drummond did not forget to mention in his '45' autobiography (2001): the fall of Krajina, the Serbian state within Croatia. Krajina fell that summer under Croat offensive, bringing many thousands of refugees to Serbia. The period of 'hope' the author refers to in this reflective account started after the Dayton Accords were signed later that year (Glenny, 1996; Silber and Little, 1996). Gordy (2001: pp. 117, 163-166) states that this 'glimpse of hope' was heavily publicised by the regime in Serbia in 1994. The regime tried to disassociate itself from Bosnian Serbs. UN lifted the embargo on flights to Belgrade airport as the immediate result of this policy change. The sanctions imposed on sport and cultural exchange were suspended too. The regime declared, all this indicated the end of Serbia's international isolation. Nothing was further away from the truth.

majority of passers'-by in Belgrade paid little attention to the film's first screening despite it having taken place in the open air of Republic Square - the very heart of the city.

My reasons for approaching Cauty and Drummond on that night were straightforward, although, in hindsight, seem rather naïve. I thought, "if someone has enough money to burn, he might as well invest... some of it". On the other hand, I thought, if this was in fact a subversive statement, these people might well be interested in others who were themselves challenging their own society's rooted set of beliefs.

I had a short and enjoyable conversation with a very polite Cauty. But despite the pleasantries I came to the conclusion that he was not at all interested in what I was trying to say. I spoke about the scene, its musicians and artists, and how some help would result in mutual benefit. Smiling, he told me that K Foundation was the brick made out of ashes of one million pounds<sup>3</sup>. All that while a painstaking process on the screen showed masked figures in white protective suits burning stacks of money against a greyish background. A crowd of few dozen, perhaps a hundred people chattered, mingled and watched the documentary.

This whole occasion and my experience of it had several layers. Average citizens of Belgrade said much with their absence, uninterested in - or uninformed of - the 'world premiere'. In contrast, young people in and around independent and underground art, music and media craved information and response from beyond the borders - to the extent to which anything from the 'outside' world drew their attention. Some were apathetic while others tried to network their way to recognition. In "This is Serbia Calling" Matthew Collin noted the similarity between the use of the term 'outside' in prison slang and the way his respondents in Belgrade used it with reference to the outside world. On one level this comparison seems fully appropriate, considering how people lived in Belgrade for about a decade (...) however, 'outside' belongs to the old "žargon" (*argot*, slang) for 'abroad'; this maybe because Serbia is a landlocked continental country."

(Reflective account, the author, July 2001, Appendix 1)

---

<sup>3</sup> Their film was titled: *Watch the K Foundation Burn a Million Quid* (Drummond, 2001: 203).

This chapter will examine the historical and social foundations of the Belgrade underground music scene. This will be done by placing it within an appropriate context defined by its antithesis, 'Neofolk'. The emergence of the latter is associated with economic, political and social tensions that have troubled Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia throughout its existence. Forms of power exercise were instrumental in the formation of cultural models associated with both Belgrade underground music scene and Neofolk. Both phenomena have fed back into the social structure, changing it and helping create new substructures in Serbian society.

This, first of the four discussion chapters employs all the levels of analysis that have been taken into consideration. The emphasis on historical events dictates the need to seek as many references to previous analytical and factual accounts as possible. Exploring the Belgrade underground music scene is conditional on approaching it within a relevant historical context. Analyses in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will refer to Chapter 4 as a reference point.

#### 4.1.1 Underground as a concept of liberty

While the world's media and culture industries remained largely uninterested in Belgrade's cultural produce, people involved in its independent art, music and media remained predominantly true to their task. Many of the interviews undertaken as part of research confirm their commitment. Some, like Fleka<sup>4</sup> do this in a confident statement:

*"Well, you know under the circumstances of such authoritarian pressure and oppression, harassment, and terror and tyranny - I mean, you know the one: violence of the majority over the individual - that was so oppressive that, the rebellion was, I think, a question of sanity. It is not now like boasting: 'We are the heroes'. I simply was not capable to imagine life as accepting such circumstances as the ones they offered us. That was simply unacceptable. And we were all going like the kamikaze, head against the wall, 'we'll pay whatever it costs', but under this rule we cannot live. Therefore, I am now, a bit sick of all*

---

<sup>4</sup> Appendix 2, interview with Miomir Grujić-Fleka, Belgrade, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

these *revolutionaries and liberators* that did, like, get a *couple of slaps from the cops* and they're now, like, *bullshitting about it*. We were simply fighting for the liberation of *Man*.”

Fleka does not only refer to the reign of the recent regime. The ‘liberation of Man’ Fleka refers to was a long-term symbolic practice pursued by free-thinking intellectuals and artists years before the nationalist oligarchies in Yugoslav republics led the country into war and its parts into dictatorship. In another unrecorded part of the conversation, he describes an iconic scene from late President Tito’s personality cult. President Tito was pronounced dead at 15.05, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1980. Signifying a part of Tito’s ‘death cult’ every 4<sup>th</sup> May at 15.05 between 1981 and 1991 sirens would echo in the streets of Yugoslav cities.

All movement would cease in the streets during the sirens. On a small scale, not stopping to the wailing sirens to mourn the death of a dictator was a sign of disrespect for the whole system. Such symbolic practices on the larger scale included music events, art exhibitions and production of films challenging the norms of conduct in socialist Yugoslavia.

The narrative exists on two levels in Fleka’s interview account. The interviewer and the respondent attempted to represent and interpret some specific, historical facts. This is the horizontal, temporal narration in which both participants play a part. The discussion with Fleka went beyond the field of material enquiry. It also involved a number of corresponding theoretical references. This threatened to cloud references to concrete events and places so the interviewer would regularly steer the discussion back to material facts.

Other narrative structures in this interview relate to vertical associations or indices. Indices are necessary devices that help integrate narrative structures of varied individual experiences. Furthermore, indices form on the points of negotiation between the respondents. In this interview, indices are represented by concepts such as ‘underground’ and ‘archetypes’ involved in media communication. He is an experienced broadcaster, consciously playing



with abstract and hermetic terminology, an author whose live radio talk-shows challenged and provoked the audience to respond, sometimes violently<sup>5</sup>.

Fleka also left a mark on Belgrade's independent music production by leading the programme of the 'Akademija' club during its prime years. 'Akademija' was the principal venue of Belgrade underground scene in the Eighties. Fleka's nickname means 'spot' or 'glitch'. Depending on the context, this name is burdened with connotations - dark or hidden, even dirty, perhaps signifying the notion of error, imperfection. He is better known as an artist, writer, producer and journalist under this pseudonym, than under his real name. One of the results of Drummond's collaboration with Fleka was a radio-jingle that Radio B92 used for years after the event.

The book, "This is Serbia Calling", owes its title to the very same jingle. In this excerpt from the lengthy interview, Fleka is one of a number of people who were deeply associated with underground movements in Belgrade. Interviews conducted with musicians, artists, broadcasters and other practitioners in Belgrade's independent culture-production, produced notions of 'underground', 'alternative', 'subculture', 'scene' and others; these were proven to be debatable, both as definitions and classifications. However, all of these terms had something in common. They formed part of a terminology, which allowed the construction of a 'parallel' reality in Serbia, opposing the oppression that Fleka mentioned.

The problem of definition arises from the research conducted in Belgrade. The definitions of 'underground', 'alternative', and other terms, which crop up in interviews with both practitioners and participants, and purport to explain the examined culture-production practices, seem to have one common signification; that of the resistance to the hegemonic practices of the 'Titoist'<sup>6</sup> and 'post-Titoist' regimes in Yugoslavia, Serbia, and specifically - Belgrade.

---

<sup>5</sup> Fleka's broadcasting style is mentioned in Collin (2001) and Drummond (2001).

<sup>6</sup> Jakšić (1994, 1995) refers to 'Titoism and post-Titoism' as plebiscitary Caesarism. Tadić (1993), whom Gordy (1999, 2001) identifies as a Serbian nationalist writer, states that "Broz (President Tito) ruled through 'series of *coups d'état*'". Tadić refers to occasions when Tito arbitrarily short-circuited the Constitution when this served his political interests, as well as to the ploys he used to eliminate any political, economic or cultural threat to his rule.

The other reading of underground implies forms of production and promotion. The interviewees see such forms of culture production as closely associated with the notion of subversive, politicised activity.

#### 4.1.2 Hegemonic practices and the genesis of Turbo-folk

Under the late President Tito, as well as subsequently, the hegemonic practices that combined consensus with coercion, were omnipresent in culture production and the promotion of moral values relating to popular culture. The regime, which was overthrown on October 5, 2000, combined brute force with a form of consensus, engineered to tune in with a number of mass-anxiety discourses<sup>7</sup>. This was related to the production and promotion of 'cultural goods', indigenous in appearance but hybrid in form<sup>8</sup>. Van de Port's (2000) text on the political role of 'Neofolk'<sup>9</sup> music in Serbia, as well as the treatise by Gordy (1999, 2001) and Collin (2001), are only partially accurate in this respect, as will be demonstrated by first-hand accounts of the author of this work - a researcher-participant who has extensive inside knowledge.

The genesis of 'Turbo-folk' - one of the main cultural tools for creating consensus across ruptured social strata<sup>10</sup> in Serbia in recent years - is far more complex than some of the statements in above works would suggest. It is therefore necessary to consult the recent work of Ivana Kronja. Throughout her book, Kronja (2001) explains how 'newly-composed folk music' had suffered numerous changes, while developing into Turbo-folk. 'Newly-

---

<sup>7</sup> Academics and journalists alike, have observed this phenomenon throughout former Yugoslavia (Glenny, 1996; Gordy, 1999, 2001; Jakšić, 1994, 1995; Kronja, 2001; Silber and Little, 1995; van de Port, 1999; Čolović and Hawkesworth, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Gordy (1999, 2001) and Collin (2001) are among those who have examined how this system of hegemony worked. Most notable among recent Serbian publications - and not surprisingly, better informed than the former two - is a book by Kronja (2001), 'The Fatal Glow - Mass Psychology and Aesthetics of Turbo-folk Subculture 1990-2000'. This book will be referred to further in the text.

<sup>9</sup> The term coined by Dragičević-Šešić (1994) encompasses 'newly-composed folk' and 'Turbo-folk' music. All of the three terms will be used throughout this analysis.

<sup>10</sup> Gramscian terminology is not used arbitrarily in this overview. The social friction related to the causes and consequences of Yugoslav war have been analysed at length by Serbian social scientists. Among the works related to developments leading to the Yugoslav crisis - and eventually, war - was Novaković's (1994) "Disintegration of Yugoslav Working Class"

composed folk' was initially based on village music (predominantly, but not only, Serbian - this is explained in more detail by Milojević (2002)). Its origins could be traced to as early as the 1930s, when some musicians tried to emulate the old village style of music performance (Kronja, 2001: 17). By the Nineties, through a series of changes affecting Yugoslav and Serbian society, the style of 'folk' music had become remote from its roots, evolving into the so-called Turbo-folk. Traditional elements of Serbian village music retreated in favour of a predominantly westernised form - especially electronic dance music - coupled with other ethnic influences (Greek, Spanish, Turkish, etc.)<sup>11</sup>.

The genesis of Turbo-folk can be traced back to Titoist times. Kronja (2001), and Milojević (2002), wrote well-informed analytical accounts on how Turbo-folk of the Nineties ascended from the political, social and business background of 'newly-composed' folk music of the Titoist and post-Titoist era<sup>12</sup>. The Turbo-folk phenomenon has to be examined in relation to independent and underground music production in Belgrade and the resistance to the regime of Milošević's élite. This will help clarify the basic concepts of the inquiry into the nature of recent and contemporary culture production in Belgrade (and Serbia). Furthermore, within the Serbian context, it would be impossible to understand the concepts of 'underground', 'subculture', 'counter-culture', and 'independent music and media production' - without addressing the phenomena of Turbo-folk and 'newly-composed folk music'.

The latter two signify the socio-historical background against which the independent music scene in Belgrade and Serbia functioned for decades

---

<sup>11</sup> Kronja (2001: pp. 24, 58, 65-73), explains the musical and stylistic elements that constitute '*Turbo-folk*' as a hybrid between elements of music of the Balkans, Mediterranean influences and - the predominant westernised form of expression. The latter range from the 'hi-tech' electronic sound-production in music, to some extra-musical signifiers of style appropriated from MTV and other media giants. Gordy recognises MTV's influence on visual aesthetics of '*Turbo-folk*'. He adds that this influence also affected Yugoslav and Serbian rock music, but the mode of 'westernisation' of '*Turbo-folk*' and rock in Serbia had completely different forms (2001: pp. 146, 150).

<sup>12</sup> Jakšić, 1994, 1995; Stojanović, 2001 are among the theorists using the terms 'Titoism' and 'post-Titoism' that enables them to identify the specifics of the Yugoslav political system, distinct from the ones of the Eastern Bloc, yet sharing some common features with other models of State Communism.

(culminating in the Nineties). The notion of 'popular music', in academic terms, signifies a number of issues that depend on the adopted criterion. The author believes that Gordy made an error, for example, identifying the band 'Ekaterina velika' (EKV - 'Catherine the Great') as 'mainstream'. This is not necessarily Gordy's error but could be arising from fieldwork, where he depended on the accounts given by respondents he contacted in Belgrade. Having in mind the competition for 'underground credentials' or 'subcultural capital' (Thornton, 1995), it comes as no surprise that some of Gordy's musician respondents might have identified the more successful EKV as 'mainstream', i.e. less credible. Similarly, with the use of the term 'subculture', the distinctions within Serbian urban subcultures in relation to 'popular' music in the Nineties need to be clarified.

Turbo-folk does indeed qualify as a subcultural phenomenon, as Kronja (2001) explains. A section of her book, titled 'Turbo-folk as Subculture Crisis' (2001: pp. 36-41) attempts to clarify this.

"Since 1990, with the start of civil war and the break-up of former Yugoslavia, happenings on the subcultural scene of Serbian and Yugoslav cities have died down, and the 'new débutantes', as the sociologist of culture Ratka Marić would say, have stepped onstage<sup>13</sup>. National war drama and the economic crisis, followed by the demise of all value-systems, have led to a real expansion of subcultural forms of lifestyle - crime, drug-abuse, prostitution, violence, robbery and war profiteering; parallel to this, subcultures that, apart from the symbolic planes of music and fashion, largely overlap with truly delinquent and militant forces in society, are enthroned on the emptied youth subculture scene."

(Kronja, 2001: pp. 37-38. Translation: M.T.)

The nature of the populist culture spearheaded by Turbo-folk in recent years was not merely parochial and traditionalist as some of Collin's respondents

---

<sup>13</sup> The very topic of this study does not allow the author to accept the bold statement of the subcultural happenings 'dying down'. However, there is some substance in the argument that, for numerous reasons explored here, the subcultures in question have 'gone underground'. Gordy (2001: 127, 133, 175) talks of the resilience that cultural forms show when endangered. In the section dedicated to rockers' resistance to the regime, he states that marginalisation had made Belgrade rockers more stubborn in keeping their stance.

(2001) would like to suggest<sup>14</sup>. If that were the case, it would not have such an effect on the urban youth and seemingly apolitical<sup>15</sup> parts of the middle-class population in Nineties' Serbia. Kronja identifies this contradiction. She states that along with the traditional audiences of the 'newly-composed' folk<sup>16</sup>, parts of the educated urban audiences have accepted the Turbo-folk genre. Kronja continues the argument by saying that 'Turbo-folk' takes over *elements*<sup>17</sup> of (authentic) urban subcultures (rock, punk, rave, etc.):

"[Turbo-folk] expresses itself entirely as an urban, contemporary, ultra-modern current. Simultaneously, it abandons the values advocated by [socially] engaged urban subcultures. This is why we can speak of Turbo-folk as crisis of subculture."

(Kronja, 2001: 36-37. Translation: M.T.)

This author's argument is especially revealing when it comes to further contradictions of the Turbo-folk phenomenon. Its followers had a strong leaning, Kronja states, towards 'hedonistic ... enjoyment'<sup>18</sup> in the consumption of '*warrior chic*'. Matthew Collin's explanation as presented in his (2001) book does not fully qualify: the *appearance* of traditionalism (mainly in lyrics) identified by two of his respondents,<sup>19</sup> remains that - a mere *appearance*. The aesthetics and ethical foundations of Turbo-folk were far from traditional, deeply embedded in the new aggressive forms of street culture<sup>20</sup>. Musically, it formed a hybrid: on the one hand, traditional Serbian elements were already amalgamated with Greek, Spanish and Turkish musical influences, in 'newly-composed' folk. On the other, Turbo-folk had incorporated elements of 'pop, Rock, Rap & Hip-Hop, even House and Techno' (Kronja, 2001: 65), making it,

---

<sup>14</sup> Dragan Ambrozić and Jelena Subotić, pp. 79-80 in Collin (2001).

<sup>15</sup> For the multifaceted understanding of the term 'apolitical' it is worth consulting Antonio Gramsci (1971) and his analysis of the dire consequences of political passivity in times of social turmoil.

<sup>16</sup> Which could be dubbed 'old'. Its origins can be found in pre-Second World War Yugoslavia. The term, as such, had its first use in the 1960s.

<sup>17</sup> Kronja uses Hebdige's (1993) views on subculture to identify the 'signifying practices' that took place here, quite correctly identifying the semiotic mish-mash of Turbo-folk.

<sup>18</sup> *Jouissance* of Roland Barthes (1977), as opposed to the more intellectualised *plaisir*.

<sup>19</sup> As well as 'flag-waving' that another respondent refers to. Interview with V. Jerić, Belgrade musician - conducted by the author of this research study - reveals how many in Serbia still cannot grasp the multidimensional nature of Turbo-folk, responsible for its success. Turbo-folk cannot be simply equated with nationalism, though it was one of its connotations. Thus Turbo-folk is not the only attribute of 'flag-waving' and vice versa.

<sup>20</sup> Discussed at length in Dragičević-Šešić (1994), Gordy (1999, 2001), Kronja (2001), etc.

almost paradoxically, a western-type market-oriented hybrid genre, having in mind the context within which it had emerged (Milojević, 2002).

Remarks made by Kronja (2001) on the nature of Turbo-folk as signifying practice are accurate. Turbo-folk used many important signifiers<sup>21</sup> of other urban subcultures and fed on them, creating a new entity, a new reading of those signifiers in a distorted context. This would inevitably change the reading of pre-existing urban subcultures of Belgrade and other Serbian cities. Kronja's statement that youth subcultures of rock, punk, rave, etc., have 'left the scene leaving a void', does no justice to her otherwise well-structured argument. The complex economic and political conditions have indeed led other urban subcultures of Belgrade and Serbia into a very difficult position.

The independent production of underground music in Belgrade was (and remains), starved of funding. As this text will show later this came as a result of numerous factors<sup>22</sup>. Kronja makes an overstatement by saying that other youth subcultures have left a void that was later filled by Turbo-folk. What made the Turbo-folk genre so effective in propagating the values and practices desired by the Milošević regime in Serbia, is related to quasi-traditionalism of 'newly-composed folk'<sup>23</sup> music' developed in previous decades as well as the *appearance* of sophistication<sup>24</sup>, fostered by its

---

<sup>21</sup> The origin of the term *Turbo-folk* came outside its social milieu, as it will be seen below. In accord to its contradictory nature, this genre's name was appropriated from a subversive statement made by one of Belgrade's conceptual rockers (Gordy, 1999, 2001; Janjatović, 1998; Milojević, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> These factors have been examined in the research study on independent *underground* music production in Belgrade. They include state intervention, uncontrollable factors of market breakdown in Yugoslavia, problematic business ethos of the Belgrade 'rock' community, etc. Political factors made their contribution too (as Gordy, Collin and others noted), effectively sending the scene 'underground', sending it 'off-stage' only in appearances. One of Gordy's respondents talks of the illusion that public taste had turned to Turbo-folk. This illusion was created by the government monopoly on media, supporting Turbo-folk and left little place for other musical forms - not only rock but also traditional village music (2001: 140).

<sup>23</sup> Van de Port makes a genealogical mistake equating it to 'Turbo-folk'. The very fact that he does this - shows the interconnections between the two genres. This is possibly a result of his *outsider* position as researcher - *more an observer than participant* - he is likely to have misread the information fed by respondents, not being an insider to the social context. This is why the whole ethnographic justification in van de Port's work might be problematic. Another possible methodological flaw of van de Port's work is the lack of sensitivity to the 'Otherness' of Serbs in his own view. This problematic is visited in 'Nesting Orientalisms: the Case of Former Yugoslavia' (Hayden, M B, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> Kronja (2001), Milojević, J (2002)

superficial relations to Western pop-music. Prodanović (2001: pp. 61-63) discusses the anti-urban nature of both Turbo-folk and the 'newly-composed folk music'. These musical genres provided the migrants from rural areas with the means to express the dissatisfaction and confusion with life in the cities<sup>25</sup>. As will be shown, this change of place and profession was imposed on them. 'Newly-composed folk' had become a substitute for the urban culture that rural migrants could not fully accept. As Novaković (1994) shows, these migrations were not merely economic. The agrarian reforms of Tito's government, after it officially took power in 1946, led to the destruction of landowners in rural areas and contributed to the demise of urban middle-classes. Further to that, the 1965 industry reform had created mass-redundancies and a drop in industrial production throughout Yugoslavia, resulting in the exodus of qualified labour to West Germany and other countries (Novaković, 1994: 3).

The cultural consequences of the two 'reforms' were vast. The first phase had created the 'peasant-workers' class<sup>26</sup>, mainly made up of impoverished farmers who were forced to migrate to the cities as a result of political and economic pressure. The second created 'Gastarbeiters' (German for 'guest-labourers'), a huge exiled Yugoslav community in West Germany (and other countries, within and outside the EEC). Both of these changes, imposed on Yugoslav society, distorted the sense of 'home' among the affected classes. This, in turn, was the breeding ground for the creation of the hybrid musical genre, 'newly-composed folk music'. As Milojević (2002) and Gordy (1999,

---

<sup>25</sup> Kronja states that the subversive role of 'newly-composed...' was underestimated in the works of many established cultural theorists in former Yugoslavia (2001: pp. 24-26). Though it is hard to find any pronounced critique of society in this music, it is, as Kronja states 'implicit'. Indeed, the longing for 'lost home' expressed in some songs might uncover the hidden problems faced by the thousands, forced to leave their farms and become cheap labour through the state-directed 'reforms'. A similar discourse of 'lost home' is implicit in the 'newly-composed...' of the Sixties and Seventies, when a large number of skilled labourers had to leave the country in pursuit of work, predominantly in West Germany. Such lyrical references might have uncovered unpleasant facts that the Communist leadership tried not to mention.

<sup>26</sup> 'Seljaci-radnici' in Novaković's words. Gordy calls them 'urban peasants'. Their dissatisfaction was used by Tito's regime as a force directed against the pro-western-democratic tendencies within the educated and managerial strata, as well as against the students' demands for democratisation (Novaković, 1994: 3). This is especially important to understand in the light of Milošević's reign, where the same formula was applied with grave consequences. The student demonstrations of 1968, 1991, 1992, 1996/97 have threatened the ones in power, and as Collin (2001) notes, the student movement 'Otpor' ('Resistance') had grown out of the 1996/97 protests into a force that was partially responsible for the overthrow of October 2000.

2001) report, neither Titoist nor post-Titoist governments in Serbia<sup>27</sup>, shied away from using music for political manipulation. The greatest enemies of dictatorships in former Yugoslavia were the values shared among urban strata, as Gramsci (1971) noted in the 1930s, and as the Serbian democratic revolution showed in 2000.

Gramsci notes (1971: 272) that the 'generic hatred' between social strata is 'semi-feudal', not modern, nor evidence of class-consciousness. By antagonising the villagers, forcefully brought into urban areas, against the city population (especially the 'reactionary remnants of the bourgeois'), Titoist and post-Titoist regimes prevented the creation of a strong democratic movement for a long time<sup>28</sup>. Among their tools was the inception of the 'peasant-workers' class: 'newly-composed' and Turbo-folk music being the main signifiers of these artificially created ruptures in urban society. Along with the 'intermediate, episodic Caesarism' of Tito (Gramsci, 1971: 222), the agrarian and industrial 'reforms' had provided a convenient valve for the frustration spread across strata. For example, the 1965 reform that expelled thousands of qualified workers 'created more jobs' in the country (Novaković, 1994: 3).

The songs of 'longing' for the lost 'love' or 'home' in 'newly-composed folk' music had diffused possible sources of political critique in these displaced communities. This statement is in disagreement with the one made by Kronja, on the subversive potential of 'newly-composed folk'. Such subversive potential was never realised<sup>29</sup>. She does concede that this music was eventually to be used - especially in its Turbo-folk form - for the promotion of values that suited the regime. The friction between strata, reflected and perpetuated through culture, could be implicitly read in Gordy's writing: the insincere critique of Neofolk in Titoist time was as ineffective as the similar 'campaign for culture' of 1994/95. He also states that Neofolk musicians during Tito's reign would readily record and perform songs dedicated to the

---

<sup>27</sup> Not only Milošević's regime during the war, but *throughout* former Yugoslavia (Broughton *et al*, 1994).

<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Gordy's book cited here was entirely focused on the practices that Milošević's regime used to destroy political, informative, musical and all other alternatives to its rule.

<sup>29</sup> Kronja probably sees this 'subversion' in Adornian terms: subversive pleasures (Adorno, 1991: 34).



'Party and Revolution' (2001: 141). Prodanović (2001: 61) refers to the 'apolitical'<sup>30</sup> nature of broadcasters and production companies that helped promote the Turbo-folk values among the politically inactive and ruptured social strata in the Nineties' Serbia.

"Although there were great differences, in some aspects Belgrade at the end of the Second Millennium could be recognised as a *pathopolis*<sup>31</sup>: the games of sadism and social anaesthesia of Ancient Rome could have been compared to the omnipresent 'apolitical' or 'entertaining' television stations, which were, interestingly, owned and run by the people up to their necks in politics - naturally - of the ruling parties".

(Prodanović: "Stariji i lepsi Beograd", 2001. Translation: M.T.)

Prodanović coined a term 'Pink-Culture' referring to the most prominent promoter of 'Turbo-folk' music and entertainment, Pink TV and Radio. He continues the argument on the 'apolitical' and the ambivalent (2001: 63).

"An ambivalent relation to the city is present throughout the manifestations of the '*Pink-Culture*' - on one hand, it (the city) is glorified through iconography, fashion, pleasant cafes and clubs, trade marks; on the other it (the city) is portrayed as a dangerous and sometimes arrogant environment that has to be conquered, adapted to one's own values; an environment from which all the aspects that bring undesired doubt have to be erased"

It would be an error to identify the 'Turbo-folk' phenomenon solely with the regime that ruled Serbia in the Nineties. Its genesis can be traced to the 'newly-composed folk' of previous decades, as Prodanović continues to explain in the text. Furthermore, its origins and versions exist in other parts of former Yugoslavia, notably Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia (Broughton *et al.*, 1994). Gordy (2001: pp. 134, 156) mentions the Sarajevo band 'Bijelo

---

<sup>30</sup> Gramsci believed that 'The greater the mass of the apolitical, the greater the part played by illegal forces has to be. The greater the politically organised and educated forces, the more it is necessary to "cover" the legal State, etc.' (1971: 229). This is an interesting observation that might be applied to the case of criminalisation of all societies in former Yugoslavia in the Nineties and especially with the glorification of apolitical yet criminogenic values of 'live fast-die young' ethos of Turbo-folk. This provides another critique to some of the observations made by Collin's Belgrade respondents that 'Turbo-folk' was advocating traditional values of the Serbian Village. Parochial - yes, traditional - no.

<sup>31</sup> The term 'Pathopolis' Prodanović (2001: 60) borrows from Lewis Mumford's 'The City in History' (1961), who, in turn, took it from Patrick Geddes (according to Prodanović).

dugme' ('White Button') as the precursor of Turbo-folk. Fleka recalls his first encounter with 'Bijelo dugme' in 1973, which at the time performed under the name 'Jutro' ('Morning'):

"... that festival featured a Sarajevan band 'Jutro' ...let's say with a frontman who had a *nice civic haircut*, he had the moustache of a restaurant musician; he wore a conventional shirt with a stiff collar, you know the cardboard one, like, and cuffs, sleeves pulled up and the shirt was tied in a knot on his umbilicus; down there he wore ... formal trousers ...those ironed to the edge. But turned up half way up the shin, and *barefoot!* ... And the others all had long hair and then *the guitarist* said, 'This is our singer...we are the Sarajevan band that Jutro, this is our singer Zeljko Bebek, he just returned from the army ... and we will now *sing you* one of our *hit compositions* that was released on a single. It is called *My Sweetheart if I Was a White Button*. And that is how they represented themselves as Jutro and afterwards three years later, they came... but just then it was clear to me as soon as I saw them that we are doomed... Well, on the first album of 'Bijelo dugme' (White Button) *the sheep were bleating!* ... That is how their first song begins. You can hear the whole flock, I mean, *horror...*"<sup>32</sup>

The term Gordy uses in relation to 'Bijelo dugme' is 'proto-Neofolk'. This further reinforces the criticism of his statement that rock was an elitist form in Serbia before the war, or that it belonged to the mainstream. The disputable mainstream position of EKV, even if accepted as correct, could by no means be comparable to the mainstream status of 'Bijelo dugme'.

Petar Janjatović, a highly acclaimed music journalist, made a comment that supports this argument. In the fieldwork conducted for this analysis, Janjatović compares EKV with bands that truly represented mainstream rock music in Yugoslavia. The following excerpt from the author's reflexive diary sheds some light on Janjatović's comments

"I just spoke to Petar Janjatović... He told me about EKV and their album 'Ljubav' ('Love') from 1988, which sold 17,000 copies at the same time when

---

<sup>32</sup> Appendix 2, interview with Miomir Grujić 'Fleka', dated 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

Bajaga sold 400,000 and Bora Djordjevic 500,000. We returned to the notion of underground as defined through record sales.”<sup>33</sup>

EKV's popularity was based on the interurban links (Gordy, 1999, 2001); the sheer numbers of records sold does not allow them to be classified as 'mainstream'. This, in turn contrasts with the argument on the 'elitist' nature of Yugoslav rock music. The stylistic distinction between the proto-Neofolk music (Gordy's term) of 'Bijelo dugme' was further coupled with its treatment by the Communist political establishment as 'acceptable'. This is why I would not completely agree with many others - Gordy, Kronja and Milojević in their statement that Neofolk was on the cultural margins of former Yugoslavia. In appearance, this was the case. In fact, the hybrid result of 'westernisation' in folk music was promoted in government-controlled media and record companies, long before the early Nineties, when this process had become obvious as the Turbo-folk phenomenon.

One possible criticism of Prodanović's comments could be that the term 'Pink-Culture' is not sufficiently explored, possibly because the author addresses a Serbian readership that is familiar with the genesis of the whole phenomenon. It would also be unjustified to non-critically appropriate Adornian beliefs in the omnipotence of the 'culture industry', where the listening audiences are all but powerless in creating the demand for the commodity-music. 'Novokomponovana' ('newly-composed') folk music, as well as Turbo-folk, were used and utilised for controlling the consensus among subordinate strata by both the Titoist<sup>34</sup> and post-Titoist discourse of populism. The social and economic roots of this phenomenon can be traced back to Novaković's 1994 text on the destruction of Yugoslav working classes. As Novaković's work does not deal with music, this link is not obvious. Indeed, talking of the cultural policies of 'enlightenment', advocated by the League of Communists in Yugoslavia, Kronja and Milojević would not agree with the statement made

---

<sup>33</sup> Appendix 1, Reflexive Diary. Entry dated 15<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

<sup>34</sup> Tito had perpetuated his own cult of personality, perfected by his cronies after his death. A valuable contribution on the subject comes from Pejić's "'Tito" or a representation iconised' ("Tito" ili ikonizacija jedne predstave', from Sretenović (1999)). It comes as little surprise, and this could be implicitly read in Gordy's work, that Milošević had, *briefly*, enjoyed a similar cult status among some Serbian strata.

above - that the regime, even during Tito's reign, had used 'newly-composed' folk music for political ends.

However, regardless of the fact that official state critics regarded it as 'backward', it was long present in the mass-media and, as Milojević argues, the protagonists of 'newly-composed folk music' had developed a market-oriented business culture long before 'rockers' did (Milojević, 2002: 1, pt. 15). In Socialist Yugoslavia culture production was controlled by the State, so it is hard to conclude that it did not unofficially support the emerging market for Neofolk. Western music influences were acceptable unless 'endangering the regime's essence' (Milojević, 2002: 2, pt. 14). Western music was licensed, subject to editorial policy of government-controlled record and media companies and 'used as a means to stifle the identities of nations living in [former Yugoslavia]' (Milojević, 2002: 1, pt. 2). This, in turn, resulted in the hybridisation of folk, and the promotion of 'village rock'<sup>35</sup> against grass roots developments in both (broadly understood) genres.

This would not have been possible if the existing cultural environment was not ready to accept it. The reasons could be sought in the changing notion of 'home' through internal and external migration<sup>36</sup> since the end of World War II. The 'conquering' of the cities by the recently urbanised rural strata that Prodanović refers to is a direct result of disastrous policies introduced by the League of Communists<sup>37</sup> growing managerial class from the early Sixties onwards (Novaković, 1994). Some of those were the result of intended manipulation while others were the result of incompetence on the part of a 'politocratic élite' (Krešić, 1994).

---

<sup>35</sup> Of the Sarajevo band 'Bijelo dugme', as the best known example.

<sup>36</sup> These notions of 'home' as well as the tensions arising from migration have been extensively covered in the work of Doreen Massey (1997). It seems that the managerial classes in Communist Yugoslavia knew how to utilise the tensions thus created, preventing the emergence of a self-conscious civil society that would endanger their monopoly of power.

<sup>37</sup> The name of the Communist Party in SFR Yugoslavia after the break-up with USSR.

## 4.2 Stratification and genres of resistance in Belgrade subcultures

It is not the purpose of this study to examine the genesis of Turbo-folk; however, it had to be explained in sufficient detail in order to position the independent music production and the Belgrade underground scene within its appropriate socio-historical, cultural and market context. Further to the above argument, and with reference to Fleka's interview statement at the beginning of this text, the cultural legacy of the Titoist regime must not be underestimated. Brute force was rarely exercised in public, as happened during the reign of Milosević's élite – bar some exceptional cases such as the 1968 student protests<sup>38</sup>. However, what Fleka is most likely referring to, in earlier, Titoist years, is the public disqualification of anyone that dared to challenge the prescribed code of discursive conduct.

The targeted groups included writers, filmmakers and other figures of public interest, creating an atmosphere of anxiety and rigidity. One of the most notorious cases involved a young Film Academy graduate at the time, Lazar Stojanović (Kartalović, 2001; Kljajić-Imširović, 1998; Stojanović, 1998). His graduation project was a film titled 'Plastic Jesus' (Plastični Isus). Made in 1971, it had symbolically criticised Yugoslav society and the system's shortcomings. The film was seized in 1972, by which time Stojanović had undergone several trials for 'activities against the People and the State' and was serving a three-year prison sentence. Evidence that the Titoist legacy still prospered even ten years after the President's death, is clear from the following. The film was released from a secret police 'bunker' in 1991, after its author had gone through considerable effort to publish it. Furthermore, Lazar Stojanović and others who took part in the early pro-democratic movement were labelled as 'nationalists' (Stojanović L, 1998). This legitimised their vilification as destructive forces and allowed their efforts for establishing open social dialogue to be discredited and stifled.

---

<sup>38</sup> Glenny, 1996 shows an interesting account and comparison between student protests in 1968 and 1991, in 'The Fall of Yugoslavia'. Kljajić-Imširović (1998) recalls the Caesarian speech with which Tito had 'supported' the student unrest in 1968 that could have endangered his position in power, only to condemn and stifle it in a matter of days (Krešić, 1994).

Some of the more recent cases in former Yugoslavia include the Slovenian band 'Laibach'. Its success in avoiding serious trouble with the rigid communist gatekeepers was symptomatic of developments within SFR Yugoslavia over the last decade which saw the weakening of both the federal state and the federal communist party apparatus<sup>39</sup> (Jakšić, 1995; Madžar, 1994; Silber and Little, 1996). The case of this particular concept-band also showed the growth of chauvinist sentiment in all parts of the former federation. They consciously played with totalitarian iconography. The iconographic references 'Laibach' made were far closer to the extreme Right than Communist totalitarianism. To understand the provocative nature of this band's subversive media strategy, it is worth looking at their very name. 'Laibach' was the name for the Slovene Capital, Ljubljana, coined during the German occupation in the Second World War. The influential British Popular Music consumers' magazine, *The New Musical Express*, had an article about fascist iconography in rock music, titled 'Hello Nazi', published on May 8, 1999. The following is an excerpt of a section on Laibach:

"Slovenian band Laibach, in a lot of ways the forerunners of 'apolitical' Rammstein, made this connection between totalitarianism and rock'n'roll most explicit, mixing up fascist symbols and imagery in their videos and stage sets, dressing in paramilitary uniforms (they claimed they were 'hunting clothes' or a style based on Yugoslav Communist partisans) and covering monolithic rock classics like Queen's 'One Vision' and 'Sympathy For The Devil' in a style deliberately construed to evoke Hitler's speeches. Whether Laibach were fascists or very clever subversives using the imagery of fascism and Stalinist communism to undermine the self-importance of both rock'n'roll and the declining state of post-Tito Yugoslavia, is a moot point. The fact is that Laibach often attracted Sieg-Heiling .... to their *gigs*. Laibach never explained their actions<sup>40</sup>."

Regardless of arguments about whether Laibach was adhering to a specific form of totalitarian ideology or not, their case is an extreme one in two

---

<sup>39</sup> Decentralisation of the Yugoslav State had become complete in the 1974 Constitution. See Silber and Little, 1996: pp. 29, 34, 36. Jakšić, 1995, however, talks of the disintegrative processes in Yugoslavia after the death of Tito as 'refeudalisation' of its federal units. Madžar, 1994, traces the power of oligarchies running the federal units to the authoritarian characteristics of a monolithic socialist system.

<sup>40</sup> Udo, NME, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1999: pp. 30-31.

respects. Firstly, they were the only band in Socialist Yugoslavia that was documented to have manipulated fascist-like symbolism. Secondly, the fact that this extreme provocation was not disciplined like previous cases clearly shows the disintegration of the system of government in Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by the end of the Eighties<sup>41</sup>. However, to be impartial in the analysis of Laibach's work, an excerpt from Janjatović's 'Yu-Rock Encyclopaedia' needs to be mentioned here (1998: 105). Laibach, well known for its multimedia performances, took part in the 1983 Zagreb Biennial. This time they played two films simultaneously: 'Revolucija još traje' ('The Revolution Continues'), which featured speeches of late President Tito, and a porn-film. The police intervened and stopped the concert. It is left to the reader to conclude whether this kind of subversion is typical of neo-fascism, although to the author of these lines it seems unlikely<sup>42</sup>.

In Belgrade, where the federal state was far more powerful than in Slovenia (not least because Belgrade was the Federal capital), resistance through subversion in music, art and cinema took a different form. With regard to Belgrade's music scene, there was one indicative example of totalitarian symbolism. A Belgrade band, 'Idoli' ('The Idols') released a song called 'Мальчики' ('Mal'chiki', or 'The Boys' in Russian). The track was on the seminal album<sup>43</sup>, 'Paket aranžman: Beograd' ('Package Arrangement: Belgrade') released in 1981 - a record that compiled the work of three

---

<sup>41</sup> A brief account of the controversies that Neue Slowenische Kunst, to whom Laibach belonged, had created could be found in Silber and Little's (1996) 'The Death of Yugoslavia', pages 48-49.

<sup>42</sup> There are other elements of 'Laibach's' visual style in opposition to their alleged fascist ideology. Their official sign contains the 'Malevich Cross'. Kazimir Malevich was a leading Russian avant-garde painter in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, not in any way linked to fascism. The deer horns, another part of their emblem, was related to the art of Joseph Beuys. The latter, was derived from Germanic mysticism, though Beuys' work had strong references to various mystical traditions, especially the Shamen from the Caucasus region.

<sup>43</sup> Janjatović (1998: pp. 131-132; 181) mentions another album, presenting the 'second generation of Belgrade New Wave bands'. It was titled 'ARA: Artistička Radna Akcija'. 'Artistic Labour Action' as a title was a wordplay, mocking the 'Youth Labour Actions', one of the iconic elements of Communist rule in Yugoslavia. These were held across the country, originating from the post-Second World War reconstruction. By the 1980s 'Youth Labour Actions' became an ostentatious signifier of the ways in which the Communist party looked upon youth. It is possible that 'The Idols' mocked this, and similar, State-supported practices in their song 'Mal'chiki'.

Belgrade bands, 'Šarlo akrobata' ('Charles the Acrobat')<sup>44</sup>, 'Električni orgazam' ('Electric Orgasm') and 'Idoli'. This album had influenced the post-punk 'sound' of the Eighties, not only in Belgrade but throughout the urban music scenes in Yugoslavia (Janjatović 1998).

In 'Mal'chiki', the sarcastic lyrical overtones consisted of images from life in a 'communist utopia'. This was further reinforced through an accompanying music video packed with exemplified images typical of Soviet art and cinema production from the era of Socialist-Realism. The answer to why the communist gatekeepers tolerated this may be found in the early years of post-Second World War Yugoslavia. Jakšić (1994) and Galtung (1994) noted the international prestige Tito gained by resisting Stalin and turning his back on the Soviet bloc. Therefore, the guardians of Yugoslavia's 'communist morale', did not consider it blasphemous to refer to the defects of the Soviet system. This created a space for subtle forms of criticism aimed at the Yugoslav society; as in the tale of Emperor's New Clothes, the Emperor was the last one to notice the swindle. Certainly this could not have happened a decade earlier when the dissenting voices of people like Lazar Stojanović faced severe harassment.

The 1996 TV documentary 'Academy-Republic' ('Akademija-Republika') touched upon a related subject. In the documentary, respondents were asked, whether the passing of President Tito led to a greater freedom of expression for the urban youth in Yugoslavia. Three interviewee statements from the 'Academy-Republic' documentary (Vujović and Kanjevac, 1996) illustrate this quite clearly. A former member of management at the influential 'Academy' club, Mića Atanasković states that -

---

<sup>44</sup> 'Šarlo akrobata' was a short-lived band that left by far the strongest impact on Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav *underground* rock (and not only rock) music. One of its members, Milan Mladenović became the leader of the influential EKV band, and is considered to be one of the seminal figures in Serbian and Yugoslav rock music, as well as an outstanding poet. Gordy quotes some statements considering Mladenović as one of the greatest Serbian 20<sup>th</sup> century poets. Another member of 'Šarlo akrobata', Dušan Kojić 'Koja' founded 'Disciplina kičme' ('Spinal Discipline'), a very influential group, whose impact on Belgrade *underground* music will be discussed later in this text. Gordy makes a serious error (2001: 156) stating that Mladenović was a member of 'Disciplina kičme'. Artistic rivalry between Kojić and him was reflected in one of Kojić's best known songs.



“Of course, it was about Tito. Tito died in 1980. It was truly a turning point.”

However, in the same film, Petar Miočin (founder of the short-lived ‘Great Rock ‘n’ Roll Party’) disagrees

“Who cares remembers Tito now?” (Turning to a child standing nearby, as he is interviewed on the street), “Hey kid, d’you know who Tito was? (The child shrugs with disinterest). “See? He doesn’t matter any more! Then they threatened me with two years in prison; ten few years down the line newspapers were competing in belittling him.”

Perhaps the most balanced view on the issue – as discussed in ‘Academy-Republic’ – came from the musician Srdjan Gojković ‘Gile’

“I do not know to what extent did Tito’s death influence the events... in the country in general. It probably had an indirect influence. We all remember that shackles loosened up a bit ... “

Whatever the cause, these liberties were not to last. Artistic liberties grew in the early Eighties; nearing the end of the decade, nationalist politics led to new forms of government control of culture.

Collin (2001) and Gordy (1999, 2001) testify that the Eighties in Yugoslavia were characterised by a number of vivid music and art scenes, with Belgrade enjoying one of the most developed in the country. This especially applies to the so-called ‘New Wave’ that encompassed a stylistic variety that emerged from punk. Furthermore, Gordy (2001: pp. 124-126) talks of the interurban nature of rock scenes in Yugoslavia, with special reference to ‘New Wave’. The links between musicians and their audiences across the newly established borders continued even after the country’s break-up. Many of these musicians and some of their followers have retained a critical approach to societies emerging from the break-up of Yugoslavia, keeping their symbolical resistance active.

Resistance in subculture, through music, art and other creative practices, has recurred throughout recent Serbian history. Collin (2001: 52) talks of the event

that took place on March 8, 1992. Members of three prominent Belgrade bands (Catherine The Great<sup>45</sup>, Electric Orgasm and Partybreakers<sup>46</sup>), formed a 'super-group'. This ad-hoc band picked its name, "Rimtutituki", from wordplay commonly used in Belgrade coarse slang<sup>47</sup>. It addressed war-mongering politicians and their followers- cryptic yet easily read by the younger citizens of Belgrade. Collin (2001) wrote a detailed account of the event. Not being familiar with the lyrics of the song promoted on that day<sup>48</sup>, Collin does not dwell on them<sup>49</sup>. One particularly interesting line from the song played by Rimtutituki on that day indicates the tensions between the discourses that rock and folk music represented in Serbian society:

"Neću da pobedi narodna muzika..." ("I don't want folk music to win...")

The song was titled 'Mir, brate, mir' ('Peace, Brother, Peace'). Musicians from three influential Belgrade bands played from a back of an old lorry, on a day that marked a forgotten holiday of a country that no longer existed, Women's Day, 8<sup>th</sup> March. The date of this stunt-concert was further significant in that it fell one day short of the first anniversary of violent clashes between riot police and pro-democracy demonstrators (Collin, 2001; Glenny, 1996; Silber and Little, 1995). The lyrical connotations are clear, as seen from the above argument: Turbo-folk was just gaining pace and was becoming the soundtrack to the crisis of civil society, the signifier of the rapid criminalisation, the signal of violent change, new stratification and the creation of a new, aggressive élite. Kronja shows the existence of superficial links between Turbo-folk and

---

<sup>45</sup> Wrongly identified by Gordy as a 'mainstream' band, as noted above. This is yet another example of problems that an 'outsider' researcher faces when relying on opinions and accounts provided by members of the observed community. It seems that some of Gordy's interpretations have been conditioned by his sources, i.e. interviewees, participants in Belgrade music, arts and media. Such representational distortions occur in ethnographic research, especially if the researcher does not possess long-term inside knowledge.

<sup>46</sup> Gordy provides a linguistic explanation of their name. This clearly shows the signifying practices through the use of slang. The 'Party' in 'Partybreakers' was, Gordy explains, the all-powerful gate-keeping political force in Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The other, more tolerable reading would have been the one that he does not mention - the uninvited guests arriving at a party, misbehaving, annoying the guests and 'breaking' it. If these two readings are superimposed, the semiotics of this wordplay becomes clearer.

<sup>47</sup> The name of the band was 'Rimtutituki'; to an untrained ear, it might resemble the word 'rhythm'. To the insider, all the layers of its offensive meaning are instantly revealed.

<sup>48</sup> The band had only one release - the vinyl 45 rpm single, promoted on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1992.

<sup>49</sup> However, the analysis provided in Gordy's book was much more thorough in this case.

western mass-culture production; the mediated eroticism of pop-stars like Madonna is met by pornographic aesthetics of Turbo-folk starlets (2001: 35).

The mass-consumption of music and related 'cultural produce' in the UK is not matched in Serbia because of very low consumer power. Cultural policies of New Labour adhere to some aesthetic codes whereas no such criteria apparently apply to the 'State Art' position of Turbo-folk in Milošević's government (2001: pp. 46-49, citing Angela McRobbie's 'In the Culture Society', 1999). This, as a result, Kronja continues, creates confusion and loss of both aesthetic and ethical criteria in Nineties' Serbia.

There was much more at stake than the customary dislike between the followers of rock and folk music fans in Belgrade. This animosity was the result of a deeper social conditioning; it would be unjustified to say that rock musicians, even the ones belonging to the 'new wave', resented the traditional musical heritage of the Balkans. For example, an influential Belgrade post-punk band, *Disciplina kičme* ('Spinal Discipline')<sup>50</sup> experimented with elements of Serbian brass music, along with references to J M Hendrix. However, this was remote from the kind of hybridisation (Milojević, 2002) used in 'newly-composed folk'. The ad-hoc concert that took place on March 8, 1992, is one example of how music was used to express and communicate concerns that went beyond entertainment. Another powerful example, the use of music in the 1996/97 street protests, is to be analysed in Section 4.5.

#### 4.3 Belgrade underground music scene and its foundations

Underground music had become customary as a mode of articulating dissent in Serbia during the Nineties. Collin describes how, during the 1991 demonstrations, Radio B92 had managed to broadcast news and comments whilst banned from reporting, encrypting them through music. They did so by carefully selecting the records they played whilst 'on air' (Collin, 2001: pp. 40-

---

<sup>50</sup> It is not the aim of this study to examine structural properties of music, therefore such examples have to be looked at from secondary sources, such as Janjatović, 1998 and others.

42). Their message was lightly encrypted through genre, song-titles, choruses, and band-names. It served two purposes: disseminating information, and supporting the protesters. Gordy (1999, 2001), Milojević (2002) and Janjatović (1998) mention another interesting point on the use and abuse of floating signifiers. A conceptual musician working under the pseudonym Rambo Amadeus, coined the term 'Turbo-folk'. His conceptual musical work - prior to the invention of his odd stage name - included bizarre titles like 'Lullaby for the Revolution: A Passion for Twenty-eight Vacuum Cleaners'. Gordy (2001), also quoted by Collin (2001), calls him 'the *Shakespearean* divine fool'<sup>51</sup>, expressing through satire, society's utmost fears and concerns. Some insiders within Belgrade's independent underground music and art production would not consider his work entirely beneficial to the survival of the 'scene'. One example lays in the very misappropriation of the name he used to describe his music in the late Eighties. He ironically labelled his music 'Turbo-folk', in order to provoke a public reaction - which he successfully did. However, this name later came to signify a phenomenon that, some argue, caused a lot of damage<sup>52</sup> to Serbian society.

Rambo Amadeus, the artist, juggles with the concept of 'primitive Other'. This is done in a Yugoslav (mainly Montenegrin) context, and is implicitly related to Sarajevo's 'New Primitives' of the Eighties<sup>53</sup>. Sarajevo's 'New Primitives' were largely misinterpreted and misunderstood. Mocking the Bosnian version of urban peasant Neofolk culture, they developed a belated but authentic version of punk's ambiguity.

Their sardonic approach to social problematic was misread in the media and they were seen as champions of Neofolk's integration into Yugoslav urban culture. This led to them becoming partially responsible for the social connotations of Turbo-folk. In a similar way, 'Rambo Amadeus' sometimes provided the grounds for ambiguous interpretations. His 'flirtations with the

---

<sup>51</sup> Antonije Pušić, alias Rambo Amadeus might not agree with the 'divine fool' label!

<sup>52</sup> Collin (2001), Gordy (1999, 2001), Janjatović, (1998), Kronja (2001), Milojević (2002) and Prodanović (2001) among others, discuss the relationships between the criminalised and destructive regime that ruled Serbia until 2000 and Turbo-folk.

<sup>53</sup> The leading 'New Primitives' bands were mentioned in Janjatović's (1998) Encyclopaedia.

mediocre' could raise ethical questions about his artistic integrity, as Fleka states in the 2001 interview. Whether Rambo Amadeus' work is ethically justifiable will not be examined here. He is widely considered an innovative musician and lyricist, as well as an exceptional performer. However, this example shows how a shift in signifying practices could have unpredictable - and some may judge - dire results.

#### 4.3.1 Signs of subversion: a semiotic enquiry

An important part of this study is focused on the semiotics of interchangeable symbols and the contexts in which they appear. This is derived from the statements of opinion and factual accounts in interviews, participant observations and secondary data including documentary accounts, academic and journalist texts. The way Dick Hebdige traced the origins of style in British subcultures, especially punk, is a notable example of the analysis of 'signifying practices' and 'floating signifiers' (Hebdige, 1993). As seen in the above example, understanding such sign-producing systems in and outside music is very important.

This study will have to be confined to subjective accounts of musical and extra-musical factors, where structural analysis of music is not available. With reference to Hebdige's work on musical style, Middleton (2000: 8) states that a lack of direct references to sound structures in music may leave the discussion on a speculative level. A theoretical underpinning of what is referred to as the sonic elements of a particular genre or sub-genre has to be accepted from other studies<sup>54</sup>. The vocabulary used in interviews, observations and other data is justified on the level of interchangeable, overlapping and counteracting elements of 'musical style'. This acts as a supplement that provides a deeper understanding of the production and distribution practices related to musical products within a specific social and

---

<sup>54</sup> e.g. McDonald's text on musical structures on 'alternative rock' (2000) or Whiteley's analysis of the music of Jimmy Hendrix (2000).

cultural environment. These practices are revealed through discursive power relations and provide the articulation of meaning.

What has to be understood in the case of Belgrade and Serbia is that music was used in a symbolic way to articulate and convey dense sets of questions and statements related to the present - and future - of the society. It remains a factor of authenticity and authority among many urban communities. This concept is largely abandoned in the West - at least in theoretical analyses of the social role of 'popular'<sup>55</sup> music. The development of artists, musical genres and their respective audiences in the West is no longer identifiable along strict lines of social stratification and politicised discourse<sup>56</sup>, as Middleton (2000) explains. This is an understandable position, bearing in mind that the social friction of the kind that existed in Serbia is largely a thing of the past, at least as expressed through music-related movements<sup>57</sup>.

On the other hand, the sub-title of Collin's 2001 book is indicative of his opinion on the role played by music and media in Nineties' Serbia. It reads: "Rock'n'roll radio and Belgrade's underground resistance". One of the main problematic elements of Collin's book is that he scarcely used a critical approach to the - undeniably significant - role of B92 in the Serbian democratic movement. It seems that B92 was taken, at face value, as the sole contributor to the counter-culture opposing the regime in Serbia during the Nineties. Whereas their role was important, it would be naïve to suggest that one media organisation was the sole bearer of cultural resistance.

Reflecting on his 1995<sup>58</sup> visit to Belgrade, Bill Drummond identifies a living example of subcultural subversion in Serbian politics. In his autobiography, titled "45", Drummond refers to the use of music in Belgrade street protests, apparently expressing astonishment:

---

<sup>55</sup> The limitations of the term 'popular' have been mentioned at the beginning of this text.

<sup>56</sup> Kellner's (1997) criticism of such theoretical positions was discussed at length in Chapter 2.

<sup>57</sup> NME's columnists observed this question, proclaiming 'the end of tribalism' (Cigarettes and Saunderton, 1998). Might this be the new conventional wisdom in popular music journalism?

<sup>58</sup> His angle on the screening of the K Foundation's film is indicative of some interesting methodological aspects of participant observation. Compare Drummond's accounts of the screening with the reflective observation of the same event by the author of this analysis.

“This morning I made a call to Beograd (Belgrade) to find out about hearing ‘The Magnificent’<sup>59</sup> on the BBC World Service last night. I learnt that B92 had become the rallying cry of last-year’s day-after-day, week-after-week, month-after-month peaceful demonstration for democracy in Republic Square, a demonstration that even those water canons could not flush away, as hundreds of thousands of people demanded the same thing: for Milošević to stand down. Our recording of ‘The Magnificent’ had not only become the theme tune of the station, but the anthem of the democracy movement. You spend your pop life longing for one of your three and a half minute slices of radio fodder to rise above being mere pop music, to enter the social fabric of the nation and times we live through, like ‘Give Peace a Chance’ or ‘Anarchy in the UK’ or ‘Three Lions’. And this morning I learn that a track that we recorded in a day, never released as a single, thought was crap and had forgotten about has taken on a meaning, an importance in a ‘far off land’ for a struggle I hardly understood. Strange.”

(Bill Drummond, “45”, 2001: 245)

The street protests to which Drummond refers took place from November 1996 to February/March 1997 - an important reference point in recent Serbian history. This point in history is also important as one charts the development of new music in Belgrade. It is hard to draw strict lines of social stratification with reference to lifestyle, aesthetic and political values related to subculture music - e. g. identifying punk as a primarily ‘working class’ movement. In the case of Belgrade, generalisations of the kind would again be unjustified, because the social reality - in Communist Yugoslavia before the war, and in Serbia during the war - developed on a very different model.

However, the relationship between rebellion (overt or covert) and music in Serbia, was identified as important by all of the music and media practitioners interviewed in the research for this study. Questions of theoretical underpinning in the interpretation of research findings have to be understood in practical terms. The importance and relevance of resistance-versus-oppression varies in extent and form between the early Eighties and the changes of October 2000. As the respondents interviewed in the documentary film ‘Akademija-Republika’ (Vujović and Kanjevac, 1996) largely agree, the

---

<sup>59</sup> Track that Drummond and Cauty produced as the K Foundation days before their visit to Belgrade took place in 1995.

immediate aftermath of President Tito's death saw some loosening of the League of Communists' control over culture production in Yugoslavia.

This resulted in the increased appearance of dissenting voices in music, art and cinema in the early 1980's. Student-run clubs and radio-programmes opened new channels for expression. Also, light was shed on other issues as increasing numbers of more liberal and sophisticated television programmes focusing on contemporary culture<sup>60</sup> were aired. Students of Fine Art were in charge of the most influential Belgrade club to this day, 'Akademija'<sup>61</sup> (The Academy). B92 was originally a student radio (Collin, 2001). The initial concept that led to the founding of B92 had in fact developed from a student radio programme aired on two other radios stations, Studio B and Radio 202. Sloba Konjović, Studio B's influential DJ and later music editor, (Janjatović, 1998; Stavrić, 2000) had a strong impact on the music scene in Belgrade. Radio Studio B did not receive the credit it deserved for shaping the popular culture in Belgrade since it was founded in 1970. This could be the case because B92 came to the fore as a result of their political activities in the past decade<sup>62</sup>.

#### 4.3.2 Economic factors influencing independent culture production in Belgrade

The reasons why B92 and Radio Index started as student-led broadcasters were embedded in the fabric of Yugoslav Socialist economy and legislation. The same applies to the leading Yugoslav underground club<sup>63</sup>, 'The

---

<sup>60</sup> One of those was 'Fridays at 22', mentioned in an interview with N. Savić, (a Belgrade artist currently situated in London; September 2001)

<sup>61</sup> The aforementioned interview with Miomir Grujić-Fleka explains some of this in invaluable detail. Grujić was one of the most successful programme managers that the club ('Academy') ever had. His career as an artist, freelance radio-producer and opinion leader is one of the most fruitful in the Belgrade creative underground of the last two decades.

<sup>62</sup> The other reason mentioned by Gordy is that Studio B often changed hands in the Nineties. This had affected its editorial policy several times, damaging its credentials.

<sup>63</sup> Gordy notes that most Belgrade rock-clubs are situated in basements. This spatial characteristic, he argues, reinforces the notion of rock as underground in Belgrade. This is a notable insight but the interpretation is only partially correct: not all rock was underground - taking, for example, 'Bijelo dugme' - nor were all underground clubs supporting rock music. From 1993, some sub-genres of electronic dance music signified counter-culture resistance.



Academy'<sup>64</sup>, also managed by students. Vasić (1994) notes that the economy of former Yugoslavia is often considered, wrongly, to be: 'more advanced than other systems of real socialism'. This, he says, is the major flaw of many analyses. Regardless of all surface manifestations of the 'self-management' system, the industry and economy of former Yugoslavia were based on the same principles as were applied in other systems of 'real-socialism' (thus the Socialist-Realist imagery of 'The Idols' 'Mal'chiki' - sharp criticism of the ideology and reality of Yugoslav life). Private control over any form of production was extremely restricted (Novaković, 1994). Culture production in particular, would not be allowed into private hands. Even when the limited and selective privatisation was to happen in the republics of former Yugoslavia, only the members of the new national élites were allowed to own media organisations (Madžar, 1994; Kronja, 2001; Prodanović, 2001).

Having all this in mind, underestimating the creative input of art students into the 'Academy' club, or the contribution of young journalists at B92 and Index Radio to these broadcasters, would do no justice to this analysis. Though rock musicians and producers alike were a bit negligent about business issues compared to their 'folk' counterparts (Milojević, 2002), this is not to be generalised. For example, in the case of the 'Academy' club, enthusiasm was coupled with advanced marketing practices<sup>65</sup>.

Collin states that Belgrade has never been a cultural backwater (2001: 11). In the same section of this book, when referring to the time when change swept through the Warsaw Pact, Collin talks of the optimistic feeling in Belgrade. The optimism and anxiety that characterised young Belgraders' anticipation of the Nineties could - in instrumental terms - be best described through examples of social, economic and political developments in Yugoslavia at the end of the Eighties.

---

<sup>64</sup> Gordy makes some material errors with reference to 'Akademija's' history. This has to be understood as result of the same second-hand sources that have led him into material errors.

<sup>65</sup> There are a number of examples supporting this argument. These can be found in interviewee accounts as well as in documentary data (such as the documentary film 'Akademija-Republika').

A number of significant actions were brought into being by the forward-looking federal government of premier Ante Marković. The economy and industry were to be restructured through reforms in ownership and management. Restructuring took place in organisational, investment and production practices. The international experts who conducted comparative analysis regarded the privatisation process planned by the Marković government as bound to succeed (Madžar, 1994: 9). In contrast - and here lay the grounds for anxiety - these reforms created obstacles for the new national(istic) élites. They accumulated a wealth of political and economic power, Madžar argues. In order to maintain their economic monopoly and macroeconomic power, the élites interfered with the privatisation process. Politically, these new élites ripped the country apart, by using their power over the media (Madžar, 1994). Manipulating the official channels for information dissemination, they exercised and reaffirmed their power positions.

These economic analyses of the fall of Yugoslavia are limited for various reasons, as Madžar himself recognises in the introduction to the above argument<sup>66</sup>. What is also likely to have created the mixture of hope and anxiety among young Belgraders was a set of contradictions existing among prevalent discursive patterns in Serbian society of the day. On the one hand, the Berlin Wall had fallen; on the other, intolerant cliques rose to power in all Yugoslav republics.

Political radicalisation saw changes sweeping through Yugoslav cities and with these changes came a change in lifestyle aspirations. This affected the streets of Belgrade. The new Serbian élite was about to create consensus with some Other young men and women, not with the cosmopolitan and pro-democratic segments of youth population. New stratification was taking place quickly, and new discourses and under-defined new subcultures began to emerge in Belgrade. Turbo-folk signified this disquieting change.

---

<sup>66</sup> Methodologically, Stuart Hall's (1980) argument corresponds with this statement. Hall describes the shortcomings of both 'economic' and 'sociological' theorisations of such complex social phenomena. This leads him to establish a new methodological approach that reconciles the contradictions between 'mirror-image' methodologies. He introduces the methodology of *articulation*, which lays at the basis of this study.

Belgrade clubs and music venues enjoyed a degree of independence during the Eighties. A small number of student- and youth- oriented radio programmes prior to the founding of B92 radio also helped. However, there were two important stumbling blocks for independent music production in Belgrade throughout the Eighties and Nineties. Firstly, there were virtually no independent record companies in Serbia until 1990<sup>67</sup>. The resulting situation remotely resembles the one described<sup>68</sup> by Wicke and Shepherd (1993)<sup>68</sup> in the case of East Germany. Remotely, because the State intrusion was rarely manifest as was in the case in the German Democratic Republic. Though the State-controlled record companies in Serbia and other parts of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had the last word in what was to be published, they were 'economically self-generating' (Vidić-Rasmunssen, 1995: pp. 246, 250). Dragan Ambrozić accounts for similar practices in music promotion<sup>69</sup>:

"I worked at 'Student' [magazine] in '86... *no release of the magazine went into press before the State Attorney read what was in it.* That was no game, there *really* was control. They could really put pressure on you *if they wanted.* OK, that system – so-called '*permissive totalitarianism*', I don't know how to call it otherwise – has *all the levers of classical totalitarianism*, but it chooses *not to use them.* It can do *anything to you*, but it did not... the only way it could survive was with the support of enthusiasts who were, in fact, working in those student cultural centres - ŠKUC in Ljubljana, our SKC, and so on; because the people who worked there understood that these things were worthy and recognised some of their own viewpoints in what those rock musicians did. Specifically in Belgrade, the Students' Cultural Centre (SKC) played an important role because people there liberated the SKC. Those were young art-historians, art critics who understood that the footing of contemporary visual art and theatre lay in Rock 'n' Roll. That it has a lot to do with what was going on in Rock 'n' Roll, punk, and later New Wave, so they gave these bands the opportunity to rehearse for free. And later they provided them with opportunities to make concerts and so on."

---

<sup>67</sup> How difficult the situation was is mentioned in Gordy's 1999 book (in this text, the 2001 Serbian edition is referred to). It is also accounted for by several interviewees - in some cases with interestingly conflicting views. What they do have in common is, that the small number of independent record companies were working in an extremely volatile environment.

<sup>68</sup> Also Wicke, 1996.

<sup>69</sup> Appendix 5, Interview with Dragan Ambrozić; entry dated 12<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

Music venues, clubs and a few media channels were controlled by university students and youth organisations in Yugoslavia. Their autonomy could have been abolished at the state's discretion at any time, as happened on several occasions with Radio Index. The station was officially under the control of Belgrade University. The university, although autonomous, was vulnerable to State intervention. The State was in a position to interfere with media and culture production. Another similarity with the situation portrayed by Wicke and Shepherd was that Serbian rock musicians, as described by Gordy, often took a critical stance toward the Government.

A specific model has to be developed in order to understand the political economy behind culture production in Belgrade, Serbia and Yugoslavia already different from that of the Eastern Bloc before the war started. The break-up of Yugoslavia and its impact on Serbian society resulted in changes that undermine existing theoretical frameworks. The suggested theoretical framework for Belgrade independent music and media production has to rely on seemingly opposed paradigms. Overcoming these theoretical contradictions characterises a multidisciplinary study.

#### 4.4 Panopticon, music subcultures and the articulation of style

Institutional power had taken the form of disciplinary control, Foucault argues, replacing the pre-modern, more violent - and less efficient - forms of power-exercise (Foucault, 1980, 1994; Rabinow, 1984). The asymmetry of power in modern 'disciplinary' society is maintained through practices that rely on surveillance. The notion of surveillance should not automatically be taken in its literal meaning. Foucauldian 'surveillance' is based on a set of practices in society described through 'panopticism'. This term is related to the 'panopticon' of Jeremy Bentham.

Foucault took its original purpose as a metaphor for surveillance practices exercised in modern society. Thus the panopticon is not merely a structural

design used in prisons<sup>70</sup> for the last few centuries. “Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power”, notes Foucault (Rabinow, 1984: 252), inviting the reader to understand that spatial relations are related to knowledge and power. Surveillance is a concept that can be abstracted and applied to the spatial power-relations in society. Practices of individuals, groups and communities take part in spaces that, in turn, change as a result of those practices. Such changes are detected, noted and evaluated. Furthermore, spatial manipulations are instrumental in power exercise. Surveillance takes part inside the minute social sub-structures, becoming a system that recognises and evaluates practices as acceptable - or deviant - according to the community’s norms.

This work does not support the Foucauldian argument in its entirety. The ambition here is to look beyond and to examine the structural consequence that spatial relations and ‘surveillance’ had on the production of underground discourses in Belgrade music.

#### 4.4.1 Knowing the Other: articulations of identity in Belgrade subcultures

The overall methodology suggested for this work comes from Stuart Hall’s Theory of Articulation. ‘Marxism without guarantees’ of Stuart Hall (Trmibur, 1993) enables the researcher to look into the existing links between discourses, ideas and practices of particular groups of society. Specific linkages within the social formation are explored in relation to time, space, position and subjective interest. Thus the Theory of Articulation overreaches the gap between the interest in the particular, and the determination of structuralism. Seemingly opposed paradigms are reconciled by interpreting the articulations that emerge from interaction between agents acting in specific social conditions. Therefore space, surveillance and discourse could be seen as acting within an existing structure, re-articulating it and helping to mediate meaning.

---

<sup>70</sup> Extended to any institution based on hierarchy - schools, the military, etc.

Surveillance, as understood here, becomes especially significant when it assists the discord between social sub-structures and communities. Demonstrations, for instance, could be interpreted as serious disturbances to the normative order. Indeed, the spatial nature of a city becomes distorted during such events. The right to space was one of the symbolic contestations between the oppressive authorities and the protesters during the 1996/97 demonstrations in Belgrade. It is now very difficult to get access to archival data examining the 1996/97 protests in Serbian cities. Even in Serbia, these events were largely overshadowed by the 'democratic revolution' (Stojanović, 2001) of October 2000. Other authors might agree that the methods for political change of 2000 were first used in 1996.

Analysis conducted in this study shows that the street protests of 1996/97 have left a significant cultural legacy (especially in music and the arts). Spatial tensions in Belgrade could also be seen through less conspicuous examples. These examples are connected to the reading of space in relation to cultural practices. Subcultures in Belgrade have been subjected to - and have themselves exercised - modes of 'surveillance' related to the use of space.

There are examples from the Eighties, when Belgrade musicians, artists and filmmakers were remarkably active and the production of music, above all, was one of the strengths of Belgrade youth subcultures<sup>71</sup>. An interviewee in the documentary film 'Akademija-Republika' ('Academy-Republic')<sup>72</sup> recalls this. Uroš Djurić, a Belgrade artist-socialite, talks about the scorn with which 'Academy' club was treated by some of the press and public alike. Stories were told, recalls Djurić, that the club attracted only promiscuous drug-addicts and the like, and that everyone there was following 'the hype'. He continues by saying that clubbers at the 'Academy' were trying to get away from the

---

<sup>71</sup> Collin (2001), Gordy (1999, 2001), and Kronja (2001) agree on this point.

<sup>72</sup> Vujović, Z and Kanjevac, D (1997), *Akademija – republika*. The film provides an interesting account of the club's history, though two remarks have to be made. Vujović could not fund the film's final release so its final editing was influenced by the new producers, B92. This film calls for analysis, especially with regards to the shift in narrative emphasis, influenced by the business relationship between Radio B92 and 'Academy's' management at the time of release. Second, the very title of the film owes its name to a graffito that appeared on the Fine Arts Faculty's main building - also home to the (in)famous club. The layers of meaning embedded in this slogan are also highly controversial and show its subversive message.

'hype' into their space where no one would give them an odd look for being different<sup>73</sup>. It is difficult to ascertain whether occasional columns in daily newspapers were to be blamed for such public opinion. It is more likely that 'vigilant' journalists reacted to rumours, subsequently creating a 'moral panic' (Cohen, 1972 and Thornton, 1995 discuss 'moral panic' at length). Such rumours and the way they act as 'corrective' tools could be seen as evidence of 'surveillance'. The club's visitors become identified as 'deviant' and the places of their assembly - 'Akademija' in particular - took the same label.

Another contribution to the understanding of the position of 'Akademija' club comes from Mimir Grujić Fleka. Fleka was the club's organiser of programmes for seven years, covering many creative activities for which 'Akademija' was renowned. He recalls a concert organised by the club in the early Eighties. After releasing its first album, the band 'Ekatarina Velika' ('Catherine the Great') staged a concert in front of the club. The club's management decided on this daring move to the streets. A stage was set up a few metres from the entrance. The audience flooded the short street and parts of Knez Mihajlova, the main avenue of the pedestrian district where 'Akademija' is situated.

"We made a big concert for 'Ekaterina' after the release of their first album, live, in the middle of Rajiceva Street... we built a stage. We cut Rajiceva into half so the stage was somewhere next to the entry into the club. And the rest of the street was filled with the audience, Knez Mihajlova too, all over the place; a couple thousand people came and these guys were, like, rocking away, Milan (Mladenovic) and Magi were in really good form then – it wasn't a bad concert at all, their first album is totally in order, as far as I'm concerned... and then, *the passers by gathered and commented, "look at the 'epileptics' ('padavičari')... you know?"*"<sup>74</sup>

Fleka mentioned that, after the event, the club management faced severe problems, including the threat of closure. The neighbourhood was traditionally

---

<sup>73</sup>This 'difference', often read as 'deviance' by outsiders, is also examined in the film.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Fleka, Appendix 2. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

hostile to the 'insurgent'<sup>75</sup> clubbers, as Fleka jokingly remarked<sup>76</sup>. Many elements of the 'underground' rock subculture discourse could be read from his uncompromising statements - including the humorous remarks that can be read between the lines. Once more, the author's inside perspective built over the years as Fleka's colleague and friend, as well as the author's personal experience in the field, facilitate multiple layers in the interpretation of this subject. This has to be taken with a word of caution: participation might end in partisanship, unless checked appropriately. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000: 194) suggest reflexivity regarding the micro-politics of representation. Such an approach enables the researcher to see himself as an agent of discourse. This especially applies to the cases in which varying allegiances between researcher and respondents are involved.

Final remarks from this interview excerpt allow an interesting observation. The neighbours were not the only ones to complain. Some passers'-by condemned the event, using the derogatory street slang comment: "look at the *epileptics*". The exact word used was 'padavičari', an ancient term for epilepsy sufferers, transformed into a form of scorn in Serbian street slang.

The literal translation of the word is hardly possible, the closest being 'fallers', describing the fall into unconsciousness that starts a 'grand mal' epileptic fit. Gordy quotes the term and uses it to encompass urban subcultures (2001: 119). This label had stuck to a diverse set of Belgrade youth subcultures, indiscriminately putting the hippies along with punks and ravers. It is most likely that this term was coined with reference to punk subcultures. Hebdige (1993) looks at the origins of punks' dance routines, apparently consisting of jittery, uncontrolled fits<sup>77</sup>. The derogatory term that came to denote the

---

<sup>75</sup> Massey (1995) refers to tensions between 'local people' and 'insurgents', revealing the full complexity of such tensions, in contesting the right to a position in space.

<sup>76</sup> In this text, M Grujić-Fleka is frequently quoted. His deep involvement in Belgrade underground music, art, and media qualifies him as a bona fide source. Discursive structures characterising the accounts he gave to the author have to be analysed in the light of his special position within the creative core of underground community. Self-narrative, opinions, and beliefs from these accounts direct the analyst to explore preconceptions as related to power-relations in the observed community.

<sup>77</sup> Tsitos (1999) examines the significance of dance forms developed from punk's 'pogo' dance in contemporary American punk-related subcultures.



'deviants', or 'misfits' could be linked to what Djurić said about the 'commonsensical'<sup>78</sup> response to 'Akademija's' regulars, as living 'outside reality'. Prevalent social groups were therefore placing such 'deviants' as the 'villainous clowns' (Hebdige, 1993) outside the social norm.

As the social structure in Serbia and throughout former Yugoslavia was suffering under the burden of crisis and war, the divisions between social groups increased. This especially applies to subcultures in the cities. The notion of Other in public discourse had become apparent. Not focusing on the use of media as propaganda tools or on the war itself, this work has to note the importance of such change in attitudes. The new, aggressive subculture related to Turbo-folk was partly created by the media promotion of 'warrior chic' (Kronja, 2001)<sup>79</sup>. Strangely enough, they could be said to owe some elements of their identity to the Others<sup>80</sup> they much despised as deviant. From the margins of depraved city areas emerged the new, Turbo-folk subculture, immediately labelled 'dizelaši' ('dieselers'). They followed the practice of street thuggery, adopting well-known criminals as their heroes. Prodanović (2001: pp. 183-193) provides a semiotic analysis of some of the ethical and aesthetic codes in Belgrade's criminal circles.

Dieselers' name was originally derived from the 'Diesel' fashion label. This is partly due to the fact that this brand was popular among them. Other, more likely readings are associated with the - *slow* on acceleration, but physically *powerful* - diesel engine<sup>81</sup>. The latter interpretation ('*powerful*') became the one that dieselers, or 'diesel-boys',<sup>82</sup> *wished* to believe in. The former ('*slow*') was a reading widely preferred by *others*: 'slow ignition' ('slabo paljenje'), a

---

<sup>78</sup> Althusser (1965) links 'common sense' with 'ideology'.

<sup>79</sup> Investigating the aesthetics of the new criminalised élite, Prodanović traces the roots of 'warrior chic' back to the 'warriors' of street crime. Their Barthesian Myth is reflected in some elements of the *dieselers'* aesthetics. The objects he analyses are grim but noteworthy.

<sup>80</sup> The identification of 'I' in this context could be related to Lacanian formulations.

<sup>81</sup> Gordy (2001: 145) relates 'dieselers' with illegal petrol trade that took part during the UN sanctions. This is, however, unlikely to be correct: this term was coined before the sanctions started.

<sup>82</sup> This term was less frequently used than *dizelaši*. *Diesel-boys* was pronounced in English, implying both immaturity and confused masculinity, the version that a *dizelaš* would find infuriating. Ironically, this wide subculture accepted the *dizelaši* epithet with delight. Not everyone identified as a *dizelaš* would consider himself as one. The name became a hierarchical status symbol that had to be earned within the Turbo-folk subculture.

term apparently derived from automotive jargon, was a colloquialism used to denote lack of intelligence. Kronja (2001: 38) mentions the 'jokes about dieselers' that circulated around Belgrade, resulting in the recognition and identification of this social group as an emergent subculture. This implicitly deprecating nickname was coined in Belgrade subcultures associated with alternative rock, punk, and other non-mainstream music scenes<sup>83</sup>.

It must be said, however, that these associations between lifestyle and one's position in society could not be reduced to music only. The middle-aged, middle-class citizens of Belgrade could not have been pigeonholed within a strict classification. With the decline of the middle classes in Serbia, the delineation became stricter and music gained significance as a statement of political and social position. Thus, the term 'dieseler' was appropriated from its origins in rock subcultures. After a while, wider segments of the disadvantaged and impoverished middle-class started using the term.

Another term, whose use Gordy identifies (2001: pp. 151-152), was the prefix 'newly-composed', referring to the new élite, its politicians, 'businessmen' (criminals), etc. The term pre-dates the war and the dieselers, showing the conceptual links between Neofolk and Turbo-folk in culture and politics. It also shows the recognition of, and reaction to, these disconcerting changes by educated segments of Serbian society. Newly-composed folk music signified the urban peasants, the stratum that was 'newly-composed' through the incompetent economic policies of the corrupt Communist Party officials from the 1960s onwards. The 'newly-composed' élite signified all that was result of such economic and cultural policies. The educated and impoverished middle-classes had seen the 'newly-composed' élite and its culture as lacking taste and ethical considerations. Thus the term became a polysemic sign of growing social and political tensions reflected through popular culture.

---

<sup>83</sup> The 'dieseler' subculture shows an interesting anomaly: Turbo-folk did become mainstream music, broadcast on most powerful of Serbian electronic media. Novokomponovana or Neofolk music was never outside the mainstream, but on its margins. Therefore, it has to be concluded that Dieseler subculture had Turbo-folk as its signifier, not its core.

#### 4.4.2 Image and representation of conflicting subcultures

The complex process of signification that led to the invention of 'dizelaši' leads to some conclusions on the state of media literacy in Belgrade during the early Nineties. Firstly, the young people close to Belgrade's clubbing subcultures that leant on the 'New Wave' scene, either took part in, or had a genuine interest in the arts and the media. On this point the author relies not only on interviews and documentary data, but also personal experience, recorded in his reflective accounts. Analyses made in the works of Collin (2001), Glenny (1996), Gordy (1999, 2001), Kronja (2001) and others - support this testimony. A close reading of Janjatović's (1998) 'Yu-rock Encyclopaedia' - following the entries relevant to Belgrade rock scenes<sup>84</sup> - enables the reader to see that all sub-genres of underground rock played in Belgrade had strong, intricate links with the art world.

The invention of the dieselers' nickname reveals media literacy and humour. Furthermore, some of those responsible for shaping the 'glamour' of Turbo-folk have 'defected' from the very core of Belgrade's underground music and art subcultures. Two prominent Turbo-folk trend-setters' careers are indicative of this, as Kronja illustrates (2001: pp. 60-62). One of them is Dejan Milićević, a fashion photographer educated in Chicago. The other signed his work under the pseudonym Zli. Literal translation of this pseudonym is 'Evil One', originating from his earlier underground credentials and possibly inspired by punk. Zli graduated in Belgrade as a film and TV director, and was once closely related to the 'Akademija' club. Until the early Nineties, he regularly photographed numerous events that made the club famous - from concerts to controversial art-performances<sup>85</sup>. Zli and Milićević actively shaped the glossy media presentation of Turbo-folk in music video and photography.

---

<sup>84</sup> 'Scenes': Janjatović's book covers the developments in Yugoslav rock since 1967. Therefore, stylistically, chronologically and historically, Belgrade had spawned a number of scenes and movements. It is interesting to observe some reactions of contemporary Belgrade musicians to questions of stylistic unity that presuppose a scene or a movement.

<sup>85</sup> Some of them mentioned and shown in the 'Akademija-Republika' documentary.

Kronja claims that Turbo-folk made some positive contributions to culture-production in Serbia. She states that Turbo-folk catapulted the standards of music videos, referring to professionally executed high-budget production. What she seemingly fails to notice is that, along with the two authors mentioned above, other TV directors responsible for acclaimed music videos<sup>86</sup> of the Eighties had shifted from rock and related forms, to the more lucrative, 'State-Art' of Turbo-folk. Both Kronja and Milojević (2002) used 'State-Art' as a term with reference to this hybrid genre.

Milojević disagrees with Gordy (1999, 2001) in that rock was an 'elitist' music in Serbia. Kronja (2001: 20), referring to Dragičević-Šešić's work (1994), states that rock belongs to the realm of mass-culture; in Serbia it is associated with the middle-class, urban, educated population. Dragičević-Šešić's classification observes another segment, the 'alternative cultural model', associated with alternative culture, counter-culture - or in the terminology used in this study - the underground. In order to avoid the confusion between the elitist nature of 'underground' and the mass-culture of rock in Belgrade, this gap needs to be overreached. Mass culture, susceptible to influences and less critical, allows audiences to shift allegiances to other forms of entertainment, such as Turbo-folk. In contrast, artists and members of underground music subcultures habitually despise the 'entertainment' elements of popular music. A number of interviews in this study suggest that this was the case in Belgrade.

Notions of artistic integrity and conceptual validation are the recurring themes in these talks. They also appear to reveal an educated stance towards music and media production. Participants in Belgrade's independent and underground music production, as well as their artistic counterparts, are critical of popular culture. Some of their statements bear a resemblance to Adorno's position on the subject<sup>87</sup>. Therefore the rock music Gordy refers to, is not the music that could have been replaced by Turbo-folk<sup>88</sup>. It must be

---

<sup>86</sup> One of these directors was mentioned in talks with N. Savić (September 2001).

<sup>87</sup> Seen throughout his work, notably in his 'Aesthetic theory' (1999).

<sup>88</sup> A similar misconception is revealed in Kronja's work, as seen in the previous section.

concluded, then, that Gordy and Milojević were talking of different aspects of 'rock music'. It is clear that the term 'rock' inasmuch as 'subculture'<sup>89</sup> could not be taken as self-explanatory.

Both sets of Nineties Belgrade subcultures<sup>90</sup> - even the 'dieselers' did not constitute a monolithic group - felt contested by the existence of the other. Thus the polarisation between them developed. The aggressive behaviour among the 'diesel' subculture was already partially explored above. Subcultures related to underground music and art, independent music production and counter-cultural activity had to develop subtler strategies. 'Parallel worlds' were constituted. Prior to giving an interview for this research, a (now influential) Belgrade musician<sup>91</sup> had not felt comfortable with the word 'underground'<sup>92</sup>. In passing, he mentioned the term, 'Other Serbia'. Whether or not he was aware of its possible connotations is not known to the author. However, this term shows deep divisions within the society, most notably on the subcultural level. Seemingly, 'folk music had won', to paraphrase the lyrics of 'Peace, Brother, Peace'. However, a few clubs that played uncompromisingly selected non-mainstream music were still functioning. Collin (2001) mentions 'Soul Food' and 'Akademija', but there were other venues. This brings the exploration back to spatial relations as relations of power. The surveillance mechanisms applied in the streets effectively enabled members of both groups to avoid contact with the other. Music became the

---

<sup>89</sup> This is why 'independent' and 'underground' were chosen to narrow down the wide area of subculture music. Turbo-folk as a genre and dieselers as its related social group, both qualify as subculture phenomena, as Kronja correctly notes. The same applies to a wide variety of musicians, projects, bands and styles that could be identified as 'rock'. This is likely to be the root of misunderstanding identified in both Gordy's and Kronja's argument.

<sup>90</sup> Once more, the terminology poses problems. Determining between 'subculture', 'scene' or 'underground' (the latter with specific references to the subject of this work) is not examined here. The term 'subculture' seems as equally appropriate because of social background to the subject, thoroughly examined in the previous section. Notions of stratification and resistance, hegemony and consensus, though imperfect, best denote Nineties' Belgrade.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with V. Jerić, November 2001.

<sup>92</sup> The stylistic change of the music performed by his band, 'Darkwood dub' could be another reason for this. Gordy (2001: 158) describes their music as 'hard noise', which could be remotely related to their early work. It is hard to imagine the interviewed musician agreeing with this classification. The interview shows the musician's dismay with some earlier attempts to categorise the music of 'Darkwood dub'.

signifier - not only of lifestyle, but also of position, beliefs and power. The grey areas existed, as Collin (2001) notes, with reference to Techno<sup>93</sup>.

Rap music also has to be mentioned in this sense. This is the only imagined space shared by both (diverse) communities, the dieselers and the subculture groups related to a different city tradition. Rap music in Serbia is a phenomenon worth examining, and Collin fails to identify its role correctly. The notion of 'urban ghetto', of isolation - however different from American inner cities, where rap was conceived - was present in Belgrade during the Nineties. Rap was the meeting point of rock and Turbo-folk subcultures<sup>94</sup> in Belgrade, the mode of expression among generations that reached adulthood during the country's international isolation.

A vast number of young and educated people left the country in the Nineties. This resulted in a demographic change that, in turn, made the rock scene - especially the underground rock scene - shrink in scope<sup>95</sup>. This, Gordy was correct to note, had made the rock scene more resilient. Economic factors should be taken into account when observing the resoluteness of Belgrade's underground scene in the Nineties. This would show the conditions, under which the scene had functioned for a decade, and how these difficult conditions might have re-affirmed its resolve. External factors, especially the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council, coupled with internal economic mismanagement, deeply affected production, trade, banking and all other aspects of Serbia's economy. The results of this were visible everywhere. Shortages of goods, especially food, made life extremely difficult. Serbia experienced hyperinflation to an extent never before seen in history<sup>96</sup>.

---

<sup>93</sup> And other forms of electronic dance music.

<sup>94</sup> It should not come as a surprise that 'gangsta-rap' was popular among the dieselers' subculture.

<sup>95</sup> Gordy examines the effects of mass-emigration on culture in Serbia. Jakšić's (1994) writes on the position of Serbian youth with regards to war. He provides statistical data on the number of young, educated people that have left the country because of war. He states that, the worrying fact is that a large portion of expatriates was highly educated. Some other statistics in this paper deal with the anti-war attitudes of Belgrade University students expressed in a survey conducted in 1992 (during one of the many student protests against the regime).

<sup>96</sup> Gordy refers to economic analyses provided by Mladjan Dinkić and others, quoting the figures and explaining the developments that led to economic chaos in Nineties' Serbia.

The annual rate of inflation in 1993 was 353.088.324.829.858 per cent. 'Newly-composed' bankers, mentioned in the text, worked in accord with the shadowy elements of the State. Some of the private banks that opened just as war started advertised unreasonably high savings interest rates. This was in fact, the notorious 'pyramidal scheme'; a fraudulent system of banking that stripped many citizens of their hard currency savings (provided that their savings had not already been destroyed with the collapse of public banks in 1991). All this had seriously affected the social autonomy of citizens, destroyed their funds, and increased the already existing sense of insecurity and failure among many. This further narrowed the means of resistance, economically, socially, and psychologically. The prospect of 'normal life' seemed beyond hope<sup>97</sup>.

Economic destruction of wide segments of Serbian society could be understood as one of the factors that led to the polarisation between social groups. This had two effects on culture production in Belgrade and Serbia. Independent production in underground music, art, and media faced numerous obstacles, economic and social alike. The latter was the result of increased competition between artists, producers, promoters, and others professionally involved. It is clear that this was not a result of increasing supply, but of the decreasing economic power of businesses on one, and the audiences, on the other side. If there was anything positive to emerge from this, it could be said that the narrowing scene became more resilient<sup>98</sup>.

Indeed, 'underground' became an important notion and a frequently used term. The other consequence of Serbia's economic downfall was the increase of financial and social power of the new élite and its 'State-Art', Turbo-folk. Some of the young people that opted for the 'dieseler' lifestyle were pushed into this by a combination of long-term media manipulation, and individual disillusionment. Such manipulation, as shown above, started as early as the 1960s. It also has to be reiterated that 'dieselers' were recruited mainly from

---

<sup>97</sup> Gordy pays significant attention to the economic position of the citizens of Serbia and to its impact on their relative political power.

<sup>98</sup> Data from interviews and documentary accounts confirms this.

the 'urban-peasant' stratum; yet, Kronja (2001) correctly notes that the powerful influence of Turbo-folk had spread into some parts of the impoverished and disadvantaged middle class.

#### 4.4.3 Events and lost narratives: The Fast Bands of Serbia, 1992-1994

In contrast to the well-funded business of Turbo-folk music, the do-it-yourself approach, part of the punk legacy, had become one of the most important elements of underground music, art and media production. Pressed by economic constraints, music enthusiasts had to rely on what little they had. It is odd that neither Gordy, nor Collin, recognised several important developments in Belgrade underground<sup>99</sup> rock and clubbing scenes during the Nineties. This becomes less surprising bearing in mind that information used by the two writers was drawn from their immediate social framework, that to which they were allowed access, which could arguably be labelled as both limited and constrained<sup>100</sup>. This is a result of microscopic power plays where one competitor (in the music business) tends to belittle the other.

The informants have affected the two studies (both Collin's and Gordy's) in that they only represent sections of the Belgrade underground music scene, while purporting to overemphasise their own practice at the expense of others'. Representing their work as significant while ignoring others, Collin's and Gordy's respondents have filled their respective analyses with factual inaccuracies<sup>101</sup>.

---

<sup>99</sup> The beginning of the process that changed B92's support for underground music is described by Collin. This came as the result of their shift from a medium concerned with social criticism to a radio listened by anyone supporting the alternatives to the regime. Some of the interviewed musicians stated that B92 is turning into a mainstream media corporation.

<sup>100</sup> This will be looked at in more depth in the chapters dealing with discursive patterns within Belgrade underground and independent music and media production. It is also a methodological problem of social research that needs to be thoroughly examined in this specific case. Factors that influence the nature of documentary data consulted in this study have to be analysed. This would put all these 'factual' accounts within an appropriate discursive framework, itself dependent on power-relations.

<sup>101</sup> These are addressed through tertiary hermeneutics (Alvesson, Skoldberg, 2000).



The first of the developments omitted in Gordy's and Collin's accounts, is the rock revival that took place between 1992 and 1994. 'Brzi bendovi Srbije' ('Fast Bands of Serbia', BBS), was a festival organised with the help of RTS - Radio Television of Serbia, the government-controlled media company. Collin's book has not paid sufficient attention to the grey areas, which call for thorough examination<sup>102</sup>. Subtle subversion did take place in RTS<sup>103</sup>, until the ethos of the new élite - best reflected in Turbo-folk 'glamour' and 'acceptable rock'<sup>104</sup> - eventually started dominating its editorial policies.

B92 executives, journalists and DJs interviewed by Collin seem to avoid mentioning that both RTS and B92 provided media support for the first BBS festival. The author does not believe that B92's co-operation with RTS on a series of live rock-music events would have seriously undermined its credibility. Janjatović's (1998) Yu-rock Encyclopaedia, which deals with performers' biographies, mentions B92's participation in BBS (1992-1994). This appears to be the only record showing the emergence of a number of rock groups during the early-to-mid Nineties, and how instrumental the 'Fast Bands of Serbia' (BBS) project was in promoting their music.

This reflects a problem faced by the author when consulting documentary data on Belgrade underground rock and clubbing scenes: such phenomena were - thus far - observed only in the light of recent political developments. Little attention had been paid to the emergence of new music and its related business practices. Conversely, being the first academic inquiry of such scope and depth into Belgrade's contemporary underground music scene is to the advantage of this study.

Not all bands that performed at BBS' festivals could be classified as underground rock. For example, Gordy (2001: 134) mentions a band called 'Plejboj' ('Playboy'). He correctly identifies them as a pop-band whose career had suffered from the polarisation between Turbo-folk and underground.

---

<sup>102</sup> This could be the main flaw of Collin's account of events in Serbia.

<sup>103</sup> Such was the example of 'Afirmator' music programme, broadcast on RTS2. Belgrade band 'Direktori' ('The Directors') recorded their first music video for this show. The song was their well-known 'Red Gang' ('Bando crvena'), an anti-regime anthem (Janjatović, 1998: 205).

<sup>104</sup> Gordy mentions bands that have profited from being close to the regime. Not surprisingly, they had no support at the grassroots level, especially in the underground rock community.

Mainstream rock audiences were narrowed as a result of the social and cultural change that took place in the Nineties. Milojević's (2002) criticism of Gordy is only partially correct, as explained previously: Turbo-folk had indeed become the 'new mainstream'. Gordy had suitably noted this shift in popular culture. He was, nevertheless, incorrect in his assertion that rock music was greatly supported by the government and enjoyed an elite status in Serbia before the war (Gordy, 2001: pp. 173-174). A form of elitism could be applied to underground rock, as was examined in this discussion. The notion of 'underground elitism' deserves further examination. This issue will be addressed in more detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The narrowing of mainstream rock audiences was explained previously as a result of mass-exodus of young and educated people from Serbia, of poverty, and of media manipulation (the latter originating from as early as the 1960s). With Turbo-folk as the 'new mainstream' and 'State-Art', bands like 'Plejboj' never acquired a wide audience in spite of sophisticated promotion. Underground rock, having even less communicational channels, was in a worse position. Because of this, BBS became important as a project that provided an opportunity for an array of new bands to present themselves to the public. One of them was 'Kazna za uši' ('Ear Punishment'), whose name reveals closeness to the punk-ethos<sup>105</sup>. Their first album 'Ispod zemlje' ('Under the Ground') is a clear statement of identification with underground rock.

The bands that took part in BBS were varied in both style and political position. An interesting example showing this diversity was 'Direktori' ('The Directors'), whose name could be related to street slang, signifying 'the ones in charge'. Another likely reading relates to their open anticommunist stance, referring to the all-powerful managerial élite of Titoist Yugoslavia, which Madžar (1994) and Novaković (1994) mention in their analyses of the social and economic conditions that led to the crisis of Yugoslav civil society. The

---

<sup>105</sup> Hebdige (1993) and Marcus (2001), examine the aesthetic and ethical foundations of the punk movement. These two studies differ in many ways but reading into the practices related to punk, it is not difficult to see that the band was named under its influence.

lyrics of 'Direktori', during their early years, were characterised by nationalism and anti-communism. They also did cover-versions of football supporters' songs<sup>106</sup>. But their openly anticommunist lyrics had put them in a difficult position<sup>107</sup>. One of their songs, 'Bando crvena' ('Red Gang') was occasionally chanted at anti-government rallies<sup>108</sup>. On the other side of the political spectrum, they could not count on the support of the majority of independent media. This was because the group's branding associated it with the extreme right.

'Deca loših muzičara' - 'Bad Musicians' Kids' was a group whose self-depreciating, humorous name became well known, and whose exceptional live performances were appreciated by rock audiences in Belgrade and throughout Serbia. The list could be continued with other names but the aim of this analysis is not to pay homage to all of 1990's Serbian rock scene's contributors.<sup>109</sup> One of the last bands to make an impact through a BBS festival was 'Bjesovi' from Smederevo<sup>110</sup>. The name - in literal translation - would have read 'The Angers'. A suitable translation of their name would be

---

<sup>106</sup> The only ones to be broadcast in government-controlled media.

<sup>107</sup> As this is a highly contentious argument, the author will refrain from calling 'The Directors' as leaning to the extreme right. The group had suffered serious problems at the 1992 Zaječar 'Gitarijada' festival. They were disqualified from the competition after reaching the finals, arrested under the excuse of drug-related charges, after performing the widely popular song 'Bando crvena' ('Red Gang'). The government-controlled press subsequently published articles designed to discredit the group (Janjatović, 1998: 205). This is a good example of 'delinquentisation' supported by panopticism on the relation authority-press. This, and similar practices and incidents have discredited the 'Gitarijada' festival have helped BBS rise as a notable alternative for promotion of up-to-date rock music.

<sup>108</sup> One of the main assets of 'The Directors' was their forceful singer, Nebojša Drakula. Many considered his surname to be a stage pseudonym, which added to the band's aura of 'authenticity'. The band never had a wide audience because of their offensive lyrics.

<sup>109</sup> There are other names worth noting that did not take part in BBS festivals. These included 'Pressing' - a group warmly welcomed by rock critics in the early Nineties. This band had worked discontinuously, but the project continued to this day. Its leader, Zoran Radović, does daring experiments in music and lyrics. Another name that attracted the audience's attention was 'Dža ili Bu', a band whose name is not translatable to English (a colloquial nonsense-term that could be read as 'Either Or'). 'Džambasov', is the name of another concept-band; their name was derived from a fictitious surname constructed from slang, as a take on 'toughness' (with no reference to 'dieselers'). 'Džambasov' were one of the bands that started early experiments with 'Hand-made Techno'. One of their prominent members later formed the highly acclaimed 'Unexpected Force...' ('Neočekivana sila...'). The reasons why Gordy's and Collin's Belgrade respondents did not mention any of these groups are further examined in this research study.

<sup>110</sup> Smederevo is a town in eastern Serbia, briefly the country's mediaeval capital, adorned with a six-century old fortress. One of the main results of social and political turmoil that shook Serbia since the Second World War was the cultural demise of regional centres such as Smederevo.

'The Evil Spirits': the term 'Bjesovi' is a Serbo-Croat word whose archaic connotations refer to malevolent creatures of the dark. Janjatović (1998: 202) writes of their 'depressive music and bleak lyrics' that have 'opened a completely different chapter in new national rock [music]'. They used the lyrics of Pushkin and quotes from the Gospel of Luke in one of their songs (Janjatović, 1998: 202), adding to the argument that intellectualism pervaded Serbian underground music. These quotations from Janjatović, complement Gordy's<sup>111</sup> (2001: pp. 186-187, 198-199) observations on the sense of failure and discouragement that many in Serbia felt between 1992 and 1995. It could be argued that the music of 'Bjesovi' reflected such widespread sentiments.

Underground rock musicians remained persistent and uncompromising. This was one of the reasons why the regime did its best to ignore them in the media, and control or close down their promotional channels (including clubs). This leads to another important development superficially mentioned, and insufficiently clarified in Collin's and Gordy's accounts: underground electronic dance music performed in Belgrade clubs. Gordy completely ignores this, apart from making occasional remarks about the popularity of 'dance' music among 'dieselers', implicitly equating all dance music with Turbo-folk (2001: 159). Collin does more justice to the importance of electronic dance music in Belgrade but does not do this in sufficient depth. Quoting rock-journalist and B92 executive Dragan Ambrozić, Collin (2001: 93) notes that because rock audiences had shrunk, parts of the 'younger generation' that did not accept Turbo-folk and could not identify with rock had turned to Techno and other forms of electronic dance music. This enabled them to communicate their symbolic rebellion, as well as keep in touch with contemporary Western music. Collin also notes that clubs like 'Akademija' and 'Soul Food' were promoting electronic dance music, the former from 1989, the latter from 1990.

---

<sup>111</sup> Gordy (2001: pp. 204-211) also analyses how the international community helped the authoritarian regime in Serbia by introducing the sanctions. He accounts for the rhetorical strategies the regime used to blame the outside world, attempting to homogenise the public opinion; how the effective ban on travel through the extremely rigorous visa system imposed on Serbian citizens stopped the flow of information into the country. Finally, Gordy accounts how the sanctions helped the regime control independent channels of business communication, limiting the range of possibilities that ordinary citizens could use to satisfy their daily needs. This gave the regime powerful means of intrusion into private life.

Several projects, including Logan V, Noise Destruction, Kole Kojot i Ptica Trkačica and Wolfgang S, spearheaded the Techno scene in Serbia during the early Nineties. The following excerpt from the interview with Bojan Marsenic, the key figure of the Logan V project, provides some insight<sup>112</sup>.

M T: Where does the name 'Logan V' come from?

B M: From the film 'Logan's Run'. SF film with Michael York, it received two Oscars, I think, by the way, it was a total commercial failure, but it was really cool...

M T: What is its real –

B M: ... message? ...Liberation. That we're not imprisoned, mentally or physically. That's what it's like in the film. They lived till you're thirty, they believed in it, and awaited death with joy.

...

M T: And they believed that their prison was the entire world.

B M: Yes. And that was the idea of freedom, which... existed here, too.

B M: Some 4-5 recordings resulted from that collaboration. One was remixed, others were demo recordings.

M T: How would you musically describe Logan V? What musical styles were represented there?

B M: Then – all sorts of Techno were popular, there were bits of Trance and House too. I don't know how to classify it. Yes, it was pure electronic music. But I wouldn't know how exactly to describe it. The idea was to be as original as possible, more original than others. We had our samples, we stole nothing; it was a good thing.

Collin does not go into detail and makes no mention of Techno-projects instigated by the DJs and musicians behind this overhaul in clubbing style. This is, again, understandable, because Collin deals with political issues and sees culture as an expression of political opinion. However, the emphasis on B92 is a bit exaggerated in terms of its position in the clubbing scene, especially prior to 1995 when they started organising their own dance events. This issue will be dealt with later in this study, where power-relations that shape the discursive foundations of documentary data are scrutinised.

---

<sup>112</sup> Appendix 1, Reflexive Diary; entry dated 10<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

#### 4.4.4 Events and lost narratives: Akademija caught in the contests of power

Belgrade saw some of its most successful Techno parties during 1993 and 1994. Bearing in mind the state of events, the hyperinflation and economic collapse, this might at first glance appear surprising. But a closer look into the issue is needed in order to see how the events developed. 'Acid House' parties were held at the Akademija club since 1989. Therefore, by 1993, it could be safely assumed that electronic dance music was no longer a novelty.

What has to be understood is that Akademija's audience was the most open-minded and cosmopolitan of all Belgrade clubs. Paraphrasing Gordy (2001: 159), the sanctions hit the cosmopolitans in Serbia much harder than others, and Akademija suffered a lot from the overall decline. A large portion of its original audience had either left the country or faced very difficult circumstances, being foreign to the new élite<sup>113</sup>. The club that was 'always its own contradiction'<sup>114</sup> stopped evolving during the early Nineties. Common wisdom has it, in some parts of Belgrade's underground scene, that the club 'died out' in 1989<sup>115</sup>. As music production reflected the social turmoil within the country, so this club was affected by the increasing criminalisation of Serbian society. Detailed reflective accounts in this work show that the club was badly mismanaged between 1990 and 1993<sup>116</sup>. During that period, the management had abandoned the readiness for change and evolution, Akademija's main defining feature.

This coincided with rumours of corruption in and around the club<sup>117</sup>. Concurrently, the rock audiences in Belgrade and Serbia lost touch with new musical developments. Gordy (2001: pp. 204-211) shows how this happened

---

<sup>113</sup> There were few exceptions from the rule, like the Turbo-folk trend-setter, *Zli* (see p. 32).

<sup>114</sup> Quote from the 'BG Clubbing' web-site, [www.bgclubbing.co.yu](http://www.bgclubbing.co.yu).

<sup>115</sup> The 1997 documentary by Vujović and Kanjevac (mentioned on several occasions in this text), contains such statements. In the interview with Fleka, similar claims were made. The facts differ, as will be shown here. The author's reflective accounts show the background to some elements of this 'editing of history'.

<sup>116</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>117</sup> The only person that would be able to provide more detail on corruption during the stated period is out of the researcher's reach. This was the 'Academy's' Head of Management from 1993 to 1994, when serious attempts were made to recreate the club's positive image.

on a wider level with all types of information. During the Eighties, Akademija regularly introduced new music, the interior design was changed weekly and daring artistic performances were frequently held at the club. Concerts were organised<sup>118</sup> on a regular basis. Information on underground music from UK and US<sup>119</sup> relied on travel and personal contacts with foreign associates and friends that lived abroad<sup>120</sup>. This was not only a feature of urban subcultures in countries of (former) 'Real Socialism'<sup>121</sup>. Thornton (1995) argues that music subcultures rely on information gathered through informal channels rather than on the mass media. The latter are, she argues, considered the antithesis of what music subcultures stand for<sup>122</sup>. Without informal information channels linking them to the outside world, rock audiences and many practitioners in Serbia were left on their own.

An unconfirmed story that went around Belgrade for years claimed that Akademija was considered one of the best European underground clubs during the Eighties<sup>123</sup>. Akademija was particularly badly affected by the demographic change<sup>124</sup> and country's isolation. A corrupt and incapable management took over after 1990. In the spring of 1993 the club was in such

---

<sup>118</sup> With reference to the 'Academy's' successes in the Eighties, several sources are consulted. See interviews with Fleka (Appendix 2), 'Sabljar' (Appendix 4), Dragan Ambrozić (Appendix 5), and 'Academy-Republic' film (Vujovic and Kanjevac, 1996).

<sup>119</sup> World's two most influential music industries in the world keep influencing music scenes in Belgrade and Serbia. Elflein, 1998; Greene, 2001; Harker, 1997; McLaughlin and McLoone, 2000; Wicke, 1996; Wicke and Shepherd, 1993 and many other authors - implicitly or explicitly point out that music produced in the UK and US leaves a strong impact - both in stylistic and business terms - on national music productions in many countries.

<sup>120</sup> One of such examples is Željko Kerleta, an independent music publisher working in London, whose label 'Cosmic Sounds' is now promoting musicians and DJs from Belgrade. Previously, Kerleta had a weekly midnight show on Yu-radio, also titled 'Cosmic Sounds' (interview with Željko Kerleta and 'Cosmic Sounds' web-site, 2001). The radio-programme was providing important information on the developments at the forefront of independent production in contemporary dance music.

<sup>121</sup> The term was here quoted from Vasić (1994) and it was in common use to refer to - primarily - the Soviet Bloc, but also to other countries of Communist Party rule.

<sup>122</sup> 'Narrowcasting' vs. broadcasting, 'micromedia' vs. mass media, are some of the dichotomies Thornton introduces.

<sup>123</sup> This is a problematic issue, as will be seen in the thorough analysis of documentary data alongside the accounts collected from two well-informed interviewees. It appears that Gordy's source on this issue was unreliable; Gordy states that The New Musical Express had listed 'Akademija' as one of best European underground clubs in 1981 (Gordy, 2001: 120). This issue will be further examined in this book with regards to data reliability.

<sup>124</sup> In an informal talk, a civil servant working for the new democratically elected Serbian Government told the author that the estimated number of people who left Serbia in the last decade amounts to 700000. This figure could not be quoted as a firmly established statistic. It is, however, a stark reminder of the cumulative effect of more than ten years of social turmoil.

a state that its famed achievements seemed a distant memory. Graffiti scrawled inside the club was testimony to the feeling of malcontent amongst clubbers unhappy with Akademija's direction in the early Nineties. One remark, 'Ovo nije MTV' ('This isn't MTV') expressed sharp criticism: the club programme's high standards had slipped; *down* to MTV level.

Several interpretations could be derived from this expression of dissatisfaction and protest. First, that this criticism was aimed directly at the club's management for its neglect of Akademija's innovative and uncompromising stylistic identity. The writing on the wall suggested that spending time at the club became no more exciting than watching television at home. The second reading could be derived from the wider social and economic context: the flow of information, previously channelled through individual contacts and travel, was disrupted through war and international sanctions (Gordy, 2001: pp. 159-160). In the case of this club, limited access to information on recent developments in other music scenes had made DJs and promoters resort to the remaining channels, relying on information from a global satellite television network. Standards of information dissemination through clubs and other subcultural channels dropped by the day.

The second reading of the graffiti mentioned above goes beyond the responsibility of Akademija's management. By 1993, rock audiences in Belgrade had become less attracted to innovation. This was especially evident in Akademija's case. Being the club that shaped trends since 1981, its decline was intricately related to what was going on in the city's underground music and art-related subcultures. The long lasting popularity of the 'grunge' movement provides an implicit reading on the state of Belgrade rock subcultures (2001: 159-160). Considering that his book was first published in 1999, five years since 'grunge' had gone into decline<sup>125</sup>, the statements Gordy refers to show that many 'rockers' in Belgrade preferred to look into the past for comfort. In 1990/1991, 'grunge' was a new phenomenon in rock music.

---

<sup>125</sup> One of the leading groups of Seattle's 'grunge' movement, 'Nirvana' had fallen apart after the death of its charismatic frontman, Kurt Cobain. In terms of 'subcultural capital', 'grunge' scene was already in decline. Its global media success meant that '*underground* rockers' had already sought something that was less commercially established.



This coincided with the early days of war in Yugoslavia. Indications of the tendency to focus on the imaginary past could be read from another example raised by Gordy (2001: pp. 133, 159). It is related to 'Obojeni program' ('Programme in colour'), a group from the city of Novi Sad. This band built its audience as it struggled to promote its work over a long period of time<sup>126</sup>. Gordy describes them as resembling 'The Fall', a long-standing group from Manchester.

'The Fall' had brief commercial success in the late Eighties. Gordy's interpretation of the popularity of 'Obojeni program' could be taken into account: the audiences recognised the band's categorical stylistic integrity. What Gordy does not mention is that the band's leader made contact with MTV in 1993. Two music videos for 'Obojeni program' were presented on this leading global network (Janjatović, 1998: 126). This brings to mind the argument from the very beginning of this text. During the years of isolation, both artists and their supporters sought international recognition whatever the cost. Rock audiences in Serbia rewarded the group's international recognition with loyalty and respect, however small or short-lived it was.

A third interpretation is also possible: rock audiences in Serbia and Belgrade have opted to avoid experiments. This statement need not undermine the artists' stylistic autonomy. Some of the rock-groups mentioned in this text attempted at creating new modes of expression. However, this was largely constrained within the accepted forms of 'rock music'. Through the process of economic collapse that affected vast segments of the population, and through the pressures that led to the deep discouragement as described by Gordy<sup>127</sup>, many lost the will to experiment with the new and shied away from radical innovation.

'Panopticism' were active in Belgrade subcultures throughout the Nineties. Interpreting spatial relations and meeting places helped ascertain who belonged to which subculture; signifiers of style, social, and political positions

---

<sup>126</sup> The group was formed in 1981.

<sup>127</sup> See page 40 of this text.

were read from music, clothing and slang. 'Soul Food'<sup>128</sup> was a club whose visitors had apparently made a break with the city's rock tradition. Some of them belonged to the café society mocked in 'Electric Orgasm's' punk classic, 'Zlatni papagaj' ('Golden Parrot')<sup>129</sup>, the Titoist era's urban elite. Some, and this was likely to be a sizeable portion of Soul Food's visitors, were attracted by new music and related trends. A different production of meaning in and around underground music might have appealed to them, after belonging to the circles around the clubs like Akademija, Omen and 'KST'<sup>130</sup>.

'Akademija' was, as discussed previously, identified and pointed out in some segments of the public as 'deviant', or as something that had 'fallen outside the social pact'<sup>131</sup>. The 'dieselers' in particular held such an opinion about the club and its visitors<sup>132</sup>. The author of this study was appointed the Head of Programme - responsible for all creative activities, including marketing. New management was introduced after a serious incident in spring 1993, when Akademija faced closure, not for the first, nor the last time in its history. The task taken by Akademija's new management was difficult; some parts of the subculture originally related to the club considered it a spent force.

Active hostility came from the 'dieselers', and passive antagonism from the authorities. The club had to be reinvented. An interview with a former DJ, who took part in the club's 1993 revival, reveals the unrecorded history<sup>133</sup>. Akademija's new management opted to introduce a series of Techno parties,

---

<sup>128</sup> 'Soul Food' was mentioned by Collin (2001: 93) as 'much loved'.

<sup>129</sup> Gordy examines the significance of this song within Belgrade's punk and New Wave scene (2001: 121).

<sup>130</sup> Gordy refers to KST on several occasions in his book.

<sup>131</sup> Foucault's take on the practices of 'delinquentisation'. An interesting parallel could be drawn - the whole country was treated as 'outside the social pact' by the outside world.

<sup>132</sup> Interestingly, the feeling was mutual, though applied to 'dieselers', there were some grounds on which such opinion might have been based.

<sup>133</sup> The reasons why this extremely successful set of events was left unrecorded in documentary data - apart from a few web-sites set up by Belgrade DJs and a few personal accounts - are analysed in further chapters. The DJ whose account of events is used here (DJ 245/1), worked in a team with the late DJ Avalanche (Radoslav Šuleić) who tragically took his own life in 1999. He would have been an invaluable source of information, being involved with Belgrade's Techno scene from its very beginnings. It is sufficient to say at this point, that the reasons are to be sought in competition and power-relations within the Belgrade music and media business communities. The way 'Akademija-Republika' documentary was edited calls for analysis. Also, contrary to what Gordy stated, the club was re-opened after its closure in 1995.

starting from June 1, 1993. This proved to be the 'right move', and was in accordance with the club's legacy of challenge and change. Meanwhile, its interior was re-designed as much as the club's financial assets allowed. More importantly, no compromises were made with regards to Akademija's long-lasting underground rock legacy in spite of the introduction of the new genre. Akademija gradually regained its credibility. This lasted for less than two years when internal strife saw the club facing new problems. The external social formations' pressures had an impact. This study does not focus on this club in particular. The author hopes that an in-depth study into the historical, social, and cultural legacy the Academy had left behind would be conducted in the near future.

There are two notable results of the Academy's 1993-1994 revival. The potential for social conjuncture between borderline areas of Belgrade subcultures was recognised and utilised by the club's new management. Academy had once more tested its leading role in the city's clubbing scene. One result of this was that new audiences were attracted from social groups and subcultures not traditionally associated with the club. The parties organised throughout the summer of 1993 were extremely successful. For the first time in four years, electronic dance music attracted large groups of people. Parts of Academy's existing audience had gradually accepted the introduction of the new style while a return to an uncompromising programme, reminiscent of the early days, increased the club's standing within the artistic community.

The second consequence of the club's revival was more far-reaching. 1993 was a year marked by hyperinflation and despair. It appeared surprising that the club had so many visitors, week after week. The breakthrough of the new musical and clubbing scene had resulted in a temporary cessation of anxiety triggered by social uncertainties. Kronja (2001: pp. 36-41) refers to the materialistic hedonism of the criminal 'dieseler' subculture and the assertion of hedonism in the iconography of its associated musical genre, Turbo-folk. Different, less aggressive forms of hedonism were practised at the Akademija club's Techno parties in 1993/94. The conception of tribal unity and the notion

of hedonistic idealism, characteristic of the early electronic dance scene<sup>134</sup>, were the valves and channels through which the rejection of oppressive reality was expressed.

While the hedonism of Turbo-folk was aggressive yet complacent with the System, the *jouissance* (Barthes, 1977) of the early Belgrade Techno-raves was a form of resistance. The scene had started growing and a number of DJ alliances were formed during the following year: 'Integra'<sup>135</sup>, a group of DJs from Yu-Radio pioneered this trend. A new club, 'Industria'<sup>136</sup>, was opened during the same winter. It was completely orientated to Techno and electronic dance music. This too was triggered by Academy's successful promotion. In 1995, the independent 'UMUB' enterprise organised open-air raves and parties in abandoned factories and other unusual sites. B92's 'Kozmik' started their activities in 1995.

It must be said, however, that this trend did not last for long. Competition between clubs, the growing number of DJ alliances and State interference<sup>137</sup> had fragmented the scene. The complex interplay of social forces soon destroyed the initial entrepreneurial nature of Belgrade's Techno scene. In spite of that, the stagnation had been broken for the second time since the Yugoslav crisis escalated in 1991. The initial, equally brief breakthrough happened during and after the first BBS festival, in 1992. A number of projects in electronic dance music started around the same time. Some of them, including Vukan (previously known as Wolfgang S), Weljam (DJ and producer Velja Mijanović), Corrosion and others, are still active and enjoying success in the country, with the realistic prospects of reaching an international audience<sup>138</sup>. After the initial vigour of Belgrade's Techno scene slowly

---

<sup>134</sup> Identified in accounts on Acid House (Collin, 1997; Thornton, 1996). The manifesto-like text by the singer of the Acid House project Dee Lite, *Lady Kier Kirby*, was published in 'Microphone Fiends', edited by Ross and Rose (1997). This text states the ethical foundations of rave parties - including the notions of idealism, peacefulness, sharing and tribal unity.

<sup>135</sup> Information on DJ alliances formed at that time could be found at <http://host.sezampro.yu/youTechno>

<sup>136</sup> Collin refers to this club (2001: pp. 93-94).

<sup>137</sup> Referred to in the interview with N. Savić, who took part in the 'UMUB' enterprise.

<sup>138</sup> A compilation CD, 'Belgrade Coffee Shop', identified by some Belgraders as the 'soundtrack to the last summer of the ousted regime' appeared in HMV stores in England and

deflated, several groups of DJs and promoters continued their work with varied success.

The Techno events at the Academy and other clubs during 1993 and 1994 were the precursors of a truly transformational process that took place during the winter of 1996/1997. Independent culture production in Belgrade and Serbia had changed since then, almost without exposure, but considerably. In the meantime, the temporary suspension of UN sanctions after the signing of Dayton Accords<sup>139</sup> in 1995 saw the regime proclaim victory. Trying to break-up the ties with Turbo-folk did not work, as Gordy explores (2001: pp. 162-175). The regime started a campaign for 'true culture' in 1994 and continued it throughout 1995. Wiping out Turbo-folk - the result of decades of subtle media manipulation and social injustice - and more importantly, its accompanying social conjuncture<sup>140</sup>, was not likely to have been the rationale behind the regime's 'campaign for true culture'.

The 'year of culture' was a campaign as insincere as were the Titoist criticisms of 'kitsch'<sup>141</sup>. While verbally condemning the musical genre, the regime was doing nothing to change the causes of the organic crisis of society, which Turbo-folk reflected. Gordy (2001: 175) notes that Turbo-folk had become autonomous from its political creators and that it would not be possible to eliminate it overnight, especially having in mind that it had become intricately linked with organised crime and was proving a very lucrative business. While the rhetoric was propagating 'culture', the regime was doing its best to stifle all channels of opposition, including clubs<sup>142</sup>.

---

France in 2001. This is probably the first release of Belgrade urban music seen in the West for years, originally published by B92.

<sup>139</sup> Dayton Accords ended the hostilities in Bosnia (Glenny, 1996; Gordy, 2001; Silber and Little, 1996).

<sup>140</sup> Some Serbian rock-critics have expressed disgust over the regime's hypocritical attack at its own creation, not dealing with the root of the problem. A citizen included in a newspaper survey on the subject, believed that the action would even become counterproductive Gordy (2001: pp. 171-173)

<sup>141</sup> Already referred to in this text. Kronja, Milojević and others wrote about the Communist paternalistic 'critique' of kitsch in music. The researcher doubts that such critique was ever aimed at its apparent target; it was rather an excuse for creating tensions between stage-managed strata, a Gramscian 'war of position'.

<sup>142</sup> The closure of Akademija in 1995 - not the final one, as Gordy believes; taking over semi-independent Studio B Radio and Television, during the same year; even taking over the

#### 4.5 The articulate noise: street protests and cultural change

A change to the regime's dominance and cultural apathy started to ascend in November 1996. It is unfortunate that the analyses of the 1996/1997 street protests were mainly concerned with political issues leaving the author to rely on a limited amount of documentary data. On November 17, 1996, the second round of municipal elections was held in Serbia. Opposition parties had formed the election coalition named 'Zajedno' ('Together'). They won convincingly in all of the major cities and in the majority of towns in Serbia. The electoral victory was denied to the voters.<sup>143</sup> Demonstrations started on the very same day and lasted for almost three months. After a few days, it became clear that the regime would do its best to ignore the requests for fair treatment, while vilifying the protesters in the media and provoking violence without much hesitation. The protesters responded with wit and perseverance.

The square in front of the Faculty of Philosophy was the meeting and finishing point for the students' daily demonstrations. Students would join the citizens' column in the streets. The protesters 'would go for a stroll'. Insisting on a term associated with leisure activity is a good indicator of the way in which the protest organisers were reinforcing the sense of moral victory over the regime. Naming a serious display of political dissent a 'stroll', the protesters implied that such was their right to fair elections that their long columns marching through Belgrade were no more than anything else free individuals would exercise, such as a leisurely walk around town. Tens of thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands of people would take the 'walk' around the city.

This pattern was repeated in all the cities and towns where numbers of protesters were sufficient to contest the control of space. Not being supported by the capital's media, apart from B92 and Radio Index, the citizens - who

---

organisation of Techno-rave parties and venues where independent ones might be held (the latter confirmed and discussed in detail with N. Savić, who helped organise some of them).

<sup>143</sup> Collin (2001) wrote on these demonstrations in some detail. It is not the aim of this study to analyse political issues but to put the protests in their cultural context and note the change in culture production practices, identifying new movements and forms of artistic expression.

overwhelmingly voted for the opposition - had to make their presence felt and their voices heard. This symbolical struggle requested courageous patience. The riot police were given orders to stop the 'stroll', break the column, sometimes with cordons and barriers, sometimes by attacking demonstrators. On several occasions, plainclothes policemen got into the column, attacking it from within with baseball bats and batons.

The daily route would be announced only a few minutes before 'the stroll' began in order to confuse riot police. Police would block the streets and act violently for no apparent reason. The protesters were urged not to match violence with violence. The government-controlled media spared no words insulting and vilifying the protesters, branding them as 'a minority' of 'traitors', and 'mercenaries', occasionally softening their language to call them 'mised, uninformed, manipulated'... people carrying foreign flags, 'stones, bombs and saucepans'<sup>144</sup>. None of the protesters took *bombs and stones* for the daily walk around town. Some did carry saucepans, which had a special purpose.

Protesters were carrying foreign flags, symbolically showing the will to be one with the world from which the whole country was severed. The huge banner carried at the head of the student column seemed to confirm this: 'Beograd je svet', 'Belgrade is the world'. This was another wordplay - wordplays appear as semantic 'weapons' often used in symbolic resistance in Serbia. The word 'svet', depending on context, could mean 'the world' as well as 'sacred'. Flags carried at the protest were not restricted to national emblems of foreign lands. 'Chicago Bulls', 'Jack Daniels', and 'Ferrari' flags were seen in the streets. Gordy interpreted them as signals of the will to share the joys of simple living, and the right to a decent and settled life. This may apply to the 'Bulls' and the bourbon, but 'Ferrari' had an added meaning. The son of president Milošević posed as a rally driver. It was said that he drove a Ferrari, the commodity-fetish embraced by the 'turbo-élite', and featured in a song by a Turbo-folk starlet. This was a symbol burdened with meaning.

---

<sup>144</sup> Eric D Gordy, quoting Mirjana Marković, the president's wife and leader of a, once powerful, interest group that posed as a political party (2001: 222).

The contestations over space had a large significance. The right to control movement through the cities was protected by the regime as a symbolic intrusion into the citizens' privacy. It also meant that no one's movement could pass unobserved and unrecorded. The protesters 'played hide-and-seek', announcing directions of the daily route minutes before the start and subsequently making their presence seen and heard. They claimed the streets, their right to live in them, to choose how and where to live and move. This could be seen as a symbolical statement about the right of the individual and the prevalence of the democratically expressed will. The 'strolls' were not only the assertion of the right to free and unsupervised movement. Nor were the walks restricted to symbolical expressions of communal will. The walking columns, miles long, were over-stretching the patience of the authoritarian system and showing strength of will. This 'regular daily walk' in the blistering cold for three months showed the protesters' remarkable endurance. An ever-present humour was used against the fear and aggression of riot police. There was a degree of spontaneity in this. Collin refers to a demonstrator who said that his best realisation was that he was not alone; that there were other 'normal' people<sup>145</sup> who felt miserable for a long time for similar reasons; that he had discovered they could all laugh over it together. People dropped their fears and worries and then discovered freedom and joy, celebrating the fact that they were not alone, liberating themselves along the way (Collin, 2001: 127). The carnivalesque atmosphere was genuine. Considering the connotations often associated with carnivals - liberation from slavery - the protest occasionally turned into a celebration of life.

There were a couple of occasions when the threat of bloodshed loomed. The protesters' prevailing numbers coupled with their self-control helped avoid serious conflict. On 24<sup>th</sup> December 1996, the authorities organised a counter-rally of its supporters brought in from the provinces, attempting to provoke serious clashes between the two groups and find an excuse to intervene and 'prevent chaos' that they had orchestrated themselves. On the occasion approximately 300000 pro-democracy demonstrators were in the streets of

---

<sup>145</sup> 'Normality regained': Gordy's analyses how the impact of hyperinflation on the people in 1993 and 1994 resulted in the loss of it.



Belgrade (Collin, 2001: pp. 116-118), seriously outnumbering the regimes' supporters. In spite of a few scuffles serious outbursts of violence were avoided. The regime felt uneasy about the sheer number of protesters.

Demonstrations often resembled a Monty Python sketch. On one occasion, sheep were paraded in front of a police cordon, carrying slogans in support of the regime (Collin, 2001: 126). Students danced in front of a police cordon, day and night, during a long deadlock in a short, narrow street in the city centre. The cordon stood there for weeks, stopping the protesters from breaking the symbolic boundary. In response, the protesters announced the area would be known as the 'cordon bleu'<sup>146</sup> discotheque. Once more, music became the bearer of multi-layered messages. The saucepans mentioned earlier had a similar - 'musical' - purpose. Every night at 7.30 p.m. government-controlled television would start its evening news broadcast. Protest organisers asked the citizens to use dishes and cutlery to create a noise that would last throughout the news broadcast, symbolically muting the televised rhetoric. The other purpose of this exercise was to metaphorically express the voice of cheated voters. Music and noise, along with space and freedom of movement, were the most powerful symbols of dissent during protests. Demonstrations were accompanied by drummers that announced the approaching column. Protesters blew their whistles, creating a noise or a calling to those responsible to answer for their misdeeds. As if the roles were swapped, demonstrators used whistles, a symbol of police authority, summoning the culprits that committed the electoral fraud.

The action was named 'Buka u modi' ('Noise in Fashion') after a song recorded in 1991 by 'Disciplina kičme', one of the most influential Belgrade bands. The group was inactive for years. Its leader, Dušan Kojić 'Koja', had been living in London since January 1992. Koja's first visit to Belgrade in years happened during the spring of 1996, promoting the album he recorded in England. He defined the new stylistic developments in his music as 'heavy rave rock, but funky' (Janjatović, 1998: pp. 55-56). His lyrics 'vreme je za

---

<sup>146</sup> Referring to the colour of police uniforms in the 'blue cordon'; sardonic overtones further connected this wordplay to cookery of the highest class.

istinu, vreme je za pravdu' - 'it's time for truth, it's time for justice', were chanted during the 1991 Belgrade protests for media impartiality. This time, 'Noise in Fashion' was the protest's anthem.

The cacophony created in the streets during the protest's early days, gradually started to take on a recognisable form. Collin talks of rhythmic patterns resembling Samba; events taking place day after day looked like a festival, in spite of the cold, police brutality, and the reality behind the protest. Composer Jovan Hristić made recordings of the street noise and arranged an experimental track titled after the song by 'Disciplina kičme'. Reminiscing over that, Fleka complained at the work's lack of conceptual originality. It is a matter for discussion whether anyone could solely claim authorship over the semi-structured noise created during the protest. Fleka's comment could be taken as an overstatement because of the specific circumstances in which Hristić's conceptual composition came into being. The author of this study believes that both tracks of the same title, along with 'The Magnificent' by K Foundation, referred to at the beginning of this text, worked in synergy with the protest's multiple unnamed ad-hoc 'anthems'. Its most interesting outcome was the sound pattern that emerged from this sonic communication, a collective performance involving hundreds of thousands of people.

The sense of self-respect, mentioned by one of Collin's respondents, was evident. Every person in the crowd could become the creator of this sonic unison. In spite of its apparent chaotic nature, participants of all ages maintained individuality and responsibility for their actions. The demonstrations resembled an electronic dance music 'rave' event. A community with its own signs and practices was created as an amalgam of all of its segments and constituent parts. Boundaries between the audience and the performer collapsed. Creation of meaning gradually became irrelevant, for the sole meaning of the whole three-month process became a celebration of liberty and recognition of mutual respect. The term 'hand-made Techno' was coined in the streets during the protests: a reconciliation of the artificial and the natural had occurred in the very contradiction that the term bears in its construct.

The spatial boundaries were eventually overcome after the regime reluctantly succumbed to the pressure of protesters. After the apparent aim of the protest was met, opposition politicians acted disappointingly. Political, personal and financial gains were sought, and the civil society had returned to the Gramscian 'war of position'. The inability of opposition politicians to utilise the moment led to dire consequences two years after the protest ended. Many of Collin's respondents agree - along with the author, once a participant in these events - that the main failure of the leaders of the 'Zajedno' coalition was to overestimate their roles in the 1996/1997 protest. 'Free Cities of Serbia' in which the protest took place demonstrated their democratic will not really focusing on individual politicians.

Collin (2001) suggests that these events have given B92 the opportunity to develop its media network, ANEM (Asocijacija Nezavisnih Elektronskih Medija - Independent Electronic Media Association), using the Internet as its technological support. The fact that most municipalities in Serbia became autonomous from the regime and provided political support for the establishment of this network played an important role in the country's democratisation. The results of the 1996/97 protests reached further than that. It is the belief of this author that they were the seed of a significant change.

It might appear unconvincing that the 1996/97 demonstrations in Serbian cities had a strong impact on Belgrade independent culture production. The author of this study firmly asserts that this is the case, though the impact of 1996/97 protest was mainly observed in the light of politics. According to the implicit readings of Gordy, Kronja and Milojević - and to a lesser extent, Collin - the effects of these protests were not far-reaching, as long as culture-production was concerned. The author will show how a significant change was introduced in ways not seen in Belgrade before; the change was subtle, not easy to detect, yet far-reaching.

#### 4.6 Concluding the historical introduction

A few years later, street theatres were again used for political purposes. The student-led movement 'Otpor' ('Resistance'), that played an instrumental role in the regime's overthrow, created theatrical allegories to convey political messages. They were severely treated by the regime, labelled as 'terrorists'. After the democratic revolution in Serbia succeeded, once more after the elections were rigged, the movement's representatives received MTV's 'Free Your Mind', the award whose laureates were B92 the year before.

The regime was overthrown through civil disobedience. The social conjunctures that led to this change were created in ways that would have been unexpected a few years before. Signifiers of resistance took different forms, depending on the elements of social formation that used them. For some, these were the rock concerts, described by the people consulted in this study. Others were probably not even aware that their actions resembled 20<sup>th</sup> century conceptual art - like the farmers obstructing traffic on regional roads, calmly playing chess in the middle of an important crossroads.

For them the idea might have come from an old Serbian epic poem 'Prince Marko Ploughing the Roads'. City youth might have read it through the intermediate form used in the film 'Ko to tamo peva' ('Who's That Singing Out There?'), a tragicomic drama written by a respected Serbian contemporary playwright.

How did the unlikely alliances between student 'avant-garde' theatrical performances and farmers' symbolic chess-playing protest come to being? Interpreted as structural affect, within which the individual played little to no role, symbolic forms adopted in political protest would not make much sense. These linkages developed between diverse actors of social change in Belgrade and Serbia during the Nineties have resulted in new forms of

mediation, in politics<sup>147</sup>, economy and culture. The author leaves the former two to theoreticians in their respective areas. This study is concerned with notions of meaning and stylistic authenticity in music scenes along with power relations reflecting and mediating these notions in culture production. A model disallowing the analyst to examine these seemingly unlikely linkages as determinations within a structure would hardly do facts any justice. Articulation Theory provides the model closest to the reality of cultural change described.

The term 'hand made Techno' has survived the political protests. The summer of 1997 was marked with cultural events organised with little to no funding. Hand-made Techno became the term used for a distinctive style of a group of musicians calling themselves "Neočekivana sila koja se iznenada pojavljuje i rešava stvar" - "The Unexpected Force That Appears Suddenly and Solves Everything". In other words, Deus Ex Machina, God inside A Machine, Technology with a Soul, Hand-Made-Techno. Consequences of the unexpected alliances that briefly existed in the streets during the winter of 1996/97 include the first truly liberal Belgrade Summer Festival, where art students arranged the programme themselves; the Low-Fi Video movement, which is now recognised in international artistic and intellectual circles; a band whose music resembles coherent electronic noise, a session of two guitars, a bass, and a set of drums. Do-it-yourself, without funding, hand-made Techno. Orge, the guitarist and figurehead of the 'Unexpected Force', stated in an interview for this study, that performance is more important than a recording - contrary to the conventional wisdom of music business (Rutten, 1991). That is a lesson learnt from years of performing without prospect of financial gain. Performance for performance's sake, not *L'art pour l'art*<sup>148</sup>.

This study is based on accounts of practitioners and theoreticians from different social backgrounds. Is it possible to accurately map such a complex system and further the development of its potential?

---

<sup>147</sup> In this case political impact is the most easily recognisable level at which the effects of social change occurred.

<sup>148</sup> This is a paraphrased statement taken from a research interview with Orge, lead guitarist of the Unexpected Force. See Appendix 9; entry dated 8<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

Will the social structures work in such accord in Belgrade as to encourage the emerging new forms of artistic expression developed during the long isolation?

Does the Belgrade underground music scene exist?

If it does, will it ever regain the strength and influence it had in the Eighties?

To whom does the national origin of a musical work really matter?

These questions bear ethical considerations as important as knowledge itself.

## **Chapter Five**

# **Culture-production in Belgrade; discourse, power and the right to space**

Chapter 5 deals with the notion of space in relation to culture-production in Belgrade. The discussion ranges from contestations over the control of space within the city centre during political protests, as introduced in the previous chapter, to spatial relations in nightclubs and architectural manifestations of cultural change during the Nineties.

The notion of space is identified as an important source of information on the cultural, technological and economic practices within a society (Foucault, 1980, 1984). The way space is treated and organised, the way in which the body occupies it and the way in which multitudes exercise their right over space and movement all reveal the hidden relations of power. Thus in order to determine what discursive formations have affected, and continue to affect the production of culture in Belgrade, and 'underground culture' in particular, it is necessary to start this chapter by examining the practices related to space<sup>1</sup>.

As Massey discussed (1995: 204-205), the status of being a 'local' and claiming the right to a particular space is a matter of negotiation related to cultural identity (class, ethnic or otherwise). The instance described by Fleka, when the onlookers condemned the daytime gathering of 'deviants' in the street, is a good example of how this contestation functions. In this interpretation of space, addressed in Section 4.4.1 (p. 147), the visitors to the 'Academy' club in Belgrade were seen as intruders to the area. Section 4.5 introduced a different form of spatial contestations. The 'strolls' protesters took around the streets of Belgrade in the winter of 1996/1997 were symbolically asserting voters' right to appoint municipal authorities. Chapter 4 concludes with the analysis of symbolic practices used to articulate the political will of the inhabitants of Serbia. Chapter 5 will use this example as a point of departure from political symbolism in these events to other readings of space ranging between communal and commercial.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bennett (2000) refers to the notion of space in relation to music scenes. However, his approach will not be applied to the methodology of this study, for a simple reason: contestations of space in Belgrade were far more burdened with politico-economic and ideological/discursive tensions than in any of the cases in United Kingdom known to the researcher.



### 5.1.1 Street protests transformed into festivals

Hebdige (1993: 24-25, 39, 87) analyses the riots that emerged during the 1976 Notting Hill Carnival as part of the broader set of disturbances that characterised the cultural change in mid-seventies Britain. One of the elements of this cultural change was the advent of Punk-Rock, a lifestyle subculture as much as a musical genre, that has deeply affected the music industry, urban culture and mainstream aesthetics not only in the UK but throughout the world. The violence that erupted during the carnival is analysed with regards to social and cultural frictions in Britain - with reference to a number of urban subcultures related to ethnic heritage, socio-economic inequalities and the post-colonial legacy (Hebdige, 1993: 36, 39, 87, 145). The case of Belgrade's street riots, political protests, demonstrations, festivals and carnivalesque events might appear, reasonably so, to be very different. However, Hebdige (1993: 39) states that one of the important elements of the 1976 Notting Hill riots is the 'symbolic defence of communal space'. As it was seen in the previous chapter, the case in Belgrade was very similar during the political protests throughout the Nineties, until the 'bloodless democratic revolution' changed the face of Serbian politics in October 2000. Indeed, the contestations over space played an important symbolic role in asserting political power after the 1996 municipal elections in Serbia. The control over the cities and towns was the subject of those political protests.

The regime's refusal to recognise the election results led these same voters to assert that control over the 'free cities of Serbia' through political protests. 'Strolling' was far from a typical political street protest. The very subject of the dispute was the urban territory. The 'war of nerves' had to be won symbolically with patience - not violence. The citizens expressed their will through non-violent yet resolute group action. On both occasions they won this symbolical struggle for communal city areas. Non-violent contestations for the control of space were supported by other means of noncompliance. The right to occupy space was asserted and confirmed through these forms of disobedience in order to break the rank of security forces who, through their sealing off parts of the city, showed their privilege over the citizens they were supposed to protect. Another provocative dispute with the coercive apparatus included 'taking a stroll' into residential areas of Belgrade where the then president and his associates used to live. Both exercises of spatial

contestation (Foucault, 1980: 252) were aimed at ridiculing the simplistic rules of privilege and austere institutional power (Foucault, 1980: 255).

The street protests turned into carnival-like demonstrations of popular unrest, appearing to have the opposite form from what Hebdige describes in his book. The heavy presence of riot police armed with batons meant the threat of violence constantly hung in the air. The protest had a few violent outbursts; the most notable being December 24, 1996 and February 3, 1997, when the threat of escalating physical conflict was very real. However, the very transformation of the angry crowd into a laughing, cheering and dancing procession through the city streets had, more than anything, demonstrated the serious resolve and unbreakable determination of demonstrators. The election results were ratified after a few months and the pro-democratic coalition seized control over Belgrade and a number of other Serbian cities and towns.

The carnival, which celebrated the power to influence change through peaceful means, coincided with another development mentioned in the previous chapter. It is by no means the intention of the author to identify the situation in Belgrade in 1996/1997 as akin to London's 1976 riots. This is neither possible nor intended. However, beyond the political connotations that could be drawn from the opposite developments of street manifestations compared here, it could be argued that a far-reaching cultural change was at work in both cases. This change to music and street subcultures will be explained later. But first the carnival-analogy will be fully explored. This exploration calls for further examination of the symbolic use of tools and objects at hand: tools that Hebdige identifies as strikingly reminiscent of opposing cultural practices and those similarly ambiguous in the case of Belgrade's street protests of 1996/1997.

In the case of London's 1976 riots the carnival that celebrated 'harmony' (Hebdige, 1993: 24) descended into violence. Belgrade was different. Demonstrations that looked likely to plunge into bloodshed were transformed into a carnivalesque celebration of the unity of pro-democratic protesters. The 'humble dustbin lid... symbol of the carnival spirit' became the 'desperate shield' of policemen in London's 1976 riots (Hebdige, 1993: 25). In Belgrade, to the contrary, the change in the use of tools went in the opposite direction. The whistle, symbolically associated with police authority, the drum,

traditionally related to the noise of advancing troops in war, and the honk. The latter two are often used by football hooligans. These three symbols of machismo and coercion became the ad-hoc instruments on which 'Handmade Techno' was invented and first performed by exalted crowds. Whilst the carnival turned into a riot in one scenario, the riot turned into a cheerful 'rave' in the other. The symbolic defence of communal space, as Hebdige calls it, was analogous to both situations.

The other, less obvious analogy, announced above, is now to be examined. As analysed in Chapter 2, the long-term effects of Punk included the attempts to re-shape the culture-industry in recent decades (Hesmondhalgh, 1998). The Punk 'degenerates', representing the 'atrophy' of society in 1976 Britain (Hebdige, 1993: 87), are no less appropriate representatives of their time than the 'deviant' youths of Nineties' Belgrade and Serbia. Representing the dissatisfied, critical minority, both groups were opposed to subcultures that were endorsing the *apparently* more traditional values, like the skinheads in the UK or Dieselers in Serbia.

Whilst Punk was immediately identified with a particular music genre, the 'deviant' 'epileptics', as nicknamed by Dieselers and others in Serbia, were spread across stylistic preferences with only the opposition toward the political and cultural mainstream in Serbia in common. Hebdige argues that the unbelievably hot summer of 1976 contributed to the inception of Punk and here another interesting contradiction between the two cases can be sought.

The winter of 1996/97 was extremely cold in Serbia. This, however, did not break the protesters' spirit. What is more likely to be the reliable argument in Hebdige's account is related to the widespread unemployment, riots, and moral bankruptcy of hippie idealism. In a similar sense, Belgrade underground youth subcultures were ready for a change. This happened at a time when the prospects of the whole society appeared so bad that their *non-acceptance*<sup>2</sup> had to be more dynamic than following the indignation observed in the lyrics of 'Obojeni program' or immersing in the music of the 'better past'. Escapism among Belgrade's urban youth had no positive effects. This state of Belgrade's alternative-Rock music-influenced youth subcultures is discussed in the previous chapter, with reference to Gordy's and Janjatović's work.

---

<sup>2</sup> Reference to this term was made in Chapter 4. The term was formulated by a Belgrade author and journalist, Olivera Milos-Todorović depicting the practices of individuals in countering the detrimental effects of the undemocratic regime on Serbian culture and society.

Whether Hebdige's assumption on the consequential relationship between Punk and the state of the UK economy in 1976 can be articulated in the case of Serbia, Belgrade and 'handmade Techno', in 1996/97 is discussed in the following paragraphs.

The over-determined contradictions, as Althusser (1965) would argue, have left little space for different interpretations. Such permeating contradictions were notable in that they left a mark on many levels of discourse, with a deep impact on signifying practices in the Belgrade underground music scene. Such an argument would be dismissed in a Foucauldian approach to discourse. Theoretical ruptures in this work such have been resolved through the methodology of Articulation (Chapter 3). Contest for domination of the city streets was a result of a concrete set of conditions embedded in Serbian politics during the mid- to late Nineties.

It could be read from the events of 1996/1997 and 2000 that there was a potential for structural change within Serbian society. Protesters gave support to political parties unified in a democratic opposition bloc primarily because this alliance had created two important implications. First, the alliance signified a wide variety of discourses opposed to the ruling regime. Secondly, the manipulated local election results gave citizens the impetus to pronounce their opinion - not only on current events but the whole set of customary characteristics of the regime's rule. The protest became the articulation of dissent on many levels although opposition victory in local elections could not strongly undermine the regime's hegemony. The regime's exasperated response was indicative of its fear of losing full control of the capillary paths of power. Thus every street in Belgrade became contested territory in symbolic struggle over the city. The protesters' noise-creations signified dissent with what they perceived as regime's information blockade and dishonest reporting. 'Noise in Fashion' events in Belgrade streets, held at one of the city squares or the 'cordon bleu discotheque', became polysemic practices autonomous from their original intent.

Thus concrete contestations over the city streets came to articulate abstract political concepts. On the other hand, potential for cultural change became evident when a new musical practice started developing irrespective of the political context that initiated it as a symbolic practice. 'The Clash' pronounced the anxieties of place and time in songs like 'White Riot' (Hebdige, 1993: 29).

Music of 'The Unexpected Force That Appears Suddenly and Solves Everything'<sup>3</sup>, articulated the need for swift and radical cultural change in Belgrade. This band's name ('The Unexpected Force...') should be primarily read as 'Deus Ex Machina': the divine intervention resolving the plot in classical drama. Their name implies readings that probe further than the ironic wordplay based on 'divine intervention' would suggest<sup>4</sup>.

The Unexpected Force emerged from a jam session informally arranged as part of the 1997 Belgrade Summer Festival (BELEF). A telling example of the intense cultural activity after the protests ended, BELEF was sponsored by the new city authorities. Their "ninth gig"<sup>5</sup> that gave impetus to 'Handmade Techno' took place at the Belgrade fortress as a part of BELEF organised by art students.

The respondents and interviewees in this research study agree that the term 'Handmade Techno' can be identified with the specified place and time referred to above. It is especially important to keep in mind that the term was accepted by members of The Unexpected Force, who did not consciously take part in coining the name for this distinctive style of musical performance. 'Handmade Techno' was created at the time of apparent cultural change in Belgrade and coincided with other cultural developments outside music.

These developments included the underground cinema movement known as 'Serbian Low-Fi Video'. Serbian Low Fi Video exercised nonconformity through a network of young filmmakers based in Serbia, establishing links between small scenes within the country. Low Fi Video kept operating in the virtual space not occupied by the hegemonic culture of any dominant group, national or international. A significant aspect of this virtual space relates to the Internet. Enthusiasts behind Serbian Low Fi Video recognised the importance of the World Wide Web in promoting their work. This group collaborates with Corrosion (CRSN) and Stripper, teams of authors involved in electronic music, digital art and alternative comics. Collin (2001: 99-116) explores the role of B92 in the development of the Internet in Serbia. B92 had established the first such service provision in the country.

---

<sup>3</sup> Today, known simply as 'The Unexpected Force' (Neočekivana sila).

<sup>4</sup> These connotations will be explored in Chapter 7.

<sup>5</sup> Quote taken from the interview with Orge. Appendix 9, entry dated 8<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

An exaggeration made by a respondent in Collin's book states that 'the Internet was the cause of (Milosevic's) defeat (in the 1996/97 protest)'. Collin accepted the statement without due rigour. Nevertheless, the Internet was instrumental in the enabling B92 and their media network (ANEM) to broadcast their programmes in spite of the government ban, Collin explains in the final chapter of "This is Serbia Calling". Internet has proven itself an important tool in dissemination of alternative discourses in Serbia, creating the space for the culture of civil disobedience. Conceived in this manner, spatial relations are not tangible. Nevertheless, the networks built in 'cyberspace' are as real and as susceptible to the Panopticon as the ones based in physical architecture. Such alternative spaces spread beneath dominant political discourses as tunnels and catacombs across societies and continents: evidence of this relates to a 'virtual visit' that Serbian Low Fi Video paid to the United States at the height of the 1999 bombing of Belgrade. Remaining US Embassy staff left Belgrade in March 1999, only hours before bombing began. They agreed to take along a tape of Serbian Low Fi Video's films selected for a New York alternative film festival where they were shown in June 1999 under the title 'Serbian Shorts Event'. The whole arrangement was made via email correspondence. Physical and macro-political boundaries have proved no match to shared discursive 'spaces'.

To conclude, the 1996/1997 street protests proved very important for the recovery of civic discursive practices in Serbia. This was most evident in treatment of space through symbolic contestations of communal areas between citizens and the apparatus of coercion. The 1996/1997 street protests initialised a new form of political culture of non-violent resistance in Serbia, finally leading to the thorough political change in October 2000. Furthermore, space was given to new informal and marginal discourses represented by the likes of Serbian Low Fi Video. After initial success with the Belgrade art public, the latter had opened virtual places to support its network.

Foucault states that nothing is absolutely liberating by its very nature. He does not see liberty as something static that is achieved once and for all, providing an ideal model that is to be replicated (Foucault, 1980: 245). Liberty as a practice is dynamic and depends on the form in which it is exercised. The noisy carnival-like protests in Serbian towns and cities had two consequences: one more immediate, political, the other more substantial -

cultural. The latter continued its existence as an undercurrent in underground music, art and cinema.

### 5.1.2 The city: commercialised communal spaces

In July 2001 huge areas of the northern Serbian city of Novi Sad, including the mediaeval fortress, were turned into one single festival space. The event was titled 'EXIT'. It lasted several days and featured some well-known musical acts from Serbia, parts of former Yugoslavia, the United Kingdom and other countries. The criteria for choosing which musicians and DJs will be featured at the 'EXIT' festival depended on a number of factors, from personal liaisons to economic viability. The argument on participation was sometimes structured around 'artistic credibility', as subsequent chapters (6 and 7) will show.

The event's title deserves more examination. This festival was the result of a long-term process, part of the aforementioned liberation attempt that started with contestations over communal spaces in Belgrade and a number of other Serbian cities. Bearing in mind that the democratic change in Serbia happened after the September 2000 elections, it should not come as a surprise that the democratically elected new government complied with and even encouraged an event like that. Considering this, claiming the causal correlation between the 2001 street festival - where the large city area was sealed off and tickets were needed to enter the festival grounds - and the 1996/1997 protest, would not be entirely feasible. However, the first such event, several days long, took place in the summer of 2000. This was the time when the dictatorial government, as Prodanović (2001: 63-65) analytically testifies, was so keen on maintaining control of the streets in Belgrade, that the 'Plateau' (or 'Plato'<sup>6</sup>) square between the Faculty of Philosophy and the Belgrade University Rectory, was sealed off in anticipation of student protests. This was done because the square was where the student protesters in 1996/1997 would gather before commencing the 'stroll'.

Having in mind the full context, the first 'EXIT' festival does gain weight as an exercise of symbolic resistance in communal space, as well as a business venture organised under unfavourable conditions. The regime's attempts to

---

<sup>6</sup> This is an interesting wordplay, successfully utilised for business purposes by the proprietors of a bookshop/café and nightclub, all situated in the Faculty building.

retain control over the population on the brink of uprising focused on Belgrade. It was the error of judgement to neglect the provinces (as the events have shown) in which the then ruling party believed was traditionally strong. After the closure of two remaining independent broadcasters on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2000, the news circulation was stifled in the capital (Collin, 2001: 199). On the other hand, local media in provincial towns and cities were broadcasting the news edited by Belgrade journalists<sup>7</sup>. This example is used only to show how municipal authorities in Serbian provinces, then controlled by democratic opposition parties, had greater opportunity for manoeuvre than the ones in Belgrade. Talking to a young woman who took part in organising the 'EXIT' festival in 2001, I had found out that the city authorities of Novi Sad received funding and other forms of support from the EU and a number of NGOs for organising the event in July 2000. The extraordinary complexity of such an organisational task can be illustrated by the fact that the 2001 festival included seven separate stages, each one of them sonically isolated from the other in the open air event.

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

Luigi came over with his girlfriend from Novi Sad. We had a chat over coffee and then – out of the blue – it turned out that she was involved in the organisation of EXIT festival from the very beginning. She spoke in detail about the way the organisation was registered at the beginning as a citizens' association, which provided them with a legal loophole to be able to organise the whole thing with the support of NGOs. Initially, the whole thing was supported by the City Council of Novi Sad and since it was controlled by the then opposition parties, they won an exclusive grant from European Union – I am not sure if that statement is accurate, but since she was at the core of the whole thing, she should really know best. I guess that this provided the grounds for NGO financing<sup>8</sup>.

'EXIT'<sup>9</sup> continued hedonistic resistance practices characterising 'Techno' and 'House' dance events that took place in Serbian cities during the mid-Nineties. The terms of 'hedonism' and 'resistance' might appear to be in irreconcilable contradiction to each other. However, electronic dance parties held in

---

<sup>7</sup> This was done with the technical support of BBC. BBC received the content from B92's through the Internet, sending the signal back to Serbia and Montenegro via satellite. The ANEM network would then locally broadcast the programmes received through a satellite antenna. This procedure (referred to in 5.1.1) is explained in Collin's book (2001).

<sup>8</sup> Appendix 1, Reflexive diary.

<sup>9</sup> Chapter 7 includes a thorough semiotic investigation of the event's title.



Belgrade between 1993 and 1995 formed a statement of passive resistance (Chapter 4). Therefore, even such a form of cultural practice becomes burdened with meaning and turns out to be potentially subversive. This is not to be mistaken for the hedonism of the Dieseler subculture, which was fed by large amounts of money acquired through criminal activity. 'Subversive hedonism' of 'Techno' and 'House' dance culture in Belgrade was less related to consumerism and more to the desire for life free from uncertainty, isolation and international stigma. One interviewee states that going to Techno parties was "a kind of salvation" for him, getting away from the "false picture around us", and the "false society in which we lived, and that's what factually saved me through those five, six years, while that sound was around."<sup>10</sup>

Several years after the events to which the above quote refers, during the months of participant observation conducted in 2001, I found myself overwhelmed by the amount of media advertising that 'EXIT' event had received. 'EXIT 2000' was a musical event in sharp contrast to the isolationist discourse of the dictatorial regime (the latter epitomised by Turbo-folk). If 'EXIT 2000' was a form of cultural resistance, an exercise of power that the pro-democratic local authorities in Novi Sad conducted to show their control over communal space and promote cultural openness, then the 2001 version was a mere commercial undertaking.

The whole festival seems quite fascinating, and what strikes me most is that they managed to do that in such a way that it was both commercially successful and politically provoking – though in a very sophisticated way. Nobody could say a word about 'subversion', but the name EXIT is pretty clear, even the logo suggests 'the end of a theatrical show'. Now, they are registered as a 'd.o.o', which is the Serbian equivalent of 'Ltd.' I am only surprised by the speed of commercialisation of the whole thing<sup>11</sup>.

The kind of media coverage 'EXIT 2001' received was reminiscent of similar highly lucrative summer gatherings organised annually in the UK. Organisational, political and spatial connotations of the second 'EXIT' festival no longer included attempts at constructing complex meanings that would create cultural challenges. 'EXIT 2001' was an event that reconstructed newly

---

<sup>10</sup> Appendix 12, Interview with N. Savić, artist based in London, once a member of the Techno-subculture and entrepreneur in the promotion of underground Techno parties, 1995/6.

<sup>11</sup> Appendix 1, Reflective diary. Date of entry: 19<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

(re)gained liberties and celebrated Serbia's reconciliation with the international community.

Diversified forms of expression, freedom of choice and redistribution of power all play an important part in such practices of liberation. Foucault's statement ending Section 5.1.1 on liberty as practice refers to a continuous long-term process and not an instant solution achieved over night. Concentration of power exercised through coercion as well as through sophisticated forms of hegemonic consensus has as many guises as do the practices of liberation. Concentration of economic or political power can appear in many forms. One of these is the transformation of space from communal to commercial. Space becomes commodified: the practices of gathering and communication through musical enactment become constrained and construed by economic factors. Full commodification of communal space could become just as inequitable a practice as the blatantly ideological constraints of the ousted regime.

Within one year of its existence, the 'EXIT'<sup>12</sup> festival revealed the transitional tendencies of Serbian society. 'EXIT' had undergone a transformation from a subversive entertainment event that asserted the citizens' right to congregate communally into a commercial venture that revealed the new tensions rising as a result of the new stages of social and economic transition in Serbia. Respondents provided the author with varied answers commenting on the development of 'EXIT' festival between its inception in 2000 and its rise to media dominance in 2001. The level of personal or professional involvement shaped such accounts. Expressed opinions depended on the position of the respondents within an interest group of a particular socio-economic stratum. The analysis of these and other narratives related to the music subculture production in Belgrade and Serbia is conducted with special caution. These reflexive measures used to ensure reliability included, among others, placing the interviewees within their appropriate social, (sub)cultural, economic, and political context in relation to independent music production in Belgrade<sup>13</sup> (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Booth, 2002; Kellner, 1997; Keso *et al* 2001).

---

<sup>12</sup> Organisers of EXIT festival released a luxury brochure in 2003, titled "Atlas: The State of Exit", confirming the author's reading of its special significance. The brochure resembles a geography atlas in format and binding; it starts from the 'constellations' featuring internationally acclaimed artists that performed at the festival (e.g. Tricky, Moloko, Pete Tong, etc.) alongside the names from Serbia and former Yugoslavia (e.g. Vlatko Stefanovski and others). This is followed by a detailed plan of the 'state' covering the mediaeval fort of Petrovaradin.

<sup>13</sup> The accounts related to musical authenticity and genre will be discussed in Chapter 7.

There are other notable examples from the past decade related to the use of communal space for similar musical events. Such examples of discursive practices related to space in underground music production and promotion, concentrated in interviews and the analyses of media texts, reveal the complex interplay of commercial and political interests. This will be seen from an interviewee account referring to electronic dance music events held in Belgrade during the mid-Nineties.

### 5.1.3 Techno-raves in ready-made spaces, legality and permissive society

Two interesting examples will be discussed here. These cases depict how the *ancien régime*<sup>14</sup> in Serbia tried to assert its control over communal space, while showing how benevolent it is towards the cultural needs and aspirations of the community. This should be seen as a progression from the discussion on Gordy's findings on the 1995 'campaign for true culture' and 'against kitsch'. The interview with Nikola Savić, an artist currently living and working in London, sheds some light on the subject. Savić was active in the promotion of electronic dance music in Belgrade, especially Techno, since April 1995. His comments on the notions of space within the context of music events, as well as the transformation of space through human activity, pose a useful reference to the argument on space and discourse outlined above.

... But coming back to the topic of *space*... every space has its own qualities but it also has its own irregularity... it always has to be had in mind that a specific sound has to come in there, a specific lighting... and it is always a question of *what do you want*, what do you want to make of that space. Of course, it is clear that this is a *musical night and a party*, but you always have that possibility, to change that space, *not with sound only, that is very obvious*, but also with lighting. Suddenly you pose the question spatial organisation... and that creates a very *interesting, a very interesting situation*, which, for me, is one of the most creative parts, of the whole project, *of every project*. And, secondly, that all of us looked at it as an *instant... an instant-position*, where we never wanted to repeat ourselves, with the same space, but we always wanted to *open those channels, those*

---

<sup>14</sup> This term was used by Stojanovic, 2001.

*forgotten places*. That is very interesting... That is, I think, our greatest quality<sup>15</sup>.

Savić and his associates registered a union-like organisation, finding a legal loophole that allowed them to operate as a business without having to deal with the many obstacles remaining from the communist era. As in the cases of leading nightclubs where entrepreneurs worked under the wing of the University, Savić and associates registered their organisation as the Association of the Young Artists of Belgrade, Serbian acronym 'UMUB' (Udruzenje Mladih Umetnika Beograda). He was also a co-founder of the 'Workshop 13' art-group along with the author of this study and several other young artists. UMUB organised several Techno-rave parties in Belgrade during 1995 and 1996, following the UK tradition of Acid House (the latter explored at length by Thornton, 1995). This came after the 'Academy' club had successfully promoted the same type of event, though confined to its own space, between 1993 and 1995. The reason for 'Workshop 13' art-group's mention here is because of its relation to a particular space used for the first time for artistic purposes in May 1995.

The old sugar-production plant, situated just outside central Belgrade, consisted of a number of huge, abandoned buildings. 'Workshop 13' had an exhibition organised in one of the old warehouses. The art-group was made up of Fine Art students whose aesthetic and conceptual leanings were very diverse. The exhibition was a display of different works, from installations to figurative paintings, all situated within a high-ceiling room of a factory warehouse. As the UMUB helped set up the exhibition, the organisation used the opportunity to claim one of the abandoned factory buildings for other artistic purposes. Getting the license from the Belgrade City Council, at that time (1995) still under control of SPS, Milosevic's ruling party, was quite difficult. The art exhibition was accompanied by a Techno-rave, the latter attracting much more publicity than the former. Thornton (1995: 137-151) provides significant space for the exploration of 'micro-media' used for advertising purposes in music subcultures. Instead of using mass media, in order to retain the 'subterranean' aura (Hebdige, 1993) and claim 'subcultural capital' (Thornton, 1995), the promoters of UMUB resorted to word of mouth, flyers, and advance ticket-sales to attract the audiences.

---

<sup>15</sup> Appendix 12, Interview with N. Savić. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

The fact that the Belgrade mayor's office was not officially notified that this was to be a commercial event could be the genuine reason for secrecy. The event was very successful. Savić, an aspiring artist, prefers not to talk about the commercial side of UMUB parties. This was the second UMUB party, the first being held in a balloon-tent used for winter tennis practice. Savić asserts his artistic interest in unusual spaces. He claims not to have been in favour of 'organic spaces' like the one that was used for the first UMUB party organised in 'the balloon'. Savić refers to a 'primordial disturbance'. Not everyone could get in because an unanticipated technical problem had emerged at the entrance. The air pressure would fall every time the door would open for new visitors. Temperature and humidity presented more problems so the whole process of *maintaining the balloon* became quite difficult. By the middle of the party sweat started dripping from the top of the balloon. Savić says that "the air was almost contaminated... that was a horrifically organic-disturbance that happened". Immediately after that, the next party turned out to be much more interesting in "that functional sense".

The second party was held at the old sugar-processing plant. The spaces where the event took place were "*terribly large*", fifteen metres high, so no 'organic' problems occurred: "everything was *clean, minimal*". Every space has its own qualities but it also has its own irregularity, Savić continues. His approach to the topic of space is as pragmatic as it is artistic: a specific sound and specific lighting have to be employed in representing, shaping and interpreting a given space. Savić claims to be interested in transforming the space through the use of lighting and '*not only sound*'. The latter is an interesting statement and reveals an unusual reasoning where sound is understood as the primary way to restructure a given space and lighting effects as secondary.

...[T]he next party turned out to be - in that functional sense - much, er, much more interesting, because that was (going on) in that sugar-production plant, where, *of course*, all those spaces were *terribly* large, they are... let's say, fifteen metres high, so we had no problems of the kind, *factually*, everything was *clean, minimal*... those problems were not appearing<sup>16</sup> ...

Savić considers the question of spatial organisation as the most creative aspect of every such project he was involved with. A personal preference is

---

<sup>16</sup> Appendix 12, Interview with N. Savić. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

revealed here: a DJ or a marketing expert would structure their hierarchies of creative activities in a Techno-rave event according to totally different criteria. He argues that others, such as the 'Enlightenment' party, did an immaculate job with sound and lighting. A new, *ready-made space* was chosen for each new party: "we never wanted to repeat ourselves"... always "*opening those channels, those forgotten places*". Savić considers this as the greatest achievement of UMUB dance events.

The interviews conducted with the participants, members, practitioners, artists and businesspeople involved in the production, distribution and reproduction/promotion (Hall, 1980b, Marx, 1973) of Belgrade underground music, include a number of contradictions and inconsistencies. These contradictions and inconsistencies, whether they belong to the same interview or come as result of superposition and comparison, reveal more than the intended narrative produced by the interviewee.

One of the three salient inconsistencies identified in this interview needs to be addressed at this stage of the analysis. This is the assertion that UMUB never intended to organise two parties at the same location. The possible interpretations of this factual omission are discussed on a different level and at a more appropriate place in this study. Savić recalls the fact that UMUB approached the Mayor's Office again, asking for permission to use the old sugar-processing plant once more. However, this time the permission was declined. In a matter of months it was revealed that the space was taken over by an organisation run by a highly ranked executive<sup>17</sup> of JUL (the interest group which was part of the ruling political alliance). The old factory was turned into a luxurious cultural centre hosting a theatre, exhibition space, cafes and restaurants. Furthermore, UMUB were informed by the Mayor's Office that they were banned from organising future events, on the grounds that 'drugs were sold' at their parties. Contrary to a consistent policy that would prevent any such happening, the Belgrade City Council, then run by the ruling dictatorial coalition, had decided to organise such an event themselves, with all the logistic, legal, financial and media support they had at hand. This was the 'Enlightenment' party Savić referred to, talking of the exceptionally

---

<sup>17</sup> Ljubisa Ristić, the founder of the once respected experimental theatre (KPGT). KPGT won international acclaim in the Seventies in the avant-garde theatrical circuits. By the early Nineties, Ristić became a prominent member of JUL, the dubious political interest group led by Mira Marković, the wife of Slobodan Milosević. JUL wielded considerable influence although it performed poorly in the elections.

arranged space, lighting and sound, where prominent Techno-DJs were invited to perform.

The greatest irony of all, Savić continues, is that a senior representative of the city authorities gave an interview to MTV. In this interview he stated that parties of such scope and scale, comprising of five to six thousand people, were prohibited in the UK, while Serbia was a free country where *the government* had decided to help organise such an event. The debate on human rights and democracy was the counterpoint of this contestation over the use of communal space. The Belgrade City Council's executive addressed a controversial legal issue much debated in the UK during the Nineties. The Criminal Justice Act 1994 changed the nature and shape of the electronic dance music community in the UK, in the light of 'moral panic' addressing the youth's cultural agendas (Thornton, 1995: 129, 134-135, 136).

...the decline of Techno culture ... [in Belgrade] happened with the Enlightenment event... unfortunately, 2-3000 people who didn't even HEAR of Techno before turned up, together with another 1000 that totally enjoyed that sound... the fall of Techno was – to me – totally predictable, but it was not catastrophic, because the same phenomena occurred in the West ... but with [Belgrade] it had a political connotation, because a couple of groups, including ours ... received letters preventing us from making parties 'because drugs were' – apparently – 'sold' in our events. In such a way, the [City Council] tried to place their *paw* over our programmes... It was a bit of a parody... the City Council Authorities... thought that they could organise projects, with good DJs, where they would be financially covered. Of course they had the media power... all the power. What was interesting... was that MTV ...interviewed the DJs: Strob, Eye and others... AND Mr K<sup>18</sup> gave an interview to MTV – saying that we are a free country, because we make raves for 5-6000 people while these are banned in England, and that... we are a VERY free society... without a repressive system...<sup>19</sup>

The control over space used for community purposes, in politics and popular culture have led to government intervention in both countries though the motives were arguably different. Addressing the complex issues continuing to develop to this date, it would not be correct to identify all the aspects of the

---

<sup>18</sup> Full name not quoted for ethical considerations.

<sup>19</sup> Appendix 12, Interview with N. Savić. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

previous system in Serbia as absolutely corrupt and the current, transitional one, as absolutely progressive. In both cases the authorities claimed control of communal space for financial reasons, as much as for political motivations. Savić responded to the question on the 'nomadic' nature of UMUB parties that tended to transform the space they occupied. 'Happening', 'opening', 'liberation' of space, the privilege to transform a rigid space into something 'organic' and 'No-logo' parties are only some of the terms he uses with regards to the spatial nature of the mid-Nineties' Belgrade rave-parties<sup>20</sup>.

What I find quite appealing about our parties was that they were all No-Logo, whereas the situation you have in the West dictates commercialisation. In fact that was the difference between us and the Enlightenment event, which was heavily sponsored.

...

... unfortunately the Techno-culture was defused after that party, and all the organisers, including us, were weakened. Events became uniform – which was not the case before<sup>21</sup>.

The 'Enlightenment' party, as Savić notes, might be seen as the cause of decline in the intensity of Techno-events in Belgrade. Such a *membership* claim that this was a 'sell-out' (Thornton, 1995: 123-126) that defused the scene could only be partially justified.

## 5.2 Nightclubs: membership and identification

The previous Sections (5.1.1-5.1.3) have brought the author to analyse the changing interpretation of communal space in the light of the commercial undertakings occupying that space. In this particular case both sides are making the judgement: the 'official' and the 'unconventional' (such crude generalisations conditionally are accepted for the sake of clarity). The aim of this part of the discussion is not merely to continue the analysis on the contestations over space into minute detail, though this is partly the case. It is essential to immerse in more detailed discussion at this stage, taking into account specific parts of narratives and their possible readings.

---

<sup>20</sup> These statements deserve close scrutiny in further discussion on authenticity (Chapter 7).

<sup>21</sup> Appendix 12, Interview with N. Savić. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2001.



The author commenced the field research by returning to Belgrade after almost three years of absence. During these three years, much has happened- more than in other cases where the analyst returns to 'his' community to partake in research and re-negotiates his status as participant and reflects on his newly gained position as observer. This was anticipated in the preparation for the data collection process (Chapter 3). The reason why the preparation of the methodological paradigm for this study included re-examining the researcher's unique position was in the severity of the changes that occurred during his absence.

This study has created invaluable contributions to participant observation methodology. For more than a decade prior to the commencement of field-work, "I" - now a researcher - belonged to a closely-knit community of artists, musicians, DJs, music, video and media producers, journalists, authors and other members of Belgrade underground music and art scenes. To try and capture that 'scene' as a snapshot in time would be impossible and would not have reliable results. This community had been subject to constant flux, dependent on many factors including changes of business conditions and practices, movement of people (most of them leaving the country)<sup>22</sup>, and the increasing difficulties of self-support. Professionals working in music, media and arts industries face a constantly high competition. When the continuous economic difficulties are taken into account, the fact that many give up on their profession should not be surprising.

The underground artistic scene<sup>23</sup> in Belgrade developed a strong sense of self-identification. One of the reasons for that belongs to their perception of 'Otherness' that grew during the Nineties. As it was stated in the previous Chapter, the sense of alienation could be strong indeed<sup>24</sup>. This especially applies to parts of the underground artistic community traditionally identified with the 'Academy' club and Rock-music-related subcultures. The sense of purpose and mission is what could be identified among them. The interviews,

---

<sup>22</sup> As stated in the historical analysis in Chapter 4, there are no reliable statistics available at the moment but the unofficial figure provided by an acquaintance working for the present Serbian Government, the number of people that left Serbia since 1990 is estimated at 700000.

<sup>23</sup> This includes the musicians, authors and others.

<sup>24</sup> The pejorative term 'epileptics', coined years before the Dieseler subculture has emerged, shows how the groups under that name were labelled as 'deviant'. This, in turn, has resulted in further strengthening of the shared sense of identity among these groups.

along with the participant observation data<sup>25</sup>, show that certain 'mythologies' - characterising the Rock-related artistic underground community in Belgrade - were still commanding the dominant discourse among them<sup>26</sup>. In this research, the sharing of space between subcultures in Belgrade was identified as a long-term problem and one that caused friction.

The author of this study, when interviewed for the 1995/96 documentary 'Akademija-republika' ('Academy-Republic')<sup>27</sup>, made a comment on 'Belgrade catacombs' one of which was 'the Academy'. Reflecting on the statement that followed the assertion that 'Belgrade was full of catacombs', the author has to note that his deep involvement within the Belgrade underground artistic scene left a discursive impact. The statement that followed reads: "many religions had their origin in such spaces, where people would gather". Eight years after that claim was made, the comparison between attending a nightclub and partaking in sacral activities seems exaggerated<sup>28</sup>. In the original editing of the documentary, a psychiatrist was asked to comment on the human need to congregate in closed cave-like spaces and on the symbolism of such seclusion for communal behaviour. This part of the film was later edited out; the fact that this was done is analysed along with other semiotic and narrative elements of the documentary in the appropriate section of this study. The discursive analysis that Gordy provided, exploring the significance of the term 'underground' in Belgrade, seems to follow a logic similar to the reasoning of the participant/researcher as young interviewee. Gordy noted that most of the Belgrade nightclubs were indeed situated in basements. To return to the argument opening this Chapter, who or what has the right to be labelled as local and thus belonging to a particular space, it is necessary to explore some of the findings from the participatory research and interviews.

In the historical analysis (Chapter 4) it was said that segments of the general public in Belgrade gradually tended to pour scorn on the 'Academy' club,

---

<sup>25</sup> 22 interviews and many hours of recorded comments and participatory records have been collected over eleven months of field research. This was complemented with several documentary sources in a variety of forms, from journalist accounts to internet-based data.

<sup>26</sup> More on those 'mythologies' in the discussions on narrative and signifying practice.

<sup>27</sup> The film owes its title to an old graffiti sprayed on the wall of the 'Academy' club during the Eighties. The writing on the wall has numerous polysemic connotations and is thoroughly analysed in the concluding discussion of this study.

<sup>28</sup> A number of interviewed participants in the Belgrade underground artistic scene are ready to make statements related to mysticism, philosophical and ontological issues. This is somewhat in correspondence with their membership in a particular set of subcultures, as will be analysed in the appropriate section of this book.

othering members of the scene surrounding it. This process was seen as part of the 'delinquentisation' or 'surveillance' result of a rising 'moral panic'<sup>29</sup>. The subsequently continued processes of othering and the creation of a moral panic, included the rising tensions as a new, Dieseler subculture emerged. The roles were changed and the deviant Others belonging to the scene around the 'Academy' and Belgrade Rock-music-related underground joined the (justified?) moral panic, identifying the Dieselers as a threatening new social group. The possible justification for such action lays in intolerance and the discourses openly glorifying violent crime at the heart of the Dieseler/Turbo-folk subculture. Such violent intolerance was fuelled and arguably constructed with the help of the official mass media, as was analysed in Chapter 4.

### 5.2.1 Membership cards and the unwritten laws

In more than twenty years of its existence, the image 'Academy' acquired as the space occupied by 'deviants', did not fully correspond to the class (or quasi-class) status of its initial members. The term 'quasi-class status' is coined here for the purpose of a short exploration of class structures in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. As noted previously, with reference to the work of Novaković (1994), a form of class stratification did develop in former Yugoslavia under Communist rule. This would not be possible if the official ideology of orthodox Marxism (or its quasi-Gramscian version developed by Tito's chief ideologist, Edvard Kardelj) is taken for granted. There is no space to delve into the dubious logic of state ideology in former Yugoslavia, or its distorted form of Marxism - the distortion being the result of prescriptive discourse woven into the analytical body of social(ist) theory. Novaković thoroughly analysed the class stratification in Socialist Yugoslavia, focusing on the working and peasant classes. The official discourse before 1990 barely recognised that Yugoslavia was in fact a class society where the differences were not only determined by economic but also by ideological means. It is a separate argument that cannot be pursued here, whether the membership of inner Party circles had in fact constituted the kind of boundary more akin to feudalism than a modern class society<sup>30</sup>.

---

<sup>29</sup> The former terms belong to the Foucauldian terminology while the latter, moral panic, first used by Cohen and appropriated in the writings of Hebdige and Thornton, the authors whose approaches to subcultures have been consulted in Chapter 2.

<sup>30</sup> Applying Gramscian analysis to this subject might lead to such conclusion.

What is evident, however, is the emergence of the 'managerial class', as Novaković (1994) calls it. These were the members of inner circles of power within the Socialist Yugoslavia's elite Party apparatus. The social structure on which this stratification was based had elements that, since the late 1960s, started developing into a system that resembled a market-economy<sup>31</sup>. In the interview conducted for this research, journalist Dragan Ambrozić states that some real elements of a capitalist market started developing in the late Eighties<sup>32</sup>. Regardless of the economic forms, a deep divide continued to exist, structured around ideological and financial power. Students of Belgrade University protesting in 1968 against growing inequalities and corruption in Yugoslav society referred to the privileged elite as the 'red bourgeois'.

The 'Academy' was the club of the, inherently elitist, Faculty of Fine Arts. Several respondents in the 'Academy-Republic' documentary film stated how difficult it was to get admitted into the club. The club's management had insisted on membership cards, and the word 'Dedinje' is uttered on several occasions in the film. 'Dedinje' is the privileged residential area of Belgrade, where pre-second-world-war industrialists were replaced by close associates of President Tito after the Communist Party rose to power. According to some accounts in the documentary, the youth of Dedinje frequented the club in its early days. The club's initial, non-permeable elitism was soon replaced by a new, semi-permeable form. The interview with Fleka reveals how new membership criteria were introduced.

F: ...All in all that was a *spontaneous happening*. And nobody had to *explain that to people*, they felt it spontaneously – and that's when the '*Golden Period*' started! When people realised – or felt – that they were *equal participants in all that was going on* and that nobody is going to *intimidate* them for it, but quite the opposite: 'welcome to the action'; then that *collective spirit began*, like a sect, in fact – was the way Academy's audience was treated at the time. 'Night People', you know. I made a logo on the reverse of membership cards, a 'Night People' logo, and printed it across the whole – ... So it gave a kind of *touch* ... You know – that's it! *We are different*. That *need for identity* that they expressed was in fact the *axis* around which – it was the centre – of *that energy* and it was really *awfully full of energy*, *the space was simply filled with it*, *this is why its momentum lasted for so long*...

---

<sup>31</sup> Madzar, 1994.

<sup>32</sup> Appendix 5, Interview with D. Ambrozić. Date of entry: 12<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

... Well there were *ill-advised attempts* to turn the Academy into a '*klubić*'<sup>33</sup> (*little club*), you see, for high school kids with lots of money. *But the walls contain that energy, the shadows of the crowd – all that was very intense.* Therefore, the ambiance had adapted to *human energy* more than the energy adapted to the ambiance. All that is underground but still *one step higher than art.* Especially in the terms of that *moral, aesthetic, and poetical stance.* Both ethically and poetically, it was definitely authentic. Therefore, Serbian underground *has a root, it can be discussed as a phenomenon*<sup>34</sup>.

Nevertheless, for a long time, recommendation was the only guaranteed way to obtain a membership card. In a sense, as much as Dedinje was the 'Forbidden City' of the communist managerial elite, the 'Academy' was, in the early days, its version in the city centre, where the youngsters of the same elite wanted to be seen. Some statements made in the film and quoted in Chapter 4 directly contradict the previous sentence. It needs to be noted that they apply to a slightly later period in the club's history.

The interview with Fleka should provide sufficient information on why a club like 'Academy' was initially popular with the Belgrade café society. The '*dark façon*' was fashionable at that time – from the early- to mid-Eighties, it was the watered-down version of post-Punk nihilism. Post-Punk had several forms in Belgrade and in other major Yugoslav cities. '*Dark façon*' was a form of 'hipness', a pose briefly adopted by the young elite.

...there something started, something that, in the first couple of years, turned out to be a *šminker* ('*make-up*', *snobby*) get-together – that was in fact the crowd from the University of Art, and at that time this was outrageous snobbery. Or *heavy junk... and trash.* And now, none of these *variants could stand the other* so this (snobby) lot took over, in a way. So there were 'fancy' parties, all in all a fair of vanity and self-deception. Like: 'easy living, stay cool forever' *I mean...* and on the other side, a parallel, fake, acted, *dark pose*<sup>35</sup>.

Once the posture was consumed, the café society went to pursue other forms of entertainment, leaving the club to its true disciples. 'Akademija' reached its peak when diverse forms of music and art were interfering in the club's programme, having in common only the uncompromising experimental

---

<sup>33</sup> The best possible translation of this term is 'crèche club'.

<sup>34</sup> Appendix 2, Interview with Fleka. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

<sup>35</sup> More accurately '*façon*' (Fr.). Appendix 2, Interview with Fleka.

expressiveness of form. The legacy from its early days remains in the form of an elitist self-perception that the members of Belgrade's Rock-music-related underground still assert. This is partly related to the snobbery that characterised the club's early days: N. S. Sabljari's fond reminiscences of the days when membership cards were still required at the club reflect this attitude. This interviewee, currently deeply involved in music production both as an artist and a businessperson, was far too young to experience the initial snobbish phase of the 'Academy'.

You remember the membership cards? Remember the prestige of having one? Not everybody could get one. These were OK parties.

... it involved *an effort*, so you had to belong to some urban environment. To have some kind of... you could not be a cretin... and get it... and there were no fights, no fuss ... As the criteria started dropping, those *things* started. Then they started letting anyone in, and then... you know the rest<sup>36</sup>.

When the fieldwork for this study commenced, 'Akademija' had been closed for more than a year after failing under a neglecting, incompetent management. The way in which one of its members declined to take part in research is recorded as a telephone conversation. This is a valuable source of data. Although an interview never happened, the tone of discussion tells almost as much as a lengthy interview might have revealed<sup>37</sup>. Three self-styled entrepreneurs of the early post-communist era<sup>38</sup> have taken the club on a five-year lease introducing the management style one of the resident DJs said 'resembled primary accumulation of capital'. A highly competitive internal organisational culture was encouraged, followed by frequent letting off of staff, *including resident DJs*.

This created a strong sense of uncertainty among the staff and resembled what Hesmondhalgh (1998: 271) refers to as 'ruthless entrepreneurs' in the way the club was run. Spaces that were never used before were refurbished and added to the club, consisting of the new 'little club' with a separate sound-system and the 'atrium', a café open to the public during the day. However, a stark indicator of a Foucauldian control mechanism was inherent in the spatial organisation and the use of newly opened premises. In spite of a promising

---

<sup>36</sup> Appendix 4, Interview with N. S. Sabljari. Date of entry: 10<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

<sup>37</sup> This short but dense conversation is critically interpreted in Chapter 6.

<sup>38</sup> The author recalls a conversation held in 1995 when one of them said 'after all, we're all relics of Communism'.

opening when the new spaces were introduced, the club was structured on a hierarchy of fear and surveillance between the members of staff. The offices were moved from the basement to the *higher level* of the 'atrium', clearly indicating the importance of hierarchical domination imposed by the new entrepreneurs. Staff members' conversations could be easily overheard by the three co-managers through the office 'balcony windows'. The seemingly benign Mediterranean appearance of the 'atrium' concealed a three-story physical hierarchy. There was an even starker reminder of the Panopticism and disciplinary power at play under the new entrepreneurs. Atrium was closed to the public at night, dubbed 'the VIP space', initially imagined as a place where performers would prepare for live events and mingle with journalists and management.

The 'VIP' space deteriorated into a control room for bouncers and their friends, frequented by police thugs and a venue of occasional violent outbursts. Most indicatively, the 'atrium' would frequently play 'Turbo-folk' music to accommodate the taste of Dieseler bouncers and their uniformed friends. This was read by 'Academians' among staff and visitors alike as the most blatant intrusion of 'the archenemy' into their space. To conclude this account, it should be said that the three entrepreneurs controlling the club have been loosely associated with others, co-owning a string of important venues around Belgrade in what resembled collecting hotels in a game of Monopoly played with intimidation not competence.

Thanks to the fact that the fieldwork was well structured as a combination of participant observation and interviewing over a period of eleven months, all the changes that took place with regards to this club in particular and other actors in general, have been recorded and taken into account. Although this research study was not initially intended to be a longitudinal one in terms of its actual execution, the author's long-term involvement has made it such. It was indeed through involvement and successful re-negotiation of insider status that the author was drawn to further develop his participatory role in the ethnographic aspects of research. Assuring reliability of data analysis, anticipated prior to the commencement of fieldwork, was in the development of reflective strategies (Booth, 2002)<sup>39</sup>.

---

<sup>39</sup> Abstracting the recommendations from the journal article in *Critical Management Studies*, the researcher has applied reflexivity to the management of data.

The 'Academy' resembled an empty shell of its former self in the summer of 2001. As noted in the reflective audio diary that it might be "better this way", as a club of such potential could not suffer more of "such humiliation"<sup>40</sup>. The word 'humiliation' referred to the decline of the club's status, to a degree justified by the pattern of mismanagement that appeared to reflect the wider social crises. This expressive statement and the term used are yet another signifier of the researcher's involvement within the community and the scene surrounding the club. The response to the 'Academy's' state in 2001 can be read from an event that took place in the club's premises, part of the Belgrade International Art Student Festival, in September 2001.

The aforementioned 'state' of the club could be read as 'non-existent'. Indeed, discourse constructs the meaning of space, as much as the space and human relationships with regards to it, construct discourse. The term 'empty shell', used to describe the observation made inside the space identified with the 'Academy', was as much accurate as it stood as a metaphor revealing the affectionate position that the *members, the locals*, had towards their communal space, the Club. The 'space identified with the 'Academy'' is not a phrase used arbitrarily. The majority of those present would not have read into all of the layers of attached meaning. Art students from Italy performed in the space that used to be the old cloakroom, possibly attracted by the sinister looking black chicken-wire and the spatial seclusion of that little appendix to the club's huge subterranean interior. Perhaps the rotting old piano stored there, behind the bars and wire 'invited' them to choose that part of the space. Maybe the very format of the Italian art-students' performance defined *the space within the space* where their performance was conducted. They played some string-instruments, according to the sound. The author could not observe the scene because this was one of the least accessible parts of the maze that formed the 'Academy's' spatial organisation.

On the other hand, the 'participant' within the observing 'researcher' rebelled against this perceived 'blasphemy' and, to say the least, was not interested in the performance in the first place. He wanted to participate with a few other *members, locals, initiates*, in the silent reconstruction of the club. It is indeed on occasions like this when Anderson's notion of imagined community is tested and approved in understanding identity construction. It should not come

---

<sup>40</sup> At the time of completion of this study, the 'Academy' operates, once more under an ineffectual management. This is seriously eroding the club's reputation and even threatens its past legacy.



as a surprise that Anderson, among so many other authors that addressed identity issues, is the one to be mentioned here. The sense of identity among the 'Akademičari' - 'Academians' would be the closest translation of this multilayered term- was little short of nationhood. Thus the 'Akademija-republika' graffiti was so appropriate to connote the sense of community that the Belgrade underground artistic scene had developed over the years.

As the 'Great Rock'n'roll Party', one of the least inventive segments of the 'Akademičari' community suggested, Belgrade was to be turned into a Rock and roll republic, separate from Yugoslavia: a counterpoint of secessionism, a joke that was not that, revealing that there was a very strong sense of identity among the unconventionally elitist underground artistic scene in Belgrade in the early Nineties. The elitism of the scene had little to do with the 'Academy's' early visitors from the rich Belgrade suburbs. Gordy had correctly identified the existing elitism of the 'Akademičari' but failed to explore consistently. This resulted in an erroneous generalisation of the whole of Serbia's Rock scene as elitist. It is not surprising that Gordy could not address the problem in an appropriate manner because of his lack of inside knowledge. The sense of purpose, of belonging, of *membership and mystical initiation*, is something shared among a number of interviewees, participants and practitioners; practitioners who still advocate the 'Akademičari' discourse.

This sub-group of Belgrade's underground art scene had its identity constructed around a spatial reference. The initial reference being Belgrade, the Capital<sup>41</sup>, the determining referential point being the 'Academy', the 'Republic'. This self-mocking, self-proclaimed aristo-democracy, politically and topically critical of the alienating-alienated society, is explored in relation to the 'Academy-Republic' and Belgrade underground music's signifying practices. A sarcastic and somewhat sinister comment made by the actor Rade Knežević – though revealing atypical form of affection illustrates the controversial position of the Academy in wider society:

"It is an authentic, unique place in the world. It is the Paradise on Earth in the form of Hell".

(Vujović and Kanjevac, 1996)

---

<sup>41</sup> Consult Chapter 4 and the 'Beograd je svet' banner carried during the 1996/1997 protests.

Knežević is among the core scene members, a long-time connoisseur of the Academy. Boredom, disgust and affection for the venue are mixed in this bittersweet cocktail mixed by an *Academian*, so poetically typified in this statement. Few years after it was uttered, the entrepreneurs that controlled the Academy withdrew, taking the equipment with them and leaving the space barren.

### 5.2.2 Inaudible noise and discontinuity of space

The author now returns to the evening of September 5, 2001, when the Italian art-students played their *balalaikas and mandolins*, as sarcastically noted by the author in the interview with N. Savić<sup>42</sup>. The visiting students were oblivious to the *phon*, the noise emanating from the strangely painted walls of the non-functioning Club. Most of their hosts, students of Belgrade's Fine Art Faculty, were also unaware of the burden of meaning constructed in relation to that particular space between 1981 and 2000. Neither of the two groups could be blamed for their ignorance.

The 'true' *hosts*, the *locals* were largely absent. There were only a few *members* of the 'Akademičari' community present on that occasion. The contestation over space and the right to interpret it was taking place once more, though this time silently, or only through a few ironical comments made by the *members*. They took the initiative and joined the event of their own accord. The need to reconstruct the space and practices that were no longer present, was strong enough to draw several 'Academians' back to their referential space. They chatted, the researcher among them, not having met for several years. Those among them that studied Fine Art at the Faculty to which the premises belonged, graduated years before. Thus their eligibility to partake at an art student gathering could have been contested if necessary.

There were a few other 'Academians', *members*, *illuminati* that did not even fulfil that criterion. However, in *their* construct the place belonged to them. It was not merely a place, once a club run by students and professionals together, referred to as strange, a no-go zone, to which the current students could not feel associated with. The latter assumption is a result of participative finding. Former colleagues, once involved in running the club and now

---

<sup>42</sup> Appendix 12, Interview with N. Savić. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

lecturers and post-graduate students at the Faculty of Fine Arts, said that the students were invited to manage the club but had refused the offer. This had initially come as a surprise to all from the 'old crowd'. The 'Academy' was not merely a Student Union club. It was, for more than fifteen years, a very successful business, that had utilised the University's autonomy within a totalitarian system to function both as an enterprise and as a driving force for subversive cultural change, artistic innovation and music promotion.

Then, while analysing this finding while still in Belgrade and conducting participative research on several levels, it became clear that this was not so much of a surprise after all. The current students had little opportunity, or motive, to associate themselves with the specific discourse related to that particular space. The deterring factors were strong, in the guise of Barthesian 'mythological' narrative related to the 'Academy's delinquent, deviant, *degenerate* Otherness. The silent contestation on that September evening was most likely to have been noticed by only a small number of *club members* described above. The present students might have noticed the ironic chat about the performance that was the official reason for the whole occasion, yet it is not very likely that they would have read deeper into it.

On the other hand, the construct of *phon* was not detected by either of the 'outsider' groups<sup>43</sup> that had the official claim on space. The 'noise' referred to in the previous sentence is the one produced in the imaginary space/time construct shared by the present 'Akademičari'. The likelihood of the same sounds of music, crowd noises, events and faces being recollected-reconstructed among the small group of *disciples/members/initiates* is very small indeed. However, the sense of community and shared experience of identity through music, space and narrative was so strong that this silent contestation over space was seen by the present 'Academians' as a rightful claim. The humorous comments shared among them might have been reduced to: '*they have no idea* what this place *is* about'. Note that the emphasis, as interpreted upon reflection, in the role of participant observer - reflective participant relates to the term: 'is', rather than 'was'.

Went back to the Academy tonight to observe its empty shell... some Italian art students had a performance. Good excuse. I miss the place. Ran into Lora and Irena and some other 'academians'. It was so funny that our

---

<sup>43</sup> A question of position in this discursive construct: both groups could be seen as 'outsiders', or 'intruders' by each other, as it often happens with spatial conflicts based on identity.

students listened to the 'balalaika' performance from the old wardrobe with such awe. Silly. The place is barren now, but the few of us could feel and see it for what it is. We were giggling most of the time. Pathetic, those kids who refused to take over their own place. We looked around and there was no equipment. Gaping holes where speakers used to be. But the place is full of past noise, I could bet all of us from the 'proper' crowd could hear the music reverberating through the good old basement. I did, I was overwhelmed by indiscriminate flow of – not memories – experiences. Lora and Irena and few others did too, I could tell. We were happy to be there. But the kids, so silly, they behaved like in a gallery or attending a chamber concert... We went to Omen, a poor surrogate for the old 'Hole'. But the crowd is more or less the right one. We started making 'plans' to conquer the old place. As if<sup>44</sup>.

The inaudible noise reconstructed from individual yet shared narratives of the present 'Academians' was intruded upon by the quiet and inappropriate sound of mandolin. Furthermore, the mandolin was played in the cloakroom, next to where pinball machines used to be, close to the toilets and the old storage room, the most inappropriate space within the club for that kind of activity. The previous sentence reconstructs the statement upon which the 'Academians' present at the event agreed unanimously. The space was intruded upon by the misconception of its consensual purpose; a purpose that was built through the years. This reflective comment - that the club's interior resembled an 'empty shell' - was further supported by the fact that it was stripped of sound and lighting equipment. This made the reading of the interior's purpose less accurate and more difficult to the uninformed. The exact positional order of loudspeakers, amplifiers, light-effects, record players could not be reconstructed even in the mind of regular visitors and once-managers.

Remaining elements of the interior design could have left the reading ambiguous: the bar could have looked differently, with slight alterations ascribed to years of neglect of its original design misinterpreted as something closer to the 'turbo' style of the Nineties 'elite'. The DJ booth left less ambiguity in interpretation of its purpose but without artefacts to show what kind of communication flowed between the stage, DJs and sound-engineers, the music could not be reconstructed by the layperson.

---

<sup>44</sup> Appendix 1, Reflexive diary. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

All these observations of once active participants, present at the 'ruin', 'archaeological site', were re-negotiated in an attempt to arrange the 'next meeting', 'when *something* will be done about *this*' and in moving from the site of temporary defeat, to a space, the clubbing interior of secondary rank, where the 'Academian' community was 'exiled'. In this other space aspiring novices of the 'Academian' tradition were willing to identify themselves with the inaccurately reconstructed 'noise' of several layers of 'Akademija's musical history. The 'Omen' club, which once belonged to the league of the 'Academy's' follow-ups, lost its prestige a long time previous. At this point in time, the music performed in the 'Omen' was superimposed out of several layers of 'Academy's 'archaeology'. These layers were often as conceptually conflicted to the expert 'Academian' as the Athenian and Macedonian layers of Ancient Greece. Nevertheless, the very fact that this place was open to the mishmash of 'post-Academians'<sup>45</sup> was read that night as a 'good omen'.

### 5.2.3 A note on reflexivity in discourse

Revisiting the subject and place had helped the test the research assumptions about possible developments in the Belgrade underground clubbing scene. The densely populated 'Omen' club indicated that this tiny venue was unable to fulfil the audience's demand for a space in which the followers of 'Academy's' legacy would congregate. Rumours spread around town that the 'Academy' will reopen were confirmed less than a year later. Both reflective observations were put in their appropriate context compounded with a hint from an early interview with a versatile young artist<sup>46</sup>. All this confirmed that the negotiations for reopening the 'Academy' club were under way on the day when the above observations as well as the mentioned interview were conducted. The discussion will leave an open verdict, whether the interviewee's hint was deliberate or unconscious. A very small amount of doubt remains that the said interviewee knew about these negotiations.

The relevance of any data collected through participant observation was anticipated to pose a methodological problem, the solution of which provides this study with a set of effective implications for future research. At this point it

---

<sup>45</sup> The term has no specific reference to 'postmodernism'. It connotes what its literal meaning might suggest: the Rock-music related subcultures grown out of 'Akademija's legacy.

<sup>46</sup> Boris Mladenović is a member of 'Jarboli', the 'Coxless Pair', collaborator of the 'Unexpected Force' and visual artist.

should be mentioned that the process of participant observation conducted was subject to constant improvement. An article on reflexivity and strategy (Booth, 2002) addresses the notion of reflexivity as an intellectual tool that might be used both in real-life management contexts and in academic treatise on management practices. The assumptions on which Booth bases his argument are derived from three possible views of reflexivity in strategic discourse. These include 'benign introspection', 'meta-reflexivity' and 'infra-reflexivity' (Booth, 2002: 1-2, 5-6). A reflexive strategy practice, he argues, should be 'sceptical about its own fictions', 'genuinely interdisciplinary', and 'disassociated from interests of dominant actors' (Booth, 2002: 9). The latter, instead of looking narrowly into power-relations within a specified context, could be seen in the 'infra-reflective' way: the researcher as participant could become the noted 'dominant actor' affecting the choice of focus when creating accounts. This could subsequently develop into undesirable partisanship.

Booth's work is relevant for this level of analysis because he consults the theoretical foundations developed from the critique of ethnomethodology and related disciplines, such as the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK). Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000: pp. 247-251) refer to related concepts under the name of 'quadruple hermeneutics'. According to Booth, most problematic is the issue of 'meta-reflexivity', one of the methodological foundations of the SSK. The full argument on the theoretical pitfalls of all three models of reflexivity is addressed in Chapters 2 and 3 dealing respectively with theoretical and methodological foundations of research. It suffices here to say that the negative feedback loop of self-correction and self-examination was the main methodological presupposition of participant observation in this research study.

The 'meta-reflexivity' should in this case be described as a constant correction of the course of reasoning behind actions and records arising in participant observation. This was done in pursuit of clear analytical direction. Analysing the data in participant observation is most effective through constant adaptation *while* the fieldwork is taking place (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Bastin, 1985). Questions of 'why am I doing this?' and 'why am I here?'<sup>47</sup> need to be constantly revisited in directing the ongoing analysis in reflexive participation. The pitfalls of 'meta-reflexivity' include lines of reasoning that end

---

<sup>47</sup> By 'here', the researcher asked himself about a specific place in Belgrade, i.e. club or a gathering, rather than with reference to the city itself or field research as such.

in themselves. There is a high likelihood that these might become fruitless, endless and confounding. However, in order to ascertain to what extent the observer-member's long-term participation within a specific segment of the Belgrade underground scene affects the reporting of events and evaluation of their importance, it was essential to use rigorous 'meta-reflection' to arrive at reliable arguments. This helped avoid the error of concluding that the observed is always 'factual'.

Field research required constant awareness of the fact that his deep, long-term involvement within the specified subcultural setting had great advantages in accessibility to data. Furthermore, this enabled him to evaluate any source with regards to its position within the power play of factors affecting the examined scenes and subcultures. On the other hand, without the use of the varied forms of reflexivity explored by Alvesson and Skoldberg, Bastin, and Booth<sup>48</sup>, falling prey to the dangers of becoming judgmental and partisan - bordering on bias - would have been easy. These considerations were taken into account carefully. The analysis of other investigative and documentary accounts covering the areas bordering the study of Belgrade underground music, shows a number of distortions developed as a result of insufficient methodological reflexivity. Finally, within the context, it is impossible to assume that a clear-cut picture could be drawn in such a problematic and interactive form of social research. The notions of 'theatrical', and 'representational' (Bastin, 1985; Booth, 2002; Denzin, 1997, 1998; Hammersley, 1992, 1998; Von Wright, 1993) are part of the ethical and methodological debates in relation to ethnography.

Hence the author's awareness of the choice of inherent subjectivity and the fact that the research process itself affects the nature of findings. This is not to be disputed: social networks familiar to the researcher belong to the 'underground' and the members' subjectivity is one of the characteristics of discourse examined here, affecting the nature of music production and promotion through the signifying practices thus created. However, the writer's preference for a particular aspect of the examined problem is asserted and thus analysed as part of the reflective strategies in approaching the data. It is treated no differently than the narrative structures of respondent and interviewee accounts. Both sets of data, the one collected through participant

---

<sup>48</sup> For an in-depth discussion on the 'flaws' Booth reports in his paper, see Methodology. It was found that the abstracted notion of Articulation Theory might help resolve the tensions between 'contradicting' or 'incoherent' methodological arguments Booth reports (2002: 6).

observation and the one related to subjective accounts of 'fact' and presented in interviews, are analysed in relation to the position of the narrator within the examined phenomenon. In this case the examined phenomenon is the Belgrade's underground music scene. The narratives thus produced are furthermore subjected to authentication and analysed as implicit autobiographies (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: pp. 71-73, 74, 93; Bastin, 1985: pp. 93-94, 98-99; Bruner, 1987: pp. 11-32; 1997: pp. 105-111; Ochs, 1997: pp. 194-203; Walker, 1985: pp. 14-17).

#### 5.2.4 Spaces between: grey areas of subcultural discourse

The above argument evaluates methodological concerns applied to Section 5.2.2 in examining the sense of membership and community ties among the 'old Academians'. Discussing the change that affected them and their identified space in territorial and thus discursive terms, they resort to *argot*-language attempting to reconstruct the signifying practice associated with the 'old' club. Their insular communication is characterised by meaningful omissions and wordplay associated to shared experience unknown to 'profane' outsiders. This micro-congregation observed its focal communal space as stripped of the only purpose it would recognise and thus validate. Conscious acting as an original participant in this 'expert' community with regards to negotiated sense of identity, construed around the right to interpret space, enriches this research with the awareness of such discursive constructs and a pragmatic use of reflexivity - while retaining the advantages of insider status.

This methodological comment opens further discussion on the role of venues in discourse-creation affecting contemporary music production in Belgrade. Participant observation is thus protected from misinterpretation of its findings: the researcher has gone through the process of re-negotiation, taking full participation as a 'our man in the UK'<sup>49</sup>. Reference to this voluntary displacement adds another dimension to the relevance of space in discourse. This process is reflected upon in Chapter 6. Furthermore, the researcher, once more accepted in his membership role, continued work with musicians and producers on a project started in 1997. As the situation required, or indeed,

---

<sup>49</sup> His role as a representative and liaisons consultant of the 'Academy' club for the UK was a direct result of longitudinal participation within the (observed) scene. This involvement had ended after the current management of the club had shown serious signs of incompetence.



dictated, the researcher had chosen to affect his position as member by proclaiming his principal, research role (Saunders, 2000: 222-229). This resulted in the acquired role of *participant as observer*, generating some problems in the negotiating process of reasserting membership. The term relevant to this dimension of research is 'reflective participant'. It best explores the role that the author of this study has taken in relation to friends, colleagues and co-members of Belgrade's underground music scene. It also best signifies the research process applied to this aspect of the study.

Belgrade underground music scene led the author to explore a variety of venues and practices associated with them. This led to the evaluation of emergent possibilities in culture production and practical implications of relative artistic authenticity. Frequent comment coming from collaborators-participants, interviewees and in diary entries made by the author himself, were related to the changing roles and positions of music venues. The term 'consumption' is avoided in Belgrade underground music scene as it has ethical bearing and strong aesthetic connotations. However, as Booth (2002: 3-6) notes, a meta-language has to be developed in order to connect elusive concepts, characteristic of different modes of reflection within a divergent discourse. Therefore, the term 'consumption' is used in this study in its politico-economic connotations. It could be argued that this is the case on 'both sides': academic readers are likely to accept the term as depicting a critical approach to the commodification of music, developed by Adorno on Marxist foundations. Many a member of Belgrade's underground scene would have followed a similar kind of criticism of the modern culture-industry<sup>50</sup> without conscious recourse to Adorno. This is analysed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

In reflective participation, members of the Belgrade underground music scene, both 'onlookers' and practitioners identified several venues worth visiting. The interviewees and informants, both in formal and informal talk, also made a number of remarks addressing the crisis in relation to spaces used for music promotion. This was done with regards to previous historical developments, as well as to the effects of the long-term crisis that affected Belgrade and Serbia. Omen, the minuscule club used as a temporary refuge for 'Academians' and 'post-Academians', was of direct interest to this task of *reflective participation*. This applies both to the specific segment of the Belgrade underground music

---

<sup>50</sup> As several interviews, most notably with, N. S. Sabljari, 'Orge' and Darko 'Dzambasov' have shown, in stark contrast to the interviews conducted with few members of the 'underground resistance' radio B92 (Collin, 2001).

scene the author was most identified with and to the business opportunities examined at that point, when the author had fully assumed his participating role.

A number of venues are indicative of discursive tensions arising from the present transition affecting the control of production, promotion and distribution within the Belgrade independent music business. A notable example of this constant shift in the use of space for music-related purposes is the 'Pecina'<sup>51</sup> ('Cave') club, adjacent to another venue, 'Bus'. The latter owes its name to a double-decker bus imported from Britain during the late Eighties. It was placed on a plateau between the main building of the RTS (Radio Television Serbia, the public broadcasting company), the 'Tasmajdan' park and the Fifth Belgrade Grammar School.

In a substantial part of the book referred to in Chapter 4 Prodanović (2001) analyses unregulated building practices in Belgrade during the Nineties. His exploration of the resulting changes in urban architecture was part of a wider discursive argument on the nature of the regime that ruled Serbia until October 2000. Prodanović's analysis provides valuable insight into the role and the importance of space for the understanding of power-relations in Nineties' Belgrade. The changes that 'Bus' had undergone over the past fifteen years should be identified as one of the cases of such 'wild architecture' (the literal translation of the Serbian term depicting such practices of unregulated building). 'Bus' was initially conceived as a café bar based on a simple and original concept, providing an interesting example of architectural 'bricolage'. Seating spaces in the vehicle were rearranged for its new purpose. The planning permission on a location in central Belgrade opposite the main State Television building would have posed a serious problem lest the owner had '*connections*'.

Over the years a building had started to grow around the vehicle, and it underwent a number of changes in accordance with the owners' whim. The first to be destroyed was the *bus* itself. The vehicle was cut, bit by bit, until nothing but its name remained. The original visitors to this café-turned-club belonged to groups that were, to borrow a term used by an interviewee<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> An event depicting this transitional ambiguity held at the 'Cave' is explored in detail in Section 5.2.5.

<sup>52</sup> Boris Mladenović. See Appendix 12, interview. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

'*mainstream-underground*' oriented (this term<sup>53</sup> deserves in-depth explanation, provided in further discussion in Chapters 6 and 7). The early visitors to 'Bus' are best identified as the 'šminkeri', mocked in a song by the Belgrade band, 'Elektricni orgazam'<sup>54</sup> (Gordy, 2001: 121). The term 'šminkeri' is yet another example of othering in Belgrade subcultures. It was initially a derogatory term invented by Belgrade Punks (Prica, 1991) but as in the case of Dieselers, it was appropriated by the members of the 'šminkeri' subculture.

Literal translation of 'šminkeri' is 'make-up artists', connoting the assumed self-image of this subculture as glossy, polished and sophisticated. The name was eventually abandoned and the groups that endorsed related lifestyles simply saw themselves as fashionable. Their main musical signifiers in the Nineties were 'House' and 'Trance' genres. As the 'café society' of post-'šminkeri' moved to new venues<sup>55</sup>, 'Bus' started attracting an audience that could not be identified with any specific youth subculture. The venues that the café society got identified with in the Nineties include 'Soul Food Café', 'Industria' and its adjacent café bar, 'Plato'.

Change of clientele at the 'Bus' had reflected the venue's spatial transformations. From the early days when it was conceptually defined this café bar/nightclub turned architecturally and demographically amorphous. The stages 'Bus' underwent are comparable to architectural interventions that have had long-term negative effects on Belgrade during the Nineties. Prodanović (2001: 60-84; 97-124) thoroughly examines the 'urban collapse overshadowed by war' and 'New Houses for the New People'<sup>56</sup>. These are the architectural signs of a decade that had long-term negative effects on the society and

---

<sup>53</sup> At this point it is sufficient to note that the term relates to some segments of Belgrade youth subcultures, where aesthetic discourse is subject to change depending on economic interests. This, however, does not include the Dieselers subculture, for the term 'underground' is not used in Belgrade in relation to the criminal underworld, especially not by the respondents, informants and interviewees consulted in this study.

<sup>54</sup> The term was read as a mockery by others, namely the youths belonging to Punk and other 'underground' scenes. The song mentioned here was titled 'Zlatni papagaj' ('Golden Parrot'), after a well-known snobby café in central Belgrade.

<sup>55</sup> N. Savić (Appendix 12) refers to the early Techno audiences in Belgrade as 'elitist' and assumes positive connotations to the word. It is interesting to note that this interviewee uses a somewhat harsh term 'hate' in relation to Rock-oriented nightclubs like the 'Academy', and an affection that reveals partisanship could be read from his comments on 'Soul Food Café', a club that was long identified with the '*mainstream-underground*' 'elite'. Savić's interview is thus fruitful because it contains references to clothing as defining style to the extent to which it assumes a more important role than music.

<sup>56</sup> The titles that Prodanović uses in relation to the architectural and urban change in Belgrade, that had, in Nineties, resulted in a number of unregulated architectural interventions that threaten to affect Belgrade's skyline for a long time to come.

culture of Belgrade and Serbia, Prodanović asserts. Under different conditions, where corruption and crime would have been less widespread, such building interventions would not have received planning permission<sup>57</sup>.

'Bus' is now considered 'a club'. It bears no resemblance to what its name supposedly signifies. The 'Bus' is (currently) a brick building that has grown through many different phases, none of which appear to have included consulting a professional architect or an official agency set up for planning purposes. The venue's audience shifted from the Belgrade's 'šminkeri'<sup>58</sup>, to the so-called 'half-Dieselers' ('polu-dizelaši'). The latter were nicknamed as such by the groups distant from the Dieselers subculture, purporting to include all of the grey areas, where a number of youths were aspiring to the financial success of the Dieselers criminal subculture, but not having the means nor the determination to immerse in it.

The name 'half-Dieselers' designates an ambivalent approach to music and other forms of expression through lifestyle. 'Half-Dieselers' could be seen as aspiring to achieve 'normalisation' by accepting the signifiers of youth groups associated with the pre-war managerial class ('šminkeri'). Secondly, 'half-Dieselers' looked up to the new financial elite, the Dieselers, as role models. Thirdly, they attempted to retain the claim of urban 'know-how' that the Rock-related subcultures had. The lifestyle of the 'half-Dieselers' was not drawing any attention. They were successfully normalised under several aesthetic codes, leaving no significant impact on cultural stratification in Belgrade yet universally despised as 'fake'. In Thornton's words, they were lacking 'subcultural capital' in the eyes of all the distinct subcultures existing in Serbian cities. The way this wide group congregated around venues such as 'Bus' shows how the notion of space designated to a specific group, functions in the case of urban discourse.

---

<sup>57</sup> Recent developments in the fight against organised crime after the assassination of the Serbian Prime Minister have revealed that some of the villas Prodanović mentioned in his book contained custom-built bunkers. These buildings were structured as fortresses, adding a new dimension to Prodanović's argument on the dubious aesthetic criteria of their owners ([www.b92.net/archive](http://www.b92.net/archive)).

<sup>58</sup> It might confuse the reader that elitism appears in different guises in various Belgrade subcultures. However, the 'elitism' of underground music subcultures is of a conceptually different nature, as will be seen, from the elitism of the 'šminkeri'. The former is related to artistic merit and related issues while the latter is mainly a construct related to consumerism, economic power and the claim on 'worldliness'. This complex set of definitions will be examined in further discussion, especially on signifying practice.

'Academy' club was identified, by both the 'café society' and 'half-Dieselers' as tolerating unacceptable levels of 'deviance', too much outside the mainstream. On the other hand, Dieselers saw the 'Academians/epileptics' as subhuman. The 'normalisation' process would not normally allow either of the three groups to be associated with a place that has, through the use of the Panopticon, become identified with the 'degenerates'<sup>59</sup>. Events associated with electronic dance music presented rare examples where some of the visitors of Soul Food Café would delve into the 'Academy' club. While 'Academy' had a strong identity "the only place with image and attitude"<sup>60</sup>, 'Bus' became an adequate representation of unresolved issues Serbian society during the Nineties. The social and aesthetic ambivalence of its visitors comprises the discourses originally directly opposed to each other in such a way that it seems to depict the indecisive ones among the younger segments of the population. They could be identified as the sub-stratum that had left its negotiation in the hands of the hegemonic classes, accepting consensus and normalisation at any cost.

### 5.2.5 The city caves and loosely interpreted spaces

'Soul Food Café' is correctly identified with some of the creative changes that characterised music promotion practices in Belgrade during the Nineties<sup>61</sup>. However, in social and subcultural identity terms, it belongs to the same genealogical line as the (far less developed) stylistic concept of the Eighties 'Zlatni papagaj' café. The self-perceived elitism of the groups associated with the dance music subcultures in Belgrade could be read from several interviews done in this research study<sup>62</sup>. It has varied appearances, from the blatant statements of self-identification with the elite to the more subtly expressed scepticism over others' ability to manage and develop a significantly authentic style of expression in music and other art forms. Having in mind that 'Academy's' first audience had belonged to a similar cultural milieu, it comes as little surprise to a reflective insider that the electronic dance

---

<sup>59</sup> The term 'padavicari' ('epileptics', identified by Gordy, 2001; see Chapter 4) as a commonplace insult directed mainly at the Rock-music-related subcultures is likely to have been derived from a rhyme with 'Akademicari', ('Academians', the nickname developed by the visitors of the club in the late Eighties).

<sup>60</sup> Quoted from the film 'Academy-Republic, a statement by the late Miomir Grujić Fleka.

<sup>61</sup> N. Savić (Appendix 12) puts particular emphasis on the role of this club.

<sup>62</sup> In interviews with V. Jerić, N. Savić, R. Banjanin, G. Paunović, and even to some extent the talks with two very differently positioned persons, Igor 'Domin8r' of CRSN and Z. Kerleta of Cosmic Sounds record and publishing label.

scene in Belgrade, grown out of 'Academy', 'Soul Food' and 'Buha'<sup>63</sup>, alike, was initially characterised by a sense of elitism.

The elitism of the 'Academy' mentioned above had two separate branches. One of them descended from the club's early 'Dedinje' days. The transformation of the club into a primarily underground Rock venue under the leadership of Fleka as Head of Programme introduced the other, different form of elitism: the notion of membership and identity constructs common to 'Academians', explored in Section 5.2.2. The shift in 'Academy's' programme towards underground Rock music led a group of its initial members to slowly abandon the place in favour of other venues. This is further examined in the segments related to the position of members and practitioners within the independent music business and the signifying practices characterising the Belgrade underground music scene. At this point of the argument it should be sufficient to say that the elitism of the 'Academians' is most closely related to the sense of *membership that appears to go beyond social*.

The link between social affiliation and status constructed through *initiation, discipleship* of a wider system of knowledge and understanding, falls within the area of artistic integrity and discursive coherence. This is why parallels are drawn to Adorno's stance on popular culture.

Underground music projects that developed around the 'Academy' club have remained the most active during the Nineties. This qualifies them to be seriously examined in this research, along with the fact that the sense of identification with discourses related to underground Rock music was continually strong. These groups have shown active resistance to hegemonic practices through political and cultural means, influencing and recruiting further such resistance among other groups. This shows that the underground Rock scene in Belgrade has shown high levels of social awareness, in spite of the inherent pitfalls that an undisputed sense of identification with a lifestyle as discourse entails. Identifying the Dieselers with a threat to the civil society, subcultural formations close to Belgrade's underground music scene have also shown their capacity for creating *moral panic*, while being subjected to

---

<sup>63</sup> 'Buha' was an insular venue. It had a role in the formation of Belgrade's music-related subcultures at the turn of the Eighties, in a similar way to the, far longer lasting, Omen. However, both remain spaces synonymous with narrow segments of Belgrade youth subcultures. The term 'insular' is used here to refer to venues that help, or have helped, define the discursive practices in Belgrade subcultures and underground scenes but fail to connect to each other and develop a lasting impact.

one. Dieselers could hardly be identified as the very source of social tensions in Belgrade and Serbia. However, they became closely associated with the apparatus of coercion employed by the regime, as well as being the consequence of its hegemonic cultural practices. Thus the fact that the salient features of the Dieseler 'spectacle' had all but disappeared by the time the researcher returned to Belgrade for fieldwork implies that a new normalisation process was in progress. Its orientation was reversed: capillary power appeared to be flowing in the opposite direction.

The sense of identity among the members of the Belgrade underground music scene is related to notions of artistic integrity and discipleship. This serves as evidence that a level of coherence and rigour exists in their shared discourse. During reflective participation in research the author had noted that some of the elements of that discourse have become remote, if not alien, to him. This is most likely to be the result of the changing notion of 'home' and 'identity' that the researcher has experienced as a result of significant changes that took place since leaving Belgrade in 1998. Without this geographical<sup>64</sup> and communicational rupture it would have been difficult for the researcher to identify the peculiarity of his 1995 statement recorded in the 'Academy-Republic' documentary. It is not the content but the tone of the statement that had startled the researcher once he attempted to re-assess the connotations of his 1995 statement. The statement refers to the 'Academy' club as one of the 'catacombs' where the ritual practices have taken place.

The 'Cave' club could have, by its physical spatial characteristics, become a very interesting venue for the promotion and performance of any form of music-related practice. This cave is a natural geological formation, part of the Tasmajdan Park in the Belgrade city centre. Positioned at the heart of the city and forming an urbanised natural shelter, this space had a potential to develop into a venue that would connote to the meanings embedded in what Fleka called an 'urban cave' with reference to the 'Academy' club in the 1995 documentary. The likelihood of the cave being used to its full potential as an underground - in literal and symbolic terms - venue is further reinforced by the fact that connotations do not stop at the level of identification with the pre-historic and the tribal. The latter is commonplace in the electronic dance music

---

<sup>64</sup> After several attempts to get possession of a copy of Doug Aubrey's documentary 'Victims of Geography', partly filmed in Belgrade, the author has failed to succeed. The researcher's contacts at B92 television have refused co-operation under the excuse of 'copyright issues' that could not be resolved because they can no longer get in touch with Aubrey (!).

discourse. The singer of 'Dee Lite' project, known under the pseudonym Lady Kier Kirby wrote a short essay on tribalism in dance music, published in Ross and Rose (1997). (Bennett (2000, 2001) elaborates on the difference between tribalism in dance music (neo-tribes) and traditional anthropological use of the term.)

N. Savić, who was one of the people promoting Techno music in Belgrade<sup>65</sup>, agrees that the UMUB parties that he helped organise had a certain 'nomadic' character, moving from space to space and changing its form, nature and use for one night only. The 'tribal' connotations of the natural geological formation of the Tasmajdan Cave are further re-enforced with the historical narratives related to it. One of them states that the cave was used during the Second World War as a German army warehouse. This gives the space an aura of mystery that could further develop the discursive threads essential for the formation of a significant spatial point identifiable with underground art and subcultural activity.

Controlled by the same management that runs 'Bus', the 'Cave' is a summer-venue. It was first introduced in 1996 when a two-night event took place. The event was organised on a grand scale, promoting the 'Cave' as a setting for electronic dance music. This appears to be the only time when the actual inside of the cave was used as a clubbing environment. Although the lack of, or inappropriate use of, planning regulations has been addressed at several points of this chapter, unspecified problems prevented the proprietors from using the inside of the cave itself as a commercial clubbing space. There is, by comparison, a similar space that has existed in Belgrade since the late Nineties. This other club was over-ambitiously named 'Andergraund'. The spelling was intentionally changed into phonetic Serbian and the name of this club could be closely associated with the award-winning film by Emir Kusturica.

The 'Andergraund' club is placed at the end of central Belgrade between the river-bank and Kalemegdan Park. It is also dug into a limestone rock, following a natural cave-like formation. The club's name came to signify the reasons why some of the informants and interviewees were sceptical about the use of

---

<sup>65</sup> After the author of this study initiated a wider appeal for Techno, openly inviting the audiences through electronic media to join the parties at the 'Academy' club in 1993/1994, the Techno (electronic dance) parties mushroomed in Belgrade in 1995 and onwards, starting with the 'Industria' club and continuing with UMUB, Integra, Kozmik and other DJ alliances.



the term 'underground'. Collin (2001), Drummond (2001) and Gordy (2001) have appropriated the term in relation to Belgrade, quoting the statements that relate to the changing role of culture during the Nineties. An interesting statement by Srdjan Djile Marković<sup>66</sup>, quoted from a film proposal by Marc J Hawker, shows the complexity of the situation in mid-Nineties Belgrade: "There is no underground, all is *overground* and the name of the game is survival" (Drummond, 2001: 229).

The term 'overground' was referred to by 'Laki'<sup>67</sup>, one of the interviewed members of the 'Unexpected Force'. Laki had problems in accepting the word 'underground' though he had to agree that a common signifier had to be found, ascertaining the features that a number of musicians, artists, and media practitioners share in aesthetic and ethical principles affecting their work. Furthermore, he mentioned the term 'overground', which was apparently used by 'Orge'<sup>68</sup>, the person most likely to be identified as the leader of the 'Unexpected Force'<sup>69</sup>, also interviewed for this study.

...['Underground'] was so overused and misused by so many people over the years... especially here... I am not too keen on it... but I must agree with you, if you need a working term [of reference], it could be [of use]... what I don't like in particular is that underground is synonymous with some people... and their efforts to justify... doing nothing... Orge prefers the term 'overground' ...it is a bit of a comment on all that...<sup>70</sup>

However, he did not voice concerns over the word 'underground'. There were other interviewees, like V. Jerić, who decided to contest the term in relation to the music of his band, Darkwood Dub. Although Gordy identifies it as 'noise Rock' and Collin as 'underground Rock', both of which Jerić worked hard to

---

<sup>66</sup> His name was completely misquoted by Drummond (2001). Fortunately, the author of this study was capable of recognising Marković's verbal style.

<sup>67</sup> Many of the artists referred to in this study will be mentioned under nicknames and pseudonyms. In most cases this has nothing to do with concealing their identity. It is done in order to simplify the presentation; arguably, these nicknames add to the signifying practice. In a similar sense, the author of this study is best known in the Belgrade underground scene as 'Fitch'. It is worth examining the identity shift that this has presented to the researcher when addressed by the pseudonym after three years of absence.

<sup>68</sup> Real name Goran Nikolic. As a number of artists and members of the Belgrade underground scene (including the researcher himself), Nikolić is better known under his nickname.

<sup>69</sup> In his interview, Orge had provided a wealth of information and some of the most interesting statements in relation to style and philosophy behind the music he plays (Appendix 9, date: 8<sup>th</sup> November 2001).

<sup>70</sup> Appendix 12, Interview with Laki. Date of entry: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

dispute in the interview, he did not seem to point out the inadequacy of the term used by the two foreign writers<sup>71</sup>.

Nevertheless, in relation to the distinctions between the terms 'underground' and 'Anderground', the researcher, especially in the role of reflexive participant, has to agree that the latter did damage to the former in its interpretation in Belgrade. Not only that Kusturica's, *Palm D' Or* awarded film was the root of the misunderstanding or *banalisation*<sup>72</sup> of the term. 'Everything is overground' could be identified as a comment on the state of civil society in Serbia during the Nineties. The social, economic and political tensions surfaced and the society was deeply divided along the lines of interests, as shown in Chapter Four. There is another possible reading of this statement. Djile (Marković) might have referred to the fact that all artistic and cultural activity previously spread around the centre or mainstream had become underground with the mainstream shifting towards the previously marginal areas of turbo-folk. This reading is allowed only in the case that it is seen as *reductio ad absurdum*, one of the intellectual tools available to both logicians and writers.

#### 5.2.6 Ostentatious projects and freely associated positions

Indeed, some of the interviewees in this research commented that the whole culture-production that fell outside the 'state-art' of turbo-folk (Kronja, 2001; Milojević, 2002) had turned to 'the underground': as a result of the lack of media coverage, insufficient funding and an unfriendly approach by the authorities. Having this in mind, along with the fact that many Belgraders, the author included - in the role of *reflective participant* - were dissatisfied with the portrayal of Belgrade in Kusturica's 'Anderground', it becomes clearer why the term was sometimes seen as overburdened. It is important to see the distinction of its intended use for commercial purposes when a club was open under that name and the use of the term among members with reference to music and style, in social, aesthetic and ethical terms. Furthermore, the academic use of 'underground' in this study was derived from careful consideration of other signifiers and their connotations with reference to phenomena similar to the ones explored in this study.

---

<sup>71</sup> For in-depth examination of such contradicting statements, please see Chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>72</sup> Fleka uses the term 'banalisation' to explain the change happening to new developments in art and society once the number of followers grows to the extent to which the idea is distorted.

The researcher in his reflective participant role, has seen 'Anderground' and 'Cave',<sup>73</sup> clubs as over-ambitious attempts to make a claim of 'subcultural capital' (Thornton, 1995, 1997). This can be verified using the audio diary recorded by the researcher in the summer of 2001. The heavily advertised 'DJ Festival' in the 'Cave' club has captured the author's attention. Advertisements for the event promised a parade of most competent Belgrade DJs competing on stage. Through re-established connections with a promoter working at the club, once an 'Academy' employee (resident DJ), the researcher obtained a ticket for the five-day event.

Having observed all of the possible preferences that might lead to bias: the sense of subcultural identity, membership of a specific segment of the Belgrade underground scene and past experiences, the researcher as reflective participant had another advantage. This was his close familiarity with the Belgrade electronic dance music scene and as someone deeply involved in its inception. This too might have led the researcher to come to distorted conclusions, affected by his past experiences as a businessperson, lest he had not anticipated this and approached all observations from meta-reflexive and infra-reflexive viewpoints (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Booth, 2002). The former refers to the constant evaluations of one's own motives, methods and findings. It does not refer to the highly abstracted examples of meta-reflexivity Booth examines as part of his text. The infra-reflexivity applied by the participating researcher refers to the notion of readership as the audience. The position of researcher as narrator is seen here as taking the role of intermediary; the negotiator whose intervention affects the discursive form of the presented phenomenon. These considerations were used throughout this research study, especially in relation to participant observation: the closer to the topic and activity the researcher came, the more considerate in terms of reflexivity he had to become. The same rigour, however, was applied to observing - reading - the media and critical texts in relation to Belgrade subcultures and underground culture. The findings related to this element of analysis are bearing numerous implications.

The 'DJ Festival' could not have been qualified as a festival in the specified meaning of the term. The researcher read the events which lasted several days as an attempted representation of some of the best known Belgrade DJs involved in the wider area of electronic dance music, comprising several

---

<sup>73</sup> Whose original name in Serbian is 'Pecina'.

genres. The criterion by which they were chosen as representative of the local scene was not clear and in the researcher's assumption was likely to be non-existent. A number of DJs did not partake in the event- most likely as a result of failed negotiations. The researcher could not check all the assumptions made - his membership status was regained in some aspects of the scene but being privy to such information would require a great deal more involvement than what he had at that particular time and in that particular area of the music promotion business in Belgrade.

The most interesting observation came with regards to the audience. The DJs were not really *competing* in front of the audience, as the name of the event would appear to suggest. The way in which the sequence of different DJs was established seemed to be arbitrary. They performed without any particular announcement or notable interaction with the audience outside the musical time-slot allocated. The audience members, on the other hand, appeared to *perform*, to take part in the negotiation with the staged DJs. The visitors appeared ready to accept offered entertainment without criticism, as if they sought some sort of certainty. It might be argued that this is commonplace for electronic dance music events, but the observation does not conclude this. The interaction between the DJ and the audience is necessary but not compulsory. The 'DJ Festival' at the 'Cave' appeared to be an event where everyone present tried to assert their position rather than use it by contesting the DJ's leadership and showing preference for one DJ over the other, as happens in similar cases the researcher has observed over the years.

Some of the comments made by an interviewee (Marko Kostić<sup>74</sup>) in relation to the 'EXIT' festival seem to mirror the findings made in reflective participation of the above event. Kostić observed the fact that the stages at the 'EXIT' festival could be seen as evenly split between sub-genres of Techno and Reggae music. Furthermore, Kostić pointed to the distinction between the discursive foundations of the two styles, Reggae being based on resistance<sup>75</sup> to social *status quo* and Techno on its acceptance. This discussion will be attended further in the analysis of signifying practice and authenticity. For the moment, however, it is necessary to note that the audiences at both events, observed by Kostić and the researcher, seem to have had in common the contented, pacified participation in search of entertainment. The transformed role of the

---

<sup>74</sup> Appendix 1, reflexive diary. Date of entry: 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2001.

<sup>75</sup> See Stuart Hall's interview with Lawrence Grossberg, 1985/1996.

Techno events, from turning hedonism into a political statement, to entertainment as its only end, appears to be the transition that the role of electronic dance music in Belgrade looks set to follow.

However, the transfiguration that a theatre in the northern city of Subotica underwent during one night at an independent film festival, shows that Techno music changes its discursive position depending on both the audiences and performers, outwardly, and inwardly, the behind the scenes event organiser. Corrosion (CRSN as abbreviated on their Internet presentations), a Belgrade Techno project that will be mentioned in further chapters, performed at the event held in the Subotica National Theatre. The independent film and underground cinema festival, JFJF, was established as recently as 1997. The researcher took part in the initial developments around its inception. Along with colleagues from the Belgrade Low-Fi Video, an organisation that grew into a movement recognised in the world (Shuster, 2001), the researcher first visited Subotica and presented the selection of films from the first Low-Fi Video Festival held in Belgrade in 1997.

Between 1997 and 2001 both festivals have grown to the extent to which a number of follow-up programmes were established, including the collaboration with CRSN and other musicians. The CRSN and Low-Fi Video have established collaboration on the Internet, presenting their work together on a web-site set up by members of both organisations. The performance of CRSN at the film festival event was, in comparison to observations made in relation to both the 'DJ Festival' and 'EXIT', forming the distinction Barthes (1977: 183-185) has defined the comparison between the *pheno-song* and *geno-song*. The difference between the two is determined by the presence, or the lack of, *jouissance*. It could be disputed whether any such attributes could be assigned to the music performed on artificial instruments and computers. This is part of the discussion in the chapter addressing signifying practice in the Belgrade underground music scene.

This part of analysis is also closely related to the work of Foucault. He vocally expressed disagreement with both the theoretical foundations of political economy, and semiotics. Both of these disciplines are employed throughout this study along with the discourse analysis characteristic of Foucault's work. Having in mind that on several occasions this seems to stand in apparent disregard of Foucault's comments on the shortcomings of semiotics and

Marxist dialectics, it is necessary to use one such comment to show that in certain cases the joining of those methodologies is indeed justified.

“... [The] important thing is to avoid trying to do for the *event* what was previously done with the concept of *structure*. It's not a matter of locating *everything on one level*, that of the event, but of realising that there is actually a whole order of levels of *different types* of events, differing in amplitude, chronological breadth, and capacity to produce effects.”

(Foucault, in Rabinow, 1987: 56. Italic highlights by M. T.)

As the power structures behind the three events strongly differ, the discursive practices and their effect could be read from the space, form and communication between the performers which implies meaning within a historical context. This is what Foucault strongly criticises in the sentences following the above quotation. He argues that the meaning ascribed to events and historical discourses, as well as the dialectic analysis of factors socio-economic in power interplay, leave the dynamic elements of the analysed event aside, making the discussion remote from the concrete and violent nature of real occurrences. The analogy to war (Foucault, 1976; Foucault in Rabinow, 1987: 56-57, 64, 73) that is implied here and explicitly noted on several other points is somewhat reminiscent of Gramsci. This is discussed at length in other Chapter 2 of this book. It suffices to say here, that Foucault himself understands events as multilayered and is opposed to the idea of 'doing for the event what was previously done with the concept of structure', i.e. disregarding all ways of looking at phenomena. He appears to be as interested in the concrete as Hall and Gramsci are, however apparently different their respective viewpoints on the nature of power.

Therefore the events in question are seen as power-exchanges using communication with social discontinuity providing the supportive background. This discontinuity is not to be taken for granted as a feature of Foucauldian analysis: it is a fact that the transition in which Serbian society has been for more than ten years has created the discontinuity. The radical change that took place since the researcher departed from Serbia and the visit, return, or re-negotiation that was taking place during the main part of field research, is precisely what Foucault refers to as discontinuity of the 'discursive regime' (Rabinow: 1987: 55). The rapidly changing society introduced a new set of

discourses within less than a year from when the political change happened on the highest government level.

However, although this discursive shift was dormant, the entrepreneurial nature of both the cultural resistance and the criminal circles close to political power in the Nineties have been the precursors of the swift re-structuring of both economic and other power relations. Indeed, the *ancien régime* of Titoism continued to provide the power discourses well into the Nineties, its only disruption- discontinuity- being the brief democratic-political and economic-industrial reform of 1989/1990 Marković government (referred to in Chapter 4). When it comes to music production and promotion, independent or otherwise, comment that the interviewed journalist Dragan Ambrozić<sup>76</sup> made about the late Eighties seems to be at work in 2001. He points to the late Eighties and 1990 as the first time when the production, promotion and consumption of music were more affected by the market than politics. Continuing his statement, Ambrozić finds that all this had changed with the radicalisation of Yugoslav crisis where political issues yet again became dominant in music and other forms of culture-production. It is therefore notable that the return of the market as the governing factor of music business in Serbia introduces this second period of discontinuity through radical change of discursive regime.

The free market in Belgrade's culture production is hindered with several obstacles that will be discussed at length in the next chapter. It is here both necessary and sufficient to say that some of the discursive aspects of power-struggle have remained, especially in terms of the previous determination for political change. A number of interviewees and informants, all of whom hold different positions of power-play within Belgrade's culture production, have noted that a problem has remained in relation to the discursive nature of culture production. This is believed to be the result of discontinuity where political and formal economic change was not immediately followed by market transformation.

Once the change happened, several practitioners<sup>77</sup> argued from different positions, that there was left a void in the self-determination of the players.

---

<sup>76</sup> Appendix 5. Date of entry: 12<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

<sup>77</sup> Including Gordan Paunović of B92, Milos Kukurić of Low-Fi Video, 'Bacha', an independent promoter, Fleka, an author, Orge, of 'The Unexpected Force', Sabljari, a musician and producer for CIH and 'Fabrika', Darko 'Dzambasov', musician and producer, Boris Mladenović, musician and visual artist, Marko Kostic, a director and writer.

How is the new stratification in culture-production to develop if all the competitors belong to the 'same side'? How to define the alternative? Against what, or for what? What is the nature of the new power play? How does one maintain the scene's resilience and see it developed further? A number of people deeply involved in Belgrade's culture-production posed these questions in one form or other, in their conversations with the author of this study. These topics emerged spontaneously rather than as a result of intentional probing. The other reason why the examined events seem to belong to a period of 'discontinuity' is in that, in spite of all the economic and political reforms taking place in Serbia, the economic power of consumers was so low that these changes could not be detected in the market. Therefore, this makes all forms of competition, 'war by other means' thus fiercer, as will be seen in Chapter 6.

All three events mentioned above: 'EXIT', 'DJ Festival'<sup>78</sup> and the 'CRSN' concert held as part of the 'JFJF' independent film festival, are analysed with relation to the circumstances that correspond to the specific discourse-power relations. The two entertainment events, under the guise of *underground authenticity* or *subcultural capital* acquired on similar occasions preceding them, had both been related to the publicity and the development of business opportunities for the organisers. The communication between the audience and the performer was thus one of commodity exchange, where the emphasis is more likely to be on exchange-value than on use-value of musical commodities.

Having in mind all the observed: the heavy advertising of these events in the media, the number of posters put up around the city (especially 'EXIT' which was on a scale that was almost incomparable to the 'DJ Festival'), it is worth mentioning the fact that a number of internationally acknowledged musicians and DJs performed at the 'EXIT' event in Novi Sad. Seven stages were set up-an infrastructure that requires a considerable organisational effort. The tickets for both events were affordable but not cheap. The aggressive form of advertising used for the events left little doubt that these were more likely to be heavily invested entertainment than independently organised events.

'Cave's' event organisers attempted to make it appear to refer to 'artistic merit' by using promotional language which left room for speculation as to whether this was a representative cross-section of the Belgrade DJ scene, a

---

<sup>78</sup> See Appendix 1, reflective diary. Date of entry: 25<sup>th</sup> August 2001.



competition, or a well-organised commercial venture. By articulating the three into one message, as ambiguous as it appeared to a trained reader and media practitioner, the promoters attracted a diverse audience willing to comply with different aspects of the presented discourse. However, to use Thornton's terminology once more, which is in this case more than appropriate<sup>79</sup>, '[the] club event was "more *Top of the Pops* on E than a warehouse rave"' (Thornton, 1995: 123; emphasis original).

The quote Thornton takes from i-D magazine, using the commonplace term for an illegal recreational drug ('E' stands for Ecstasy) does not imply that drug-taking<sup>80</sup> was observed in relation to the specified event. It does however bear significance on the argument on signifying practices and related issues in the Belgrade underground music scene. Furthermore, having accepted that drug abuse is an aspect of a number of music and entertainment events in urban Western culture to which Serbian cities belong, it is not relevant for this stage of the argument as a determining factor of the discursive nature of an observed event. Thornton's quote was taken in full, in order to show the semantic manipulation used in her argument.

In the case of the CRSN concert<sup>81</sup>, the economic motivation for the interplay of power-related discourses was set in the background and acted as a counterpoint. The festival's abbreviated title, JFJF, stands for 'Jugoslovenski Festival Jeftinog Filma', 'Yugoslav Cheap Film Festival' - with all the ironic connotations that the word 'cheap' carries - *intended*, as in the case of Low-Fi: *Low Fidelity* (Video Festival). Both gatherings were titled in such a way as to position themselves among the discourses of the artistic scenes of Belgrade and Serbia, as complex as the situation dictated and connoting the specificities of 'overground', as proposed by Djile. On the other hand, the 'EXIT' had grown from a pop-cultural event with subversive political connotations to a business venture with conceptual links to the newly regained freedom, the latter problematic in discourse-regime change. The 'DJ Festival' at the 'Cave' club was merely following the legacy of similar events established between 1993 and 1995. Occasional clubbing events led to regular Techno parties being staged at the 'Academy' that in turn instigated

---

<sup>79</sup> Thornton's PhD, turned into a book examined the electronic dance club culture in Britain, with special focus on Acid House, the precursor of many contemporary electronic genres.

<sup>80</sup> It very likely drugs like this *are* consumed at events similar to the ones described here. However, as the discussion on signifying practices will show, the phenomenon is not exclusively related to Belgrade *underground* music.

<sup>81</sup> See Appendix 1, reflexive diary. Date of entry: 11<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

large underground gatherings. These gatherings not only had a discursive impact on politics in street protests but also led to the development of the Belgrade's new musical genre of 'Handmade Techno'. The 'DJ Festival 2001' does not appear to have been conceived in any other way than within the business of entertainment.

### 5.3 Conclusions: spaces of cultural contest

In the interview titled 'Truth and Power' (Gordon, 1980; Rabinow, 1984), Foucault seems to suggest that power changes form and appearance though remains an end in itself, unconcerned with meaning. If this were to be accepted wholesale there would be no place for semiotics and economics in analysing discourse in relation to power. The researcher takes a different viewpoint in seeing the Foucauldian approach as a necessary yet not sufficient element in analysing the complex interplay of factors affecting independent music production and the underground music scene in Belgrade.

The interest in the concrete was declared the overarching principle of methodologies employed by Foucault, as well as by Gramsci and Hall. This statement follows Foucault's argument on *levels of events, varied in amplitude, chronological breadth, and the capacity to produce effects* (1984: 56) and concluding that it allows for the use of analytical models explored in the seminal text, Hall's *Encoding/decoding* (1980b). This is especially important with regard to the nature of the study of Belgrade's underground music scene: it does, indeed, reveal the contest for power within the society yet the very *means* of that power-play include narratives and meanings that are inextricably related to both economic and other forms of power.

Accepting Foucault's 'Nietzschean' approach to power, the researcher has, in this chapter, followed the transformation of political to economic dominance reflected in the spatial features of music production and consumption. The transformation of space through music from one case to another was used as an important element in observing the role of underground music within the context of the massive changes that took place in Belgrade and Serbia. The breadth of these changes did not allow all of the observed venues and spatial relations to be discussed in this chapter. Therefore, the 'parasitic' café opened five metres from the 'Academy' club's entrance. This shows that the 'natural'

inclination of space to be defined along existing discursive lines could not be included in this part of the analysis but should and will be referred to, along with similar examples, in the following segments of discussion.

Furthermore, the 'Plateau'/'Plato' complex in central Belgrade, which included the 'Industria' club and a fashionable café-bookshop, is as important in the political power-play of the Nineties because of its business status in which a number of entrepreneurs and artists competed for public attention. This was also the place where B92 radio built its Techno audiences, making up for the initial omission following its late entry into the electronic dance music scene in Belgrade. This is also to be discussed later with special reference to some documentary accounts recorded in Collin (2001).

Finally, the vigour of Belgrade's *bricoleurs* could be reflected in the few examples mentioned by interviewees and observed by the researcher as *reflective participant*. This especially applies to the acquisition of space, the symbolic 'guerrilla' led by the Belgrade underground scene, the 'conquering' of several 'ships' on river Sava, as well as the virtual 'guerrillas' - the Internet-supported music, media and art-projects, including Chernobyl In House (CIH), Corrosion (CRSN) and Low-Fi Video. All of these deserve focused attention and are discussed in relation to Belgrade's underground music scene as business and signifying practice in the following chapters.

## **Chapter Six**

# **Stratification, power-relations and business practices in Belgrade underground music production**

In the following discussion, the author will examine current practices in Belgrade's independent music business. These practices, it will be seen, affect the underground music scene to a great extent, as a number of interviewees, informants and the researcher as a reflective participant, have found out. Business practices and their discursive characteristics are closely related to power-relations inherited from the past, as well as to the ongoing stratification within Serbian society. The difficult *transition* period of the Serbian economy since October 2000 is reflected in both music and media businesses.

Stratification of the market for independently produced music will be analysed in the light of the developments explored in previous Chapters. Statements, reflections and observations derived from interviewees, informants and the researcher in the role of reflexive participant will be accounted for, compared and contrasted. This will be done in order to explore the Belgrade underground music scene within its national and international business environment. Power-relations between different players in the production of Belgrade underground music will be seen in their economic, micro-political and discursive context. The latter, especially in relation to the definitions of 'scenes', 'underground' and 'independent businesses' will create implications to the market potential for this production.

Business practices, legal and ethical issues and relevant forms of promotion emerging from the field data are inextricably linked with the perception of relative artistic autonomy, authenticity and credible claims of originality<sup>1</sup>. Legal and ethical issues raised in interviews will also be addressed in this chapter. Ascertaining the concrete market position of Belgrade underground music will require reflexive reading of these issues emerging from field research. Some of these statements are conditioned on the position of interviewees and respondents within the stratifying music and media markets of Belgrade and Serbia.

---

<sup>1</sup> The latter three are explored Chapter 7.

Furthermore, the researcher's past and present involvement with the Belgrade music and media businesses will be reflected upon in relation to his interaction with the interviewees and respondents consulted in this study. This especially applies to the analysis of media and venue promotion. Concluding Chapter 5, it was said that Belgrade music venues served as 'battlegrounds' for competing entrepreneurs, organisations and artists representing various subcultural discourses in music and media production. Moreover, the potential role of the government in the local production and international promotion of Serbian music will be explored in this chapter, leading the discussion further into the examination of performances of Belgrade underground abroad.

Analysing the changing role and position of B92 in Belgrade's independent music and media businesses is of significance for this chapter. B92 holds an important position in Serbian media and music markets; moreover, its links with foreign entertainment and media businesses will be addressed. In the analysis of interviews with music and media practitioners, business practices were implicitly read both from the narrative structures of interviewee responses, as much as from their interpretations of events and 'facts'. Implementing reflexivity was crucial to this stage of analysis. Methodological considerations will be addressed in relation to negotiation and threats of partisanship.

### 6.1.1 The missed opportunity: music production and the Yugoslav market reform of late Eighties

Talking on the subject of underground rock production in former Yugoslavia, journalist Dragan Ambrozić<sup>2</sup> describes its relative autonomy as 'ghettoised'. In the interview conducted for this study, Ambrozić stated that private businesses in former Yugoslavia were not allowed to employ more than ten

---

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 5, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2001. Ambrozić, primarily an experienced music journalist and critic, became openly involved in a number of business projects, from retail and distribution to promotion and touring. The question of impartiality will be raised. However, journalists as opinion leaders are rarely truly independent. Their reviews and editorials significantly affect the success of a musical product and liaisons developed between marketers, band managers and journalists, represent an important, if covert, aspect of the music business worldwide.

people. Economic reforms introduced in the late Eighties by Ante Marković's Government in Socialist Federal Republic of (SFR) Yugoslavia changed this. Until then, official cultural centres provided the only grounds for entrepreneurial practice in music and art. Venues associated with student organisations were the main source of support for underground rock music, creating a business infrastructure for alternative discourses in music, art and the media. Employment legislation that stifled private enterprise did not apply in their case.

Ambrozić states that being involved in underground rock in SFR Yugoslavia "was no game". Communist-controlled management boards were scrutinising all media contents, including student publications in which many of the, now renowned, journalists and music critics started their careers<sup>3</sup>. Until the late Eighties, every issue of Belgrade's influential "Student" magazine had to be approved by the State Attorney. His power, as well as the decisions made by editorial boards, could have prevented the release of articles, publications, films, TV programmes, and records. In some cases, their authors had to face far deeper consequences (as seen in Chapter 4).

Nevertheless, student-led organisations were developing considerable influence over the production of alternative culture, in their own, 'ghettoised' environment, within an autonomous music market. Ambrozić states that, unlike in the Soviet bloc<sup>4</sup>, such semi-independent business infrastructures in Yugoslavia have developed some elements of market competition. This was possible under the condition of low-key publicity veiled as 'youth culture'.

The communist rulers of Yugoslavia had loosened their grip on these forms of culture production by the Eighties, deeming such enterprises less threatening. Ambrozić stated that this first affected mainstream rock musicians. Until the emergence of Sarajevo band 'Bijelo dugme' in the 1970s, the communist

---

<sup>3</sup> Among them were Ambrozić, late Miomir Grujić-Fleka, Petar Janjatović, and other authors interviewed for this study.

<sup>4</sup> However, the cultural landscape in the Soviet bloc was in no way homogenous. Bennett (2001: 68) accounts for very different developments of the punk scenes in Hungary and Russia.

regime ignored or even starkly criticised rock music. The populist image of this 'rural-rock' group was deemed acceptable by communist gatekeepers. Consequently, the state-owned record companies made considerable effort promoting their releases.

Ambrozić claims that by the end of the Eighties Yugoslavia developed elements of market economy. This was reflected in the production of music. As Janjatović suggested in his interview, 'Bijelo dugme' and 'Riblja čorba' were selling hundreds of thousands of copies of their albums. Their tours were attracting thousands of visitors throughout the country. Ambrozić recalls that Bora Djordjević, the leader of Belgrade band 'Riblja čorba', although enduring a dissident stance, had his records released by the government-controlled record company, PGP RTB. His music videos were recorded and promoted by State Television. He states that "[Bora Djordjević] could do *whatever he pleased*<sup>5</sup> because his record sales were *perfect*<sup>6</sup>". He points at this as an example of how market criteria overruled ideology in 'permissive totalitarian system'<sup>7</sup> in Yugoslavia during the Eighties.

During that time, he claims, foreign mainstream music was licensed regularly and releases in Yugoslavia coincided with the ones in the West<sup>8</sup>. This trend, Ambrozić continues, had peaked in the brief period of market liberalisation between 1989 and 1991, when it became possible to organise concerts of renowned Western musicians<sup>9</sup>. While mainstream records were released

---

<sup>5</sup> This is not entirely correct. Djordjević had encountered considerable problems at the height of his career during the early Eighties, when his lyrics were publicly scrutinised for their criticism of the ideological foundations of the ruling regime. The line "fools die for ideals" from his song titled "Na Zapadu nista novo" ("All quiet in the West", paraphrasing E. M. Remarque) induced 'moral panic' in the press. However, these problems earned him dissident status resulting in increased popularity across disillusioned strata aiding his subsequent commercial success.

<sup>6</sup> Ambrozić stated that Djordjević's later made compromises ('consensus'), which eventually blunted the social criticism in his lyrics. See Appendix 5; date of entry 12<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

<sup>7</sup> The system in SFR Yugoslavia had at its disposal all the levers of power characterising totalitarianism, Ambrozić states; more often than not, however, it "chose not to use them".

<sup>8</sup> He illustrates this statement with the examples of Madonna and Michael Jackson.

<sup>9</sup> Renown artists, such as David Bowie, 'The Cure', 'Ramones', Iggy Pop, 'The Pixies', Nick Cave, 'Sisters of Mercy' and 'The Stranglers', all played in Zagreb, Ljubljana and Belgrade during that time. Live performances by underground rock acts, such as 'Husker Du', 'The Fall', 'New Model Army', Grant Hart, Nico and others also took place in the mid- to late Eighties.



consistently, licensed releases of alternative music were made without regularity. With independent record companies in their infancy, this is hardly surprising.

However, while the two Yugoslav mainstream rock-groups mentioned above reached sales of up to half a million<sup>10</sup> per record, the sales of foreign pop albums were ten times lower. Ambrozić relates this to language barriers. The researcher, however, believes that these figures reflect the class stratification in a supposedly 'classless' communist society. Yugoslav mainstream rock appealed to different audience segments for different reasons. Some were attracted to Yugoslav mainstream rock because of its populist appeal. Those consumers were to switch to Turbo-folk and related genres. Arguably, even before the 'crisis of subculture' identified by Kronja (2001), overlaps existed between the audiences for domestic production of folk and rock music. Other parts of the rock-music audience belonged to a narrower segment the urban middle-class population. They were more interested in the 'dissident' status of rock music in general and the implicit readings of 'problematic' lyrics in particular.

The market for Western pop music was thus narrower, representing the parts of the population that was not showing interest in 'subversive' implications of music, coupled with lesser inclination to the domestic or foreign production of alternative music forms. In this particular case, Ambrozić's 'language barrier' argument applies. Subcultural identity, whether associated with 'transnational', 'underground' or 'national', 'folk' music was of lesser importance to such consumers. These could be identified as the 'grey area' from which part of the 'half-dieseler' groups (mentioned Chapter 5) were to develop.

On the other hand, the dissemination of foreign underground music could not have been measured in statistical terms. Records were brought into the country by individuals, connoisseurs, promoted by few radio DJs, played in a

---

<sup>10</sup> Jopson, 2002 refers to sales of 500000 records as difficult to attain, even by the present international music industry standards.

small number of underground clubs and, quite frequently, home-taped. Thus Gordy's (1999, 2001) erroneous statement that rock music had enjoyed an elite status applies to but a few examples, invariably related to underground rock music. Furthermore, this provides insight into Kronja's (2001) misunderstanding of the shift in audience reception from alternative rock to Turbo-folk. Such shifts, although affecting significant segments of the youth population, do not take into account the internal segmentation of the market for rock music before the war. In addition, the significant demographic change whereby hundreds of thousands of young and educated men and women have left former Yugoslavia in the Nineties had affected the market for alternative products of popular culture.

In spite of cultural diversity of Yugoslav nations and their growing political divide, markets for popular music Yugoslavia were well integrated. This especially applies to the three leading centres, Belgrade (Serbia), Zagreb (Croatia) and Ljubljana (Slovenia). Ambrozić accounts that the success of underground music in those three cities largely depended on student venues that hosted underground nightclubs. Belgrade's SKC<sup>11</sup> was "liberated", as he asserts, by young art historians, critics and artists, who were aware that modern visual art and theatre of the day "were entrenched in Rock 'n' Roll". These clubs and venues have, during the Eighties, provided a space for up-and-coming musicians to rehearse, perform and slowly enter the market.

By the end of the Eighties, the business climate had improved and Yugoslavia, "at least in the market sense *became a part of Western Europe*<sup>12</sup>..." in spite of "the economic crisis lurking underneath", organising the concerts of foreign musicians became easier, because the country "at least appeared to become wealthier", Ambrozić states in the interview.

---

<sup>11</sup> Other similar examples include Belgrade's Akademija, KST and Ljubljana's ŠKUC.

<sup>12</sup> Appendix 5, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2001. This statement is clearly simplified and exaggerated. However, Ambrozić refers to the economic opening to the West market reform and liberalisation introduced by the government of A. Marković.

From 1991, however, “Rock ‘n’ Roll”<sup>13</sup> once more became an *extremity* “ and the “message of [its] whole *milieu* did not suit the regime” that felt threatened in many ways. Although the society appeared to be far more market orientated than ideologically controlled, underground rock music, channelling the need to question things became significantly more “ghettoised” than in the Eighties. It had turned out, Ambrozić continues, that the market no longer meant a thing and everything became a “matter of political complicity”. “The door had slammed at once”, he concludes metaphorically.

The effects of the Yugoslav crisis on music, arts, cinema and media production became apparent on all levels. The collaboration between musicians from post-Yugoslav countries remained dormant for years<sup>14</sup>. Serbian musicians resumed performing in Croatia only after the last Croatian presidential and parliamentary elections when a social democratic coalition replaced the right-wing nationalist government of late Franjo Tudjman. The boycott of Serbia by Croatian musicians ended after the political change in Belgrade in October 2000. Before the recent political change in Serbia, Slovenia and Macedonia remained open to musicians from former Yugoslav republics soon after the break-up of 1991<sup>15</sup>.

#### 6.1.2 Terminology describing underground music production: varying views

In Serbia, the socio-economic stratification during the Nineties had a severe impact on culture production. Interference of the government and its dominant interest groups was oblique but considerable. They did not prescribe what musicians should do but applied<sup>16</sup> hegemonic practices described in Chapter

---

<sup>13</sup> In Ambrozić’s accounts, ‘Rock ‘n’ Roll’ signifies all the numerous sub-genres of rock music.

<sup>14</sup> Apart from a few concerts at the beginning of the war, held abroad when some of the leading alternative musicians from Serbia and Croatia performed together. These concerts were held in Prague and Berlin.

<sup>15</sup> Along with several acts from Macedonia, Slovenian ‘Laibach’ (Chapter 4) was among the few bands that did not allow political discourse to affect business and cultural relations with Serbian audiences.

<sup>16</sup> UN Security Council voted for UN Resolution 757 imposing sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro in response to war events in Bosnia. One of the best excuses the old Serbian

4 including financial and informative starvation of undesired music, art, literature and cinema production. The regime manipulated culture production in a skilled and effective way, without resorting to direct persecution of artists.

Many of the interviewees consulted in this research have referred to the regime's actions to stifle the perceived threat from any source of subversive discourse. Ambrozić, Fleka, Laki and Orge from *The Unexpected Force* ('Neočekivana Sila'), 'Sabljari' from 'Dža ili Bu' and 'CIH', V. Jerić from 'Darkwood Dub' and others have all accounted for the importance of underground music production in the attempts at democratic transformation of Serbian society. The government-controlled media branded such attempts in politics 'the work of the enemy within'. On the other hand, loose interpretations of legislation on broadcasting and small business provided the effective force for economic strangulation of independent media and cultural entrepreneurs outside the narrow circles that possessed the 'pedigree' of loyalty and active compliance.

However, some interviewees have pointed out that a similar business paradigm had survived the ousted regime. The term 'pedigree' is repeated with reference to current business practices in media and music production. 'Sabljari', an underground musician turned entrepreneur, is of the opinion that B92, now a significant force in media, music and publishing, exercises selective application of managerial rationality. Although such practices are not uncommon in culture production in other countries, Sabljari, Fleka and several others see these actions as anti-competitive, slowing the growth of independent music production in Belgrade and Serbia.

Interviewees reporting such practices include an individual whose business involvement with TVB92 could be hampered if his name was quoted with reference to such statements. Therefore, respecting ethical considerations of research these statements will remain anonymous in this book. Another interviewee who once drew media attention to B92's monopolistic practices

---

regime had to rob its population of their savings were the UN sanctions on trade, culture and sport.

avoided talking about it for the recorded part of the interview. He felt free to make such comments in informal talk with the researcher only once the tape recorder was turned off. Both of those cases indicate that B92 has considerable business influence in the Serbian market for music and media production. “One monopoly replaces another”, Sabljär stated pessimistically<sup>17</sup>, reflecting on the new stage of economic stratification in Serbian music and media.

Another interviewee suggested the term ‘mainstream underground’ in relation to B92’s music production. The wording of this phrase suggests stylistic ambiguity and clearly implies dubious authenticity of such cultural produce. Currently dominant interest groups in music and media production embodied in B92 implicitly market their releases as ‘underground music’. This is related to B92’s previous standing as an ‘underground radio’<sup>18</sup>. However, this interviewee suggests that B92’s music publishing policies favour commercialisation, stylistically affecting the music production of acts signed to them while dismissing others as unprofitable. These statements have strong business implications. This interviewee states that B92 ‘fears competition’ and ‘had lost touch with the audiences’.

... well, you see, these guys are scared of competition now... and they don’t exactly know what’s going on in the real underground level... and while in the past they did a good job, now it’s all about their little privileges and stifling competition<sup>19</sup>.

Terminological inconsistencies had emerged in talks with several musicians about the Belgrade’s contemporary underground scene. For example, a terminological problem emerged during the interview with Laki<sup>20</sup> (a member of the ‘Unexpected Force’). He used a metaphor of ‘flowers that never bloom’, to

---

<sup>17</sup> Appendix 4, interview with N S Sabljär. Date of entry: 10<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Evidence of such sophisticated public relations strategy is revealed throughout Collin’s (2001) book; its very subtitle refers to B92 as ‘Rock ‘n’ Roll’ radio of ‘underground resistance’. While this was evidently the case in their early years, the change of their music policy accounted for in Collin’s book implies that B92 started aiming at wider audiences in the mid-Nineties (justifiably so), thus abandoning their earlier uncompromising approach to music.

<sup>19</sup> Appendix 12, interview with B. Mladenović. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Appendix 12, interview. Date of entry: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

indicate the issues that make him feel uneasy with relation to the term 'underground' in Belgrade music. Though it has similar implications, this stylistic figure is still distinct from notions addressed by Ambrozić with regards to professionalism (or lack of it) of the last two generations of Serbian 'non-mainstream'<sup>21</sup> musicians. Dragan Ambrozić states that socio-economic discontinuities resulted in the 'lack of business sense' among Serbian rock-musicians emerging in the Nineties.

In the case of Belgrade and Serbia the connections between the aesthetic, political and economic issues are still evident. It is, however, possible, that prospects of economic stability could lead to a less tense relationship between the three. It is necessary to note that the delineation between the 'mainstream' and 'underground' has changed in Serbia since October 2000. Representations of mainstream in the media had shifted back to 'pop' since Turbo-folk no longer receives the media attention granted to it by the *ancien régime* and the interest groups once allied with it. The tensions between Turbo-folk and underground music productions have been discussed throughout this work. Their respective connections to economic and market classification are articulated within a complex unity. Underground music production remains complex, conditioned by economic, ideological and stylistic terms. The effectiveness of the message-transmission is conditioned and constrained by economic and financial factors. 'Selling out' into 'mass' culture, thus losing artistic credibility in the eyes of underground audiences should not be equated with effective production and promotion of cultural artefacts. Defining the relative autonomy of artists is related to their market position, economic potential and negotiating power. It also shows the processes within the local market and ways in which business practices of the main players affect culture-production in the short and long-term.

Gordan Paunović and Boza Podunavac, both working at key positions in B92 are established opinion leaders in music and the media. Paunović is one of

---

<sup>21</sup> The term 'non-mainstream' is used here with regards to an interesting distinction that a multifaceted artist, Boris Mladenović, drew with respect to independent music production in Belgrade. He was the one to suggest that B92 releases represent 'mainstream underground'.

the most senior members of B92's management. He leaves a strong impact on B92's other policies. Podunavac has long been a core member of B92 since the radio station's early days, starting his career as a sound engineer. He is a recognised DJ, specialising in Techno, House and Drum 'n' Bass.

Both of them are very familiar with contemporary developments of electronic dance music scenes worldwide. Paunović's responses were informed and structured, providing one of the most concise definitions of the term 'underground' in this study. He referred to the use of the term as related to the position *outside the industry*. All this was said with regards to the possibility of promoting the Belgrade and Serbian-produced music, in the West. "*They* ... [his reference to the 'Western Other'] *are ... a bit lazy* [to seek information outside the abundance of readily available cultural products]". Popular music in the West, he continues, is used as a background for shopping, a *normality* with which Serbian society is no longer familiar. If popular music serves as a background to shopping and '*no one does anything of the kind*', he asks, '*what is the role of popular music in Serbia*'? This led Paunović to continue, in a sceptical tone, that the question of the very existence of a music industry in Serbia may be related to that.

Subsequently, how should 'underground' be defined in that case? If 'underground' is related to industrial status and 'independent' applies only to record companies outside the control of global entertainment corporations ('the majors'), Paunović suggests that all record companies in Serbia are 'independent'. Consequently, if such terminological imperfections were followed meticulously, a whole new 'language' would be needed for this work. The need for readable terms of research thus dictates unavoidable terminological compromises in communicating the findings. Paunović does identify a few authentic underground projects from Belgrade. He refers to Zoran Radović, the previous leader of 'Pressing' (now a solo musician) as a genuine example of contemporary Belgrade underground music. However, he asks, "*who would be interested*"?

The definition of underground music offered by some other interviewees (Z. Kerleta, D. Petrović and B. Mladenović) is more closely related to aesthetic criteria and consequently to its likely audience in segmented markets. As it was examined from the Introduction to this book onwards, different criteria apply to different *concrete* social and therefore economic settings.

... Well I think that 'underground' is an *appropriate* word, definitely as far as I'm concerned, even more so because I *consider* it my field of activity and I think that underground always has to have a *sub-ver-sive* element – in a *positive* sense of the word – and, as such, I always find it closer than some *projects whose aim is...making money*. Let's say that to avoid *harsher* words. In any case the whole point of musicianship, for me, is the constant exploration of something new; I have been doing that for 20 years-odd years now and in principle I always strived to leave a *personal* mark on what I am doing, to have a kind of a *unique expression* and not to hesitate in front of...things that present a *problem*, or rather, erm, to be as uncompromising as I am in making such choices. That is a kind of a *personal definition* of the things I am doing in music and of course that is a thing which has been evolving and becoming more complex as I have worked *with* music<sup>22</sup>.

The notion of 'underground' used here can clearly be seen as an intersection of two basic criteria. First, the political/discursive notions of 'underground' are more likely to be embedded within the wider aesthetic/discursive argument - the more aware of the aesthetic criteria the audiences were, the more politically educated they were likely to be. Secondly, the aesthetic/discursive argument was not *necessarily* related to political issues, and is likely to be implicit, consequential, rather than explicit, conditional.

Metaphorical description of underground as the "flower that never blooms", used by Laki, is equivalent to the position "beneath the 'threshold'", a term used by his band colleague Orge. The former criticises the concept of 'underground at all costs' as ineffectual and counterproductive. The latter believes that commercial forces of the entertainment industry place alternative discourses below the threshold of public perception, forcing them into underground existence. Boris Mladenović finds a less cryptic definition.

---

<sup>22</sup> Appendix 6, Interview with D. Petrović. Date of entry: 12<sup>th</sup> November 2001.



Referring to management and marketing practices applied by B92 when working with artists and bands, he argues that a distinction must be drawn between 'underground' and 'underground-mainstream'<sup>23</sup>. By suggesting that B92 promotes 'mainstream' music as 'underground', B. Mladenović states that this is a result of two factors: losing touch with the audience base and fear of competition.

B92... And now they're promoting this so-called underground, which I call 'mainstream-underground', or 'underground-mainstream' if you like...bands like Darkwood Dub, Eyesburn, and all that stuff, they definitely aren't underground. What they [B92] achieve with this is that they are selective in a bad way...<sup>24</sup>

### 6.1.3 The 'reanimation' of Belgrade's underground music scene: production, legal issues and business ethics

Such strong statements further implicate that, in recent years, B92's previous interest in the emerging local scene was set aside in favour of commercial motives. Some interviewees suggest that, claiming underground status while transforming into a dominant media and entertainment organisation, B92 weaken the already doubtful prospects of survival facing the underground scenes of Belgrade and Serbia.

This, however, is not entirely accurate in all the cases concerning B92's ongoing business transformation. Pedja Pavleski, the central figure in a small underground rock band, 'Plavi Pepermint' (Blue Peppermint) expressed his surprise and delight saying that the group was offered a CD release with B92's record company, after years of unrewarded commitment to music.

---

<sup>23</sup> This stylistic delineation closely connected to issues in business policy correlates to Ambrozić and his focus on the bands that showed a willingness to develop 'professionalism', examined in the next section.

<sup>24</sup> Interview, Appendix 12. Date of entry; 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

Darko Matković<sup>25</sup>, a musician working for a small production company states<sup>26</sup> that many different organisations operate in the electronic media environment, providing a number of opportunities for promotion for musicians. There are “perhaps *too many media organisations*” in the country, he continues, implying that full market stratification and segmentation are yet to happen.

Furthermore, it must be said that local independent record companies competing with B92 in the Serbian market rarely had consistent policies in defining their image and core competencies, especially in relation to musical genre. These inconsistencies resulted in the lack of clear marketing strategies. Record companies currently operating in the Serbian market include: ‘B92’ and its sub-label ‘Stereofreeze’, ‘RTS’, ‘Metropolis’, ‘Hi-Fi Centar’, ‘BK-Sounds’, ‘Active Time’, ‘Felix’, ‘Automatic’ with its hip-hop sub-label ‘Tilt’, ‘Circle Records’, ‘Amonit’, ‘Round Records’ and others.

Ambrozić states that some record labels had “pirated their own releases” during the Nineties to the detriment of their own artists. The legal position of such companies is now problematic. This is not an exclusive feature of the Serbian music market, as Jopson (2003a) refers to litigation between some globally acclaimed musicians and major record companies. However, Ambrozić argues that low record sales coupled with such ‘self-piracy’ in the Nineties affected the music business: the “economics of a Serbian band” became based on live performances.

Corroborating the model of ‘the economics of a Serbian band’, Orge states that he sees the purpose of CDs as merely promotional tools for concerts. He considers live performances more exciting and artistically rewarding to himself as musician. Furthermore, Orge considers concerts a more desirable form of

---

<sup>25</sup> Matkovic co-leads “Beograund”, the publishing arm of a small company, “Sens-art”, whose combined interests include promotion, production and publishing. The latter is the present proprietor of the Academy club; at the time these interviews were conducted, “Sens-art” was involved in negotiations with Belgrade University of Arts, aiming to attain the license to run the Academy’s premises owned by the University.

<sup>26</sup> Appendix 8, interview with D. Matković. Date of entry: 10<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

generating income. When compared to the practice in the West, this shows an inverse picture where concerts are seen as promotional tools for record sales.

At the time when some of these interviews were conducted, during November 2001, the police had started closing down makeshift shops where both foreign and domestic music CDs were sold without specified permits. The process started with a concentrated effort to eradicate computer piracy and had spread out to music, film and other forms of intellectual property works. At present, no foreign record companies (major or independent) have their interests directly represented in Belgrade and Serbia. This is a result of numerous factors, ranging from the legislation imposed by the Yugoslav communist leadership before the war, to UN sanctions during the Nineties and to the slow and hesitant entry of the international culture industry into the Serbian market.

An indication of this exists in annual reports of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) published in 2001 and 2002, i.e. after the political change of October 2000. In these reports there is no mention of Serbia and Montenegro, while Slovenia and Croatia have been included in their market analysis. However, a recent IFPI (2003) commercial piracy report indicates that this is likely to change. It notes recent significant drops in the circulation of music piracy in Serbia and Montenegro. Implicitly, this shows the interest for potential business investment in the future and the likelihood of the country's full integration into the international culture industry.

Some interviewees expect subsidies of large music and media corporations to enter the Serbian market, once intellectual property legislation is consistently and effectively enforced in the country. However, several informants outline that foreign investment of the kind Rutten (1991) mentions in his article could materialise only once the local market becomes fully regulated.

Serbian Ministry of the Interior had recently started strict implementation of intellectual property laws in the field by fighting all forms of piracy. B92 led the campaign for better protection of intellectual property in Serbia and

Montenegro. The news on government's uncompromising new policies in enforcing intellectual property rights was reported on the B92 web-site on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2002. Comments posted to the B92 Web-discussion forum in relation to the news reveal stark differences of opinion. The public was divided on the matter.

Such debates are very similar to the ones concerning businesses and consumers in other countries, including the United Kingdom and USA. The topic of intellectual property protection has emerged on a number of occasions in the majority of interviews and informal talks conducted for this research study. A plethora of views, from supporting the new legislative measure to pro-piracy comments were discussed in B92's Internet forum on the same day, as the news emerged. Some consumers with little disposable income argued that the new measures would prevent them from buying music CDs, software and video releases. On the other hand, those who expressed their support for the government's fight against piracy see this as a positive move toward further integration of Serbia into global markets. However, one interviewee believed that domestic CDs were overpriced and that some interpretations of copyright protection could result in further economic weakening of the local music scene.

Sabljar describes how he tried to offer legally manufactured CDs of his band for a lower price and that retailers refused to agree with his proposal. It remains unclear whether this refusal was in any way related to legal issues. However, there is no clear indication of such reasoning. Whatever the case, the interviewee believes that this would negatively affect independent music production in Belgrade and Serbia. Confronted with a choice between the domestic and foreign product at similar price, the public, he argues, would opt for the latter.

Furthermore, Sabljar outlined problems with collecting copyright revenue from broadcasting companies. He complained on the insignificant amounts of broadcasting moneys his band (Dža ili Bu) had received from SOKOJ, the collection agency of Serbia and Montenegro for the year 2000. Sabljar stated

that the sums Dža ili Bu received from broadcasters are “insulting”; only the official RTS (Radio-Television Serbia) was paying regularly and one independent station had apparently reported only five performances of his recordings for a whole year. The researcher replied that, even in the UK, musicians with lower record-sales experience similar problems with claiming broadcasting royalties. However, the interviewee replied that an effective system of copyright exploitation needs to be developed evenly and that broadcasting media do not find this to be in their interest. He suggested that this is one of the main areas where the State should intervene, remaining sceptical about the position of domestic music production.

Darko Matković, leader of the ‘Dzambasov’ concept-band also referred<sup>27</sup> to ineffective copyright protection affecting musicians and others involved in the music production business. Matković has a dual interest in the matter; he is involved in ‘Beogrand’ a small production company focusing on releasing underground music. ‘Beogrand’ suffers from financial problems; Matković was deeply concerned about its prospects for business survival. He stated that the government was only concerned with the interest of ‘big business’, imposing difficult rules for small businesses like his<sup>28</sup>.

The comment Matković made in relation to ‘too many media’ links to another statement he made in the interview. Factors threatening the local scene include the media-induced boredom, combined with little or no disposable income of the general populace and a shrinking number of concert venues (V. Jerić and Sabljari also complain about the shortage of venues for live performances). ‘Sens-art’, the organisation Matković is part of, had recently taken control of the influential Academy club. Through a series of errors, the club’s current management had become incapable of fulfilling its initially high-aiming business plan. The researcher became familiar with the organisational strategies of Academy’s current management after informal talks in the summer of 2002.

---

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix 8.

<sup>28</sup> Sabljari also purports to develop a multifaceted business that covers music and video production, along with a design services agency.

The document outlining the aims and procedures that were to be implemented at the Academy falls within the category of traditional managerial discourse criticised by Levy *et al* (2001). Meticulous planning and intent of adherence to rational management structuring are both evident. Ambitious changes of the interior indicate the seriousness of the project. Furthermore, attempts to improve decision-making processes in a society returning to market competition after sixty years of directed economy are worth noting.

Nevertheless, the main loophole of such a functionalist approach lays in the assumption that prescribed means would fit the desired ends, disregarding the conditional nature of management practice in a real-life environment. Indeed, the relative inexperience of the club's present management resulted in numerous organisational problems. There is no coherent approach to potential audiences. The club's programme is irregular. Hesitant decision making in reality contradicts the managerial recommendations outlined in the club's business plan. Furthermore, a pivotal part of an effective public relations strategy, promotional messages sent to the club's potential visitors contradict each other, damaging the club's image.

A rock musician interviewed for the 1996 documentary film 'Akademija-republika' ('Academy-Republic') referred to the club's functioning in the Nineties as "reanimations". The implicit statement was clear: the metaphor of serious illness dismissed the Academy as a 'has been'. While it is correct to note that the club was in serious crisis between the late Eighties and early Nineties, the 'reanimation' of Academy during 1993 and 1994 was quite successful, both in the terms of innovative programme and ticket sales. However, the acquisition by aggressive entrepreneurs mentioned in Chapter 5 eventually resulted in the reversal of previous efforts to reinstate the club as the country's leading underground music venue.

Prior to the 1995 acquisition, B92 made several attempts to take effective control of the club's programme. This succeeded on two occasions but did not last, not least because the visitor numbers decreased on both occasions. Few

more comments need to be added to the 'Academy-Republic' film purporting to present a documentary account of the club's history. Although directed by an independent filmmaker, the documentary was edited with the substantial support of B92, when its author faced financial problems.

The film was eventually released in 1996, thus formally becoming part of B92 video-production. Since copyright legislation identifies the producer as the owner of the work, it transpires that the production company (B92) and not the film director, determines the form and content of the published work. It is therefore interesting to note elements of the narrative structure of this documentary. The story of Academy appears to end in 1989, while the brief mention of the club's subsequent development is referred to as 'reanimation'. All verbal references to successful events of the Nineties were edited out in post-production. In the summer of 1993, Studio B television crew reported the unexpectedly large crowds waiting to enter the Academy. Comments on the club's decay and business failure were superimposed in the 1996 documentary over the only remaining video-recording of this successful event.

### 6.2.1 Promotional practices in Belgrade independent media

Dragan Ambrozić noted that 'media presence' was always essential for successful promotion of musicians in Belgrade and Serbia. Contrary to the argument presented by Kronja (2001), music videos were used for years before the emergence of Turbo-folk. In Yugoslav's popular music, video became quite a sophisticated promotional tool<sup>29</sup>. An innovative approach to music video can be traced back to the early Eighties, especially when applied to musicians of the post-punk generation (such as the Idols' 'Mal'chiki' video, mentioned in Chapter 4). Ambrozić's statement therefore does not exclude the musicians' 'underground' credibility automatically, in cases where they had been repeatedly shown on television or enjoyed a lot of radio airtime.

---

<sup>29</sup> An example of this can be found in Janjatović (1997: 114), in reference to a feature-length TV show of Oliver Mandić, then an up-and-coming musician, who won the 1980 'Gold Rose' award at the respected annual television festival held in Montreux.

Other aesthetic criteria are of importance here and they will be discussed in the next chapter.

It would be difficult, if not impossible to understand contemporary independent and underground music production in Belgrade without looking at the principal representatives of post-punk and New Wave scenes. Highly developed in the Eighties, Belgrade music scenes have spawned groups such as EKV, Partibrejkers, Elektricni orgazam and Idoli. During a talk with Petar Janjatović, the researcher learned about EKV's record sales at the peak of their career. EKV, Janjatović testifies, sold up to 17000 copies per album. This is only a fraction of sales enjoyed by leading mainstream rock bands<sup>30</sup>. Petar Janjatović referred to this during a conversation with the researcher. He stated that EKV had been touring a much smaller group of towns than the widely popular 'rural rockers', Bijelo dugme. EKV's audiences were narrower and based predominantly in the cities of former Yugoslavia.

Thus, whether underground status was defined in relation to stylistic content or record-sales, urban rock music scenes stayed beneath the metaphorical 'threshold' in spite of media exposure. The 'Rimtutituki' anti-war project in 1992, mentioned in Chapter 4, signified the end of a decade in which Serbian official media were open to alternative music. A leading figure in the Belgrade alternative rock scene, Milan Mladenović, died in 1994. For the rock audiences of former Yugoslavia, this accomplished musician and songwriter represented a significant part of the Belgrade post-punk scene<sup>31</sup>.

In spite of some enthusiastic attempts by music journalists and television producers working at the government-controlled RTS, rock music returned to the margins. While 'TV Politika' had a long-standing programme 'Paket

---

<sup>30</sup> 'Bijelo dugme' and 'Riblja corba'. Ambrozić made similar comments on the subject (in 6.1.1). Though there were no official chart eligibility criteria based on record sales in Yugoslavia, Janjatović and Ambrozić are reliable sources of market information.

<sup>31</sup> Milan Mladenović was involved in seminal bands and projects, from Sarlo Akrobata to EKV and Rimtutituki. His solo-album 'Angel's Breath', recorded in Brazil was published posthumously.



aranzman'<sup>32</sup>, the concept of this television show did not evolve over time. Studio B, for a long time the only independent television station in Serbia, suffered numerous political and financial setbacks. Its transmitter did not reach audiences outside Belgrade. Similar problems affected the independent Radio Index. The only station with sufficient resources combined with a coherent public relations policy was Radio B92. However, only once the municipal elections of 1996/97 provided local electronic media around Serbia with more freedom and until B92 developed technical solution to the problems it had due to a weak transmitter, its range was limited to Belgrade only<sup>33</sup>.

The 1992-1994 project 'Fast Bands of Serbia' ('Brzi Bendovi Srbije' or BBS) was of relatively narrow scope. A rock-enthusiast television producer working, at the time, for the official RTS developed BBS. Representing the tendency to revitalise the Serbian rock-scene, BBS promoted several bands that came to signify the forefront of national music production (Chapter 4). However, few of them survived to this day. The extremely unfavourable political and economic environment played a crucial role in this.

...maybe we weren't the richest country in the world, but we were decent. From [1991], it was a total downward spiral, and there was a generation of bands, 10-15 of them, emerging in '91, '92, '93... Presing, Kazna za Usi, Deca Losih Muzicara, Darkwood, and so on... then the bands from the provinces, such as Novembar, Dzukele, Bjesovi... ensembles that have grown during the Eighties but emerged in the Nineties, 'when time is not ripe'. KST had an excellent season in 1992... there was good rock music then, a good generation of new musicians, which could have become really big ... especially because they had a good audience that saw them as representing *their own voice*, someone who represents their interests. However, [by] 1993 [the hyperinflation had] totally ruined the whole scene ... people observe the last ten years, saying that none of those bands did anything special ... none of them became *big*. Not because of their quality, but because none of them had a continual career<sup>34</sup>.

---

<sup>32</sup> The programme was named after the seminal album of the New Wave period, featuring Sarlo Akrobata, Idoli and Elektricni Organazam (see Chapter 4).

<sup>33</sup> This was explored at depth in Chapter 4.

<sup>34</sup> Appendix 5, interview with D. Ambrozić. Date of entry: 12<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

According to Ambrozić, one particular sequence of live music events inextricably bound with politics became instrumental in the later significant revival of the production of (non-folk) popular music in Belgrade and Serbia. The tour, titled “Rock ‘n’ Roll for the Elections” (accompanied by the slogan “Izadji na crtu”<sup>35</sup>) was held during the summer of 2000. The tour involved bands of diverse stylistic orientation<sup>36</sup>, purporting to address the new generation of young voters, in anticipation of the elections of September 2000. As explained in an article for a renown Belgrade weekly (‘NIN’), fifteen non-governmental organisations financed the “Rock ‘n’ Roll for the elections” tour organised in the attempt to “promote civic responsibility and culture, whose important part is partaking in the elections” (NIN, 2000). Dragan Ambrozić, co-organised the campaign that was heavily supported by B92. In the research interview, Ambrozić made the following assertions:

There were groups that we believed in and *thought* were good, such as Dža ili Bu... surely they were motivated, but, *man*, Dža ili Bu simply could not build up their audiences and have disappeared... However *OK* they might have been - personally... (hesitates)... I mean, they made *some sort* of an audience in Belgrade, but, somehow, that... (hesitates)... and I am not saying that [their music] was *bad*, but, it simply *did not have an audience*... Or let us say, ‘Pressing’, which also is an important group, had also disappeared. They simply could not - how should I say - *bite in*, in the business sense, to endure it... as a *job*... The bands that survived were the ones that had a good combination of artistic credibility and business sense... Which means that the scene we have today is *more professional* than the one we had in the Eighties.

He continues by stating that none of the bands partaking in the tour had previously endured twelve consecutive concerts. These accounts are read in conjuncture with the comments made by Sabljar, the *frontman* of Dža ili Bu. Sabljar said that the tour had many flaws. According to him, these ranged from the choice of musicians representing Serbian contemporary scenes, to

---

<sup>35</sup> The term is intentionally left without translation because it is far too complex an example of Serbian slang to even attempt to explore it without serious diversion from the discussion. The best translation would be ‘dare to do it’ but there are further connotations. Literal translation would be ‘step on the line’.

<sup>36</sup> This tour encompassed a number of performers whose stylistic interests ranged from hardcore punk to rap to pop ballads.

speculations on organisational malpractice Dža ili Bu were excluded from the tour that presented seven other groups.

'Sunshine', a well-known Belgrade rap project, had the widest audience of all. 'Negative' are a pop band whose female vocalist was a recognised performer for several years<sup>37</sup>. 'Darkwood Dub' were well-known in underground circles throughout the country; the tour helped them gain wider audiences. 'Goblini', a rock band from the western town of Šabac were one of the most popular Serbian bands during the mid-Nineties. 'Kanda Kodža i Nebojša', a reggae project whose lyrical references to 'Babylon' and 'the Righteous' implicated the regime and its opponents respectively. 'Jarboli', whose member, Boris Mladenović was interviewed in this study, escape stylistic definition. 'Eyesburn' started as a hardcore punk band, playing regularly at the Academy and other venues in the early and mid-Nineties. Their original audience was narrow but loyal. At the time the "Rock 'n' Roll for the elections" tour was conducted, 'Eyesburn' were already undergoing a stylistic transformation that gained them a wider following.

While the singer of Dža ili Bu assumes that conspiracies behind the scene were to be blamed for the band's exclusion from the list, Ambrozić, the tour co-ordinator, suggests insufficient popularity as the main reason for refusing them. However, the tour provided the above bands that emerged after 1990 with an opportunity to "develop their business sense" which they apparently could not do because of numerous constraints mentioned in this study. Sabljarić argues that members of Dža ili Bu wanted to join the tour primarily out of political conviction (nevertheless, this clearly was a unique promotional opportunity). Visibly irritated, he stated that a number of musicians were welcomed when Radio B92 needed vocal political support but were ignored every time it concerned business decisions. He said that the organisers who were mainly drawn from B92 did not want 'outsiders', i.e. artists outside their chosen circle.

---

<sup>37</sup> The researcher met Petar Janjatović, Serbia's internationally acclaimed rock journalist at the promotion of their first box-set release in 2001.

B92 was my *favourite radio station, for which I 'walked'*<sup>38</sup> when they shut it down ... and it had a function at the time when there was a *regime here... to push forward some healthy ideas*. And... it had financial support and the rest. ... *even while it was doing that job, very little was invested in art...* There is *no similarity between B92 and foreign stations*. Because foreign stations could be justified on the fact that they are driven by commercial interest. And *they are not driven by economic interest either*. Because they are motivated, maybe... by personal interest only. Because they do not even enter projects *that could make money*. If they are economically driven, why shouldn't they release something that is, say, *cruelly commercial?* If they are not economically driven, if they are driven by cultural interest, why wouldn't they release *all that is progressive?* When you summarise all these stories the outcome is – only personal interest is motivating them... Eh! And when *tours are arranged, when loads of dosh is being made*, then *it is known who would be called [to play]*. So... that is all clear; we talked about it. Even if that someone wants to come to play *for free, purely from his own 'trip' is refused so he wouldn't see* – what is happening behind the props... *we all kept giving them everything*. Asking nothing in return. And then... they presented it as *their ideas, their story* (sigh), *and we were all left out*.

Ambrozić, however, suggests that rational decision-making was the only criterion. Nevertheless, what drew the researcher's attention to this case was that neither of the two was asked about that particular event. It transpires that both individuals felt the need to report and justify their stances. Discursive ruptures in this set of contradictory statements reveal the conflicting business interests involved in the promotion of Belgrade underground music<sup>39</sup>.

### 6.2.2 Belgrade underground music and promotional venues

The legacy of Belgrade's underground music scene in the Eighties continues to affect independent music scene to this day. This especially applies to

---

<sup>38</sup> Reference to the street protests 1996/97, as well as May 2000.

<sup>39</sup> Sabljar's experience at the SKC venue in 2000 provides an example of severe business malpractice. He accounts that the concert was successful, with good attendance and excellent reception from the audience. However, the band was made to *pay the venue to cover their expenses*. Sabljar stated that impact of this experience was so strong that it resulted in the band's unofficial split. The above example is an extreme representation of malpractice impairing the independent music production, as well as leading to the closure of a number of previously successful clubs. See Appendix 4; date of entry 10<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

promotional strategies that could be employed at present. Two interviewees have made references to the issue of 'fashionable trends'. One of them is a young musician and artist involved in creating electronic music and digital art, working under the pseudonym 'Domin8r'. The other is Boris Mladenović<sup>40</sup>, a musician and visual artist whose interests are equally varied. Both have outlined significant effects of 'trendiness' and snobbery on the consumers of popular music in Belgrade and Serbia. Domin8r stated that members of his Corrosion multimedia project intentionally avoid strict definition of genre because these tend to create the means for unjustified publicity<sup>41</sup>.

With visible emotional attachment, Sabljar recalls the times when membership cards were compulsory for Academy's visitors. The interviewee thinks of himself not as a past consumer, but as a member of the group privileged *by knowledge* rather than financial status. Fleka has a slightly different approach to the same notion. Fleka belonged to the Academy's inner circle from the beginning: first as an art student, then as the club's Head of Programme. Recalling the role he played in the formation of the club's image and the consequential developments in the underground rock scene outside Belgrade, Fleka justifies the decision-making behind a number of changes he introduced, to the musical, artistic, management and promotional practices at the Academy. Building and profiling the scene through rules of inclusion around 'underground elitism' represented a successful model for the club's publicity and promotion strategies<sup>42</sup>. The following three examples provide a good illustration of such changes.

During its heyday in the Eighties, the club had rented its space to a recording studio and in return had used its facilities for live recording. The best illustration of this successful move is the "Live at the Academy" album by 'Disciplina kicme', which belongs to the most important records of Yugoslav rock music and is a good example of how underground music can be

---

<sup>40</sup> This individual is involved with several musical projects. Continuing his musical career with 'Jarboli' ('The Masts'), he currently works with 'Coxless Pair' and the 'Unexpected Force'.

<sup>41</sup> However, controversial self-publicising practices in music and art alike were detectable since the emergence of the Dadaist art-movement (Richter, 1966).

<sup>42</sup> Some of the practices employed at the Academy signalled a qualitative leap towards capitalist modes of culture-production.

successfully promoted from independent funds. This is also one of the salient individual contributions that Fleka made to the independent music business and the underground music scene in Belgrade, leaving an impact throughout former Yugoslavia. As Head of Programme and he succeeded in applying strict aesthetic criteria to the club's promotional policies. In another example of his exclusive promotional strategies, Fleka talks of 'Duh Nibor', a Belgrade underground band active during the Eighties. Discovering that Duh Nibor, the supporting act was of greater interest to him over Idoli, whose concert he went to see, Fleka invited them to play at the Academy.

Duh Nibor were stylistically firmly embedded in the underground scene of the day, far removed from the conceptions of pop, preferred by the 'café society elite' that had originally been a significant part of 'Akademija's' audience. The effect this intervention left on the club's audience soon became evident<sup>43</sup>. By introducing music rendered *unlistenable* by parts of the audience, Fleka had applied 'inverse' promotion, affecting its profile of Academy's visitors and changing it in the long term.

The experience of the researcher himself in his own role as the Academy's Head of Programme corresponds to Fleka's account. The researcher applied a similar exercise in 1993, during the attempts to reinstate the club to its leading position. By that time the club had deteriorated financially and physically. Its standing had downgraded in favour of other venues that previously lagged behind.

The previous management was highly reluctant to take any risks and the club was day by day losing support from its core audiences, traditionally orientated to underground rock music. The first change was to introduce Techno, an electronic dance music genre apparently alien to the club. Moreover, this event was not to be held every week but once a fortnight. This was done for two reasons. Firstly, the change needed to be gradual. Secondly, the

---

<sup>43</sup> A Dutch band called 'Pustinjak' ('Hermit' in *Serbian*), was introduced as the first foreign act to follow Belgrade's 'Duh Nibor'. This is a semiotic oddity in itself, and sadly, not very likely to be answered in this study because of the lack of access to the people originally involved in the project.

audience was not to get used to the idea that the new programme was available to them at any time. To make the distinction as sharp as possible, the new fortnightly event was countered with its polar opposite. Whilst Techno was associated with hedonism, the event taking place every other Tuesday was titled “Psychopatia, Depression, Horror: *it WILL get worse!*”<sup>44</sup> The music was chosen to be as obscure as possible, clearly sending a double-edged message to the audience. Firstly, ‘this *IS* an underground club’; secondly, ‘you are invited to partake in Techno parties every *OTHER* week’.

This rigorously controversial approach concept of promotion was barely accepted and harshly criticised as risky by other members of management. However, it had two immediate results: the Techno parties were extremely well populated and membership cards were no longer needed: the audience was offered a choice: ‘adapt or leave’. The club regained some of its reputation in the underground artistic community while gaining new visitors at the same time, through manipulative alteration of its public image.

As it was noted in Chapters 4 and 5, the underground music scene in Belgrade remains centred around clubs and live venues. The latter have undergone a significant crisis since the Eighties, affecting the opportunities for musicians whose music makes the strongest impact in live performances. A genuine Belgrade feature, the ‘Unexpected Force’ are live performers first and foremost, structuring their music around improvisation and audience feedback. For them and many other acts, live venues are essential. More costly to maintain and more susceptible to malpractice, live venues have suffered under the economic crisis and corruption during the Nineties.

On the other hand, the clubbing scene has undergone a transformation not the least because of the changes in global music trends through the introduction of less structured dance subcultures. However, the development of the music business associated with the dance scene in Belgrade also has some unique features. Starting in clubs such as Buha, Soul Food and

---

<sup>44</sup> This statement had socio-political implications as much as it was a reference to the music played every Other Tuesday.

Akademija, it had moved onto the streets and communal spaces as a form of political protest. While the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 introduced regulation and pushed the dance scene into registered clubs and further into the mainstream in the UK, the political role of electronic dance music in Serbia made the audiences 'spill over' into the streets.

The festivals, such as EXIT (held in Novi Sad for three consecutive years) and its Belgrade successor, 'Echo' have transformed urban communal space where various electronic dance and rock-related genres are performed<sup>45</sup>. Therefore, as in the case of Handmade Techno, summer festivals in Serbian cities have arrived at an outcome similar to the ones existing in the West through very different means and conditions of development. The clubbing business, however, is still undergoing significant transformation.

Conversations with musicians, Laki, B. Mladenović and Sabljar, reveal the changes in the way young Belgraders socialise. Belgrade has now become a city of cafes, rather than nightclubs. Cafes are more cost-effective and reflect the segmentation of the market for music. A number of musical genres available to the audiences structure a particular café clientele. Bosnian, Macedonian and Croatian pop-music productions have replaced Turbo-folk in many such small venues, catering for the taste of 'half-dieselers'. A variety of genres of dance music and hip-hop are followed by more discerning audiences and small clubs like Omen and Dollar where DJs play a combination of rock, dance, hip-hop and reggae are in fact, converted cafes. While Laki states that this is bringing people closer together, marking a significant change from the impersonal nature of large clubs, many interviewers agree that the small number of live venues and nightclubs present a problem for the promotion of local music production, particularly underground forms of rock. Market liberalisation implies that without successful promotion, record sales are not likely to rise in the foreseeable future.

---

<sup>45</sup> The first Echo festival held in Belgrade in July 2003 hosted a variety of performers, from Morcheeba to Sonic Youth.



Dependency on the media outlined by Matković and others means that insufficient resources have been developed for other forms of music promotion. Having in mind that Metropolis television dubbed “Serbian quasi-MTV” by Ambrozić stopped broadcasting domestic music videos in 2001, its only coherent alternative remains Music Television Balkan (MTB), broadcast by B92 and its ANEM network. MTB deserves more attention and its prospective business development will be assessed in relation to B92’s current transition from underground radio to an ‘infotainment’ corporation.

In spite of all the problems associated with nightclubs and live venues, some interesting solutions were found for the shortage of clubbing and live venues. V. Jerić mentions a converted barge and a club-venue based on the ‘Kolos’ ship, both of them based on Belgrade rivers. Boris Mladenović refers<sup>46</sup> to the boats and rafts on Belgrade waterfronts where some up-and-coming DJs and bands perform with regularity.

B M: There’s this place, a riverboat... just a short walk away from Branko’s bridge... there is this DJ team, they’re kids, very talented, they call themselves ‘Free...’ (inaudible) –

M T: ‘Free *Right* Culture’?

B M: No, no, man, Free *Ride* Culture.

M T: Aaah, yes. It didn’t make any sense...

B M: Have you been to Krivi Stojko?

M T: Yep, weeks ago. I met many people I haven’t seen for *years*...

B M: Yes, it’s quite popular with the ‘ekipa’ (‘team’, ‘crowd’). The only problem is... works Fridays only... as [a club].

M T: What’s happening other days.

B M: Nothing... the guys don’t have enough money [to run it] so they rent it out for wedding bashes and stuff... with folk music and that...

M T: (laughs)

A DJ with an underground following, Dejan Milićević<sup>47</sup> performs at ‘Krivi Stojko’<sup>48</sup>, a rusty boat converted into a summer nightclub. B92 DJ Bojan

---

<sup>46</sup> Appendix 12, interview with Boris Mladenović. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

<sup>47</sup> Not to be mistaken with his namesake mentioned by Kronja as the fashion photographer who helped design the glossy image of Turbo-folk starlets.

Mitrović, partaking in the 'Painkiller Septet'<sup>49</sup> project also performs at this river-boat-turned-nightclub anchored near the Belgrade Fair. 'Free Ride Culture', a DJ team referred to by Boris Mladenović as an innovative new project perform on yet another 'floating venue'. There is a long list of new underground music projects acting in Belgrade at present. Alternative new spaces and forms of promotion, however, need to be coupled with a stronger and more regulated business infrastructure in order to allow the multifaceted Belgrade underground music scene achieve its full potential.

### 6.2.3 The role of the State in the promotion of contemporary culture

The opportunities and threats facing Belgrade underground music production and its associated business structures need to be assessed in relation to their current state. The international position of Serbia is improving but at a pace that leaves many respondents dissatisfied. Strong references have been made to slow economic recovery and lack of funding in the music sector. On the other hand, several interviewees have outlined the omnipotence of media in music promotion as a double-edged sword.

Relating to the music business environment, the discussions between the researcher and his respondents frequently led to comparisons with other countries in transition, potential role of the new government in formulating policy in popular culture, as well as to potential threats from foreign, economically more powerful, music productions. In relation to this topic would, the researcher occasionally addressed such issues by presenting the interviewees with the example of former East Germany and asking the respondents to comment on the likelihood of similar developments in Serbia.

---

<sup>48</sup> Wordplay associated with Serbian coarse slang. In free translation, 'Krivi Stojko' would mean 'bent erection', referring to the riverboat's poor state. 'Stojko' is a form of an old boys' name 'Stojan', derived from the verb 'to stand' ('stajati').

<sup>49</sup> One of their tracks was released on 'Belgrade's Burning' compilation by Cosmic Sounds Records in London.

Matković<sup>50</sup> assumes that the prospective entry of global media entertainment corporations would improve the position of people involved in the local market for cultural products in Serbia. This especially applies to financing local music production. However, Matković's approach does not take into account the increased competition that would be imposed on the local practitioners. He was subsequently asked to comment on the 'east-German scenario', as presented by Maas and Reszel (1998).

Matković believes that the local independent music production could survive such challenges. In relation to the potential role of the State, he replies that national music production needs to be preserved, he argues, as a matter of importance for national sovereignty. Matković refers to the example of Slovenia, a small country traditionally open to foreign cultural influence. In the attempt to preserve and develop the local scene, Slovenian government continuously invested in underground culture production for years before the break-up of Yugoslavia. As a result, the Slovenian market is regularly updated with foreign releases and touring artists, while the local scenes remain commercially viable.

Discussing the potential for a new, positive role of government within the music production and promotion in Belgrade and Serbia was one of the few points of consensus, where the practitioners from different fields and varied positions seemed to agree in scepticism. It is important to start analysing this matter from the discussions with Paunović and Podunavac; both individuals belong to an organisation that had frequently collided with the old state apparatus. Furthermore, B92 enjoys public support for its role in providing proactive opposition to the regime propaganda during the Nineties. Finally, this organisation is the strongest among the businesses involved in independent music and media production in Serbia.

---

<sup>50</sup> Appendix 8, interview with D. Matković 'Dzambasov'. Date of entry: 10<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

During the interview with Paunović<sup>51</sup>, the researcher did not directly pose questions on the changing role of the Serbian government in culture production. However, the topic emerged during the discussion. Appearing to be disillusioned with changes that affected the country since October 2000, the interviewee stated that “the society is *still collapsing*, but this is an unpleasant chat... unless you’re a sociologist”. “The *system* [any system] *no longer exists*, he continues, leaving him “*without adversaries and no allies*”. Referring to ‘adversaries’ and ‘allies’, Paunović is concerned about the changing position of B92: the role of this growing organisation needs to be redefined. This applies to its public standing as much as its organisational growth and market re-orientation. More widely, Paunović refers to the crisis of civil society that is reflected through the ongoing economic and social stratification known to many post-communist countries. Adversaries and allies he mentions existed in the past on many levels. From the previous government and its interests in the media and culture production to the wide front of social formations pursuing a single goal of democratisation, all have provided B92 with a ‘modus vivendi’.

The author of this research considers the reasoning on social stratification as the most valuable contribution coming from Podunavac, who provided the following estimation<sup>52</sup>. Steadily building the levels of cultural superstructure is the prerequisite of positive government intervention that would support the creative industries in Serbia and promote local talent abroad. Since the reconstruction of the country was still at the level of civil engineering and the economic transition was in its most strident stage, the superstructures of culture production are transforming slowly, last to receive any funding.

A very similar comment emerges in the discussion with Fleka, once a significant collaborator of B92. Since the official closure of B92 in April 1999, Fleka’s controversial ‘šišmiš radio’ (‘bat radio’) programme was suspended. The station, existing only in ‘cyberspace’ for a long time, had focused on news and a few other programmes. This lasted until the overthrow of Milošević’s

---

<sup>51</sup> Held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2001. See Appendix 3.

<sup>52</sup> Appendix 12. Conversation held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

regime. After the 'democratic revolution' of October 2000, B92 decided not to allow Fleka to return to work. He did not hide his disillusionment regarding the matter. Fleka referred to the political and economic restructuring in Serbia, stating that the old system had disappeared, not being replaced by a new and stable one. For people like him, there was no work. He stated that underground culture remains closely associated with alternative and oppositional discourses. Since the new opposition has not yet been defined and the new ruling coalition consisted of a multitude of political discourses, economic interests and social formations, social stratification entered an unstable stage. Furthermore, he stated that the contradictions of economic and political interest among the groups united against the old regime emerged immediately after the political change had taken place. This resulted in increased competition between former allies, especially in culture production.

As many interviewees have outlined, the government is unlikely to provide any financial support for the promotion of culture soon. However, legislation was seen as a significant source of support for individuals and organisations involved in the music and media production in Serbia. Musicians and others have called for the introduction of a legal infrastructure that would provide them with the ability to compete in the domestic market. This does not only concern the enforcement of anti-piracy laws. It also involves the necessary control of the processes of copyright exploitation (airplay on radio and television, the efficient work of collection agencies, etc.).

Underground music production is economically most fragile of all forms of music business in Serbia. With relatively narrow audiences and disassociated from formal government structures for a number of reasons, ranging from political to economic, it faces strong competition from abroad. On the other hand, it stands at the forefront of Serbian culture-production and the individuals involved in underground music and art (musicians, producers, promoters and others) are highly motivated in their work, because financial gains are not their only motivational factor. This was confirmed in a number of interviews with musicians. Therefore, their efforts both need and deserve some form of government support.

Miloš Kukurić, founder and leader of the Serbian Low-Fi Video movement closely associated with underground musicians and artists, suggests that government support should come in the form of diplomatic efforts coordinated with the help of the Serbian Ministry of Culture<sup>53</sup>. This is, he argues, not satisfactorily developed, leaving plenty of space for improvement. Having worked with the French Cultural centre in Belgrade, he refers to the fact that France is promoting its contemporary culture as much as its traditional legacy.

The researcher believes that promoting contemporary production of Serbian music, art and cinema should become one of the long-term aims of the government. This does not only apply to economic motives. The image of the country is seriously tarnished by the ten years of conflict. Contemporary culture will provide a significant opportunity for the 're-branding' of Serbia, essential for the country that needs to forge its diplomatic and economic links with the rest of the world<sup>54</sup>. The next section will examine some of the attempts of promoting Belgrade underground musicians abroad.

#### 6.2.4 Promoting new music from Belgrade abroad: a story from London

The researcher believes that 'Handmade Techno' and its principal representative, the 'Unexpected Force' qualify as an independently developed form, half-way between the musical foundations of rock and the ones characterising contemporary electronic dance music. The interviews with Orge, Laki and B. Mladenović from the 'Unexpected Force' ('Neočekivana Sila') have aimed at the subjectively expressed artistic autonomy and authenticity of form. These interviews have shed some light on business

---

<sup>53</sup> See Appendix 7, interview with M. Kukurić. Date of entry: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

<sup>54</sup> Some notable positive changes have occurred recently in this respect. A British organisation focusing on collaboration between the UK and countries of SE Europe recently commenced a programme titled 'Creative Networks: Belgrade-London 2003'. The project was supported by the Serbian Ministry of Culture and the opening gala was held at the Embassy of Serbia-Montenegro in London. The four-day event featured a performance by Belgrade underground musicians, 'Belgradeyard Sound System' (formerly collaborating with Coxless Pair, see below) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts. The event also included theatrical plays by Serbian playwrights, film screenings, poetry readings and discussion panels.

practices and the position of artists within the independent music business in Belgrade.

The interviews with active musicians and businesspeople reveal these practices. Zeljko Kerleta (originally from Belgrade) runs a small London-based record company, 'Cosmic Sounds'. Cosmic Sounds focuses on the loosely conceived set of genres defined under the label of 'Eastern European Jazz'. This concept includes a classic Jazz trumpet player 'Belgrade, Dusko Gojkovic, whose career could be traced forty years back, when he performed and recorded with a seminal Jazz drummer, Kenny Clarke. On the opposite side of the scale, Cosmic Sounds releases records for Jazz projects from Belgrade, including 'Coxless Pair'/'Dvojac bez kormilara'. The band's name was translated into English for promotion outside Serbia. Far from being strictly understood as 'Jazz' in its traditional connotations, 'Coxless Pair' started as a two-man band. Guitar saxophone and other traditional instruments are combined with artificial sources of sound, including samplers. At the beginning, the two musicians, Dusan Petrović and Boris Mladenović worked with changing guest members: DJs, instrumentalist on vibraphone, piano or viola, 'the coxswain' being the floating member that determines the direction in which the *'boat'* would go.

Kerleta<sup>55</sup>, Boris Mladenović and Dusan Petrović have shared interpretations of the term 'underground' as well as the opinions on the nature and size of their target audience. Frequent references to their 'global underground' following, show that 'Coxless Pair' face less local constraints that hamper many Belgrade-based artists. The latter often lack basic financial and logistical support for successful promotion outside the borders of Serbia. Kerleta, Petrović and B. Mladenović alike identified the target audiences of the band and record label alike as globally spread in 'niche' markets. All three agree that the number of potential listeners falls within the range of ten thousand. It is not clear whether this estimate is based on specific market research, other verifiable data or whether the assumption was derived from

---

<sup>55</sup> See Appendix 12.

speculation. The likelihood that Kerleta was the source of this estimate is quite high. He is the businessperson among the three. His business experience would have led him to embark on such speculations.

One other note should be made here: could Cosmic Sounds and its associated musicians be defined as 'Belgrade underground music'? Talking to the researcher, Kerleta defines and explains his cosmopolitan viewpoint by stating that in London's modern music market the national origin of the work and of the author do not matter. Kerleta justifies his statement through a notable example. Mitar Subotic, a musician from Novi Sad north of Belgrade, is known in London and around the world as a respected Brazilian author, under the nickname 'Suba'<sup>56</sup>. The late Subotić (died in a recent accident) was also one of the seminal figures of former Yugoslavia's underground scene. Known in the Eighties under the pseudonym Rex Ilusivii, one of his first public appearances were on an influential demo compilation LP, 'Ventilator 202'. This musician worked with Milan Mladenović from EKV whose only solo album was published after Mladenović's death under the title 'Angel's Breath'.

Suba's example might have been an exception rather than a rule. His music's audience appeal could be related to 'quality' and 'professionalism' as Kerleta states. On the other hand, he was identified within the market as a 'Brazilian' artist. Kerleta's response on national origin of a work is not clearly defined with regards to the posed question. It is unclear whether perceived connotations of national identity are truly irrelevant for the audience reception in a world city such as London. Brazil is renowned for its musical tradition and continues to make a significant impact on music production on a global scale, from bossanova (Jobim, Gilberto and others) to thrash metal (Sepultura). While the media image of Brazil is associated with the carnival in Rio, the media image of Serbia is associated with the carnage in Yugoslavia. Needless to say, both are stereotypes. However, stereotypes are important in promotion.

---

<sup>56</sup> The researcher came across an advertisement in the broadsheet newspapers for a recently published album 'Tribute to Suba', referring to Subotic as a Brazilian musician.



The experiences of performing in London clubs described by the members of 'Coxless Pair' differ from the ones described by the members of the 'Unexpected Force' and to an even greater extent, 'Darkwood Dub'. The experience referred to by V. Jerić of Darkwood Dub shows the possible pitfalls threatening musicians from Belgrade and Serbia in their attempts to successfully overcome cultural, political and financial constraints when playing abroad.

The audiences in London's Zoo Bar attending the concerts of Darkwood Dub and the Unexpected Force were predominantly from Former Yugoslavia. The impact of a 'ghettoised' audience, consisting of members of a small exiled community, should be observed with respect to the social and political aspects of the music performance as signifying practice. Analysis of accounts reported by different interviewees relates to the ghetto-like nature of Monday events at the Zoo Bar, when the audience is predominantly ex-Yugoslavian. Asked about Darkwood Dub's Zoo Bar concert, Jerić's laconic reply was "awful, don't ask". Conversely, the cosmopolitan, predominantly British audience at the Plastic People club gave a warm reception to Coxless Pair<sup>57</sup>.

This should be interpreted with regards to the organisational nature of the three live events respectively. The key aspect of organisational lapses could be interpreted with regards to the target audience. Representing the recent generation of the Belgrade underground scene in a small London café-club appears to be the case with all three bands. However, the audience at the Zoo Bar had an 'imagined community' of 'lost home' as its common signifier. This turned out not to be truly beneficial to the interviewed musicians. DJ Boza Podunavac, who accompanied the Unexpected Force at the Zoo Bar, was asked on arrival 'if he brought some records of 'Bijelo Dugme''. This statement alone shows a communicational slip. The audience expected 'rural rock' of former Yugoslavia, accompanied with a performance that would remind them of the imagined and idealised 'better past'. Instead, there was a band performing an experimental combination of electronic and rock music,

---

<sup>57</sup> In his interview, D. Petrovic states that Coxless Pair were the very first band to perform at the Plastic People club, which was previously 'a discotheque'.

accompanied by a DJ whose repertoire did not significantly differ from the ones performing in underground London clubs.

The encoding on one side of the communication process was the following: an underground band promoting the most sophisticated and challenging music created in Belgrade as the result of social articulations of the troublesome Nineties. The expected decoding on the part of the audience, most of which had 'disowned' the present and embraced the past, was the one of recognisable, 'safe' cultural produce of a country that no longer exists. Not only because of faults on behalf of promoters working at the Zoo Bar, but also because of their very choice of venue, the communication failed at the outset. Very similar events took place at the Darkwood Dub concert. In spite of the fact that in both cases, *some*, better informed, parts of the audience had supported the bands, both Darkwood Dub and the Unexpected Force were far more likely to get a positive reception from visitors that had no preconceptions.

Most certainly, the audiences' 'familiarity' with the national/cultural origins of musicians worked against the performers. This could be seen as a case of 'mistaken identity'. The small group of exiles from different parts of former Yugoslavia had articulated its identity through the shared sense of loss, negotiating the common signifiers of Yugoslav popular music at the level known to all, i.e. their own representation of mainstream rock and pop music produced until the break-up of 1991. What they were presented with was alien.

On the other hand, Orge simply states<sup>58</sup> that the concert in London was the only one that was not related to a specific '*within the caste*' event, because of the fact that London is '*hypertrophied*'<sup>59</sup>, as the centre of the music industry. In this case, '*caste*' meant narrow social groups associated with underground music. He appears to have taken the positive aspects of the concert into

---

<sup>58</sup> Appendix 9. Please read introductory note first. Interview held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

<sup>59</sup> The terms are directly quoted from Orge's statements and emphasised because of their multi-layered nature that could be analysed in its own right.

account; performing in front of a hostile audience meant that any 'convert' was an evidence of success. Orge shows his frustration with the fact that the band had "spent five days walking around London", instead of having a performance arranged every day, which, he continues, was not only possible but also desirable. The main complaint that Orge had about the concert in London was that the promoters should have arranged more opportunities for them to play, regardless of venue. He referred to the whole arrangement as "lacking the 'rock 'n' roll feel'" that would enable them to utilise the opportunity to perform elsewhere.

The advantage of the interview with Boris Mladenović over the other interviews in this chapter is that he has seen and has the ability to compare the two different models under which the London concerts of Belgrade bands were organised. He points out the flaws of the concert organised by 'Seven Arts Promotions', a promotional agency run by a group of Serbian expatriates who were responsible for organising the concerts of the 'Unexpected Force' and 'Darkwood Dub' at the Zoo Bar. In comparison, his most favourable comments relate to the Coxless Pair performance at the Plastic People club.

B. Mladenović notes that the audience at the Plastic People club concert was relatively small, consisting of about two to three hundred visitors. However, he points out that the club was an 'underground place', 'with a cult status', referring to the statement about the club apparently made by Zeljko Kerleta. The concert audience was, according to B. Mladenović, well versed in musical genres characterising the music of Coxless Pair<sup>60</sup>. In the words of B. Mladenović Coxless Pair represent the 'latest tendencies' in Jazz. The experience that he and Dusan Petrović report to have shared is one of warm reception from a London audience which is 'very spoilt', Petrović stated, because of the wide variety of music available to choose from<sup>61</sup>.

---

<sup>60</sup> 'Balance' event at the Plastic People club promoted new Jazz, 'downtempo' and 'left field' sub-genres.

<sup>61</sup> See Appendix 6.

This appears to have strongly supported the band members' morale in terms of their further international career development. The similarities between the accounts provided by Petrović, Kerleta and B. Mladenović appear to point to two things. First, they share a narrative regarding the stylistic and financial characteristics of what is to be considered 'underground music' and are more than willing to depart from the political definitions of 'underground'. Second, the detail in which the band members refer to the London concert experience seems to suggest that the visit was successful. Furthermore, their experience shows that Kerleta's statement on irrelevance of the national origin of underground music seems to apply.

#### 6.2.5 Promoting new music from Belgrade abroad: other, 'safer' territories

However, all three events explored above could be classified as 'microscopic' and related to small samples of the market. Since no ambitious promotion of underground music from Belgrade and Serbia has been done yet, cautionary comments will need to be made with respect to the permeability of audiences. The likelihood of successful music promotion in a business environment as competitive as the London clubbing market depends on networks built over many years of practice. Arranging concerts at renowned venues requires insider knowledge. Although it is based in the heart of the city, the *outsider* status that Zoo Bar appears to 'enjoy' hampers similar promotional attempts.

Comments made by Orge with regards to the concert held at the Zoo Bar are, nevertheless, positive, as is the comment on the same concert made by Laki, the bass-guitarist of the Unexpected Force. The promotional advantage of the 'Unexpected Force' in English-speaking countries is that instrumental not vocal performance represents their main form of expression. Language creates an obstacle; similarly, being an instrumental band may have swung in their favour. The second assumption for successful promotion abroad, especially in a market saturated by produce from all over the world - like that of London and the UK - would be that a musical product has some generic

authenticity, whether it is based on a concept or stylistic form<sup>62</sup>. Both Laki and Orge, interviewed on two separate occasions, seem to agree that there is potential for further promotion of their music abroad. The Unexpected Force had also played in Amsterdam, Budapest and Ljubljana (and other towns in Slovenia). In all these cities, as they indicate, the concerts have been very successful. In Ljubljana, Orge testifies, their concerts were so well received that a couple of extra events had to be arranged in Slovenia.

Ambrozić complements this argument by stating that the Serbian rock scene - and his field of journalistic expertise is predominantly rock music - is by far the most coherent, professional, diverse and developed in former Yugoslavia, in spite of the said hegemonic practices employed by the previous regime. Evidently, the result was detrimental to the scene in Serbia. However, because of the uncertainties long felt within Serbian society, the anti-war movement was strongest among artists and intellectuals and the rock scene developed an ethical stance that kept it motivated for symbolic resistance. The adversity constraining the work of rock musicians in Serbia made them resilient.

Ambrozić estimated that the first step in addressing foreign music markets should be made in the direction of the former Yugoslav republics. Indeed, Serbian bands played in Slovenia throughout the Nineties. The Croatian market was the most appealing for Serbian musicians, being the second largest in former Yugoslavia. However, until recently, political obstacles hampered cross-cultural communication, both formal and informal. The second suggestion made by Ambrozić was to consider entering the German market. A band like 'Eyesburn' should be able to create an appeal in the German market. An interesting observation made by Ambrozić had made the puzzled interviewer see his line of reasoning<sup>63</sup>:

---

<sup>62</sup> The 'Unexpected Force' has both, as will be argued in Chapter 7. The response to this complex question relates to the dialectic relationship between artistic integrity and commercial viability. Questions of musical and stylistic form cannot be discussed directly in this study in terms of textual analysis of music *per se*. They rely on implicit explorations of subjective accounts within concrete social, economic and discursive frameworks.

<sup>63</sup> See Appendix 5.

D. Ambrozić: ...no wonder that the British would feel proud about their music production and be less likely to allow foreign acts to penetrate the market. In fact, the music industry is their second largest export...

M T: ... just after Formula One

D. Ambrozić: Yes. In America... the *entertainment* sector, and I am quoting, is *the largest export they have*... imagine, what amounts of money are we talking about... why would they accept competition? On the other hand, the Germans are already used to getting their music from other sides. They are more open to influences and bands like Eyesburn are not well represented in their national scene... I believe that this would be an interesting market to enter...

Ambrozić appears to be a cautious optimist although he does not share views expressed by his colleagues from B92 who did not seem to show the same appreciation of the music scenes in Belgrade and Serbia.

Addressing the promotion of Serbian music abroad it is necessary to note the emphasis Paunović placed on a number of interviews with French newspapers during the launch of the 'Belgrade Coffee Shop' albums in Paris. At the same time, he noted that this release was not very likely to make an impact on Western audiences, either in business or cultural terms. It is indeed correct to assume that a market saturated with dance music to the extent to which the French and British markets are, would not be affected by *one* CD release from a small country associated with forms of (adverse) publicity other than music production.

Paunović also referred to a track by 'Teget'<sup>64</sup>. He suggested that, its 'different' 'exotic', and 'authentic', 'Turkish sound' makes it eligible for promotion in the West. This part of the discussion with Paunović ended with the conclusion that music from Serbia would only create some form of appeal if promoted as exotic. Such a statement sounds disconcerting when it comes from a person considered an important decision-maker and who could strongly influence the future of music production in Belgrade and Serbia. The text 'Nesting Orientalisms: the case of former Yugoslavia' (Hayden, 1998) was already

---

<sup>64</sup> 'Teget' is a project comprising several musicians from renowned Belgrade bands.

mentioned with regards to the *othering* of former Yugoslavia in Western political and public discourse. It shows that notions of *exoticism* and *otherness* need to be addressed in practical implementation of promotion of Serbian music production abroad, regardless of genre. This question, along with a number of others, both intended and emerging during the interviews, proves that authenticity, signifying practices, and cultural identity<sup>65</sup> are inextricably linked with the business practices in music and media.

DJ Boza Podunavac offered similar responses to the questions related to the possibility of promoting contemporary music production from Belgrade and Serbia in other countries. Podunavac is constantly updating his music collection, focusing on three specific genres and often observes electronic dance music available on the Internet. He reflects on the vastness of available data related to music. Podunavac states that the number of titles growing by the day and posted on the Internet from all over the world is such that it is very hard to imagine a situation where similar products from Serbia could be capable of competing in the world market. The very fact that 'Belgrade Coffee Shop' was available in UK music retail chains, such as HMV, was something that drew the researcher's attention to this release. However, it seems that Paunović was ready to assume that a marketing success of this kind did not guarantee further such developments. This is especially surprising because this promotion came just a few months after a radical change in politics that previously threatened to completely cripple Serbian society and isolate the country for decades.

Contrary to the statement made by Paunović, Ambrozić expressed delight with the fact that a CD comprising of Belgrade 'House' music was released abroad, first in France, then in Britain. Because Paris is one of "the capitals of House music", Ambrozić likened the quick and unlikely success of the Belgrade scene to a "civilisational achievement", making a slight journalistic exaggeration. The researcher agrees with the estimate that the very fact a

---

<sup>65</sup> Several interviewees note that 'ethno/fusion/world-music' of Serbia and the Balkans has the greatest potential for sales abroad. Such is the case with Goran Bregovic, the former leader of Bijelo Dugme, and experimental ethno-jazz artists led by multi-instrumentalist Lajko Felix.

French record company showed interest in something that belongs to the so-called urban milieu (and not merely 'exotic') represents a qualitative change. This change came about relatively soon after Serbia started re-establishing the diplomatic and trade relations with the outside world.

With regards to trade relations, Paunović too mentioned something that is an emergent topic of many interviews: intellectual property rights. In agreement with many other interviewees, Paunović stated that it would be very unlikely that international record companies would become interested in Serbia if collection agencies in the country failed to pay them royalties and the government failed to implement anti-piracy legislation. Collection agencies are crucial for the effective functioning of the music and media businesses, providing the framework by which copyright and related rights are claimed by their owners (publishers, record companies, songwriters, musicians and others involved).

### 6.3 B92: a business affecting the production, promotion and the position of Belgrade underground music - some insights

Underestimating the importance of B92 in the past and present - especially with relation to underground culture in Belgrade and Serbia - would be a serious omission. Rigorously evaluating its true contribution and defining how the term 'underground' really applies to B92's past and present actions affecting Serbian popular culture, is critical for this study.

The importance, factual and perceived, of the B92 Radio in the underground music scene of Nineties Belgrade is undeniable. Respondents and interviewees from all segments of the underground music scene and independent culture-production pointed out that B92 is becoming an ever more important factor in the production of popular discourses in art, music and the media in Belgrade and Serbia. Some conclusions might be drawn with regards to the organisational culture developing in B92, and its effects on



music production in Belgrade and Serbia as well as its promotion both within and outside the country.

Their television network, established by B92 coinciding with the political changes of 2000, is becoming one of the most influential media in the country. This organisation has undergone considerable change since the days when B92 was a small radio officially controlled by the Socialist Youth Student Union (Collin, 2001). During the Nineties, Radio B92 developed its publishing, recording and promotional businesses. The television facilities used for broadcasting could not be used because of constant obstructions by Milosevic's government.

However, the station's television documentary division was used to collect archival data, creating the image that is now well known to international media organisations collaborating with B92. Indeed, a recent Internet debate group on the opening of MTV Balkan, visited by the researcher, shows that the currently existing MTB programme, part of B92 television, is to become the core of MTV's Balkan broadcasting. The Internet debate based on B92's website provided an interesting insight into the international corporate ties of this multifaceted media company.

'B92 Forum', based on the Internet, hosts discussions dedicated to a number of relevant contemporary topics, ranging from politics to popular music. The debate related to MTV Balkan that took place on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2001 provides valuable insight into B92's business plans for the future. A participant from Croatia enquired about the rumours that MTV is planning to start a channel that would cover the countries of former Yugoslavia under the name of MTV Balkans. The immediate response from another participant, based in London was quite sceptical. "Good for us. Sure they're gonna do Turbo-folk". Similar statements exchanged in this debate imply that the internet-community from former Yugoslavia whose musical tastes revolve around underground music have a low opinion of MTV.

A participant nicknamed 'Carverious' said "MTV - turbo folk... what's the difference". The mainstream standing of Turbo-folk throughout former Yugoslavia is here equated with the 'commercialised' image MTV has among the people who see themselves as followers of 'sophisticated music'. Furthermore, 'Freak' from Belgrade added a note: "what 'Pink' represents in Serbia, MTV does in Europe... where's the good old MTV". 'Pink' TV was referred to in Chapter 4 as one of the main media pillars of the previous Serbian regime. This list of sarcastic remarks ended when Vlada Janjić, who runs B92's music publishing and record companies, clarified the issue.

Apparently annoyed by the tone of the discussion, Janjić stated that MTV is indeed preparing the ground to enter new markets. MTV does this meticulously, he continued, so the process might take a while. He stated that B92 should become one of the partners in this deal and this was indeed the reason why TV B92 introduced a daily programme titled 'Music Television Balkan', with the aim to transform that show into MTV's Balkan channel. "In any case, it is highly unlikely that this would be anything like Turbo-folk", Janjić concluded the debate.

Few months before, the researcher was made aware of the existence of the MTB programme on TV B92. Knowing that this company strenuously argues for the introduction of effective protection of intellectual property, the researcher found that 'MTB' could have been seen as an infringement of several forms of intellectual property rights. Conversely, this could have been an indicator of some kind of a business development between B92 and Viacom, MTV's parent company. Indeed, B92 received the prestigious 'Free Your Mind' award at the MTV Awards ceremony in 1999. The significant insight into the long-term policy of B92 coming from the above Internet-debate shows that this organisation might be planning a future corporate merger with some of the global entertainment corporations.

The ongoing stratification in which B92 is becoming one of the main corporate bodies producing, distributing and disseminating information, entertainment and other cultural produce, started to affect the media landscape of Belgrade

and Serbia even before the fall of the previous regime in October 2000. This could indeed be read in Collin (2001), with regards to B92's ANEM (Asocijacija Nezavisnih Elektronskih Media - the Association of Independent Electronic Media) network. The information was stifled in Belgrade: B2-92's<sup>66</sup> offices, positioned in the business space belonging to another independent broadcaster, Studio B, were closed once more. Both B2-92 and Studio B went off air. However, B92's management was ready for this and they continued broadcasting *outside* Belgrade, using the Internet and their ANEM network, based in local broadcasters around Serbia and Montenegro (Collin, 2001).

Being the fastest growing media, publishing and entertainment business in Serbia, especially with the legacy and reputation that pushes Matthew Collin to label them as 'underground radio', B92 must be seen as a factor likely to influence the music and media landscape of Belgrade and Serbia for many years to come. This led the author to consult with Gordan Paunović, Boza Podunavac and Dragan Ambrozić for opinions on the state, nature and developmental potentials of Serbian and Belgrade underground music.

The emerging discursive pattern appears illogical. The comments made by Paunović and Podunavac with regards to the vitality, authenticity and the market potential of the independent and underground music in Belgrade and Serbia, would come as a bit of a surprise to a reader unfamiliar with business discourse in Belgrade's independent music and media production. The interviewees holding best positions in local, national and international music markets appear to be less inclined to believe the prospect of success abroad. The success of B92's promotional activities in the market for electronic dance music owes a lot to the work of Podunavac and Paunović, who were among the key figures in the project titled 'Kozmik'.

---

<sup>66</sup> B2-92 was functioning under a changed name because the police had taken over the radio's premises in 1999, when the bombing of Belgrade started. A radio station controlled by the government was functioning under their name until October 2000.

'Kozmik', the DJ alliance mentioned by N. Savić<sup>67</sup> in his interview, and praised by Collin in 'This is Serbia Calling', as one of the most important developments in Belgrade electronic dance music. 'Kozmik' was founded by B92 approximately two years after the first Techno parties took off at the 'Akademija' club. Savić noted the speedy commercialisation and fragmentation of the Techno music clubbing market in Belgrade, boosted by the intervention of Belgrade's City Council, which served to contribute towards the organisation of the 'Enlightenment' party, discussed in Chapter 5.

Savić explained how 'Kozmik' became very influential in further developments of the Techno scene. It helped maintain standards in that there was a need for it to become as commercially efficient in a very short time due to the increased pressure of other late entrants into the market. It is interesting that neither Collin nor Savić mention the events held at the club during 1993 and 1994. Collin (2001), as an outsider, fully depends on information from local sources but Savić visited the early Techno parties at the 'Akademija' club.

Bojan Marsenić, alias DJ 245/1<sup>68</sup> noted that B92 were late entrants into the Techno music clubbing market, though it appears to be the opposite. Along with the late Radoslav Šulejić AKA DJ Avalanche, Marsenić had initiated Techno parties in 1993 at the 'Akademija' club<sup>69</sup>. He was also the originator of one of Serbia's first Techno projects, Logan V. Although his project aroused attention and brought him and the author of this study to take part in the prestigious 'Rock Interview' on Studio B Radio, neither of the two kept record of these events. The only written record available to the public and known to the researcher can be found on the Internet, in accounts by a member of Integra DJ alliance, Marko Vajagić, whose career as club DJ began at the 'Akademija' club in 1993.

The temporary closure of the 'Akademija' club left a gap in the published records on the success of these events. The individuals involved in the

---

<sup>67</sup> Savić had provided the researcher with the contact with Podunavac. They have worked together on a couple of occasions, when Savić was co-organising the UMUB Techno parties.

<sup>68</sup> 245/1 is the act of Serbia's criminal legislation addressing the possession of Cannabis.

<sup>69</sup> Appendix 1, reflexive diary. Entry date: 10<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

promotion of Techno music at the club in 1993/94 (including the researcher) have not taken enough care to keep record of these events. The only remaining copy of the original television report, made by Studio B in 1993, was lost after Radoslav Šulejić, alias DJ Avalanche, died tragically in 1999. The TV cameraman who filmed the report in 1993, Zoran Vujović, was contacted by the author of this study. Vujović replied that the only remaining copy of the report showing one thousand people queuing in front of the 'Academy', during the 1993 summer of hyperinflation - was lost.

This is not an isolated case. The lack of funding that had always hampered independent television in Serbia, as well as early independent attempts to create an alternative niche within the official state television during Tito's era, led to most of the invaluable records being taped over and so lost forever. Thus the absurd situation where cultural history is written and re-edited in retrospect when tangible records could have been saved.

#### 6.4 Fieldwork as negotiation with entrepreneurs and authors

One of the people who could have provided useful accounts on the functioning of the music business in Belgrade avoided responding or giving any comments. Because he declined to partake in research, this man will remain anonymous and will be referred to as 'Mr X'. He was deeply involved in the programme of SKC during the Eighties, helping develop the profile of the Belgrade rock scene in that period. X also managed some of the Belgrade's most prominent bands. Their live audiences and record sales alike have notably grown during X's time as their manager. During the Nineties he controlled a string of key Belgrade nightclubs.

The short telephone conversation between the researcher and X revealed tensions between the two. The business relationship between the two ended problematically: the researcher recalls X as an autocratic entrepreneur. The researcher was left to talk during the 'conversation'. X avoided making any statements. Long pauses followed each question. His initial reaction to the

telephone call was a several second-long silence. Being familiar with X's negotiating style, the researcher knew such behaviour indicated suspicion. It appears that X had expected a business-related offer. Instead he was asked for an interview on his business experience. His response points out that this made him even more suspicious. This was indicated through even longer breaks and changes in the intonation of X's voice. He finally offered to get in touch by email. He never did.

When reminded by email about a written response to questions, X became almost hostile. The email addressed to X contained questions relating to specific facts on the numbers of records sold by a particular group and his management practices. The syntax of his response had been stripped to the form of a statement in which X said: 'I have read your [e]mail<sup>70</sup>, printed the questions and will reply *when I find the time*', revealing a sense of impatience. The construct, *when I find the time* is important for this discussion.

On the face of it, it suggests a person too busy to respond to a query of a former employee. On closer examination, the lack of an informal addressing introduction and the sentence stripped of any content apart from the direct response to the query seem to emphasise X's importance as a *busy person*. The apparent *nonchalance* of the 'I am uninterested and busy' response hides an aggressive overtone. X appears to have felt the subject matter was too revealing. This short and apparently fruitless correspondence had in fact corroborated the researcher's experience of the would-be interviewee's management style. The researcher was led to compare this experience with another when X had abruptly ended otherwise successful negotiations with an owner of a small recording and publishing company.

In both cases the entrepreneur felt uneasy being in a situation which involved the threat from exposing his weaknesses. During negotiations held in 1996, X showed no patience for the publisher's demands for the promotion of a

---

<sup>70</sup> The word, '*mail*' is emphasised because it is one of many terms appropriated into Serbian language from English and used in its unchanged form, a clear indicator of the role that technology has in cultural globalisation.

protégé-band at the club he controlled. X insisted on authorising every minute detail of the promotional process and the situation led him to negotiate the deal in front of the waiting staff.

In the case of the interview offer X's sense of exposure may have been twofold. Firstly, he appeared unconfident and prejudiced against such academic query. The second probable reason for such a response is not interpreted as a lack of interest, bearing in mind that he refused to talk for the 'Academy-Republic' documentary film. X appears to prefer to stay behind the scenes. Indeed, X was likely to have found interviewing intrusive.

X's refusal to partake in research need not be related to shielding any accounts of dubious legality in his business practices. A possible interpretation of this meaningful lack of response relates to safeguarding 'trade secrets', the knowledge that means power in the business environment. The researcher himself has learnt the value of information on contacts and procedures his early career within the music business.

The observations made by the researcher, however reflective they might be, must be supported, checked and corroborated by other data in the appropriate context. Some other interviewees referred to unfair business practices of some club-owners. Nenad Mirović'Bacha', an independent promoter, and Vladimir Jerić, from the Darkwood Dub band, pointed at X as a prime example.

X's communication style negatively affected his performance in business. Considering that in the Nineties X controlled several important clubs and venues and had partaken in arranging some of the most lucrative Techno parties mentioned in Chapter 5, his scale of influence and effective power should not be underestimated. As a result of his hostile and distrustful approach to collaborators and employees, X had found himself isolated in the market. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that X, a potentially valuable source for this research, had decided not to disclose any information.

Among the interviewees consulted for this study, Sabljari appeared least experienced in directing the conversation to desired outcomes. Thus his representation of events appears transparent. Moreover, Sabljari firmly believes that his membership of a specific segment of the Belgrade underground music scene determined the way he was treated in business. He believes that both of his bands represented the kind of uncompromising position that neither the old, nor the new dominant discursive structures in Serbia would have supported.

Ambrozić has, on the other hand, stated that Dža ili Bu did not have a wide enough audience to be included in the promotional activities he co-ordinated. Ambrozić was speaking at a speedy pace. During the interview, his line of presentation appeared to be concerned with facts alone. The speed with which he narrated could indicate two aspects of his reasoning: firstly, he is very well versed with many aspects of the subject, especially the historical developments of Yugoslav and Serbian rock music. Secondly, he is extremely confident about his original vocation of music journalist and critic. However, coming to address the controversial issues, after he volunteered the information on the 'failure of 'Dža ili Bu' to recruit audiences within the Serbian province, Ambrozić's verbal style became more hesitant. This suggested that there were reasons to mention the problematic issue which, he did not feel had yet been resolved.

There was an interesting encounter between the researcher and some former business competitors. The group had a brief conversation in which the researcher, holding a CD wrapped in a translucent plastic bag, expressed the wish to find out about the new releases of their record company. One former competitor stared at the bag, as if he were anxious to find out what record it contained. His gestures were defensive, revealing tension. Reflecting upon the event the researcher first considered whether his memory was distorted, putting too much emphasis on the former competitor's enquiring glare.

As anticipated in the methodological preparation conducted before fieldwork commenced, the issues of 'Other' and social re-negotiation of membership



have emerged (Hannerz, 1996: pp. 61-62, 99-101). In the event described above, the researcher was possibly seen as an 'Other' on three levels. Firstly, his previous relationships with X as well as with the group of individuals described in the above paragraph were fraught with competitive tension. While the author of this study had previously overcome these experiences due to the change of focus from competition to exploration, most of his past competitors have not changed approach.

Secondly, the researcher became the Other on another level, by moving abroad and into perceived prosperity, apparently not having to endure the consequences of the politics of the *ancien régime*. Indicative of this naïve conception is a part of the interview with V. Jerić when he argues that national identity is an 'obsolete concept' and that, for example, 'a Pole can easily become a Belgian'. This idealised conceptualisation of *transnational communities* does not take into account the notions of identity explored at length by Mazarr (1996) Hannerz (1996) and others. Indeed, as Hannerz (1996: pp. 99-101) stated, even some old friendships needed to be reasserted against the process of Othering through the global-local dichotomy.

Thirdly, some informants and interviewees have accepted the researcher's exploratory stance with difficulty. Indeed, the issue of 'politics of representation' has been addressed in numerous accounts of ethnographic research. While this applies only to a few cases, it was a salient feature of communication with former business competitors.

Trying to determine the title of the CD during the brief encounter described above, the researcher's former competitor indicated a few unpronounced questions. These could have been, 'what is your *real* intention here?', 'what did you get *here* that you cannot acquire *there*?', '*whose* music do you want to present *there*?' and 'what *is* your hidden agenda?'. Anyone familiar with the uneasy relationships within the music and media businesses would concede that such hypothetical readings are not likely to be exaggerated.

A critical comment on this line of interpretation is required here. The author of this research is aware that previous experiences may be affecting his judgement and that he could be 'reading too much into it' and not applying the same criteria to other respondents, informants and interviewees. Firstly, all the interviewee accounts and observations were subjected to reflection. The researcher needed to constantly remind himself of his dual position with regards to the subjects of his enquiry. Secondly, regularly adding entries to his audio diaries and reviewing them over the past two years since the fieldwork commenced added to the effectiveness of reflexive analysis.

However, it is precisely the experience gained from several years of work within the music and media business that allows the researcher to have a reflective viewpoint. In this case the viewpoint is enhanced with 'infra- and meta-reflexivity' (Booth, 2002), i.e. the ability to be aware of a response to such representation of experience *and* the need for constant re-assessment of the processed knowledge on the terms of 'why did I notice this, and how?'

The necessity for heightened awareness of all such issues involved in ethnographic research makes participant observation "a very time-consuming and emotionally draining activity" (Prus, 1997: 202). In spite of avoiding bias, researcher's subjectivity is part of the explored phenomenon, and is thus presented as an integral part of this study. Therefore, all these readings are conditioned not only by the position of the interviewee (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: pp. 144-145, 268-269) but also of the interviewer himself.

Past experiences and discursive power-position structure the reading of contemporary events (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Booth, 2002; Savić, 2001). Therefore, the 'triple hermeneutics' examined by Alvesson and Skoldberg needed to be applied here. The power-relations between the interviewees and researcher had to be taken into as much consideration as the position of each source of data with regards to its position within social and economic structures of Belgrade independent music production and underground music scene.

The late Miomir Grujić - Fleka<sup>71</sup> was a confident speaker. This interview was a negotiation of knowledge and skill. The researcher considered him a friend long since their collaboration ended in the mid-Nineties. This did not mean that Fleka would shun relentless debates in which he would exercise well-developed rhetorical skills.

Paunović is an experienced journalist and media practitioner, no less than Ambrozić is. His answers were direct but slowly pronounced, perhaps his 'defence' from probing questions or the possibility of the interview becoming unstructured and free-flowing which could reveal more information than an experienced interviewer such as himself would be comfortable with. Paunović is an experienced negotiator and the interview appeared to have an element of probing from the interviewee himself. Some of this could not be recorded on audio-tape because the involvement of body language was important. It involved Paunović gazing at the interviewer and occasionally looking through the window apparently uninterested in the conversation, just to return to a fixed, enquiring gaze. Paunović was also prone to asking occasional questions, such as 'and *what period are you covering?*' This apparently passing remark momentarily put the interviewee in the position of the interviewer. The researcher's previous interactions with the interviewee covered a range of roles and capacities. These were in a number of different power positions: as negotiators, competitors and, very briefly, collaborators.

## 6.5 Conclusions: the point of departure towards 'style'

There could be no mention of true qualitative change until the emergence of phenomena such as the 'Unexpected Force' in music and Low-Fi Video in film

---

<sup>71</sup> Fleka passed away on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2003. The author of this study firmly believes that this man's contribution to Serbian contemporary culture is yet to be recognised. A short obituary was published on B92's web-site few days after Fleka's death. Being closely familiar with Fleka's sardonic dry humour, the author of this work is more than convinced that Fleka would have mocked the phraseology used by his long-term collaborators. After the political change of October 2000, Fleka's contract with B92 was not renewed. He was quite upset that the organisation whose uncompromising image he helped shape treated him in that way, once their status changed from 'subversion' to 'establishment'.

and alternative media. Unlikely forms of association led to new models of activity between the micro-levels of social strata in Serbia. In light of this, the statement made by Veran Matić, Head of B92 that “there was *no culture* to report, so *WE*<sup>72</sup> had to organise something” (Collin, 2001: 119) appears as an exaggeration, revealing the partiality which is rarely so tangible though quite identifiable throughout Collin’s book. The weight of such a statement becomes even greater when put in its appropriate historical, social and political context of the *creative subversions* that characterised the 1996/97 protests.

B92 has grown from a small independent radio to a business whose television infrastructure is likely to provide support for the Balkan subsidy of MTV. Information gathered on a Web-based discussion suggests this. The implications of some interviews and observations suggest that B92 might be aiming to become a subsidy of one of the major global information/entertainment corporations. B92 also developed an influential publishing business that includes books, journals, music and video publications, focused on but not restricted to, latest developments in alternative forms of popular culture. Thus it becomes even more important for B92 to ‘find itself’, its position as a business and an agent of culture-production within a changing Serbian society. Statements made by Paunović, an influential member of B92’s management on one side, and Fleka, on the opposite side of the spectrum of the organisational set-up of the ‘old’ B92, are indicative of the need for the re-assessment of this organisation’s role and form.

Indications of a change in policy can be read in Collin’s 2001 book, when he refers to the introduction of *play-lists* once alien to B92, during the 1996/97 protests. The interpretation of the changes in B92’s music policy relates to the fact that B92’s audience grew to encompass wider segments of society. News reports became the most important aspect of Radio B92, widening listener demographic to audiences whose musical tastes were incompatible with underground rock, rap and dance music. B92 had undergone a thorough

---

<sup>72</sup> Parts of this statement were highlighted by the author of this work.

transformation during its transition from opposition to establishment. It could be argued that this was in fact a long-term process, not a smooth, continual one, but a process consisting out of leaps and changes of discursive regime (Rabinow, 1984: 54-55). Thus the terms 'rock 'n' roll radio' and 'underground resistance', as used in the subtitle to Collin's book, sound a bit misleading when considering the facts of B92's development.

The discursive rupture identified between his and Dragan Ambrozić's account of events in relation to the 'Rock 'n' roll and the elections' 2000 tour are indicative of the stratification within the wider social movement once underground music was associated with political change. Sabljar was initially reluctant to point out the perceived business malpractice of B92. However, remembering his previous position among musicians that supported and fought for the station's right to broadcast, the interviewee changed his mind and admitted his belief that B92 started abusing its position within the pro-democratic movement even before the political changes took place in 2000. Sabljar refers to the change of power-relations with respect to the production of dominant discourse as seen in B92's shift from opposition to establishment. This change does not seem to satisfy even highly ranked B92 executives such as Gordan Paunović. It could be read from his assertion that there were 'no adversaries and no allies' left, that the old regime provided B92 with some form of purpose and position both in political and business terms.

Only a few days after the 'democratic revolution'<sup>73</sup>, Fleka wrote 'The Conscience Appeal' ('Prigovor Savesti') addressing the responsibility of the new authorities, both formal-political and informal-discursive ones. In this open letter to the public, he called for a thorough self-examination that would, once and for all, enable the true transformation of Serbian society. Fleka's uncompromising approach to broadcasting and his provocative use of social, psychological and cultural concepts appeared to be unacceptable for the 'post-revolutionary' B92. As a freelance author who had retained his autonomy throughout his years of work with B92 right from its outset, he was

---

<sup>73</sup> The term 'Democratic revolution' was used as a title for Stojanovic's 2001 article.

'not invited to return' to the radio once political change took place in Serbia and the radio station returned to the 'airwaves'.

Forming an entirely different viewpoint from the one expressed by Paunović, Fleka was treated by B92 as a liability once the organisation shifted from 'rock 'n' roll resistance' to the prospective partner of MTV. Paunović and Fleka belong to opposing paradigms within the wide set of discourses that once coexisted within B92 Radio. However, both made strikingly similar statements about shifting positions in Serbian society. While in the past, the common goal had united a number of people with varied interests, the ascent of the new cultural paradigms are not yet defined.

In the case of independent authors and underground artists, it was not possible to associate oneself with the oppositional discourses present in Serbia in 2001. This was the case because that set of interest groups was the common adversary against whom the heterogeneous democratic alliance fought for a whole decade. Fleka concludes that all the ruptures among the coalition of forces that once existed for a common (single) purpose have become so manifold that the likelihood of sharing any form of interest, from culture to business, is becoming very low. Indeed, the present stage of social stratification in Serbia supports the statement Fleka made almost two years ago. The economic and political stratification is affecting many levels of life in Serbia. While the wide political alliance that has replaced the previous regime is eroding and new democratic alternatives are in the process of formulation, the scarcity of economic means has not yet allowed for the articulation of effective new independent production of cultural content.

From data collected through interviews and reflexive participation it becomes evident that the ongoing stratification within the music business poses new challenges, reflecting the changes in Serbian society at large. Sabljarić suggests that the present stage needs to be overcome in favour of increased competition. The concept of 'the economics of a Serbian band' as defined by Ambrozić, suggests that some practices must change. Piracy, blamed by Paunović on lack of contact with the international music industry, was the first to be attacked by new legislation.

All interviewees whose prime interests lay in effective operation of music markets of Belgrade and Serbia have agreed that the issues relating to intellectual property need to be solved as soon as possible. This needs to be done in order to allow the normal functioning of local music and media markets and their integration into the international culture industry. Growing media businesses, such as B92, which is evolving into a corporate body, have in the past developed alliances with club-owners, promoters and management circles of student clubs in order to achieve business dominance within Belgrade's independent music market. A number of interviewees and respondents pointed out that this led to the expulsion of musicians and practitioners who were not ready to conform to the consensus offered by B92.

The 'new monopoly that has replaced the old one', appears to be unaware of its new position, as claims on the 'lack of adversaries as well as allies' suggest. On the other hand, the changing, more commercialised nature of B92's strategies does not have to be detrimental to the local underground music scene. This depends on B92's awareness of its changing position and reputation among members and practitioners within the scene itself.

What Paunović and Ambrozić seem to consider as a shortcoming, musicians and independent producers think of as underground music. Frequently mentioned is the example of Zoran Radović, leader of the early Nineties' band 'Pressing', now an individual artist producing his own work. Ambrozić refers to his 'lack of business sense' and Paunović doubts that Radović's authentic underground music would find an audience abroad. Interviewees from B92 claim that this organisation aims to support the development of local talent. However, their doubt in originality and stylistic authenticity of many Belgrade underground musicians might have different practical implications.

One successful alternative media practitioner uses the term 'pedigree' to describe factors that qualify a band, project or club to be promoted and supported by B92. This, he states, was the case with Corrosion/CRSN, considered a Techno project of high professional quality. In the last few years,

projects like the 'Unexpected Force', 'Corrosion/CRSN', and 'Coxless Pair', seem to have shown a greater potential for success in the West than Serbian rock musicians did in the past.

On the other hand, the work of the 'Unexpected Force' has been noticed by B92, and to quote Gordan Paunović, the 'grumpy underground' band 'trusts no one', which "after all, is understandable" but "they have refused the people that could have helped them... *us*". This can be read in relation to what Laki, the 'Unexpected Force's bass player, had to say about his fears that that these "very exciting moments [in music] disappear". There is a genuine concern that the band's music, innovative, and as will be argued, authentic as it is, will not be adequately recorded and preserved. This problem stems from the very nature of their performance, as will be seen in Chapter 7. Conversely, the fact that Dragan Ambrozić's accounts seem to point out that making a musical project (moderately?) commercial is the only way ahead, this could signal a significant change in B92's editorial policy.

Endorsing and promoting a pop act such as 'Negative' in the 'Rock 'n' roll and elections' tour, while some musicians with clear anti-establishment credentials were refused support just *before the key election that was about to transform Serbian politics*, indicates that some of B92's key people had already decided to move closer to the mainstream. There is no fault in this, either from a business or an ethical perspective, *provided that it becomes clear that B92's mission statement has changed*. Claims that this organisation is focused on alternative or underground culture production is not only incorrect but could also have a detrimental impact on the very nature of independent and underground production of culture in Belgrade and Serbia. The sooner B92 moves more towards its aspired corporate status, the better for the open market competition in music, media and the arts, which this author believes forms the prerequisite for professionalism and growth of standards in all three areas.

This analysis finds that B92 should no longer claim 'underground' status. It is in the organisation's best business interests to grow into a lower-scale



corporate business or a major corporation's semi-independent subsidiary. This would enable its news agency to retain its position as an independent critic of society, yet would allow its music, television, video and publishing businesses to move closer to the mainstream.

Independent music production in Belgrade and Serbia and the underground music scene of the city have proved very resilient throughout the past decade. According to Gordan Paunović, 'Belgrade Coffee Shop 1' album, featuring various artists, "mirrors Belgrade almost to the same extent as 'Paket aranžman'<sup>74</sup>". Moreover, Paunović states that 'Belgrade Coffee Shop 1' owes its '*atmosphere*' to the fact that all of tracks on this CD were recorded during and immediately after Nato's 1999 bombing of Serbia. Sabljari, on the other hand, testifies that his current project 'CIH' was started spontaneously, in the same period, in the basement of the building where he lives. Its full name, 'Chernobyl in House', consists of many layers, as will be seen in Chapter 7. A part of Sabljari's basement was used as a rehearsal space and recording studio. During the bombing campaign, the space was converted into a shelter and became home to several computer enthusiasts, who established an anti-war web-site and on to work with Sabljari and other musicians on music and related materials.

The following discussion pays due attention to the present role of musicians within the Belgrade underground scene. They have been influential for creating the signifying practices resulting in the development of a sense of authenticity shared by a number of musicians, entrepreneurs and practitioners in related arts. Signifying practices strongly affect the business and market potential of underground music.

---

<sup>74</sup> 'Package Arrangement' album that had shaped Belgrade New Wave in the Eighties, mentioned in Chapter Four.

**Chapter Seven**  
**Signifying practices and**  
**communication in Belgrade**  
**underground music**

In this chapter, the author will examine signifying practices in Belgrade's contemporary underground music production, promotion and consumption. This analysis will require drawing references to historical, spatial-discursive and business-related foundations of such practices, thus consulting the previous analytical segments in examining the modes of communication and expression related to the Belgrade underground music scene.

However justified in terms of 'artistic credibility' an underground project might be, it leaves little recognisable trace if it lacks essential financial support. Unless serious effort is put into publicising or keeping record, such developments remain forgotten regardless of their indirect cultural influence. Part of the rationale for this study lays in the fact that the changing power relations in culture production articulate the contents of documentary accounts in the media. This has a significant bearing on what is reported, recorded and analysed in cultural history.

One of the results of ten years of isolation and economic decay is that only few organisations and individuals had been able to publish such accounts. This chapter will examine the modes of sign-production and communication within the Belgrade underground scene. Some examples will cover the notion of authenticity in underground music conditioned by the market criteria, previously explored in Chapter 6. In Chapter 7, however, the emphasis will be on the way market relations articulate the notion of 'authentic style'.

The role of informal communication within the underground scene will be explored through the examination of an experimental radio show and analysis of graffiti texts. The interpretations of 'underground' and 'scene', inextricably linked with the subject of the previous chapter will be construed from interviewee accounts with regards to the questions of stylistic plurality and authenticity. Finally, some of the signifying practices employed in the work of musicians and video-artists will be examined as articulations of social and cultural change in Belgrade and Serbia.

### 7.1.1 Terms of underground authenticity in Belgrade and Serbia

Different definitions of mainstream, underground, alternative, avant-garde, counter-culture, sub-culture and music scenes - more than mere signs used in language, portray varied interpretations of the topic of this study provided by interviewees, informants, and authors consulted in this research study.

Though Ambrozić and Sabljar do not share common interests in the music business (see Chapter 6) there are some similarities in the way the two lay claim to understand the distinction between mainstream and non-mainstream rock music. Ambrozić looks at the career of pop-musicians such as Kylie Minogue, whose stylistic transformation followed fashion trend. Rather than introducing new stylistic features in music or standing in opposition to fashion, artists such as Kylie and Madonna embrace the forms of expression emerging from 'underground scenes'<sup>1</sup>, Ambrozić argues.

Ambrozić's statement continues with an observation of the market consequences of different ways in which rock music and 'commercial', mass-consumed music, tend to operate. He suggests that 'commercial pop' is sold in large amounts over a short period of time, generating little interest after a few years after release. The former, however, has a *cumulative effect* in business terms. Some albums, he argues, sell well over decades, and as such are long-term record company investments that create returns over long periods of time.

Sabljar made a similar statement that underpins this argument. He states that when examining the artistic integrity and stylistic autonomy of a composer, musician, musical project or band, it is important to examine the means by which this music can address the audience across time, space and cultural boundaries. However, his adopted tone suggests Sabljar's belief that his chosen profession deserves consideration well beyond its mere income-generating potential.

---

<sup>1</sup> Interesting statements relating to Madonna's 'Vogue' period could be found in Ross and Rose (1997) and Gelder and Thornton (1997).

This, in a sense, is an ‘Adornian’ statement. It suggests that a musician with a strong sense of autonomous achievement can arrive at a higher ground of artistic authenticity without complying with industry practices. It is not likely that this interviewee is conversant with the work of Theodor Adorno. It seems that the reasoning behind his statements is partially based on observation and developed into a set of assumptions about the industry. These are based on wider discursive patterns common to a number of rock music subcultures.

A similar argument comes from an interviewee whose involvement in the Belgrade underground music scene included theoretical and critical texts. Contributions from *underground scenes* eventually affect popular culture on the level of mass-consumption. Exploring the ‘life-cycle’ of an underground scene Fleka stated that the results of these processes include ‘vulgarisation’ and ‘corruption’ of meaning originating from underground music and art. This statement is notably different from the ones made by adherents of a ‘post-modernist approach’. Interviews with some musicians and practitioners whose primary interests lay in contemporary electronic dance music seem to reflect the theoretical analysis of the changing relationship between ‘commercial’ and ‘underground’ (Bennett, 2000, 2001; Thornton, 1997; Miles, 2000).

In line with such arguments, V. Jerić states that visual uniformity is no longer the prerequisite indicator of musical preference:

“Hip hop style in clothing has become the characteristic of many young people... all that depends on context... A kid wearing a baseball hat, with a skateboard under his arm is *cool*, a kid that looks the same that sits in a car with [a Turbo-folk track] blasting from its stereo is a *nightmare*...”<sup>2</sup>

Jerić’s claim that this characterises a post-modern approach to music is only partially correct. Anyone familiar with contemporary Serbian urban styles would read the shifts of meaning of the above signifiers without ambiguity. While the ‘politics of taste’ in the West apparently have little or no ideological connotations at present, the case is very different in Belgrade. The

---

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 11, email correspondence with Jerić.

*skateboard* is an item that is excluded from the dieseler subculture in which coded representations of power do not allow for such 'childishness'.

The connotations of Rap and Hip-hop are less clear-cut but meaningful distinctions exist in this area. Ideological differences between the 'cool kid' and his 'nightmare' twin in Serbia are not reducible to lifestyle choice. Although some connotations of Hip-hop music in Serbia are shared between youth groups whose ideological stances diametrically oppose one another, closer examination reveals significant differences. Dieselers were overwhelmingly supporting the previous regime: their ideological position was connected to group interest. Dieselers' seldom connection to Hip-hop relates to the perceived glorification of crime in 'Gangsta Rap'.

Arguably, the interest a 'cool kid' would show in the same musical genre is rooted in different motives. These could be seen as a result of stylistic preference but even in this case ideological connotations play a role. Superficially, '357', the name of a Belgrade Hip-hop band called could be associated with the narratives glorifying gun crime. '357' is a known model of Smith and Wesson 'Magnum' revolver. Contrary to superficial readings, the band in question drew strong critical connotations to the state of Serbian society under the previous regime. Thus their name serves as a reminder of violence and corruption. The lyrics in '357' songs were clearly aimed against such practices. Stratification and social frictions based on ideology represent the determining factor of the appropriation of Turbo-folk and its associated 'dieseler lifestyle'. One well-known track by '357' mocks the urban folk-music subcultures associated with the 'dieseler' phenomenon.

Though the influences of global fashion phenomena have affected Serbian urban youth, appropriating baggy trousers and baseball hats remains the most superficial aspect of the argument. Music and its connotations remained burdened with meaning throughout the Nineties. The potential justification of pluralist arguments in the case of Belgrade subcultures is yet to evolve since the signifiers of style are very gradually losing ideological connotations as the society enters a period of relative stability.

Although criticising the “take-money-and-run” business policy widespread in Serbia during the Nineties, Ambrozić does not put blame on producers and promoters of Turbo-folk for the problems facing the independent businesses associated with Belgrade underground music (“what sells, sells”).

Orge has much stronger opinions about Turbo-folk and styles that preceded it:

[The people in the West] cannot understand that the break-up of Yugoslavia was unfolding for twenty years, through a semantic code and the said *hypertrophy* of *šund* (*kitsch*<sup>3</sup>)... Hence, this *non-entity*<sup>4</sup> that was placed into the populace. You see. This is one side of that story that has nothing to do with the aesthetic [argument]. That is what's *perverted*... because at some point, people here *got it right*. You know, for example, say, literally for one month after 5<sup>th</sup> October [2000] everyone knew that, you see and suddenly they forgot it all once more<sup>5</sup>.

Some interviewees have left the multifaceted nature of the term ‘underground’ almost intact. Paunović stated that a group of music projects that emerged in the early Nineties (‘Presing’, ‘Kazna za usi’, ‘Darkwood Dub’ and ‘Klajberi’) and their unreleased compilation “Zelim jahati do ekstaze”<sup>6</sup> are closest to the definition of ‘Belgrade underground music’ as innovative and stylistically challenging. He refers to them in passing, after stating that even the New Wave of the Eighties became established in industrial terms (on a smaller, Yugoslav scale). There were only a few exceptions to this trend of commercialisation.

One such exception, ‘Dr Spira i ljuska bića’ (‘Dr Spira and the Human Beings’), was considered by both Paunović and Fleka to be a prime example of Belgrade underground music in the Eighties. Yu-Rock Encyclopaedia (Janjatović, 1998) also refers to ‘Dr Spira’: their only record was released after

---

<sup>3</sup> The term “*šund*” has much stronger connotations describing banality and cultural decay.

<sup>4</sup> The term ‘non-entity’ is a frequent reference in his interview. In relation to ‘commercial’ music, it describes the abuse of culture-production by interest groups whose drive towards power is stripped of ideology, ranging from post-communist hegemony of the old Serbian regime to global media corporations. He sees all such systems as oppressive. Their approach to the control of communication in popular culture is labelled ‘digital fascism’.

<sup>5</sup> Appendix 9, interview held 8<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

<sup>6</sup> “I want to ride to ecstasy”.

the project ceased to exist<sup>7</sup>. Paunović's statement about the market position of Yugoslav New Wave is partially accurate and could be one of the lines of reasoning leading to similar statements about EKV in Gordy's book. Paunović seems to dismiss the other aspect of 'underground' related to authenticity.

On the other hand, V. Jerić, as many other musicians interviewed in this study, asserts authenticity as evident. In his case, however, authenticity applies only to a small number of musicians including himself. In support of such a statement, he relates to the proposition that a historical departure from the legacy of the Eighties defines the new authenticity. Styles that could qualify as 'underground' are seen as sets of practices existing in a narrow, yet heterogeneous scene such as that of Belgrade. The word 'scene' was not readily embraced by some interviewees either: Vladimir Jerić from Darkwood Dub criticised attempts by Dragan Ambrozić and other rock critics in the early Nineties to classify the 'new Belgrade scene' that included projects such as Presing, Klajberi, Darkwood Dub and Kazna za usi.

Another interviewee, Boris Mladenović disagrees with the term 'scene'<sup>8</sup>. He states that the 'scene' is a construct that never existed in reality. Neither in the Eighties' Belgrade New Wave, nor in the early Nineties in spite of the emergence of bands that offered innovative interpretations of rock music. He continues by saying that a scene is not recognisable now, although social interaction is evident among members of various bands and projects. He insists that there can be no talk of stylistic unity and all these projects approach creativity from individual positions, forming their own aesthetics.

Jerić's objections against any form of stylistic, temporal or ideological continuity between the Eighties' and Nineties' 'generations' of Belgrade musicians is presented in the following quote. Jerić bases his argument on a historical rupture.

---

<sup>7</sup> The album, released long ago is no longer available to the public.

<sup>8</sup> Appendix 12, interview with Boris Mladenović. Date of entry: 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001.



Even that famous *new wave scene* had a vivid communication with the previous, very rotten (sic) music that was made here in the sense that they had something *very much* against it, very clearly, like, *acting against it*; which means that communication existed and that means that the [previous] music affected them, really. And now, for the first time... something emerges, 'autistic'<sup>9</sup> at first sight - in relation to the history of music in Serbia... it is a fact that *none of us...* had spent... more than, like, 0.2% of time listening to and thinking of *anything related* to domestic music. Therefore I think that this is the first *scene*, er, yes, *we're not talking about a scene*, but the first *generation* of musicians... creating some kind of music which *in no way leans* to the previous history of local and regional music and that... confuses the critics but not the audience that ... does not care [for the history of domestic music]... [The] *first free and authentic music* truly appears... in the Nineties, fully freed from local references, local stories, local heritage... localism that existed before, I think, in *all domains...*<sup>10</sup>

Interviewee's bias undermines his justifiable criticism of rigid classification. One implicit reading of the above quote could be 'only we are original'. The sweeping statement that 'localism existed in *all domains* [of culture]' is counterproductive for the effects of the interviewee's argument. Furthermore, 'generation' simply replaces the 'scene' in his terminology. What is significant in this case is the denial of any stylistic interaction between the members of a 'generation'.

Ambrozić had found no objection to such statements of stylistic heterogeneity. He emphasises the fact that, due to the interplay of social and politico-economic factors, the number of people dealing with music outside the Turbo-folk 'mainstream' decreased significantly during the Nineties, yet remained true to their task. Ambrozić views the term 'scene' pragmatically, in keeping with his approach as to what is justifiable as an investment in rock music<sup>11</sup>. He sees the scene as a dynamic social occurrence that affects the market of popular music.

---

<sup>9</sup> See introductory note to Appendices 9-12, on Jerić's *idiosyncratic* communication style. The term Jerić uses here is *highly inappropriate* in respect of people affected by this condition. The intended meaning might be read as 'different/non-referential/solipsistic/introspective...' – this appears to be the case in the specified context.

<sup>10</sup> Appendix 10, interview with V. Jerić. Date of entry: 8<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

<sup>11</sup> This is referred to in the argument on "Rock 'n' roll for the elections" tour in Chapter 6.

The extent to which the underground music production in Serbia had shrunk during the war was such that in some cases just one or two bands would represent a particular genre. Jerić expresses his objections on the attempts of critics to formulate the music of different bands that have emerged in Belgrade during the early Nineties:

... so... that first emergence I mean, in the Nineties, of a new generation of musicians and the attempt to knock it into a *scene* - had failed, totally, however much the critics have tried to pigeonhole it, like, and create a common name [for it] like 'Belgrade new wa[ve]...' ... or whatever? But we already had that; presumably, it should have been called 'the new *new wave*'. Mmh, that really was, like, quite odd. I think the critics also had a problem to create definitions for those bands individually, because again, when you are referring to the music a band is making you need to write how it should be called...<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, V. Jerić describes the attempts at promoting some of the bands of his *generation* as 'mainstream' as 'sad, pathetic':

... by that I mean a couple of unsuccessful attempts to make, like, to turn something that was, conditionally regarded as alternative or underground, into a 'super-band' that would be commercial, but under the rules of *this* market... those were truly *sad, pathetic* attempts...

Two notions of underground seem to converge in this statement. The industrial definition of Paunović examined in Chapter 6 is contrasted with the aesthetic-ethical definitions made by other interviewees, most notably musicians. These differing opinions encompass and articulate the apparent rupture between the two viewpoints on what represents underground music. This rupture is especially interesting when viewed in methodological terms. It is especially noteworthy that Jerić and Mladenović have in recent years changed their musical interests from rock to dance music.

---

<sup>12</sup> Appendix 10.

### 7.1.2 Dance music: electronic, electrical and *electrifying*

Though 'Handmade Techno' of the Unexpected Force falls within broader definitions of *dance music*, the band's apparent leader Goran Nikolić 'Orge' does not seem to share these arguments on plurality. In his case, the familiarity with the work of Adorno and other critical theorists is evident. Orge takes his work seriously in the sense that he appears to believe in the conceptual unity and theoretical justification of music.

He was among the interviewees that readily responded to the researcher's questions relating to aesthetic and cognitive foundations of music as something worth examining in future music promotion practices. Orge is versed in musical theory and has a firm understanding of other issues related to theoretical arguments. He mentioned the works of Atali and Adorno with relation to contemporary popular music practices<sup>13</sup>.

The following excerpt continues Orge's argument on the relation of music to power structures. This discussion emerged as the researcher explained very little was known about Serbian underground music in the UK.

Orge: ...The catch is clearly in that music runs away from [enlightenment] and [has become] so sleazy... And in fact, it is *so neglected* in the sphere of education. I have no great knowledge but my estimate is that until 300 years ago music played an important position in education... And now with the development of technology, music suddenly loses its relevance... becoming *as such* an ideological weapon *par excellence*... What to me seems positive... the people whose predominant involvement is computer music use all ethnomusical conceptions... You literally cannot create aesthetically valuable music without incorporating all cultural models that you are aware of... I compare it to chess. You can't go out to play somewhere without knowing what are the novelties of the 58<sup>th</sup> move of the *Sicilian Variant*... Rock 'n' Roll has definitely lost that *energy of naïveté*. Therefore I think that the English could understand [Serbian

---

<sup>13</sup>Orge refers to the contemporary practices in music media as 'digital fascism'. This is one of the more difficult terms to analyse, belonging to this own '*personal terminology*'. His wordy response could appear to be meaningless if taken out of the personal context with singular terms (like 'over and done') repeated at the salient points of the interview. This shares some common features with Fleka's 'Trotorock' expression, explored below.

music] and there surely are those who understand all that... I think that our village music, 'two-beat' "kolo", is musically relevant... the most cheerful music in the world... Go to the flea market because I've heard such phenomenal modern gypsy production, mate... Yes, yes, madness, they're selling cassettes, their own underground tapes. It's *mad, but very good, literally*. Good, simple music... No aesthetical errors... they are articulate in all that... that's the other side of the story... [T]he only ones from over here that could succeed [in the West] are the ones that can fit into the concept of Western civil society... light aesthetics placed in a... quasi-civic, post-consumerist package would pass through. Everything else can be acceptable only on the level of excess<sup>14</sup>.

On closer examination, Orge's argument should also be read as a criticism of music industry practices. Exclusive strategies that narrow the scope of effect that innovation in music could make are imposed through the *threshold of [media] perception*. Such a mandatory threshold of perception is embodied in his term 'digital fascism'. The latter has no connection to the historical political ideology. It is a term he develops to describe the domination of mass media and what he sees as imposed aesthetics.

Points he made about the ambiguity of Techno music represent his most interesting contributions to this study. Orge states that the electronic music had freed itself from limitations of form. These limitations were based on the assumptions about the purpose of rock regarding its expressive 'message' and content. This, he believes, brought music back to the formal structure characteristic of the classical era, while, at the same time, opened the door to creative people with little formal training.

Electronic dance music had, on the other hand, threatened the creative processes of musicianship, making musicians 'redundant', forcing them and the audiences alike to conform to the rules set out by the industry. Whatever fell below the threshold of perception was not taken into account. Kellner (1997) criticises pluralist tendencies in cultural theory in similar terms. The plurality of choice is a mere reflection of the segmentation within markets,

---

<sup>14</sup> Interview, Appendix 9. Date of entry: 8<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

currently controlled by media corporations to a greater extent than ever before, he argues (Kellner, 1997; Miles, 2000).

From Orge's accounts it transpires that the mass-production of music is at its peak and (in the Adornian sense) the music industry had become perfected in its pursuit of commodification after the introduction of House and other forms of electronic dance music. Handmade Techno, developed by the Unexpected Force has become the style that, on the one hand, accepts the *musical form* but, by its very means of live performance remains opposed to the commercial ethos of *dance music* production. Some authors suggest that greater availability of professional recording equipment played a significant role in the transformation of the process in the production of electronic dance music (Bennett, 2000; Miles, 2000).

In the West, the availability of affordable professional electronic music equipment had decentralised the production of dance music. This phenomenon is inextricably linked with the market segmentation in which the 'bricoleur' DJ is the sole focal point and apparent creator of music. However, while samplers and other sophisticated equipment are 'inexpensive' by Western standards, the enduring economic crisis in Serbia has limited the opportunities of many musicians to see dance music in the same way.

Thus the social connotations of dance are different in Belgrade and Serbia; furthermore, the early work of the Unexpected Force was based on live performances using 'Rock' instruments. The free-flowing form of *dance* was appropriated but the nature of 'bricolage' in their early work rarely includes the 'cut-and-paste' of sampling. 'Domin8r' of Corrosion/CRSN project presents an argument similar to the one of Orge with regards to creativity and 'underground' status<sup>15</sup>. He believes that the role of DJ has become overemphasised in the modern music industry environment.

---

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 12.

‘Domin8r’ also believes it was the great mistake of Serbian music producers and promotional businesses to follow the international trend in this respect. He cites his disillusionment with the ‘DJ culture’, which developed in Serbia and across the world throughout the Nineties, as the reason why the CRSN project had cut their ties with the ‘Integra’ DJ alliance and one of its most prominent figures (DJ Mark Wee) in particular. Domin8r emphasises his self-perception as artist who, like colleagues and friends from CRSN, has the will power to resist industrial consensus and persist in his attempt to shape his art and business along individually chosen lines. The fact that many Serbian DJs have slipped into the area of commercial, i.e. under the terms of his ‘underground’ aesthetics, unacceptable stylistic compromises in music, gives credence to this decision to sever all ties with the recently commercialised clubbing scene.

This, in turn, stands in stark contrast with the comments on ‘*ready-made*’ approaches characterising *dance music* scenes where musicianship appears to be becoming gradually obsolete to those involved in production. Nevertheless, Domin8r expresses views of stylistic determination quite different from the ones made by musicians whose work is genealogically rooted in the traditions of *underground rock*. He states “for us [CRSN] genre does not exist”. Therefore, although insisting on ‘underground credibility’ founded on an uncompromising approach, this interviewee pushes the argument on stylistic fluidity one step further by dismissing genre *as such*.

Domin8r comments that he would not object to “making lots of money” from his music and digital art; however, pecuniary rewards *apparently* hold a relatively low position in his set of priorities. Sabljarić has come to a similar conclusion. He states that *underground [music] remains a matter of principle, a matter of approach rather than an economic condition*. Boris Mladenović suggests that CRSN represent a genuine underground project<sup>16</sup>. He asserts that, despite its obvious potential, this group of young authors receives little or no attention from record companies, promoters and the media.

---

<sup>16</sup> Appendix 12.

In such cases, style is not merely a reflection of individual choice. Consumers are rarely exposed to music that falls below the threshold of media interest. As was the case with Turbo-folk where existing demand for pop and folk music was met by the aggressive promotion of a genre combining both, the editorial policy of influential media and entertainment organisations affects the final form a music product will take. The freedom of expression is evident in stylistic preferences of interviewed musicians. However, what would be published, recorded and promoted depends predominantly on the relations of power between musicians and the businesses that control the means of production, promotion and distribution.

Such tensions appear to lay behind Paunović's attitude<sup>17</sup> with relation to the troublesome negotiations with the Unexpected Force and the probable reason behind his comments on "*nadrkani*<sup>18</sup> ('grumpy') *underground*" (Chapter 6) with regards to the band's members. The problem, as read from contrasted talks with Orge, Laki and Paunović, seemed to relate to suggestions made by B92 producers to band members with regards to their musical style.

Paunović states that the band has a "rare ability to perform Techno music with the energy of rock", a statement that indicates a degree of respect for their achievements. He asserts that the Unexpected Force successfully merged the qualities of two approaches to music, electronic dance music and rock. Furthermore, Paunović accounts for their notable standing, due to previous engagements. All of the band members are established within the Belgrade underground rock music scene. Their innovative approach to Handmade Techno provides the Unexpected Force with an implicit market potential.

However, Paunović believes that the Unexpected Force cannot realise this potential. He suggests that the band members did not pay due consideration to the need to put their music into a repeatable and recognisable form. Paunović continues by saying that the 'Unexpected Force' "*never performed*

---

<sup>17</sup> Appendix 3.

<sup>18</sup> The term 'nadrkani' originates from Serbian coarse slang, recently losing its original sting. However, it is still considered to be a rude word, with its English translation ranging from 'grumpy' to a literal meaning of 'over-masturbated'.

*the same song twice*". Recordings they have made so far do not fully reflect their stage appearance. Orge and Laki do not disagree with this. According to the band's bass player, Laki<sup>19</sup>, music has to be contained within a recognisable form. It needs to be made reproducible without losing the band's distinct ability to improvise<sup>20</sup>.

Laki appears to be searching for the means to overcome the problems of capturing the dynamic music-formation of the Unexpected Force in a fixed and repeatable form<sup>21</sup>. The advantage brought by spontaneity and improvisation suggests inherent problems in adapting their expression in order to conform to recognisable 'standardised forms'. The 'problem' that they were keen to solve - that of music being developed as a result of an inter-member negotiation on stage seems imposed by the need for standardisation.

Comparing the arguments made by Orge, Laki and Paunović, it transpires that B92's negotiators attempted to convince the band to short-circuit complex creative processes in which their music builds up in a stage performance, thus forcing it into a song-format, limited by temporal structure. Information gathered during interviews with the band members suggested that these attempts would fail. Nevertheless, eighteen months after these interviews were conducted the band released their second album with B92 record label.

### 7.2.1 Šišmiš radio or the *voice of the old Belgrade underground*

'Neočekivana sila' ('Unexpected Force') and B92 appear to have reached a successful compromise between the band's pursuit of stylistic freedom and the company's business interest resulting in the release of an album. Communicating the connotations of underground music and claims to artistic credibility, as seen in the examples explored above, is a tenacious process.

---

<sup>19</sup> Appendix 12.

<sup>20</sup> He expressed dislike for the term 'underground', because for him, it had come to signify a work left incomplete, "a flower that never blooms" (see 6.1.2).

<sup>21</sup> Talking about their first public appearance during the 1997 Belgrade Summer Festival, Orge refers to their 'zero gig' (since the band initially started performing as a jam-session project).



The very definition of underground music is subject to articulation when attempts are made to attract public attention.

The difference between effective and counterproductive communication lays in the successful encoding of the cultural content on offer. On their own, terms 'underground', 'alternative', 'avant-garde', 'experimental', 'modern' and 'postmodern' remain void of content. Only once specific connotations are identified and the terminology is ascertained in relation to the social groups, to whom the message is addressed, decoding becomes effective.

Perhaps the furthest away from the conventional, and paradoxically, the closest to it, is the definition of underground offered by Fleka<sup>22</sup>. He recognised many of the above terms were compromised through inappropriate use in both literature and practice. His initial analysis of the term 'underground' is that it primarily acts as a metaphor that can only be described by other metaphors. Embarking on such a process is of doubtful logical validity, he argues.

Fleka refers to connotations of hell and purgatory, processes of liberation that inevitably involve forms of vice and the tendencies to achieve totality and fullness of existence. While suggesting that iconic connotations of 'under the ground' are inevitable and numerous, Fleka concedes that his early fascination with 'underground' was *phonetic* and *individual*. It was related to the times when he associated the term with a song called 'Memphis Underground'<sup>23</sup> and the early radio work of John Peel where he first heard it.

Speaking more broadly on definition, Fleka suggests that the '*Tower of Babel syndrome*' raises the need for instant justification of any term in use. 'Modernism', 'alternative' and 'avant-garde' had all been overused, reaching the point of saturation. 'Serbian underground', he believes, is too wide a term

---

<sup>22</sup> Appendix 2.

<sup>23</sup> By Herbie Mann; the bass-player that worked with him, Miroslav Vitous, was a Czech exile, Fleka accounts. As a young man he found the thought of political dissidence fascinating and inextricably connected with early readings of 'underground'. The 10000 word interview with Fleka deserves a separate study going beyond the scope of this research.

and needs specifying. However, if 'creative underground' connotes a set of developments authentic to aspects of cultural activity in Serbia, it could be used as an *operational* term, he says, in the absence of any other that could encompass all relevant connotations.

Fleka invented the metaphors 'Troto-art' 'Troto-rock' that apply to urban cultural phenomena, which question standardised aesthetic and ethical values. He does so in order to distance himself from the linguistic and terminological problems that follow attempts at definition. The prefix 'troto', taken from French 'trottoir' for pavement, standing in front of 'rock' and 'art' represent the 'ground level', not the earth itself, but the artificial layer of tarmac, signifying the wordplay of Fleka's 'Urbazona Trotoart-Trotorock' project. The project dealt with music publishing and promotion, exhibitions and performance art events during the Nineties. These terms remain *singularities* associated Fleka's work.

Further readings of 'Trotoart' and 'Trotorock' imply the ground level in a modern city. The (cultural) *pavement* is already covered with its first industrial-cultural layer, tarmac, disallowing the spectator to see what the original ground was like, creating the artificial yet authentic foundation, a ready-made culture on which everything else is built, including music and art. The pavement is the passive accomplice, necessary foundation and the silent witness at the same time - of whatever is happening in the street, creative or destructive, good or bad.

Fleka does not consider the dichotomy of 'good' versus 'evil' as relevant in relation to his "Šišmiš radio" ("Bat Radio"<sup>24</sup>) programme, aired on B92 for ten years. "Šišmiš radio" was a virtual space where he argues to have experimented with archetype, leading the listeners in this contact programme to spell out the deepest unconscious archetypal contents of their psyche. Reflecting on his experiences in these experimental radio programmes, Fleka

---

<sup>24</sup> Fleka made symbolic references to his lost eyesight in a dark, self-ironic manner.

asserts that unconscious contents significantly affect the audience's reception.

Jung's notion of archetype emerged as an aspect of the discussion with Fleka<sup>25</sup>, who believed to have reached into the 'Collective Unconscious' in his radio shows by using a number of cues that would provoke unconscious responses. These ranged from highly abstracted metaphors to intentional discourse-markers that included music, engineered sound effects, but also building the tension between the presenter and audience through other gestures. Sounds of chewing, lighting a cigarette and blowing smoke into the microphone would sometimes hasten the discussion, create narrative suspense or irritate an aggressive caller.

In conversation with anonymous callers, Fleka would challenge their mind-set, occasionally provoking violent responses to his statements. He refers to this as 'the filtering process'<sup>26</sup>, attracting an audience that would accept the manifold unwritten rules of communication characteristic for his programme. Such modes of communication included slang and coded messages.

Fleka asserted that highly abstracted terminology he used remained completely incomprehensible to the 'mainstream listener'. The more abstract the wording, the more likely it was to exalt the 'followers' and annoy argumentative callers. Such tensions would initiate the "flow of Free Consciousness... or Free Unconsciousness" that he sought, stating that each programme represented a 'Jungian psychological experiment' conducted with a large sample of participants. Combined with music, the 'archetypal'

---

<sup>25</sup> Though this notion has not been accepted in scientific psychology, Fleka considered it an important aspect of his work in arts and the media. As Jung himself accounts in his memoirs 'Memories, Dreams, Reflections' (1995), he was aware that his academic career ended at the very moment when he started connecting his concepts of *Collective Unconscious* and *Archetype* to formative structures of religious mysticism. Fleka suggested that "the world is not ready yet" for Jung's theory.

<sup>26</sup> The author of this study recalls these challenging live on-air discussions.

terminology and dynamics of communication with the audience would act as a source of unique artistic experience<sup>27</sup>, he argued.

Moreover, such 'archetypal' terms would create numerous connotations that could "fill three or four pages of densely typed text". This led to the development of a highly dense meta-language and "crystalised" forms of communication with the selected audience. Fleka accounts that, in spite of these 'filtering strategies', market research figures published in an independent weekly ("Vreme") one month after the termination of his programme (coinciding with the closure of B92 in April 1999) estimated rating figures at twenty thousand listeners.

There are many indicators that B92 is now predominantly supporting already established musicians, artists and writers, i.e. those whose commercial potential is evident. To anyone familiar with the insolent forms of communication with the audience that characterised "Šišmiš radio" programme, the end of a decade-long collaboration between Fleka and B92 was a clear indicator of a determining transformation of the latter. In pursuit of creative autonomy, Fleka carefully maintained his independence from any employer. In an informal conversation with the researcher, Fleka stated that he was never listed as an employee of B92. In spite of his lasting effect on the radio's image - the very title of the book "This is Serbia Calling" (Collin, 2001) should be credited to Fleka's radio jingle created in collaboration with Drummond and Cauty - this artist, journalist, author and entrepreneur could not return to broadcasting<sup>28</sup>.

If the pluralist argument on cultural diversification correctly represents contemporary politico-economic structures in Western democracies, the ongoing transition of Serbia into a similar social formation was first indicated by the lack of discursive oppositions that Paunović and Fleka reported with

---

<sup>27</sup> Fleka always saw himself as an artist. The loss of his eyesight which prevented him from continuing his work in visual arts, Fleka used sound as an artistic medium, taking many different forms, that included his controversial experimental concept-radio show.

<sup>28</sup> The author of this study is unaware of possible arguments for the termination of the "Šišmiš radio" programme. It could be only left to speculation whether an expected drop in demand for such a radical concept provided the justification for this decision.

notable concern (Chapter 6). Whatever the case, “Šišmiš radio” represents a model that embodies polarised discursive relations between ‘mainstream’ and ‘underground’ culture of the Nineties in Serbia.

With only a few channels for the expression of open dissent, “Šišmiš radio” played the role in broadcasting that was conceptually matched only by graffiti. Scrolls burdened with meaning, heavily dependent on internal slang of the ‘initiated few’ resembled the esoteric rhetoric of Fleka’s “Šišmiš radio”.

### 7.2.2 *The writing on the wall*, Belgrade graffiti and *overground* communication: ‘AKADEMIJA - REPUBLIKA’

Fleka cites the date, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1984 as the moment when an autonomous form of graffiti art developed during a group happening accompanying a Rock concert at the Academy. Expression through signs and symbols, sessions in drawing, rather than Hip-hop graffiti tradition (which had not taken root in Belgrade until the mid-Nineties) characterised the organic exchange of visual signs and *paroles*, ‘tattooing the Academy’, as Fleka recalls.

Hip-hop graffiti, the signs of ‘obtuse meaning’ (Barthes, 1977) did not characterise Belgrade streets. However, an interesting set of examples of mediated communication in Belgrade underground music could be related to written messages, street scrolls of aerosol paint. As a form of informal communication, ‘writings on the wall’ are likely to be as old as literacy itself. The examples explored in this section indicate how the foci of media interest and levels of media literacy shifted among the younger population of Belgrade from the late Eighties to the present. The authors of graffiti are most likely to be drawn to the underground music scene, as observers, members or even practitioners. The author of this study was once himself the user of this primal medium. Graffiti, apart from their sometimes dubious artistic credibility and the nuisance caused to the wider public, represent a medium whose apparent immediacy is deceiving as well as challenging. Graffiti depend on the

articulated *langue*, the codes shared among a set of social groups ranging from narrow *neighbourhood* allusions to the statements that could be found addressing the widest city audience.

One such example that was later to turn into a referential point around the 'Akademija' (Academy) club in Belgrade was the writing on the wall that lasted for more than a decade. It simply spelt: 'AKADEMIJA REPUBLIKA'. 'Academy - Republic' is a statement behind which concepts that are very difficult for outsider's reading if the vocabulary and contexts are not entirely clarified. The multiple layers of meaning consist of a *parole* taken from political discourse, being the reference point, even the counterpoint of all Yugoslav crises, the identification of a name with the appropriate place and its purpose, and of the sense of identity built around an unusual night-club.

The most refined layer is related to a 'mentality', which could be simplified as a 'mode of communication', to be more specific, a satirical sense of self, present at every point in Belgrade's artistic scenes, across generations. The last statement might sound as a result of partisan bias, and it probably is: yet only in form and not in effect, there are anecdotes around which a thread of narrative was built with respect to the Belgrade's 'mentality'. A number of plays and biographical accounts, films and books, poems and songs, paintings, records, posters and videos testify that this sense of self-mockery, self-examination, satire and irony is not only present throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century but that it is also subjected to the meta-reflexivity of self-mockery, self-examination, satire and irony. The latter statement - on humour - has to be included because the whole point behind the 'AKADEMIJA REPUBLIKA' graffiti could be seriously misunderstood in the light of recent political history of the Balkans. The "Great Rock 'n' Roll Party" that failed to compete in the 1990 Serbian parliamentary elections had a simple political programme: Belgrade was to secede from Yugoslavia, and to be announced an Independent Rock 'n' Roll Republic. This idea might have been taken from the quoted graffiti that was already adorning the walls of the Faculty of Fine Arts for a few years back.

The slogan that was paraphrased in the graffito had a far more serious, ominous background. The crisis that led to the eventual destruction of Yugoslavia started unfolding on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1981, when a group of Albanian students in Pristina University started to protest in the student refectory. The protest was soon to spread and spill onto the streets of Kosovan towns. The slogan they used was 'Kosovo - Republic', referring to the clause in the 1974 Constitution of SFR Yugoslavia that allowed *republics, but not autonomous provinces* to secede from the Federation. The right to self-determination until secession was guaranteed to each and every one of the Republics.

Kosovo and Vojvodina were the only two autonomous provinces in Yugoslavia, both constituent parts of the Republic of Serbia. By being given the status of a Republic, Kosovo would have had the right for self-determination and full statehood. Not getting into the complex power-games played within the Yugoslav League of Communists<sup>29</sup>, nor into the formation of oligarchies that took power in parts of former Yugoslavia, eventually leading to the violent break-up of the Federation, this analysis will focus on the signifying practice behind the cited Belgrade graffiti.

The slogan, requiring a change of political status for Kosovo, became commonplace in Yugoslav political discourse during the Eighties. It simultaneously came to signify the deepest fears of some and the highest hopes of the others. It became a powerful symbol of the political, social, ideological, and economic crisis in the country. It had also become the signifier of rebellion and something that would not be easily uttered in front of authority, even as a joke. The 'Akademija' mentioned in the graffiti was not the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, as someone walking down central Belgrade might have assumed. This kind of error would have made the writing on the wall even more problematic. Nor was it Plato's Academy. It was a club, at that point still not identified by the general public - the panopticum had not being fully functional in observing the *deviants*.

---

<sup>29</sup> The euphemistic name the Communist Party took soon after the 1948 break-up with the Soviets.

The graffiti scroll 'AKADEMIJA - REPUBLIKA' could be read in a number of ways in its several layers. One of such readings will be presented here, under the assumption that it is most likely to be a variation among several forms, but not something that would be disputed by a meaning remote or opposed to the following structure.

"There is a crisis in the country; the crisis is deep. It could go wrong."

"The crisis involves identity, based on statehood and nationhood."

"Disconcerting and dangerous as it is, the whole thing is ridiculous."

"*We*' do not care. Our identification is with a lifestyle."

"*We*' *WILL* make jokes about disconcerting matters."

Another interpretation of the same graffiti would observe the statements in a different order and with a slightly different emphasis.

"This is the 'Academy'. It is not only a school of Arts."

"There is a strong sense of identity about this place."

"*I*' (*anonymously*) assert this identity for *us* (*a semi-exclusive group*)."

"*I*' proclaim to be no different than anyone belonging to an *Other* ethnicity."

"*My* identity is in my civil values, liberties and aesthetic."

"*I/we* do not care for the difference thus proclaimed."

Tackling an issue burdened with layers of political meaning the anonymous author of this graffiti - famous in the adequate social and cultural milieu - had not only addressed the notion of subcultural (underground) identity against the background of political discourse that shook the whole society. By contrasting a dangerous discussion with something as 'trivial' as a statement related to a night-club, he had created a 'reductio ad absurdum'. The author had collapsed the argument into absurdity - identifying identity with the freedom of choice, where statehood and nationality became less significant than aesthetic preference and freedom of choice in terms of lifestyle and expressive forms<sup>30</sup>.

---

<sup>30</sup> The graffiti lent itself to name the documentary film 'Academy - Republic' (1995/96).



### 7.2.3 MTV and Belgrade graffiti: formal and informal music media

The changes in the Serbian media literacy could be seen with respect to the two graffiti, as salient in their representation of Belgrade underground scene in the Nineties, as the 'AKADEMIJA REPUBLIKA' slogan was for the Eighties. The two are, as quoted 'Ovo nije MTV' - 'This is not MTV', and 'Vratite nam MTV, upropastio je najbolje ribe iz škole' - 'Give us back MTV, it[s absence] ruined the nicest *birds* in [our] school'. The former was a comment written in spray paint on the wall inside the Akademija club in 1991. The latter was sprayed in a central Belgrade street in 1996.

'This is not MTV' was written at the time when media literacy among the young visitors of the Academy club was so high that MTV was regarded as a signifier of the 'mediocre' mainstream popular music production. The club's DJs started borrowing ideas from MTV since the country's international isolation grew during the run-up to the war. Acquiring information through informal channels became less frequent than before. DJs started relying on mass media for information. The graffiti also indicated the club's deterioration between 1989 and 1992<sup>31</sup> affecting music policy and promotional practices.

Thornton (1997) identifies MTV as 'acceptable' by underground audiences examined in her work, resulting in the fact that acts presented on MTV are not identified as 'sell-outs', while presenting an act that aims at the 'underground' audience at Top of the Pops as enormously counter-productive. Top of the Pops is 'seen as the unrivalled nemesis of the underground and the main gateway to mass culture' (Thornton, 1995: 123). Comparing this to the statement written on the wall at the 'Academy' in 1991, that stated 'this is not MTV', shows the degree of media literacy of the club's audience at the time. The latter relates to various forms of information dissemination, including flyers and informal networking.

---

<sup>31</sup> This was often referred to in the accounts made in the 'Akademija Republika' documentary.

Comparing the findings represented in Thornton's work in relation to MTV to the first graffiti quoted above, it appears that the rigour in terms of authenticity and underground credibility at the 'Academy' club was, by Thornton's criteria, higher than the ones found in her research. It must be said, however, that this attitude was to be expected because the 'Academy' was one of the best clubs in former Yugoslavia. This example, however, shows the high level of media literacy within the Belgrade underground scene before the war. Conversely, the case of the more recent MTV-related graffiti has a very different reading. Until 1996, MTV's programme was randomly available on different terrestrial television channels in Belgrade. (It is not the focus of this discussion to determine how a satellite channel became broadcast on terrestrial television, though some interesting questions on intellectual property could be raised here). The graffiti as quoted above shows a completely different discursive position.

It implies that '*ribe*' (equivalent in UK slang is '*birds*'), girls in the school the author of the graffiti was attending are 'ruined'. If the lack of access to MTV has to do anything with the fact that the girls are 'ruined', the possible implication could be related to the channel's influence on the girls' stylistic preference in music, clothing, etc. Without the information on fashion and music, the girls were 'ruined'. The latter is a harsh word to be used in relation to entertainment content, unless something really bad is going on. What could be that bad? For a teenager who calls for the return of MTV, it seems to be the whole set of factors affecting the signifying practices in relation to music and the related aesthetic and ethical issues. Could it be that the girls from his schools started watching TV Pink and fell under the influence of Turbo-folk music and the diesel subculture? This is very likely to be the case having in mind that the message was written in a tone that clearly implies despair.

Serbian graffiti rarely took the form of meticulous artwork characterising Hip-hop subcultures (though the author recalls such graffiti appearing in Belgrade in 1997). They were 'writings on the wall' in the most literal form of that ancient metaphor. "Dzaba ste farbali" has a free translation in "You wasted all that paint"; the graffiti was written with a rough brush, in white paint, over the

neatly refurbished scarlet wall of the 8<sup>th</sup> Belgrade Grammar School. It became a reference point in Belgrade rock subcultures. This student prank epitomises their teasingly dry humour. “JUST DO IT” accompanied with a ‘Nike’ sign appeared on a street wall during the 1996/97 street protests.

This total re-articulation of an advertising slogan was easily readable to some and meaningless to others, depending on their respective social, political and educational backgrounds. Reading the two graffiti referring to MTV and the three described here requires media literacy and knowledge of specific contexts in which they were written. Barthes explains such practices in the ‘Change of the Object Itself’ (1977). No longer are the ‘mythologies’ transparent because media literacy has increased since 1957 when he wrote the essay under that title. ‘Any student’ could be aware of myths and uses them in analysis. However, the populace’s increased awareness of media myths and their implied meanings, results in shifts in the *signifier itself*.

Signifying practice of *signifiante* consists of these superimposed significations that connote each other within the signifier itself. A complex and changeable sign with such internal dialectic structure subsequently has an increased number of possible meanings. Such meanings become strictly context-specific because their readings can change over time. However, if a signifier becomes burdened with meaning within a particular subculture, it could be abstracted to independent existence. One such example is the black motorcycle jacket. Present in a plethora of subcultures, it always signified forms of ‘delinquent’ and ‘deviant’ behaviour.

As Barthes explains, all narratives are both distributional and integrational. The integrational forms of signification, through metaphors and iconic signs form the points of ‘arbitrary closure’. One example comes from a graffiti, reading “Kao da niceg nije ni bilo” (Serbian for “As if nothing ever happened”). Written in 1996, after the sanctions were suspended and the country’s government had celebrated the Dayton peace accords, the graffiti writer asked several questions in that apparently simple statement. This scroll questioned to the state of Serbian civil society after the war and sanctions

have resulted in loss of life, ruined Balkan economies, plunged hundreds of thousands of educated young people into emigration, fuelled crime and corruption and brought tens of thousands of refugees into the cities. Using this title for their self-released<sup>32</sup> 1998 album, 'Dza ili Bu' have clearly sided themselves with the critics of society. Their statement was a moment of arbitrary closure, where the sign was cemented in a critical, subversive and rebellious reading. Being an underground rock group with a relatively narrow audience in the country, without an appropriate distribution network and little media exposure, combined with little or no disposable income among consumers meant that 'Dza ili Bu' reached smaller numbers of people than the graffiti in central Belgrade.

### 7.3.1 Coherence, articulation and signifying the Belgrade underground music scene

Ready to accept the term 'underground' with regards to music and art, Boris Mladenović is part of the Belgrade band 'Jarboli' ('Masts')<sup>33</sup>. A track that significantly departs from their semi-acoustic style was recorded during a live performance. It features on the "Leopardov rep" ("Leopard's Tail") compilation released by Beograund. Mladenović suggested that the "Leopardov rep" compilation CD represented a notable cross-section of some of the most recent developments in Belgrade underground music<sup>34</sup>. The album presented the work of various artists; its stated purpose was to protect the work from oblivion rather than the pursuit of technical perfection<sup>35</sup>.

---

<sup>32</sup> The CD was released on Sabljari's 'Fabrika' label.

<sup>33</sup> Their lyrics have double-edged, sardonic overtones, standing in stark contrast with the music, best described as 'guitar pop' such as in the case of the song "Da li u stvari ona nije bila oprezna" ("Wasn't she in fact just careless?"). The story of a girl run over by a train while listening to music on her "Walkman", is narrated by the vocalist and loosely structured as a poem in prose.

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix 12.

<sup>35</sup> This CD bears conceptual similarity to Fleka's '*Urbazona-Trotorock*' project, presenting what was happening on the underground rock scene regardless of the low quality of recordings. Raw material was released on audiocassettes bearing the '*Urbazona-Trotorock*' label. The project was designed with the assistance of art-photographer Vuka Mijusković, who added her creative input to Fleka's conceptual guidance.

This was an attempt to provide *historical reference of the present*. It turned out that funds were insufficient for further such releases. The historical significance of this record had already been proven in some cases, such as the project 'Gori skola' ('School's on Fire'), made up of some members of the Unexpected Force and a known DJ. This concept-band did not last long enough to result in many valuable recordings but this snapshot shows how the elements of what was to become known as 'Handmade Techno' developed.

It was interesting that B. Mladenović, apart from talking of his involvement with Cosmic Sounds record label and the 'Coxless Pair' project, implied that Beoground were an interesting up-and-coming company dealing in music production and related issues<sup>36</sup>. The leaflet accompanying the CD stated that the track by Jarboli titled "08/02/1998"<sup>37</sup> represented a prime example of Handmade Techno, performed during their live concert in the Cinema Rex venue. This is the first occasion that Handmade Techno was found in a promotional leaflet referring to a band other than the Unexpected Force. Jarboli were not a group normally associated with Techno music. It is likely that this came through the influence of Boris Mladenović, who was involved with the Unexpected Force on their visit to London and later became a member of the band. Reading the chronology of events and the semiotics of the title "08/02/1998" will unravel the chronological and consequential sequence of stylistic developments in Belgrade's Handmade Techno.

The title of the track is purely numerical, showing the intention to signify an artificial, technological, emotionless approach and, provided with the interpretation in the leaflet that accompanies the CD, signifies the first recorded occasion on which Jarboli experimented with Handmade Techno. The style in this case goes through its phase of early adoption across the boundaries within the scene. Arguing that there is no such thing as a common feature of style among the contemporary Belgrade musicians, and that such

---

<sup>36</sup> Longitudinal nature of the reflective participation has enabled the researcher to unravel the 'secrets' encrypted in the interview with B. Mladenovic, announcing an interesting business move that has taken place between September 2001 and July 2002.

<sup>37</sup> The track was titled after the date of performance.

common features never existed in reality, B. Mladenović involuntarily uses the term '*hacker scene*' with reference to the work of CRSN.

Jerić also negates the existence of a scene, criticising the attempts made by Dragan Ambrozić to 'pigeonhole' the early work of this band, Pressing and others that have emerged in the early Nineties. Placed in the appropriate context, its validity becomes problematic. It is equally difficult to imagine a scene characterised by a total uniformity of style, as it is to suggest that musicians that communicate and befriend each other do not exchange influences in the slightest - even involuntarily. Straw (1991, 1997) defines the term '*scene*' precisely along the same lines by which the two musicians account on some amount of social cohesion.

The result is interesting; the self-perception of the two musicians suggests that the academic notion of '*scene*' is equivalent to what the two practitioners identify as '*community*' or '*generation*'. On the other hand, the meaning of the term '*music community*' implies the type of coherence and historical continuity that are dismissed by the two practitioners as characteristics of a '*scene*'. No other respondents have questioned the terminology on this level. Thus the term '*scene*' will not be curtailed albeit with two cautionary notes in mind: theory should imitate life and not vice versa; the heterogeneity of genres, opinions and modes of communication necessitates a clear terminology.

The notion of '*scene*' does not limit its music and discourse to one predominant mode of formative expression, as the two interviewees tend to suggest. It appears that they are doing so in order to emphasise the individuality of musicians and their groups. The author of this research study emphasises the need for an established formative language of stylistic, aesthetic and any other form of academic reference when discussing music in cultural terms. The introduction of the term '*scene*' comes as a result of an attempted workable compromise between phenomena and their descriptions.

Straw (1997) suggests that the term, '*music community*' is constricted, depending on contemporary practices as well as on the heritage of one or

more musical idioms. On the other hand the term 'scene' signifies a range of coexisting musical and social practices. Such practices follow varying courses of change and cross-fertilisation, affecting each other yet retaining their own distinct identities. Accounting for the comments made by the two interviewees, it is necessary to note that sharp discursive and chronological differences need to be taken into account without insisting on developmental continuity.

However, until recently all of the interviewed practitioners belonged to a unified though heterogeneous underground. The complex meaning of 'underground' provides the means for the formation of a good working terminology. Prior to the changes of October 2000, the diverse interest groups were represented by one counterculture whose artistic expression was formulated through the Belgrade underground scene. The Sixties' counterculture was composed of equally diverse participants (Bennett, 2001: 28; Green, 1998) unified by a set of common interests. One example of such an organic alliance formed in Serbian cities during the Nineties is examined below<sup>38</sup>.

Jugoslovenski Festival Jeftinog Filma (JFJF, 'Yugoslav Cheap Film Festival') was formed in Subotica in 1998 as a result of collaboration with the Belgrade-based Serbian Low-Fi Video Festival. Both events have included musicians and visual artists from the outset, some as participants, some as followers. By 2001, both festivals have grown to the extent that they included live events and exhibitions. The band 'Jarboli' performed at the JFJF Festival, held in Subotica in July 2001. Not restricted to the official part of the five-day event, members of the band animated the festival audience participating in informal events during the festival. They were seen singing songs by the American band 'They Might Be Giants' to an independent film director from the US, who was filming them while appearing to be amused and rather under the influence of Montenegrin grape brandy.

---

<sup>38</sup> For a detailed account, consult the author's reflexive diary (11<sup>th</sup> August 2001), Appendix 1.

'They Might Be Giants' were, according to the members of Jarboli, one of their major conceptual, musical and artistic influences. The float of signifiers could be read from the improbable set of developments initiated by the chance meeting of the American independent filmmaker and the Belgrade band. The filmmaker promised to take the tape to the band's members in the US, announcing, in an interesting twist of fate, that he has common acquaintances and is likely to reach them.

The Low-Fi Video movement is a good example of how the cultural change that emerged from the 1996/97 street protests found a valve in the idea of two film and video enthusiasts, Milos Kukurić and Aleksandar Gubaš - an idea that was widely embraced by the audiences-turned-filmmakers. The *do-it-yourself* ethos of the first Low-Fi Video festival held in July 1997 bore a similar form of *significance* to the ad-hoc raves/concerts performed by street protesters some months before. However, there is no consequential implication that the Low-Fi Video festivals would not have happened if there were no protests during the previous winter.

Stating this would be almost as erroneous as the statement by the B92 chief editor Veran Matic that "*there was no culture to report so WE had to invent some*" (Collin, 2001: 119)<sup>39</sup>. It would also be unreflective to suggest that the Unexpected Force owed its distinctive style only to the street protests of 1996/97, or that Low-Fi Video can be solely attributed to the same set of events that changed the way political dissent was expressed through culture. However, the phrase Handmade Techno was derived from the '*Rave without Techno*': a term coined during the protests. The latter signified the type of street parties happening in Berlin's "LOVEPARADE" where thousands of people partake in electronic dance music events (Bennett, 2000: 96).

The '*Rave without Techno*' happened at a time when, as was seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the youth of Belgrade were still sharply divided between

---

<sup>39</sup> Note that the 'we' present in Matic's statement is analogous to the 'us' as the self-identification with the company when Paunović discussed the troublesome negotiations with the Unexpected Force in his research interview.



'dieselers'<sup>40</sup> on one and 'epileptics' and 'ravers' on the other side of the divide. The latter two groups would occasionally overlap, and were both present in the street protests, while the former were associated with the dominant political option. Some dieselers and their 'defining Others' would rarely mingle together in dance events (at the Academy, 1993, UMUB parties in 1995, etc). The temporal limitations of such interaction were strict and did not happen during the 1996/97 protest. However, as explored in Chapters 4 and 5, significant interactions between rock-orientated 'epileptics' and 'šminkeri/ravers' happened during the winter protests, creating the grounds for an audience that would soon recognise Handmade Techno as a form of expression that merged both musical *underground* 'traditions'.

The catchphrase '*Rave without Techno*', evolving into 'Handmade Techno' had signified the acceptance of electronic dance music by a number of adamant 'rockers'. The very wording is significant: '*without Techno*' associates the stubborn youths that had decided to live in the *better past*<sup>41</sup>, and not accept Techno music. This was not only a result of aesthetic preference but also because it signified the *bad, worse present* from which they had escaped into the music that signifies pre-war 'normality' described by Gordy (1999, 2001). Such forms of glorifying the past signify a conscious choice of 'living in oblivion', a more sinister interpretation of 'underground', relating to yet another reason why Laki of the Unexpected Force is weary of the term. He says that the term 'underground' was often misused by people who are not ready to admit their problems, such as lack of professionalism and addiction to drugs.

Laki is proud of the fact that Handmade Techno was associated with his band and that it appears to be an authentic contribution to contemporary music. When asked to comment on the fact that a British dance band, 'Faithless' have also performed their music in live events using instruments normally

---

<sup>40</sup> By the time the street protests in Belgrade happened, turning into a carnivalesque sight, the number of skinheads started to grow.

<sup>41</sup> Title of the book by Petar Lukovic, journalist and columnist, having for its topic the early days of Yugoslav pop music. Published in the late Eighties, it 'announces' the time when the past would be considered 'better' by many, signifying both the lost peace and escapism.

associated with rock and Jazz music, Laki said: “come on, *you know that we came first*”<sup>42</sup>. He argued that independently, even *because of isolation*, the Unexpected Force had created its own genre. The example of Jarboli shows how this influence started affecting others.

Looking at the dates in sequence it appears that the influence that the ‘Unexpected Force’ had left on ‘Jarboli’ had predated the involvement that B. Mladenović had with the band that initiated this stylistic influence. Furthermore, this shows that the process of cross-fertilisation that characterises a vivid and developing scene had started relatively early after the ‘Unexpected Force’ came to be identified by the audiences, colleagues and authors alike as a distinct musical phenomenon.

The ‘zero gig’ as Orge refers to<sup>43</sup>, was taking place in July/August 1997. The track recorded at the KST venue dates 8<sup>th</sup> February 1998, less than seven months after the ‘Unexpected Force’ had their first appearance, at that point still nameless and their ‘Handmade Techno’ style in its earliest stages. The ‘Человек-Машина’ (Russian: ‘Man-Machine’) performance held at the ‘Academy’ club, organised by the author of this study, then a freelance artist, music and media consultant, collaborating with Low-Fi Video and a number of musicians and artists, was believed to be the first event when a DJ and two rock musicians have collaborated, creating an event that would merge the distinct styles of Techno and rock.

The ‘Man-Machine’ performance was used as the title of the event, paying homage to an album of a German concept-band, ‘Kraftwerk’, that has strongly influenced the development of several music genres including Techno. This event was held in May 1998 and happened to coincide with the development of ‘Gori skola’ (‘School’s on Fire’) project between a DJ and some of the members of the ‘Unexpected Force’. The rapid development of a part of the Belgrade underground music scene shows how quickly the flow of signifiers moves from place to place, performer to performer and author to author,

---

<sup>42</sup> See Appendix 12.

<sup>43</sup> Interview, Appendix 9.

provided that *it is recognised by the audience*. This is why Jerić was correct in his criticism of the attempts to invent names for an emerging scene.

Trying to pinpoint every minute detail of style is likely to fail if it does not take into account the fact that a snapshot cannot represent a process. This process of stylistic formation is bound to evolve *over time* as was the case with Darkwood Dub, that have in recent years become a 'mainstream band of the *Other Serbia*' and Zoran Radović of Pressing that had evolved into a genuine Belgrade underground musician. Therefore the stylistic development of music as *effective signifying practice* is subject to the *articulation process* that takes part on the relation between the audience and the artists, the artists and the media, the media and the audience, and all the more or less likely relationships between these agents.

This took little time to happen with the 'Unexpected Force' and Handmade Techno, because the contradictions in society that have created the tensions resulting in new forms of communication and signification were over-determined to the extent to which everything mattered in sign-production. Unstructured noise turning into a recognisable form that had bound an ad-hoc community, lowering boundaries between strata in such a sense that discursive distinctions between scenes and followers of scenes in music became irrelevant, leading to the final appropriation of a stylistic influence among the previously reluctant audiences<sup>44</sup>.

All these social and cultural factors have led to the quick development of a new form of expression in music that was quickly identified and articulated by the audience's participation. One other factor that helped shape the floating signification in Belgrade artistic underground scenes of the late Nineties was the *Do It Yourself* approach to culture, art, and even politics. The latter could be read from the fact that the citizens have discovered their power during the 1996/97 protest, until the sense of self-liberation was taken away by both the

---

<sup>44</sup> This articulation of change was further sped-up by the fact that one of the '*gurus*' of the Belgrade Rock scene, Koja of 'Disciplina Kicme' had promoted his first album in five years, a record that was made in the UK under the strong influence of another electronic dance music style, Drum 'n' Bass.

opposition that suffered from infighting and self-indulgence and the corrupt machinery of oppression.

### 7.3.2 Metaphorical freedom and restrictions of form

The cities and towns of Serbia were 'liberated' through *DIY* protests in which dance music played a significant part. Thus Techno music was *made by hand* and the audiences have become instrumental in constructing the social and cultural space for a new musical form, and as soon as it was identified, it bore the name coined few months earlier in relation to collective performance of willpower.

On the other hand, the Low-Fi Video had invited all to bring whatever they have taped, and feel that is worth sharing with others. The films presented at the first Low-Fi Video Festival in July 1997 included titles like "The Grand Boiler-room Robbery" ("Velika pljačka kotlarnice") where the *author* had taped a middle-aged janitor explaining how someone had stolen bits of the heating equipment that was servicing a whole apartment-block. The social implications of such a 'creation' were as important as the humorous title of a film that was likely to have been taken to the police as evidence of an unsolved theft.

The Low-Fi Video movement had developed to such an extent from its early days that it keeps attracting a number of contributors from the country and abroad. In a recent advertisement posted at the Low-Fi Video mailing list, Rambo Amadeus, had announced a competition inviting authors to direct a promotional video for his new track due to be released along with a forthcoming album.

'This *estrada* is such a *globalising* factor'<sup>45</sup>, stated Fleka in the interview<sup>46</sup>, referring to Rambo Amadeus and some of his self-publicist ploys. The two

---

<sup>45</sup> Fleka constructed this wordplay from Serbian 'globalizirajuci' ('globalising') and 'grob' ('grave'). For a thorough explanation of the whole statement, see below (page 313).

<sup>46</sup> Appendix 2.

wordplays used by Fleka need to be explored here: 'globalizacija' and 'estrada'. The latter is most likely originating from French 'estrade'<sup>47</sup>. The literal meaning of the word is 'platform' and in its Serbian usage was associated with the 'stage', thus referring to theatre, vaudeville and entertainment in general.

In modern Serbian it is rarely used with reference to stage art and it is more likely to be associated with 'cheap' entertainment, especially since the term was appropriated and referred to in the Serbian mass-media, connoting folk music business and turbo-folk 'celebrities'. Rambo Amadeus's attempts at self-promotion that were often associated with the urban-peasant image he occasionally perpetuated to the extent to which the boundary between the musician and his public 'alter ego' had seemed to vanish.

When the researcher pointed out that R. A. was consciously playing with dialect as the form that corresponded to his musical experiments, Fleka, who rarely left any questions unanswered<sup>48</sup>, replied "oh yes, he is an exceptional artist; but the way he *flirts with the mediocre...*"

Fleka strongly criticised the ambiguity with which Rambo Amadeus (R. A.) approached his ironically<sup>49</sup> conceived self-image. The catalytic impact the latter had on media articulations of 'Neofolk' should not be left without examination. Coining the term 'Turbo-folk', first intended to signify his parody of urban peasant music subcultures, R. A. created a name that later came to signify something very different, unwittingly providing the future genre with its name. While some understood the humorous remark, the marketers of Turbo-folk utilised the name in literal not ironic terms.

---

<sup>47</sup> French language had affected Serbian culture prior to the Second World War and its influence can be detected and found in the present.

<sup>48</sup> Indeed, he had barely left any space for questions, conducting the interview in the form of authoritative autobiographical narrative.

<sup>49</sup> Rambo Amadeus took the irony one step further from the controversial aesthetics of the Sarajevan 'new primitives'. Their sophisticated critique of 'urban-peasant' phenomena was misinterpreted and appropriated by the bands representing 'rural rock' that became the part of the process that led to the creation of 'Turbo-folk'.

Referring to a much earlier development, Fleka said: “that very moment I knew we were doomed”. That event, arguably the first step in the genealogy of the Turbo-folk ‘estrada’, was the first occasion when ‘Jutro’ (‘Morning’) the band that was to develop into ‘Bijelo Dugme’ performed in a park on the outskirts of Belgrade.

Following Fleka’s argument on R. A.’s *flirt with the mediocre*, the wordplay ‘grobalsing’ deserves further examination. The original form of the ‘grobalsing’ nature of ‘estrada’, as Fleka used it was the word ‘grobalizirajuci’. This mock construct combines two words. ‘Grob’ is the Serbian word for ‘grave’; ‘grobalizirajuci’ is an adverb that means ‘globalising’. Further reading into Fleka’s ironic wordplay<sup>50</sup> reveals a reading into the possible grave consequences of the globalisation of entertainment. Indeed, dieselers’ fashion and ethics are barely any different from the signifying practices of many violent urban subculture *mythologies*: the stereotypes of belligerent street ‘heroes’ are perpetuated in popular culture far outside Serbia’s urban ghettos.

On the other hand, the metaphor that Fleka used to describe what he believes ‘underground’ is, appears to be as poetic as double-edged and ambiguous it is in ethical, aesthetic and even business terms. The condensed metaphor he offers in relation to the development of underground culture is represented by a tree. The roots are under the ground, symbolising a source of nourishment, depth and stability; the trunk represents public creative processes and the eventual commercial outcome bearing fruit. Further readings would imply ‘branching out’ as stylistic diversification, etc. The statement he makes about underground in art, music and any other form of cultural activity refers to the inevitable corruption of the fruit, result of the widening of the number of participants privy to the knowledge reserved for the few.

References to mediocrity of ‘estrada’ (entertainment) and ‘estradni underground’ (staged/entertainment underground) introduced subsequently in

---

<sup>50</sup> Even without the application of reflexive analysis, the researcher can testify that Fleka does pay plenty of attention to semiotic and semantic games, using them on numerous occasions in radio programmes and common speech.

this interview represent a reading very similar to 'underground-mainstream' suggested by B. Mladenović. The likelihood of any collaboration between the two individuals was minuscule. This makes the conceptual correspondence between the two independently developed explorations of the tension between underground and mainstream doubly significant. This shows that the two interviewees, both deeply involved in different generations, genres and market segments, share the opinion on one of the aspects of authenticity.

There is little doubt that Fleka's approach is an elitist one, though this form of elitism is hardly recognisable in the literal meaning of the word, often assigned to the economic and subsequent class-structured position. This elitism is the elitism of *knowledge*, more akin to Foucauldian concepts of power than the classical Marxist identification of class as the foundation of social inequality.

Looking at the problem from a different viewpoint, it is possible to identify the elitism expressed in Fleka's argument as power that could be constructed and asserted through symbolic resistance. The consensus offered by the dominant strata could be seen as Fleka's criticism of *mediocrity*. The refusal of this discourse of dominance is related to the subversion through 'underground elitism' or exclusivity.

This notion of exclusivity is even present in the apparently open dance scenes that have gained momentum in Belgrade underground music production. This notion of underground status is also based on hierarchies of knowledge, though the perceived social *purpose* appears different. Exclusivity is explored in Thornton's 'subcultural capital' (1997) as well as in Bennett's analysis of the practices employed in protecting the tolerant behaviour within the scene (2000: pp. 90-91).

While Fleka's approach to underground communication relates to the *Rock ethos*, emphasising the '*provocative*' nature of underground opposing the entertainment/status quo, B. Mladenović suggests that provocation need not

be relevant. The response given by Laki<sup>51</sup>, a musician who belongs to a project identified with rock-musicians' approach to a different musical structure seems to correspond to a certain extent to what Fleka has said, while strongly differing from some of the other issues. It will be seen that the difference expressed here is one that shows a different logical structure behind the discourse of 'underground' authenticity.

As the flower that never blooms, underground becomes a signifier of 'infertility'. Contrary to the *'inverse elitism'* of other interviewees, whose stylistic preferences relate to Rock, Laki believes that there is no justification for staying 'underground' indefinitely. He considers it a necessary but passing phase of artistic development, stating that 'you cannot be angry all your life'. When asked by the interviewer whether it is related to the diversification of musical forms and corresponding discourses resulting in the 'death of tribalism'<sup>52</sup> and of giving up on rebellion, Laki provides a thoughtful answer<sup>53</sup> consisting of several layers.

He notes that there is a strong argument in the fact that the past decade has introduced a diversity of musical genres not seen before. He had continued by saying that this could be understood as a positive development allowing a greater creative liberty of musicians and the giving the audiences enormous freedom of choice. However, he did not agree with the latter part of the argument, related to the rebellion, or resistance through music. He had identified the problem of finding a suitable definition for the terms of rebellion, continuing that the music of the Unexpected Force was strongly influenced by Fela Kuti, a Nigerian musician whose work was known for social criticism and the capacity of creating upheaval. Laki also adds that the influence of Reggae could not be neglected in the work of the Unexpected Force.

---

<sup>51</sup> See Appendix 12, interview. Date of entry: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

<sup>52</sup> This reference to articles published in NME (1998) is *not* to be mistaken with Bennett's concept (2000, 2001) of neo-tribes derived from Maffesoli (1996) and Hetherington (1992).

<sup>53</sup> Appendix 12. Most parts of this interview were inaudible (see introduction to Appendices 9-12). Those that could be fully recovered were quoted in the Appendix.



Arriving at the intersection of the signifying practices so different and diverse, the Unexpected Force had used the metaphor taken from the form of classical Greek drama: *Deus Ex Machina*, the agent of divine justice arriving at the point of juncture of the classical theatrical narrative, resolving the struggle between forces entangled in the play.

In the case of this project/band, the association between the perceived form of expression and its several constituent elements developed through an unlikely complex signifying process does not fall within the conceptual framework of Techno music. It is more akin to the pessimistic rebelliousness ascribed to industrial rock (Derry, 1997), combined with the self-reflexive sardonic humour present in Belgrade underground Rock since the early Eighties, and the conceptual influences of the non-compliance to domineering forces (Reggae).

The logical links between the resistance to racial oppression at the root of reggae and the corresponding sophisticated forms of subversion in the case of Belgrade underground music might appear to be loose and arbitrary. There is, however, a strong case to justify this link not only when applied to the expressed influence of Reggae in the music of the Unexpected Force but to the principle of stylistic formation that had led to the constitution of formally, very different signifying practices in Belgrade underground music.

### 7.3.3 Electronic means and Rock 'n' Roll aesthetic: Chernobyl in House

Sabljar, whose current project Chernobyl in House draws influences from classical music, ethnic traditions of the Balkans, and *Industrial* Rock suggests that music forms one of the most powerful modes of communication. Such communication overcomes the limitations of present market conditions affecting people across the boundaries of time.

*Quality stuff* still sells today; stuff of low quality has a much shorter life... How many faces have you seen change on 'Pink' [TV]... whom no one remembers... Also, 'New Kids on the Block', or, I don't know... such *creations*: when one is

spent, *they* create another... But, *in just one year no one will remember, let alone* twenty years, for example, while, to this day you can put a [Pink] Floyd album [on your record player] and listen to it. And you will be able to in fifty years. The same is with classical music that has survived for *many centuries*. Because it is something of value... so time simply *doesn't exist* [for it]. The 'Modern' is only connected to the moment while *true values* connect to eternity... or even if in the given moment they have not succeeded, someone will *dig them out in twenty years*... There never was a true value that did not eventually see the light of day<sup>54</sup>.

When the researcher asked Sabljar about the stylistic links between the music of Chernobyl in House and the musical genres known under the common name of '*Industrial*', the interviewee disagreed with the suggested description.

His response was shaped in the form of an explanation of the meaning of 'originality' in the music of Chernobyl in House. Sabljar insists that the authenticity of style developed by the musicians involved in this project is closely related to the sense of isolation, the direct consequence of which was the independent development of musical genres in Serbia during the Nineties.

M. T.: ...Serbian underground music: to what extent could we talk of some sort of originality? I believe that we could, but, what causes would you find for it?

Sabljar: I already spoke of the first point<sup>55</sup>. That is a strong point. [Then], isolation. Isolation from influences would be second. I mean, the scarcity of information; so, you are cut off in an environment without information from outside... then you have to reduce yourself to *your own idea and your own creation* without copying others, even *subconsciously* copying others... By the very virtue of that a basis of originality is created. That is one. Other... if we say that true ideas are created from suffering... Some *true* messages evolve from some kind of rebellion, which is again induced by suffering and for ten years we had *that and that only*, then, that too is an aspect of originality (chuckles)...

M. T.: Yes, yes...

Sabljar: ...guess I said enough.

In a similar sense the signification of performing Techno music on 'classical Rock instruments' (the case of the Unexpected Force) was a result of artistic

---

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Sabljar, Appendix 4. Date of entry: 10<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

<sup>55</sup> This refers to the definition of underground music *per se*, explored in Section 7.1.1.

intent operating under the constraints of economic and political isolation. Laki, Orge and Paunović described the work of the Unexpected Force as close to electronic dance music genres, yet expressed through the means of a '*Rock 'n' Roll performance*'. On the other hand, Sabljarić insists that in terms of music structure, Chernobyl in House should be categorised as Rock music, though the synthetic means of sound production (computers, synthesisers, samplers) are used by this concept-group extensively.

Sabljarić continues his account by saying that all efforts are made to enhance the sound by electronic means while maintaining the formative and signifying structure characteristic of Rock<sup>56</sup>. Regarding Chernobyl in House, the interviewee reinforces his earlier statements on favouritism characterising the business practices of B92. He says that Chernobyl in House deals with the sensitive issues B92 is likely to wish to avoid. The issue of globalisation inevitably emerges in discussion with Sabljarić. While Dza ili Bu dealt with social issues in Belgrade and Serbia, Chernobyl in House is concerned with global matters.

*Globalisation is such a small word for what it truly represents... We [Serbians] are fresh [in that respect]. They [people in the West] probably understand it better than we do. We have just been taken so we should go through two-three phases in order to get to the stage when we can start understanding it... This is why such [anti-globalisation] movements are strongest there, precisely there [in the West]. We are still seeing all that as, let us say, something nice, very nice.*

In his account of the band's ethical and aesthetic stance, the interviewee explains the origin of the name "Chernobyl in House". The group owes its name to a suitable coincidence forming a sign of social and political critique that spreads beyond Serbian society. The interviewee explained this coincidence in an earlier informal discussion. The researcher had pointed out that the band's name had a grammatical structure that would be rendered

---

<sup>56</sup> Analysing the sonic and tonal properties of music is not part of this study, so the subjective accounts provided by listeners, critics and authors, expert opinions of producers and musicians, and suggested links of signification that could be drawn in social, cultural, ethical and aesthetic terms are drawn indirectly.

incorrect by a native English speaker<sup>57</sup>, suggesting that 'Chernobyl in *the* House' would be a more appropriate syntactic formulation.

Sabljar's reply was surprising: the name of the band was derived from a computer virus. The name of the virus is quoted by band members as Chernobyl in House, abbreviated as CIH, its software command name being win32.cih. The '.cih' extension designates the name of the virus, dormant for months, becoming active on a specific date. When this happens, the virus attacks the computer's very basic systems. The following statement was conspicuous: the virus becomes active on 26<sup>th</sup> April every year, the date, which coincides with the date of the Chernobyl disaster. The virus would reveal itself just before destroying the 'BIOS' of an infected computer.

The band was formed during the [Nato] bombing [of Serbia] in that *paranoia*, I don't know, a kind of madness, when people were pondering on all sorts of things... We used those circumstances and shut ourselves in the studio that was in a way used as a shelter (chuckles)... '*studio-shelter*', where we were OK... people would occasionally sleep in there and so on... and the *mini-commune* thus created, where we *tripped about* making music. The initial idea wasn't even about a band, but, you know, 'let's record something, let's play and record some music', and from that [our] first songs emerged, some four or five of them... naturally, I mean, *very badly recorded* (chuckles)... We had many problems with drops in the electricity charge [voltage]... Losing electricity is more or less OK... But because we did almost everything on computers, when the *system collapses* at a sensible point, plenty of [recordings] get deleted... From all that, the band eventually emerged. There was a small group of people whom I allowed to use the studio, so they could bring their computers...<sup>58</sup>

The small computer network they have established in the studio was made to support an anti-war web-site, jokingly titled 'Krompir' ('Potato'). Eventually, the whole network was attacked by the '*CIH*' computer virus. The virus was dormant in the computers and had become active on the day of Chernobyl

---

<sup>57</sup> Most of the songs of this band are written and performed in English (apart from one track in German, titled 'Kinder'). If any attempt is made to promote this band in English-speaking countries, they will have to pay more attention to linguistic structures.

<sup>58</sup> Interview, Appendix 4 .

disaster, destroying most of the PCs' infrastructure. Sabljarić stated that they had just about enough time to identify the virus and save a couple of PCs.

The name came as something worth utilising for artistic purposes. The researcher's first, uninformed interpretation of the name "Chernobyl in House" was related to 'House' as the electronic music genre. This presented a problem for interpretation, if the reference was indeed drawn to *House music*, because the work of this band had no semblance to the above genre. The other initial reading was that the band was named after a 'nuclear disaster affecting a *mellow* genre of electronic dance music'. Such an 'attack' could symbolically result in the music that was the conceptual and musical opposite of House. While the latter is melodic and has many connotations to hedonism, both the sound and the lyrics of Chernobyl in House have dark overtones<sup>59</sup>.

This example shows the kinds of pitfalls that might affect a journalist, critic or cultural theorist if insufficient caution and rigour are applied to the work on classificatory analysis of a musical genre. This is reflected in the comments made by Jerić on the attempts of critical classification of the music of Belgrade bands emerging in the early Nineties. Without applying textual analysis, and/or consulting the *artists themselves* with regards to the nature and purpose of chosen stylistic forms.

The music and lyrics of Chernobyl in House refer to apocalyptic concerns. The extent to which this band is conceptually rounded comes from three examples, showing that their perceived authenticity depends on the effective use of *bricolage*. One relates to the effective manipulation of a sound *sample* featuring at the beginning of one of their songs. The second example relates to the title of the track sharing its name with the band, 'Chernobyl in House'. The third concerns the use of traditional ethnic music. In all three cases, tearing the meaning from its original context purposefully correlates to the newly created content.

---

<sup>59</sup> Such assumptions could be used for promotional purposes not analysis.

The first example comes from a song called 'Gates Control'. This piece symbolically tackles the monopolistic control of world software markets and examines its possible impact on numerous aspects of human activity. The track starts with a recording of Bill Gates' voice: "Microsoft is based on my vision of a computer on every desk in every home". The recording of the voice continues, until it is distorted: the sample is electronically manipulated, creating a piercing, screeching noise. This sound-effect resembles the noise of choking and vomiting; the track then introduces synthetic drums and computer-enhanced electric guitars. An unavoidable reading presents itself when the vocalist pronounces "Gates-control, gets-control, freedom - no more". Further connotations imply gatekeepers of information and '*Orwellian*' Internet surveillance.

The second is a song titled 'Chernobyl in House' from their first album, dedicated to the 1999 bombing of Serbia and the use of depleted Uranium. The subject is examined in the lyrics in a dry and sardonic manner, examining the politics behind the wartime situation in Serbia, and the broken hopes of ordinary people. A distorted voice pronounces the words "Chernobyl, Chernobyl in your house" is sampled and repeated at several points in the song<sup>60</sup>.

The third track titled 'Walk With Me' is the third example examined here. Musical appropriation of Balkan Gypsy tradition takes a very different form from the one by which Turbo-folk is recognised. The cello motif resembling a Gypsy ballad blends into electronic drums and distorted guitar sounds<sup>61</sup>. There is another interesting feature of this song deceptively appearing to have love as its main theme. The lyrics point at the enduring drug problem that has been affecting Serbia since the beginning of the war. However, the lyrics are dedicated to a young woman going out with a drug-addict. The narrator urges the girl: "leave your junky guy and walk with me".

---

<sup>60</sup> The album was pressed in the Ukraine, where the Chernobyl power plant was based. The interviewee cites this as an uncanny coincidence.

<sup>61</sup> This is a prime example of what Sabljär refers to as an influence of traditional and classical elements in their music.

### 7.3.4 Escape form Utopia: Techno as a multilayered concept

Rade B, a Belgrade Techno DJ expresses his concerns about the effects of drug-abuse. The following excerpt was taken from an interview with Rade B and Pedja Pavleski<sup>62</sup>. One of the indicators of the increasing popularity of stimulants could be found in the changing tastes of Techno audiences. Rade B starts this account by talking of a hypothetical young man visiting a *dance* event.

Rade B.: ... All that apathy is the reason why all this is happening with drugs. *He* has enough money to pay for entry and to sell two or three 'E'-s<sup>63</sup> to his mates so he can have a free pill, and drink water all night. He has nothing in his head, nothing about *creation*, there is no link with reality, it is not about music, but about the *beat, fast, raw and strong*... and in a sense that is OK. But [this happens] from the beginning [of an event], from eight o' clock: there is no *warm-up* where the first DJ lifts them up and the third slows the people down... so they can go home. *Here*, [the beat] starts from the onset, immediately with Techno, I am talking about those groups of young people, those kids ranging from high school to twenty-somethings... now I said *a lot of things*... (worryingly)<sup>64</sup>

This statement follows an unexpected diversion of topic. The interviewee initially talked about the difference between the mainstream and underground music in the West and in Serbia. Once reassured by the researcher that the unpleasant diversion is accepted, he continued talking of music and drugs.

Rade B.: That has changed... there is a *lot of chemistry* around these days... the problem is that *it* is not talked about over here... Now a campaign [against drugs] has started... showing, in a blatant kind of way, that [taking drugs] is *shit*. Maybe it's better that way because people have become desensitised, *so the cattle can understand*...you can't communicate through a sophisticated vocabulary with people that *do not want to understand*. I mean, that they have

---

<sup>62</sup> The two individuals have not met before, belonging to very different strands of Belgrade underground music scenes. Rade B works as a Techno DJ; Pavleski is a Rock musician.

<sup>63</sup> 'E' is a universally used reference to Ecstasy. This drug was originally associated with electronic dance music genres in the West (Miles, 2000; Thornton, 1997) but has entered Serbia in recent years.

<sup>64</sup> Appendix 1, reflexive diary, interview excerpt. Date of entry: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

not developed a value-system that makes them go to clubs because of *music*, this or that, but... its bent out of shape, everything is.”

P. Pavleski: “Well, the drugs over here [in Serbia]... have long crossed the borders of *underground*. It’s so much of that stuff, you can go to a folk party...”

Rade B.: “Everywhere.

One of the apparent paradoxes concerning the ‘healthy machismo’ of Dieselers is that this subculture, associated with Turbo-folk genre misread by Collin as promoting ‘*traditional*’ patriarchal values, is deeply associated with drug-abuse. The ‘folk parties’ Pavleski had mentioned represent the most easily identifiable Dieselers events. The abuse of illegal drugs, not uncommon in Western countries, had become widespread in Serbia during the Nineties. None of the other interviewees had focused much attention on this but it is worth mentioning as an integral part of youth subcultures. From the followers of Rock to Hip-hop, *dance* and Turbo-folk, stimulants and opiates alike have entered the subculture, to the extent to which people who are not aware of their original meaning use slang words such as ‘tripovati’ and ‘stondirati’<sup>65</sup>.

Rather than going into a depth analysis of drug-abuse, the author of this study needed to refer to this topic, since it emerged in the above interview. There is yet another reason for this. The argument on drug-abuse was cynically used when the previous regime closed down clubs and outlawed small private enterprises such as UMUB, described in Chapter 5. While the Dieselers-associated Turbo-folk wielded considerable influence in the circles close to the *ancien régime*, other enterprises were subjected to various forms of delinquentisation (Foucault, 1980: 221, 222, 223-224).

Indirect strategies associated with signifying practices had to be adopted. The ‘EXIT’ festival, supported by the local government in Novi Sad provides one example. ‘EXIT’ signified a need for change in a manner that the authorities of the day could not easily identify as threatening. Signifying practices behind ‘EXIT’ were ambiguous and required an informed reading, evading control

---

<sup>65</sup> ‘Stondirati’ is a verb that relates to intellectual numbness; it is derived from the English slang ‘stoned’, referring to the numbing effects of some drugs. ‘Tripovati’ means ‘to be delusional’ or ‘to speculate’, depending on context.



while having a wide social effect. 'EXIT' was a title that reads as a sign lit above a theatre door at the end of the show. The performance is over, the show has ended and the audience is about to leave. 'The cabaret is dead': the East German rockers pronounced a similar message shortly before the Wall fell. 'Making a scene' is an associated colloquialism with strong implications. Mockery was a powerful tool in the 1996/97 protests (Chapter 4) that represented the regime as a group of neurotic attention seekers. A Serbian colloquialism, 'I know that film' relates to an unattractive scenario, something not worth one's attention. The audience wishes to leave the theatre and the exit is clearly identified.

Transformed social role of 'EXIT' festival under the new, democratically elected Serbian government was best described by the unemployed film director- turned critic, Marko Kostić. He commented on two musical forms that dominated the 2001 festival, Techno and Reggae. Kostić believes that these two musical styles indicated the dichotomy between passivity and subversion respectively, in popular culture and political discourse alike. The following excerpts are taken from an interview held with the writer Marko Kostić, the artist Andrej Bunusevac and Kostić's friend (name unknown).

M. Kostić: I think... here's one observation. I had an impression that all that... was... A conflict between Reggae and Techno (laughs), it did seem so: '*One-nil, one-all, two-one*'... half of the stages had Techno, the other half - Reggae, throughout [the festival]... Still, Reggae is, in this case *a representative of Rock 'n' Roll*... more than Techno... Reggae is interesting, it has these roots... to me, it is a part of that *Rock tale* because it is linked to rebellion, something revolutionary, in comparison to Techno, which for...

M. T.: Techno is deceptively hedonistic. I would call it that way, conditionally.

A. Bunusevac: It is the music for release [of tension] for the masses.

M. T.: More than ten years ago I read Huxley's 'Brave New World' and he described all that, Techno, Ecstasy, in principle, the veneration of products... worshipping Ford's 'Model T' and saying 'Ford' instead of 'Lord'... and everyone went to these huge halls, dancing to some kind of synthetic music and... were taking *sōma*...

A. Bunusevac: Ecstasy as *sōma!* ... (laughs)

M. T: Artificial utopia, that's what I think Techno represents... it was a rebellious thing, in the beginning, but this was cut down...

A. Bunusevac: What, Techno? Yes, yes, there were serious things going on...

As Hall suggests (Hall and Grossberg, 1986, 1996), reggae music had found the ability to articulate the anger and revolt through the means characteristic of the social and cultural formations under which Jamaican identity was constructed in relation to dominance. Interviewed with regards to the role and nature of the EXIT event, Marko Kostić notes the dichotomy between reggae as *rebellious, and after all the representative of rock*<sup>66</sup>, and Techno as complacent, maintaining the *status quo*. Kostić's observation could find its justification in relation to the analysis offered by Thornton (1997), Miles (2000) and Bennett (2000, 2001) with respect to the electronic dance music phenomena in the UK, the lack of expressed class-stratification or pronounced rebelliousness.

Kostić's account is akin to the ones offered by Miles (2000: pp. 53, 98-99) and Kellner (1997) on the standardisation and relative powerlessness of youth consumerism in relation to electronic dance music.

K's friend: In this book, '*Post-Apocalyptica*'<sup>67</sup>, Techno is like... you have a punk kicking which is still some kind of co-operation, some kind of relationship between people, a form of amity... But Techno is total detachment, you go nutty on your own, doped, while the crowd *is* involved the punk kicking... while this is asocial.

M. T. Punk is anti-social, this is asocial...

A. Bunusevac: Punk is a *social project*. As a concept it is *politicised, political*.

M. T.: Punk is *very politicised* at the source.

M. Kostić: However, the word '*Techno*' has changed... there are many different...

M. T.: ...Nuances, exactly.

M. Kostić: I heard this *Afro* the other day, taking the role of Techno, nothing to do with the *Germanic*, original Techno.

---

<sup>66</sup> The latter might be disputed - conceptual links between rock and reggae are evident in many theoretical treatise, yet the term 'representative' should be taken with caution.

<sup>67</sup> The researcher is unaware of this title; furthermore, the audibility of the recording is bad in places so the quoted name of the book should be taken with reserve.

(Focused discussion continues after a few comments were made on different interpretation of terminology associated with dance music in UK and Serbia)

K's friend: "Over here they say: 'what [music] do I listen to? *Rave!*'" (tone indicates disbelief)

M. Kostić: "What do you think of the term 'instrumental music?'... *Instrumental music of a recent date...*

In the following discussion, Kostić's friend mocked Techno and dance music DJs, comparing them to harpsichord operators carrying a monkey on their shoulder; in this case, the audience represented the monkey. Suffice to say that the interviewee was not a great admirer of DJ creativity. Kostić's comments, however, were not dismissive but showing an attempt to analyse group behaviour at contemporary *dance music* events:

M. Kostić: You know what is specific about Techno? The relationship between the atmosphere which is *intense* and the music, which is *auxiliary*. You see people receiving this music in a state of enormous exaltation while the music is the one of *middle-mood*, averaged feel, temporary, even without character, as if representing some occasions in life that do not have any great significance, yet the ones who listen, experience it as a Debussy concert in E Minor! (laughs)

This especially applies to the perceived hedonism related to electronic dance music, *if* stripped of the subversive elements that accompany 'warehouse raves' or '*nomadic no-logo parties*' explored in the interview with N. Savic. On the other hand, as Laki suggests that the development of the music style that could (conditionally) be identified as 'Techno' in the case of the 'Unexpected Force' went via a very different route. He stated that the rebelliousness of punk had left a lasting influence on him personally: punk was an exceptional example of a *successful 'sell-out'*, a well-measured campaign that had ended before it had faded away.

This further reinforces the notion that Paunović mentioned in respect of the Unexpected Force as a Techno act *with the energy of Rock 'n' Roll* and not merely 'commercial', 'hedonistic' and 'docile'. The stylistic and conceptual (ideological) foundations of the Unexpected Force are to be found in African and Caribbean music of cultural unrest on the one hand, and the *avant-garde*,

*underground* experiments with electronic forms such as Alan Vega's 'Suicide' project on the other.

#### 7.4 Conclusion: signifying defiance and creativity in Belgrade underground music

The sets of social, politico-economic and cultural factors affecting the formation of communication/mediation style have the same underlying principles on the abstract level, while their combination in the concrete setting largely depends on the improbable yet possible alliances, links or *articulations* of social interest-groups and their modes of communication.

The example of Chernobyl in House shows how the intended and unintentional factors can influence the production of signifiers and meanings flowing from music. The ability to encode these as readable stands at the core of successful promotional practice. The *encoding* of a specific meaning is inherent in the production process. It includes the audience's '*manual*'; if that were not the case, the music would not address the appropriate listener/receiver. This band has a narrow following in Belgrade. If it ever reaches a Western audience, the music will need to be promoted along with its complex conceptual background, indicating articulations specific for Belgrade underground music production.

B92 tries to correspond with the predominant Western music trends. The increased commercialisation of global music markets was a reference point in several interviews. It reflects the current consolidation of the music industry. Some interviewees, such as Pedja Pavleski, refer to this trend and its possible effects on the prospects of representing Belgrade underground music abroad. Knowing that he does not belong to the group that would be supported by B92, in a similar sense as Fleka, Corrosion, and others do, Sabljar had decided to stay self-reliant in his artistic, musical and business development. The projects that he had worked on have been too radical for the B92's publishing business and also belonged to the area that was directly dismissed

by businesses close to the previous regime. They had to rely on themselves and the rapidly narrowing network of independent clubs and small record companies. It comes as little surprise, therefore, that the interviewees closely associated with B92's editorial policies (Jerić, Paunović, Podunavac), do not identify the existence of authentic forms of Belgrade underground music. If they do, as appears to be the case with Paunović and Jerić, their interest in the authentic musical phenomena characterising Belgrade underground scene is low. Having in mind the image that B92 has built over the years as an organisation closely associated with the Belgrade underground scene, this appears to be puzzling and illogical.

The interview with DJ Boza Podunavac addressed the notions of authenticity in Belgrade underground music, focusing on the electronic dance music scene (distinct from Handmade Techno). Podunavac comments on social superstructures in a somewhat pessimistic manner, reminiscent of the way in which Paunović doubts the existence of any authenticity in contemporary music production in Belgrade. Another similarity with Paunović's argument relates to notions of authenticity as linked to the means available to musicians, producers and DJs living and working in Serbia who aim to create something that would prove competitive in international music markets. Both stand in sharp contrast to the opinions expressed by artists, producers and media practitioners working under much less favourable conditions.

In full contrast to the beliefs expressed by the interviewees closely associated with B92 - with the notable exception of Dragan Ambrozić - many artists are strongly convinced that Belgrade underground music scene is authentic and resilient. This authenticity, they agree, is a facet of global cultural processes and Belgrade music production is using the internationally acknowledged musical forms, from Rock to Hip-hop to the plethora of genres in electronic dance music. However, innovation was not unusual in the production of alternative culture in Serbia and Belgrade in the past. At the present, a number of new and innovative music projects are developing.

In spite of the plausible scepticism expressed by many, the following illustration will provide the reader with an insight into the vigour with which B92 used to promote Belgrade music production. This quote comes from the most successful CD release of the past few years.

“radio utopia 4: belgrade coffee shop

serbia 2000: navel of the balkans, troubled underbelly of europe, a new breed of musical otherness coming through...

belgrade’s radio b2-92 and freeb92 label present the selection of 12 exclusive tracks from some of the most talented artists on local electronic music scene. 100% adrenaline-free collection of tunes from the place where apathy meets devastation...”

This dramatic text<sup>68</sup> is quoted from the cover of the first “Belgrade Coffee Shop” album released by B92 in 2000. A promotional introduction to a record Gordan Paunović describes as an accurate representation of the ‘*atmosphere*’ in Belgrade during and immediately after the bombing of Serbia in 1999. Moreover, this record is widely believed to have represented the quiet resolve with which many young people of Serbia have endured the final year of isolation under the regime that was growing more repressive every day. Many interviewees and respondents agree in that the position-opposition dichotomy, characterising Serbian society in the Nineties had collapsed. Almost paradoxically, the political liberation appears to have been detrimental for underground culture production. Though market forces are likely to impose ruthless selection on musical products, the ones that are most resilient are likely to survive. Being different is likely to be one of the main criteria for survival in the market no longer stifled by ideological constraints.

---

<sup>68</sup> This quote is presented in its original form, without attempting to correct any grammatical errors or alter the names typed in lowercase that are as important in representing the ‘*atmosphere*’ surrounding this record, as does its ‘*mellow*’ sound that stands in strong contrast with the social circumstances in which it was released.

# **Chapter Eight**

## **Conclusions and Implications**

The following discussion explores further the findings and methodological approaches and their implications. This research has contributed to specialised knowledge in several areas. It contained credible analysis of the impact of social stratification on changing power-relations within the music and media market in Belgrade. It also provided considerable insight into the formative practices of contemporary youth subcultures in Belgrade. The authenticity of signifying practices characterising the Belgrade underground music scene has also been addressed. Finally, the role played by underground music in recent social change in Belgrade and Serbia has been examined.

This study is the first of its kind to deal with the above issues in this way. The researcher acknowledges the contributions of Gordy<sup>1</sup> and Kronja as relevant theoretical background to the study. However, both authors adopted significantly different foci from those chosen for this study<sup>2</sup>. Apparently, no other researcher has yet provided such a complex multidisciplinary analysis of culture production in Belgrade or Serbia.

The research findings were abstracted using articulation of a number of methodological contributions. This enabled a set of methodological implications to be drawn for future research studies dealing with similar issues. Implications for the use of ethnographic methods in cross-cultural research follow from the principles of data collection and analysis related to source reliability, where special consideration was paid to participant observation, partisanship, representation and interpretation. Furthermore, methodological concepts developed in this study can be applied in future

---

<sup>1</sup> Some shortcomings of Gordy's text relate to dependability of sources.

<sup>2</sup> Several other academic (Andjelkovic, 1983; Milojevic, 2002; Prica, 1991) and documentary texts (Collin, 2001; Drummond, 2001; Glenny, 1996; Janjatovic, 1998) dealing with issues related to Belgrade subcultures have been consulted in this research. Andjelkovic (1983) examined Belgrade youth subcultures in the Seventies. Prica (1991) deals with similar phenomena at the turn of the Eighties. Though providing a relevant point of reference, neither of the two authors undertook a study similar to this one. Collin's (2001) book is seriously methodologically flawed. In spite of its journalistic form, Collin's work should have scrutinised sometimes blatantly partisan respondent accounts. Drummond's autobiography (2001) provides a 'pure text' far more reliable than Collin's book. Conversely, Janjatovic (1998) provides an encyclopaedic volume on Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav rock music. Finally, Glenny's (1996) analytical approach to documentary journalism is comparable to an academic ethnographic study.



multidisciplinary research in cultural studies, social history, media studies, art theory and critical management studies.

The methodological philosophy used in this study was developed from Hall's Theory of Articulation<sup>3</sup>. Its conceptualisation provides the means to reconcile different methodological paradigms in multidisciplinary research. Kellner acknowledges Hall's analytical concepts despite being critical of certain aspects of them. Although Hall's and Kellner's methodological approaches were developed with multidisciplinary studies in mind, the researcher is not aware of any works that have so far utilised these concepts to provide an in-depth examination of a concrete research problem. This study is the first of its kind to apply a methodology based on these concepts.

This study has two immediate practical implications. One relates to policy-makers whose interests range from cultural exchange to effective promotion of Belgrade underground music production in international markets. Ethical considerations are particularly relevant here. The sensitive relationship between the researcher and the researched is one, and provision of guidelines for sustainable development of local markets and consequently, the most effective utilisation of local talent in international markets for cultural products, is another.

### 8.1 The scope and limitations of research

This section deals with two issues that are relevant to the methodological aspects of this study. The first stems from the fact that parts of the fieldwork could not be included in the analysis. The circumstances prompting such decisions are examined below. Secondly, the specific nature of the explored phenomena dictated the inclusion of some neighbouring areas into the analysis.

---

<sup>3</sup> Consulting the works of Foucault, Gramsci and Barthes has provided the researcher with the means to deal with different aspects of analysis.

This study deals with multiple aspects of the phenomenon identified as the *Belgrade underground music scene*. The analysis was based on structural exploration rather than detailed accounts of product plurality and individual players involved in underground music production. This had an impact on sampling strategies. A number of informed participants were consulted for the purposes of this study. Their accounts were compared and contrasted; relevant analytical and documentary sources were scrutinised as part of the social and economic structures from which they have originated. These different data sources were interpreted as elements of an articulated structure of the explored phenomenon. Data arising from the researcher as participant observer, was treated with equal scrutiny and contrasted with aforementioned sources.

The researcher focused on articulations of social, economic, discursive, organisational and communicational structures that determine power relations affecting Belgrade's underground music scene. Examining the principles that govern the development and formative structures of Belgrade underground music did not allow the researcher to explore the plurality of its individual expressive forms. However, the researcher's first-hand familiarity with the most prominent among musicians, entrepreneurs and other practitioners involved in the scene was essential. The researcher's substantial network of acquaintances holding core positions within the scene had enabled him to collect relevant, valid and reliable data. However, save but a few cases, the researcher's relationships with respondents were determined by competition, collaboration and friendship<sup>4</sup>. In order to counter the researcher's potential partisanship, reflexive strategies were rigorously applied.

Parts of data collection were excluded as a result of this. An example of this is the researcher's collaboration with Pedja Tošović. Their joint project began in 1997 when Tošović's band "Mancando" performed at the opening of an art exhibition led and organised by the researcher and three other young artists<sup>5</sup>. Mancando performed at the opening of the researcher's first independent

---

<sup>4</sup> In some cases, these relationships varied between the three categories in the past.

<sup>5</sup> Held in a ruined house in a Belgrade suburb in June 1997.

exhibition of paintings<sup>6</sup>. Soon afterwards, the researcher and Tošović co-organised the preparation for the making of Mancando's first music video. In 1998, the researcher's departure from Belgrade interrupted the process. This creative collaboration continued in the summer of 2001. Work resumed, resulting in the completion of the music video for a song recorded by Mancando in January 1998. The four-year old video footage was eventually edited during the summer of 2001. After long debates, all of those involved in the project decided that the controversial video should not be publicised. One important methodological implication follows from this case. The creative co-operation between Tošović and the researcher needed to be scrutinised through *triple-hermeneutics*. Their social and professional ties meant that the author's reflective approach to participation was necessary but not sufficient. The threat to the interpretation of research findings was too great.

However, in practical methodological terms, this joint attempt became part of the process of the researcher's renegotiation of membership. Prior to the cancellation of all such plans, Tošović and the researcher intended to convene a promotional party in one of Belgrade's café-clubs, where the video would be screened in public for the first time. A live performance of Mancando was also planned as part of the event. Substantial negotiations with several club managers took place before the event's eventual cancellation. This process provided the researcher with the opportunity to reassert his insider status among other scene participants<sup>7</sup>.

The above example shows how the threat of distorted interpretation forced a musical project, though fully qualifying<sup>8</sup> as a part of Belgrade's underground music scene, to be excluded from analysis. Furthermore, although a substantial part of this study's analytical process depended on ethnographic data, the research focused on structural principles of the scene's formation,

---

<sup>6</sup> Held in a private gallery, October 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the two-week long work on Mancando's music video was not of great relevance for the focus of this study and remains a mere snapshot from the researcher's diary. The Mancando project is currently inactive.

<sup>8</sup> Fleka's last ever radio show took place on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1999, two days before the bombing of Belgrade commenced. Mancando had a live appearance on the programme, performing several songs.

not the examination of its manifold manifestations. In the following paragraphs the researcher explores the rationale for excluding one other socio-musical phenomenon from this study.

Rap and Hip-hop music production<sup>9</sup> in Belgrade was only marginally examined. Firstly, because Hip-hop could fall within the area of *new mainstream*. Secondly, underground Rap music of Belgrade urban ghettos is not likely to be of any consumer interest outside former Yugoslavia because of its heavy reliance on lyrical content. Thirdly, in spite of its social overlapping with elements of Rock music subcultures, Rap's social status in Serbia is ambiguous because of its positioning on the fringes of newly created strata. For instance, Serbian Hip-hop and Rap have more often than not been associated with parts of the Dieseler subculture<sup>10</sup>.

Nevertheless, including Dieselers and Turbo-folk in this analysis had its reasons. Belgrade's underground music scene faced numerous challenges during the Nineties. It stood in sharp contrast with another bona fide Serbian subcultural phenomenon - the Dieselers and Turbo-folk - through its identification with oppositional political discourse. Analysing tensions in Serbian society that affected Belgrade's underground music scene during the Nineties would be incomplete without addressing the Dieseler/Turbo-folk phenomenon. Concisely described, the relationship between the two social groups was one of resentment. Therefore, subcultural practices associated

---

<sup>9</sup> 'Sunshine', 357 and 'Belgrade Syndicate' are notable examples of Belgrade Hip-hop/Rap. The first was among the handpicked bands chosen to represent alternative political discourses in the 'Rock 'n' roll for the elections' campaign in 2000. The work of the second (357) is associated with socially engaged Rap-Rock styles and strident criticism of the corruption and violence in Serbian society during the late Nineties. The third falls within the grey area of *half-Dieselers*, or rather, *post-Dieselers*, signifying the long-term impact that the crisis had made on the young urban populace of Serbia. However, 'Belgrade Syndicate' write socially engaging lyrics that follow the tradition of sardonic criticism of politicians. One other Hip-hop artist needs to be mentioned. A singular phenomenon in Belgrade Rap music production, 'Voodoo Popeye' is an artist that connotes the full complexity of the times in which he had emerged. His lyrics are dark and sarcastic representations of the social turmoil of the Nineties in Serbia.

<sup>10</sup> While conducting fieldwork in Belgrade during the summer of 2001, the researcher was told of the growing success of a Hip-hop band called "Beograski sindikat" ("Belgrade Syndicate"). Invited to the set where their music video was recorded, the researcher found out that it was taking place in 'Havana bar', infamous during the Nineties as a venue belonging to the violent Dieseler subculture.

with the Dieselers and Turbo-folk represented more than a marginal phenomenon in the development of the Belgrade underground music scene. Moreover, the political and economic structures in communist Yugoslavia played a significant part in the formation of *urban peasants'* sub-stratum and *Neofolk* music, from which the Dieselers and Turbo-folk music emerged during the Nineties. Noting these developments warranted the inclusion of political economy into the analysis. Although individual consumer choice plays a significant role in markets for different musical genres, the case of Belgrade and Serbia shows that control of the means of production strongly affects these markets. Since the change of government in October 2000, remnants of communist state economy are rapidly disappearing. The promotion of local cultural products no longer represents an apparent hegemony-resistance dichotomy. However, this does not mean that economic dominance in music and media markets does not affect form and content of musical products.

## 8.2 Music markets

The situation is far from idyllic in business and economy. As the socio-political analysis suggests, stratified tensions that accumulated during the Nineties within Serbian society, reached the point where internal conflict became a likely result. The peaceful political change in October 2000 contradicted the expectations of many. The economic transformation in Serbia has so far proven to be a difficult process not likely to give quick positive results, posing the threat of future social friction along economic, rather than ideological lines. The economic transition and relentless privatisation might endanger the sense of community that was evident in the analysis of communal spaces. The control of communal space appears to be moving from the fight for civil liberties to economic contestations. This process goes beyond music markets.

A process of stratification has been identified in markets for cultural products in Belgrade. The loose alliance of agents, from entrepreneurs to organisations involved in music and media production, lost its original *modus vivendi*: supporting the common goal of cultural, economic and political change. This

was an expected outcome and it is likely that recognised forms of market competition will develop further in Belgrade culture-production. The research findings suggest that all those concerned would greatly benefit from the earliest possible completion of economic stratification in culture production. This was among the few points of consensus among interviewees. The few organisations that seem to be aiming at corporate status are most likely to achieve this through collaboration or as a result of merging with foreign investors. Accomplishing this would provide space for the emerging independent sector.

In their heyday, leading Yugoslav mainstream Rock bands<sup>11</sup> sold 500,000 copies per album. The market for mainstream Rock music in former Yugoslav republics had in aggregate been much larger than the sum of its parts. Recent developments indicate that the market for cultural produce is reintegrating on the level of former Yugoslavia and the rest of the western Balkans.

The expected founding of MTV Balkans through a collaboration with B92 confirms that large media corporations are becoming interested in the area inhabited by more than twenty million people. B92 had a clear anti-war stance, which qualifies it as one of the core mediators in the establishment of MTV Balkans. B92's political stance helped it to re-establish contacts with promoters, musicians and record companies from other republics of former Yugoslavia. Substantial similarity of language removes many communicational obstacles. A *polycentric* cluster of corresponding music markets is likely to develop between the countries of the western Balkans.

Between 1918 and 1991<sup>12</sup> Belgrade was a dual capital city, that of Serbia and Yugoslavia. Civil servants of all nationalities worked and lived in Belgrade. The latter meant that it unavoidably became cosmopolitan in the modern sense of the word<sup>13</sup>. In the Serbian and post-Yugoslav context, Belgrade remained one of the focal points of the market for culture-production. Although the largest cities of former Yugoslavia have bred cultural products for

---

<sup>11</sup> Bijelo Dugme and Riblja Corba.

<sup>12</sup> In the Second World War, Yugoslavia was partitioned by the occupying forces.

<sup>13</sup> As opposed to Gramsci's cosmopolitanism of mediaeval nobility.

decades, the towns and smaller cities are now regaining a sense of identity. Smaller urban settlements in modern Serbia started developing autonomous forms of expression<sup>14</sup>. Regardless of these changes, Belgrade remains one of the market centres of the western Balkans and the South East of Europe. With economic recovery, the redevelopment of markets for underground and independent music production will, though fragmented, still generate potential record sales in the order of half a million records in aggregate<sup>15</sup>.

Whatever could be said of its core ethical and aesthetic foundations, professionalism was evident on many levels<sup>16</sup> of Turbo-folk production. Audio and visual recordings were technically immaculate. Within the aesthetic frame of Serbia's *nouveau riche* elite of the Nineties, Turbo-folk's starlets enacted the role of venerated objects reminiscent of their Western counterparts embodied in contemporary mainstream media's obsession with *celebrities*. Turbo-folk's followers were former mainstream consumers<sup>17</sup>. With the narrowing of Turbo-folk production and greater importation of pop music from Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia, the market for mainstream music in Belgrade is changing once again.

A wider availability of licensed foreign releases is contrasted with price increases of both domestic and imported music recordings. The prices grow as a result of more regulated distribution and copyright protection. The choice of mainstream music consumers is narrowed by low income. Because of this, the demand for live music performances grew so significantly in 2000 that in all subsequent years, Novi Sad and Belgrade hosted large live events

---

<sup>14</sup> In 1994, the southern city of Nis had no venues in which it was possible to present the home-grown *industrial* music scene. Composing and recording on their Ataris, in a city of cafes, these young aspirants had no space for expression.

<sup>15</sup> In the years preceding the break-up of Yugoslavia, Riblja Corba from Belgrade, Azra from Zagreb and Bijelo Dugme from Sarajevo represented complex social and market phenomena where music and lyrics were combined with elaborate visual concepts, recognisable logos and costly designed album covers.

<sup>16</sup> Kronja (2001) writes extensively about this. Her slight exaggerations, suggesting that music video became a sophisticated promotional tool with the emergence of Turbo-folk (and not before) was criticised in Chapter 4.

<sup>17</sup> Thus the cynical remarks made by members of the B92 discussion forum (Chapter 6) relate to MTV Balkans as a potential disseminating channel for Turbo-folk. On a deeper level, these comments indicate signifying practices of underground scenes of former Yugoslavia. In spite of the break-up of the country, Croatian and Serbian followers of underground music assembled in the virtual chatroom share common interests and viewpoints on popular culture.

covering a variety of different genres. Many foreign musicians performed at these events. It is very likely that this will, in the long term, rejuvenate markets for independent music imports. In internationally recognised industry terms, all musical products coming from Belgrade are 'independent' and thus 'authentic'. This is why the word *underground* is suspect to some, as *scene* is to others. However, since competition with global music production is yet to develop, the full market potential of Belgrade's underground music remains to be tested. The entry of global media and music corporations into the country is inevitable. In the long term, it should benefit independent local production.

B92 is becoming the first Serbian *mini-major* entertainment and media company, positioned between independent and corporate sectors. It is likely to hold a significant position in the Serbian music and media market for years. Having this in mind, the Belgrade underground music scene would greatly benefit from the growth of smaller competitors. Some small record companies and teams of promoters are likely to survive the current transition; other entrants might emerge after the early stages of economic recovery end in market stabilisation.

Ethical propositions about the use of information derived from this and similar studies may arise in the near future. Global corporations involved in culture-production might gain invaluable knowledge from this and related field studies. The way in which their policy would be affected by such information depends on its market relevance, the reliability of sources, analytical clarity and the concluding discussion implicating future developments. Provided that the first three aspects of such a study pass rigorous examination, the implications of research represent the determinant that could advise corporate decision-makers on the possible courses of action. Ethical responsibility of the authors of all such studies (including this one) should not be underestimated.

Furthermore, this study could create guidelines for organisations whose primary interests lay in cross-cultural exchange and international relations. The examples of Holland and former East Germany provide policy-makers with both positive and negative examples of government involvement in local



forms of underground music. Past experiences of Yugoslavia before the war, and Serbia in the ten years of its duration, have been taken into account. These experiences show the resilience of Belgrade's underground music scene in overcoming manifold obstacles while developing an authentic approach to culture-production. Such an example, on its own, stands as a testimony that rules out stereotypes.

### 8.3 Signifying practices and authenticity

The researcher found that genuine claims of authenticity characterise creative practices and activities in Belgrade's underground music scene. Adverse past circumstances have affected the scene in two ways. One relates to the business resilience of artists, entrepreneurs and organisations; the other relates to the musicians' relentless search for individual stylistic authenticity. The implications of the former were explored in the section above. The latter was indicated in responses provided by some of the interviewed practitioners. Authenticity remains quite a polarised issue among the respondents<sup>18</sup>.

A new musical concept was articulated in 1997 and was reaching maturity during the final stages of this study. Belgrade audiences have recognised it as Handmade Techno. The leading representative of this music style can be clearly identified as the Unexpected Force (Neočekivana Sila). Their work's evolution and transformation was evident as this study was taking shape. Its influence on audiences and other scene practitioners is undeniable. The extent to which the term *Techno* is still appropriate to describe the music of this band could be discussed in a separate text. Nevertheless, the combination of main constituent performance methods still remains as it was from the outset. The successful amalgamation of two modes of signification entails wide connotations that could be read as the authentic style of the Unexpected Force. The communication with the audience, the virtuoso ability

---

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 7.

to perform on instruments and the 'energy' associated with Rock music are coupled with the free-flowing futurism of electronic dance production.

However, the plurality of expressive forms in electronic dance music includes similar examples. The musical form *in itself* represents only one aspect of the authenticity of expression in this case. It is the path through which the result was achieved that makes the Unexpected Force a uniquely Belgrade phenomenon. The interviewed members of this band testify to the spontaneity of their style. The *Techno* element emerged from their on-stage communication with little premeditation. Their potential audiences were already formed and grew significantly after Handmade Techno was spontaneously invented in the winter protests of 1996/97. Handmade Techno of the Unexpected Force was a combination of necessity and free experimentation that seeded as a result of a climate where a very small number of musicians and DJs could afford sophisticated equipment. Band members proudly point out that the path to their authentic expression was determined by individual effort in a specific time and place. This was a clear example of articulation; non-necessary yet deeply rooted in the social and economic reality in which it germinated.

According to some respondents, the eighteen months between the beginning of Nato bombing<sup>19</sup> and the fall of the coercive regime, resulted in the creation of a number of sophisticated musical works. Even competitors on opposed poles of creative discourse agree that the music produced during the peak of the social and political upheaval reflects a qualitative leap in Belgrade culture production. Manifest forms of works recorded under such circumstances varied from Bossanova-influenced electronic dance music to the fusion of Industrial Rock and traditional Gypsy string arrangements.

The opening of international borders after the October 2000 change brought thousands of adventurous visitors curious to see a country that had

---

<sup>19</sup> This is a difficult area for the researcher to discuss. Away from Serbia during the 1999 Nato bombing, the researcher does not share the experience that has strengthened the ties within the scene and society at large. The same applies to the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2000.

undergone a decade of isolation and infamy. Moreover, it became far easier for musicians to travel and perform abroad. But this newly discovered freedom opens a number of questions. Some relate to the long-term effects of war and isolation on culture production in Belgrade and Serbia. Save for the nuances of opinion addressed in Chapter 7, those involved in the scene view effects of the decade-long isolation on authenticity in different ways.

Some respondents have outlined the isolation as an unavoidable test of endurance and imagination. Though information on new musical developments in the West did reach Serbia, this process of knowledge distribution was limited by a lack of formal communication channels. For years records were smuggled into the country. Both pirate and legal copies were accessible to a tiny minority of people with good informal cross-border networks. In such circumstances, isolation bred frustration, which in turn resulted in endurance on the part of a few individuals devoted to artistic achievement.

Some interviewees considered isolation as a source of motivation to work in spite of obstacles; others spoke of how it served to fuel their pessimism. Some practitioners, considered by many in Belgrade and Serbia as truly accomplished individuals, expressed the opinion that the opportunity to *compete with the rest of the world* was irrevocably lost. Their sense of direction has been lost in spite of the recent liberation from dictatorship; some even suggest that this is the case *because of the liberation from dictatorship*. Doubting that there is any such thing as an authentic Belgrade style, they referred to the multitude of projects developed in other countries, free from the kinds of fundamental obstacles endured by musicians and others in Belgrade and Serbia.

In spite of such sombre opinions, the people who expressed them share one other feature with those who hold the belief that suffering isolation prompted them to develop authentic stylistic expression. This shared characteristic is the elitism of knowledge. This appears, however, to be the only similarity between the two groups. On the surface level, the expressed opinions are

contradictory; some talk of rebellion, others of non-compliance. One focuses on the musical *meaning*, while the other focuses on its form. Some fully acknowledge while others strongly deny the existence of a *scene*.

However, collaborations between musicians are evident. These collaborations inevitably result in an undisturbed exchange of influences. Artists retain their individuality while at the same time learning and evolving through processes involved in acting as guests on each other's records and performances. At the time of this study's completion, members of Belgrade's underground music scene appeared to be going through a stage of self-examination. This reflexive phase is likely to lead to long-term effects, the extent of which is difficult to predict.

#### 8.4 Social change, discourse and stratification

*One monopoly replaced the other*, said an underground musician, while a leading figure of the *new monopoly* complained about losing *his own* points of reference. A group conversation suggested that music featured in open-air dance events perpetuated the *status quo*. A musician-turned-entrepreneur said: "*there are too many media*". Introspective self-examination was evident among respondents. It seems that material limitations and past coercion motivated them to innovate and resist hegemonic practices. Past relationships between the multifaceted counterculture on the one hand and the dominant groups on the other were complex but dialectically determined. It was easy to reject the consensus of *Turbo-folk* offered on *TV Pink*. Many respondents appear to be concerned with the current state of flux; there are no clear delineations between oppositional and dominant discourses as represented in the past through tensions between the counterculture and Dieselers - their defining *Other*.

The Dieselers subculture left a lasting mark on Belgrade and Serbia. The researcher's first impression was that since the Serbian '*democratic revolution*', this sub-stratum, elevated to power in the Nineties, ceased to exist

overnight<sup>20</sup>. However, their *disappearance* is deceitful. The Dieselers have melted back into society after losing support given by the previous regime with which they had a symbiotic relationship. The most obvious recent change in Belgrade street culture was the decline of its, once vigorous, clubbing scene. A city of cafés does not communicate in the same way and the cultural change transpires from the apparently trivial changes in spatial organisation. Small, fully independent, ad-hoc, bricoleur venues have replaced the established clubs that used to operate in the Nineties. Places of cultural activity have moved from the city centre to the suburbs and riverboats. The latter were, ironically, initially associated with the early growth of Dieselers and Turbo-folk.

As the nouveau riche financial elite of the Nineties came to occupy the city centre, the artistic and intellectual underground scene created its alternative spaces developed in a *do-it-yourself* spirit: rafts and boats on the Sava and Danube rivers became the meeting places for Rockers and Ravers alike<sup>21</sup>. A part of the city of Novi Sad was transformed into a music stage for a week; only one year later, the event held on that same site shifted from a form of cultural resistance to entertainment. At the commencement of fieldwork in 2001, the Academy, once Belgrade's most influential underground club, was a barren, empty space. It re-opened in 2003 (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Changes brought about by the escalation of war and the ousting of the political regime, were instantly evident to the researcher whose absence between 1998 and 2001 coincided with all these events. The author's unique research opportunity allowed the observation and analysis of the radical social, political, economic and cultural changes that took place in Belgrade and Serbia between 1998 and 2003.

---

<sup>20</sup> However, the legacy of the Nineties will affect Belgrade and Serbia for years to come. Among other things, this applies to the *entrepreneurial innovations* of Turbo-folk and the articulated structures on which it depended.

<sup>21</sup> These DIY venues significantly differ from the highly elaborate design of the costly riverboats and rafts where shootouts between rival gangs occurred during the Nineties.

## 8.5 Methodological contributions

This study extends the concepts of Articulation Theory. While its original author had moved on to the explorations of *global postmodern* plurality, the applications of Articulation Theory have so far dealt with specific effects of general socio-economic phenomena. This is the first field study that explored how politics, economic stratification, discursive practice and market relations linked together in the formation of an authentic cultural phenomenon. The data used in this study came from individuals whose direct involvement in the scene affected the shape and content of cultural products. Moreover, the researcher's relation to the subject was scrutinised as part of the explored phenomenological continuum.

The representation of findings in this study includes elements of the researcher's past experiences. The researcher interviewed former business competitors alongside former collaborators in order to gather information but also attempting to counter the threat of partisanship rooted in his long-term direct involvement in the scene. The researcher reflected on narrative exchanges and other aspects of interviewer/interviewee interaction. Reflection determines the research narrative in all parts of the book where such encounters are analysed, and looks at fieldwork as a process of negotiation. Potential analysis pitfalls are thus clearly identified and turned into an advantage. The researcher's long-term involvement with Belgrade's underground music scene proved essential for effective and accurate interpretation of data. The researcher's past experiences of competition and his familiarity with communication styles of some interviewees provides this work with unique insight and insider's look, which is absent from other studies of Serbian urban subcultures and others<sup>22</sup>.

Questioning interpretation, representation and 'pure text' as forms of ethnographic narratives is intertwined with the question: "who is the author". This question represents a problem common to all ethnographic studies. If the

---

<sup>22</sup> This applies to all of the following studies: Collin (2001), Gordy (1999, 2001), Kronja (2001) and van de Port (2000).

text should *speak for itself*, then the researcher becomes a mere physical information processing medium. On the other hand, if the researcher relies on his interpretation only, then the voices of interviewee and informant narratives become muted by the research text's interpretative tone. The latter scenario where the threat of partisanship comes from the researcher himself, opens itself up to severe distortions<sup>23</sup>. Another possible problem with interpretation/representation dependability relates to bias on the part of interviewees, informants and archival sources. This is very difficult to overcome if a researcher has no previous insider status, forcing an uncritical reliance on his network of respondents.

The absence of longitudinal membership in the scene itself may mean that some authors were not in a position to fully scrutinise the dependability of their informant networks. Gordy's book represents a valuable sociological document characterised by structured discussion and academic rigour. Some factual inaccuracies in Gordy's work stem from his dependence on informal networks of respondents, acquaintances and associates.

*Insider* status is built over a long period of time through direct participation within a scene. As a member of the underground music and artistic scenes in Belgrade, the researcher has first-hand experience spanning more than a decade. However, the greatest potential threat to the study was the possibility that the researcher might become *theoretically native*, i.e. partisan or biased. This threat was turned into an advantage through rigorous reflexivity.

Processes of sign-production in music and related areas are well known to the author, as are the power-relations and business practices in their more covert form. The researcher's longitudinal familiarity with the subject means this study enjoys firm authentication of data. Not only has the researcher re-negotiated his position during months of fieldwork, his contacts with some practitioners were maintained regularly throughout his long absence from

---

<sup>23</sup> Van de Port (2000) appears to present 'pure text'; his partisanship is concealed. It is not the one arising from identification with the community but his judgemental stance is reflected in the way he takes the *higher ground* of someone coming from a *tolerant, civilised background*.

Belgrade. However, spatial and temporal distance between the researcher and respondents affected such collaboration. The researcher underwent a transformation of status that inevitably generated reflexive caution on both sides during the renegotiation process of his position from *other* to *member* and vice versa. While some former competitors kept the researcher at arms length because of suspicion about his motives, others became more open. On the other hand, some friendships were subjected to the process of *othering*<sup>24</sup>.

The very concept of competent ethnographic research conducted by a previous outsider remains problematic because of the dependence on so many subtle aspects of communication, identity and membership when negotiating insider status. This applies to several issues: sampling, i.e. how relevant is the choice of respondents; deep knowledge of language, jargon and slang; rules of membership; internal relations and the interplay of interests within the examined social group; the structure of meaning in cultural practices, etc.

One of the methodological implications of this study stems from the above discussion. *Reflexive participation* rather than *participant observation* could be the appropriate methodology for ethnographic work in the community. The proposed dichotomy goes beyond terminological nuances and wordplay. It can be argued that analytical rigour depends on reflexivity. Furthermore, subjective sense of membership developed prior to any formal research provides the grounds for effective reflexive analysis.

The researcher suggests that future studies conducted within a community or scene would have an enhanced value if they rely on the work of a genuine participant whose analytical position is attained *a posteriori*. It is the author's belief that in this way, both academic and policy research would gain benefit from researchers *recruited* from the community.

---

<sup>24</sup> In such cases the researcher was seen as the *transnational other*, accurately described by Hannerz (1996).



## 8.6 Summary of contributions and implications

Exploring Belgrade underground music scene entailed the analysis of concrete economic and political factors affecting its development. Discourses of dissent and subversion were seen as articulations of historical conditions and social stratification. Tangible indicators of dynamic relationships between the scene and dominant discourses in Serbian society were found in spatial relations. The notion of space was analysed in relation to power-exercise, as a specific articulation of subcultural identity.

Gaining experience of emerging forces in society and new articulations of meaning in a changing environment was central to this research. Positioning that experiential knowledge within the concrete social context of Belgrade underground music scene facilitated the exploration of meaning through polysemic signifiers. It has been argued that each code-component of the communication process acts as an articulation of social forces involved in coding. Music could be seen as one of the most fluid and abstract communicational systems; yet the meanings ascribed to it remain context-dependent. Arguably, reception of authenticity depends on the articulation of various factors determining the context within which an authentic style develops.

Social position and power-relations appear to deeply condition practices that govern the superstructure of society. While this statement could be disputed on the grounds of reductionism, talking about music without regard to the economic background of its production would have deprived this research of meaningful practical implications. To understand how to present Belgrade underground music to other cultures means to articulate what meanings it could convey, in material and cultural terms. This study could be seen both as a comprehensive 'map' and 'glossary' of fundamental articulations of this particular scene. However, the models developed in this study could be abstracted and deployed in exploring other cultural phenomena.

The identity of Punk Rock went through numerous mutations, so in the case of former Yugoslavia, the rebelliousness associated with certain sonic structures attained a different meaning; one of relentless questioning of the postulates of an entirely different establishment and its flaws. Similarly, the musical structures of electronic dance music came to mean something unique in Belgrade during the years of isolation. These are but some qualifying examples relevant to the *practice* of articulation. *Authenticity does not necessarily imply originality*, as one interviewee said. The specific characteristics of development of Belgrade's underground music scene enable musicians and other creative individuals involved in the process to assert that their work followed an authentic path.

The findings provide an understanding of manifold aspects of popular culture in Belgrade and Serbia. This could lead other academic researchers to examine its theoretical implications. Policy-making on various levels within different organisations could also be affected by the practical implications of this study. In both cases, the *articulated meaning* of theoretical, methodological and pragmatic knowledge would feed back into the observed phenomenon, changing its form through the application of findings. Ethical implications cannot be overemphasised.

This study may impact future research of social and cultural phenomena. Methodological principles developed in this study could be adapted to multidisciplinary research by exploring the links, overlaps and tensions between distinct paradigms as parts of a phenomenological continuum. Whilst recognising the analytical 'division of labour', the researcher treated theoretical ruptures between paradigms as a result of their constraints, not their irreconcilable absolutes. This research contributed to the methodology of Articulation by exploring the limits of different paradigms as linkages between their respective foci - not their exclusive boundaries. The researcher's reflexive approach to the examined phenomenon shows that its different manifestations could be addressed using contrasting paradigms.

Non-necessary links between disciplines reflect non-necessary articulations of examined forces, practices and events. The 'non' necessary element of events has a twofold character. Firstly, it is the voluntary, 'arbitrary', non-deterministic aspect of social, cultural and related phenomena otherwise conditioned by structural relations; it represents agency, the freedom of action within social confines. Secondly, such *non*-necessary action determines the *emphasis* of the manifest phenomenon, thus affecting its appearance and initial treatment by observers (theorists and others). Once recognised under a specified name (e.g. 'Impressionism') it starts structuring the interpretation of subsequent and concurrent phenomena, sometimes constructing a fictitious genealogy developed *in retrospect*. Depending on discursive position, accounts of such phenomena are theoretically deconstructed with varying success. Once fully articulated, social, cultural, and related phenomena enter the deterministic realm, constraining change to already rooted interpretations. The process would start anew with further articulations of existing structures, potentially creating novel *non-necessary* associations of meaning.

Methodology of Articulation thus understood could lend itself to historiography and epistemology. However, this study merely provides the principles for successful integration of disparate disciplines in social sciences, arts and business studies.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- Adorno, T (1973) The Philosophy of Modern Music, London: Shed & Ward
- Adorno, T (1991) Culture Industry: selected essays on mass culture, London: Routledge
- Adorno, T (1997) Aesthetic Theory, London: The Athlone Press
- Albahari, D (ed.) (1983) DRUGOM STRANOM: Almanah Novog Talasa u SFRJ, Kultura: Beograd
- Althusser, L (1965) For Marx, London: Allan Lane
- Alvesson, M and Skoldberg, K (2000) Reflexive methodology: new vistas for qualitative research, London: SAGE
- Ambrozic, D (2000) 'Izadji na crtu - rokenrol i izbori', NIN (online), (August 2000). Available from <http://www.nin.co.yu/arhiva>
- Anderson, B (1991) Imagined Communities, London: Verso
- Andjelkovic, V (1983) 'Potkulture u sedamdesetim', in: Albahari, D (ed.) (1983) DRUGOM STRANOM: Almanah Novog Talasa u SFRJ, Kultura: Beograd
- Atkinson, P and Hammersley, M (1998) '*Ethnography and Participant Observation*', in: Denzin, N and Lincoln, Y (eds) The Landscape of Qualitative Research, London: SAGE
- Averill, G, Keynote Lecture: 'Persuasive Sounds', British Forum for Ethnomusicology Annual Conference: Music and Power, Brunel University, 2001.*
- Bakir, A, 'Understanding Organisational Strategy', Critical Management Studies Conference 2001 Proceedings, Manchester School of Management, UMIST, England, 2001.* Available from: [www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers\\_strategy.asp](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers_strategy.asp)
- Barthes, R (1977) Image, Music, Text, London: Fontana
- Barthes, R (1993) Mythologies, London: Vintage
- Bastin, R (1985) 'Participant Observation in Social Analysis', pp. 92-99, in: Walker, R (ed.) (1985) Applied Qualitative Research, Aldershot: Dartmouth
- Bateman, A and Holmes, J (1995) Introduction to Psychoanalysis: Contemporary Theory and Practice, London: Routledge
- Baudrillard, J (1983) Simulations, New York: Semiotext[e]

- Bennett, A (2000) Popular music and youth culture : music, identity and place, Basingstoke : Palgrave
- Bennett, A (2001) Cultures of Popular Music, Buckingham: Open University Press
- Bennett, T, Frith, S, Grossberg, L, Shepherd, J and Turner, G (eds.) (1993) Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions, London: Routledge
- Bickman, L, and Rog, D (eds.) (1998) Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods, London: SAGE
- Bird, C (1999) 'Clubbers: The music goes despite the bombs and missiles', *The Guardian*, Manchester, 12 April, p. 2
- Booth, C (2002) 'The Problems and Possibilities of Reflexivity in Strategy', *Electronic Journal of Radical Organization Theory*, vol. 8/1, Waikato Management School, University of Waikato, New Zealand. Available from: [www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/Research/ejrot/Vol8\\_1/Vol8\\_1articles/booth.asp](http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/Research/ejrot/Vol8_1/Vol8_1articles/booth.asp)
- Boric, D (2000) Pepeo i Prah: Rock Interviews 1988-1998, Pancevo: Kulturbunt
- Bourdieu, P (1991) Language and Symbolic Power, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Bourdieu, P (1993) Sociology in Question, London: SAGE
- Bowie, M (1991) Lacan, London: Fontana
- Bradley, D 'The Cultural Study of Music: A theoretical and methodological introduction', *Working Papers Collection*, The University of Warwick, 4/1983
- Broughton, S, Ellingham, M, Muddyman, D and Trillo, R (1994) World Music – The Rough Guide, London: The Rough Guides/Penguin Books
- Bruner, J (1987) 'Life as narrative', *Social Research*, Vol. 51, pp 11-32
- Bruner, J (1997) 'Life as narrative' in: Mackay, H (1997) Consumption and Everyday Life, London: SAGE
- Burnett, R (1996) Global Jukebox: International Music Industry, London: Routledge
- Chomsky, N (1959) 'Review of B. F. Skinner's 'Verbal Behaviour'', *Language*, 35, 26-58
- Cigarettes, J (1998) 'Tribal Ungathering', *The New Musical Express*, London, 5 December, pp. 21-22

- Clarke, J, Hall, S, Jefferson, T and Roberts, B (1975) 'Subcultures, cultures and class' in: Gelder, K and Thornton, s (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge
- Cohen, S (1972) Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers, London: MacGibbon and Kee
- Cohen, S (1980) 'Symbols of trouble', in: Gelder, K and Thornton, s (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge
- Collin, M (2001) This is Serbia Calling, London: Serpents Tail
- Collin, M and Godfrey, G (1997) Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House, London: Serpent's Tail
- Colovic, I and Hawkesworth, C (2002) Political Symbolism in Serbia, London: C Hurst & Co.
- Concise Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2000), London: Routledge
- Coolican, H (1999) Research Methods and Statistics in Psychology, Hodder & Stoughton
- Deliège, I and Sloboda, J (eds.) (1997) Perception and Cognition of Music, Hove: Psychology Press
- Denzin, N and Lincoln, Y (eds.) (1998) The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues, London: SAGE
- Denzin, N, (1997) Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, London: SAGE
- Derrida, J (1978) Writing and Difference, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Derry, M (1996) Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of Century, Hodder & Stoughton
- Djuric, J (1995) 'The Meaning of Myth', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i drustvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: dr Zagorka Golubovic), No. VIII, pp. 169-.
- Djuric, J (1999) 'Globalisation and Isolation', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i drustvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: Svetozar Stojanovic), No. XV, pp.-.
- Djurkovic, M (2001), '*Pop-politika i pop-ideologija*', Republika, Broj 266-267, 1-31. 08.2001.
- Drummond, B (2001) 45, London: Abacus

- Du Gay, P (ed) (1997) Production of Culture/Cultures of Production, London: Sage/Open University Press
- Du Gay, P, *et al* (1997) Doing Cultural Studies: the story of the Sony Walkman, London: Sage/The Open University
- Eco, U (1972) Towards a Semiotic Enquiry Into the Television Message, W. P. C. S., University of Birmingham
- Eco, U (1976) A Theory of Semiotics, Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Eco, U (1997) Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality, London: Minerva
- Elflein, D (1998) 'Some aspects of Hip-Hop history in Germany', *Popular Music*, vol. 17/3, 255-266, Cambridge University Press
- Eyes The Colour of The Frontline (2000), Belgrade: Centre for Antiwar Action
- Fetterman, D (1998) 'Walking Softly Through the Wilderness: Ethics', in:
- Fetterman, D (1998) Ethnography: Step by Step, London: SAGE
- Foster-Carter, A (1985) Sociology of Development, Ormskirk: Causeway Press
- Foucault, M (1980) Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Foucault, M (1984) The Foucault Reader: edited by Paul Rabinow, London: Penguin Books
- Foucault, M (1994) The Archaeology of Knowledge, London: Routledge
- Frey, J H, and Fontana, A (1991) 'The group interview in social research', *The Social Science Journal*, Vol 28, No 2, pp. 175-187
- Frith, S (1993) 'Popular music and the local state', in Bennett, T, Frith, S, Grossberg, L, Shepherd, J and Turner, G (eds.) (1993) Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions, London: Routledge
- Frith, S (1996) Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Frith, S (2000) 'Music industry research: Where now? Where next? Notes from Britain', *Popular Music*, vol. 19/3, 387-393, Cambridge University Press
- Fromm, E (1984) Escape From Freedom, London: Routledge
- Galtung, J (1994) 'Four Theses about Yugoslav Crises', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i drustvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: Bozidar Jaksic), No. VI, pp. 25-.
- Geertz, C (1993) The Interpretation of Cultures, London: Fontana

- Gelder, K and Thornton, S (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge
- Gerth, H and Mills, C W (1969) Character and Social Structure: The Psychology of Social Institutions, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Gill, A M and Whedbee (1997) 'Rhetoric' in: Van Dijk, T (ed.) (1997) Discourse as Structure and Process, London: SAGE
- Golding, P & Harris, P (eds.) (1996) Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Globalisation, Communication and the New International Order, London: SAGE
- Goodwin, A (1991) 'Popular music and postmodern theory', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 5/2, 174-190, Routledge
- Gordon, C (ed) Foucault, M (1980) Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977, London: Harvester
- Gordy, E D (1999) The Culture of Power in Serbia, Pennsylvania State University Press
- Gordy, E D (2001) Kultura vlasti u Srbiji, Beograd: Geopoetika
- Gramsci, A (1971) Selections From the Prison Notebooks, London: Lawrence and Wishart
- Green, J (1998) All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture, London: Jonathan Cape
- Greene, P (2001) 'Mixed messages: unsettled cosmopolitanisms in Nepali pop', *Popular Music*, vol. 20/2, 162-187, Cambridge University Press
- Grossberg, L (1986) 'History, politics and postmodernism: Stuart Hall and cultural studies', in: Morley, D and Chen, K H (eds.) (1996) Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies, London: Routledge
- Hall, S & Du Gay, P (eds.) (1996) Questions of Cultural Identity, London: SAGE
- Hall, S (1973) 'Marx's notes on method: a reading of 'The 1857 Introduction''. *Working papers in cultural studies* 6. Birmingham, pp. 132-169
- Hall, S (1974) '*Deviancy, Politics and the Media*', in Rock, P and McIntosh, M (eds.) Deviance and Social Control, Tavistock
- Hall, S (1980a) 'Race, articulation and societies structured in dominance', in: Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism, Paris: UNESCO



- Hall, S (1980b) 'Encoding/decoding', pp. 128-138, in: Hall, S (ed.) (1980) Culture, Media, Language, London: Unwin Hyman Ltd.
- Hall, S (1986) 'On postmodernism and articulation: an interview with Stuart Hall'. By Lawrence Grossberg, in: Morley, D and Chen, K H (eds.) (1996) Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies, London: Routledge
- Hall, S and DuGay, P (eds.) (1996) Production of Culture/Cultures of Production, London: SAGE and Open University Press
- Hall, S *et al* (eds.) (1976) Resistance Through Rituals, Hutchinson
- Hammersley, M (1992) What's Wrong With Ethnography: Methodological explorations, London: Routledge
- Hanczor, R S (1997) 'Articulation Theory and Public Controversy: Taking Sides Over NYPD Blue', *CSMC: Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, vol. 14/1, pp. 1-30, A Publication of the Speech Communication Association
- Hannerz, U (1996) Transnational Connections: Culture, people, places, London: Routledge
- Hargreaves, D J and North, A C (eds.) (1997) The Social Psychology of Music, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Harker, D (1997) 'The wonderful world of IFPI: music industry rhetoric, the critics, and the classical marxist critique', *Popular Music*, vol. 16/1, 45-79, Cambridge University Press
- Hayden, M B (1995) 'Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia', *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (Winter 1995), pp. 917-931
- Hayden, M B (1998) 'Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i drustvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: Svetozar Stojanovic), No. XIV, pp. 101-118
- Hebdige, D (1993) Subculture: The Meaning of Style, London: Routledge
- Hebdige, D (1997) 'Posing... threats, striking... poses: youth, surveillance and display', in: Gelder, K and Thornton, S (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge
- Hesmondhalgh, D (1998) 'Essay Review: *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid house*, by Matthew Collin, *The Clubcultures Reader: Readings in Popular Cultural Studies*, by Steve Redhead, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, by Sarah Thornton, *Popular Music*, vol. 17/2, 247-253, Cambridge University Press

Hesmondhalgh, D (1998) 'Post-Punk's attempt to democratise the music industry: the success and failure of Rough Trade', *Popular Music*, vol. 16/3, 255-274, Cambridge University Press

Hogg, B, 'Power Relations of Technology and Space: Territory, Property, Surveillance and Listening in Britain and Bosnia and Hercegovina', *British Forum for Ethnomusicology Annual Conference: Music and Power*, Brunel University, 2001.

<http://citd.scar.utoronto.ca>

<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/eems/Yugo-Rock.html>

<http://www.utexas.edu/ftp/depts/eems/Yugoslavian.html>, Yugoslav cinema, ref: Plastic Jesus/ Plasticni Isus, Director: Lazar Stojanovic, 1971

*IFPI Annual Report 2001*, London: IFPI, 2001

*IFPI Annual Report 2002*, London: IFPI, 2002

*IFPI Annual Report 2003*, London: IFPI, 2003

Jaksic, B (1994) 'The Youth Between the War and Peace - the Case of the Former Yugoslavia', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i drustvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: Bozidar Jaksic), No. VI, pp. 97-.

Jaksic, B (1995) 'Disintergration of Society and Possibility of Independent Media', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i drustvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: Bozidar Jaksic), No. VII, pp. 99-.

Janjatovic, P (1998) Ilustrovana Yu-Rock Enciklopedija 1960-1997, Beograd: Geopoetika

Jopson, N (2002) 'Why the web is going quiet', *Resolution*, London, October 2002, pp. 50-51

Jopson, N (2003a) 'The long plastic hallway', *Resolution*, London, March 2003, pp. 54-55

Jopson, N (2003b) 'There is another way', *Resolution*, London, April 2003, pp. 60-61

Jung C G (1991) The Psychogenesis of Mental Disease, London: Fontana

Jung C G (1995) Memories, Dreams, Reflections, London: Fontana

Jung C G (1999) The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature, London: Fontana

Jung, C G (1991) The Development of Personality, London: Fontana

- Kahn-Harris, K (2000) 'Roots?: the relationship between the global and the local within the Extreme Metal scene', *Popular Music*, vol. 19/1, 13-30, Cambridge University Press
- Kant, I (prev. Prof. Nikola Popovic) (1932) Kritika i istoga Uma, Beograd: Izdavacka knjizarnica Gece Kona
- Kartalovic, B (2001) 'INTERVJU: SVETLANA VELMAR JANKOVIC', Slobodna Svetlost, Kragujevac. Available from <http://www.svetlost.co.yu/arhiva/2001/307/307-4.htm>, (last update 05-2003)
- Kellner, D (1997) 'The Frankfurt School and British Cultural Studies: The Missed Articulation', *Cultural Studies and FS: McGuigan reader* [cta] 1/1/97, from <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/courses/ed253a/Mckellner/CSFS.html>
- Keso, H, Lehtimaki, H, and Pietilainen, T, 'In Dialogue with Business Research Data', *Critical Management Studies Conference 2001 Proceedings, Manchester School of Management, UMIST, England, 2001*. Available from: [www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers\\_construction.asp](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers_construction.asp)
- Kljajic-Imsirovic, J(2001), 'Disidenti i zatvor', *Republika*, Broj 196. Available from [http://www.yuope.com/zines/republika/arhiva/98/196/196\\_14.HTM](http://www.yuope.com/zines/republika/arhiva/98/196/196_14.HTM) (updated 05-2001)
- Kohn, M (1992) Dope Girls: The Birth of the British Drug Underground, Lawrence & Wishart
- Kres, G, Leite-Garcia and van Leeuwen (1997) 'Discourse Semiotics' in: Van Dijk, T (ed.) (1997) Discourse as Structure and Process, London: SAGE
- Kresic, A (1994) 'Reasons for Repeated Fall of Yugoslavia', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i drustvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: Bozidar Jaksic), No. VI, pp. 67-. ISSN 0353 - 5738
- Kronja, I (2001) The fatal Glow: Mass Psychology and Aesthetics of Turbo-Folk Subculture 1990-2000, Beograd: Technokratia
- Krueger, R A (1994) Focus Groups, London: SAGE
- Lacan, J (1966) Ecrits, London: Tavistock
- Lacan, J (1994) The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, London: Penguin
- Laing, D (1985) 'Listening to punk', in: Gelder, K and Thornton, s (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge

- Lane, M (ed), (1970) Structuralism: A Reader, Cape
- Levy, C (1992) 'The influence of British rock in Bulgaria', *Popular Music*, vol. 11/2, pp. 209-212, Cambridge university Press
- Levy, D L, Alvesson, M and Willmott, H, 'Critical Approaches to Strategic Management', *Critical Management Studies Conference 2001 Proceedings, Manchester School of Management, UMIST, England, 2001*. Available from: [www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers\\_strategy.asp](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers_strategy.asp)
- Lovink, G (2001) 'Information inequality: an interview with Herbert I. Schiller', *Telepolis: magazin der netzkultur*. Available from: [wysiwyg://239/http://heise.de/english/special/pol/8018/1.html](http://wysiwyg://239/http://heise.de/english/special/pol/8018/1.html)
- Maas, G and Reszel, H (1998) "'Whatever happened to...?': The decline and renaissance of rock in the former GDR", *Popular Music*, vol. 17/3, 267-277, Cambridge University Press
- Mackay, H (1997) Consumption and Everyday Life, London: SAGE
- Madzar, LJ (1994) 'Economic Aspects of Yugoslav Disintegration', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i drustvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: Bozidar Jaksic), No. VI, pp. 211-.
- Marcus, G (2001) Lipstick Traces: The Secret History of the Twentieth Century, London: Faber and Faber
- Marcus, G E (1998) 'What Comes Just After 'Post'? – The Case of Ethnography', in: Denzin, N and Lincoln, Y (eds) The Landscape of Qualitative Research, London: SAGE
- Marx, K (1951) 'The Eighteenth Brumaire' in Marx and Engels selected Works, volume 1, Lawrence & Wishart
- Marx, K (1973) 'Production, Consumption, Distribution, Exchange (Circulation)' in Grundrisse: An Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, London: Penguin
- Massey, D (1997) 'Making spaces, or, geography is political too', pp. 203-206, in: Mackay, H (1997) Consumption and Everyday Life, London: SAGE
- Matic, D (2001) 'Mala skola rokenrola', *NIN* (online) (cited 1 November 2001). Available from <URL:<http://www.nin.co.yu/cgi-bin/printpage?filename=/2001-11/01/20439.htm>>
- Mattei, E, 'Belgrade: the first breath of freedom', *Adrenalin*, (London) No 6, January 2001

- Matza, D (1961) 'Subterranean Traditions of Youth', The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 338 (November)
- Matza, D and Sykes, G (1961) 'Juvenile Delinquency and Subterranean Values', American Sociological Review, 26
- Mazarr, M J (1996) 'Culture in international relations', *Washington Quarterly*, Spring 1996. Available from:  
<http://www.globalpolicy.org/globaliz/cultural/cultur2.html>
- McDonald, C (2000) 'Exploring modal subversions in alternative music', *Popular Music*, vol. 19/3, 355-364, Cambridge University Press
- McLaughlin, N and McLoone, M (2000), 'Hybridity and national musics: the case of Irish rock music', *Popular Music*, vol. 19/2, 182-199, Cambridge University Press
- Mercer, K (1987) 'Black hair/style politics', in: Gelder, K and Thornton, s (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge
- Meyer, L B (1994) Music, The Arts, and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Culture, University of Chicago Press
- Middleton, R (1990) Studying Popular Music, Milton Keynes: Open University Press
- Middleton, R (ed.) (2000) Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Miles, S (2000) Youth Lifestyles in a Changing World, Buckingham: OU Press
- Miller, J, (translation: Sakic, M) (1990) The Clash, Beograd: Art Press
- Mills, M B, Huberman, A M (1994) Qualitative Data Analysis, London: SAGE
- Mills, S (1997) Discourse, London: Routledge
- Milojevic, J (2002) 'Od narodne muzike do turbo folka', *Politika*, Beograd, 6-22 February. Available from: <http://www.politika.co.yu/2002/0206/indexdan.htm>
- Miloš-Todorovic, O (2000) Neprestajanje, Beograd: Shock Art
- Mitchell, T (1992) 'Mixing pop and politics: rock music in Czechoslovakia before the velvet revolution', *Popular Music*, vol. 11/2, 187-203
- Morley, D and Chen, K-H (eds.) (1996) Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies, London: Routledge
- Muggleton, D (2000) Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style, Berg Publishers
- Muzicka Enciklopedija, (1971), Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod

- Negus, K (1999) Music Genres and Corporate Cultures, London: Routledge
- Nettl, B (1983) The Study of Ethnomusicology, Urbana: University of Illinois Press
- Novakovic, N (1994) 'Disintegration of Yugoslav Working Class', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: Bozidar Jaksic), No. VI, pp. 309-.
- Ochs, E (1997) 'Narrative' in: Van Dijk, T (ed.) (1997) Discourse as Structure and Process, London: SAGE
- Oppenheim, A N (1992) Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement, London: Pinter Publishers
- Otašević, A (2001) 'Sudbina pobedjenih', *NIN* (online) (cited 25 October 2001). Available from <URL:<http://www.nin.co.yu/cgi-bin/printpage?filename=/2001-10/25/20379.htm>>
- Pashler, H (ed) (1998) Attention, Hove: Psychology Press
- Pavicevic, Dj, Spasic, I (2001) 'A "Pass": Changes in Serbia as a Form of Social Learning', *Revolution and Order* (Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, Belgrade, editor: Ivana Spasic, Milan Subotic), pp. 137-150. ISBN 86-82417-03-2
- Pilkington, H (1994) Russia's Youth and its Culture: A nation's constructors and constructed, London: Routledge
- Port, M van de (1999) 'The articulation of soul: Gypsy musicians and the Serbian Other', *Popular Music*, vol. 18/3, 291-308, Cambridge University Press
- Prica, I (1991) *'Omladinske potkulture u Beogradu'*, Beograd: Etnografski Muzej
- Prichard, C, 'Creative bodies - critically reading 'creativity' in management discourse', *Critical Management Studies Conference 2001 Proceedings, Manchester School of Management, UMIST, England, 2001*. Available from: [www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/)
- Prodanovic, M (2001) Stariji i lepši Beograd, Beograd: Stubovi Kulture
- Rabinow, P (ed.) Foucault, M (1984) The Foucault Reader, London: Penguin Books

- Radojicic, M (1997) 'The Cross-Roads of Values', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i drustvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: Svetozar Stojanovic), No. XII, pp. 95-.
- Richter, H (1966) Dada: art and anti-art, London: Thames and Hudson
- Riggins, S H (ed) (1997) The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse, London: SAGE
- Robins, K (1996) 'What in The World's Going on?', Chapter One, in: Hall, S and DuGay, P Production of Culture/Cultures of Production, London: SAGE
- Ross, A and Rose, T (eds.) (1997) Microphone Fiends, London: Routledge
- Rothkop, D (1997) 'In praise of cultural imperialism? Effects of globalisation on culture', *Foreign Policy*, June 22, 1997. Available from: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/globaliz/cultural/globcult.html>
- Rutten, P (1991) 'Local popular music on the national and international markets', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 5/3, 294-305, Routledge
- Rutten, P (1993) 'Popular music policy: a contested area - the Dutch experience', in Bennett, T, Frith, S, Grossberg, L, Shepherd, J and Turner, G (eds.) (1993) Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions, London: Routledge
- Ryan, A (ed) Mill, J S and Bentham J (1987) Utilitarianism and Other Essays, London: Penguin Books
- Saunders, M, Lewis, P and Thornhill, A (2000) Research Methods for Business Students, London: Financial Times and Prentice Hall
- Saunderton, S (1998) 'From Teds to Mods to Hippies to Skins to Punks to This: NME reports on the death of youth cults', *The New Musical Express*, London, 5 December, pp. 20-22
- Saussure, F de (1974) Course in General Linguistics, Fontana
- Savic, M (2001) 'Event and Narrative (On Judging the Character of Contemporary Events)', *Revolution and Order* (Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, Belgrade, editor: Ivana Spasic, Milan Subotic), pp. 11-20.
- Schiller, H I (1998) 'Dominating the electronic era: towards a new century of American imperialism', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 1998. Available from: [wysiwyg://137/http://www.en.monde-diplomatique.fr/1998/09/02schil](http://www.en.monde-diplomatique.fr/1998/09/02schil)
- Shank, B (1994) Dissonant identities: The Rock 'n' Roll Scene in Austin, Texas, Wesleyan University Press

- Shuster, R (2001) 'A No-Budget Production: At microcinemas, alternative fare is shown anywhere organizers can fit a projector, a screen and chairs', *LA Times*, Los Angeles, September 2, 2001. Available from: <http://www.calendarlive.com/top/1,1419,L-LATimes-Movies-X!ArticleDetail-41805,00.html>
- Silber, L and Little, A (1995) The Death of Yugoslavia, London: Penguin Books, BBC Books
- Slack, JD 'The theory and method of articulation in cultural studies', in: Morley, D and Chen, K H (eds.) (1996) Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies, London: Routledge
- Slobin, M (1993) Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the west, Wesleyan University Press
- Sloboda, J A (1985) The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Sloboda, J A (1991) 'Musical structure and emotional response: Some empirical findings', *Psychology of Music*, 19, 110-120
- Smart, B (1993) Postmodernity, London: Routledge
- Sretenović (ed) (1999) Novo čitanje ikone, Beograd: Geopoetika
- Stallybrass, P and White, A (1997) 'From carnival to transgression', in: Gelder, K and Thornton, S (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge
- Stojanovic, L (2001), 'Ko behu disident?', *Republika*, Broj 182. Available from [http://www.yuope.com/zines/republika/arhiva/98/182/182\\_11.HTM](http://www.yuope.com/zines/republika/arhiva/98/182/182_11.HTM) (updated 05-2001)
- Stojanovic, S (2001) 'Democratic Revolution in Serbia', *Revolution and Order* (Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, Belgrade, editor: Ivana Spasic, Milan Subotic), pp. 23-31.
- Storey, J (1998) Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader, Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall
- Straw, W (1991) 'Systems of articulation, logics of change: communities and scenes in popular music', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 5/3, 368-388, Routledge
- Straw, W (1997) 'Communities and scenes in popular music', in: Gelder, K and Thornton, S (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge



- Szemere, A (2001) Up from the Underground: the culture of rock music in post-socialist Hungary, Pennsylvania University Press
- Šunjka, D and Pavlov, D (1998) Pank u Jugoslaviji 1980-1990, Beograd: Dedalus
- Svensson, P, 'Setting the Marketing Scene: Discourse and Ideology in Marketing Practice', *Critical Management Studies Conference 2001 Proceedings, Manchester School of Management, UMIST, England, 2001*. Available from:  
[www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers\\_marketing.asp](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers_marketing.asp)
- Szemere, A (2001) Up from the Underground: The Culture of Rock Music in Postsocialist Hungary, Pennsylvania University Press
- Tadic, LJ (1993) 'Broz Ruled By Series of Coup D' Etat', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i drustvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: Bozidar Jaksic), 4, No. IV, pp. 200-201. ISSN 0353 - 5738
- Tagg, P (2000) 'Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method, and Practice', in: Middleton, R (ed) Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music, Oxford: OUP
- Taylor, E (1989) The AB Guide to Music Theory I-II, London: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music
- The Recording Industry Commercial Piracy Report 2003*, London: IFPI, 2003
- Thornton, S (1995) Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital, London: Polity Press
- Tinker, T (2002) 'Sleepless in Seattle: Farewell Democracy, Hello WTO!', *Electronic Journal of Radical Organization Theory*, vol. 5/2, Waikato Management School, University of Waikato, New Zealand. Available from:  
[www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/Research/ejrot/Vol6\\_1/Vol6\\_1dialogue/tinker.asp](http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/Research/ejrot/Vol6_1/Vol6_1dialogue/tinker.asp)
- Tolson, A (1997) 'Social surveillance and subjectification: the emergence of 'subculture' in the work of Henry Mayhew', in: Gelder, K and Thornton, S (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge
- Treece, D (1997) 'Guns and Roses: bossa nova and Brazil's music of popular protest, 1958-68', *Popular Music*, vol. 16/1, 1-29, Cambridge University Press
- Trimbur, J (1993) 'Articulation Theory and the Problem of Determination: A Reading of Lives on the Boundary', *A Journal of Composition Theory*, vol. 13/1. Available from: <http://www.cas.usf.edu/JAC/131/trimbur.html>

- Tsitsos, W (1999) Rules of rebellion: slamdancing, moshing, and the American alternative scene', *Popular Music*, vol. 18/3, 397-414, Cambridge University Press
- Van Dijk, T (ed.) (1997) Discourse as Structure and Process, London: SAGE
- Vasic, P (1994) 'Invisible Reasons of Yugoslav Economic Collapse', *Philosophy and Society* (Institut za filozofiju i drustvenu teoriju, Beograd, editor: Bozidar Jaksic), No. VI, pp. 299-.
- Vidić-Rasmunssen, Lj (1995) 'From source to commodity: newly-composed folk music of Yugoslavia', *Popular Music*, vol. 14/2, 241-256, Cambridge University Press
- Volosinov, V N (1973) Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, Seminar Press
- Von Wright, G H (1993) 'Two Traditions', in: Hammersley, M (ed) Social Research – Philosophy, Politics and Practice, London: SAGE
- Vujović, Z and Kanjevac, D (1996), *Akademija – Republika*, VID-B92, VHS PAL, 30 min., Beograd: B92 Video
- Wahlin, N, 'Humor and Irony as Devices for Identity Construction', *Critical Management Studies Conference 2001 Proceedings, Manchester School of Management, UMIST, England, 2001*. Available from:  
[www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers\\_humour.asp](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers_humour.asp)
- Walker, R (ed.) (1985) Applied Qualitative Research, Aldershot: Dartmouth
- Wallis, R and Malm, K (1983) 'The music industry in small countries: big sounds from small peoples', Gothenburg University and UNESCO
- Wallis, R and Malm, K (1984) Big Sounds from Small Peoples: the music industry in small countries, London: Constable
- Wallis, R and Malm, K (1987) 'The International Music Industry and Transcultural Communication', in: Lull, J (ed) Popular Music and Communication, London: SAGE
- Walser, R (1993) 'Eruptions: Heavy Metal appropriations of classical virtuosity', in: Gelder, K and Thornton, s (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge
- White, L A (2001) 'Reconsidering cultural imperialism theory', *Transnational Broadcasting Studies Journal*, Spring 2001. Available from:  
<http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Spring01/white.htm>

- Wicke, P (1996) 'Popular music and processes of social transformation: The case of rock music in former East Germany', Rutten, Paul (ed.), *Music, culture and society in Europe. Part II of: European Music Office, Music in Europe*, Brussels, 1996, 77-84. Available from [http://www.icce.rug.nl/~soundscapes/DATABASES/MIE/Part2\\_chapter02.html](http://www.icce.rug.nl/~soundscapes/DATABASES/MIE/Part2_chapter02.html)
- Wicke, P and Shepherd, J (1993) 'The Cabaret is Dead': Rock Culture as State Enterprise - The Political Organisation of Rock in East Germany' in: Bennett, T, Frith, S, Grossberg, L, Shepherd, J and Turner, G (eds.) (1993) Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions, London: Routledge
- Widdicombe, S (1993) 'Autobiography and change: rhetoric and authenticity of Gothic style', in: Burman, E and Parker, I (eds.) Discourse Analytical Research, London: Routledge
- Widdicombe, S and Woofit, R (1990) "'Being' versus 'doing' punk: on achieving authenticity as a member", Journal of Language and Social Psychology, Vol. 9, No 4, pp257-77
- Widdicombe, S and Woofit, R (1995) The Language of Youth Subcultures: Social Identity in Action, Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Williams, R (1990) Notes on the Underground, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press
- Willis, P E (1997) 'Theoretical confessions and reflexive method', in: Gelder, K and Thornton, S (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge
- Woodward, K (ed) (1997) Identity and Difference, London: SAGE
- Wright, R (2000) "'I'd sell you suicide": pop music and moral panic in the age of Marilyn Manson', *Popular Music*, vol. 19/3, 365-386, Cambridge University Press
- Yardimci, S, 'Interlocking Flows: Globalisation, Urbanism and Culture in Contemporary Istanbul', *Critical Management Studies Conference 2001 Proceedings, Manchester School of Management, UMIST, England, 2001*. Available from: [www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers\\_creativity.asp](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2001/papers_creativity.asp)
- Young, J (1997) *The Subterranean World of Play*, in Gelder, K and Thornton, S (eds.) (1997) The Subcultures Reader, London: Routledge
- Zikic, A (1999) Fatalni Ringispil: hronika beogradskog rokenrola, Beograd: Geopoetika

## Appendix One: Reflexive diary

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2001.

Spent the day at the rehearsal with Pedja and his old band. It was a family thing, they brought their kids, the funniest one being Rale's son Nemanja who imitated his father on the drums. The gestures he made as he took sips of milk from the bottle were especially interesting. He did it the same way Rale would drink beer from a bottle between songs. A long, lazy day in the patio garden between blocks of rehearsals. They have matured quite a bit, and though I never really liked their music, it seems that they've overcome some old clichés. Recorded the whole thing, but the recording was poor. Pedja and I listened to it at the new café called 'Banana Republika'. He knows the girl that runs the place – he was considering arranging a gig there, for 'Mancando'.

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2001.

I went with Pedja to see Sabljari. We popped in to his studio flat, where he also keeps his audio-visual editing equipment. After listening to a few new tracks by CIH and watching the videos that the band made of their own accord, we started talking about business opportunities in Belgrade. The guys sounded pretty disillusioned about the selective promotion imposed by B92. That reminded me of Fleka's comment – I spoke to him the other day – about the unauthorised use of his slogan for the title of 'This is Serbia Calling', especially in the light of how the station treated him. The guys wanted to know more about the book, since none of them read it, and I said that I thought it was fairly good, considering the fact that all the expressed opinions came only from people running B92, or the ones from their circle of collaborators and friends. I wasn't much surprised when Sabljari started complaining that they 'act as a clan'. I told him that the book gave B92 a lot of publicity in UK broadsheets and Radio 4; though well deserved, I thought it exaggerated, because the book portrayed the station as the single source of subversion and resistance, as if nobody else did anything that kept people going during the past ten years. Upon reflection, it appears that new forms of rivalry have developed since the political change was achieved – the unifying goal connecting many of us in the past.

Sabljar complained about the tour that B92 organised last summer (2000). His old band wanted to support the action, to play for free, but they were not allowed to join. He suspected that there was a lot of money involved and that the rejection had something to do with that and what's 'behind the scenes'. I don't know what was the case but it is worth taking into account. The man looked very dissatisfied. He said that 'they are controlling everything now', and that 'unfortunately many people can't see that'. 'Everything' included music production and live concerts, to broadcasting and Internet services. Talking of the Net, I had no idea that 'Krompir' (Potato) was his anti-war web site. Sabljar told me so now. I came across the site in the spring of 1999, I can't remember everything but I think it was quite funny; humour of absurdity drew me to visit it several times. I can't remember a lot from those days, they're quite a blur; I didn't feel very well then.

We talked about all sorts of things; I told them I noticed dozens of cafés around town, and that it seems that not many are active. Gruja was there too. He expressed strong dislike of both the owners and clientele, calling them a 'criminal crowd'. I don't know if his comment was accurate, but the cafés are one change I noticed immediately. We talked about all sorts of things, and when I listen to the recording I cannot tell how exactly did the conversation flow, but at some point Sabljar said, when I spoke about the importance of authors' rights, "I'll show you something that'll make you laugh". He showed me the receipt from SOKOJ, Serbian equivalent of the PRS, showing that his band had received a grand total of 1,600 Dinars – circa 16 UK Pounds – for the whole of 2000 and that the whole band might be able to buy a box of cigarettes each, or a few spare guitar strings. After all, he said, "it is all down to... doing what you enjoy", since music obviously didn't bring him any commercial benefit in years. He was very keen to find out, whether I played CIH to someone in England. He sent me a CD in May or June. I said I did, and that the reactions were largely positive, but I added that they need a bit of polishing. Even more so, Pedja and I agreed that CIH is perfect for the German and Belgian markets, since Industrial isn't that popular in the UK,

apart from some smaller niches – I could imagine a couple of spots in Camden where they could readily play it.

It is obvious that the guys – and I can't blame them – are very interested in trying to promote their stuff in the UK. I told them about some things I know, primarily about Zoo Bar in Leicester Square and some bad comments I got from friends in London. The place hosted a former-Yugoslav clientele on Monday nights, and the attempts to organise some decent gigs there were not that successful. Their promoters did not have a very clear image regarding post-Yugoslav, mainly Serbian artists, so they brought anyone, from 'Paribrejkers' to 'Models'. When I mentioned the latter, Pedja went berserk. Well, yes, those girls are a good example of Serbian manufactured pop, but still... Anyway, I told them that all the gigs held that summer – and I must admit, a bit better planned than the previous ones – were organised by B92, yet again. This brought us to mention Darko Dzambasov and his open letter to the public, when the radio tried to take over the whole building of Dom Omladine, apparently free of charge.

Since venues were obviously the hot topic, the good old Academy was next. A lot of speculation has been going on, but luckily I ran into Zoran Dimovski, who told me the inside story. Since the venue belongs to the University of Arts, students were offered to manage the Academy - but they refused. We concluded that the place has been closed down for too long and the new kids have barely any connection to it. It is apparently been negotiated with someone who intends to turn it into a space for multimedia presentations. That might not be so bad after all.

The next relevant conversation we had, started when Sabljar asked me if I was planning to stay in the UK. I said I have at least another year to finish my studies, and other important plans will have to wait. I know that it wouldn't be bad for them if they had someone there to help with the contacts. I told him that I want to establish a bridge, and this visit was also connected to that. Sabljar said that he has no intention to leave and that he sees himself in Belgrade, playing with the band, doing the business, and – if possible, going on occasional trips if an opportunity arises to perform abroad. Pedja and I

were also looking at possibilities to finish that video in the studio. Pedja was full of enthusiasm saying, “we can’t go on, sitting on our hands in Belgrade”. He was especially enthusiastic about the ‘bridge’ I mentioned. I kept my scepticism for myself, knowing how difficult it would be to achieve the whole thing. Eventually, the conversation moved on to the inevitable subject: what is my position in England? I said that, whatever I do, identity matters, and it’s best for me to start the whole career thing relating it to Belgrade. The natural progression of the conversation went towards the image of Serbia abroad. That’s improving quite slowly.

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2001.

There is a lot of potential, I think, for good music, but people are far tenser than they are ready to admit. There is a bit of friction and the scene seems to be quite fragmented, since the most successful ones became entrenched in their newfound position. I have spent some time and money relaxing since I arrived in Belgrade nine days ago. Though fieldwork was on my mind all the time, I was a bit unfocused. I saw Pedja the first evening as I arrived; he came over to mine. We sat for a while with my family and then went out. He found this ‘Portuguese’ bar in town and the usual argument, ‘who was where doing what when it mattered’ started when the barman made some nasty jokes at the expense of Pedja’s old band, ‘Direktori’. It turned out that the ‘Portuguese’ guy running the bar is a good friend of Vuk, whom I met in London in 1999. Small world.

...

I have noticed that the new Belgrade cafés are well designed, one reminds me of a cyber-café in Manchester, where I went last year. Others look like some bars I’ve seen in Soho. Still, I can hardly shake off the insight I had – that this was an example of Serbian *nouveau riche elite*, the Dieselers that have all but ‘melted back’. In fact, they have entered the pores of society, and nobody notices that anymore - unfortunately so. The new elite has found its place; it is obvious when I see how ‘tensely relaxed’ they are. Someone told me, “have you noticed that there are no more Dieselers in the street?” I did, but the impression I had is still there; never mind, they’ve gone quieter.

...

I was planning to visit the EXIT festival last week, but I came a bit too late to organise everything, especially transport. It seemed to me that this is a proper western-style festival; then someone said to me that something similar was done in Budapest, so, “if you think that Hungary is the West, than this is western”. I don’t know, couldn’t find out for myself, but I have some interesting new contacts to speak to. One of them is Marko ‘Koska’, who made that comment. I ran into him accidentally, some quite surreal things happened that evening. I have his number so we’ll meet for an interview.

....

I visited Andra yesterday, Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup>. Pedja Pavleski turned up. This was the first truly awkward situation I faced so far – with the stupid Dictaphone. I carry the thing around all the time, sometimes to keep the diary notes, sometimes to record whatever I’m doing around town. No one complained so far, but Pedja Pavleski became almost hostile. I understand him, I almost felt embarrassed. Then I explained the whole research thing. It was a bit awkward, really, but he understood. I felt like a spy, and didn’t like it. He’s doing something with ‘Plavi Pepermint’, formerly ‘Peppermint Blue’; I’m glad that the band is still active. Andra was ditched from ‘Flip Out’, a Hip Hop band. He played it all afternoon, and then again, the other day, when Gaza came over.

After we left, Pedja Pavleski and I saw Bakic in town. They both talked with a lot of frustration that dealing with music and art is almost impossible when they have to cope with existential problems. Financial hardship, the threat of war, and so on... but I wouldn’t totally agree because I know that musicians in England also have to keep the balance between daily survival and doing what they really want to do, at least until they get some success. But again, the situation here was so overburdening that the lack of perspective might as well resulted in inactivity. Still, the interesting development is, that B92 invited Pedja Pavleski for a radio interview because his album was released. This is why the band is active again. So, things are still happening. That cultural vacuum that happened in Turbo-folk years needs filling now. I decided to look for things that could be labelled authentic. I don’t believe that copying western music could result in competitive products.



Again, there is a lot of potential but there is some kind of 'heavy' atmosphere everywhere. It is probably influenced by the financial situation and such. There is little money in circulation, there seems to be a bit of a 'clan' mentality, and communication doesn't go smoothly between them. Chernobyl in House seem to be trying to base their publicity strategies on Warhol, to form an alternative to the alternative; B92 seems to have made that transition between underground and something official and powerful, just one of the interest groups. That's a change.

...

To summarise, I think I have experienced a certain awakening and have adapted to Belgrade and I should start... arranging some meetings, with Marko 'Koska', Fleka, and others, to plan interviews and that... and to wait until a gig happens, or something interesting, a happening in town, so I can get there and document it... I am glad that I'm here because it seems that some things are happening... though the scene seems to be struggling to survive.

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2001.

Here... me and my brother have just popped in to Dom Omladine, where they promoted a new release by 'Negative', of whom I never heard, I must admit... Brother just tells me that it's a project featuring Ivana, formerly from 'Tap 011', a pop band. I just met Pera Janjatovic, 'in the flesh' and he gave me his number... I will call him these days, and have a chat with him... excellent.

...

(The following was recorded the same night):

I met Baca tonight, and he was overenthusiastic about EXIT. Not surprised because he's got his tentacles there, as he would like to say. Never mind, good source of info. I need to contact him, but not too soon. It is hard to be open in conversation with him. This is the kind of thing I anticipated, meeting a 'friend' and former 'colleague', while the both of us know that we were, depending on the situation, competing against each other.

Belgrade has become so tiring. Heavy. I don't feel comfortable at all. I must admit that I don't enjoy it here. I could leave tomorrow...

I must admit that nothing could have prepared me for this two-month adventure in Belgrade. I always saw myself as someone who belongs here. I don't really like it here very much. I don't feel comfortable. I left in the first place because I didn't like it anymore. Secondly, it has changed, and in such a way that – as usual – I could not have anticipated. It changed in a way that I just started to understand. Some degree of coldness and reservedness developed here... life is expensive here in comparison to the wages... opportunities are limited here... Krista, the lady at the BCUC library told me, "yes, now you notice that you are becoming European". Yes, I started attaining a new identity that I am becoming aware of now. I lived in an imaginary Belgrade... only now I can see how correct that idea is... How quickly people got disappointed, much quicker than Czechs and others. Observing my friends... I can only see how disappointed they are.

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2001.

Posters around town... "TTP – Teenage Techno Punks" DJ team playing at 'Kolos' riverboat... this seems to be connected to B92. I'll check it out... By the way, I just saw a rock journalist I met on TV... I could get in touch with him. I'll wait... experience taught me that you have to play the waiting game with most journalists. Which doesn't apply to Petar Janjatovic, the man is really open and friendly. I have found out that this applies to all truly accomplished individuals. They simply have no need to be arrogant...

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2001.

I spoke to Pedja and Andra and we came up with all sorts of ideas. The band 'Bad Brains' are still apparently active. We could invite them to play in Belgrade, they probably wouldn't charge much. Not a bad idea at all. I also thought of something interesting, as a concept, connecting modern DJ equipment with an old wireless, the one in wooden casing. Many homes in Belgrade have one. Andra has one and when I asked him if it works, he said, "of course". It could provide a nice, warm sound, the old amplifier connected

to a CD player. Why not? Necessity and limitations could bring you to interesting ideas and discoveries.

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2001.

It is now of the essence to start arranging things to start with meeting people. I need to get in touch with Fleka again, to meet him. I also need to contact Jeric... but Bojan tells me that most people are away until the end of August. He was quite correct in saying that. I could blame myself for bad timing, but this was the only way to do it, having this summer free. I'll arrange it all.

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2001.

It was a very pleasant evening. I sat next to the old Academy... Being connected to the imaginary crowd as well as to imaginary Belgrade is quite burdening. It is like a habit; quite redundant though hard to kick... this is like saying goodbye.

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2001.

I have been thinking of this new brand of cigarettes, '357'. A very peculiar thing. Semiotically. Looks like a cigarette brand that sells because of associations with handguns. Magnum. If you have a closer look, you can see that the relief on the pack, a black dot in a grey circle represents a barrel of a gun. I don't know if it's a local brand or is it made by a western company specifically for the markets in south-east Europe. It doesn't say where, or by whom is it manufactured. I don't like it. The very fact that no-one seems to find it repulsive is quite worrying.

...

I spoke to Fleka today, and we arranged to meet sometime next week, and I am sure that it is going to be very useful. I need to get in touch with Pera Janjatovic but I can't get hold of him. He's very busy.

Monday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2001.

Several days have passed since I've done anything, or recorded any entries to this diary, first and foremost because I reached the point of saturation. I am going to see CIH in their rehearsal today.

Afterwards, we went to my place. Pedja and Gruja were quarrelling about each other's ability to perform. Typical. Several people came over. Some complained about the choice of music. We played the whole album 'Live at the Academy' by Disciplina Kicme. Very cacophonous. The cover is the best; Koja's bizarrely talentless drawings and collages, combined with Fleka's expressive drawings. Seminal stuff. I am embarrassed to say that it was my kid brother who bought the record in '86. I didn't like 'Disciplina' then. After Pedja's attempt to terrorise us with ABBA's single 'Money, Money, Money' played on 33 rpm, we skipped to watching the entire 'ya! Films' catalogue.

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2001.

I have scheduled a talk with Marko 'Koska', which is supposed to happen tonight. I will also meet Pedja these days to continue working on that video. The process will be recorded to be used as a reminder of the whole development. I am now going to meet Baca, he says that someone is recording a music video. I think that's worth visiting, at least to see whether it's interesting. I'll keep the Dictaphone on just in case that I might need some references to the event for later. Of course, I have already noticed that such recordings hardly make any sense but the important thing is to keep them as a reminder of all the events I noticed and to get the general idea on the atmosphere.

Tonight I spoke to Marko 'Koska' Kostic, Andrej Bunusevac, and one of their friends whose name I didn't know. It was quite disjointed, the discussion shifted to one thing to another. I guess that's the problem with all group interviews. They're even more unpredictable than unstructured interviews with one person. Marko invited Andrej without my knowledge though I was happy to see him. The only problem was that they would often go off on a tangent, change topic, so I will have to be careful in extracting the relevant bits. The conversation started with EXIT and Marko's view of the music performed at different stages as well as the whole purpose of the event. Now, since he mentioned Reggae and Techno, this led Marko and Andrej to start philosophising about the philosophical aspects of Reggae and Techno, which

I should fit into the discussion, but this led to some vague speculation around the table – on things I could hardly find relevant for what I'm doing, such as the principles of traditional icon painting. I will preserve the recording though, those bits on mediaeval art and its philosophy might be of some use, maybe as part of a future essay.

...

I first asked Marko about the time he spent at the EXIT festival. His initial reply was unusual.

M K: I don't know how to make that sound intelligent.

M T: Was it crap? Or was it good? Was it a pose or...

M K: It wasn't crap and it wasn't 'a pose'.

M T: I heard there were seven stages on site.

M K: I don't know how many stages there were.

A B: Yes, yes, yes... it was like, Techno, Reggae.

M K: I don't know whether it was bigger than Woodstock? I think it was.

A B: No way. Maybe according to the number of people.

M K: All components suggest so.

A B: Come on, there were million people on Woodstock.

M T: It wasn't as revolutionary.

M K: This was better.

M K's friend: Who told you there was one million people?

A B: Where? At Woodstock? I saw recordings, man, that wasn't normal.

M K: I mean, to open a city and make it last for a whole week, that was greater organisation than Woodstock.

A B: No way, 'bigger'!

M K: (Laughs) To turn the whole city...!

A B: Well, Woodstock too lasted for five or six days...

M K's friend: Three.

M T: That's quite an important thing; I haven't been here for three years.

...

A B: That really wasn't normal. Never had something like that before.

M K: You could have been there and not even see a single concert.

A B: Yes. To buzz around.

M K: No problem.

M T: How much was it?

M K: They were selling tickets for the whole event, 750 Dinars each.

M T: That is all? That's OK.

A B: You could walk everywhere, around the place.

M T: Had I called the man on time...

M K: I think... here's one observation. I had an impression that all that... was... A conflict between Reggae and Techno (laughs), it did seem so: '*One-nil, one-all, two-one*'... half of the stages had Techno, the other half - Reggae, throughout [the festival]... Still, Reggae is, in this case *a representative of Rock 'n' Roll*... more than Techno... Reggae is interesting, it has these roots... to me, it is a part of that *Rock tale* because it is linked to rebellion, something revolutionary, in comparison to Techno, which for...

M T: Techno is deceptively hedonistic. I would call it that way, conditionally.

A B: It is the music for release [of tension] for the masses.

M T: More than ten years ago I read Huxley's 'Brave New World' and he described all that, Techno, Ecstasy, in principle, the veneration of products... worshipping Ford's 'Model T' and saying 'Ford' instead of 'Lord'... and everyone went to these huge halls, dancing to some kind of synthetic music and... were taking *sōma*...

A B: Ecstasy as *sōma!* ... (laughs)

M T: Artificial utopia, that's what I think Techno represents ...it was a rebellious thing, in the beginning, but this was cut down...

A B: What, Techno? Yes, yes, there were serious things going on...

M K's friend: In this book, '*Post-Apalyptica*'<sup>1</sup>, Techno is like... you have a punk kicking which is still some kind of co-operation, some kind of relationship between people, a form of amity... But Techno is total detachment, you go nutty on your own, doped, while the crowd *is* involved the punk kicking... while this is asocial.

M T: Punk is anti-social, this is asocial...

A B: Punk is a *social project*. As a concept it is *politicised, political*.

M T: Punk is *very politicised* at the source.

M K: However, the word '*Techno*' has changed... there are many different...

---

<sup>1</sup> The researcher is unaware of this title; furthermore, the audibility of the recording is bad in places so the quoted name of the book should be taken with reserve.

M T: ...Nuances, exactly.

M K: I heard this *Afro* the other day, taking the role of Techno, nothing to do with the *Germanic*, original Techno.

(Focused discussion continues after a few comments were made on different interpretation of terminology associated with dance music in UK and Serbia)

M T: ...it has so many sub-variants... here it is called 'Techno', because for a while, Techno was the most popular of those genres. It is just one of them. House, for example... there are so many names... [in the UK] they call it 'dance'.

M K's friend: It's so complicated over here... some call it 'Rave'.

M T: Well Rave is only the event itself.

M K's friend: Over here they say: 'what [music] do I listen to? *Rave!*' (tone indicates disbelief)

M K: What do you think of the term 'instrumental music?'... *Instrumental music of a recent date...*

M K's friend: Koska, that's not instrumental music. These DJs, they're just harpsichord operators, organ grinders... it's just the modern version: he's got the monkey on his shoulder.

M T: It's not the same. You have two records whose individual content cannot stand on its own and –

M K's friend: They're modern day organ grinders...

M T: No, both records are 'empty'. It's not merely a mechanical motion involved. You have 200 records like that, and from them, you make music.

M K: I find this interesting...

M K's friend: They're just organ grinders...!

M T: No. One record, for example, has bass lines without the melodic content. If it exists, it has been 'dried'. The other has the harmonies and melodic lines. Then you combine them in such a way that you need to mix different rhythms, harmonies, tempos... you can clash them and you can combine them.

M K: I find it interesting because you have one emitter and a mass of receivers.

M T: Well, that's cost-effective. I also heard that explanation. One man, one computer, one mixing console, they make much more money than a bunch of people who could argue –

M K's friend: ...with their needs, hotels... this and that... but he's still just an organ grinder...

M T: Some of them aren't.

M K: Can I say something? We met for *my interview*.

... (another argument on 'who should speak now')

M K: You know what is specific about Techno? The relationship between the atmosphere which is *intense* and the music, which is *auxiliary*. You see people receiving this music in a state of enormous exaltation while the music is the one of *middle-mood*, averaged feel, temporary, even without character, as if representing some occasions in life that do not have any great significance, yet the ones who listen, experience it as a Debussy concert in E Minor! (laughs)

M T: There are people who take it really seriously.

A B: But my friend went to a Rave in Canada... they only played the basic bass frequencies, but amplified... till your eardrums explode... just bass, and the crowd goes...

M K: Yes, that's a physical...

A B: Psychosomatic reaction... to make the hair stand on the back of you neck...

...

The discussion then deteriorated, from my explanations of the sonic 'plateau' reached when the DJ 'lifts the crowd' to Koska's questions on transcendental absolute continuum to Andrej's illustrative depictions, impressions of sound-effects in electronic dance music. Then Andrej and Koska found some excuse to talk about messianic cults, at which point I stopped recording, only to resume the process later, as we came to my place for dinner. The rest of the conversation shifted from the principles of Christian iconography, Andrej's new obsession to my record collection, which Koska considered 'coherent'.

I met Fleka yesterday. He is an authentic Belgrade underground character. He spoke very openly about many things, including the date when the Academy opened and all factographic errors accounted for in some books. He started planning a big internet action, which would connect authors, musicians and artists who have some links with Belgrade, scattered around



the globe. We spoke at length about his disappointment in B92, about the former opposition becoming the 'position' and ethical problems, which the underground scene faces in relation to that. Very interesting and serious...

I did not understand that we all had different tastes, aspirations and ideas before common misfortune united us in doing fundamentally one and the same thing, annoying the ones that annoyed us as much as we could get away with. There is a reminder of different times when I guess the sheer despair gave many of us more energy than we knew we had. I was a lot more naïve then. Few days ago, I recorded something I later wanted to discard. It looked a bit too much like self-publicising and I got fed up with all that after spending three years announcing the club programme on all the media I could reach. Yes, I was banned from going to the official television for wearing a gas mask in a show that was watched by grannies all over Serbia. I had no idea that I was putting myself into potential danger. It sounded like fun then; as the old Serbian saying goes, "God guards fools and young children".

Anyway, after recording my memory of a distant event, I thought not to include it here. Then I thought again. Why not? I read Drummond's autobiography and I respected what the man had to say, though he made some factual inaccuracies, for which he is totally blameless – distortion of memory. Before that, I read Glenny's account of student demonstrations on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1991, and recognised how accurate it was, because of a tiny error he made. He didn't know that the other half of the student crowd came from the north-east side of Belgrade, not just from university campuses but from their homes, just like my friends and I did. So his errors and confusion proved that he was there, on the bridge, where the police stopped the protesters by force. Then I thought – well, why not say something about my own experiences, such as the 1995 projection of a notoriously self-indulgent 'documentary'. Eventually, today I decided to leave it in my diary. There are as many 'truths' as there are stories, and the facts often elude them. Still, as a witness and 'accomplice', I can say a few things and add to the mosaic of 'true stories'. Here it is.

...

I spoke to Jimmy Cauty on a warm September evening in Belgrade, 1995. K Foundation, the organisation Cauty co-founded with Bill Drummond, was at

the time virtually unknown in wider popular culture. Yet K Foundation emerged from the self-demise of influential pop project, The KLF. It attracted a lot of attention from the British art public through the controversy created around the Turner Prize in 1993/94. Being a young artist interested in media manipulation - and also deeply involved in the independent music business in Belgrade - I was drawn to the subject. The apparent reason for Cauty's and Drummond's visit to Belgrade was 'the world premiere' of a K Foundation film. The event was heavily advertised on B92 Radio thanks to the capable influence of Miomir Grujić Fleka, a significant figure on the Belgrade underground art scene.

However, the event seemed to mean little to people living in isolated Serbian society. Despite the first illusory glimpse of hope that UN sanctions might be lifted, people continued to go about their business. Life was still hard. Many of the potential viewers could not be blamed for their lack of interest; at the time, B92's radio signal covered only central areas of urban Belgrade and a few of the city's suburbs. Yet, keeping in mind the full context, the irony about this lack of interest was within the film's very subject. The rumour around town was that legal reasons prevented the screening of this film anywhere else in the world. It did not matter much whether this was a fact or a result of Fleka's subversive promotional strategies.... It was what we did know about the film that mattered - the burning of one million pounds Sterling.

The film itself was rather boring to watch. It was a record of meticulous work that apparently included burning stacks of money and other goods- all products of the globally successful KLF project of the early Nineties. Some of the people I spoke to believed this act to be a criticism of the global music & media industry. Some were enraged that such a film was to be shown in Belgrade- a place where for years people were struggling to make ends meet under the constant threat of war. The opinions among interested parties were diverse, but the controversy was clearly working. What I found most interesting about it was that the vast majority of passers'-by in Belgrade paid little attention to the film's first screening despite it having taken place in the open air of Republic Square - the very heart of the city.

My reasons for approaching Cauty and Drummond on that night were straightforward, although, in hindsight, seem rather naïve. I thought, “if someone has enough money to burn, he might as well invest... some of it”. On the other hand, I thought, if this was in fact a subversive statement, these people might well be interested in others who were themselves challenging their own society’s rooted set of beliefs.

I had a short and enjoyable conversation with a very polite Cauty. But despite the pleasantries I come to the conclusion that he was not at all interested in what I was trying to say. I spoke about the scene, its musicians and artists, and how some help would result in mutual benefit. Smiling, he told me that K Foundation was the brick made out of ashes of one million pounds. All that while a painstaking process on the screen showed masked figures in white protective suits burning stacks of money against a greyish background. A crowd of few dozen, perhaps a hundred people chattered, mingled and watched the documentary.

This whole occasion and my experience of it had several layers. Average citizens of Belgrade said much with their absence, uninterested in - or uninformed of - the ‘world premiere’. In contrast, young people in and around independent and underground art, music and media craved information and response from beyond the borders - to the extent to which anything from the ‘outside’ world drew their attention. Some were apathetic while others tried to network their way to recognition. In “This is Serbia Calling” Matthew Collin noted the similarity between the use of the term ‘outside’ in prison slang and the way his respondents in Belgrade used it with reference to the outside world. On one level this comparison seems fully appropriate, considering how people lived in Belgrade for about a decade (...) however, ‘outside’ belongs to the old “žargon” (*argot*, slang) for ‘abroad’; this maybe because Serbia is a landlocked continental country.”

...

When all this happened, all of us in the so-called 'underground scene' – and anyone who opposed the banality and aggressiveness of the system – had a common goal, which was to live a normal life and to attain that through non-violent means. But, working as the programme organiser in a leading arty-nightclub I have seen greed and resentment develop between people who shared that goal. Competition was harsh in the impoverished market.

...

As I stated on several occasions, Belgrade fragmented to a city of smaller cafés; less clubbing implies that it has become a bit more closed, reserved... or rather, people are ...people who were rather successful – in the underground scene – in previous times, complain that it is harder now. There is a turmoil regarding rules, regulations, and rights... which is going to affect the music scene... I have to stop now. I'm entering the 'Havana' bar.

...

The video was recorded at the 'Havana'. Interesting. It was so awkward to record the thing from the bag. The noise is hard to distinguish. Apart from Baca's occasional giggle, indicating his networking 'small-talk', the only thing I can recognise is one of the producers, clapping hands, suggesting to the crew and cast that the thing should go on and resume after the previous take. The band in question is 'Beogradski Sindikat' and it seems that they're getting quite big these days. I don't like the venue and its implications. Havana was a well-known place where diesel-boys and all sorts of yobs used to congregate in the Nineties. The interior is decent though; I've never been here before, not the kind of place that I would have visited in the past. Strange. These kids from the band are quite influenced by the Dieseler-culture, whether they're aware of it or not. I think they are. I think that the video that was filmed today has a bit of intentional irony. It's like a bit of a mockery on the new elite, though one never knows... I spoke to Baca about some possibilities for collaboration in the future. He's a pragmatic character, though I know him all too well... he wants to bring 'Tindersticks' to play in Belgrade, fair play...

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

Today is exactly a month since I landed in Belgrade. The last seven days have been quite uneventful, apart from a few developments. I need to ring

Fleka and Petar Janjatovic once more and arrange some meetings. I am planning to go to Subotica tomorrow... for the 'Yugoslav Cheap Film Festival', JFJF. It started in the same year as Low-Fi, and the first time I went there, it was only five of us; the trip and the event were sponsored by the Helsinki Human Rights Watch... they paid the trip and catering... bare essentials. The whole thing was based on sheer enthusiasm. The theatre was full of young punks and local students who cheered our films – they obviously had no money so they stayed in town for the summer while everyone else was on holiday. The other day, on Wednesday I saw two busloads of people – journalists, authors and all sorts of characters – heading to Subotica for the JFJF festival. I am going there tomorrow, I'll try to interview Milos Kukuric. I'll try to examine the connections between the music scene, video and no-budget film... it would be good to interview Stipan Milodanovic too... the guy who leads the thing in Subotica. They might be very busy, both of them, I could imagine that their schedule is hectic. If that is the case, we'll leave the whole thing for some other occasion, while I'm still here... by the way, last week wasn't that uneventful after all. Rather, it was quite fruitful. We spent all Saturday and Sunday editing the video for Mancando... it was very interesting, conceptually, we had the real atmosphere – for the theme of the clip itself – thunder and lightning and that... Sabljar is working this weekend, he's producing some young musicians...

...

I just arranged the next meeting with Fleka; the deal is to meet on Tuesday, some time after five o'clock, to have an extensive talk, maybe the interview, maybe to talk of his plans, about that internet thing... Excellent news! I just got to speak to Pera Janjatovic. He just released the new edition of Yu-rock encyclopaedia. We'll speak again on Sunday, when I return from Subotica. He gave me his mobile number, so I'll get to speak to him... next week his travelling to Montenegro, I think, he's very busy these days, so I picked the right moment! It is best to meet him on Sunday or Wednesday, we'll see.

...

Regarding the atmosphere in Belgrade, it is incredibly slow, compared to Britain, and also to the city as I used to know it. Maybe that's an illusion... I don't know... but some people want to collaborate, Baca is a good example. I

met him last Thursday, when he called me for that video-shoot. He told me that there's a good new band, called 'Vroom'...

...

Last week something interesting happened. Police came over and chased away the guys who were selling pirate CDs and tapes in front of SKC, while the ones who stayed have a significantly reduced offer... It appears that the government is keen to solve the problem of copyright – after the request of the international entertainment industry, most likely... this makes me a witness of certain changes that are taking place. These will make a significant impact on the scene, music trade, defining authors' rights, harmonising the law with the EU... The city is full of foreigners, which was almost unimaginable few years ago. You can hear English, Spanish, French, Italian... it is obvious that the country has opened and that people are willing to visit... this is an opportunity that has to be utilised.

...

The same night I visited a former collaborator, Bojan Marsenic, AKA DJ 245/1. He took part in the Techno parties at the Academy club between 1993 and 1996. This is an excerpt from a spontaneously recorded conversation with him. Since we have known each other for a very long time, I had to pay attention to possible bias and not divert from fact. More so, our conversation would occasionally slip into things that were totally unrelated to the topic, making it very similar to the one I had with Marko 'Koska' and Andrej Bunusevac.

M: Tonight, I am accompanied by – in fact I have visited – DJ 245/1, the man that caused chaos around Belgrade few years ago... and now, he's a busy man, doing his daily job...

B M: ...which is poorly paid. Anyway, DJ-ing wasn't very well paid either, in those years.

M: How do you look at '93/4, '95/6, when you had a Techno project, 'Logan V' probably the first real Techno project in Belgrade?

B M: Well, I was 23 and it all happened overnight and I can tell you that now, after some eight years, when I look at it, I am satisfied... that we made a change, affected things...

M: Where does the name 'Logan V' come from?

B M: From the film 'Logan's Run'. SF film with Michael York, it received two Oscars, I think, by the way, it was a total commercial failure, but it was really cool...

M: What is its real –

B M: ... message?

M: The message, the theme of the film.

B M: Liberation. That we're not imprisoned, mentally or physically. That's what it's like in the film. They lived till you're thirty, they believed in it, and awaited death with joy.

M: They thought that this was the way it should be.

B M: Yes, they thought that was something great, they didn't know that one could grow old.

M: And they believed that their prison was the entire world.

B M: Yes. And that was the idea of freedom, which... existed here, too.

M: Yes.

B M: The idea behind the film is not bad at all.

M: So the name of the band is related to the main character, Logan Five, who decided to make...

B M: That move, the run, from under the glass dome. And that's when he met Peter Ustinov, as an old man.

M: Yes, yes. That's where he realised that people can live long and that they could be free. That's the scene when they have a first swim in that lake.

B M: Yes, yes, you're right.

M: In fact, working on that project, the stuff that you gave Srdjan, was important at that time, because he was an important man in your project, Srdjan Babovic.

B M: Well he was, to be honest, the main man. Musically. I was trying to explain some ideas to him, he was trying to realise them, it resulted in what you already know...

M: You were, in fact, the executive producer.

B M: Some 4-5 recordings resulted from that collaboration. One was remixed, others were demo recordings.

M: How would you musically describe Logan V? What musical styles were represented there?

B M: Then – all sorts of Techno were popular, there were bits of Trance and House too. I don't know how to classify it. Yes, it was pure electronic music. But I wouldn't know how exactly to describe it. The idea was to be as original as possible, more original than others. We had our samples, we stole nothing; it was a good thing.

M: You also did a cover version of –

B M: 'Acid Tracks'. Yes. But that was Acid House, a bit darker, the club-type. It wasn't happy like House music normally is, and so on. That was Chicago.

M: Well, you see... I think... What you did at the Academy, with the late Šule, at the beginning, it's especially relevant that the first party happened on 1<sup>st</sup> June... it was accidental, but...

B M: It was a Tuesday in the summer, some demonstrations were that day, teargas, Vuk [Draskovic] did something that day.

M: Vuk, it was him, yes.

B M: We sold around 200 tickets that day, didn't we?

M: 120-150. But it was a Tuesday.

B M: And the next time, it was around 300.

M: Yes.

B M: And the third one was around 4/500.

...

M: This is what I wanted to ask you. That first evening was totally strange, because it was a mixed crowd. There were the usual lot, who barely knew what was going on at the Academy on that day.

B M: Tuesday was a fantastically bad day.

M: Yes, always.

B M: In the summer and in the winter. The same. Tuesday was always bad.

M: And that night, there were people in bikers' jackets, and some Techno-fans did come along...

B M: We struggled with those placards, and everything was against us; Vuk and the demonstrations, but that night we did the lot, the samples –

M: That's what I'm saying. It had a dark element. From the very beginning. Techno at the Academy became a bit... when Sule started doing those –



B M: 'Shamen' and all that... yes, he went commercial

M: That is when they ...that's very interesting too, when Dieselers started visiting.

B M: Imagine *that*... the old geezer with his wife...

M: The old smuggler...

B M: Yes, yes. Disgusting.

M: But then it was packed. Eight hundred people, for weeks.

B M: Yes, it was like that for a few weeks. When we parted from Sule, it all halved. He would have 400-500, we had 300-350 tickets.

M: I think... yes... he went to work for David.

B M: Yes, he got a show on radio [Politika] and all that...

M: Yes... but, we were a bit nasty too... who cares, that's the business... but you know what's the catch... I was totally, I think I was totally... remember when the [management] insisted, all the time, that we should repeat Techno every week? I told them that it is better to do it once a fortnight.

B M: Yes, to make them ask for more.

M: What do you think of that attempt to do Techno on Fridays?

B M: That?

M: We didn't do just Techno. We did Techno, electronic stuff, even new romantics...

B M: The first Friday, many people didn't know and went berserk. Then next Friday was shit too, and *then* it started selling, it was around 700.

M: ...yes. Yes.

B M: But then Saturday had raised to 900.

M: And by the end, one Saturday we had 1,400 and more...

B M: Right.

M: And on Friday it was 7/800. And Friday always had 700-800, and Saturday a thousand. We did it bigger.

B M: But they [management] didn't like it. Thematic night... but people started coming...

M: And what the buffoons didn't get was that the Academy needed a change. Without a change it would go down. And it did, eventually.

B M: Because of stupidity. And every evening was the same, eventually.

M: It went bust three times.

B M: At the end, this and that... B92 came, and made every night the same.

M: They ruined the Academy at that point. Whenever they worked it. Let's be honest. It was always boring. They did thematic nights.

B M: Yes, Gordan Paunovic comes up with Rap and then he turned to Techno. And now, he's, like, 'a Techno DJ'. The only one of them who played Techno at that time was Podunavac.

M: Yes.

...

M: That place can take in 2,000 people.

B M: Well if they cram together.

M: Well, less...

B M: No way. 1,000 is enough for both club areas... not like before, the corridor, packed with people...

M: Well that's when the club started going down when those characters started coming –

B M: Anyone [could come]... ..

M: Well, sod underground anyway.

B M: It's OK, but to look after yourself. Moderation.

(We closed the subject, had a couple of drinks and I went home).

...

It is a bit awkward walking down the street at night talking into the Dictaphone. There was a noise just now: a car passed by. Mutated Dieselers, or post-Dieselers still make a noise at night, driving fast through the city at night. At least in appearance – they seem a bit less aggressive... I regret that I'm not already in Subotica. That's why I'm leaving tomorrow. I can't wait to see the people there. I think it's going to be both fun and useful.

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

I arrived in Subotica around five in the afternoon. I really enjoyed the change. The trip was horrible and I should have taken the train so I decided not to go back by coach. You can't really enjoy the journey as much. The town was quiet on a Saturday afternoon and I easily found my way from the station to the cultural centre where everything was happening. As I arrived I saw the guys from 'Jarboli', making circles on bicycles in front of the building. Boris

Mladenovic was drinking Lozovača, Montenegrin grape brandy, straight from the bottle, passing it to others. Alongside the band stood a chubby fellow with a digital camera, chatting in English to filmmaker Milos Tomic. Two cute girls sat on the steps of the white marble building. I first thought, "I missed everything, this is the matinee drinking session, everyone's gone to Belgrade". I was very wrong. I came just at the right time to party. Soon enough, one bottle was gone so we went for another two. I was pretty proud when Boris responded to the query from the girls, saying, "well, that's Fitch, the guy who made the 'Short Course in City Self-defence'". My reputation still followed me, and my old nickname, which I haven't heard for three years, was still remembered. I knew the four guys from around town. The chubby bloke with the camera was an American indie-film director. He was in a very good mood. Everyone was. It was totally contagious.

A wedding procession of cars passed by at some point, blowing their honks the usual Balkan way. Boris and two other guys mingled into the procession, but the crowd didn't get the joke. We downed several bottles by nightfall. The American film-director was as tipsy as we were. He couldn't stop laughing. Then, without any apparent reason, the band announced an ad-hoc performance into his camera. After stating that they were great fans of 'They Might Be Giants' they started singing the band's songs. I never learned the American's name; he looked really friendly and relaxed. As he taped the surprise performance, his giggle went even louder. Then, between the songs, he made a new, even more surprising announcement; he knew the guys from 'They Might Be Giants' and he's gonna make sure they see the tape. That resulted in an even greater demand for Lozovača, and the bottle was gone, a new one on the way. I took a break from the party and sat on the steps.

Within half an hour, everyone was there. The night had fallen and the audience mingled with no-budget filmmakers. I saw Stipan and Milos passing by in a hurry, looking extremely busy. We just managed to exchange a 'hello'. That's what I expected anyway. The gala event was taking place in the cultural centre's atrium. Stipan, the funny guy whom I met in 1997, transformed into a serious professional. The experience of four difficult years

changed him considerably. Then, there was the success factor. He led the event competently, announcing the big names in the festival. I can bet that the merry indie-director on Lozovača was among them. Suddenly I felt tired. Gule, the less conscientious half of the Low-Fi Video board of directors, came at the right time. Him, Boris and I got a cab and went to the local hostel where the guests of the festival were staying. I enjoyed being treated as a 'veteran' and getting such freebies. And as I was about to for a nap before the big party at the Subotica National Theatre, I ran into an old friend who got involved in the Low-Fi movement. That was it. No sleep till Brooklyn, the Beasties would say.

We walked around town, had a coffee and eventually ended up in the garden in front of the theatre. The city was lively though it was a bit cold to sit outside. Then the gig started. A band of whom I first heard when I was already in England started playing around eleven. Since I was a member of the Low-Fi mailing list, all their newsletters reached me in the past three years. I have learned of the band when Low-Fi announced joining the 'Zadruga' team, alongside 'Striper', a group dedicated to underground comics, and Corrosion. Corrosion, or CRSN, was the band, but not only that. They dabbled in computer animation, and also appear to be a small hacker community. They did most of their promotions on the web. I was intrigued as soon as I heard of them. Now they were playing live. I entered the theatre and was stunned with what I saw. This was better than I expected. The stage was covered in white cloth and the stroboscope was on most of the time. There were several people on stage, wearing sunglasses and clad in black. They played the game of 'we don't care about anything' but they did it convincingly. As far as any such thing could be a fake, they appeared genuine. The coldness of their appearance was justified with the music. The performance seemed flawless, and the music was not 'happy'. I could recognise several genres in every song. It would transform from what people call drum 'n' bass to, what other people like listening to as Techno. It sounded like an auditive representation of a razor-blade and I accepted their image and stage behaviour as appropriate to the music.

The stage was encircled with a net made of white rope. The audience was full of young men and women dancing in a trance-like state. The rest of the hall was in the dark, and if there were any other light-show – I didn't notice it. There was some sort of communication – in fact, everyone communicated through movement – but in an impersonal kind of way. The music was very loud but not intrusive. The guys on stage were treating their keyboards and computers with apparent ruthlessness. Not aggressively; taking the pose that reminded me of Kraftwerk but with a rough edge. I saw Milos again. He was clearly busy. He had a hand-held camera and was moving through the crowd apparently disinterested in the party itself. He was concerned with filming the event, and moving around in a zigzag trajectory. I felt that he was so consumed by the event that he barely noticed anything else; I don't know if he knew that, but he seemed to enjoy himself in a similar way as the band was. Cold professionalism at first glance but with a distinct feeling that something very powerful is happening. Total non-verbal communication through movement, sound and vision. The theatre was like a dark metal well. It was sealed off from the baroque town, and from the fresh summer night around us. Though everyone was clearly expressing individuality, I occasionally lost awareness of separation from the environment. It was an 'us' but without any need for asserting any identity. For a while I didn't feel anything but what my senses consumed. Even my thoughts were suppressed by the overbearing stimuli. It was entertaining but not entertainment. Excitement was the more appropriate word. Then, suddenly, I had to go out and sit in the chilly garden.

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

I decided to go to the theatre again. Some went for a swim in the nearby lake. The neo-classicist building looked very different in daylight. There were no apparent signs of what had happened there the previous night. I ran into the guys from 'Jarboli' again. One of them played a pastoral flute, creating a pleasant disharmony against the elevator music coming from the theatre. As I approached their tables, they were commenting on the previous afternoon. One of them was just explaining their uncanny connection with 'They Might Be Giants'. He said, "Let them see what fans they have in Belgrade". After an hour in front of the theatre – and inspecting its totally changed interior – Boris

and I decided to go home. As I got off the train, I decided that my chat with Boris provides me with a significant source of material. We talked about the problems and situations in Belgrade, related to music, publishing and all that. First, the Academy started working – but so far it presents the works of professors and lecturers at the Faculty of Fine Arts... and that there is a serious contender for the club. Someone, apparently, who wants to start the business at the club with very altruistic motives. He is apparently willing to invest a lot of money into the space and to make it an art-orientated club. I hope that doesn't mean that the nightclub element would be totally excluded from the programme, because it has become a part of Belgrade's cultural legacy. The second thing he told me was that a new group of young DJs has emerged – totally new. They are apparently very uncompromising and strong in their stylistic approach to music. There is a problem, though. He says that B92 – surprisingly – has become an obstacle. Not a direct one, but they simply ignore this new generation of DJs; they exist in a parallel plane, they were not related to B92 in the first place. He used to work at B92, he said, in the more or less, cult programme, 'Rhythm of the Heart'. But, when the station reopened after the [political] changes, they decided - not to call him back. They did the same thing to Dragan Ambrozic<sup>2</sup>, who was once very useful in their publishing business, as they did with Fleka too, in the same context. Boris says that they have lost contact with the real scene, and that they are afraid of young new DJs and such like, as potential competitors. That's his opinion on B92. He also talked a bit about himself. He says he played in London, in a club that was quite a bit better than the one I know as 'Zlatni papagaj' or Zoo Bar. He didn't like playing Zoo Bar's post-Yugoslav clientele, but the other place was fine. We agreed to meet again.

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

I accidentally found out that the whole crowd went last night to gather at the 'Fili' café/club/gallery, for one of the wedding reception of a bloke from KKN. I went there and to my surprise it was packed with people I know – directly or indirectly – from the Belgrade scene. Well, these are the people I've known for

---

<sup>2</sup> I later interviewed Ambrozic in one of B92's studios. I guess that might mean that he is back with them, but this is not very clear.

years, sometimes the word 'scene' sounds pretentious in that context. I ran into Vlada Jeric from Drakwood Dub. He was quite reserved, but friendly. Strange conversation. When I asked him about their gig at 'Zoo Bar', he just said, "awful, don't ask". I ran into Laki, from 'Sila' ['Force']. I also ran into some girls that I haven't seen for years. That was totally a fine and pleasant evening, but I was *very tired*. But I simply could not miss the whole thing.

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

I just spoke to Petar Janjatovic. I took the recording device with me but then I couldn't do the recording. He had a meeting with a journalist who interviewed him before we met and I observed the whole thing as I was waiting. I have decided to speak to the man normally and if I have any comments to record, I'll do it after the talk... The man is totally OK, we had a very pleasant conversation... we spoke about the Academy and the famous claim that it was once voted one of the best clubs in Europe. I am going to check the email that he sent me about the whole thing... He told me about EKV and their album 'Ljubav' [Love] from 1988, which sold 17,000 copies at the same time when Bajaga sold 400,000 and Bora Djordjevic 500,000. We returned to the notion of underground as defined through record sales. And he also added another footnote to my work. The new edition of his *EX-Yu* rock encyclopaedia mentions Boris and my 'neighbour' Dule Petrovic and their performance for Cosmic Records<sup>3</sup> in London last year [2000]... he also asked me about Koja and how is he doing in London. I said that 'Disciplin A Kitschme' are really marginal and he said, "see, Koja is consistently underground". I believe he referred to Koja's uncompromising stance.

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

Luigi came over with his girlfriend from Novi Sad. We had a chat over coffee and then – out of the blue – it turned out that she was involved in the organisation of EXIT festival from the very beginning. She spoke in detail about the way the organisation was registered at the beginning as a citizens' association, which provided them with a legal loophole to be able to organise

---

<sup>3</sup> Obvious error; the label is called 'Cosmic Sounds', which I learnt later.

the whole thing with the support of NGOs. Initially, the whole thing was supported by the City Council of Novi Sad and since it was controlled by the then opposition parties, they won an exclusive grant from European Union – I am not sure if that statement is accurate, but since she was at the core of the whole thing, she should really know best. I guess that this provided the grounds for NGO financing. The whole festival seems quite fascinating, and what strikes me most is that they managed to do that in such a way that it was both commercially successful and politically provoking – though in a very sophisticated way. Nobody could say a word about ‘subversion’, but the name EXIT is pretty clear, even the logo suggests ‘the end of a theatrical show’. Now, they are registered as a ‘d.o.o’, which is the Serbian equivalent of ‘Ltd.’ I am only surprised by the speed of commercialisation of the whole thing.

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2001.

I went to ‘Pecina’ [Cave] club for the heavily advertised Belgrade DJ festival. It was the exact opposite of the CRSN gig in Subotica. I have no idea how come they called it a ‘festival competition’ since it was a totally amorphous event. In comparison to the spontaneous behaviour of the crowd in Subotica, this looked like, ‘we are supposed to have fun and we are having it, aren’t we’. The cave which is not a cave, next to a bus which is not a bus, holding a festival which is not a festival, people desperately trying to prove to themselves that they are having fun, because they paid entry.

5<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

Spoke to Boris Mladenovic again. It was a valuable experience. The recording is awful. We sat on the veranda at the Faculty when the heavens opened. The rain was so loud that I will have to try and make notes as soon as possible. It was very interesting how he negated the existence of a scene and then referred to Corrosion as a ‘hacker scene’. I also liked his definition of ‘underground mainstream’... that’s where he classifies B92, Darkwood Dub, Eyesburn... while underground, proper, is the stuff that Zoran Radovic plays. He told me of a CD, limited edition, that I *must* get, ‘leoopardov rep’... sounds good, the name is strange. Various artists. It’s been released by ‘Beoground’



– another interesting name; Darko Dzambasov is working with some other guys, it seems interesting altogether...

...

Went back to the Academy tonight to observe its empty shell... some Italian art students had a performance. Good excuse. I miss the place. Ran into Lora and Irena and some other 'academians'. It was so funny that our students listened to the 'balalaika' performance from the old wardrobe with such awe. Silly. The place is barren now, but the few of us could feel and see it for what it is. We were giggling most of the time. Pathetic, those kids who refused to take over their own place. We looked around and there was no equipment. Gaping holes where speakers used to be. But the place is full of past noise, I could bet all of us from the 'proper' crowd could hear the music reverberating through the good old basement. I did, I was overwhelmed by indiscriminate flow of – not memories – experiences. Lora and Irena and few others did too, I could tell. We were happy to be there. But the kids, so silly, they behaved like in a gallery or attending a chamber concert.

...

We went to Omen, a poor surrogate for the old 'Hole'. But the crowd is more or less the right one. We started making 'plans' to conquer the old place. As if.

...

5<sup>th</sup> November 2001 (UK).

I had a good conversation with Nikola. He provided me with plenty of factual information about Kozmik and UMUB. It was interesting how he used the term 'No Logo' in relation to his Techno parties. The big problem with his accounts is obvious from this part. He likes cryptic statements:

"...I was not in favour of those *organic spaces*, like our first party was, which was organised in *the balloon*... a disturbance had happened, a *primordial* disturbance...not everyone could get in, technically, there was a problem with the entrance, because of the air (pressure), and that whole process of *maintaining the balloon*... by the middle of the party... from the top of the balloon, sweat started dripping... the air was almost contaminated... that was a *horrifically organic, organic-, organic-* disturbance, that happened. Immediately after that, the next party turned out to be - in that functional

sense - much, er, much more interesting, because that was (going on) in that sugar-production plant, where, *of course*, all those spaces were *terribly* large, they are... let's say, fifteen metres high, so we had no problems of the kind, *factually*, everything was *clean, minimal*... those problems were not appearing... But coming back to the topic of *space*... every space has its own qualities but it also has its own irregularity... it always has to be had in mind that a specific sound has to come in there, a specific lighting... and it is always a question of *what do you want*, what do you want to make of that space. Of course, it is clear that this is a *musical night and a party*, but you always have that possibility, to change that space, *not with sound only, that is very obvious*, but also with lighting. Suddenly you pose the question spatial organisation... and that creates a very *interesting, a very interesting situation*, which, for me, is one of the most creative parts, of the whole project, *of every project*. And, secondly, that all of us looked at it as an *instant*... an *instant-position*, where we never wanted to repeat ourselves, with the same space, but we always wanted to *open those channels, those forgotten places*. That is very interesting... That is, I think, our greatest quality. Because we had a lot of shortcomings, when it comes to sound, lasers, lighting... in that, others did an immaculate job, like when the 'Enlightenment' party was organised..."

...

Tomorrow I'm flying back to Belgrade to do some more interviews.

9<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

Laki made a number of interesting comments on why he doesn't like the term 'underground'. I liked the metaphor 'flower that never bloomed'. It was a fine chat but it took him ages to open up. Then, he suddenly became confident. I know that he knows that I know that he was right about the question who was first to play electronic music on non-electronic instruments. He let out a sigh of relief after we finished the interview. When I listened to the tape, I realised that there was a lot of background noise. I will make notes.

...

Now this is the reason why I became weary of group interviews. I tried to talk about music but Rade hijacked the discussion:

Rade B: ... All that apathy is the reason why all this is happening with drugs. *He* has enough money to pay for entry and to sell two or three 'E'-s to his mates so he can have a free pill, and drink water all night. He has nothing in his head, nothing about *creation*, there is no link with reality, it is not about music, but about the *beat, fast, raw and strong*... and in a sense that is OK. But [this happens] from the beginning [of an event], from eight o' clock: there is no *warm-up* where the first DJ lifts them up and the third slows the people down... so they can go home. *Here*, [the beat] starts from the onset, immediately with Techno, I am talking about those groups of young people, those kids ranging from high school to twenty-somethings... now I said *a lot of things*... (worryingly)

Rade B: That has changed... there is a *lot of chemistry* around these days... the problem is that *it* is not talked about over here... Now a campaign [against drugs] has started... showing, in a blatant kind of way, that [taking drugs] is *shit*. Maybe it's better that way because people have become desensitised, *so the cattle can understand*...you can't communicate through a sophisticated vocabulary with people that *do not want to understand*. I mean, that they have not developed a value-system that makes them go to clubs because of *music*, this or that, but... its bent out of shape, everything is.

P. Pavleski: Well, the drugs over here [in Serbia]... have long crossed the borders of *underground*. It's so much of that stuff, you can go to a folk party...

Rade B.:Everywhere.

And this is how it sounded five minutes before:

P. Pavleski: When you talk of our stuff being accepted outside [the country], it is not... the story has two sides. We are not the only [determining] element... They [Western music markets] are at the moment in a trend of full commercialisation... These days I cannot see practically a thing that is not commercial. Even if it is extravagant, it is commercial. *Everything is commercial*. In *that context*, how can we sell our stuff... I am not sure. It has become a little too... it really *is an industry*. But, *nothing else!* Almost nothing but. There are, OK, some sporadic things, but they are all - more and more - incidents. That kind of thing is quite infrequent. And if there is something exceptional, it is not well known, nor is it popular, nor is it really sold. I am

certain that our guys cannot do anything *big*, something big. Firstly, the industry as it is, as an organism does not have *the need for that kind of thing*. They function, the system works, it is known how you should go about business, what works, what is needed, what is not. I am not sure if in that sense they feel any need for us. Perhaps as something exotic. But that is not *it*. That would again be some kind of *margin*."

Rade B: "Feat Sejdic is exotic too."

P. Pavleski: "... Well, yes but it is... on one side, that is OK but on the other, *it is slightly insulting*, you know. Seriously. I mean, that *urban stuff*...

11<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

Boza Podunavac made an interesting point on the enormous variety of music available on the net, though I don't agree with him that we will never be able to compete. This cannot last forever, and there are people who work well, including him, by the way. He is an OK guy, we talked for hours.

21<sup>st</sup> November 2001 (UK).

Called Mr X, whom I'll keep anonymous because he declined to respond. But the aggressive refusal is quite indicative of his management style. The man is very difficult, especially when I compare him to Zeljko Kerleta, who was absolutely open in conversation – it was a pleasure to talk to him. Dusan Petrovic gave me his number. Sounds like an enthusiast. But it is not going to be easy, he admits that too... I was making notes during the phone conversation. Very useful things and he seems like someone who is capable of doing something here about Belgrade music. I hope...

8<sup>th</sup> July 2002.

Last day of my chaotic visit to Belgrade. Sorting out personal business, I think I made a greater mess than what awaited me. But there is one good thing. That guy Boris was talking about – he took over the Academy. Coincidentally, it is the same person who released the compilation CD 'Leopardov Rep', which Boris mentioned last September. We talked about possible collaboration. Maybe.

## Appendix Two

Interview with Miomir Grujic 'Fleka'; 05/09/2001

(Before recording commences, the interviewer and interviewee discuss the topic)

F: Erm, all right... so, '*The question of underground*', was that the thing, eh?

M: Mm.

F: To me it is – by some kind of feel and as a result of some kind of analysis, thoughtful, in every way and after all – still a kind of a metaphor. The very term 'underground' is a metaphor, isn't it, for one very complex archetype even as a term in itself it encompasses a whole set of archetypes, starting from the archetype of 'hell' or rather some kind of 'purgatory' or a place where temptation happens – to those heavenly or *pseudo-heavenly* implications of the term. And that is the rapture in winning freedom and enjoying all sorts of vice that go with underground.

M: Yes.

F: In that sense for a man, i.e. a mortal, it has some kind of a primordial magical effect, some kind of a magnetic, energetic attraction in fact. I believe that a kind of psychic energy gets sucked out in a turbulent vacuum-like way from this reservoir of the Collective Unconscious where such strong group archetypes settle; and it attracts the individual, of course the individuals who are simply speaking *tuned to that frequency*. It means that the magical-mystical- mysterious aura of that metaphor of underground is so strong that you can't simply define it; you can only describe it using another, similar metaphor, can't you. Therefore, you define a metaphor with yet another metaphor – and it is irrelevant how logically valid the whole process is. What matters is that it can be recognised as a kind of temptation where a, say egomaniac, an eager admirer of his own greatness, goes to tempt his own challenges. But there you can also find people who seek *the greatest prize that a mortal can attain* and that is the satisfaction of completeness; that you are somewhere let's say at the very scene of an event, in the focus, that you participate and that you are not merely some kind of a passive observer. And that you express, fulfil, yourself by resisting or rather opposing such

temptations in one way or another. You state what you are like, who you are and I think (laughs) what kinds of intentions you have, *in this mission*. Therefore the very basic, horizontal meaning that the word has in English, “under the ground” defines quite a lot and its weight can in no way be avoided. Let’s say that I was phonetically fascinated with that term when I first heard it, I heard it listening to a *mono* “Kosmaj” (model) wooden wireless belonging to my grandmother; and on it I think using longwave or AM perhaps, I could listen to Radio One.

M: A-ha.

F: ...and from time to time of course holding the aerial in my teeth like Goofy you know, holding all sorts of positions around the wireless, I could listen for ten to fifteen minutes *until interference starts*. That is how I would catch fragments of John Peel on Radio One.

M: oh a-ha.

F: ...and he played Herbie Mann’s ‘Memphis Underground’. That’s a song covering I think one whole side of a record a ride on the flute and some kind of free jazz for that time that was very very freaky, *freaky*. Well that was funk music. Then of course I started digging so I could somehow find the recording which was impossible under those circumstances *at that time, I mean you know*. However, I was constantly seeking that radio to listen again and every time I would hear that ‘underground’ I mean in the song – in the composition there is no singing, you can only hear it in the announcement – I would feel some kind of stroke of energy from that phonetic vibe of the word itself. And afterwards of course when all that started gaining political connotations we felt like some kind of dissidents, us listeners of these things such as Radio One – well then we started digging that Miroslav Vitous played bass on that record with Herbie Mann; he was a Czech or maybe of Polish origin, I’m not sure, I think he is Czech. Yes. And a dissident, you know runaway from Czechoslovakia and for us that *had an aura* that is when Solzenjicin was in, they printed him here for the first time and some kind of ideological awakening had started. And that’s where all that got burning political connotations; underground not in the criminal underworld sense but in a kind of Bogumil, heretic, intellectual underground you know. All that had a terrifically strong magical aura in itself, alongside everything that we mentioned about

archetype. So it was really irresistible. Then we understood that this was a kind of a very good method for... provocation; and provoking created greater satisfaction: *provocation, I mean of that tabooed mentality that had so scornfully ruled and like cattle trampled on anything that wasn't like it.* We endured that and then we had to fight back. Provocations were in fact the area of creative expression. So the whole rock 'n roll culture and if you want that iconography that goes with it is provocative and that's what makes it different from *Estrada*; what isn't provocative – simply isn't rock 'n roll especially – cannot be underground. Well now, *if it is*, that is the first qualifier by which you further evaluate and judge to what extent is it, I don't know, authentic, true, etc. Until recently some kind of a possibility to perform existed here; simply, even that possibility was imposed, probably by the set of those social circumstances that were so drastic, that there were *many* normal conditions for authenticity; but (now) it seems that simply wasn't understood as a necessity. I would even say that it was understood as undesirable so it was all obstructed, swept under the carpet and underground, let's return to the term eventually if it has to be visualised in some way certainly needs to be understood as *the root*. From that root the trunk the leaves the branches and finally *the fruit*.

M: Yes, I really like that image. You mentioned it the last time that we spoke.

F: Well, yes, that is in a sense the essence I mean of that creative power – again I'm talking of underlining that kind of underground, intellectual and artistic and not this, which *really became underground. Reality*, the kind that is lived here is definitely by the scenario and by all other elements of the tragi-comedy (laughs), fully, fully an underground Vaudeville though it is trash big-time *underground-estrada in fact*.

M: (laughs) ... *underground-estrada*...

F: Yes I have insisted several times that this *estrada*, as the most general term encompassing even politics and of course art too let alone forms of popular culture that *estrada* is such a globalising factor, that it has of course as a wide phenomenon its own marginal examples. This is what I call *estrada* (entertainment) underground; that is for example Rambo Amadeus.

M: Yes

F: If we are going to establish borderline references, since you've been mentioning that story about The Idols that would basically be estrada-underground: Rambo Amadeus.

M: You know what I think – what is his quality – I find it very interesting that he, in fact because of that play with dialect, that he is again playing *with sound itself*, you know. He is still –

F: oh yes, he is an exceptional artist; I do not negate that. He is great. But from an ethical –

M: Yes, yes.

F: ... My objection comes from an ethical standpoint you know.

M: That's where everyone finds his blame; because in fact he *formulated* what was going on, all that crudeness around.

F: No I'm not aiming at any kind of labelling. I personally believe that it is hypocritical that he... the way he *flirts with the mediocre*, which is his audience. I'm not saying that all of his audience belongs to mediocrity, but he is attempting to... widen their circle as much as possible; and he is stripping about playing in front of 100,000 people, you know I perfectly understood that. But I think that a man who attempts to truly be an artist at the same time – and he is – cannot allow himself that; and he shouldn't attach any importance to it let alone effort and he is constantly making an effort in that direction, to get into their arses and to find as many of them as possible.

M: There is something in that.

F: Well that...what now? Enough about underground. Would you like us to throw something in and add a bit more salt?

M: Yes

F: Ask. What would you like?

M: You know what I'm interested in; I'm interested in, say, the definition – look now, I'm narrowing it down. So, what would 'Serbian Underground' be?

Look, the very word is – sounds crude as a clash of two words: on the one hand like, a name of a nation and some historical and sociological fact that stays as result of that name; on the other hand you have the term 'underground' in music. Is it *at all* possible to join those in a definition? I'm literally exploring the question of my very title, you know. Does that term make



any sense; to what extent are these influences woven, the interacting influences – we talked about it.

F: Are you recording?

M: Yes, yes, everything.

F: Now. Look, I totally believe in that story of *the syndrome of the tower of Babel*. To me no term is in its appropriate place unless you define it immediately. That means that, if you use it, you have to provide its definition within the text or not use it at all, because terms are definitely emptied. Especially in *our* situation terms such as the *avant-garde*, such as *underground* such as *alternative*, such as the *Moderne*, I think all of those terms are so absurd and dysfunctional. That is why I was inventing *trottoart* and *trotorock* so I could in fact distance myself from that linguistic and terminological problematic. Terms are too widely defined and ‘Serbian Underground’ then sounds like, say, an attempt to narrow down a term that is too widely defined.

M: Yes.

F: In that sense as an operational term functional, as you go it could function if that purports to encompass the *specificity* of such an creative underground in this environment, Serbian, then, it makes sense as a question in that this ‘underground’ was really *authentic*.

M: Ah yes. *That* is what interested me.

F: I think that you can make a very clear picture about it at least of the last 20 years, although I’m a witness, like, from ‘73 when the first “Open Up Festival” happened ... in Kosutnjak, near the “Hajducka Cesma”.

M: That was before (the band) ‘(Bijelo) Dugme’?

F: That was before ‘Dugme’ and that festival featured a Sarajevan band ‘Jutro’ –

M: Mm, let me hear that...

F: ...let’s say with a frontman who had a *nice civic haircut*, he had the moustache of a restaurant musician; he wore a conventional shirt with a stiff collar, you know the cardboard one, like, and cuffs, sleeves pulled up and the shirt was tied in a knot on his umbilicus; down there he wore –

M: (laughs) proto-‘new primitives’.

F: Yes; formal trousers ...those ironed to the edge.

M: Yes, yes, yes...

F: But turned up half way up the shin, and *barefoot!*

M: (laughs) genius, genius...

F: And the others all had long hair and then *the guitarist* said, "This is our singer...we are the Sarajevan band that Jutro, this is our singer Zeljko Bebek, he just returned from the army" –

M: No shit.

F: Yes: "...and we will now *sing you* one of our *hit compositions* that was released on a single. It is called 'My Sweetheart if I Was a White Button'. And that is how they represented themselves as Jutro and afterwards three years later, they came... but just then it was clear to me as soon as I saw them that we are doomed, fucked, fuck it.

M: ha, ha, ha, ha, that we're fucked!

F: This is that story.

M: hmm. Then they are; they *are the fathers of* 'new primitives'. I think that the 'new primitives' were totally misunderstood...

F: Well, on the first album of Bijelo Dugme (White Button) *the sheep were bleating!*

M: (loud laughter) I remember.

F: That is how their first song begins. You can hear the whole flock, I mean, *horror, fuck it.*

M: Oh God... 'Black horses' or something what was it?

F: Well yes, *'the Requiem for Radmila M'*.

M: Ohhhh.

F: And the arse, *arse*, like, in silk knickers I mean (album cover) –

M: Horrific.

F: Yeah, yeah. I mean, fuck.

M: And that record company 'Kamarad' that him (Bregovic) and Zdravko Colic, kind of (started), I mean ... that was such filth...he's partially responsible in fact ...for creating Turbo-folk, which returned as a boomerang. I've got a pretty radical opinion on that.

Long pause

F: He came almost jumped on me on John McLaughlin's (gig), I think it was on John McLaughlin's gig, I don't know... a concert held at 'Pionir' I think it

was '78 around that time. And now he tells me "Could you... sort me out with something..."...I mean, I thought 'no way'...you know...and then at the end Ipe Ivandic – thud!

M: Poor man.

F: ...From the "Metropol" (hotel). I mean, these guys from Bosnia they're something else, fuck it. They ruined everything that the crowd was nurturing like gardeners. There are things from 1973, I think, to the beginning of the Eighties, good things were happening. You've got 'Laboratorija Zvuka' (Sound Laboratory), which was underground; at the same time in Slovenia you have 'Bulldozer' getting on –

M: Yes.

F: ...And presenting to the wider public over here things like Frank Zappa, practically, and Captain Beefheart, which is an essential thing because that was at that time *our understanding* of underground in Western rock music. We knew about the Droogs, we knew about things that were around in '68, The Stooges and all that. It didn't miss our attention. However, *Zappa was the law*. I guess we got to that stage of development when we were really digging it. And then when Captain Beefheart turned up that was mad because he was already a big painter and then besides being such a musician –

M: I didn't know.

F: Come on he's a wicked painter (laughs) On of the greater characters really. And you know then he did us, Captain Beefheart... and then 'Bulldozer' turns up with "spit the truth in the eye" you know what kind of album that was for that time, *madness!* I was a DJ at that time, a project preceding the Academy where everything was conceived as an idea and the crowd really digged Bulldozer you wouldn't believe it. Then Laboratory, very respected; but at the same time you had Djordje Balasevic sutrumming (*lit. "tamboureeing"*) into "*the oath to Tito I rhymed a verse*", you know? At the same time you have the Vranesevic's and *him*. Now in fact you see it's not the question of information only but they need *Placipickarnica Blablasevic (Moaning Shop Blah-blah-shevich)*, you know...that's what they are like.

M: Ha, ha, ha, ha, that stinker.

F: That's how I used to announce him.

M: That man is so repulsive.

F: You know there was also the crowd including Pop Machine they were totally cool but in that *heroic period* that preceded you had excellent things. Such as Eclipse and then Siluete: Zoran Miscevic sang Spencer Davis's 'I'm a man' in a kiddie train on Tas (park), 'Music spot', wicked, black and white, fat Rica recorded it I think. And then Zoran Miscevic you know, from a kiddie train sings "I'm a man yes I am yes I am..."...horror. But the concerts of Siluete were, what a ride that was, he was *burning away*. Like, *Djorde Marjanovic on adrenalin*, that was Zoran Miscevic. There were big, big characters around, not like these kids now, *moaners*. Hey, light this for me, will you... I always burn my nose on the stub...

M: Ha, ha, I know the feeling...

F: That's bad, isn't it...

M: I once burned my hair on it...

F: You know, when I become such a *dragon* that I can inhale flames through the nostrils, I'm gonna ... (laughs) *inform you what underground is...* there you go... Now, you take this, put it on paper and publish it, *from the first word to the last one*, as a literary work, why should you give a damn.

M: I will.

F: Yes, fuck science.

M: Joint work, ha, ha, ha, *joint* work.

F: How can science be underground and vice versa? *Well it could*, in fact: there is such a thing as scientific underground...

M: Well, sociology and ethnography...

F: I mean, *scientific underground* in natural sciences.

M: Cyber-punk theoreticians, that is quite interesting...

F: Well yes, that's fine... you know what, I think that underground is deepening and I constantly use that metaphor – *the bottom of the abyss*.

M: Yes.

F: That goes, in the sense of rooting.

M: Mm.

F: Rooting, that is – *expansion to the core* and the man's attempt to bring the subconscious to consciousness, isn't it?

M: Yes.

F: That is why we *descend*, we that have the guts to do it. And those who don't, they, instead of saying "OK... if *they* already have to *fry down there*, why should we make things worse? No, as fried as you are, *they* slaughter and suffocate you.

M: (laughs appreciatively)

F: ... 'half-slaughtered but not finished', you stagger while everyone vents out their anger on you but... you're trying to win freedom. And that is, I tell you, the *figure, the amount to pay*, isn't it... for the feeling that 'you wish to awaken inside yourselves'.

M: You know what they say, it is apparently a psychological fact that only three per cent of the population has the capacity for abstract thinking.

F: THEY ARE LYING!

M: HA HA HA HA HA

F: THEY ARE LYING!

M: ... too high an estimate maybe (laughs)

F: Maybe thee *per mille*.

M: Three per mille (laughs)

F: ... but I am sceptical of that too. Whenever there is a *statistical truth* involved I become a sceptic, of course, but... what did I want to say, yes, the complaint in itself is of scientific nature too.

M: ...yes.

F: Therefore, scepticism belongs to an intellectual so I doubt this statistical ploy.

M: Yes, yes... but, you know what? I have one – in fact – very mundane question, honestly, that crossed my mind just a second ago: *the true history* of 'Akademija' ('The Academy' club).

F: *True 'Academy'*.

M: *True 'Academy'*.

F: If I expose *that*...

M: I wrote an article about it, but I don't know enough, let's be honest.

F: If I expose that to you, then *I won't be able* to write my own autobiography.

M: Well, then don't say everything, but some tricks, damn it.

F: Some tricks. The truth of the Academy is the following. The Academy is... the Academy was opened in Eighty-One, which, as a reliable record does not

at all match with *all sorts* of information published around, including the book by Eric Gordy on the destruction of *the alternative* in Yugoslavia. He writes that the Academy won a *certain award* in Nineteen-Eighty, of which no one knows a thing, and of which nobody but me has any documentation (laughs).

M: (laughs)

F: Anyway, the thing that he talks about happened only six years later – not in the way he talks about it because his *informants* have obviously informed him incorrectly about *everything*. By the way, I have a set of factographic objections about (his) elucidation in general and I do not think – that is his own issue – but his conclusions were obviously based on incorrect insights.

M: Yes, he never received correct information. That is it. He did not have the right sources.

F: He was led into *puzzlement*.

M: The same with this bloke, the other one –

F: It is obvious who led him.

M: ...Matthew Collin.

F: Yes. Him too.

F: It is obvious who took him around town and told him things.

M: Yes, the things that were said to him...

F: And with what degree of responsibility he approached that whole... task of his; because someone should have done it *as appropriately as possible having in mind that he is representing all of us*, shouldn't it. But him, who ever he is he *did it with his left foot*, so altogether that is more of a *disinformation than a record*. Therefore, I have insight since Nineteen-Eighty because I was in the club's very management that started the whole thing, to turn a basement full of debris and all sorts of gypsum replica (sculptures), some old... educational props and so on, and *coal, of course...* to clean all that. And there something started, something that, in the first couple of years, turned out to be a *sminker* ('*make-up*', *snobby*) get-together – that was in fact the crowd from the University of Art, and at that time this was outrageous snobbery. Or *heavy junk... and trash*. And now, none of these *variants could stand the other* so this (snobby) lot took over, in a way. So there were 'fancy' parties, all in all a fair of vanity and self-deception. Like: 'easy living, stay cool

forever' / *mean*... and on the other side, a parallel, fake, acted, *dark pose*<sup>1</sup>.

You get it?

M: Yes.

F: And then, some *kind of*... pro-DAF... you know who DAF were?

M: I know, 'Deutsche-Amerikanische Freundschaft'.

F: Yes, 'Deutsche-Amerikanische Freundschaft'. Yes. There were those two guys, 'D' Boys', acting something similar. Pedja and Mihajlo; and now, they were tragic-comical, all that had some kind of a *camp* reflection. It wasn't all that unbearable, there was a lot of humour in it, some kind of sarcasm, but you know, it was all quite spontaneous with them, in fact. They were from... they really were themselves, two really unbelievable characters. They were not... idiots, however... ha! (Laughs to himself) So *they* had the monopoly to entertain the crowd, no other band was allowed in. *Their café*.

M: Is that why Vuja put them in the film? (Academy-Republic)

F: Yes. Well, they are in a sense a part of that *legend*.

M: So that is why I .... I have once accidentally emerged in front of the Academy, with Jeric (Darkwood Dub), one evening; we were fourteen, just started going out, I guess. And we sat at the end of Knez Mihajlova (street) and saw some green light from the basement, you know, and: "what is this?" And we heard Pedja 'D'Boy' having a rehearsal. We went, "what's this", you know. That was the scene. Sorry, just a short digression.

F: Well everything was revolving around that context in the first couple of years. And then they invited me to become the editor of programme. I already had plenty of such actions in life, I was in the editorial board of 'Omladinske', freelancing for some mags, 'Start', 'Duga'...

M: 'Start'?

F: Yes. I had –

M: I remember an article from Start.

F: Then I also had some – constant – arrangements with DuAA, the literary journal from Rijeka (Croatia) and so on. However, as a media person, they found me appropriate, and then *fucked it up by inviting me to work there* (at the club). And then a conflict naturally emerged between me and Mica from

---

<sup>1</sup> More accurately '*façon*' (Fr.).

'Art Kanal' (TV), who was into all that *make up* (snobbery) while I wanted to turn it into some kind of a Rock 'n' Roll place. And I had experience working in clubs, besides I was a DJ, I have spent the whole of 1979 in London. And there I was constantly hanging around 'Music Machine', 'Venue', 'Marquee', every night at club gigs. I saw 'Simple Minds' at the 'Marquee' when they played in front of only two hundred people. They were a *band* then, maybe just released their first single. Wilco Johnson, Solid Senders, too. Where appeared all the things that were *about to mean something*, you know. I saw the farewell gig of 'Sham 69' at the 'Venue'. That counts as *the end of punk...* and erm, skinheads in action, man... 200 skinheads thrashing the concert, a totally party-breaker thing... scaring the crowd away. The crowd was running away in panic from left to right hand side of the hall and cramming in... I mean, it was scary to see that *terror, real 'nazi terror'*, the things you see in black and white films about nazi Germany, THAT. And, yes, I saw the farewell gig of Led Zeppelin, around two hundred and seventy thousand people, man, that was wicked. 'The Who' at Wembley, and all those gigs had... for example, 'The Stranglers' played with 'The Who': Nils Lovegreen, Sade Adu, AC/DC, 'Stranglers' and at the end, 'The Who'. From 8 am to midnight, Wembley stadium, all day programme. Naked runners, those *protesters*, you know, what's their name (laughs) –

M: There is, they have a name...

F: They do, I forgot.

M: Streakers!

F: Yes, *what characters*, mate, the crowd running along the scaffolding, metal bars at the roof of Wembley stadium. They're up there, naked, and those below are shitting themselves, who's gonna fall down... I mean, when you run naked along a metal bar... I mean *that's underground for you*.

M: Sure.

F: Yes, but there, having fun around London – and I really had plenty of time, doing nothing, having sold the equipment of the old discotheque (laughs) in Yugoslavia and spent it around London and that's where I learned how the job is done. That clubbing thing, from the flyers, which was inconceivable here, to those tricks in marketing, promotion and that – and I was really eager to establish that rock scene. So I started a column in the 'Omladinske'



magazine, titled 'Scene' because I had, I was already editing those, sort of, 'rock' pages; I managed to fit in the 'Scene' column in there and that's how *it started*. I went to the gig of 'Idoli' in Zemun (Belgrade suburb) held at the Pinki hall. The support band was 'Duh Nibor' – Dule-duh, who later played in 'Plejboj' was there – and they were good, better than 'Idoli'. So I chatted them up in the bus after the concert, it was packed, Dule-duh and someone else were there, and I'm like, "wanna play the Academy?", "we do, yeeeah". And they *did it, the first concert of a local band*. After that I got two Dutch guys, called 'Pustinjak' ('Hermit'). In *Serbian* was their name, Hermit. And they were a terrific, successful interpretation of DAF. I let them play, at that time I would never refuse two Dutchmen playing that well; there were many influences of Alan Vega from 'Suicide' in their music too. In comparison to that 'D' Boys' thing, you know – I let these guys show the crowd how it *should sound*.

M: Srdjan told me that the night was titled 'Lost in Art'.

F: Mm. Yes. Then we started with that 'Lost in Art' thing, with more profiled programmes. 'Lost in Art' were in fact nights with performance art and all that fun *along with the band, of course*. So we had a graffiti session, and then the goggles party. So we had the whole crowd doing the graffiti session, that was an action in which at least a hundred people took part because we bought 200 cans of spray and at least 100 people went mad on it and the whole place was wheezing. And since the ventilation at the Academy is catastrophic – at that time we had only two ordinary fans dispersing the air onto the street – the ventilation system wasn't there yet and all that nitro-stuff stayed in the air. I later analysed it in an article as 'the first Serbian nitro-test', not Serbian, but Belgradian or something. With all that beer and whatever anyone was *scoring* – at that time everyone had something – that was a definitive madhouse. Then several bands were playing and there was a session too; I think 'Baby Kate' were playing, yes, it was them, during that graffiti session. That was – I remember well because the date is important in my private life – this was 24<sup>th</sup> September 1984. And as late as June 1985 at the Aperto Section of Venetian Biennale did Europe have the first opportunity to see American graffiti artists, Futura 2000, Rimilzi... then there were Kenny Scharf and Keith Haring. And they exhibited at Venetian Aperto – that is the informal, avant-garde section of the Biennale.

M: Therefore, Belgrade had it before they did.

F: Belgrade had it at the Academy but that was a *sub-event, you see, truly underground*.

M: Not like Rap –

F: We were *inside* and that was a kind of a collective artistic work in the process of formation. Because that first night we stuck those graffiti, i.e. drawings. That was a *drawing session first and foremost*. You see it wasn't like 'writing slogans' but expression through pictures and symbols. Sign. And it subsequently provoked people, so it started weaving like a *web*, people started adding drawings there, with lipstick, you see, marker pen – what ever they had handy – scratching with keys, exchanging comments; that ambiance *[wa]s like a living thing in constant change* – so a *new slogan turns up* and then *a comment on that slogan follows*. As if a local paper started spreading over the walls and that was, like, *the tattooed Academy*, you know. That initiated the whole concept of *tattoo séances* and *that is the trick (façon)* with graffiti –these days I hear *kids* talk, *THEY invented graffiti* and I think, “yes, sure” – the thing with graffiti then was about that communicational content, but it was *totally authentic*. The fact that Black guys spray-painted trains around the Bronx, was their *thing (façon)* and what we did on the walls *inside* that was our *façon* and it communicates on a totally equal footing. We *lacked nothing* in terms of expression in comparison to them, to the contrary. And those things that *five people did the same thing at the same time, one wall*, you see, that created such an *entanglement of languages (langue)*-

M: Yes, ways of thinking –

F: That is a *cacophony*; that was an *artistic superstructure* of that kind of *raw graffiti façon*.

M: That was with Jackson Pollock too, in fact –

F: Well yes; don't drag in Jackson Pollock now, *we'll never resurface*. When we start *splashing*. But though, I must connect him to that question of underground and to add Hendrix. I understand the forcefulness of Hendrix's musicianship in an about the same way as the forcefulness of *action painting* that Jackson Pollock did. But I did not have the opportunity to see the best of his things live, you see. I saw several pieces, which were terrifically strong, *vibrant*, that strike with *that psychic energy*, which radiate with that *ritual*

*strength* that he released jumping around those canvases and spilling the paint, *there, from the can*; in the same way, when Hendrix plays, *that is the sound of the underground* – let us say.

M: Yes.

F: Hendrix *enchanted* me, for example, when I first heard him and *ruined me as a guitarist*. I was trying to *squeeze* something out of the guitar to make it sound, *sort of*, like Hendrix (laughs); since it didn't succeed in a satisfactory way I got very frustrated and left the guitar under the bed (laughs). So I never tried to *'strum it'* (*lit. "tamboura it"*) again, Bob Dylan style (*façon*) – *AND to play protest songs*, though we did dig that kind of thing. That was... (pausing to remember)... yes, rebellion, which, as far as I'm concerned, identifies with underground. Rebellion like 'human behaviour' (in English), as a *necessary component of a man's behaviour*. Well now, who has a definite tendency – well, is there a better place than underground? To go and to really have fun, because there you can rebel, I think, both against God and against the 'hairy one'. Well, you know under the circumstances of *such authoritarian pressure and oppression, harassment, and terror and tyranny* - I mean, you know the one: *violence of the majority over the individual* - that was so oppressive that, the rebellion was, I think, *a question of sanity*. It is not now like boasting: 'We are the heroes'. I simply was not *capable to imagine life* as accepting *such circumstances* as the ones they offered us. That was simply unacceptable. And we were all going like the kamikaze, head against the wall, 'we'll pay whatever it costs', *but under this rule we cannot live*. Therefore, I am now, a bit sick of all these *revolutionaries and liberators* that did, like, *get a couple of slaps from the cops* and they're now, like, *bullshitting about it*. We were simply fighting for the liberation *of Man*.

M: Symbolic struggle is the most difficult one. My dad was an educated man in the Seventies, imagine him returning from the wide world back to Serbia and having to watch here Tito receiving the medal of the People's Hero<sup>2</sup> for the third time, the entire Yugoslav Parliament applauding him –

F: LONG time passed since he got the previous one (bitterly).

---

<sup>2</sup> The highest decoration awarded in Communist Yugoslavia.

M: You get it, I mean, now with that knowledge – only in 1990, when I was in the army, I *really saw him [for what he was]* on a photograph and understood that he and his five million decorations remind me of Idi Amin or some kind of Latin American *deity* -

F: Ooh, there was a good series in Photo magazine, which used to be imported... *he posed, for Western needs* (laughs)... Ouch, you should see it. But let's cut it short – he was *a model, a mannequin* (laughs).

M: (laughs) You know what, Peternek did him best. He photographed him beside Richard Burton, you know, on the set of 'Sutjeska'<sup>3</sup>. And Burton [who played Tito in the film], normally, was a good-looking man, and Tito looked *like a toad* (laughter) ... unbelievable, I thought that was a *beautiful* political photograph. And nobody got the joke!

F: Yes, but from the position of Broz [Tito], that was his triumph. He, *as he is – rents out the best of them all*, you see. Which means, if he rents out the best – and by the way, [Burton] wasn't paid by *him*; look, he plays *for someone else's [tax] money* – and this character [Tito] had, sort of, *just agreed*, you see - *nothing else: 'this is the lad* that I found *agreeable* to play me, and I suggest that you *trust him* (laughs), and he is going to do his best *in my favour*' (laughs). The master craftsman ('majstor') was presented well; *he presented himself well*.

M: Well he was a grand character. In some way. Do you know that Sabljari had a 'cult' of Tito? When 'Dza ili Bu' played in SKC, with 'Direktori' as a support band, in '92. So Sabljari takes out a SPS poster and rips it on stage, then takes out Tito's photo and the whole audience starts shouting –

F: Yeah well (laughs). Joke.

M: And then he jumped on a motorbike and dragged it across the stage; that was such a scene – mucking about, in a healthy kind of way, childish.

F: Well you know, humour is the only way to survive all this. We can get over this only by totally mucking about. And by that I mean, who knows the meaning and value of humour, he knows that it is *beyond philosophy*, above which stands *Poesis*, which implies *all arts and skills*. Therefore, Philosophy, then Poesis, then above the Poesis – only humour.

---

<sup>3</sup> A communist Second World war epic film spectacle reconstructing Tito's cult of personality.

M: [Aristotelian] Comedy.

F: Well, the pure one, smile of superior-power. The Smile of Superiority.

M: Hierophant.

(Break. The conversation pauses. Turning the tape).

F: All right, what are we talking about: Jung and underground?

M: We could also talk of the work at the Academy, whatever you wish.

F: You see, he describes the motives for a man's behaviour as a consequence of an interaction of archetypes that are the Collective Unconscious, which is a kind of a *sub-space*. Or rather, 'under', below. Which again, as a metaphor, comes very close to what I already said about underground. Something below the earth. Something below consciousness. Something, in any sense, of deep origin. If archetypes truly are, as he describes them, those *fundamental informations* about the script of Akasha, that gives you the knowledge of yet another argument for that magical attraction that leads a man *to peer onto the other side*. This is not just curiosity; that in fact means tempting all human fears. Therefore descending into those *underground spaces of the subconscious* and bringing this content to consciousness is a labour, difficult even for the best-trained players; and I personally think that *an enormous majority* of humanity is scared of *even contemplating such a project*. And that will always create an advantage to the mediocre, at least in numbers. That fear: that fear to descend to one's own depths. And underground as a *space for expressing* - therefore *externalising of the behaviour conditioned through the unconscious* - is an ideal space to convey something in a creative manner. I have tried to present that metaphor of Collective Unconscious as the Shadow in "Rebellion of Machines". That was little Aki, danseuse wearing a terrorist mask – as a sexual stereotype, something sado-maso, which in fact is that story: *sado-maso, black-white, good-evil, you see, which all exists in a kind of paradoxal unity in underground*. The rule of paradox on the planet and in the Universe is best understood through experience. Underground is a school of heavy blows in which I was *the teacher of experiences* (laughs). It is where the tale of the rule of paradoxes is *empirically understood* and that is where you learn to overcome and *rule them yourself, to operate them*. Therefore... who wants

quality education, has to be *his own master*<sup>4</sup>, but having to go through the school of heavy blows and perhaps – now concerning Jung, concerning Freud – if human behaviour is motivated by libido, i.e. sexual urge, then *we boys...* go into the underground so the girls would like us. It could be said that way too. Kids make bands to attract the girls.

M: Pete Townshend apparently said ‘if it weren’t for my big nose, I’d never play the guitar’.

F: Yes, why mystify things. So it could *also be said that way*. Anyway, Adler’s concept [sates] that the inferiority complex motivates the will. That could especially apply to politicians.

M: Not in such a linear way though. *It is* one force but not the determinant.

F: Yes, politicians are 10 times more intense in their need for self-assurance through power, than are the ones involved in entertainment, especially the ones in underground, which we are talking about.

M: That is a different kind of egomania, in fact.

F: Yes, this is cultivated egomania, you see, and *THIS* [politicians] is a raw, primitive one, based on greed. That is about Jung’s statements. Jung *himself* was underground. At one point in time his positions were no longer acceptable in Psychology, and *in a wider sense for 20<sup>th</sup> Century science*; that would have shaken too many things, so his period of interest for Eastern traditions, then his research of magical and mystical texts, interest in Alchemy, and generally, those, so-called *esoteric* and philosophical *reflections*, all that created a kind of a *fence and he was put on ice*; I think he is still very provocative. That his thought is yet about to make a great revolution in the understanding –

M: Yes, by the end of *this century, the new one*.

F: But, people will *never be in the mood for that*. That is bound to happen by the force of *truth and trustworthiness* of that thought. Because it simply is such, that it will be confirmed in time, you know, as a truth.

M: It is as revolutionary as Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, this *is why it is not accepted* yet... simply, it changes one’s worldview. You become aware that –

F: Its rhythm cannot be followed, that *is clear!*

---

<sup>4</sup> Also a Serbian metaphor for ‘DIY’.

M: Just the tip of the iceberg and most of it is under the water.

F: Sure, sure, the *rhythm cannot be followed but it will happen* with this hastening and spinning out of control – I mean the Internet and *the whole story*, computers – is simply going to insert the whole of humanity into a situation in which it *will have to* ask itself “and what with *this other bit*” called psychic energy; you know, we cannot only deal with the issue of petrol.

M: I think that 80% of the Internet contains subconscious information. If you have in mind that pornography is one of the most represented, then music – which, in itself, is emitted and transmitted through the subconscious at least as much as through consciousness, and *then* there are bulks of strange and sick people and so on. Almost as ‘images’ of the Collective Unconscious, so *many strange things are out there*. You can type in the most ordinary of words, you will get a totally –

F: I provoked the Collective Unconscious *very consciously* in *Šišmiš Radio*. That simply came from that aspect –

M: I have made some quite embarrassing calls there that I’d prefer to forget –

F: Hahaha, you won’t manage because –

M: ... they were all recorded (laughs).

F: *All of them were recorded*. Even I don’t know where is all that now, in that sea of recordings, so it will be left to someone who will one day ... I think that my son may *have an ear* to listen to it and investigate all that so he might make some selections and so on. But what did I want to say – the Collective Unconscious is an incredibly... *unpredictable area*, where, after all, you do not have to have an *intention or motive* to provoke anything: whatever you drop could become *a seed*. Therefore the provocation could *literary* range from the, say, *intonation of your voice* –

M: Yes.

F: ... to *behaviour that they reconstruct* in their minds by listening; and that is, say, *chewing or drinking, lighting a cigarette, blowing smoke into the microphone*. So you *prod the ‘nerve-wire’* and than it is enough to say ‘*Siamese twins*’ – *and they* start to react: the more ambiguous you are in coding, the more successful is your provocation. And of course I never cared *which pole of that energy is expressed*. Negative or positive. Are *they exalted and in a ‘follower’ mood, or are they the spitting and calling to speak abuse at*

you. Because what is *necessary* for any kind of action, conflict or plot is established there and *the Flow of Free Consciousness begins*. Or rather – *The Flow of Free Unconsciousness*. *The question is, whether that stadium of pronunciation of any content represents its passage to consciousness?* Because ‘he’ called, provoked with any kind of context, and started, say, swearing; and now, it is absolutely irrelevant *what provoked such a reaction*. The question is, whether that what he is cursing – *the content brought to consciousness or just an uncontrolled surge of the unconscious through him as a medium*. That, in any case – even on individual occasions with the *same people* such as ‘Djole Trip’ – varies a lot. Sometimes it is an eruption, and sometimes it is *content brought to consciousness*. Therefore, in such analyses I arrived at priceless experiences that are *essential for the education of artists in a deeper sense of the term*. Because even Jung lacked that opportunity, nor did anyone who works with art in the media – and I treated it as *Art on radio* – have that kind of opportunity for *that kind of insight*. A month after the last *Šišmiš* was aired, rating published in ‘Vreme’ magazine estimated that the programme had some 20,000, over 20,000 listeners. That is a *huge auditorium*, when you take into account that *a band performs for 2000* and that is considered, *I mean*, a successful concert. And that an [visual] artist, touring *his own country* cannot count on an audience of 20,000, no way. If he has *twenty exhibitions*, and each is visited by a thousand people... that is inconceivable. And for me that was, simply, a kind of duty, for ten years, every week. Once a week you have a concert for *twenty thousand people*. That is a *live performance*, no matter that I don’t *jump and expose myself* there – I am working there all the time, for three hours without a break. That is a *big concert, very draining*. And the auditorium has that power, the Unconscious, has that *power of vacuum*, that’s what I’m telling you, to suck out energy. So, after that - I don’t know how to call it – *fight* there, three hours long, you’re pretty exhausted. But I have learned that it can also be *filtered* and a *good vibe could be accumulated* and after two years of work I’ve learnt to accumulate, not lose. So I used to come from the show, especially when everything happened, as we wanted it – sometimes a show passes, all goes smoothly, tricks keep pouring out of the sleeve, *anything goes*, and after we return, we’re packed with enthusiasm – everybody figured that we’re making



an effort to *'get ourselves in the mood using all sorts of things'*, you know, on *'all sorts of dopes and alcohols'* and we were more or less *on bubbles, and on that energy*. Now, that insight into many of those archetypes is priceless because it helps *formulate an archetypal language*, i.e. the terms are so *dense and have so many connotations* that using *one of them* you express *three or four pages of typed text*. That helped the *crystallisation* of speech in that programme, *succinct statements turning into dogmata, doxa*. Everything bent toward aphorism, in the wider sense of the term; a bit like Haiku but with the use of *Troto-language, that specific language*, which is, also an *enormously important signifier of underground authenticity* within a particular social environment. Serbian underground has such a local slang – which is not made of just two components, but it was mixed between *šatrovački* (Serbian equivalent of Cockney rhyming slang) and the newest inventions in city slang, making some kind of *melting-pot linguistic variant* – this slang is almost autonomous and I have explored it in my show. Some contents can be communicated in *such a coded way that – absolutely none* of the conventional radio listeners *are capable to understand the meaning of such a message*. *And in that way you make a selection*: you reject anyone who *'vibes you' negative energy* – they don't even call you by phone, if they emit it in your direction, it has a 'weight', especially if they *unite in such numbers*.

M: (laughs)

F: That is the... *'dementor effect'*. And then, through music, and that *performance, you scatter them, making a selection* and keep only the ones *who have ears for what you are saying*. They are *reliable respondents* in the sense that they *feel mutual trust*. Once you communicate with them *without misunderstanding*, they relax so much that you open their *unconscious and they express all sorts of things*. Woah... for a psychiatrist, *that would be, you know* –

M: Yes.

F: ... and it was not without a reason that a slogan we had was "Radio Šišmiš – Reception Unit", for example, when we do a contact programme... *Reception Unit* (laughs)... Djole Trip used to say, "collective washing and mourning"...

M: (laughs) "collective washing and mourning"...

F: Yes. People were channelling that very spontaneously, so the image of the Collective Unconscious was *very tangible*. That is a *work of wizardry*; that is how I look at magic, when you make very *tangible sights out of abstract vibrations*. So, if one would merely analyse it from its psychological aspect, this would be *an enormously comprehensive experiment*.

(Short break.)

M: Now... I have a pretty *banal question*. I remember reading in 'Start' magazine, long time ago, about Thursday parties at the Academy; then I recognised your drawings, *years later, on a flyer* -

F: Mm.

M: ... Eighty-... four, for example.

F: Yes, and I even remember the flyers. That was a 'Lost in Art' flyer for... it was called "84 is over, so let's go post-apocalyptic". And so I played some post-apocalyptic bands and some video-works of the 'Slits', recordings. Those were the gals that used to smear mud all over their naked bodies and then played like that... I watched them once at the 'Marquee'... 'Slits'... *in mud, man, chicks...* and I mean, *a totally cool performance, you know, art, no problem*. You know, *it wasn't stupid*.

M: Yes.

F: *Performing art at that time...* You know, that was – accepted with a dose of resistance at that time, *in that environment*. People watched it *but rather reluctantly* although it would be normal to expect that *this audience* – we always insisted on art audiences and the core of that audience was *IT*, four universities of art, but they followed some kind of a *hedonistic façon* and, "well *super*", like, "we *consume art all day*, let us drink beer and dance... *Srle's gonna shove some David Bowie in a minute*". It used to give me the creeps from their, "c'mon, give us", like, "Talking Heads"... *those were the kinds of...* well, Talking Heads, more or less... but I mean... *Brian Ferry* and that stuff! ... and... I didn't like it and I intensified that rock 'n' roll stuff but, that went *rough*, you know, the audience was *rebelling*, "the band's boring us, fuck it", you know, like, "we *wanna have fun*". And now it all looks like, *romantic, and those describers* of their *heroic days*... I mean, I was dragging Cane away from the

bouncers not to beat him senseless because after *only two beers* he'd start *splashing and spraying* [beer] all over the shop and harassing other people's girlfriends, and, you know, always some beating... first, the bouncers save him from the audience that was ready to beat him into a pulp, and then he fucks it up *with them*, and eventually gets a kicking. *You know what I mean* and now, like – the whole of that *crowd*, the whole *scene was there, at the Academy* – but they were like, 'this place is *doing well, this "pub" ("kafana")*', and, like, '*for you guys, the price is higher*'. They played for less money in Zagreb, Ljubljana – sometimes they went for *zilch*, you know – that whole group [of bands]... And they were always there, having a good time, gossiping one another, monitoring each other, *scavenging for free beer, "give us a token!" you know...*

M: ... (laughs) history repeats itself...

F: Yes. And those were their *petit-bourgeois* games *that always hindered the scene's unity* – while the tradition already developed in the Eighties... 'Doktor Spira', for example, *who was a myth*; he recorded an album in London, and pressed fifty copies of vinyl. 'Dr Spira and the Human Beings'. He was one of *Koja's great role models*. Well, the 'Limunovo drvo' were already there, then... 'Disciplina', before that 'Šarlo akrobata' – there were excellent bands around. And afterwards a 'kiddie scene' formed at the Academy: some guys called 'Albert Kalashnikov', who did performances, painted their faces, using some signs resembling futuristic Cyrillic dating from Russian avant-garde, you know that typography. Then, what else, there were smaller bands who had a great time, to the core. Not very musically relevant but they entertained the crowd well. Such was 'Fatty' Milinkovic in 'Morbidi u noci'. He was studying Film Academy and... later he had 'Big Sex' – they had some 'trash' gigs were Misha Zmija (The Snake) took part from the other side, from the booth, those were *wicked dialogues*. Eh! You know, all that was, in fact, a *spontaneous creation* – that should not be considered in relation to art - *but underground, certainly*. And it was creation all along, *in which the witnesses were also participants*; there's always someone – even if just by breaking a bottle on stage – who affects the state of events. All in all that was a *spontaneous happening*. And nobody had to *explain that to people*, they felt it spontaneously – and that's when the '*Golden Period*' started! When people

realised – or felt – that they were *equal participants in all that was going on* and that nobody is going to *intimidate* them for it, but quite the opposite: ‘welcome to the action’; then that *collective spirit began*, like a sect, in fact – was the way Academy’s audience was treated at the time. ‘Night People’, you know. I made a logo on the reverse of membership cards, a ‘Night People’ logo, and printed it across the whole –

M: I remember.

F: So it gave a kind of *touch* –

M: “The Night People Are Here”.

F: Yes. You know – that’s it! *We are different*. That *need for identity* that *they* expressed was in fact the *axis* around which – it was the centre – of *that energy* and it was really *awfully full of energy, the space was simply filled with it, this is why its momentum lasted for so long*. Although Academy died around eighty-nine, *that spirit*, you see, simply broke down, transformed into something *sick and poisoned*, but it still retained that momentum until recently. And it could *never* overcome that *image* of an ‘underground place’.

M: Well it *never should have*.

F: Well there were *ill-advised attempts* to turn the Academy into a ‘*klubić*’<sup>5</sup> (*little club*), you see, for high school kids with lots of money. *But the walls contain that energy, the shadows of the crowd – all that was very intense*. Therefore, the *ambiance* had adapted to *human energy* more than the energy adapted to the *ambiance*. All that is underground but still *one step higher than art*. Especially in the terms of that *moral, aesthetic, and poetical stance*. Both ethically and poetically, it was definitely authentic. Therefore, Serbian underground *has a root, it can be discussed as a phenomenon*. This is, it seems, even easier to prove than in the case of *grander social environments*, where it simply represents – a starting position. From which you’re catapulted very quickly, into the world of media, into the world of finance, into the world of professionalism. And over here it was a matter of choice, until recently, *a moral stance, a way of life and simply – something that was experienced as truer and far more spontaneous than ‘there’... where ... people grab the opportunity, ‘Ciao, I’m in a hurry! You guys continue*

---

<sup>5</sup> The best possible translation of this term is ‘crèche club’.

having your beercans, I'm going for caviar'... however, one of the *truly persevering* people is Koja, and that *has to be emphasised* –

M: Yes.

F: ... *uncompromising*, somewhat *still in the game*, he puts up a fight. But many of *that crowd have gone*, either abroad (*lit. 'outside'*), or *into isolation*, or *into the establishment*. *Many joined the establishment*. Because that was a *relevant crowd*, of rather high quality and all of them have abandoned that way of life... that suicidal concept has no perspective... you cannot live in '*underground forever*'<sup>6</sup> – *unless you are forced*.

M: (laughs) Well said, yes.

F: However, many that came from abroad were fascinated. For example, 'UK Subs', when they were. Even during the sound-check, 'UK Subs' were fascinated, "*what a place, what an atmosphere*", about the club – *bars, rusty iron*, you know the thing – *rough, totally hardcore, to their taste*. And then the kids at the concert threw *teargas* they brought from the army and some fireworks, *wicked ones*, started blasting there. The teargas was – I have a photograph of that concert, they – the band – pulled cowboy scarves over their faces, like Cole Younger's gang, roasting on teargas *for two hours, bruv*, while such a *stampede started* in the club... because 950 tickets were sold. I was constantly *tilting that someone might get hurt*... you could imagine how would I feel! Not *what would happen to me* because I was held directly responsible, *while I wasn't really responsible* because it wasn't me who decided to sell two more books of tickets – some *apes did, without consulting me, so they can skim as much money*... *you know*... and a couple of thousand people were left outside the Academy and then when the teargas stampede started, *I mean*... I wasn't well at the time, mangled by rheumatism, I barely survived, man... but nobody was hurt. A few fell down but it wasn't serious... *and the band never stopped!* That was unbelievable: two hours under teargas – I mean, *they fried the place*, like they were mad. And then they left exhilarated. For them, it was... that is *such a band*, they estimate how good is a gig by the amount of teargas thrown at them (laughs)... and they spread the story... and that's how the *fable about the Academy started*.

---

<sup>6</sup> This used to be Fleka's maxim for years, frequently announced as he presented *Šišmiš Radio*.

Many foreigners from the alternative scene came to play. I used to work with Vidmar at the time; he brought all of that stuff from the West to Ljubljana and made all those *prosthetic-tours*, like, he would send all these bands Budapest-Belgrade-Athens or Salonica, *even to Istanbul*. It was a kilometre-long list of bands that played at the Academy in those days – and there were three concerts a week. I made a rough estimate that I did around six hundred gigs. And there were – since I was the Programme Editor until Eighty-... no, until the spring of nineteen-ninety, some seven years – there could have been more but, let's say that of those 600 concerts, *at least four hundred were by different bands*... Some played two-three times, of course... practically *the whole of the Yugoslav alternative scene presented itself there* – Slovenes, Croats... and... '89 was the *last Yu-rock moment*... lasting several years, this was the *most relevant 'parade' of the alternative scene in Yugoslavia*. I remember that 'Strelnikoff' from Ljubljana played, then 'Obojeni Program', and after that we did them a record which was made live at the Academy... then, 'Robna kuca' played, 'Mizar' from Skoplje, at least three-four bands came from every place. So the Academy became the point of reference for the whole scene and of course, there *was a lot of mystification around*, they all spread their own tales in their own way. Later we had that project with '*Satan panonski*' – so the Academy acquired a '*hard aura*' too, you see.

M: Direct underground labelling, couldn't have been more direct...

F: And I believed that the scene is going to boom at the point when I achieved the almost impossible – to connect *the underground with a medium*.

M: Yes. Yes.

F: That is like connecting *heaven and earth*. *That is when I was William Blake*. I ran that club at the Academy of Fine Arts, *and* I got a radio programme. And now, hadn't my health been destroyed then – at that time I lost my eyesight – which destabilised me so I could not endure through that connection of heaven and earth, i.e. the radio show and the club programme. It functioned for two or three months - and then came that conflict with the '*hammer on radio*'<sup>7</sup>, Nenad Cekić, related to the interruption of a show dedicated to 'how to evade military service'. After his interruption and that conflict, he *scooped his*

---

<sup>7</sup> Wordplay, 'čekić' means 'hammer'; Cekić was the surname of B92's first Chief Editor.

way through the Academy and then they dug out that old club statute and explained to me that I, as a post-graduate who completed his course, am no longer a student at the Academy [of Fine Arts] –

M: So you no longer have the right to...

F: So I no longer have the right to work at the club as a professional – it really was defined that way in the statute at the time – professional appointments could only be given to full time students at the Academy, and so I lost the grounding at the club; I stayed on the radio *but that was no longer under control*.

M: Pulling the carpet under your feet.

F: Yes. And we still did some projects with the Academy, as well as the Šišmiš Party, where we had some art-performances all the time, thematic, accompanied with thematic music – all that was supported on radio and I also did some *sound illustrations for those projects*. That was, I would say, quite well received and noticed. But that period also left behind some other valuable things. For example, that *rock design*; I made a conceptual exhibition at the gallery of the Academy, called 'Packaging Noise'. That was '94, I mean, a couple of years before 'Noise in Fashion' (student protests 1996/97). That is where those flyers I made were presented. They represent a project of sorts; I did them for seven years, flyers for three or four programmes a week; now, you can only imagine the amount of material thus produced. There are, among them, exhibits I am really proud of. And a selection could be made. I haven't yet even considered approaching that. I guess that one day the time will come for me to do it. It contains, for one, a *visual description*, and a chronological description could be made too – of those happenings at the Academy. That shows in fact, how that whole production of happenings at the Academy represented a pre-... *I wouldn't use 'avant-garde'*, an advance rather; in fact, as a term, 'avant-garde' sounds too politicised and... '*anticipation*' is something, which is indicated. Even then I used to say, "*this is the seed of Belgrade's Soho*", you see.

M: Yes!

F: The *configuration of the terrain is such*, that, in about fifty years, *that is where the real 'downtown' is going to form*, where –

M: It is already happening.

F: It is happening, *but to get to Soho* –

M: Well, *that still is far away* –

F: ... Soho, meaning “Soho”, we’ll have to wait for that. Well that doesn’t matter now, what matters is that *what is happening is what became clear as soon as that club opened*. And that’s where we did things that indicated spreading from within, out onto the street.

M: I agree.

F: You know. There were some *grotesque attempts* – let’s say, when that graffiti session happened down there, then Ceda Vasic and his *hope-inspiring poltroons* ‘*came up with the idea*’ to edit the photographs of city facades, and show it to city authorities so they can be allowed to paint their own stuff on those facades, after those sketches they made. And that is how that *idiotic mural appeared* on the wall next to the entrance of the ‘Zvezda’ (‘Star’) club (across the road from Academy). There and then, *immediately, what was the Essence* – as soon as it crept out on the street, leaving the underground – became *vulgarised* –

M: Yes, it gets spread all over... muddled...

F: Yes, and dies down too. That is it. And then, we tried to move a rock concert onto the street. We made a big concert for ‘Ekaterina’ after the release of their first album, live, in the middle of Rajiceva Street. Precisely in front of *that wall* we built a stage. We cut Rajiceva into half so the stage was somewhere next to the entry into the club. And the rest of the street was filled with the audience, Knez Mihajlova too, all over the place; a couple thousand people came and these guys were, like, rocking away, Milan (Mladenovic) and Magi were in really good form then – it wasn’t a bad concert at all, their first album is totally in order, as far as I’m concerned... and then, *the passers by gathered and commented, “look at the ‘epileptics’ (‘padavičari’)... you know?*

M: Yes, yes...

F: We had *huge complaints to deal with later... all over...*

M: The Dean’s office?

F: From the club’s board to the lecturers’ committee. Luckily, Branko Protic was the dean then, he was very kind to me, he was my mentor. He’d let me get away with anything. It was thanks to him, in fact, that we didn’t go down;



because, there was an army general in the neighbourhood, *complaining and insisting that he wants to sleep in his home in Knez Mihajlova*<sup>8</sup> at 10 p.m.

M: (laughs)

---

<sup>8</sup> The pedestrian street at the very heart of Belgrade.

### Appendix Three

Interview with Gordan Paunovic, B92; 12/11/2001

(Before recording commences, the interviewer and interviewee discuss the topic; thus the apparently abrupt start of conversation.)

M: Nothing else. I'd start with the definition.

G: You then have to define things according to industry categories. If we start from the scene then we have to define it. There are various things being done here that do not belong essentially to the motion of scene. So you can include things such as those different things here- things that are fundamentally part of this system. So you can include starting from New Wave existed as a separate category, not part of the system. ON the other hand all of these bands established themselves in one way or another or have split up without leaving anything substantial behind them. In the same way if you trace in the eighties- I mean there is a great big paradigm, as – Zelim jahati do ekstaze (I wanna ride till ecstasy) that was like an unpublished compilation which has somehow defined the *scene*, defining literally, the way the scene remained...You have 'Kazna Za Usi' 'Preisung', that's where Darkwood Dub appears that lasted very long, maybe in mid-nineties they didn't manage to break through into the mainstream which was when they managed to regulate their industry relations – Darkwood Dub – had done it through B92 and in that way they managed to *retain* that – conditionally speaking – political position in the *underground*. While on the other hand here and now....*and what period are you covering anyway? (hostile tone)*

M: I'm covering – the whole idea is to cover this now and the historical development is very important in order to find out what is going on now. Even observing the possibilities to promote something that was done *before*, if something done before is still found to be relevant. I know that-

G: You know, now you have some kind of – that is a process which has not been well-rounded, it has merely moved from a standstill; What technology

has brought ten years ago abroad, allowing anyone to produce whatever he wants in his bedroom. From number one like the KLF to some forms of abstract electronic music, *that is slowly* generated, here these days; some kids constantly bring their stuff to us, using some of the earlier pirate software, a virtual studio that enables you to do whatever you please, if you focus on it. And at the moment there is a big collision between a real emerging scene and the fact that it is never recorded or accounted for. And every time I visit Vlada Janjic on radio who gathers all such material because he covers our publishing and every time I see two or three new discs there, somebody left them there. And that's what some characters do – DG's, musicians, what not, but the problem with the whole story is that this is *not their identity, the way I see it*. Because what figures there is a technological copy of what is done abroad ("*outside*") and such a technological copy implies a creative copy at the same time. All of them are making some kind of noise that you've already heard somewhere. Very rarely does someone escape that trap. This is gradually turning into a practical problem I think. You have a country in which er, the culture, erm, of copying because, er, so dominant that there simply is a small number of things avoid that trend – from Levi's 501 jeans – to music. What was interesting with that 'Radio Utopia' compilation that you said, "Belgrade Coffee Shop" is that it was created around, just, literally just before the bombing. It was packaged just before and after the bombing. That was the time when all of those songs were created. And, in a bizarre kind of way, that formed an aesthetic, technologically quite incomplete. That compilation sounds worse than 1992. And on the other hand, it has a very good atmosphere. It has that something which defines a musical masterpiece, in fact. In the same way in which today you can treat it as some kind of mirror of its time, the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties in Belgrade. In the same way, this compilation would – well, not in such a remarkable, sociological level – you could interpret it culturally. Many people get hooked on that bait. Vlada and I gave 30 interviews in three days of the official promotion in Paris. From electronic media including websites and that, which are less relevant to serious newspapers, such as 'Le Figaro' 'Liberacion' whereby even people who are seriously well informed on Belgrade...like this man who comes to Belgrade 2-3 times a year every time

something happens to cover it. By the way his musical taste is very wide and eclectic. He says that the atmosphere that existed in Belgrade (in 1999) can be *clearly heard* on that compilation (CD). A background European *mahala* attempting to keep the peace (with Europe) while at the same time it has some *third* kind of identity it is unaware of.

M: Yes that *identity* is a very interesting issue. I was listening over there, something that I did for a friend (from Belgrade) and I was supposed to do a video for him. We have completed the video but it is unlikely to ever be released. Well, that doesn't matter. But the *structure*, the musical structure of what they played was something resembling Bossanova, you know. And accidentally, when reviewing the footage, I sped it up.

G: Mm

M: And what I heard was a rhythm and even the melodic structure of a 'Becarac' sped up on VHS editing equipment. Something that I've not expected; well in such a case you need to know Cognitive Psychology and I won't even go into it at the moment. Therefore there appears to exist an identity contained indeed in the music produced here that we are unaware of which could possibly be identified *there*.

G: I don't know. I think that the problem is twofold. I think that on *their* side, there is a kind of general laziness, they are lazy to learn about social environments that are *not transparent enough*. They deal with music which absolutely speaks for itself. Bossanova or *Dragacevo* brass bands would be *accepted*. Those well-rounded musical forms that are functional in themselves. With regards to the urban aesthetics, the situation is very complicated. The situation here is the exact opposite from Europe. You have decay here; there you have some kind of ...erm....consumerist euphoria. Popular music that you here there is a soundtrack to shopping. Here, on the other hand, you have no shopping but a different situation; really a society that is *still collapsing, crumbling*. IN spite of the cosmetic political changes that make people excited. And that... is quite an unpleasant scene I would say.

That could be, say, an *exotic story for sociologists* and people dealing with such occurrences. But I think that on the level of global phenomena, making something of this social environment – I am not a great optimist in that respect... the main problem with the whole thing is the *lack of defined references* of identity. I went to Turkey a few weeks ago. I was fascinated how well organised Turkey is as a country; it is traditional and modern at the same time, while we're neither traditional nor modern. Those traditional ties, those ties that define society as such, patriarchal society – they're all broken, so there is no authority, nothing. Just anarchy, nobody is respected, old or young. I am not saying that these things hold Turkey together as they do Austria, Germany, England. They have these structures against which you kind of struggle when you're young and as you grow old you join them. In Turkey it is even more transparent because there still exists a striking notable division between traditional and modern. I think that this country truly reminds me of a huge dump. Civilisational scrapyard from which all that was good was already taken while everything else is slowly rusting and rotting... Now, what kind of music can emerge from all that – it could. All theories of art describe this sort of situation as a fertile ground for...things like that. While on the other hand...I don't know...someone who makes music around here would have to have inherited a huge pad, a big inheritance, so he doesn't have to do anything, money to buy instruments and a strong enough sensibility to arrange all of that...there, you do have *phenomena* such as Kiza Radovic. The man who is a *metaphor* of Serbian underground, from 1989 whose work was never released by anyone. There was that '*silver cassette*' for Sorabia Disc and that. It was cassette only, no disc. Then a whole album that nobody wants to release or someone *might* release marginally. But I don't know if anyone would be interested in it apart from...I think that this is reality, the situation...maybe I'm a bit too.... I mean I know how 'Belgrade Coffee Shop 2' sounds like – it's supposed to be released soon. Musically it is better and much more interesting than the first one. Regarded as music, it is more rounded, but it has *no such context*, absolutely not, of the kind that No 1 had, which will make it uninteresting as a testimony. There is, however, a very interesting song by a band called 'Teget'. I'm not sure if you've heard of 'Teget' That's a project done by some members of Darkwood and Jarboli etc. That

(song) is kind of a theme where *sargija* is combined with a rhythm machine. It sounds like Turkish, some Turkish *tune* but with a rhythm machine rattling underneath. It's not a four by four House rhythm but some kind of a mixture and that is sort of an *interesting*, say thing, that has something interesting... for observation, how will people react to it. Abroad they react to it very well *because it's different* from anything else. (*inaudible*)... this is very *authentic*. The only problem is that this project was active a year ago. I think even the people involved barely remember it now. Luckily they've recorded a few tracks and this one turned out the best. I think that the main problem bothering us now is ...you know, after 5<sup>th</sup> October those points of reference were strongly disturbed; the problem of positioning with regards to the system is this. The fundamental difference is now that, before 5<sup>th</sup> October there was a system; after 5<sup>th</sup> October – the system *no longer exists*. We're in a position like after 'Big Bang' and things have not yet developed after all that. I think that all fundamental changes in the scene will all have to wait until, erm... the artists themselves become capable of defining their stance towards *reality*, *the system*, and so on. At this point in time there are no adversaries and no allies. This is a situation of totally mixed identity.

M: Floating

G; Yes

M: So, until a structure emerges -

G: Maybe I was a bit too abstract –

M: No, that's totally okay. An abstract opinion is totally acceptable, and it can apply to music.

**BREAK**

M: Just one more issue, briefly. Speaking to musicians these days – more specifically to the people from 'Sila' (Unexpected Force) whom I met these

days – I came to a conclusion, or an idea related to the fact that they ('Sila') are mainly non-verbal in musical communications which is possibly the problem with our Rock music, when you sing in Serbian or even worse, attempting to sing in English and not know the slang. Do you think that someone working with sound, characteristic of electronic music... has some kind of an advantage?

G: In that, communicational system – yes. Because you do not communicate the same way with language. You use sound, some forms of emotion, whatever else is involved there. 'Sila' is a very interesting example, because I followed them from the very beginning and I am very *disappointed* with their achievements because.. but they are a classical emanation of *that Belgrade nadrkana* ... I mean, '*Nadrkani Underground*' ('Grumpy Underground'): you do not trust anyone...which is understandable, but on the other hand you don't make moves cleverly enough in order to make your position more important than it is. The fact is... that they are a totally live band, you know. That their music is, sort of, based on improvisation, so they never had two identical sound-checks

In their lifetime, let alone two identical concerts – nor they ever will! While on the other hand at the same time they have no releases; or rather they have some kind of *their* releases which, are sort of erm.. I don't want to say 'bad' they are absolutely unrepresentative. Like 'Velvet Underground' Live at the Max, Kansas City, which is *trashina* (compound word, English+Serbian: superlative of 'trash') *the worst kind* of a record, but that is something which, which-, sort of depicts the *spirit* of that group. IN that kind of mosaic...(made) during those 3/4/5 years, I don't know of their existence. And now *they* I mean non-stop – they, ...they, from 'Sila' – you don't know that in concert – privately, they're full of anger. And they blame everyone, sort of; while, they had the opportunities to, *jump that*, sort of, *barrier*, between themselves and *people who could have helped them...us?* We never had a couple of conversations that were so abstract that we didn't understand at all what they wanted. I guess that after a while they started looking at us as a bunch of *nadrkan'* (grumpy) guys loaded with money, I mean which is... totally senseless. That group is rather.... They tried something which I consider very

*interesting*: the *spirit* of Rock 'n' Roll in electronic music and to make non-verbal music, which has, you know, that *weight* of Rock 'n' Roll. It has the drum, the guitar, bass, some *voices* appearing here and there – it has some kind of *transcendental hypnoticity* that *great* rock bands *have*. But I'm telling you – if they split up tomorrow, nothing will be left behind them. Those two discs they have recorded cannot be considered *relevant work*. And they could not have made that. I think that goes with their personal characters. The same applies to Orge. 'Nosorog' was a phenomenal group in concert, if you remember that, a couple of their concerts, and they haven't recorded *a thing*. That is it. *That* is, I think, authentic Belgrade Underground, 'Sila', however, I don't know these new bands such as 'Shazalakazoo', that could be quite interesting. Those recordings that they gave us for the compilation... I don't know how does that sound now, but 'Shazalakazoo' is among the best two or three tunes there, on "Belgrade Coffee Shop". Generally, 'Sila' had succeeded to cash in on their *personal* legacy; all of them are people who *existed* such as Vlaca from 'Klajberi', Orge from 'Nosoro' and before, I don't remember where did he play – 'Robna Kuca', wasn't it?

M: I think he was in 'Robna Kuca'.

G: Maybe, yes, maybe not, I don't know, erm.. and the bass player was also around –

M: Laki

G: Yes. And you know... they managed to attract an audience, to make a critical mass, to make their concerts what a concert should be by *definition*: when you isolate yourself from reality, dip into some kind of parallel world, and you feel good. You're not there with 57 other *freaks*, and you look at one another. This has some kind of *energy* ... but I don't know how other bands will do. If another band appears of a different profile but without personal charisma –

M: That they have.



G: That is often a problem. Often it is hard to cross that boundary between where music *really* does the job and where it is PR.

M: Good. Thanks.

G: (laughs)

M: I *could* bother you for a bit longer, you know, but there is no need.

G: (laughs)

## Appendix Four

Interview N. S. 'Sabljari'; 10/11/2001

M: I would usually start [interviews] with others by from the theme, like, '*is Serbian underground music... justified as a term?* What do you think of that?

S: About underground?

M: Yes. About underground music, to what extent can it encompass what is going on in Belgrade, in the last... ten years?

S: Well that's related to the known story, we had isolation for ten years, so underground *has to exist*, you know. Some things survived... under isolation; this very fact qualifies them as underground. Compared to everything else, it is totally different. As it is.

M: Yes. Well, you see... problems with the connotations of the term *underground*. First, some people told me, like, that they don't like the word, because it appears to be a bit worn out here, for various reasons. Some other people made it clear that they don't consider themselves underground musicians, but when I'd suggest to them to propose a definition, they were... some said that they don't like definitions as such; but, 'underground' –

S: I don't [agree]. I still consider myself... I have been exposed to damp, WD40 still works many months a year (chuckles), then I am 'underground'. When in the summer we climb up to my terrace (laughs) – then we're not. But, I don't know, for as long as you are *down there* you don't have... I still connect it with... Underground is, as far as I am concerned *a way of thinking*, more of an *ideology* than – *regardless* of whether you '*sell yourself*' with *more or less success*. I would not connect it to, erm, *quantity of sales*. I would rather connect it to, whether you *wish to send some message*, or it only matters that *this message brings you money*.

M: Yes.

S: That is the formulation.

M: That somewhat corresponds with a working definition that I adopted, because it seems more of a decision... of aesthetic nature, related to ethical decisions, more than the things like, 'how many records have you sold'. You

can still be a 'narodnjak' (neofolk musician) who sold five records and that still does not mean you're underground.

S: Certainly. Yes. But *that is the formulation here*. Many people formulate it in that [economic] sense.

M: In relation to the quantity of...

S: Yes. They do place you in, say, 'rock 'n' roll'; then, in that area, if you sell – you're one thing, if you don't – you're the other, but still, that doesn't matter as far as I am concerned, *but only the message*. And a form of independence. I think that this is relevant parameter, too. I mean, how independent are you from... ideas imposed on you and to what extent do you do what you really want, what you truly feel.

M: Yes. Which means –

S: In relation to your *record company* (loudly), in relation to... the influences of the *mass* [audience], which means, *the less you think about it, will you sell that record or not – I think you are likely to sell more of it* (normal voice). Because then, the record is then *more honest* and honest things reach people sooner than... the ones made under certain... (quiet, almost inaudible). OF COURSE, that variant exists too – researching the market, and then – but, that is the *way (façon) of commercial [approaches] (derog. 'komerrijala')*.

M: Then, I would like to widen the term ...Serbian underground music: to what extent could we talk of some sort of originality? I believe that we could, but, what causes would you find for it?

S: I already spoke of the first point. That is a strong point. [Then], isolation. Isolation from influences would be second. I mean, the scarcity of information; so, you are cut off in an environment without information from outside... then you have to reduce yourself to *your own idea and your own creation* without copying others, even *subconsciously* copying others... By the very virtue of that a basis of originality is created. That is one. Other... if we say that true ideas are created from suffering... Some *true* messages evolve from some kind of rebellion, which is again induced by suffering and for ten years we had *that and that only*, then, that too is an aspect of originality (chuckles)...

M: Yes, yes...

S: ...guess I said enough.

M: Well, you did. Quite... I wanted to ask you further. Because in principle, I imagine this whole thing as a jumping from one subject to the other, depending on the associations that we touched upon at this moment. In this concrete case I would really like us to mention the project that you are working on, CIH – ‘Chernobyl In House’. Because it has *pretty strong underground connotations, even in the widest possible sense* of how the term ‘underground’ is accepted. In the clearest possible sense. Could we start from the *name*, because I find it very interesting.

S: Well, you know, we talked about it but we’ll repeat now, for the record. The band was formed during the [Nato] bombing [of Serbia] in that *paranoia, I don’t know, a kind of madness*, when people were pondering on all sorts of things... We used those circumstances and shut ourselves in the studio that was in a way used as a shelter (chuckles)... ‘*studio-shelter*’, where we were OK... people would occasionally sleep in there and so on... and the *mini-commune* thus created, where we *tripped about* making music. The initial idea wasn’t even about a band, but, you know, ‘let’s record something, let’s play and record some music’, and from that [our] first songs emerged, some four or five of them... naturally, I mean, *very badly recorded* (chuckles)... We had many problems with drops in the electricity charge [voltage]... Losing electricity is more or less OK... But because we did almost everything on computers, when the *system collapses* at a sensible point, plenty of [recordings] get deleted... From all that, the band eventually emerged. There was a small group of people whom I allowed to use the studio, so they could bring their computers... and do some interesting things, which I wouldn’t mention now... which eventually initiated the reverse reaction, contracting the virus, computer virus, CIH, win32.cih, the version that existed then, though they’re now mutating... there is a new one, win95.cih. On that day, eight computers broke down, because it hits the BIOS... and if it *fries it*, if you have an older [model], you cannot load the new BIOS... there are ways to reset them, some computers survived, AMD’s, they are a bit more sturdy, INTEL’s were gone (laughs)...

M: (laughs)... we’ll stop there. You told me tonight the place where your first album is being pressed... [Ukraine], and I think that’s an interesting marketing [point].... I think it could be used if it were promoted somewhere...

S: Well CIH is a virus that enters a computer and *crouches there, and multiplies* through email and sends them *itself*... enters every disc or diskette that you might use, spreads very fast, but it is not recognised as a virus and the computer behaves normally, which is very good for the virus, because it spreads to as many machines as possible, *and then it activates on a certain date*. So the time while it's dormant enables it to spread, and no-one knows that they've got it... and then, on a particular day, 26<sup>th</sup> April, the day of Chernobyl disaster... it is activated, attacking the computer's BIOS directly. When BIOS cracks, there is nothing, the screen goes blank, and many thought *that the monitor broke down* (laughs)... we quickly got what happened. Though we had all possible protection...

M: Listening to your music, since you sent me one CD, which I listened to thoroughly, and played it to some acquaintances in England – the first thing that I mentioned was, though it is hard to... define it without an experimental approach... to structural similarities and differences – but what *I have noticed* and so did my *friends, who don't know its place of origin*, is a great degree of similarity with *electro [industrial] genre* which is quite well spread across western Europe, especially in Belgium, Germany –

S: Well, yes, in essence it *IS 'Industrial'*. But it has... as anything anyone makes, a mixture of many different genres... but it has something, it is strange because it was mainly done on computers, and fundamentally it is 'techno' but its approach isn't Techno, the approach is Rock 'n' Roll.

M: Yes. *That is the thing which* interesting –

S: *A different approach (loudly, emphasised)* to making songs and the tool –

M: ...technological.

S: Therefore, there is a kind of *classical Rock 'n' Roll* ... guitar base, strong guitars, live instruments, as many as possible... we did our best to minimise the use of synthesisers, while on the other hand we used them ... less for harmonies, for effects and rhythm. Because there is a *live drum as well as a rhythm machine* at the same time. On the other hand, there are many *renaissance elements, mediaeval music, even classical music* combined with guitars - it is very strange, and in any case, *it has its own originality. At least I haven't heard anything exactly like that*. Perhaps something *resembling it, but...*

M: ... I mentioned this because my conviction is ... that a degree of *similarity could be essential* if something is to be accepted. I mean, *there are many ways* in which music can be promoted, many ways, depending on what is the music, and what connotations it has, what musical structure it has. I spoke to many people here, who said that it is evident, that some kind of *ethno-music from here made the greatest success so far in the world market*.

S: Yes.

M: Is that because of its 'exotic' nature, or is it because indigenous music is becoming quite popular around the world, especially in developed countries, where it is *interesting to find things like... a bit of African music, then add some Middle East...* But if we are talking of a 'musical lingua franca' – the one that you are using is somewhat recognisable to people as something they know, stylistically defined as some kind of ... 'Industrial' or 'Electro'.

S: Yes.

M: While on the other hand, what I think definitely helps the success of music, is *the existence of that degree of originality*. Now... in that respect, I *did not negate your originality* ... what would you think that the *fact that the music comes... from Serbia* could help or hinder its promotion in the West, and more precisely in England, which is a musical superpower.

S: I think that *at first* it could hinder, but if it *does reach people, it could help*. Of course, there is a... we have been seen in a negative light, but, on the other hand, that could – you know, always, even bad things, if you deal with it in an intelligent way, you can turn it to your advantage. Therefore... it can all be seen in a – positive light. That is the same as *'the advert' and 'the anti-advert'... anti-advertisement is a form of advertising, too (laughs)*.

M: Negative publicity that could be turned, especially –

S: It can, it can be transformed... *in the final, final account, outcome*, but... at the beginning, it is bad because it does not motivate you to *hear* the thing. But if you do *hear it - that is* something different because *having heard something like that* becomes more interesting, if it comes from *such and such a country or social environment...*

M: In that case, there are two things crossing my mind now simultaneously. One is... to what extent is history relevant in that context; to what degree do historical facts of the last ten years, interpreted in different ways here and

elsewhere... to what extent are they relevant to music, or the subject of our conversation?

S: (Gives a puzzled look)

M: Let's say that I have noticed something quite apocalyptic in the lyrics and in the music [of CIH], something I cannot define, but –

S: You see, I have worked with 'Dza ili Bu' for 15 years and that is more connected with what is happening to us. It is related to the things affecting us, here and that could be totally uninteresting to someone abroad. On the other hand, CIH is something, which is happening to *everyone; something, which is happening to the Planet*. And I went into *that*. I went into a different kind of story, much wider, but also far more complicated. *But that is happening*. That which is the subject of CIH's lyrics. What exists in our texts, *a year or two after we write about them, these things occur*. And they will continue so. Therefore, we have, from some kind of... environ-... some... my 'trip', the way I wrote the texts for CIH used to be strictly related to this place, here. Now they have become *wider – much wider*.

M: It has turned out that they have wider connotations than what was happening in our country.

S: Well, they *had, at the beginning*. Because *that was happening to us, while we were recording*. It is happening now, and *it will continue* to happen. *Till the end, ha!*

M: Very optimistic (laughs uneasily).

S: But it always goes progressively. Then... but evil, which were unfortunately born, always goes onto progressive levels. I understand that there are people who will understand that. That will understand the message. I know they are in small numbers, I know that there won't be many left in the end, but *that is the tale*. 12x1000x12<sup>1</sup>.

M: (sigh) Well, when I get to transcribe and translate this text, I will obviously have to use some footnotes –

S: Yes.

---

<sup>1</sup> The reference to the specified numbers implies esoteric numerology.

M: ... but it is a fact that what defines underground in its music, in its narrowest or widest sense – depending on your viewpoint – is indeed that it is cryptic in a way... in a way, all messages are coded -

S: Yes.

M: Only who truly already knows something, who is really *interested in something* could decipher it from the music of certain people who deal with that, or the followers should always know which code is been talked about. Therefore, would you agree that underground music from Serbia *could only be promoted to narrower circles* in other countries, in other urban environments? Or rather, to underground circles, that could understand that language?

S: Yes. Yes. Because there is very small number of people who can *get it*. As there is a small number of people who understand *what's going on in the civilisation as a whole*. In the same sense, there are a small number of people that will understand *someone talking about it*. That is the way it is. It is certain that someone who, I don't know, opens the paper and sees what the headlines say cannot understand it.

M: And concludes what is the content of the article by just reading the title.

S: Yes. Does he go through the papers, or just sees the first information. You know, informations are very fast and barely anyone goes into their depth. But there are people who will understand that, and I think that there are more and more of them. And that their circle is widening.

M: Yes, there might be an interesting example of those... movements that... talk of globalisation.

S: Yes. I was referring to that precisely. But... if we were to avoid that story of all sorts of –

M: Difficult political subjects.

S: Difficult. But... Globalisation *is such a small word* for what it truly represents... We [Serbians] are *fresh* [in that respect]. They [people in the West] probably understand it better than we do. We have just been *taken* so we should go through two-three phases in order to get to the stage when we can start understanding it... Those who were *taken* before we were – they already understand it... This is why such [anti-globalisation] movements are strongest *there, precisely there* [in the West]. We are still seeing all that as, let



us say, something *nice, very nice*. Oh, well. That is what I told you... just read everything inversely. All that... '84, but on the power of three.

(A brief silence)

M: One of the things that impressed me most, from *that material* was... if I translated it to Serbian, “kapija kontrola/ kontrola kapija” (Gates Control/ control gates).

S: Yes.

M: now, there is – in western sociology of music, of so-called popular music, because ‘popular music’ encompasses everything, including underground, as opposed to classical music –

S: Yes.

M: ...there is that term, ‘*gatekeeper*’. The ones who guard the entry into the gates and disallow –

S: Yes.

M: Now... what is the chance to open that kind of door? This may also be connected to this situation here. Because we have *ONE* media organisation, which has become extremely powerful in the last thirteen months, erm, and the only release from this country that I saw in England was *their* release. That it a record which they made here. What do you think, to what extent do they positively affect the promotion of our culture abroad?

S: Well, you know, anyone who deals in other peoples’ things and ideas, while at the same time (speaks quietly) has no right to that, certainly isn’t the one to represent anything (dry laughter)... but, that’s the way it is. Here, it seems, *one monopoly replaces another, from one form of power to the other, from one state of affairs to the exact same state of affairs*, but... you know. Everything seems to be happening at some top levels, and we... there is also the *man, mortal man, who gets nothing*. In the same way, I don’t know if you are familiar with the fact that the Pentium 3 processor was first made in eighty-something... 1980. But... it was given to us mortals only once they pressed further ahead. That’s it. Whilst here... (long pause)... the ordinary man... feels nothing. So... that is the problem. Monopolism continued, but in sort of a different sphere, but it continues... well if you don’t have... com-... *that will last until competition emerges*. Well, *there always is competition*. But,

money is the main catalyst and who has no financial or media support, faces *a long road to get to people...* (the next statement is inaudible)

M: The notion of market. I spoke to one friend who is trying to make it as a painter in England...

S: Just to close the subject (confidently). Concretely, we are talking of B92.

M: Yes.

S: As a station.

M: Yes.

S: B92 was my *favourite radio station, for which I 'walked'*<sup>2</sup> when they shut it down, and, like, listened to it every day. For a while I even did some shows there... and it had a function at the time when there was a *regime here... to push forward some healthy ideas*. And... it had financial support and the rest. However, when it did the job that it did, it should have... *even while it was doing that job, very little was invested in art. You know that too. And very little went on the right stuff. And everybody is talking how the culture was destroyed by 'Pink' and suchlike radio and TV stations. But on the other hand, how much money came from all sorts of – Soros was just the beginning... but I mean, it went building further and further – not ten times more, it could have been done a thousand times more to sustain some underground rock 'n' roll culture, but that wasn't done*<sup>3</sup>.

M: Yes.

S: ... you know. I don't know whether that was because of the thing I told you I heard from a girl with whom I was going out for a short while, and who neatly described that – that is *the way of thinking* – that a man in fact has to be given *everything, offering him to choose from anything, including bad things*. To which I stood up and reacted by saying *'how... it is clear what is good and what is bad, it is clear what is culture and what is uncultured'* to which she replied, 'it is not clear; *who are you to say what culture is?*' That is the same thing happening to culture... all that apparently represents human rights... Theoretically, *anything is justifiable...* and the consequence of that is what is happening.

---

<sup>2</sup> Reference to the street protests 1996/97, as well as May 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Highlight (*in Italics*) is added when the speaker puts emphasis through intonation.

M: What you said, that *I too know how it was with B92*. I was very cautious with that question these days. And then, when the people *that work with them* told me of their dissatisfaction for numerous reasons; at the end of the day, they have noticed that they cannot reach *those internal circles*. All that shows that, on the one hand, they [B92] are very similar to corporations that exist in the developed world, while on the other - this whole idea *that they are very progressive does not fully hold water*. Therefore I mentioned market principles and this friend of mine who says, 'we do not have a market for visual arts', and maybe, there is no market for music either? Because there is no free competition.

S: There *is no similarity between B92 and foreign stations*. Because foreign stations could be justified on the fact that they are driven by commercial interest. And *they are not driven by economic interest either*. Because they are motivated, maybe... by personal interest only. Because they do not even enter projects *that could make money*. If they are economically driven, why shouldn't they release something that is, say, *cruelly commercial*? If they are not economically driven, if they are driven by cultural interest, why wouldn't they release *all that is progressive*. When you summarise all these stories the outcome is – only personal interest is motivating them. And what is it... *but I don't wish to find out... you are leading me to talk about it now, but...* in principle, all I care about is to do what I like, to do it the best that I can, and if someone likes it – fine, if not, 'goodbye'. And that is it.

M: You know why am I leading you into that kind of story? Because – at the end of the day, all this will become part of what I am doing, and for as long as they can't affect me, in the sense that I don't have to do business with them, all is fine. But –

S: They always had *strict benefit from everything they have ever done*. Concretely, Pedja is [playing] with me, he is – how many years has he been with the 'Direktori'? Both 'Direktori' and 'Dza ili Bu' *were good ... as a kind of a weapon against the regime* – when there are demonstrations *to set them free [to broadcast], to move the masses – literally that*. Further than that, *nothing happened*. As if it had passed long ago, *there is no trace of it*. And then some other *tales are told*. Well, I've gone through a thousand such things... *it was*

*always like, when someone has to offer his back, when you play [for them] when it's tough, then you know who plays.*

M: Yes, yes.

S: Eh! And when *tours are arranged, when loads of dosh is being made*, then *it is known who would be called [to play]*. So... that is all clear; we talked about it. Even if that someone wants to come to play *for free, purely from his own 'trip' is refused so he wouldn't see* – what is happening behind the props.

M: This *whole thing* is not aimed at certain frustrations, how they treated the Academy *when I was there*. It has much more to do with the fact that – all this, what I'm doing and writing now, should result in some implications as to *how to do the thing*; because *it is evident that* when 'you' publish a book talking about underground radio and rock 'n' roll resistance in Belgrade, and *mention relevant things but leave out things that are equally, if not more relevant* –

S: That is because *we believed in them and gave them everything*. You see? I loved that station. I have... *we all kept giving them everything*. Asking nothing in return. And then... they presented it as *their ideas, their story* (sigh), *and we were all left out*. After all, we are irrelevant. Let's start from Fleka.

M: Yes, Fleka.

S: That is *enough*. And we can continue... *as many names as you like*. However many. What should we talk about now?

M: We could arrive at the topic of intellectual property. That is a big problem. Because the outside world, talking to a music industry lawyer in England, I found out that they *know very well* that we... you know, do piracy and that we're buying Bulgarian pirate CDs and so on, and I tried to explain to him how *necessary* that piracy was for the scene's survival –

S: Yes.

M: ... and kind of music in this country, during the starvation –

S: Yes.

M: ... which isn't totally over yet. On the other hand, Pedja Pavleski drew my attention yesterday to the fact that this is a problem *for our authors, here*, he mentioned 'Kristali' who have officially sold 300 copies, and unofficially, really,

they sold many more – but *pirate copies* – from which they haven't seen a penny.

S: While on the other hand a foreign pirate costs... 1 to 2 Deutschmarks, maybe 3, and a domestic CD costs 10-12.

M: Yes.

S: And you are doomed, because a kid who comes to the stall will rather buy three foreign bands, than one new release. Well, there are those who buy – of course – but, small numbers. But on the other hand, it is a very *strange monopoly* –

(Phone rings several times; the conversation was interrupted)

S: ... as I was about to say. What is strange about it? Since I have... the last album by 'Dza ili Bu'... we broke relations with our publisher and all sorts of things happened, at the end we printed the CDs ourselves... and I have offered these discs - burned at home, 500 copies, house release – I offered them to the retailers for 2-3 Deutschmarks each. I consciously gave them a price that I knew would make me a loss and I *barely managed to persuade them* – just in order *to make them drop their price* from the customary 12-15 Deutschmarks. They will *always sell it at that price*. As if someone *prescribed* that a domestic CD should be expensive. I would always like to know, *who prescribed it and why*. *Why* would a domestic CD –

M: ... cost more.

S: If *I have decreased the price* – see, I lowered the price so he could make *twice as much*, but he still doesn't want – he says, "it has to be, *they said*", "who told you", "doesn't matter".

M: Yes. So there is *something*...

S: There is something, maybe even calculated, *what, I don't know*. *But, a calculated destruction of the domestic scene*.

M: I often quote in conversations with people – just crossed my mind the other day – a text by ... German authors... who wrote... about what happened to East-German punk and rock, which were *quite strong* in eastern Germany and were financed – in a similar way as it might have been done some time ago, I mean, what, PGP was important in a sense, and some good music emerged from their production –

S: You had a *taxation of schund (kitsch)* –

M: Yes.

S: ... And you paid the taxes, and copyright was paid for every time it was aired on television or radio – to whom did B92 pay any rights? *OK, RTS, we understand that, thieves, this and that, but these guys could pay something – yet nothing [was paid].*

M: What the German guy says, these bands were quite noteworthy for breaking down the wall from the eastern side<sup>4</sup>. When the wall fell, first the western German [industry] stormed in, with its music and capital, then the *big ones*, the big corporations followed... and that scene was totally *wiped out*. In that *thirst of the people* for... How much is something like that threatening – because what you told me, with the price of CDs sounds a bit odd –

S: Sounds odd, but that is a different thing. That is... I think it is going to get better. That is one of the brighter things, it is going to get better... in fact, it won't (laughs) because, if we now impose authors' rights, foreign CDs are going to cost as much as the domestic ones, or more, well something is going to be levelled. *But people as they stand will simply not have enough money to buy music*. That means, it's going to be bad anyway – I just thought that it's going to be OK... (laughs) *one pleasant thought*.

M: Can you imagine a future in which, say, our government attempts to promote our urban – I am not talking about national ethnic music – but our *urban music*, urban culture [promoted] in developed countries, *important ones*, should I say. My friend from Holland is writing about it.

S: The most basic things haven't changed yet. Most basic. You know. So, we are still far away from that, because authors' rights –

(Tape ends, a brief break, then the conversation continues)

S: - generally, *nothing until authors' rights are sorted out here, nothing will function*. You cannot – how much money has been taken from all the bands? How much money does the state owe to *all of us*? Not the state. Radio stations.

M: Those radio stations... the state in that context... controls...

S: All radio stations. All television stations. *I can even tell you that the RTS is the only one that has started* – because we just got some money – RTS is the

---

<sup>4</sup> Clearly, the interviewer had at that point mixed up the topic of two texts – Maas and Reszel (1998) on the one hand, and Wicke and Shepherd (1993) on the other.

only one that has started paying some of its old debts. B92? No way. They don't even think about it. To pay for their programmes.

M: So the only way is some kind of enforcement. So there *probably* was a law enforcing that; such laws could be written in a variety of ways.

S: But you could never charge for everything that has been taken from you for ten years. *How many performances, how much money is that?*

M: Yes.

S: Enormous amount... and videos... you know all that. And you can charge for an interview. How much is that?

M: The greatest income is... there also exists the problem of radio airplay –

S: What is charged: radio emission, TV, compositions, authors' rights... if you are a composer... I am a member of SOKOJ. I have regulated that and it exists, of course, but I know that we got – yes, on one occasion we received for, I don't know which year, 96 Dinars in total, so we calculated that we could *perhaps buy two or three strings for that money*. And now they've opened up, so they gave us a grand total of eighty Deutschmarks. That is one pack of bass strings, one for the guitar. *That is the indicator of change. If everybody looks how much things have changed* – well, you are there now – if you looked how much things have changed in your life between the old system and now. I am observing it through my life, Dule through his... I am looking at how much did I get out of everything – I got nothing. I received 96 Dinars. That is ridiculous, that is *insulting*. As far as I am concerned, it would have been better if they gave me nothing. That is an insult. Nothing is better than that. I preferred it during the Milosevic's time, when I knew that I can't count on anything.

M: Now you can't complain. You got something.

S: Sure. You got it.

M: You've shown me the receipt (laughs).

S: They have reported *five [broadcast] performances*.

(This part of the conversation is badly recorded and almost inaudible; only a few sentences were lost)

M: I know how that is regulated in England but I don't know if there is an interest to impose that. There is a number, code, in the programming schedule –

S: There is no interest as far as radio stations are concerned. Only musicians have that interest. And musicians are here... you know that here, anyway, the old story applies, “go on, *do something in your life, don't be a musician, you can't live off that. Who made a living from music?*” Isn't it like that? That is at the core, part of the psyche, deeper than (laughs)... but you know that this is a business, which, *where you are, makes enormous amounts of money.*

M: Yes.

S: Even, one of the best-paid jobs. And here, that's the bottom. No money in rock 'n' roll.

M: We know how much money some people made in the last ten years; some people whose profession it is to be own clubs, which they destroy and then open others, which, in turn, they destroy again and so on... they made good money on musicians, DJs...

S: On everybody.

M: ...on the audience, after all, which is paying excruciating prices of beer, for example. Now, my impression is that there are less and less live venues in town. Cafés and places that existed 17-20 years ago.

S: Now I will tell you the best example, *how is a band treated.* Black on white. Our last concert at the SKC was such that we... the deal was, I don't know what was the exact figure, anyway, such-and-such a number of tickets are needed to pay off the PA system, this is the amount for the lighting, this goes to SKC, what not. And all of them are safe. That *has to be paid off.* And the musicians get whatever remains.

M: Yes.

S: Of course, we agreed to that; we came to the gig, with some 700-800 tickets *accounted for*, having in mind that the tickets *have disappeared two days before the concert and then famously reappeared, without stamp...* the man who did the sound, who is always doing gigs, told me that there were 1200 minimum. Minimum. Big garden. It was full. The gig was over – even if it was what they said it was – it ended this way: we go into red, at the end of the gig, I take 200 Deutschmarks from my wallet and *pay SKC for packing their*



*garden full of people*, made them a profit of I-don't-know-how-many-thousand, so the guy that checked the tickets, and the cleaner *get the money*, while the band who made the whole thing happen – *pays 200*. That is the end of all stories. That is the truth. Total. And after that I said that I will never play SKC again and that is the point when we started splitting up (laughs) unofficially... that's it. Everybody makes money but the musicians... he didn't come to see the cleaner play.

M: (laughs)

S: And you know what SKC meant to us... when open gigs were made, where everything started, everything was happening there. SKC, DADOV, Akademija... nothing's left of it now.

M: What is worst, Akademija is there now and I saw what they did.

S: ... they did it, I've heard.

M: ...but Zen rented it out the other day and now he's playing what he wants.

S: Rent and play what you want.

M: Luckily, 'Sila' was the first to play there now.

S: But it is as likely that Halid Beslic<sup>5</sup> could rent it out and play there.

M: I'd really like to go there and speak to someone to see if they *would rent it out to him*.

S: They would... You remember the membership cards? Remember the prestige of having one? Not everybody could get one. There were OK parties.

M: It was *an effort to get one*.

S: - it involved *an effort*, so you had to belong to some urban environment. To have some kind of... you could not be a cretin... and get it... and there were no fights, no fuss or shooting. As the criteria started dropping, those *things* started. Then they started letting anyone in, and then... you know the rest.

(Short break taken from conversation)

M: ...would you say that there is something universal in music *as such* to make it capable of crossing social barriers?

---

<sup>5</sup> Beslic is an 'archetypal' example of Neofolk.

S: Yes. Because the evidence is... *Quality stuff* still sells today; stuff of low quality has a much shorter life... How many faces have you seen change on 'Pink' [TV]... whom no one remembers... Also, 'New Kids on the Block', or, I don't know... such *creations*: when one is spent, *they* create another... But, *in just one year no one will remember, let alone* twenty years, for example, while, to this day you can put a [Pink] Floyd album [on your record player] and listen to it. And you will be able to in fifty years. The same is with classical music that has survived for *many centuries*. Because it is something of value... so time simply *doesn't exist* [for it]. The 'Modern' is only connected to the moment while *true values* connect to eternity... or even if in the given moment they have not succeeded, someone will *dig them out in twenty years*... they sometimes come sooner, sometimes later, but they always eventually arrive. There never was a true value that did not eventually see the light of day.

M: Well, that is the thing.

S: Was that all right?

M: I have nothing else to ask. Thanks.

## Appendix Five

Interview with Dragan Ambrozic, B92; 12/11/2001

DA: Dictaphone?

M: Yes.

DA: Easier that way.

M: Easier *for us now*. It's going to be more difficult *for me* when it comes to translation, but never mind.

DA: In a historical developmental sense... the whole *urban new* phase of our popular music had certain underground characteristics. It initiated some changes, introducing new values in our society, as it did in the West, but with a slight delay. From Jazz onwards, it was not only connected to entertainment but also a vehicle for the introduction of some new, more liberal, worldviews than the dominant ones at the time. The same applies to Rock 'n' Roll - which appeared quite early, first Belgrade bands at the beginning of the Sixties - they opened a completely a new outlook on life, which, of course, wasn't widely accepted. But it was accepted in those narrow musical circles; and Rock 'n' Roll was, especially in the Sixties and Seventies an underground cultural activity. As such it encompassed a whole infrastructure, a network of clubs, promoters, media interests; and by the early Seventies, the numbers of copies sold had drawn further interest of local record companies, especially Jugoton and PGP... first serious such album was by 'Korni grupa'. Those things are not as well known as 'Bijelo Dugme'. 'Bijelo Dugme' made a commercial move; at that point in the Seventies, things became a bit more relaxed... Those things *were kept under control*, though [the politicians] have decided that it does not endanger the regime. Tito's time and that... such policies continued until the Eighties. All of Rock 'n' Roll was absolutely underground until the arrival of 'Bijelo Dugme'. And after that this was not possible because market laws started governing its production. In essence, market competition did exist and they have fundamentally changed everything, from the media - previously dictating the widely accepted conservative values - they had to change their approach... Slowly, bands became capable of making videos and have their own shows on national

television; like 'Riblja Corba', who did that first. Bora Djordjevic, who enjoyed a dissident status, was making videos for PGP RTS. *He could do whatever he pleased, because he had perfect record sales.* Those were releases of 200,000 or 300,000, sometimes even 500,000 copies. These were, for this part of the world, serious sales figures, establishing a proper market. What is interesting is that these figures *were 4 or 5 times higher* than the best sold among foreign licensed albums. Michael Jackson sold 25,000 records per album and this was a successful licensing deal. You have to have in mind that every Yugoslav pop group sold around 100,000... There is always a language difference and that is kind of normal, although we had licensed releases at the same time as the rest of the world, Michael Jackson, Madonna; later some more alternative things, such as REM and so on. In principle *there was little underground Rock that ruled the world in the Seventies and Eighties, but we always had mainstream in abundance.* There, until the Eighties, from New Wave onwards, the *new underground* started emerging and forming here, whereby a distinction was drawn *within rock 'n' roll.* You have mainstream stars, Bijelo Dugme and Riblja Corba, you also have the others questioning those mainstream stars that have *obviously* shown a tendency *to make compromises* with the authorities and the regime, *on some level, of course.* And you have a ...sort of music creators, that found nothing interesting in that; they did what they felt was the right thing and *decided that there is no place for compromise...* some were doing that according to their pose, some were there because of community aspects, but there were talented musicians who did important things in that underground rock scene that formed during the Eighties, from New Wave onwards. It is very important to understand that in former [SFR] Yugoslavia ...it was impossible... private initiative was not possible. There was no private property, so whatever you did, you had to do with some *communal*<sup>1</sup> *[state-owned] means of production,* in cultural centres or student cultural centres and so on. Therefore, all was subjected to Party control. Party control went so far that – in the case anyone forgot this – newspapers had those 'executive boards' which had the power to close down

---

<sup>1</sup> The phraseology of Yugoslav communist system after the reforms of 1965 followed the change in management practices that remotely resembled corporate boardrooms. Thus state ownership was re-branded 'communal' which reflects the introduction of boards, in which experts, workers and Party officials were supposed to make decisions together.

a paper, change the editor, *ban the content of the whole publication* and so on. I worked at 'Student' in '86 and I know that *every release of 'Student' had to go to the State Attorney before going into press; no release of the magazine went into press before the State Attorney read what was in it.* That was no game, there *really* was control. They could really put pressure on you *if they wanted.* OK, that system – so-called '*permissive totalitarianism*', I don't know how to call it otherwise – has *all the levers of classical totalitarianism*, but it chooses *not to use them.* It can do *anything to you*, but it did not... in such a milieu, dealing with something like underground rock was *not a naïve thing to do.* I want to say that people who did it... the only way it could survive was with the support of enthusiasts who were, in fact, working in those student cultural centres - SKUC in Ljubljana, our SKC, and so on; because the people who worked there understood that these things were worthy and recognised some of their own viewpoints in what those rock musicians did. Specifically in Belgrade, the Students' Cultural Centre (SKC) played an important role because people there liberated SKC. Those were young art-historians, art critics who understood that the footing of contemporary visual art and theatre lay in Rock 'n' Roll. That it has a lot to do with what was going on in Rock 'n' Roll, punk, and later New Wave, so they gave these bands the opportunity to rehearse for free. And later they provided them with opportunities to make concerts and so on. Then, by the Eighties, foreign bands of a bit more daring aesthetics started appearing, and it started spreading. Without an event, you don't have an audience; only once you make an event, you can see how many people you have, with a bigger event it grows and that is how things happen. So the people working in cultural centres around former Yugoslavia played a significant role because there were *no independent publishers or record companies.* They appeared later, especially in the late Eighties, especially during the time of [PM] Ante Markovic, when private initiative was allowed. That was *the first time that our legislation allowed you to employ more than 10 people.* Until then, even craftsmen weren't allowed to employ more than ten people – eleventh employee already *makes you a capitalist.* It was not allowed, you simply wouldn't dare do it.

M: That is why student clubs –

DA: The only places where something could happen. That was the infrastructure that helped shape the underground here. It was necessarily connected to these clubs and it was all like a *little ghetto*. But it functioned. And if it weren't for this, the scene would not have survived, it would not have been cultivated and many people would not have had the chance to play, many things would not have happened, hadn't it been for [student clubs]. Because, simply, there was *no other structure outside it*. Look at the situation here and now; it still influences the thing, the main clubs of the Eighties and Nineties were still student clubs, such as the Faculty of Fine Arts, *as you know*, and the Club of Technical Studies. And then, when people come from abroad, they cannot... *there are no private clubs*, or they were established in the latter half of the Nineties, with the emergence of Techno, DJ culture and so on. But local clubs were based in student venues. Now... those clubs developed their profile here, in Zagreb and Ljubljana, so ...new bands had a space to perform their first concerts and things were developing. In other countries where communists were in power, the Soviet bloc, eastern Europe, *even that was almost impossible to happen*. While here, at least that *was not affecting anyone* because it was closed in its *own ghetto*... and until it spilt over outside of its confines, it was not under direct police pressure, *apart from occasional raids, drugs, what not* –

M: Maintaining the tension.

DA: ... yes, tension. Otherwise there was no significant pressure on the performers themselves, for as long as they played by the rules. You could create a *parallel little world*, and no one would touch you... and from that strange relationship of the Eighties, our underground music emerged in the Nineties. But then *everything changed totally*, because after that brief moment from 1989-1991 - when in the time of Ante Markovic, at least in the market sense we became a part of Western Europe, and when it was easy to organise concerts of foreign bands, domestic performers and so on, the country was wealthier, at least appeared to become wealthier, while the economic crisis lurking underneath shouldn't be forgotten, the threat of inflation and insecurity – after that brief period until '91, the circumstances have pushed rock 'n' roll from the stage again, by force. Because the message *coming from that whole milieu was threatening the regime in power*

*at the time*. In itself ...channelling the need to question things, let's say that this is the message... was inconvenient to the regime and made them feel personally at threat. So rock music and everyone that had anything to do with it – 'flew' into radical *grettoisation*, much worse than it was in the Eighties, when it appeared to be close to surfacing. If someone could sell a good number of records without making compromises... close to the turn of the decade, it appeared increasingly market-orientated, and less politically controlled, and *then, suddenly, the door had slammed at once*. People found themselves discovering that the market means nothing and that everything is a question of political docility. If they find you unfit at a certain point... 1991 and 1992 were the years when Turbo-folk was formulated, *our version of a pop-folk mutant*, which turned out to be a commercial project. Now, I wouldn't *blame the production*; people make what they make, what they make sells, what sells – sells. Media played the crucial role in that, I think; they were responsible for a lot of what was happening, folk existed then and it will exist tomorrow. Rock 'n' Roll was thus positioned as something that was uninteresting to the media for two reasons. Firstly, it was the message, you *don't wanna gamble with your destiny and your medium* and they couldn't play someone whose message he *could not justify politically, where all accounts had to be cleared, and everybody had to do it, to a greater or lesser degree*. Secondly... rock music has the distinct market quality that it sells over a longer period of time. When 'Partibrejkers' release a record, they will sell today, tomorrow and in ten years, their first record still sells, and that is the case with rock music around the world. It doesn't sell immediately in a 'boom', but to a certain degree *yet continuously*. But good rock groups *build a career*. And here, in the situation when you had the hyperinflation, when everything was based on 'take money and run', you invest now, gaining returns in a month, two or six months – and *that is it!* When everything was 'take money and run', rock groups *didn't stand a chance*. What publisher would invest into something that would sell in two or three years. And now, nobody is interested in the first record of Vesna Zmijanac, or Ceca's first record, it sounds ridiculous, it might interest someone for a museum, but nobody is going to seek it, looking for a legendary moment. The same is, however, in the world: who is interested in the first album by Kylie Minogue? That is totally passé. Our pop

stars live in the same way as their pop stars, in the period of one to two years, then the style changes, and they adapt to it, re-formulate, so the new record follows the fashion trend of the moment. When it turned out that people who here had some money decided to invest into our pop-stars – and above all entertainment is always convenient for *money laundering, so is sport...* because you do something for the community and you won't be asked many questions, that's a good cover... Arkan wasn't silly when he invested in [FC] 'Obilic' and Ceca, and that is not only our speciality, this is how it's done in the world... Anyway, rock music and rock bands suddenly found themselves in a vacuum. By the end of the Eighties we had a generation that had slowly grown surrounded by abundance... in retrospect, it was abundance, if not material, then spiritual: the opportunity to travel as much as you liked, you had alternative records imported into the country by the end of the Eighties, you had all the films at the point of their European release, comics, domestic and imported, books, you had *everything, if you wanted to develop [intellectually]* ...maybe we weren't the richest country in the world, but we were decent. From that moment, it was a total downward spiral, and there was a generation of bands, 10-15 of them, emerging in '91, '92, '93... Presing, Kazna za Usi, Deca Losih Muzicara, Darkwood, and so on... then the bands from the provinces, such as Novembar, Dzuकेले, Bjesovi... ensembles that have grown during the Eighties but emerged in the Nineties, 'when time is not ripe'. KST had an excellent season in 1992... there was good rock music then, a good generation of new musicians, which could have become really big, someone at least, especially because they had a good audience that saw them as representing *their own voice*, someone who represents their interests. However, [by] 1993 [the hyperinflation had] totally ruined the whole scene. *None of those bands...* people observe the last ten years, saying that none of those bands did anything special; but these people just about reached middle status – even now we have a number of medium-sized bands – none of them became *big*. Not because of their quality, but because none of them had a continual career. How could you have a continual career if you have no records or videos? You release a record *now, and then the next comes when you save up some money from gigs, maybe in three years*, during which you have *no videos, nobody wants to record them and if they do, they're trash*,



*made cheaply, totally, and who's gonna watch that (bitterly, obviously annoyed when remembering the situation).* You cannot sell a record, even if you have one with a potential to sell, to kids, *even to young girls*, if you don't have a good, glamorous video. *You have no money.*

M: The only people who had the money then were folk musicians.

DA: Yes. And now, on top of that, publishers and record companies, who were scarce anyway, *and have decided to release some rock bands...* since they understood the game... so they would release a thousand copies of a CD, *but then pirate their own release, so they could return what they invested.* The band would barely survive of money from sales, *which would not arrive anyway, because the firm sells what it sells and does what it pleases with it.* Then the firm would *pirate itself, so that it wouldn't report that to the state, nor anyone else, including the band.* The band would, in turn, *be happy to have someone to release it, because sometimes... they would get at least one video*, which would get some airplay. So the band did not have to suffer to collect the money for the video. *But the bands survived, depending on the number of performances. How many rock concerts you had was the main thing. The 'economics of a Serbian band' depended on how often does it play.* That was also closely connected with the frequency of *airplay of their video.* The audience knows – it watches more TV than it listens to radio, which, in turn, by far exceeds the number of records it buys. The bands that were lucky to have a video clip emitted somewhere – had more success, more [live] arrangements *and a higher price.* That is how their economy looked like. And that lasted throughout the Nineties, *all the time.* There was absolutely no moment in time that a band was happier than that...

(Inaudible part of the recording, half a minute long)

DA: ...because of the way the market was operating, the whole of rock 'n' roll went underground. This was, in a way, good, because the selection process had happened, *in a way*, only the bands that had an audience, however difficult it was for them, have become more aware of some criteria and survived simply because they were good. That was really *a Purgatory for many rock bands.* There were groups that we believed in and *thought* were good, such as Dza ili Bu... surely they were motivated, but, *man*, Dza ili Bu simply could not build up their audiences and have disappeared... However

OK they might have been - personally... (hesitates)... I mean, they made *some sort* of an audience in Belgrade, but, somehow, that... (hesitates)... and I am not saying that [their music] was *bad*, but, it simply *did not have an audience*... Or let us say, 'Pressing', which also is an important group, had also disappeared. They simply could not - how should I say - *bite in*, in the business sense, to endure it... as a *job*... The bands that survived were the ones that had a good combination of artistic credibility and business sense... Which means that the scene we have today is *more professional* than the one we had in the Eighties. They are more responsible, they know what it means to have concerts, they have a greater appreciation of certain things, they practically know that their elections come every week, unlike politicians. If something goes wrong on a concert, he simply might not play again. They started living off concerts, they have no illusions about it, *though they are a bit more materialistic than the bands in the Eighties*, but that was the time like when they formed. They're tougher and not so many things can get them out of balance and they're clearer in what they want to do. Even older bands, such as Darkwood Dub, have toughened up and built a profile. *Those actions of ours* were very important in that respect, since we did those campaigns, 'It isn't human to stay quiet' and 'Rock 'n' Roll for the Elections'. Those groups never had so many concerts in fact, nobody organised them a proper tour. Even 'Sunshine', who were very popular, never had so many concerts, twelve in a row, in an organised tour. Darkwood especially, who've toughened during that tour and understood what works with the audience, you could see from gig to gig, how they learn... and they opened up, became communicative band, Vuca speaks to the audience, could you believe that? Oliver was the only one with a bit of a problem, but they were the least known from the lot. The audience liked them [KKN], but that was the point when they *first discovered them*. On 'Rock 'n' Roll for the Elections', everybody went mad for Eyesburn. It would be good if five such tours could be organised each year, but of course we couldn't repeat that, God knows if we could, because we then received a *large donation [from NGOs] so in that way we managed to organise the whole thing and bring rock back into public focus*. Because the audience did exist and the bands that are around now have grown up during the Nineties and they were the *speaking for that generation, and the only*

*thing we did was to connect the bands with the audience.* From 1998 when the Kosovo crisis escalated until... the concerts we organised, there were no normal concerts, because there was no money... *apart from Novi Sad and Nis, most of those bands have not seen the provinces at all. You were lucky if you played those two cities*<sup>2</sup>. The situation in the provinces was horrendous, no concerts were held for a long time. So you had to play Belgrade, and that was deep underground, if you look at it more carefully. When we *connected them with the audience, of course it had a wider social meaning, not to promote a political option but a new form of social activism... with the support of NGOs...* was there anything else you wanted to ask me?

M: To what extent can we – having in mind the past ten years, realistically speaking of the limited knowledge about our urban scene in the West – to what extent can we be accepted as something which is not necessarily 'exotic'?

DA: The scene we have now.

M: Yes.

DA: There are about twenty bands... every one of them with their own niche... covering different genres. To what extent is our scene interesting there? It is a very extraordinary question. Nothing can really be said about it now, because our market, in fact, is still disconnected [from the West]. Politically, yes, but in market terms, we're not connected; in that sense, the integration will have to wait for as long as there is piracy... when that is solved and they start receiving – however little – money, *as soon as the offices of big music companies open here*, then they will be *very interested indeed to find out what is going on here* and to see whether some material could be made here that could make them a profit. That is the way it functions, and no other way. If some of that could succeed *if they package it in an appropriate way... somewhere abroad...?* On the other hand, we shouldn't forget that our bands have a good following throughout former Yugoslavia. This is by far *the strongest Rock scene*. No other scene from former Yugoslavia is as branched out, lively, innovative, with good and professional musicians, artists *who have*

---

<sup>2</sup> These statements stand in direct contradiction about the [lack of] credibility of other bands with the audiences outside Belgrade. It transpires that none of the stated had an opportunity to play in smaller towns before the 'Rock 'n' Roll for the Elections' tour.

*something to say. We could very quickly compete in the Croatian, Bosnian and Slovenian market, Macedonian too, with a better packaging of content. Meaning, a good video production, with a systematic effort to appear there – would sell. There is a political problem, especially with Croatia, but there is none with Slovenia, Bosnia and Macedonia. We have very good export products, and someone who would think appropriately would see that this music would not sell only here, but throughout former Yugoslavia... Bajaga just released his album throughout former Yugoslavia, simultaneously... Rambo did the same thing. Some names overcome national limitations, so, with a good packaging, EMI – having a representative in Ljubljana who is responsible for the whole of former Yugoslavia – could place that anywhere, with a good packaging. Therefore, we first need to look at our neighbours, possibly Bulgaria and Greece, to see if it would sell, and then... England is far away. It is easier, perhaps, to look at Germany. See, we... B92 sold an album in France, Belgrade Coffee Shop, clubbing House sound, that is a bit under French influence and that's why they like it, but Paris is one of the capitals of House. The fact that we found a publisher who was ready to buy the album for the French market – that is a great move. The second thing, the [ethno] compilation 'Serbia – Sounds Global' also generated interest in America; that will surely be released there, because Bregovic has generated interest in our [ethno] sound. Since he is enormously popular, I am sure that this is going to sell really well... with good packaging and good placement in the market, we have things to sell. We have good electronic music, where singing does not represent such a limitation, and a good ethno-sound. Which might not make the popularity of a Cuban sound, but it could sell well. Rock 'n' Roll bands have the problem that they sing in an unknown language, and if they switch to English, then they have to adapt to the requirements of their market... could Eyesburn – who are currently a mega-band here – manage to fall into the clichés that would work in England, America, or Canada? I mean, support from abroad could mean a lot but it might equally fail; the band 'Sikter' from Sarajevo had been produced by Brian Eno... and nothing happened... whoever of the foreigners heard Darkwood, said that they are a good band... packaging could perform miracles. Depends what you expect in life... they cannot expect to sell millions in America. I think Eyesburn could sell a lot, but I*

think they could go to the German market. They are the wealthiest in Europe and are open, they follow all trends at the same time. They don't have many of their own bands of a similar profile... it wouldn't function badly there. And they are a bit more relaxed, they've realised that rock music comes from other countries. ...no wonder that the British would feel proud about their music production and be less likely to allow foreign acts to penetrate the market. In fact, the music industry is their second largest export...

M: just after Formula One

DA: Yes. In America... the *entertainment* sector, and I am quoting, is *the largest export they have*... imagine, what amounts of money are we talking about... why would they accept competition? On the other hand, the Germans are already used to getting their music from other sides. They are more open to influences and bands like Eyesburn are not well represented in their national scene... I believe that this would be an interesting market to enter... Since these problems will be sorted and people will be able to travel, we would be able to promote the music, which has under specific circumstances, gone underground. It is underground, but it is a communicative form of music. We're not talking about experimental electronic music here, these bands play music which would reach... but they have to find their own place in the market... That is a great, big civilisational step for us, finding a place in the global market for something that was produced here. These would be great achievements that need to be pursued now.

## Appendix Six

Interview with Dusan Petrovic – “Coxless Pair”; 12/11/2001

M: The conversation should have a normal flow, as if this Dictaphone does not exist and we are not recording because I don't like, unless really necessary – to ask questions explicitly. So we could start from *that* definition: 'Is underground an appropriate word?'

D: Underground. Well I think that 'underground' is an *appropriate* word, definitely as far as I'm concerned, even more so because I *consider* it my field of activity and I think that underground always has to have a *sub-ver-sive* element – in a *positive* sense of the word – and, as such, I always find it closer than some *projects whose aim is...making money*. Let's say that to avoid *harsher* words. In any case the whole point of musicianship, for me, is the constant exploration of something new; I have been doing that for 20 years-odd years now and in principle I always strived to leave a *personal* mark on what I am doing, to have a kind of a *unique expression* and not to hesitate in front of...things that present a *problem*, or rather, erm, to be as uncompromising as I am in making such choices. That is a kind of a *personal definition* of the things I am doing in music and of course that is a thing which has been evolving and becoming more complex as I have worked *with* music.

GLITCH ON THE TAPE, CONVERSATION WAS INTERRUPTED

M: So, about your gigs in London –

D: Mm, Ha! The way the *whole* thing went. Let me just make a *brief history* of that before we start. Therefore – last year, in January 2000, Boris Madenovic And I have started, *initiated* a series of sessions in the Dom Omladine club, with an aim to promote Jazz to a young audience. That was my old project, the second band in which I focus on Jazz. I also did some Jazz programmes on radio; therefore my long-standing project was to somehow initiate people to play Jazz especially the tones that had little or no contact with it. Now, of course, that isn't that simple. First such a project was Menson Benson Sextet, which played for one season in another Belgrade club – but it's not important where now. Anyway, the point is that one Reggae bass-player, one young drummer and a DJ, including one on saxophone – a team of people that never

did Jazz before – gathered together attempting to react to Jazz standards. That was successful, let's say half successful. So we played some standards too, but we mainly played my compositions adapted, in fact, to their abilities. Nevertheless this had a *fantastic energy* and a *Bop-like attitude*, how should I say. And it had a very good reception precisely with the audiences that could hardly be recognised as Jazz listeners. Of course, such a project cannot erm, survive for long without financial support so it stopped at some point but we have made some recordings and after a while Boris and I came up with an idea to make a virtual Jazz – *reanimation*, through sampling and computer editing of old materials to redefine (Jazz) standards and to *react live* to such computer-made matrices, playing the saxophone and guitar, always accompanied with a guest. We also always had a DJ as a representative element of, how should I say, the most *modern approach*, we also had various people whose background isn't Jazz – classic musicians, people from Rock 'n' Roll, various other guest musicians, all of them providing their own 'cut'. After about 4 months into that – regularly, meaning new material, new guests and so on, all that recorded of course – a London publisher Mr Zeljko Kerleta turned up. His foremost speciality is East European Jazz and as such he heard all that was worth hearing, there and then, all that was recorded and relevant and both of those things were added to the Cosmic Sounds repertoire – that is the name of his publishing/recording house; all that was released in October last year (2000). Two albums were released: one titled 'Contemplation' by Dvojac Bez kormilara' - or 'Coxless Pair' - our name there; the other is titled 'Sharpening My Stone', I think it was (M-B) Sextet, those are my first recordings, in that context. As soon as he took the demo or rather the unreleased masters he used the first opportunity to play them when he worked at the Plastic People Club and Mr Ade, who owns the club when he heard the recordings, said. 'I want these people to open the live season at my place' and 'I'm not interested what happens to the *finances*, let's go and organise and do it.' Around that time Edwin Gibson from Jazz Café called Zeljko and said he would like to do some work with Cosmic Sounds. He was in fact making enquiries about Dusko Gojkovic, the biggest name of Cosmic Sounds (Records) and Janko Nilovic, a cult composer from Paris who is originally from those parts, from Montenegro to be more precise. Anyway,

Dusko Gojkovic was very busy, so it crossed Zeljko's mind to offer the package that would include two young bands signed to Cosmic Records alongside Janko Nilovic. Of course they agreed and in principle that initiated the renewal of Menson Benson Sextet Project. With a new man on piano, Mihajlo Krstic, we decided to prepare a live version of our record for performances, and that is how we went there. We received an invitation from London on the basis of the recordings being released there. Of course the whole financial plan has, how should I say – with a great understanding from the people from JAT who gave us substantial discount – balanced out at *positive-zero*, as we would say here...

In principle, through that whole thing, we managed to make enough income to cover our expense, travel, visas and so on... that was a terrific '*hit and run*' *variant*, I mean not 'hit and ruin' but it was very *intense* because we got there on Thursday; on Friday we were preparing the performance all day. We did it with Kerleta because we also played his music in Plastic People club. ON Saturday we played Plastic People after rearranging the mains throughout the club in order to make it possible to plug in the equipment, because it was a discotheque only before the event. Then on Sunday we were in the Jazz Café from 3pm, sound check at 4pm, stayed there browsed around for a while. The gigs start a bit earlier there. At 8pm we were already on stage. Coxless Pait played first, then Janko Nilovic. I was a soloist guest in a medley of his two compositions. That too was a *new dimension* for me – *never before* did I play with so called *serious* people without extensive preparation – I was a bit scared too but in a positive kind of way. All in all it went brilliantly, Menson Benson Sextet closed the concert. I don't know...in fact *through our London experience* I understand that we are indeed very close to those happenings, developments which appeared very far, out of reach, in *this vacuum*. I think I have the right to consider London audiences as one of the *most spoilt in the world*, knowing that Roy Ayers played only a week before we did. One week after we were there it was Jimmy Smith who played at the Jazz Café... and Plastic People, in principle on Saturdays – when we played – those events are titled 'Balance'. Giles Peterson regularly works there, Alan Cross too, Zeljko Kerleta plays there. People from Jazza Nova visit the place, Evgening



Class... and so on.... Zeljko explained to me that this is the so-called *underground scene*.

M: Underground scene...it is really hard to find out...

D: Yes, yes, yes. We managed because it was a gig, so they *advertised*. We were announced in Time Out and Hot Tickets – I think it's called – that's where it was publicised, but under Clubbing, not 'music' or 'concerts' but 'clubbing'. Er... I've heard that Plastic People was now extended and refurbished and that they are extending a new place for gigs only.. It's not that relevant for this story. I think that the point is, the way that I got it, in fact, you can find and assemble the crowd here with whom you can from New York to Tokyo – *no problem*.....There that is it. And it does mean a lot and on the other hand, *it changes nothing*. *Literally*, it always changes *nothing*. The *underground population* – well it's not true that it doesn't change a thing. It does for as long as you finally have something, a connection on the world level, with the underground population and that's the kind of boost that supported me in doing these things, still, and gave me a new, new, Elan, motivations to overcome *hardships*, which are so numerous – in fact, *we only deal with hardship over here*... It meant, much more than should be *necessary*, and the creative process suffers because of all that but I prefer to struggle with all these things and to *do the thing, totally* according to my taste, than to make certain compromises that would be sort of a kind of an *acceleration* in that kind of sense – *a breakthrough* and so on. I think that with a publisher in London, we stand a chance to get to those 5-10,000 people, who - I mean around the world – to whom our music would be interesting. According to some calculations that we made, those 10,000 or so would be enough to enable us to live here and continue to work normally. That is my only goal in life, to secure myself a normal living and experiment further in those *domains* of my interest. In June this year (2001) we started a very interesting '*variant*' of totally hybrid jamming which means sessions with DJ's, Coxless, i.e. Boris and I, we started doing that with a fellow from Budapest. The man comes from the two-man crew 'Kaiser and Shurikeu' two alternative DJ's from Tilos Radio (Hungary) and he came here to attend some media conference, his radio sent him, I don't know; his trip and accommodation were covered. He called Zeljko because they were in touch by e-mail saying

'should I bring my records there (BG) what's happening there, is there anything interesting going on, something where I could spin a record there' and such like, and Zeljko sent him to me. Through their radio equivalent in Belgrade, two DJ's – they're called Belgradeyard Sound System, OI organised two performances. One was in the 'Pazi Skola' club where we continue to perform to this day. We just started the season with Belgadeyard Sound System – around the same time. The other performance was held at Barutana, because the weather was fine. And what is that (you'd ask) That's a DJ-set, an alternative/underground DJ set with people who have enough style to adapt their set to a live performance with another sax player and guitarist. Therefore there are *basic tracks* with plenty of percussion, plenty of bass very little wind instruments, guitars and so on – and here we come and fiddle with it without *any* preparation, we do nothing in particular in advance and that is some sort of I'd say, *new Jazz 'variant'*. That which was in the 30's in the clubs on 52<sup>nd</sup> street New York, that's the thing in November 2001 – a logical succession. Even more so because these are the people who are really well *founded* in those say *Jazz variants*. Therefore I hope that we will, in due course, offer those things even outside Belgrade. I have spent a lot of time convincing people here that *this kind* of programme can have its *own* audience and that... we almost managed with the backup from British Council, but this... thing that happened, firstly 9/11, then the war in Afghanistan, *everybody* became catatonic, and now we're awaiting to see what will happen. Maybe from the New Year on 2002 they might step in, to financially support the plan for that kind of thing so we could technically achieve it to the same standard. Then we might as well bring some acts from London and imitate that *bridge* from this side – which, I suspect you are dealing with there. The whole thing would be titled 'Cosmic Sounds'- Belgrade Business' it would have its own page on the CS website. Therefore *such an idea exists* but it's very problematic to find someone willing to listen.

M: I was very lucky to bump into Boris this summer. I didn't know what happened in the meantime. We met and started chatting and then he told me and I said this is exactly what I need; I spoke to other people, like the guys from Darkwood Dub and all that

D: Yes

M: ...but their perception was totally different. From this Zoo bar, a place that wasn't managed very well though it was in the heart of London –

D: Yes, yes, that was the 'Potemkin' place. They contacted Zeljko as well and he was making arrangements and so on but then he realised that the organisation of the whole thing was a bit (unreliable), financially not..

M: He was probably concerned about finances, while on the other hand the *audience* was quite a *very* interesting phenomenon, according to what I've heard from some other people because I didn't go there... A Yugo-nostalgic audience, which is simply *not that profile* –

D: Yes, yes... for Sila, Darkwood Dub and for... well, that is always the kind of a.... I mean, I've no idea. In fact I'm very glad that I did it in the right way; I think it would be hard for me, in an emotional sense to turn up at a place like that and get the *wrong kind of audience*, the wrong, I don't know because I cannot speak of something that I have not seen, but I am in contact with a sufficient number of people in London for years – unfortunately – to be able to know what could be expected, having in mind that the *text* was relating to the DJ that accompanied Sila like bring Haustor, 'Idoli', what was there, 'Elektriciini Orgazam' and ...such like. In that kind of sense I feel very OK that a Nigerian invited us to London and one, Adrian Gibson, whom I never met, who never met me and the only link between us is what we did for Cosmic Sounds: Therefore people here play that kind of ballgame, *generally*, when they do things – they *address* someone invariably. Most of the time, it is the local audience without any idea that this could... *communicate across* and over the things that they *imagine* as their audience. And that *always*... depressed me that the greatest numbers of people are in that mode. I'm not, and, *finally*, after 20-odd years I have some results that *prove* that I am not. And I will repeat again, that doesn't change anything *significantly* my way of life or the problems I have in life but simply gives me the *certainty that I am doing it right*.

M: Yes. Some kind of communication has succeeded, that is *the proof* of that.

D: That is the proof that we told a *story that somebody understood*. And that whole thing: that in a city like that, where it's very complicated to make a decision *what to watch* in a club, which is quite 'sminkerski' (snobby) or should I say *sophisticated*, conceptualised in relation to audience and taste –

that you have 200 people, for 2 and a half hours, *madly* dancing to what you are playing which isn't a regular occurrence over here. You know that *means something*. That says something, says *that there* is some sense in doing it. Because there are 200 people like that in New York, in Bucharest, Moscow, Leningrad, wherever that sort of music has spread through, people like that exist. It is only a matter of time and patience for us to I and I believe that that will happen.

M: Great, thank you.

D: That is it?

M: That is it.

D: Cool.

## Appendix Seven

Interview with Milos Kukuric; 9<sup>th</sup> November 2001

M: First question would be: 'You're not directly involved in that music thing. But you are I'm sure, well familiar with all that is happening in the context of corrosion and that. Let's start from how *alive* you think that all is now? How did the things that were going on for the last couple of years, positively or negatively affect the development of some artistic and ....

QQ: You mean about CRSN?

M: Yes, and in general.

QQ: So Electronica?

M: They see themselves, I spoke to Igor and that and he tells me that he sees himself as an underground musician; because I'm specifically observing that I'd start from them.

QQ: It's interesting when Low-Fi and the whole story started and later at the time of Rex when we all met and that I got quite oriented to that type of music and by coincidence. That happened and somehow opened my eyes. CRSN are a specific type of people, generally that *demo-scene* where they have originated. Their most important segment is music and they are best at that. They were around for quite a number of years. In that demo-scene they were extremely *hermetic*. Only, thanks to us, not myself specifically but the whole *team* that was gathered around *Cinema Rex*, they started peering out of the hole. Their....erm.....*meetings and happenings*, where new music was played, those demo parties and that, they were terribly *closed-up*. Only now you can hear that this is going on. But still there's *no audience* for it, yet. Although this is truly on a world-level, music, absolutely, even with an example of some *French* people that turned up here they CRSN have an *impression*. They came here for the '*scene-strike*' event and made an impact. They are I think an extremely specific music stream, when we talk about music (they also do multimedia) and of course they have emerged as one of the *responses to the (social) environment*. These are the kids who under *the circumstances stuck to their computers* and with wide interests seeing the world *through a monitor* and that's how the whole thing emerged. Bu the only thing I was always

against was their self-satisfaction/ self indulgence, that they were not trying to make it more popular. Even now it is still better this way: a demo is made to be watched on a computer and not to be played elsewhere. We play their demo at Low-Fi events. Therefore they are a typical group formation that would, having in min the (tide) of this *techno-shit* promoted by other formations like *Technokratia*.

M: They always got it wrong.

QQ: But it gets a 2/3000 audience but that's also a media thing, ways in which you relate to the audience and of course some (financial etc) background and all that. This is (CRSN) some kind of *underground* but according to their quality I think they should have the place, a much better one than it currently has.

QQ: Because I think it is attractive, very listenable music because it's very specific, you know, you heard.

M: Yes I was thrilled then, in Serbia.

QQ: They've got plenty of that and music is the strongest aspect of what they do. There's plenty of stuff getting better and better. They're finding their own place but...I don't want to do things like: people come on do something. When I go to a CRSN party I want to see...a super selection (of music). That needs to be supported in some way. I think it's a shame that a greater number of people haven't heard it yet: because they're very authentic. When you hear similar things coming from the demo-scene abroad, this is of equal quality – absolutely. When you play a “Domin8r” or something from a bloke from say Finland... madness, their demo scene, musical wonder, really. – to the English guys ‘Squarepusher’ and that, I think that a proper connoisseur of all such world trends would find something very original here. They (CRSN) have a tendency towards dark, ambient and neurotic rhythms. Well, that's Serbia (laughs).

M: I get it.

QQ: I think that's a clear match. Though sometimes you enjoy it (music) sometimes you don't. When you're in a shitty mood it keeps you cocooned and when you fell like kicking someone, then you play it... I think I'd really like to see some polarisation, not like millions of copies but to see 500 people at a CRSN concert, not 50.

M: I've been thinking about some things in the following context: to what extent can we talk about some sort of *segmentation* within the scene. Like people who listen to one kind of thing would not listen to the other ....maybe there is a potential provided that they CRSN wanted it., if they promoted it to similar groups abroad they would generate the same if not more interest that exists here. What do you think of that since I used those terms which I am trying to capture and they could be quite useful. One is on a kind of world level, they (CRSN) do not really lag behind the things you have heard, on the other hand, that they are characterised by something unique. Those things, if it proves to be the case, could create good conditions, a good starting point for the promotion of such music. I'd like if you could elaborate more on that.

QQ: You know what I think is the best about that music, there is no voice, no language. If someone abroad hears it, that kind of music they'd say I like it or I don't know but, but that's IT... In that sense such limitations don't exist and that is one of the prerequisites for something like that to be accepted abroad. Well there's always that creative artistic part and there's on the other hand the market. I'm not sure to what extent the people here are ready to work on it. Publishing authors' rights, export/import. In fact what worries me is that they (CRSN) have created some kind of release EP, pressed a few hundred copies, you can buy it here (Beopolis Bookshop) maybe in SKC, but I don't know how interested people here are to do something serious about it. PGP, not, but someone... I think that here the way people do work and business trade that consciousness is not.... So someone would dare to invest money into something that *might* not work, but could succeed. I think that a breakthrough to the West could happen only through the back door. If it turns out that this exists that it works, that it is good – to begin with – then people would care about it, I don't find it impossible that someone works with it, say WARP or Ninja Tune, releases it, why not....?

M: That's interesting. Belgrade Coffee Shop has appeared in England.

QQ: That's B92.

M: Yes.

QQ: Well that's the same story. Pedigree. IN that sense they (CRSN) have no pedigree. Only if they come across someone who can do something about that. Stories went around something that Dule Petrovic and Boris

(Mladenovic) were doing. They were supposed to release something in England. I don't know what's going on there?

M: I spoke to Boris about it this summer. Then I'm meeting Dule tomorrow. He will get me in touch with that man Kerleta; he has a record company in London called Cosmic Sounds. They focus on Serbian jazz. Now 'Jazz' is very broadly understood in this case. In that context classical Jazz is barely being played these days – things that Darkwood Dub play can be called Jazz conditionally. What (Coxless Pair) did, they played in a London club called 'Plastic People' which I'm trying to find but doesn't appear on any of the listings because it is an underground club, a proper one. Boris told me that he had a better experience there than in that Serbian club (Zoo bar) because the English have digged their music better. So there is a chance to bridge that so called cultural barrier.

Q: You know what's quite interesting. I've started focusing on electronic music a few years ago. I'm saturated with guitars and if I listen top anything it has to be really special and even then in moderation. While this other stuff I still have to like it but I can play it in a loop it doesn't burden me. And I don't believe that the only things that you can sell in the West are confined to Kusturica, Zabranjeno Pushenje or Bregoric.

M: Yes

Q: Or Salijevic and that scum from Guča. I can't believe that people react to THAT only: Here you can like one of the Orbital's records but not the other. End. I like this one, I don't like that one.

M: And at the end of the day you don't care where they are from.

Q: Sure, you're not that interested in that. It's true that the Mecca for that is in England from Future Sound of London Orbital... and Aphex Twin they're all from there, not to mention what I've managed to get Amon Tobin, and 'ethno-synth' and all that because I love Arabic music, that's true magic to me; all that from the Middle East, to North Africa, to India. I'm totally mad about it – just make a good mix and I'll fall on my bum. So I don't think only that can be sold, I think that corrosion can sell something too, too find an appropriate audience, at least 1000 people who would but that disc.

M: That *is* the thing. IN fact you can't expect to create an appeal for mass audiences.



Q: Yet they could find their own place. Even before with the band's previous generation: Leb I Sol at CBGB... after all maybe even there at CBGB they played in front of 20 Americans.. well before the Balkan filth, before Kusturica and Bregovic.

INAUDIBLE

M: That *is* the problem, some kind of an obstacle perhaps. Because I remember BBC Radio 3 oriented to classical music, some time after midnight, dead of night, they had an ethno programme where they played – totally thrilled by them – Bulgarian clarinet, players, Bosnian moaning and such – Bregovic. You should have heard the presenter how she melted speaking of him, Bregovic's recordings from Greece. And all of that was comin from places surrounding Serbia; Serbia wasn't mentioned because all of this was happening in 1999. And the things that are sold now, the things that are accepted are the same 'oh dear, how exotic they are' all that unfortunate history of ours in the past ten years; that is all so very interesting. Nobody speaks of any urban music styles. I think that they are the root of the problem because nobody has the perception – that any urban music exists, that the scene is strong here.

Q: That is the evidence that certain *non-popular* music coming from other places ... are presented at the Ring Ring (festival) When something really good crops up, that packs 'Rex'. I remember 1997 Ring Ring festival which was *brilliant*, I remember two American geezers totally fascinated by Lajko Felix. That's also when those Japanese guys came, 'Ground Zero'<sup>1</sup> and the others.... It was placed in a framework of a festival, half the audience were the blasé snobs, but the reactions, 'Ground Zero' everyone is listening to it now, it is known people have their records, serious stuff. And that sense that's the same kind of production we're talking about. So if fucking 'Ground Zero' from fucking Japan made it in fucking Serbia, (something like 0.01 per cent of the population though) – but I can tell you of the names of at least ten people who have their album. If those kids from Pozarevac, who mentioned 'Ground Zero' in the closing credits of their film... We had a great 'trip'; Mikrob accidentally bought a tape from some Gypsies at the local grebe market –

some kind of release, well dodgy, the geezer calls himself 'Čita'<sup>2</sup>, he's got a moustache –

M: I've heard of it, Gule told me.

The conversation is interrupted. QQ briefly speaks with a friend.

QQ: Gule left us (laughs). He is now the editor of the 'Beorama'. It might not be the same record. The thing is, that bloke (Čita): we've concluded that he's an Albanian Gypsy – The King of the Kings – who released the tape for his sponsor Halip. The guy plays a synth, he does weddings and all that mad stuff, and he records it all, you know. And all of that is released in 'Halip-production: 10-20 tapes feature in that production, some by Čita, some by people called Merxhan, madness mate, it's super – a mixture of Albanian Gypsy and Serbian 'melos'. The music is *such a mix* that it sounds like India. Totally. He winds, he moans in singing. Čita is true hardcore. That *is* underground. Those guys, Salijevic, and the Guča crowd, that's mainstream now. Some girls came over from Holland the other day, like they went to Guc, met Salijevic, he proposed to them. I mean mad shit, madness, you know. But Čita, he's the king. We were even 'tripping' – should we suggest Bojan Đorđević To invite Čita to the Ring Ring festival. And he's like 'no' that's too trippy. By the way Čita would come – my arse! He's obviously doing serious cash. We would have to pay him seriously when the big guys come from abroad. But what Čita (Čita) is doing, that's some kind of a mix. God knows what it is, how to describe it..total madness. The music is totally something; and you have a smoke, then trip, madness!

M: (laughs throughout the last few sentences)

QQ: Genius. When the first tape appeared I pinched it from Vasa who had it first and kept it on our premises in Dom Omladine, played it constantly. God knows what the neighbours thought ...Čita was bemoaning from my stereo, 10 days without end. That's what is worth listening; not Guča and all that. Guča is a name, it was, it passed, Feat Sejdic ended his career. Balkan Band is playing Berlin, Low-Fi screening – and the guest is Feat Sejdic They're . screening films by (Kusturica). But that's the way it is. That's the way they

---

<sup>1</sup> No connection whatsoever with New York events (attacks), this is a band from Tokyo involved in the international ethno/fusion/world music scene.

perceive us. A total mish-mash. But that's the way it is. To return to the topic – I don't believe that only that 'madness' can sell, Gypsy stuff and 'No Smoking Band' (new primitives). That's French guy (from the cultural centre) I played him things and he goes 'this is good stuff'.

(Another interruption. QQ speaks to someone)

Q: ...I gave him some music to listen to for himself. But how to place it (how to promote it), that is...

M: The problem is – from what I know from stories ...there – people who work over there, in the music industry, not even they can easily break through the system, there's a whole system of gatekeepers that prevent you from coming through the 'door'. Simply one of the big companies, I think it's Universal (BMG) that has decided not to sign new bands for now until they can squeeze out the profits from the ones that are already signed I've read it in the papers the other day. Big money is in the game, and that's it. And then the question is under what labelling, in what packaging to sell those things (e.g. music). You'll either find a niche narrow area where people exist – potential fans of exactly that kind of music (UG) and then you can say, "well here's exactly someone who comes from Serbia, incidentally, and they're doing something similar to what you're doing". Or to go to the old 'vulgar variant', like 'here you have what is produced and listened to in Serbia'. I'm saying 'vulgar' because that would attract *their* blasé characters, ICA for example and they view these things like something 'exotic'.

Q: The same thing applies to CRSN. They functioned as Zadruga (Unison) and they promoted themselves in places like that, elite venues in fact. When Zadruga went to Amsterdam, that's the story. 'Serious matter' or somewhere in Bulgaria, in Plovdiv. IN the same way a snobby crowd had gathered. Fuck that. They would not even tell someone 'here listen to this'. I have that feeling. I don't know. Music and film function like that. That is how Bregovic sold himself; that is how 'Zabraujeno Pusenje' promoted at the end of the day, through Kustarica – again. Goran Vejvoda Did music for Enki Bilal, he managed to do something for himself, solo, in France. Some theatrical plays.

---

<sup>2</sup> Pronounced as 'Cheetah'; no reference to the wild breed of African cat, his nickname relates to the Chimpanzee 'friend' of Tarzan, from the pre-WWII films featuring Johnny Weismuller.

M: Precisely because you are doing film that is what I find interesting, because in several e-mails I told you that 'The Promising has' –

QQ: Yes, yes.

M: Firstly, because of his name and surname (the main character in the 1980 film was called S.M) the whole thing could be quite interesting. It was extremely interesting when Studio B (TV) played the film in June 1991. ON the other hand, that film is one of the more accurate representations of a Belgrade mentality at the start of the eighties and the change – someone hits him in the head with an ore, and he becomes a punk. That stuff. And by the way, the music was –

QQ: That's it.

M: - very relevant. Now, I've seen 'Munje' and I'm not too delighted.

Q: That's got nothing to do with anything. As the other one *makes sense*. You may like it or not, but it *makes sense*. And this (Munje) is nonsense.

M: They have *extracted* some things that were happening in reality, even some stories that they have retold, in fact tales of the city that I saw and heard pf, packaged into 'first Serbian Drum n Bass'. I don't know whether D 'n' B is really happening. I wouldn't really agree that it's really happening but because of the strong influence from B92, and they promote and prefer it, I think this film is creating a false image. And I would like if it were *possible* to make a project like that – film is multi-medial by its very nature – that would at the same time cover music and street culture and then it might be –

QQ: The same thing is the following. A link between what you're saying and what we talked about before about Corrosion. One of their tracks features in 'Munje' they are not credited for it. The scene when *they* enter the club...when they climb the stairs. Stolen from them, badly mixed in – and of course it was not credited at the end (of the film). And everything was like, 'can we use it, of course you can', sure they'll be recognised we said OK then at the end, the credits go: 'Music: Eyesburn, E Play', what not, and about CRSN, neither on the soundtrack nor on the credits, that is the story. Yes, Because they're not B92.

M: Like the book 'This is Serbia Calling', having known who he spoke to, it's good. Because he approached things with relative objectivity, having known what information was available. What he was told around town, he collected it

only from – he was introduced only to the crowd that was ‘acceptable’. The... it turns out that only one station and only one group of *people*, B92, did something. And all of us – we simply – we do not exist.

QQ: Yes

M: One of the reasons I am doing this is to present facts, to balance things out.

QQ: And to demystify B92.

M: Yes.

QQ: Yes. I am working with them in relation to this programme. And yes, they do meet us half way. But definitely, I know, I still feel when I go there to work, that things are not right yet, I feel like a ‘stranger’. Of course there are people who like us more and the ones that don’t. Cirica is filming us every now and then.

M: As with any organisation – you have all sorts of things, layers upon layers.

QQ: ...We go there, do the programme and then go home. And whom I like to see outside work, I do. We meet somewhere else and chat. I don’t know... I would agree... But I think they’ve lost a lot, definitely from October 5<sup>th</sup>, and even before that... Their ratings have dropped. Chaotic television programme, though it’s visually compact, stylistically rounded, jungles and that, in fact the linkages within the programme... I don’t know if people listen to their morning news simply through a force of habit.

M: Well, that’s it. My radio was always tuned to 92.5 MHz. But I was often tempted to turn it off. The degree of bias with which they’d glorify themselves used to annoy me occasionally.

QQ: That’s a little bit... yes; that was always felt, strongly. I used to pop in there, long, long time ago, when Brakus started his show. *It was quite sectarian*. Now don’t play this recording around town, *destroy this tape (jokingly)*.

M: (laughs)

QQ: *If it falls in their hands...*

M: Don’t worry, I’d be the first victim then (laughs)

QQ: ... and then I thought, who cares. Who's OK is OK with me, and others... *I will always watch them from afar, as they keep 'selling fog'*<sup>3</sup>. But there are OK people there, really. For example, one of the chief editors of TVB92, Mishko, he's good, gives people a chance, he even might be a bit too lenient. But he's a decent man.

M: Yes.

QQ: One of the reasons why their programme is uninteresting is that everything is done with respect to broadcasting rights... they have to pay for licensed series...

M: Those are the two things which emerge from what we just said. One are authors' rights – I think it's going to be a big problem for Serbians to get used to this... in the west, they're not just respected but if you get caught red-handed [with copyright infringement] you can do time. You can't –

QQ: ...fool around.

M: ...fool around, yes... pirates especially... and on the other hand, the other thing is, *which channel can be open to promote things in the West. The only such channel that exists now is B92*. For years they had very good contacts -

QQ: ... well the only ones...

M: Only them, yes. Now, it might be possible, if the government started to think in the long term, they would understand that cultural policy often has longer consequences than daily politics.

QQ: Well of course.

M: If we eventually opened a *good cultural centre in each of the big world cities*, and such a cultural centre might finance and promote it. At the end of the day, that is very important on the state level.

QQ: The problem is that... B92 had an even greater potential, they had a *real strength*, to make it much bigger *than those MTV awards*.

M: 'Free Your Mind' and that.

QQ: 'Free Your Mind', yes. OK, "we're working to promote ourselves, *but, we're helping, establishing contacts*"; *not just, "we are working"*, but: *"someone else is contributing too"*. That is what they didn't do. Of course, it is normal for you to push your own things, if you establish contacts. But you

---

<sup>3</sup> Serbian colloquialism for self-publicity and/or fraud.

don't have to say, "*me and me only*". You know, that's not... but again, that was the political moment, "give money *to me only and nobody else*". Imagine having a cultural centre and then, one day you bring over KUD 'Abrasevic' [folklore society], and on another occasion, you bring CRSN.

M: And of course that would mean that someone well-motivated works –

QQ: Of course, as here, with the French Cultural Centre. There's a guy, a friend, who promotes... from Chechov at BITEF<sup>4</sup>, to those two guys that played Rex, then showing films round Serbia... promoting France, theatre, or music, or... *he didn't bring Frenchmen with berets, baguettes and garlic to play the accordion*. That's the story. We are still like, "Milos Sobajic exhibition in Paris, Dragos Kalajic talking out of his arse..."

M: Heavy.

QQ: That's the thing. The other day, this chick from NIN approached me to talk about the relationship between institutions and us, independents. So she talked to CRSN, Striper, what not, I then told her, not knowing what to talk about any more, I told her that Low-Fi still functions as a *guerrilla, based on the enthusiasm of several people*; until government's cultural policy is defined and the culture becomes at least as important as sport, and until people get to understand that culture can achieve much more than... not just National Theatre, National Museum...

M: 'High culture'

QQ: ...yes... that an edition of Striper magazine, is equally merited as anything else... until then, nothing will change... there was some talk of collaboration with Dom Omladine (DOB); you know, as SKC would not take lo-fi under its wing saying 'here's the editing room, here's the equivalent, do your work, no they won't but they'll say, here's the theatre go on make a screening 'that's all that can happen.'

QQ: So until they say here's a 3 by 3 (m) you have an edit suite, you have phone access, you don't need more than that, then you'll know that this will pay because some of these programmes will be shown through cultural centres and all that and some contacts with other cult centres such as DOB, that's another thing y'know. You go to some marginal DOB (cultural centre)

and say 'we've got 50 programmes, choose what you like...with that kind of story....but of course until that happens: that will be once Lecic stops turning up at the opening of a festival of French film (BG) with his shirt drawn out, in a suit with his shirt hanging out of his trousers, hands in pockets, standing next to the French ambassador... and they say, unshaved...I didn't see...at the end with his arm around Serges Trifunovic, and left...you know representing this country...and St Protic and his behaviour in America, 'This is my house' well it's not your house, you motherfucker, I don't give a shit that you're clever and educated and intellectual

M: Intelligence and education do not...

QQ: ...mean good manners

M: They wrote about you in the LA times.

QQ: I've just found out that the LA Times has the second largest circulation of all papers in America. They wrote in the Moviemaker that's another amazing journal, concerning that micro-cinema network.

M: Microcinema is a big thing there (UK) There was a programme on Channel 4 which is the most avant-garde TV channel there, where Ewan McGregor was talking of the whole microcinema movement, internationally with the internet networks and that, you know, no budget producers

QQ: There's loads of that. England and America are really...

M: So you guys are there in fact, leading this story among people who are making this quiet revolution on a planetary world level while nobody thinks of saying 'This is useful, we need this, this will pay to me the thief (media entrepreneurs in S) or it will bring advantage to 'me, the State' I'm totally convinced that the English care about promoting their culture in America. If someone turns up in an LA Times article someone would be there to phone him up and say OK we've got something for you, as you say an office and a phonenumber...I mean that is yet to be built over here

QQ: Imagine someone gives us, and I calculated the money, well what we need to tell the US: There make a small theatre, video theatre with a good video beam from all the different video formats from tape to CD technically superior, say Dolby surround, mega sound, to have I don't know 150 seats;

---

<sup>4</sup> BITEF is an, once world renown, International Theatre Festival (Beogradski Internacionalni



man that would be crammed. I've been thinking whoever comes over here, we would always cover it with some programmes, whoever would want to show something, they need a good screening we would make it an open house for kids to show their film, they do their film like half an hour or so....to make it not just like any lo-fi rigidly closed shop, low-fi is giving itself exclusive promotion... no, when we have some programmes, ok, when not, we arrange all in advance and it'll be Zika for a discount price, or we agree to pay the organisation costs and these would be some kids that make something, bring their mates along and have a full theatre and you can do that three evenings a month...I don't know who shows his work or there's a seminar arranged. OK we want to watch films in a good environment something like that...but as I was saying, I mean after 30 seconds, I realised that you need 300,000DM (£100,000) for one, minimum, and that next to these shitty cinemas y'know, who'd afford that.....

(DIGRESSION)

QQ: When I lived in France I found out what good sound means, 50 theatres in Paris and I knew what I was getting...

(DIGRESSION)

M: You need a good foundation for any sort of promotion.

QQ: You need cash and you need press (PR). People need to start thinking 'if something pays off in 5 years, it's fine, but here it's take the money and run. I'm selling something I'm gonna build the price 200 per cent so I can take the dosh now, cos you'll close me down before..

M: That's why so many clubs have gone down, including the last phase of Academy when they introduced whisky that nobody had or could afford

QQ: Now Sila was playing for two days and that French guy was like 'c'mon, c'mon, let's go' and the beer was...

M: And you build the retail price, not 100 per cent but 200 per cent without any economic justification and they would have made more money, so these things that appear minor in fact undermine the scene.

QQ: The State itself.

---

Teatarski Festival), held in Belgrade every autumn since the late Sixties.

M: Why would I go to a party if I'm made to pay excruciating prices to enter and drink, I'll be less interested, if I'm less interested people that do that, music etc have a lesser chance to succeed, here, if they don't make it here, how will they find the strength to try anything elsewhere (abroad)

QQ: This state was ... I mean systematically destroyed you know it yourself creating yourself an opportunity and if you don't take it then don't give me any shit, you know. If you work if you make an effort you'll make something regardless of an uncertain future

M: Yes, yes, great competition, uncertain future but if you approach competitors from a right angle then there is a chance..

QQ: That you can pull it off. Here a small; number of people have managed in some strange way to do that it's all like where do you fit in, strange scheme with channels, how and what.....I'd like that, what you told me about that article and that but you know in the next five years of our lives something has to be done in life you have to stand somewhere I don't want to at the age of 35 you know think 'Where should I start, what do I do?' That scares me, that even if that happens next year, it could be too late for many it's not late for the ones younger than us, but again we are that fucked up generation who had it in 1991 and through the nineties and we're gonna have it again, it seems, 'cos we were for one in the army and it caught us during studies, all that shit, the nicest part of growing up and now it's trouble, employment, nerves, and it's again catching us first, not that we are now this Generation Y, that's gonna, poor guys, drink all of that, at the end they'll take our pensions away - not that but... I don't think that people are gonna make the same mistake twice. I too have been thinking fuck it, I can beat it from here. It's true, the trouble's happened (9/11), now the West is strange and uncertain too but again...

M: The trick is that they've got to work, they suppress it and they're not gonna allow that to distract them...

QQ: I get it. Hope that we talked about something that's gonna help you.

M: Sure.

## Appendix Eight

Interview with Darko Matkovic 'Dzambasov'; 10/11/2001

M: here it is, you know: I will start from one question and we will then develop a natural line of conversation. That question is connected to the very topic of what I am examining – and the working theme examines the conditions for successful promotion of Belgrade underground music in the United Kingdom<sup>1</sup>. And, you know, I had frequently encountered misconceptions when I spoke about it to people in the UK. Often, their idea of Serbian underground music was connected to some ethnic stuff... or 'we didn't know that you had an urban music scene' or people thought of something related to the Eurovision contest. While on the other hand, *many people here felt dissatisfied with the term 'underground'*. And I would therefore start from the question, to what extent is the term 'Serbian underground music' justified.

Dz: I don't know... any term is useable. So we can agree on such a neutral term; if you would call it... I don't know... if it had a *title* for which... 'underground', in itself implies perhaps some kind of ... activity which is not that connected to institutions, not supported by the state, some kind of development outside of *those regular streams*. And that is the kind of terminology which is *supposedly outdated*... maybe this is not the most fortunate of names, but, that is subject to discussion. I think that's OK; the same as when someone tells me [about] 'Rock'. Why not call it 'Tock'? ...and, er... the term is a bit notorious here because it is interpreted as an artificial need to make something 'off' at any cost, so musicians complain because they would like to do what they do and not be 'off' and so on... anyone would find it more appealing not to be outside of those circles of doosh, to have a career, because in fact, unfortunately, *over here almost everyone is underground*. In that 'pop-rock' production you have only five or six people who make a living out of music. And that literally includes Bora Djordjevic, Bajaga, Cane, Anton, Djule from 'Van Gogh' and Nele Karajlic. No-one else.

---

<sup>1</sup> Since 'promotion' was identified as only one of the aspects of the phenomenon and the scene needed to be narrowed down, focus had shifted towards the Belgrade underground scene.

All the others are 'hobbyists' ... regardless of whether they have videos, promotion, even good sales...

M: Which can be connected to economic facts.

Dz: I mean, the disastrous thing was that ... generally, I understand that a lot of that industry in England is based on the commercial and over here, say, in the past two years, people had always... not all, but some, had to make some money by playing where the cash was invested by the state, political parties, or the City Council. So they had no opportunity to promote themselves in the right way; they had the media but their 'weight' wasn't measured. If you go to a concert you ask yourself, can this band make a living out of music? It can, or only if it's partaking in an election campaign.

M: Yes. When the institutions get some money out.

Dz: In fact that is bad because nothing is completed, but everything is based on that kind of money that pour in from other sides and not directly from sales, from concerts, from airplay on the media... videos were not paid for, by television stations, royalties were not paid or to such a miserable extent, that one cannot live from it. Money from radio airplay was also pathetic –

M: Sabljari was complaining to me. He said that, for 'Dza ili Bu' they had received literally, in writing, 'five performances on Studio B', for a whole year. And the money they received from that was something like 1,600 Dinars. That is a question I consider very relevant, related to the possibilities that will open – possibly – with the integration of Serbia into world trade, the question of authors' rights.

Dz: That is, in fact the most important issue and the greatest problem in the country. Two things that affect me personally; one is not related to this topic, *denationalisation, the question of material protection, and the other is the question of intellectual property*. Not just authors' rights through music, but in general; because, without that, there is no chance for any talk of integration. Someone talked about it on B92 (TV), an English guy, I think he's from some record company, he says, "you don't have that system", you see, "of copyright protection, there's a lot of piracy here", so *nobody would come to play in a country where his CDs are pirated*. And that is logical.

M: Now, as you mentioned B92; it is very interesting that many people I spoke to, even the ones that have direct contacts and work with them... suggested

in that – and of course, the people from B92 wouldn't agree – that there is a sort of monopolism in their organisation. Also, they boycott what ever isn't their own. That is also related to my experience, working at the Academy<sup>2</sup>.

Dz: Well, yes; but, there are so many media here that anyone could develop own sphere of interest. *Rather, there are too many media*. And they are a bit better resourced so it is easier for them to reach the things they're interested in. They were clearly interested in those bands they released, in video production and the like. The question of monopoly is probably related to the fact that they only perform domestic music that they have released. Well that is the practice on some other media. But *unfortunately this is does not produce a very good role model*<sup>3</sup>. The thing is, that no media – only public television provides some status to the people working there – related to that, why does Serbia have more media than almost anywhere in Europe?

M: Yes. British ordinary [terrestrial] television has four-five channels.

Dz: Four channels in London; probably – I don't know if Channel Four is seen in Scotland but there you have something else to replace it.

M: The previous question might be connected to the context in which – I heard, for example, from a friend that [B92's] release, 'Belgrade Coffee Shop' CD has appeared in HMV [stores] in London. Because, in the past ten years, they were the *only ones* with strong connections with the media abroad, they are in fact, filtering –

Dz: Yes.

M: ...what parts of our production would be promoted –

Dz: Yes. Well, I think it is like that everywhere. More or less. But, erm... but people from outside are interested in what is represents the *local, like ethno-music and so on*, and perhaps the exchange on that level, that kind of contact is what [B92] does, you see, and can place far easier than – whatever exists there – they probably could not have sold 'Munje' soundtrack, Darkwood Dub

---

<sup>2</sup> This is where the reflexive methodology had to be applied. The author's past experiences could have contaminated the data, so this process had to be controlled. Bias was countered through reflexivity.

<sup>3</sup> The interviewee had been very reluctant to fully express his opinion on B92. He reacted negatively to researcher's probing questions, having been concerned about his past frictions with B92 (mentioned elsewhere in Reflexive Participation data) and choosing to keep a low profile on the matter. However, Matkovic voiced a far sharper criticism of B92 once the recording device was off.

and that... while as far as I remember that [Belgrade Coffee Shop] is electronic music, 'acid'...

M: Well, there's a bit of that...

Dz: *House, House, that's what I meant.*

M: House, and occasionally, some ambient, and stuff like that.

Dz: I heard some of these things. But... they have in fact, as far as I can remember, I don't know if that was directly B92 or was it a licensed release in France, that record. And that functions according to market criteria.

M: Which is totally alright.

Dz: If another record company doesn't have those contacts and the ability to place it – why shouldn't they do it? Obviously, those people [in France] get their returns, [meaning] that they *can sell it*, that it has a certain quality.

M: Yes.

Dz: Something that is close to their audience, which is OK.

M: Yes. Then, in fact –

Dz: I wouldn't call that a monopoly. That is OK, it is competition. Whatever they get as information, they take and see if they can sell... I don't think anyone would have taken any money to release it...

M: Things don't function that way abroad.

Dz: That is the case only over here, where... I recently found on Bajaga's album cover, that he thanks the Ministry of Culture... and these are the so-called gigs... most of these people that would normally have to pay fat taxes that would go to the Ministry of Culture or the City Secretariat for Culture for classical music, ethno-music, experimental music – all that goes into the *claws of big entertainment [estrada]*. I don't like that at all, but that is the practice, ever since those election campaigns, but there is no reason for that to continue after 5<sup>th</sup> October... money is going to things that represent no quality for both local and international standards... if they make money, it's all right, but you can't *give them money while musicians from the National Theatre cannot afford to change the strings on their cellos for two years.*

M: Yes... that is, since my topic is, the part that interests me now, based on the possible potential to widen that channel of communication, to place our music in the world – that is connected to two things I'd like to examine further.

One is that 'ethno' thing which – for a number of reasons – for one, it is a world trend...

Dz: Yes.

M: ...generally speaking...

Dz: Well, that international music industry has gone bust, so they have to use, constantly, those ethno motives, which haven't won out, various rhythms and sounds, Madonna sings in Sanskrit, I don't know... something has to be done to refresh that production, which is staggering. You have all the technological means but ...no ideas, I think that this is the case. Secondly, the interest for something original – I think that music was far more original 40, 30, 20 years ago, and interesting, more progressive, far more progressive than today. Millions of copies were sold of some music that was considered 'artistic', say, Jimmy Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, even punk... all with an artistic streak. It is *boring*. *If you can't stand pop music, you find a guy from Africa, Macedonia, Russia, or... there's a lot of that music, quite good music, too.* And it does overlap with popular music... things, which are not totally ethno... developed from some kind of 'trubadur' [mediaeval travelling musicians] music, unconnected to the electronic media. That is interesting.

M: Yes. I assume that this ongoing process... in the developed countries... when a very small number of global media corporations is being consolidated, there were 6, then 5, there will probably be less now. They make both the hardware and the product, which is [consumed] through it.

Dz: Yes, yes.

M: So you have Sony, the most obvious example, from film, music, games... and independent labels are decreasing in numbers, while –

Dz: Yes.

M: - they're often just subsidies of the big ones. That worries me, in the whole context, because the whole process is a closed circuit.

Dz: Well, that is all related to 'big politics'. Globalisation, I guess; less and less airlines, less and less beverage companies... all that follows a pattern, but, here, the question of art is the borderline question... Some of these things lean onto the spiritual plane. In relation to publishing, music and cinema, that [process] *is not good at all*. But as far as I know all these big companies have

a number of sub-labels, doing all sorts of music, under the patronage of a big 'house'.

M: Do you think that there is a potential, in current conditions, to – regarding something that isn't 'ethno' –

Dz: Yes.

M: - I mean... not only Bregovic, who flirts with ethno...

Dz: That is also a *pop-form*.

M: Yes.

Dz: I think, since he had accomplished to do music for a couple of world-renown films, he got an entry into show business. That is only partially ethno, it is more like a collage. "Give us some Bulgarians, some Buzuki... this and that"... but outside *that story*, what could be presented *there*... that is on the same level as that compilation [BG Coffee Shop]... we're talking about music that is ...the music that came from the West – we had Jazz and Rock for a long time – how would that experience... apply to place this music in America or England... there are countries that constantly succeed in that. Look at Swedes, they always have –

M: Yes.

Dz: From ultra-pop, to some Rock projects... there is another problem, the question of globalisation means that a majority of those bands perform in English. Which has its limitations... in our case, it could lead into *banalisation*. I don't think that the point is to make someone *understand precisely what you are saying*, so as to listen to your English, but to do it on an *intuitive level of communication*. Like when you travel somewhere where you don't speak the language and they don't speak English... communication goes beyond the strict... because I heard a story that people work in English in order to sell it abroad, however the problem is that the whole thing is a bit late. A trend that comes from America bears its first fruit here five years later, music is packaged in a similar way - and all that is sketchy. On the other hand, people cannot be satisfied locally – unless they pay attention to the meaning of lyrics. It is hard enough to write in your own language, let alone English. That is more of a simulation.

M: There is a problem of nuances. Something that makes sense to someone here, someone from an original subculture over there might find ludicrous.



Dz: Yes. There were cases like that... a friend of mine who lives in NY, played some stuff made here... when it comes to Reggae and English language in general, that sounds a bit funny. It's not even European, like when you recognise German or Swedish, it is kind of clear, but this is a kind of improvisation that we might find interesting out of ignorance. But if you go there [NY etc.] – it might be counterproductive. However, that compilation [BG Coffee Shop] is mainly instrumental, here and there you have something... it is not emphasised. While traditionally, though this is secular music, this tradition leans on vocal performances, more than on instruments... in a civilisational sense, Western church music features instruments... while our tradition... but in Belgrade that has changed to instruments though you have a parallel tradition of choirs... that is also interesting... one does not know what all these changes could bring...

(short break)

M: There is something which is very hard to prove and unfortunately I cannot deal with it now. I had a video that I did with Pedja and Manja, and the song seemingly sounded like Bossanova. But when I sped it up in editing, it sounded like something that reminded me of 'kolo' [Serbian traditional village dance music] or 'Becarac' [its Slavonian equivalent]. They probably did it subconsciously but I don't know.

Dz: I must admit that I never, never shun away from... these influences. Because it is not the point to strictly avoid something; those influences that represent clichés... like in poetry, where someone expresses himself ...more openly than in everyday life... about metaphysical matters than in common speech.

M: ...two important things necessary for the promotion of what is done here and there, where they are saturated with such produce... a recognisable musical 'language', not... Euro-rock, but a deep understanding of that music and creating something that is similar... on the other hand... a degree of originality without which it would be uninteresting.

Dz: Yes.

M: In that sense...

Dz: Almost every song or any phenomenon represents a unique story... the problem is here *caused by the media. I think that is the thing that ruined the*

*whole situation; almost worse than in politics... the scene is a bit rudimentary because of that.* First, the media draw people's attention from their everyday troubles and from the need to seek... even if such a programme were to compete on the market, if someone had to pay subscription for something like that, BK, Pink, any of those stations – that would spell *disaster for them...* but the scene has become a bit rudimentary because of... people do not go out because of material issues, perhaps, but even more because of the media, which dictate everything from above. I think that the scene is weaker at the moment than three, even more so than five years ago, and so on... it's stagnating. Politics have also made an impact, not so much in relation to music but to art and video-production; in painting, the centres of power are the ones that dictate the scene. Not in relation to stylistic preference but... those centres of power can almost limit an artist – *in what space will he move and work.* Now, a change of government happened, so *even those two poles* are not there any more, 'national and international'. Now it came to this that only international factors exist, on several levels, and this or that still remaining, institutions like the National Theatre... What I said depends on some national heritage, while everything else is so outwardly open, but *I'm not sure that they are as free to do as they please, dealing with, say, global matters...* they deal with local issues but on a global level. That is half-dictated or dictated, 'how should you observe the world'. In that sense I am dissatisfied that the scene is stagnating because there are less and less possibilities to promote anything, if you aren't in some kind of scam; because there is no open market competition...

M: Yes. You mentioned the media and going out in one context and that interests me, because at the time when I was leaving the country, there *were clubs, and there were places for live music.* It seems that there is much less of that now. The city has transformed into a city of cafés. Which is probably bad.

Dz: That is indolence... not open enough, not spiced enough with any kind of content, no thematic evenings where you can concentrate on certain contents... gathering... where video-works would be viewed... not enough of it lately. Maybe there are places where gigs could be arranged... there were more such spaces before and it was understood that such things are done... now you have clubs where not a single live performance happened... Earlier,

in Slovenia, well before the war, they invested in subculture, philosophy, there was a continuity of development... since they are such a small country it is probably saturated with all sorts of contents from outside, they are open enough so you can watch all sorts of things every day. Foreign bands, bands from former Yugoslavia, and all that...

M: That is a very interesting matter because I read some sociological analyses on eastern Germany. They had punk and rock bands, both supported by the state, but they were constantly against the system, in a similar way, perhaps, to what happened here in the Eighties. And they helped a lot to the movement to break down the wall... when the west German and other media stepped in, the scene was wiped out through the saturation of information... to what extent would it be productive and to what extent counter-productive, when... the big media companies step into this market?

Dz: I think that – on the one hand, that would be good. I have heard some stories about it... I think that the status of people working in the media, dealing with culture and subcultures, would be solved. That would be OK.

(Telephone rings. The conversation is interrupted).

Dz: That is one thing. On the other hand, I think that every country that wishes to keep its sovereignty has to have its national industry, to keep its institutions which provide it with a character... that is going to be very difficult over here... I agree that people should be open enough to apply the experiences of others but not to the extent to which they would be applied without scrutiny because the state would lose its character. I don't know how bad are such experiences on the East, but –

M: That doesn't mean that it would be the case here.

Dz: Of course. I think that now... I like that people come from abroad, bit by bit. It is unfortunate that there is no guarantee... there are smaller, interesting bands that come over here, having toured around Europe... but I think that if you have too wide a choice, you could get confused... but, I don't know. We will see. I am not an optimist because I see that there is no vision as to how to arrange this *state, what is its potential, etc...* transport and agriculture, and I cannot see that something will be done about *this*.

M: Since you mentioned the state; I have no reason to believe at the moment that any part of government would be doing something about this, while a

friend of my from Holland does his research focusing on Dutch cultural policy, where they have a strong industry and the state promotes it even further; wishing to preserve what is authentic even though music could be performed in English.

Dz: That is the case.

M: Can you imagine a possible future, where your works and your publishing company could draw the attention of cultural departments which would promote that abroad?

Dz: I don't know – things do not look like that. I never had the impression that this was possible. At all. Out of all of the three systems that I have survived – none of them seemed to do that. The previous government had totally neglected the notion of maintaining culture, thinking that it's a minority, but they paid for that mistake. The vast voting machinery in the cities was orientated towards international culture.

## Appendices Nine to Twelve: Introductory notes

### 1. The interviews with Goran Nikolic Orge and Vladimir Jeric – Appendices 9, 10 and 11:

The problem arising from those two interviews in terms of translation relates to the idiosyncratic communication style of both interviewees. A specific terminology, long and awkward sentences, the use and [mis]appropriation of sociological and philosophical terms, have all contributed to the enormous difficulty in translating the interviews in their entirety. Because of all that, the most relevant and salient details of interviews have been identified, highlighted, and placed within their appropriate position in the main body of the Serbian transcript. These parts of all three texts (two verbal interviews and one e-mail) have been *highlighted in italics and underlined* for clarity.

These highlights appear on the following pages: pp. 498, 504, 505, 506, 510 (Appendix 9); pp. 515, 516, 524 (Appendix 10); and p. 534 (Appendix 11).

### 2. Excerpts from the interviews with Boris Mladenovic, 'Domin8r', Nikola Savic, 'Laki', Boza Podunavac, and Zeljko Kerleta – Appendix 12

This Appendix consists of reconstructed conversations with several key individuals involved with the Belgrade underground music scene. Apart from the conversation with Zeljko Kerleta – which was not recorded, but notes were made – all others are interviews, which suffered from long digressions (B. Podunavac) and poor audibility, due to background noise (others). Elements of these conversations are combined with the notes from my reflexive diary.

## Appendix Nine

Interview with Goran Nikolic "Orge" – "Neocekivana sila" [Unexpected Force];  
08/11/2001

O: Stvarno, dakle taj digitalni fasizam je mnogo zajebana stvar (jebote) zato sto ne postoji prakticno definisan prag drazi; vec ti regujes na neku senzaciju gde je detektujes kao takvu; znas, kao nedozvoljnenu, razumes, nego sve je ovo kao u nekom podsvesnom, pod-, pod-, nivou ispod praga drazi; znas, tako da je jasno da je tesko razviti neku estetiku koja odstupa od uobicajene. (###) Nasuprot tome postoji neka opsta tendencija uravnotezenja svih kulturno-umetnickih modela, znas, zbog potreba, prosto, komercijane isplativosti i i te neke imanentne ekspanzionisticke prirode samog establimenta,

M: da

O: ... medijskog, jasno, kpiras

M: da

O: ... da, tako da imamo dve kontradiktorne pojave, cini mi se, jer to je to, ono, potpuno prihvatanje svih muzickih jezika i- u jedan znas, a s druge strane, opet nesto sto je nedozvoljeno - mh, ne moze da bude plasirano. A sta bi to bilo nedozvoljeno, opet ne moze da se definise tako lako; znas ja bi to nazvao mh, mh, mh, ipak je u pitanju - sve zajedno jedan duh vremena, cini mi se

M: da

O: ... znas, koji ... uzmes recimo muziku pre 15 godina, I jasno ti je da je pre 15 godina bila jedna (stvar?) ... potpuno drugi senzibilitet je bio u pitanju, a sad - potpuno drugi senzibilitet.

M: da

O: I sta je jos interesantno: nekako te ideje, avangardne ideje, dakle, od koje su dakle formulisane od pocetka veka (20?) pa na ovamo, dakle pocevsi sa onim Schoenberg-om,

M: aha, aha, da, da - atonalna muzika!

O: da, i ne samo atonalna, nego ona koja - on je valjda, njegove postavke su bile bitne, u tom smislu da je izjednacio po vrednosti sve parametre tona,

kapiras, od visine, do buke preko, sta ja znam, svih ostalih parametara, znas; tako da sad imamo tehnologiju koja omogucuje takav pristup, takav kreativni pristup. I, ali, za razliku, sta je interesantno, jos, ono, sto takav pristup dobija na, na, na ... mh, na razumljivosti, znas, za razliku recimo od njegovih kompozicija koje su teske, heavy, ovakve i onakve, sada imamo potpuno jednu scenu koja radi na tom kreativnom principu: dakle, ono 'upotrebi sve tonove, stavi ih u nekakav loop i kao dobices nesto sto je slusljivo

M: da, da

O: da, to je paradoks, misli, a, iz drugog razloga, jer ti na kraju krajeva, sve sto je repetativno mozes da dozivis kao pravilnu strukturu, jer ono, to potvrđuje samo sebe - to je ono, malo, perverzija u kojoj izvan cele price ostaje licnost kao takva, cini mi se. To se uklapa u pocetnu tezu o takozvanoj 'digitalnoj fasizaciji'. Kapiras, ti ostavljes gole, tehnoloski isproducirane, estetske postavke, bez licnog angazmana. To je totalna perverzija, jer ono kao, jer nemas nikakav, mh, nikakvu istinitu ... taj kvalitet istinitosti. Kapiras?

M: da

O: Svaka umetnost mora da bude, mh, potkrepljena sa nekakvim saznanjem istine, znas, inace je svaka umetnost prazna bez toga. Ne samo 'L'art pour l'art' kapiras, nego bukvalno, tvori jednu shizofrenu prazninu. Znas, ako ti budeš izlozen takvim strukturama koje ti nose neku ... prazne neke ideje, prazna struktura, forma, tebi se ono kao, bukvalno dusa prazni, i otvara za ko zna kakve sadrzaje - da se razumemo! I to je definitivna cinjenica.

Translation:

O: Every form of art has to be, mh, supported by some experience of Truth, y'know, or else- any form of art is void without it. Not just 'L'art pour l'art' y'see, but literally, it forms a Schizophrenic void. You know, if you were exposed to such structures which bring you some ... empty ideas, empty structure, form, your soul is being, sort of, literally emptied, and opened to – who knows what kinds of content – let's not mince our words! And that is a definitive fact.

M: Izvini ja sam samo smanjio ovo zato sto, zbog pozadinske buke.

O: ... to, to je jedna strana cele situacije. Znas. Ima ih jos nekoliko, koliko sam uspeo da skapiram, ali sad mi je pobeglo.

M: Zato bih se vratio, palo mi je na pamet nesto u vezi ovoga; moram da proverim ... ova masina me zbunjuje, napravljena je da bude user friendly ...

O: iscekiraj, iscekiraj

M: Tu si ti u jednom trenutku kad si pomenuo Schoenberg-a, znas, meni je pala neka asocijacija sa Schoenberg-om, zato sto, u stvari, ocajnicki pokusavam da povezem te mal' te ne suprotstavljene discipline. Citao sam jedan tekst u kome su neki bas psiholozi pokusavali da dokazu da atonalna muzika nije slusljiva po sebi, nego postoje, jednostavno, neki ono bioloski razlozi zbog kojih su harmonije - harmonije ...

O: Ne bioloski - matematicki. Pazi, kako bese ... ? Taman malo pre Bach-a ... Dobro, to je ono, ali potpuno indikativno za sve odnose tehnologija-kreacija. Taman pre Bach-a, znas neka dva matematicara su formulisala dobro temperovanu skalu, kapias, gde recimo imas neko odstupanje, ne mogu tacno da se setim, ali tipa 'peta kvinta nije isto sto i treca oktava', a trebala bi da bude, nego imas odstupanje od 1/17 tona; to se zove recimo, 'sintonicka koma', i tome slicno. Ima da se nadje. U tom smislu ta dvojica su izracunala da je (1x1 na koren iz 2 ####?) jedan taj polustepen, kojih ima dvanaest. I to je dakle, dobro temperovano. I to je Bach-u omogucilo da moze da pravi svoje hromatske, dakle, kompozicije koje idu iz tonaliteta u tonalitet. Tako. A ne samo da ide kroz skale, odnosno moduse, koje su prirodno, recimo u C-duru pa ono, 'u C-duru imas A-mol' i kao vec sta dalje. Kapias, nego je moguće praviti sve, skakati iz tonaliteta u tonalitet bez da se to cuje. To je jedna stvar. U tom smislu to je mnogo povezano sa bioloskim dozivljajem svega toga. Mislim, jer je ocigledno, svaki od nizova, ja znam za Fibonacci-ev, verovatno ih ima milion, koji su bazirani na tom principu, kapias, i koji omogucavaju samo, ja bih rekao, egzistenciju, postojanje neke tvorevine samo u odredjenom vremenu kapias, a dok ujednacavanjem tih polustepenova omogucavas disperziju na vise vremenskih tokova. I na neki nacin to uvodjenje nove harmonije u jednu kompoziciju je vrsta slobode s kojom je na kraju krajeva Bach imao problema, koliko sam ja cuo. Njega su popovi, zvali na razgovore

M: 'informativne razgovore'

O: po tom pitanju, kao 'kako to mozes da uvodis', razumes, u tom smislu je taj neki nivo slobode je sad stvarno, sad govorim o sadasnjem vremenu, toliki da



potpuno gubi na znacaju svaka hrabrost koja mora da ukljuci taj, koja mora da bude ukljucena u kreativni proces, kapiras, jer tebi je sve dozvoljeno. Kad ti je sve dozvoljeno, nista ti nije bitno.

M: To je jako zanimljivo. Tu si napravio upravo tu vezu. Ono sto je zanimljivo je da kad posmatras recimo, na primer, neki tekst u NME-u koji sam priocitao pre par godina, gde su objasnjavali kako vise ne postoji buntovnistvo, ne postoji razlog za tako nesto i tu oni jako vole, u tom kontekstu jako vole, sto je postmodernizam to proklamovao u jednom trenutku rekavsi da ne postoji nista sto je po sebi odredjeno, da je sve arbitrarno, da je sve dogovorljivo, i da je sve posledica dogovora u smislu recimo estetike ili ideologije koja prati muziku ... ako nisi ni protiv cega, za sta si? I onda sta imamo, jednu totalnu diversifikaciju, znas, jednu disperziju stilova, ideja i tako dalje, koja daje privid slobode; s druge strane ne postoji nikakav pokret, ne postoji nova paradigma...

O: Cekaj ko je jos o tome pricao, jebo te, da li ... marksisticki filozof, nije Adorno, tome slicno, kao da li umetnost kao takva je konstituent drustvene represije ili nije? I na koji nacin? Tako da to pitanje sve u svemu postaje potpuno virtuelno danas, znas. Uopste nije bitno. Nije bitno, zato sto se taj nivo pobune stvarno spusta na na ono sto je ispod praga drazi. Sumanuto, kapiras. Ima jos jedan paradoks, a to je da neke te estetske ideje, muzicke, idu mnogo daleko. Mnogo daleko u svojoj komplikovanosti.

M: da, da

O: ... A s druge strane, narod slusa jednu-te-istu muziku; vec vekovima. To je ono kao ...

M: hahaha

O: Znas, kako to, jebi ga? Dakle, definitivno taj neki biologisticki, odnosno mehanicisticki pristup radi pos'o. Nego ono, osnovne kvarte, kvinte, terce, velike, male, rade pos'o - ciao! Tehno je uneo tu novinu, znas, cini mi se, u opstem dozivljaju tonova, i svega toga. Ali ono sto mene sad prevashodno zanima u zadnje neko vreme je, koliko imas pravo kao muzicar, kao umetnik, da zadres u integritet druge osobe. To je jedno, a druga stvar je semanticki kod same muzike. On je definitivno manje definisan od semantickih kodova drugih jezika. I zato je on toliko ideoloski I politicki bitan, cini mi se. I zato se na osnovu njega, njegovih tih nedefinisanih zakonitosti formiraju sve

potkulturne filozofije. Za razliku, dakle, što nije on definisan, mozes kroz njega da proturis nekakve sardzaje u bilo kom pravcu. Jednostavno. Jer cini mi se, ti ono kao govoreci jezikom reci, mozes tacno da se izlozis kriterijumu istine; govoreci jezikom muzike ti ne mozes da se izlozis kriterijumu istine, tek tako lako. Jer ne postoji nikakav pozitivan metod ni instrument koji ce reci ta kvarta ti je dobra, a ova kvarta ti nije dobra. Razumes.

M: da

O: Tako da sve u svemu neka manipulacija semantickim kodom muzike je mnogo bitna za politicki i ideoloski aspekt citave stvari, cini mi se. To je jedna stvar. A s druge strane, mene licno interesuje koliko covek moze da iskoristi muziku kao neku vrstu nekog mentalnog fona koji ce mu omoguciti da on miruje. Miruje, neka vrsta nirvane. Do toga sam dosao. Posto je struktura dozivela svoj kraj. Em je struktura dozivela kraj - dozivljava ga ubrzano ako ga nije dozivela - em su poruke, em je jezik potpuno obesmisljen jer nema nikakvih praznina izmedju samog jezika i onog sta izrazavas jezikom, cini mi se. Jer citav taj tehnoloski pristup je potpuno hipertrofirao, i sad ti nemas vise praznine izmedju, dakle, gde mozes da manipulises sa kategorijama kakve su hrabrost, istina i sve ono sto su nedokazivi aksiomi. Bukvalno nemas razloga da se u to pacas. To je problem. A opet, to imate s jedne strane: to, neka potpuna uravnilovka svih pojmova i termina, vrednosti, a s druge strane tempo savremenog zivota koji slama. KapiRAS. To je, ono, potpuna perverzija. Ja sam ono skroz pesimistican u pogledu sta ce biti s ovim svetom. Jer su sve stvari imenovane. Postoji neka budisticka prica koja kaze, kada se sve stvari imenuju - ciao, ode svet. Dovraga, razumes. To je jasno.

M: da, da, da

O: Eto to je ono sto me interesuje. E sad, ima jos, i to je oko same, cini mi se sustine stvari. Dakle semanticki kod, koji dakle je bitan, ali i nije bitan. U nekom ideoloskom smislu je jako bitan jer ti na osovju njega formulises kao svoju neku koncepciju, kapiRAS, ono kao, nastupa u medijima trte-mrte I on se formulise sam od sebe hteo ti to ili ne; s druge strane imas tu mogucnost da kazes bilo sta *novo*, razumes, i kao ostaje ti neka vrsta ja nazivam to 'religijskog pristupa'. Ali bukvalno sve religije imaju taj, dodiruju tu tacku, kapiRAS, koja omogucuje potpunu toleranciju za bilo kakvo postojanje; I to je jedini nacin da se ti odnosis prema bicu, odnosno ne-bicu. Jer ti u uslovima

hiper-produkcije stvarno dovodis u pitanje ono dakle da li bice nije ili jeste. A ti ako si napravio ne-bice nekim budalastim tehnoloskim postupkom koji ima tu imanentnu stranu samo da pravi, samo da pravi proizvodnje radi, dakle ti po difoltu pravis nesto sto je nemoguće da postoji. To je paradoks, dakle, napravio si ne-bice koje je u neku ruku sam djavo; jeste, jer ti on krade dusu, prazno je. (### tonski snimak nejasan).

Na osnovu hipertrofije informacija koje su dakle sve sitnije, sve preciznije i besmislenije ti dolazis do zakljucka da vreme dolazi do svog kraja.

Na neki nacin i - ciao. Ti mozes samo da se opredelis da li ces ili ne da pristanes na sve to. A moras. Na neki nacin.

(Laki, drugi muzicar, koji je trebalo da bude intervjuisan, odlazi. Mi se vracamo na konverzaciju).

M: Mi smo negde stali.

O: Stali smo kod ovdasnje muzike, da li moze da ima tamo (... uspeha?) E, da, kulturni model je prekopiran ovde, kapijas, sto je recimo bilo bitno pre 15 godina. Sad nije bitno. Sad mislim da je vise mehanizam medijskog plasmana onaj koji odlucuje o tome: da li ce neki odavde imati uspeha ili nece. Razumes. Mislim sad, tu ima mnogo nivoa: to je recimo nivo Evrovizije, kapijas, imas nivo umetnickih festivala, nivo underground-a, i kojecega. A i posto je ovde muzika kojom se mi bavimo ipak dakle pracenje nekih poslednjih dostignuca tako da to i nije toliko bitno. Ne znam, ja bih voleo da, bukvalno to bi moralo, da bude izvedeno na nivou eksperimenta. Da li ce neka odavde dobro, inteligentno osmisljena strategija dospeti da se tamo proda 100000 ploca. Ali vidim da orkestri poput Bobana Petrovica, recimo onog duvaca, imaju uspeha, relativan uspeh; uspeh ima Goran Bregovic, kapijas, razumes, dakle nesto sa ovih prostora je interesantno za ono trziste, definitivno. Ali mislim da je stvarno interesantnije to, dakle, cime se bavi, jebiga, taj folk, nego ono sto se bavi ...

M: U tome je muka. Jer ja kad god pricam ljudima, prvo mislim, kad sam ja dosao tamo, ljudi, vecina ljudi na koje sam naisao, iako su oni bili negde u nekom kontekstu muzicke industrije, ili radili ili to teorijski posmatrali, svi su bili zblanuti kad sam ja njima objasnjavao da sam ja radio neke techno zurke u Beogradu, da ne znam... ovo ono, kao 'sta, to *ima* tamo kod vas' jer uopste potpuno drugacija je percepcija njihova i sad mi se dogadja recimo kad

pricam sa ljudima da oni kazu kao 'cekaj, sta ti podrazumevas pod Srpskom underground muzikom, sta je'l imate vi *drum'n'bass*', 'imamo', 'aha'; a drugi ljudi me pitaju, tipa ono nasa kao seoska zurlica i tako to. Ceo problem je u tome sto oni ne mogu da, vrlo cesto, prepoznaju tu tako definisanu stvar, stvar koja je definisana kao underground muzika u Srbiji koja ima neke svoje specificne karakteristike iz nekog razloga, a opet je povezana sa takvim pokretima kod njih I u Americi itd.; a onda je najveći problem u tome sto, Bregovic je, kao, uspeo: zbog toga sto, da se ne lazemo, ceo kontekst ima veze i sa tim nesrećnim ratom. A taj folk je eto tako uspeo, zato sto su se etnomuzikolozi strasno zainteresovali za takve stvari, a i to je opet neka vrsta egzoticnosti. A kada polazis sa stanovista kao, ne pricamo 'o egzotici' nego o necem normalnom sto nije odredjeno ni ratom, ni time sto smo mi 'cudni' zaboga, nego time sto hoces da uspostavis neku najobicniju kulturnu komunikaciju, onda mal' te ne, ucinilo mi se - i tu sad mogu da budem pristrasan i da kazem da mi se ucinilo - da je to otprilike da te posmatraju kao 'pa, cuj, mislim, to je ipak verovatno proizvod nize vrednosti, zato sto smo mi bolji od vas u tome'.

O: Pa pravo da ti kazem, mi smo putovali po Evropi i necu mnogo pogresiti ako kazem da sam imao kompleks vise vrednosti iz bilo kog ugla posmatrano, znas, da se razumemo. Oni su malo tu neobrazovani, po tom pitanju.

M: Meni se cini da u tome i jeste stvar. Niko, pazi ja sam trazio, sad necu mnogo da duzim, ja sam trazio teoretske radove koji su napisani u bilo kom kontekstu Srpske kulture. Vrlo ih malo ima. Obicno su povezni sa Vizantijom, neki su povezani s politikom, nista nije povezano o popularnoj kulturi u ovoj zemlji. Uopste, pojam popularne kulture u Srbiji, mislim da je delimicno pokriven od strane novinara, da je u Americi pokriven u teoretskom smislu vise, zato sto sam na Internet-u nasao tekstove Kim Simpson sa Univerziteta u Texas-u pise o Srpskom rock-u I kaze da je ubedljivo najbolji kao ne znam iz bivse Jugoslavije, ali to je to. Dalje nema.

O: E, brate, ja kapiram da oni uopste ne kapiraju ono sto bi morali da ukapiraju *po defaultu*, a to je ta ideoloska strana svega toga. Znas, oni ne mogu da skapiraju na koji nacin je i kod njih, a kod nas specijalno protekcionska politika u pitanju kad je muzika, znas, u pitanju. Ne mogu da shvate, znas, da je raspad Jugoslavije spreman 20 godina, ono sto smo

pricali na pocetku, onim semantickim kodom i hipertrofijom tog shunda; dakle, ne-bice koje je plasirano u narod. Razumes. To je jedna strana te price koja nema veze sa estetskom. To je ono sto je perverzija; sto ovde ljude ... Ljudi su u jednom momentu skapirali. Znas, recimo da su, recimo, bukvalno mesec dana posle 5 Oktobra svi znali to, razumes, a odjedanput su svi to zaboravili opet.

Translation:

[The people in the West] cannot understand that the break-up of Yugoslavia was unfolding for twenty years, through a semantic code and the said hypertrophy of šund (kitsch)... Hence, this non-entity<sup>A</sup> that was placed into the populace. You see. This is one side of that story that has nothing to do with the aesthetic [argument]. That is what's perverted... because at some point, people here got it right. You know, for example, say, literally for one month after 5<sup>th</sup> October [2000] everyone knew that, you see and suddenly they forgot it all once more.

M: Da, to sam primetio od Marta, kad sam bio prvi put ovde, do sada, su se stvari promenile.

O: Ali odjedanput su svi zaboravili to. Znas kao, svi su znali to, cak se pojavila jedna knjiga na tu temu, znas odjedanput - vise niko ne zna to! Jebote!

Kao, znas, u cemu je stos!? A ocigledno je stos u tome, da muzika bezi od toga I toliko je ljugava. Jebiga. I toliko je zapostavljena u stvari, u sferi obrazovanja, znas, u stvari je zapostavljena. Moja znanja nisu velika, ali procenjujem da je do pre 300 godina, muzika u obrazovanju zauzimala znacajno mesto... I sad sa razvojem tehnologije, muzika odjedanput gubi na znacaju, razumes; i mislim kao takva postaje ideolosko oruzje par excellence, i najjace ideolosko oruzje. Ono sto je pozitivno, cini mi se, u svemu tome je dakle, to sto ljudi koji se bave kompjuterskom muzikom pre svega, koriste sve etnomuzicke koncepcije i trpaju je u jedno te isto; u jedan ... Ti bukvalno ne mozes da napravis neku estetski vrednu muziku, bez da inkorporiras sve kulturne modele za koje znas... Ja to poredim sa shahom. Ti ne mozes da izadjes da sviras negde, ne znajuci koji su noviteti u 58 potezu Sicilijanske Varijante i slicno. Rock'n'roll je kao takav izgubio tu energiju naivnosti, definitivno. Tako da kapiram da bi Englezi mogli, a sigurno ima onih koji sve to

kapiraju... Ja licno mislim da je nasa narodna muzika, 'dvojka' kolo muzicki relevantna, ja mislim da je ona najveselija muzika na svetu. Veselije muzike od naseg kola nema, ciao. A tebi bih preporucio ako imas vremena u subotu ili u nedelju, idi na buvljak posto sam dva-tri puta cuo tako fenomenolanu cigansku, brate, modernu produkciju; da... da... ludilo, oni valjaju kasete, svoje underground kasete. To je ludilo, ali bukvalno mnogo dobro. Dobra muzika, jednostavna. ... I nema gresaka u tom nekom estetskom smislu... oni su artikulisani u tome svemu... to je ta strana price... odavde moze da uspe samo neko ko ce se uklopiti cini mi se u gradjanski koncept celog zapadnog drustva. Dakle jeftina estetika upakovana u to neko... kvazi-gradjansko, post-potrosacko to ce proci. Ostalo moze proci samo na nivou ekscesa.

Translation:

...The catch is clearly in that music runs away from [enlightenment] and [has become] so sleazy... And in fact, it is so neglected in the sphere of education. I have no great knowledge but my estimate is that until 300 years ago music played an important position in education... And now with the development of technology, music suddenly loses its relevance... becoming as such an ideological weapon par excellence... What to me seems positive... the people whose predominant involvement is computer music use all ethnomusical conceptions... You literally cannot create aesthetically valuable music without incorporating all cultural models that you are aware of... I compare it to chess. You can't go out to play somewhere without knowing what are the novelties of the 58<sup>th</sup> move of the Sicilian Variant... Rock 'n' Roll has definitely lost that energy of naïveté. Therefore I think that the English could understand [Serbian music] and there surely are those who understand all that... I think that our village music, 'two-beat' "kolo", is musically relevant... the most cheerful music in the world... Go to the flea market because I've heard such phenomenal modern gypsy production, mate... Yes, yes, madness, they're selling cassettes, their own underground tapes. It's mad, but very good, literally. Good, simple music... No aesthetical errors... they are articulate in all that... that's the other side of the story... [T]he only ones from over here that could succeed [in the West] are the ones that can fit into the concept of Western civil society... light aesthetics placed in a... quasi-civic, post-

consumerist package would pass through. Everything else can be acceptable only on the level of excess.

M: Znas, cela ideja je - cesto razmisliam o tome - da u stvari underground moze da se promovise samo u underground krugovima.

O: Definitivno.

M: Mi smo... Ja se secam faze pre nego sto sam otisao odavde '98 kad su prakticno ljudi svirali za svoju ekipu, jer nije bilo drugog kanala, a u stvari se to dogadja i na nekom vecem, nekom sirem planu.

O: To sam doziveo u svim gradovima gde smo bili, osim Londona. Zato sto je London definitivno hipertrofican preko svake mere... centar muzicke industrije, znas planetarne ali ono kao... Amsterdam je bio smesan, Pesta jebiga; mislim manje-vise, oni imaju nekakvu tradiciju koja je izvan tih komercijalnih tokova, ali i tamo takodje... Ljubljana... gde smo jos bili... u nekoliko gradova u Holandiji, svugde sam imao taj 'trip', ciao, mislim nema tu - svirali smo na underground mestima; i to je bilo uvek organizovano od strane nekih, anarhistickih uglavnom, znas kao svesno ili nesvesno organizovanih grupa, umetnickih - dobijene su pare od nekih fondacija, trte-mrte, i opet je to plasirano u underground krugovima i plasirano je i drugde; ali nema tog kao *izvan-kastinskog proboja* i ciao to je to; oni u principu, cini mi se, na Zapadu se trude da to nekako dovedu pod kontrolu... oni daju pare da se *ne bi culo* za tebe.

M: Da, otud je i zgodno sto vise ne postoje ti kriterijumi tipa 'ovo je avangardno, ono je alternativno' nego 'zaboga, sve je vec vidjeno, pa sad se igramo'. To je jako zgodan izgovor da se prosto zapusi taj kanal, prosto da se kaze: OK, ova etnicka grupacija slusa ovo, s druge strane, postoji neverovatno profilisana muzika za neke druge underground krugove, neke druge intelektualne krugove itd., ali da ti nekom ko slusa Britney Spears pustis nesto sto je drasticno izvan tog miljea, jednostavno nece naici na odgovor. I tu je meni jako dobar jedan primer kad se setim, recimo ovako, ove situacije: imas "I Put a Spell on You", koja je standard...

O: Evergreen.

M: Da, da. E, sad, imas *tu* verziju, onda imas Marylin Manson-a i imas onu trecu, zaboravio sam ko je to, neka dance pevaljka pre par godina. Potpuno sam uveren, da sem nekog jako malog broja ljudi: oni koji slusaju originalnu

verziju, neće niti cuti, niti će ih zanimati druge dve; oni koji slusaju Manson-a neće biti zainteresovani za druge dve; a oni klinci koji slusaju onaj 'pop' dance neće ni znati da je to nekad, pedeset-neke, na primer, odsvirano prvi put, a bice im gadno kad pomisle da tu stvar peva 'onaj ludi, zli pevac, koji je obucen kao budala'.

O: Stvarno, to je mnogo interesantno, ta neka netolerancija izmedju tih pristalica odredjenih muzickih zanrova. Sto je shvatljivo. U tom smislu neka mogucnost komunikacije izmedju Engleza koji slusa techno i nas koji ga sviramo će biti veca, nego izmedju nekog ovde koji nas slusa i ne svidjamo mu se, a slusa pri tome kao 'narodnu muziku'. KapiRAS. Tako da je ta neka, na nivou *nacije*, komunikativnost - negirana. Znaci nema toga, nema vise; to je neki atavizam, izgleda - ocigledno. To je to. Sta ima jos od tema da se pomene?

M: Ja bih sad presao na konkretna iskustva. Posto si pomenuo da ste bili npr. u Budimpesti, Amsterdamu i Londonu: Kakav je tvoj doživljaj onoga kako je to u Londonu izvedeno? Do koliko usiju je to doslo, na kakav nacin?

O: Na zalost, organizacija celog tog dogadjaja je bila nama ugodna; bili smo tamo 5 dana, svirali smo jedanput, ostalo vreme smo proveli setajuci po Londonu. Ali sve u svemu, skapirao sam da smo mogli da sviramo svako vece. Posto je sam, opet cini mi se, London kao takav, mozes da sviras u kafani i tamo je, prosto, mesto gde to treba da se radi. No, medjutim, organizatori nisu imali taj rock'n'roll pristup, koji je ovde isti kao i tamo; nego su nam zakazali jednu svirku misleci da će to da bude i ekonomski na kraju krajeva isplativo, medutim ne, doslo nam je 90% nasih ljudi i 10% Engleza, a to znaci da smo imali u publici 10 ili 15 Engleza - koji su se dobro zabavljali, posto se oni u principu cini mi se bolje zabavljaju nego mi; da se razumemo, opusteniji su ali nemaju... na drugi nacin (su opsteniji). Tako da mi je krivo zbog toga. Ali nikad nisamo imali te interkulturalne probleme, da nas neko kao razume ili ne razume, ma kakvi.

M: Mislim da je tu velika prednost vaseg benda; u tome sto niste vezani za specificne neke kulturne, neke...

O: Nismo.

M: Kao kad ti slusas Rambo Amadeuse ti moras da razumes dijalekt

O: Pre svega, da.



M: I onda moras da razumes kontekst, moras da razumes trenutak, i onda se tu gubi mogućnost da se to značenje prenese, sem ako imas *debeo sloj interpretacije* koji ide uz to. Otprilike, ja pustim *njima* njega, pa da kazem ko je to i kako, i zasto, on je iz Crne Gore, muzika je takve, dijalekt je takav, on se igra sa zvukom jezika, itd., pri cemu ja njih ugnjavim, a oni na primer ne stignu da slusaju...

O: Ciao!

M: Vi u tom kontekstu nemate taj problem.

O: Nemamo. Interesantna stvar se desila u Ljubljani koja mozda i nema mnogo veze sa ovim. Mi smo dakle odsvirali jedanput na tom nekom underground mestu gde je bilo 50 ljudi recimo, u 'Metalkoj', a posto nam to nije bilo dosta nego smo hteli da uradimo nesto izvan tog zacaranog kruga underground, odnosno dotiranih desavanja, organizovali smo jednu besplatnu svirku u jednom klubu koji je regularan, gde je doslo 2 ili 3 puta vise ljudi nego u 'Metalkoj' zato sto je to bilo posle. Dakle, odsvirali smo dobar koncert, izašlo je par clanaka, intervju trte-mrte, tako da je doslo jedno 150-200 ljudi i to je bilo super. Puta (x), sto smo svirali opasno dobro. E sad sta je to opasno dobro ....svirati? Ti mozes da izvrsis atak na publiku raznim metodama, kapiras, raznim strategijama; u ovom slucaju je metod bio odsviravanje nase, odnosno njihove, odnosno *naseg odnosa*. Od cele... ja sam imao taj *trip*... svirajuci... to je interesantno: kako je moguće transponovati jedan sadržaj, koji je verbalan u muzicki? Razumes, ja sam stajao na bini, bukvalno sam, sve sto sam znao o odnosu Slovenaca i Srba u bivsoj Jugoslaviji (smeje se), odsvirao sam. I oni su to kapirali. Da li su kapirali to ili neku drugu apsolutnu vrednost na toj svirci, mene ne zanima. Kapiras, ja samo vidim da su oni reagovali onako, *kako sam ja reagovao*. I ovako znas, polu otvorenih usta, sa dozom neprijatnosti, *i radosti sto se saznaje*. Kapiras, to je bilo fenomenalno. Stvarno je bila mnogo dobra svirka. I to je, sta je to dobro svirati. Na neki nacin, ono kao u skladu sa dobrim vaspitanjem, moras da ostanes u granicama prodiranja ili ne-prodiranja u tudji integritet kad sviras. I to je ono sto ljudi cesto smetnu s uma, kapiras? Da li ce biti suvise invazivni ili ce biti suvise, pak, povuceni, da li ce biti ovakvi ili onakvi, to sve resava sa prostim postojanjem necega sto hoces da, sto imas da saopstis. Kad si to uradio, resio si sve te probleme. A te probleme si razresio, kad imas nekakvu

odgovarajuću koncepciju, što mislim da nas bend ima; a to je da nemaš ništa po defaultu, jer ono kad imaš nešto po defaultu to automatski ubija svaku poruku. Jer je svaka poruka očekivana. Sad je malo tih umetnika koji i tom metodom, gde je sve očekivano, umeju da ono kao, iscede nekakvu katarzu ili šta god, ne znam koja su to osećanja. Malo ih je. Houston je čini mi se, jedan od njih na nivou filma. Sve znaš šta će da se desi, a opet uživas u toj shemi, šta god. Ima i muzika naravno, koje su takve. Rock'n'roll je definitivno kao forma takav. Gde možeš, znajući šta će se desiti, uživati ako je dobro ili ne uživati, ako je loše. Tako da je to meni interesantno. I zato ja volim kad se nešto svira *autentično, nije bitno da je originalno*. Bitno je da je autentično, da ti dopre do nekih sadržaja koji, bilo kakvi da su, ako su dobro određeni omogućavaju ono što estetika, kao metod može da donese. Razumes, nije bitan jezik. Zato, iz tog istog razloga, o taj kompleks se spotakla citava rock'n'roll scena ovde. Jer oni, u traženju načina da očuvaju neki duh rock'n'roll-a, koji je *passé*, razumes, definitivno, kao koncept je prošao - oni su odustali od tehnološkog razvoja. Dakle, ne samo tehnološkog, odustali su od proučavanja te 'Sicilijanske Varijante'. Izostali su na petom potezu, dok je citava etno-folk scena, picila 100 km/h u tom pravcu. I ona je koristila... slušaj najnoviju 'Cecu', da li si čuo najnoviju 'Cecu'? Uzmi, saslušaj. To jeste *passé* u odnosu na najnoviju svetsku produkciju, kaska, ali kaska 2 godine, kapiras, ne kaska 15, nego kaska *dve, covece!*

M: To sam ja primetio još davno ovde da su oni profesionalno neverovatno dobro dohvatili loptu, stali na loptu, neverovatno dobro... i ako posmatras intelektualno reference koje su oni zauzimali...

O: Oni su birali prave stvari!

M: *Ti ljudi koji su to radili* bi dobili jako dobar posao u medijskoj industriji u Americi. Jako, jako dobar posao.

O: Definitivno.

M: Zbog toga što oni rade isto ono što rade ovi 'vestacki bendovi'.

O: Isto, isto, isto! I opet da ponovimo, jebote! To je ono što su ljudi znali u jednom periodu posle 5 Oktobra, odjedanput svi - i odjedanput niko ne zna to više. Dakle, mogućnost saznanja... zato nas bend svira improvizovanu muziku, jer je tako lako razbiti cliché, shemu znaš. I ti uvek imaš dozu neodređenosti koja ti omogućava skretanje u dobro ili loše. A i to 'loše',

mislim da koristi, jer kad je lose mnogo je lose jebiga, da te ljudi skontaju po tome. Onda to ispostavlja neki licni sadrzaj koji je legitiman za prezentovanje. Znas, umetnost moze da bude ruzna, jer tako je. Na kraju krajeva to nije EPP; koji je osim toga po meni nezakonit, protivustavan, definitivno, EPP, kao takav. Da se razumemo. Tako da je I to jedan aspekt stvari, koji ima smisla.

M: Ja se secam, ja ne znam konkretno, koja je bila vasa - ono sto bi se moglo nazvati prvom svirkom, ali ja se secam nekog BELEF-a '97, gde ste vi svirali u Barutani.

O: To je prva, to je nulta rekao bih.

*Translation:*

*M: I remember, I couldn't tell you specifically, which was your first – what one could call your first gig, but I remember BELEF '97, where you played the 'Barutana'.*

*O: That was the first, I'd call it the nilth one [gig].*

M: Da, jer tada valjda jos niste imali ime. To je bio session, neki. Ja sam posmatrao kako se to brusi s vremenom do tacke, u kojoj mi posalje ortak spotove iz Beograda, koje je snimio na 'Metropolisu' i onda vidim nesto sto - vidi se da je vec isprofilisano, definisano i - primetio sam neverovatnu razliku izmedju tog snimljenog materijala i svirke.

O: Da, jebote, ti medijski ne mozes da zapakujes sve to. Ne mozes, u toj projekciji gubis uvek.

M: E, tu je taj koncept, to je meni jako zanimljivo, koncept zivih bendova, jer meni je, ja sam, uceci teoriju marketinga, muzickog marketinga uocio - sto me je jako razocartalo u stvari - da je pristup upravo reciprocan ili dijametralno suprotan, kako hoces, onome sto sam ja mislio da jeste. Koncerti u Engleskoj, kad se radi o velikoj muzickoj industriji, se organizuju zato da bi sluzili kao promotivni cin -

O: - za prodaju ploca.

M: - da se prodaju ploce. A ne obrnuto.

O: A ne obrnuto!

M: A vi ste imali pristup: 'ploce sluze za promociju nase zive svirke jer ziva svirka je prava stvar'. A oni su u stvari spremni da odu u minus na koncertu, zato da bi otisli u plus kad prodaju diskove.

O: E, ovde je to nemoguće. Jer ti imas pirate i dakle to je nemoguće. Ali to je definitivno tako. A trebalo bi da bude (? obrnuto ?). To sam cuo jos u filmu o Buddy Holly-ju, znas, u jednom momentu neki manager njemu kaze: niko ne zna zasto je tako, tamo gde ne sviras zivo, tamo neces prodati ploce. To je ovde nemoguće tako. Mi ovde naprotiv, znas, nama ploce sluze za reklamiranje koncerata, zivih. Jedino tako mozemo da napravimo pare.

M: Pa jeste, na kraju krajeva, ljudi ovde ne mogu da priuste da kupe sve sto ih zanima, i onda u principu jedan ima jednu kopiju, pa pusta ortacima, pa oni to presnime, i onda odluce da dodju na koncert jer im je draze da to urade, jer im je do zezanja, i komunikacije s ljudima.

O: Otprilike tako. To bi bilo to. Je l' imas jos nesto?

M: Pa otprilike ja mislim da nemam bas neke, da ne mogu da se setim.

O: Ni ja.

M: Sasvim OK.

O: E da, sto se tice te redundancije znas, cini mi se da postoji jedna kljucna tacka. Znas, ti ako sviras dobro, dakle, ono sadrzajno, kako treba, ti lomis sve redundancije u toj tacki. Razumes. Posle toga, tvoji su. Jebote ciao, nema sta. KapiRAS. Nema govora. Mislim o nerazumevanju. Znas, desava se u tom trenutku prosvetljenja u publici kao nesto sto bi im trebalo 100 stonova da shvate; i obrazovanja, i slusanja ploca.

M: To je kao da ih stavis bukvalno na svoj brod i povedes ih.

O: Da, upeco' si ih. Otidlo. I nemas vise nista da ih ubedjujes. Tvoji su. To je sustina.

M: To verovatno i jeste prednost ne-verbalne komunikacije. Muzike, slikarstva...

O: Prednost, definitivno.

M: Zato sto ima taj prividno indirektan, a u stvari mnogo direktniji pristup.

O: Mnogo direktniji pristup. Eto.

M: Samo bih te pitao, taj pojam 'redundancije'.

O: 'Redundancije',

M: Jer znas u Engleskom ja cu imati zanimljiv problem prevodjenja termina. U Engleskom 'redundancy' znaci nesto vrlo konkretno. Nesto kao kad je neko tehnoloski visak, pa ga otpuste. Kako bi definisao taj pojam?

O: On sto ljudi vec znaju, i ti mozes da im ponudis nesto sto je tu oko toga, ako ponudis manje zajebo si se, ako ponudis suvise opet si se zajebo. Znas, tacno onoliko koliko mogu da shvate. To je to.

M: Sjajno. Hvala ti.

O: Cool. Daj da razmenimo mailove.

## Appendix Ten

Interview with Vladimir Jeric - "Darkwood Dub"; 08/11/2001

M: Znas kako, ja bih poceo od onoga sto sam ti vec pomenuo: referenca na tvoj razgovor sa Matthew Collin-om, na komentar o postojanju, odnosno o nepostojanju jedinstvene scene; posto je to ipak - ja parafraziram ono cega se secam iz knjige koju sam procitao pre sest meseci, je l' bi voleo da -

J: Malo razradimo to nekako?

M: Da.

J: Hmmm, da. Pa mozemo to da razradimo. Znas kako, mislim da su to bile dve, onako, vrlo bitne vremenske odrednice oko toga kao 'ima scene, nema scene'. Prva o kojoj mozemo da pricamo je ta koja se dogodila pocetkom devedesetih, kada se tu pojavilo, sad, nekoliko bendova, vrlo razlicitih, ovaj, novih. Sto je, opet, bilo neuobicajeno, mh, taj period jeste katakteristican zbog toga sto je prvi period zapravo gde se pojavilo nesto novo, neki novi set, kao muzike, koji je nasledio prethodni period, koji je bio stvarno okarakterisan, vrlo, postojanjem scena. I to je zaista bilo tacno, u osamdesetima su postojale te neke regionalne scene; u principu zaista je postojao taj neki beogradski 'sound', pa zagrebacki 'sound', pa su slovinci imali vrlo definisan, svoj, neki profil; i cak i ukviru tih scena su - to opet nisu bile jedinstvene scene, mada je moglo da se razgovara *i* o jedinstvenim scenama - i jedinstvenoj, nekoj globalnoj prezentaciji tih lokalnih scena; ali i u okviru tih scena je bilo vrlo razlicitih pristupa: mi smo ovde imali novotalasnu scenu, al' smo imali I taj neki ono budjavi post-heavy metal, takodje kao celu scenu, transparentnu. Kao sto su slovinci imali ceo onaj pop talas, kao baziran na 'Vidosex', kao, nekom istrazivanju, kao, pop muzike i 'Miladojke' I onaj nekakav, ono, misticizam, *kao*, koji je bio oko 'Laibach' *price*.

M: Da.

J: I to nisu bile jedinstvene scene, ali *moglo* je da se govori o tome u tom trenutku, medjutim u trenutku posle - dvedesete pocinju - u Beogradu se dogadja da se pojavljuje neka nova muzika, koja je *jako* razlicita. Muzicka kritika - pri tome referisem na par nekih, samo, magazina koji su uopste postojali u tom trenutku, 'Ritam' je bio najaktuelniji, i Dragan Ambrozic - oni se

sad rukovode tu, instinktivno, nekom potrebom i navikom da odmah to proglase kao radjanje nove scene. Zato sto je to bila kljucna rec. Ovaj, negde 'scena mora da postoji'. Zato sto ono o cemu pricas, mora da dobije identitet u okviru odrednice kao sto je u slucaju muzike bila scena. Oni nisu nikako mogli da prihvate, da-, da-, vise ne postoji kategorizacija po scenama I da je ona besmislena, tako da su pokusali da sve to pomire, trazeci neki najmanji zajednicki sadrzalac, kao, koji mora da postoji da bi ti od nekoliko razlicitih elemenata proglasio bilo kakav fragment, ono, celine I ja mislim da nisu uspeli da ga nadju apsolutno, zato sto je jedini zajednicki sadrzalac te scene koju su oni pokusali da proglase, je bilo *vreme* nekakvog javnog pojavljivanja. A to, jednostavno, nije dovoljno, nije dovoljan element da ti mozes da, ovaj, proglasis, sad, mh, bendove tipa 'Darkwood Dub', 'Presing', 'Kazna za usi', 'Euforija', sta se sve tu jos dogadjalo, to ne moze biti scena apsolutno (smeje se). *Cak* je istina, da smo se mi *svi* medjusobno, u to vreme i druzili i razmenjivali *i opremu, i muziku i ideje* zato sto smo u principu bili...

(digresija?)

Interesantno je, mislim da su sve prethodne scene, prethodne generacije muzicara ovde, do, kao, pojave tih devedesetih, u principu, prilicno bile naslonjene - hteli sad to oni ili ne i bili svesni toga ili ne - prilicno naslonjene na prethodne generacije, i u nekoj komunikaciji su uvek bili sa prethodnim generacijama;

*cak i ta cuvena 'novotalasna scena' je bila u vrlo zivoj komunikaciji sa prethodnom, vrlo trulom muzikom koja se ovde pravila, u smislu da su oni vrlo zivo imali nesto protiv toga, i vrlo jasno onako, su delovali protiv toga; sto znaci da je komunikacija postojala, i sto znaci da je ta muzika na njih uticala, zaista. I sad, prvi put se, ja mislim, ovde pojavljuje nesto sto je na prvi pogled autisticno u odnosu na istoriju muzike u Srbiji. Jer se ni na koji nacin, ni kao nasledjem, ni postovanjem nekakvih ustanovljenih, kao tu, principa, niti negiranjem istih principa, naslanja na bilo koji nacin na istoriju muzike u Srbiji. A mislim, cinjenica je da niko, apsolutno, od nas, niti od ovih svih bendova koje sam ja pomenuo sada, zaista, u svom zivotu nije potrosio vise od, ono, 0.2% vremena, slusajuci i razmisljajuci bilo sta sto se tice domace muzike. Tako da ja mislim da je ovo prva scena koja, odnosno ne scena, da, ne pricamo o sceni, nego prva generacija muzicara se pojavljuje koja proizvodi*

neku muziku koja se nikako ne naslanja na prethodnu istoriju te lokalne ili regionalne muzike, i to, pretpostavljam, ili zvuci autisticno ili zbunjuje i kritiku - ali ne i publiku zato sto se vec oformila i publika koja takodje ne poznaje istoriju domace muzike niti ih briga apsolutno za to. Ovaj, tako da, negde, prva, slobodna i autenticka muzika se zaista pojavljuje tu, ovaj, devedesetih, oslobodjena potpuno tih lokalnih referenci, lokalnih prica, nasledja, za i protiv, znas, nekakvog tog, ono, vrlo opterecujuceg lokalizma koji je postojao do tada, ja mislim, u svim domenima.

Translation:

Even that famous new wave scene had a vivid communication with the previous, very rotten (sic) music that was made here in the sense that they had something very much against it, very clearly, like, acting against it; which means that communication existed and that means that the [previous] music affected them, really. And now, for the first time... something emerges, autistic at first sight - in relation to the history of music in Serbia... it is a fact that none of us... had spent... more than, like, 0.2% of time listening to and thinking of anything related to domestic music. Therefore I think that this is the first scene, er, yes, we're not talking about a scene, but the first generation of musicians... creating some kind of music which in no way leans to the previous history of local and regional music and that... confuses the critics but not the audience that ... does not care [for the history of domestic music]... [The] first free and authentic music truly appears... in the Nineties, fully freed from local references, local stories, local heritage... localism that existed before, I think, in all domains...

Naravno to se posle vremenom menja. Neki ljudi iz te generacije pokusavaju da se zainteresuju i za, ovaj, po njihovom misljenju, uspesne, ja mislim - uglavnom, u smislu muzickog biznisa - pojave iz istorije, kao, nase muzike, u tom smislu menjaju i svoj, kao, nekakav, ono, 'appearance', kao i odnos prema muzici koju prave; pa onda i muzikie same, pri tome mislim na par neuspesnih pokusaja, onako, da se od necega, sto je uslovno receno, bilo proglaseno za alternativno i underground, napravi 'super-band' koji ce biti komercijalan, ali po zakonima ovog trzista, tipa 'Plejboj'. Ovaj, to su bili stvarno *tuzni*, *tuzni* pokusaji da se nesto, sto *zaista* po svojoj ono sustini bilo



globalno, interesantno, ovaj, prepakuje u nesto sto bi, navodno, po misljenju nekakvih ljudi iz marketinga, Srbija mogla da kupi. I zavrсило se *naravno* katastrofom, zato sto se obracalo pogresnoj publici, i zato sto takvi postulati biznisa ovde ne mogu da se isprate; ali uglavnom, ono sto je ostalo

(pauza)

...integrisano, jel' da, samo u sebe, to je ostalo vise-manje sustinski isto, ta muzika.

Tako da, mh, ta prva pojava, kao, u devedesetim, nove generacije muzicara i pokusaj da se od toga napravi scena, je propao - potpuno, ma koliko se kritika trudila da napravi bilo kakvu fioku u koju bi to stavila, ono, i napravila zajednicko ime 'beogradski novi ta...', ili sta vec? Ali to smo vec imali; onda bi verovatno trebalo da bude 'novi novi talas'. Mmh, to je bas bilo, onako, cudno. Ja mislim da su kriticarima imali i problem da naprave i odrednice za te bendove pojedinačno, posto opet, kad se referises na muziku koju neki bend pravi moras da napises kako bi to trebalo da se zove.

Translation:

... so... that first emergence I mean, in the Nineties, of a new generation of musicians and the attempt to knock it into a scene - had failed, totally, however much the critics have tried to pigeonhole it, like, and create a common name [for it] like 'Belgrade new wa[ve]...' ... or whatever? But we already had that; presumably, it should have been called 'the new new wave'. Mmh, that really was, like, quite odd. I think the critics also had a problem to create definitions for those bands individually, because again, when you are referring to the music a band is making you need to write how it should be called...

Tako da, cinjenica da je 'Pressing' bio punky-band u ocima kritike, prilicno sumnjiva -

M: (smeh) jako zanimljivo, da.

J: - daaa, a opet, mh, za ono sto smo mi radili u tom trenutku nista drugo nisu mogli da izmisle osim izraza 'sonicni reggae'. Gde u prvoj polovini referisu valjda na 'Sonic Youth', a drugoj na taj 'dub' element, koji smo imali, tako je Dragan Ambrozic potpisao izraz 'Sonicni Reggae'. Znas, (smeh) vrlo zanimljivo.

M: Često se pitam zašto nečemu treba davati ime, kao takvo.

J: Pa to je vrlo, vrlo jednostavno. Ovaj, u pitanju je navika, veliki broj ponavljanja, mmh, nedostatak komunikacije sa, generalno - mada taj nedostatak komunikacije bi mogao da se nadomesti i malo dubljim razmišljanjem što opet se nije dogodjalo - o tome šta se događa u svetu uopšte, ne samo u umetnosti, posto je umetnost sama po sebi praktično nikad nije ni funkcionisala i ono, 'pure art' ne postoji, ja mislim da to definitivno i naučno može ono vrlo lako da se izvede, ali ta svest o tome da mmh, je umetnost *u funkciji* različitih sad stvari je *odavno* ovaj odavno takodje nije tajna, pogotovu *popularna umetnost*, pogotovu ono što *MI* pokušavamo da shvatimo kao, ono, element života, a ne umetnosti, a to su ono, multimedija, komunikacije; ono čime se mi bavimo kao bend, ono čime se bavi bilo ko ko sada snima filmove, reklame, spotove, neko ko pravi bilo kakav software, to stvarno ovaj ne može da se nazove umetnošću u nekom uzem smislu. *To je sve* - u našem, ono, u neprestano tumbajućem, prozimaćem, postmodernom svetu - neki oblik komunikacije. Ovakav ili onakav. Ja nemam niakav problem da sutradan ovo što mi radimo prebacim u formu, ono, nekakvog web-izraza ili da počnemo da se bavimo snimanjem bizarnih ono, filmova kao koji će to da isprate; mislim da je to potpuno isti izraz u principu jer će i tu biti zvuka i tu će biti muzike potpuno to nije važno. E, sad, ljudi koji su navikli da se bave kritikom na *taj* nekakav, vrlo konzervativan način, su imali jako veliki problem, zato što se u svetlu njihovog ispitivanja bilo kakve pojave pojavljuju postulati tipa 'treba da se odredi *šta je to* o čemu pričamo, moramo znati da mu damo ime, moramo, moramo da mu damo nekakve obrise koje ima ponaosob, onda moramo da ga stavimo u nekakav *malo* siri kontekst, znati pravac, stil ili scenu, da bi ga na kraju nagradili i njegovim mestom u globalnom, nekakvom, tom, konzervativnom pogledu'. Znas, ali sva ta tri stepena su potpuno prevaziđena i *nepotrebna* u razmišljanju o bilo kakvoj, ono, autohtonoj pojavi poslednjih 50 ili 60 godina u svetu umetnosti ili medija. Dakle, polako ali sigurno, ja mislim da se i kritika osvjećava u tom smislu; već neko vreme nisam video da je neko pokušao da pravi *scenu* od ovog što se ovde događa, da pokušava da izvlaci nekakve *pravce*. *I dalje* se trude da daju *imena* stvarima, ovaj, koja su tako nekako usko deskriptivna, što je opet prilično tužan pokušaj da se nekako pojasni, znas, to što se događa.

Ja mislim da gledano iz pozicije kritike, mislim da ti ljudi imaju problem komunikacije sa *svojom* publikom, zato sto oni ne misle da je njihova publika dovoljno zrela da zajedno sa njima u kritickom tekstu istrazuje pojavu i dolazi do nekakvih - zajedno sa autorom teksta - zakljucaka o tome o cemu mi zapravo ovde diskutujemo, vec imaju i dalje tu vrlo staromodnu, konzervativnu, potrebu da *objasne* citaocima, za koje se *pretpostavlja da ne znaju* nista o tome, o cemu se tu radi. A iz pozicije citaoca je to malcice uvredljivo. Zato sto ja mislim da moderan i obrazovan citalac *bilo kakvog* kritickog teksta, ne ocekuje da dobije *objasnjenje* pojave za koju nikad ranije nije cuo, ili da mu se *nametne* sta bi trebalo da misli o odredjenoj pojavi, vec ocekuje *otvaranje*, u kritickom tekstu, velikog broja pitanja, koja bi posle mogao da iskontemplira zajedno sa autorom teksta u nekakvom zakljucku. Znas, tako da je taj odnos prema publici koji su kriticarima imali, bio prilicno nipodastavajuci. Drugi deo te price o scenama moze da se prenese na aktuelni trenutak i na cinjenicu, da sve ono o cemu smo pricali - a neki ljudi su to negirali i pokusavali od toga da prave scenu pocetkom devedesetih - je doslo potpuno kristalno jasno, krajem devedesetih, na svoje; znaci, *scene nema*. Ne postoji scena. *Scene verovatno vise nikad nece ni biti*. A i zasto bi je pa bilo? Ovaj, ne vidim nikakvu *dobrobit od toga*, da sada nekoliko, ono, fragmentarnih pojava u bilo kom domenu, integrisanih u scenu, moze da pojedinačno ima bilo kakav *benefit* od toga, i cak mislim da je saradnja medju muzicarima ovde postala *mnogo* bolja, iskrenija i cistija kada-, kada-, smo *mi* - onako instiktivno i bez ikakvog odnosa prema tome, ali onako samoinicijativno i instiktivno - *ukinuli* uopste taj pojam scene. U tom trenutku je nama bilo sasvim normalno da saradjujemo - mada ja stvarno ne mogu da povezem bilo sta sto radi grupa 'Pressing', i onoga sto radimo mi - da razmenjujemo cak i goste jedni drugima na snimcima. Znas, to je nekako sasvim normalno, sasvim u redu. I definitivna situacija, sada i ovde, je da scena nema. Niti ce ih biti. Postoje fragmentarne pojave, vrlo, i vrlo onako, ono, posebne. I to je to, mislim. Mi mozemo da idemo na turneje sa grupom 'Eyesburn', nama moze da gostuje bilo ko od njih na albumu, i mi njima, ali mi nikad ne mozemo biti scena, niti ikom pada na pamet da razmislija na taj nacin.

M: Kako bi onda definisao, *jednim pojmom*, ista sto se dogadja na jednom jedinstvenom prostoru? Da idem malo dublje u to, rekao bih da je pojam fragmentacije zajednicki imenitelj stvari koje se, u principu, dogadjaju na umetnickoj i muzickoj sceni - dobro, da kazemo 'umetnickoj' kao zajednicki imenitelj, opet, svega toga, *sceni*, 'sceni'(!) - znaci, *umetnosti* na Zapadu. Odnosno, secam se clanka u NME-u, od pre jedno 3 godine, gde je neko pomenuo, 'eto vidi se da vise nema buntovnistva, jer ne postoji vise nista protiv cega bi se bunili' i prilicno su prigrlili taj postmodernisticki postulat da, u stvari, nema tu vise narocito sta da se otkriva, vec elementi koji postoje se kombinuju po volji autora. Znaci, da li postoji, po tvom misljenju, bilo sta, sto bi se moglo - da li postoji bilo kakav nacin, na koji bi se moglo predstaviti, na primer, ono sto se dogadja *ovde* u muzici, *negde, nekome, ko o tome ne zna nista*, a da pri tom ne idemo *od slucaja do slucaja*; znaci, od slucaja 'Durkwood dub' do slucaja 'Eyesburn'?

J: Verovatno moze, ali ne u jednoj recenici. Ali je bas interesantno ovo sto si sad ispricao, ovaj, da su napisali u NME-u, ja mislim da to nije tacno. Ja mislim da je to jedna, vrlo, onako, plitka konstatacija. Zato sto su prethodni oblici *buntovnistva*, uslovno receno, u, konkretno, popularnoj muzici o kojoj pricamo - hajde da izvucemo nekoliko primera - tipa imali smo, ono, Rock'n'roll: u Americi ultimatnu pobunu protiv - pa, u prvom redu - segregacije. Crna muzika, bela deca, ovaj, na 'dance floor'-u, kako sad to? Pa je onda taj Rock'n'roll postao, nesto sto se buni protiv *ozbiljnih drzavnih poslova*, tipa rata u Vijetnamu? To vec nije bilo zezanje. A onda je poceo da se buni protiv samog sebe, u smislu tog, punk, kao nekakvog, buntovnistva, *ali su sve to bila buntovnistva koja pripadaju jednom, onako, proslom vremenu, ja mislim, i proslim ljudima*, zato sto su to jednaka buntovnistva kao sto smo imali ratove, recimo, unutar Evrope, bilo sta; to su plitka buntovnistva na - pa mozemo da poredimo sa, ne znam, *nacionalnim, nekakvim osecanjima*, znas. To je-, to su prilicno plitke stvari, populisticke su stvari. Ta buntovnistva su bila vrlo eksplicitna neka buntovnistva protiv: 'ovog konkretno pravca', 'protiv one konkretno zemlje', protiv necega vrlo, vrlo, konkretnog. A, ja mislim da buntovnistvo i dalje postoji kao *nuzan* preduslov bavljenja popularnom muzikom, i ovde *i bilo gde na Zapadu*. S tim sto je to buntovnistvo u skladu sa onim sto se dogadja, ovaj, sa *covekom* u

postmodernom svetu, *postalo jedno vrlo licno buntovništvo*. Sama cinjenica da bilo ko, i ovde i negde drugde - u New York-u i London-u - resi da se bavi muzikom, svojom muzikom, *da zivi od toga*, da mu bude glavno opredeljenje, ja mislim uzasno buntovan cin. I tako da, ako oduzmemo *onaj deo muzicke industrije*, koji ja ne mislim da moze da se uopste posmatra kao, socioloski neka druga kategorija, osim *biznisa*, znaci, ono 'major label', kao, *operacije*, tipa, albuma Michael Jackson-a i slicnih stvari, stvari koje mozes da vidis po, ne znam ono, Americkim satelitima, sve ostalo jeste buntovništvo, ali buntovništvo protiv - globalno buntovništvo koje se ne naslanja na te, negde staromodne, populisticke principe buntovnistva protiv *neke nacije, protiv nekog konkretnog pravca*, bilo cega drugog, *nego protiv nacina zivota*, protiv tog, ono, korporativnog nametanja principa mladog uspesnog biznismena ili mlade uspesne karike u lancu, ovaj, *nekakve proizvodnje bilo cega*; ovaj, ako resis da proizvodis samo osecanje ili ideju kao sto je situacija sa muzikom, onda se bavis prilicno opasnom stvari po bilo koju drzavu, a drzave su sad integrisane u jednu veliku nad-drzavu. Tako da mislim da je to ultimatno buntovnicki, nije toliko eksplicitno I ne moze da se posmatra kao punk, znas, ja mislim da je to ta vrsta buntovnistva koja kod ljudi budi osecaj za, koje ljude tera da razmislja; budi im osecaj za lepo, budi im svest o sebi, ultimatno buntovništvo; mnogo je buntovnije nego kad nateras ljude da piju pivo i sutiraju strance po ulici, to je besmisleno, to je buntovništvo na nivou feudalnog, nekakvog, drustva. Ali *ovakva* vrsta buntovnistva, bavljenja ono, modernom komunikacijom, *medijima*, koja odrzava u zivotu tu jednu dusu, negde ono, entitet, kao, coveka naspram *uzasno* lose tendencije i te korporativne price, da je covek neki sasvim drugi entitet. Entitet koji je isklucivo u funkciji nekog nad-sistema, a ne u funkciji samog sebe, pre svega, mislim da je to buntovništvo ultimatno buntovništvo i ne slazem se sa NME-jem uopste. E sad drugi deo. Ovaj, kako objasniti ovo sto se dogadja u Srbiji, a da se ne-, ne-, pojedinacno ne navode stvari; to je jako tesko, u jednoj recenici nije moguće. Zato sto ne moze da rezultira opisom *vrste* muzike, koja ne postoji, postoji mnogo, mnogo izraza. Ali moze da se nekoliko reci tu upotrebi, od kojih bi kljucna rec bila 'izolacija', druga rec 'siromastvo', I treca iz koje izviru mnoge druge, je 'rope and stick technique' fazon. Mi smo bili prinudjeni da ne samo u tehnickom smislu, ono, u procesu samog snimanja ili izvodjenja te muzike, izmisljamo nekakve stvari

nebi li to zvučalo onako kako smo zamislili da zvuči, a bez ikakvog znanja o tome kako treba da se radi, pogotovo bez finansijske mogućnosti da to nabavimo, već i u smislu da smo izmislili negde, ovaj, nove načine da pronadjemo komunikaciju s tom muzikom koja je bila isecena. Mislim da je količina pirata, MP3 sajtova, nekakve ono presnimavane muzike tih kanala, kao ono postom, diskovi rezani, ovde dostigla svoj vrhunac. I da apsolutno *samo onaj ko nije hteo*, zapravo, se nije za vrlo skromnu svotu novca mogao da informise o *bilo kojoj* vrsti muzike iz *bilo kog dela sveta*, koja mu je bila interesantna. Zato ja mislim da je ta izolacija probudila čak negde u ljudima želju i nabildovala i preko nekakve koja bi normalno postojala da se ostane, kao, u komunikaciji sa ostatkom sveta. Tako da mislim da je *to* karakteristično za muziku ovde, da je prepuna uticaja, uticaja ima više nego što bi trebalo da ih bude da je sve bilo normalno.

M: Zanimljivo je to što si rekao, zbog moje opservacije, mog zapazanja kada sam prvi put došao za Beograd posle skoro tri godine proletoš, I prva stvar koju sam primetio je da izuzev filmova - koji su verovatno skupi da se uvezu za veliki ekran ali postoje načini da se to lepo snimi, u bioskopu, I pošalje video-kaseta I šta sve ljudi ne rade - izuzev filmova, sve ostalo je bilo tu. Informacija je bila tu sve vreme. Odeca, muzika, kad god sam pričao sa ljudima koji su i dalje željni informacija, pitali su me 'pa dobro, šta si ti tamo gledao, šta si ti tamo video, šta ima tamo što ti imaš nama da kažeš što mi ne znamo?' A ja kažem, 'pa ništa, to je ono što je zanimljivo, ja sam jedino u poziciji da to *fizički vidim, i fizički cujem...*'

J: Znam.

M: '...da vidim izvodjaca na licu mesta, da odem u galeriju i vidim to na licu mesta, *ali ništa što vi već ne znate*' što je radikalno različito od onoga što se naziva sindromom Istočne Evrope, ne sindromom, ali prosto, tog *kasnjenja Istočne Evrope* zbog čega mene - posto ne mogu da budem potpuno objektivni - *vredja*, kada se mi strpamo u kos sa Istočnom Evropom, prosto zato što to *kasnjenje* kod nas ne postoji.

J: Mmh, da.

M: Postoje problemi, ali kasnjenje ne. E sad u tom kontekstu, to siromastvo i izolacija, znaš, Ozbiljni Državni Poslovi, pri čemu bih to onako stavio, sve tri reci sa velikim slovom -

J: To je dobrim delom vezano i za politiku. Ovde je, *svuda* je zapravo, politika neodvojivi deo - uvek je i bila - bavljenja umetnoscu, ali je to u trenutacnim, ono, *biznis konstelacijama* i uopste zivotnim situacijama, *malo zapadnije odavde*, prilicno vesto skriveno i-, i-, i vrlo daleko, konsekvntno *nije* toliko 'in-your-face', ovaj, kao sto je ovde bilo, a verovatno ce i biti jos neko vreme. To je opet interesantna stvar, mislim politika, zaista - o kojoj god muzici pricamo sada, aktuelnoj bilo gde u svetu, ili ne-aktuelnoj, ovaj, vec - u istoriji muzike, uvek mozemo da dodjemo do nekakvih politickih elemenata. Ali su ovde ti politicki elementi bili, *ne zatrpani* u nekakvoj diskusiji ili istrazivanju, vec na *vrhu* svega. Bilo je potpuno jasno, ko je sta, tu, gde, u vrlo uzavreloj politickoj situaciji. Bilo je na momente vrlo opasno biti tamo gde se muzika zaista i nalazila, ovaj, ali na kraju, konsekvntno, ta opasnost je bila realna, zato sto lako mozemo da izvedemo zakljucak, sta se desilo, recimo, posle *tri te velike predizborne turneje*, koje smo mi napravili; to je *jako cudno*, procenti su, ovaj, statistika je surova stvar. Statistika kaze da su pre te tri turneje, da je procenat - sad, improvizujem cifru - da je procenat glasaca mladjih od 25 godina, koji su izlazili i *kao* bili aktivni, bili katastrofalnih 22%, a da je 5 Oktobra izaslo 78% mladjih od 25 godina. Situacija je bila resena *odmah*. (javlja se na telefon).

Ta opasnost, koju smo mi ocigledno predstavljali i bili tako i tretirani, ovaj, od strane rezima, je bila dobro procenjena.

M: Ja bih tu upotrebio, znaci, umesto reci 'bunt', upotrebio bih rec 'subverzija'.

J: E, to je bas interesantno, *nikad to nije bilo eksplicitno*. Nikad, nista, nismo uradili u smislu tekstova, izjava, nasih, sto bi eksplicitno podrzalo jednu politicku opciju, neku politicku stranku, *ali su nas zivot i rad* bili *simbol*, vrlo jasan, ono, politicki, vrlo citljiv, te opcije koja je predstavljala opasnost prethodnom rezimu. Cinjenica da mi postojimo, da se time bavimo, na nacin na koji se bavimo, je bila vrlo jasna. Mi nismo mogli da izbegnemo da nama ljudi, nicim izazvani, na koncertima pevaju vrlo ruzne stvari o Slobi ili da ne znam, budu u majicama 'Otpora'. *Mi ih nismo zvali, mi im nista nismo rekli, oni su dosli*.

M: Da, to je bila opcija koja nije bila u skupu opcija koje je sistem zeleo.

J: To je interesantno, zato sto je vrlo jasno bilo da ta publika nikad ne bi otisla na koncerte, mmh, medijski *uzasno dobro pokrivenih zvezda iz 'Pink' produkcije koje takodje nisu imale nikakav eksplicitan politicki sadrzaj*, ni u svojim izjavama, ni u svojim, konkretno, radovima. Ali je bilo vrlo jasno, opet, koja politicka opcija stoji kao simbol onoga cime se oni bave. Oni su imali isti problem; kod njih su dolazili druga vrsta ljudi, oni koji pucaju u plafon, i ne znam, razvijaju srpske zastave. Potpuno neverovatno. I oni ih, verovatno, nisu zvali, kao sto mi nismo zvali nasu publiku. Pri cemu je *sama* te simbole proglasila za - odnosno, sadrzaj svog zivota stavila iza tih simbola.

M: Da, sad je zanimljivo to: taj pojam razvijanja srpske zastave. Da li nalazis nesto *passé* u pojmu srpske zastave, kao takvom?

J: (kratka pauza; prva recenica vrlo glasna; potom prica tiho, pa sve glasnije)  
Pa, u principu da. Nalazim, ovaj, da je prilicno bespredmetno razvijanje *bilo cije zastave* u ovom trenutku, zato sto je to - opet se naslanja na ono o cemu smo pricali ranije, o tom nekom, 'old fashion' kao, buntu, znas, kao koji je zasnovan na *nacionalnom*. To je potpuno prevazidjeno, zato sto osim *fizickog* nepostojanja nacije kao takve, odnosno nekakvih kvaliteta ili mana koje bi mogle da odrede eksplicitno neku naciju *sada* - ako je to u nekakvoj *fazi* stvaranja sveta, kakvog ga sad poznajemo, vrlo davno *i postojalo*, su bili ocigledni prosečni fizički, psihicki, duhovni kvaliteti jedne nacije u odnosu na drugu - to *odavno* ne postoji. Odavno je sve toliko pomesano, ovaj, i-, i-, i genetski kodovi su se toliko pomesali da ne mozemo o tome da pricamo. S druge strane, iz tog drustvenog fazona, komunikacija je vec toliko dugo vremena, toliko snazna, izmedju cak, i prilicno udaljenih, kao, ovaj, mesta na svetu i ljudi na svetu, da ne mozemo ni-, ni da razmisljamo o razlicitosti nacije na nekom mentalnom ili psihickom nivou, u odnosu na neku drugu naciju. Mozemo da diskutujemo mentalitete i navike, ali to zaista sustinski nije vazno. *Tako da ja mislim da je to prevazidjeno: Jedine zastave koje sada mogu da se razvijaju su, ovaj, s jedne strane Microsoft, s druge strane 'open source'; s jedne strane Shell, a s druge strane 'Greenpeace'; ali potpuno ne vidim nikakvog smisla u razvijanju s jedne strane, ne znam, belgijske zastave, a s druge strane ...Fiji ostrva. Kakav je to konflikt i sta to treba da znaci? Ko je sada neko ko se predstavlja kao Belgijanac, po cemu se razlikuje od nekoga*



ko se predstavlja kao Poljak? Postoji istorija, postoji navika, postoji mentalitet, ali svaki Poljak moze postati Belgijanac, i obrnuto 'in no time'.

Translation:

Therefore I think [the nation state] is redundant: the only flags that could be waved now are, erm, on the one side Microsoft, on the other 'open source'; on the one side Shell, on the other 'Greenpeace'; but I definitely see no sense in waving, on the one side, I don't know, the Belgian flag, and on the other ... the one of Fiji. What kind of conflict do we have now and what is it supposed to mean? Who is today that someone who represents himself as Belgian, and what makes him different from someone who represents himself as a Pole? There is history, here is a habit, here is a mentality, but any Pole could become Belgian, and vice versa - 'in no time'.

M: Da li nalazis da je to mozda kada sad gledamo na jednom vrlo pragmaticnom nivou, mozda, malo problem? Da kazem, da preciziram, na jednom pragmaticnom nivou, predstavljanje necega sto dolazi iz jedne odredjene sredine, koja ima odredjene konotacije - odnosno, kako bi Englezi rekli 'label' prikacen na sebi - nuzno vodi dijalogu, odnosno pitanju 'a KO ste vi?' I da li si ti taj *Drugi*, da li ti kao *taj Drugi*, nesto predstavljas *i sta imas* da predstavis i da kazesz? Odnosno, govorim o tome, da verujem, da *ipak postoje* odredjene barijere. Komunikacija - da, postoji; ali nisam siguran koliko je dvosmerna. Postoji taj stari postulat o kulturnom Imperijalizmu koji su Francuzi posebno razvili u strahu za svoju kulturu pod uticajem americkog -

J: Ono, Anglo-, zapravo, da.

M: Da li je to dvosmerna komunikacija? Imas primer, recimo, grupe Deep Forest koji su drugi album nazvali 'Bohemija', gde su prakticno obradili cesku narodnu muziku, pri cemu je jako malo ljudi znalo da se radi o ceskoj narodnoj muzici, sem ljudi koji su zaista za to zainteresovani. Nego su to posmatrali kao neki *proizvod* koji, 'eto sluzi zato da ja sednem i da se opustim' -

J: 'Fina muzika, cudna muzika'. Da.

M: Znaci koliko je ta komunikacija dvosmerna? Koliko te barijere *ipak* postoje?

J: Pa barijere *naravno* da postoje. Ali barijere su tu da se onako diskutuju. Mi mozemo da pricamo o tome na, u principu, iz ono dve nekakve tacke, kao, tu

postoje dve vrste pogleda; postoji pogled normalnog, kao, coveka, svesnog coveka, coveka koji, koji negde zivi tu, gde zaista zivi na planeti kakva je sada, svestan je *svog* nasledja, tudjih nasledja, speman je za komunikaciju, speman je za diskusiju, i u principu verujem uvek ispunjen, zadovoljan, kada ta diskusija ne služi da neko prizna da je pobedjen ili-, ili zadovoljan da je pobedio, vec iz te diskusije se rodi, odnosno iz ta dva neka pola, uslovno receno, se rodi treci, koji je zanimljiviji od ova dva ponaosob. Znas. I uvek-, uvek su takvi susreti, uvek imaju potencijal da-, da stvore od dve ono, razlicite stvari, trecu koja ce biti, koje ce sadržati najlepse, najuzbudljivije, najplemenitije stvari prethodne dve. A postoji i korporativan jedan, vrlo, pogled na sve to, gde postoji *apsolutno* ta prica, ono, o kulturnom imperijalizmu; ja ne znam kako ce to da se završi, ali se neće završiti dobro, zato sto je ta struja ona koja ima sav *novac* kod sebe, a taj novac je ocigledno, ovaj, stvar broj jedan, o bilo cemu sada da pricamo. Zapravo, ono, na konkretnom primeru zapadni svet, kao, ono, koji je nazalost predvodjen, kao, trenutacno, Sjedinjenim Drzavama, zato sto ti ljudi iz, ono, korporativne sfere, kao, nasih zivota, koji se zaista *i bave*, kao, verovatno strategijom, ono, resursa na planeti, oni, recimo, ocigledno ne mogu da izadju na kraj sa cinjenicom da dobar deo istocnog sveta, ne želi da konzumira njihove proizvode. I ne mogu da, apsolutno, se pomire sa cinjenicom da *popularna muzika*, ono, *Coca-cola*, bilo sta slicno, se *neće* prodavati u milionskim tirazima tamo, tako da od toga prave globalni konflikt. S druge strane, bilo kakav osvescen, ono, znas, covek, koji pokusava da *sam* uspostavi dijalog - ako je sa zapadne hemisfere - sa Istokom, to se *uvek* završavalo sa razumevanjem, razmenom, interakcijom, necim boljim nego sto je i zapadna i istocna kultura bila pre toga. Tako da, eto ono, na tom *jednostavnom primeru*, znas, se vidi da komunikacija *jest* dvosmerna, ako zelis da bude dvosmerna. Ali mmh, ja mislim da dobar deo ljudi sada *strateski* polazi od cinjenice da komunikacija *mora* biti jednosmerna, zato sto mora da rezultira sa konkretnim ono, *finansijskim* ucinkom. Sto znaci da govorimo o kolonijalizmu, prakticno, ovaj, koji je *trenutacno* vrlo aktuelan; i istina je da, negde, ovo cime se *mi* bavimo ovde, podrazumeva da odredjenim delom *i* prihvatamo tu vrstu kolonijalizma. A ja se nadam, da jos uvek uspevamo to da uradimo vrlo selektivno, odnosno, da uspevamo da prihvatamo *novu tehnologiju*, novi software, mhh, nekakva, ono, konkretna

resenja - o tome kako neki mehanizmi treba da funkcionisu - isprobana sto puta na nekom drugom mestu, koji provereno rade, da pokusavamo da ih usvojimo kao *dobre* stvari iz te price, ali da i dalje, ne, nikad necemo usvojiti *princip*: a to je da cemo mi to upotrebiti, da, ne znam, ubedjujemo, navedjujemo, ili dominiramo nad bilo kim drugim. Znas, tako da mislim da je sasvim legitimno koristiti *dobre tekovine*, mehanizma, one koje *samo* neverovatna svota *novaca* ulozena u istrazivanje software-a i hardware-a moze da ostvari; znaci nekakva *oruzja* koja nama *nikad* ne bi mogla da budu dostupna, zato sto nemamo taj, ono, 'bloody money' koji je potreban da ih ostvarimo. Da ih usvojimo, i naucimo da koristimo *u sasvim druge svrhe*, u odnosu na one kojima su namenjene. Tako da mislim da je *i to* nacin dvosmerne komunikacije. Odnosno, *mi njima vracamo, uzimamo* ono sto nam daju, ali svesni da cemo im vratiti nesto drugo.

M: KO su *oni*?

J: Pa, ljudi koji imaju dovoljno novca da rese da cemo svi koristiti PC-e u narednih 10 godina i uspeju u tome. KO su oni, ne znam, kad bih znao imao bih odlican 'project proposal'.

M: (smeh) Da, da. Pitanje je, gomila zanimljivih stvari mi sad pada na pamet, s obzirom na ono sto si rekao, ali moramo ipak da *ovo* drzimo negde u nekakvom '*sudu*' da to ne iscure na sve strane.

J: Da.

M: Problem fokusa je uvek veliki problem, kad se radi o bilo kakvim temama slicne vrste.

J: Pa to je opet problem vidis, koji je opet *nasledjen*. I ti u svom radu moras da ispratis odredjene ono, *akademizme*, koji su opet proizvod odredjenog nacina razmisljanja.

M: Da, diskursi.

J: Prakticno nisi slobodan da, ma kako bio, sadrzaj, drugaciji od onoga koji neko drugi ocekuje, da primenis i radikalno drugaciju formu; jos uvek. Ali mozes da iskoristis formu da bi taj sadrzaj mozda uticao na nekakvu buducu formu.

M: To je, da, to je pitanje 'proizvodnje istine', odnosno, proizvodnje znanja.

J: Istina je, onako malo, izlizana rec. Ali mozda, znas, proizvodnja tog nekakvog *slobodnog* nacina razmisljanja. Znas, ja tvoj *apstrakt* ne bih voleo,

ne bih voleo nikad da budem covek koji je toliko uznapredovao u akademskom svetu da od tvog *apstrakta* ocekujem, ono, ista *poglavlja*, iste *'topics'*, isti *'digest'* kakav je bio *moj kada sam postajao PhD* - zato sto ga drugacije *ne razumem*. To je *smesno*, prilicno smesno. I zato sto ce mi trebati malo vise vremena da provalim o cemu ti pricas jer nisi radio po *mom sistemu* pakovanja u fioke.

M: Problem je u tome sto se sada dogadja - mislim da se sada dogadja - 'anti-renesansa', *inverzna* renesansa. U renesansi se desilo to, da su se znanja pocela da objedinjuju, i bilo je majstora koji su bili - za mene je Leonardo jedan od prvih multimedijalnih umetnika u istoriji - a sada se dogadja da ukoliko ne drzis to pod kontrolom, ukoliko nisi 'multimedijalan' po definiciji, odnosno po onome sto radis, onda se dogadja da padas, da ulazis u te vrlo, vrlo uske fioke - kako ih Englezi zovu 'pigeon hole'-e - nise (niche), u stvari, u kojima je tvoja specijalnost vrlo usko definisana. Tako da to moze da se primeni *i na zanrove*. Sad meni je palo na pamet jedno pitanje - kom bih se vratio malo kasnije, za jedno 5 minuta - ali samo cu da ga pomenem, a ti o njemu razmisli: jedan moj prijatelj, koji se isto bavi muzikom, je pre nekoliko godina rekao, kaze, 'kakva je to produkcija kod nas, ja sebe ne mogu da smatram za clana *velikog benda* jer kod nas ima pet *velikih* bendova, a nema *500 malih ili 5000 malih*, da nas pretvore u velike'. I sad - onda, kao - vracamo se na mnostvo *izraza*, ali *relativno malo* - ako govorimo o *toj statistici* - relativno *malo* ljudi se bavi sa tih *mnostvo* izraza -

J: Da, to je nas problem.

M: - pri cemu, velika vecina se *ne usudjuje* da uzme u ruke bilo koji instrument, bio to racunar ili gitara; *ili ne moze* to sebi da *priusti*, nije bitno; ne, ja bih to pitanje ostavio za nesto malo kasnije, prosto zato sto bih voleo samo da se vratim na nesto sto mi se cini da je vrlo bitno. Govorio si o uticajima. I recimo, mozemo da kazemo, da sve ono cime se ti bavis u muzici, i sve ono sto je i mene, kao coveka koga je muzika zanimala, zanimalo u ovoj zemlji, je na neki nacin, *hibrid* te, neke kulture, koju smo zeljno primili od spolja, i obradili i uporebili. U kom stepenu se moze govoriti o originalnosti? Ili specificnom, jedinstvenom izrazu ove, ovdasnje sredine u umetnosti?

J: To je bas, onako, otvoreno pitanje: u kom stepenu uopste moze da se govori o originalnosti, u *bilo kom*, ono, *post-modernom* izrazu, posto je

*moderna*, ja mislim, ipak zadržala nekakve tragove originalnosti, po nekakvim, po vremenu makar, pojavljivanja odredjenih stvari. To je jako interesantno; to nije... znas, prvo treba rascistiti sa tim pojmom 'originali i kopije' u jednom, ono, globalnom trendu sada, znas. Sta je ono *citatnost*, sta je *kolaz*, da li je... to je ono pitanje kojim se bave u principu filozofi sada, ja se ne bih preterano uplitao u njihov posao; ali pitanje, znas, da li je, ovaj, kolaz kolektivno autorsko delo ljudi - ciji su radovi, kao fragmenti, konstituenti kolaza - ili je kolaz autorsko delo onog ko je sastavio kolaz, raspolazuci sa radovima tih prethodnih ljudi... (nejasno###) kao jednom *pramordijalnom supom*, kao nasledja, koja je slobodna na koriscenje bilo kome. Sad, da li je to *njegovo* autorsko delo, ili je to autorsko delo tih fragmenata prakticno skupljeno na gomilu? Ali buduci da je uvek rezultat, uvek je potpuno drugacije od bilo kog rezultata nekog od fragmenata tih prethodnih radova, koji sad cine novu celinu; ja mislim da je, u principu, taj teret autora vise premesten na stranu onoga ko je kolaz sastavio. Zbog toga sto je to *novi kvalitet* koji se rodio iz svega toga. Ne mozemo da prenebegnemo cinjenicu da, znas da-, da... negde to znanje - koje se skupljalo o istoriji sveta, zivota, *pa i umetnosti na kraju* - zbog *uzasno* unapredjenih mogucnosti da se nesto sazna, i mogucnosti komunikacije izmedju ljudi, da nije postavilo odredjen teret za nekakve nove autore. Ja nisam nesto pristalica regresije; (regresije) u tom smislu, da je teret dosadasnjih saznanja, iskustava, izrazenih emocija, postao prevelik za modernog autora, da bi bio svestan toga, i da treba da ih negira, u smislu da vrši regresiju i da pokusava da postane nesvestan. Postoji cela jedna skola, ceo jedan princip, pa cak i u modernoj muzici, koji pokusava da stvari tako simplifikuje, da izgleda kao da ti autori vrše neki proces *lobotomizacije* - odnosno, ciscenja samog sebe od tih prethodnih saznanja, prethodne muzike koja predstavlja teret, da bi se nesto *autohtono* ponovo izrazilo. Sta se tu dobija? Nista. Zato sto se vracamo na poziciju nekakvog *autora* iz prethodnog vremena, koji zaista nije bio svestan, svih iskustava koja su se dogodila u medjuvremenu. Tako da, ti ljudi koji se time bave, prakticno pokusavaju da izmisle vremeplov; mozda im cak i uspe u tome, ali ne vidim nikakav smisao. Jedini smisao je da-, da se, ono, otvorenih ociju i onako punog mozga, s potpunom svescu *sta* se do sada dogodilo u - konkretno, ako sad pricamo, ono, o - muzici *ikada*, sto vise to bolje, pristupi pravljenju *dalje*

muzike, koja ce nositi ceo teret, ali i potpunu svest, i sva iskustva prethodne. Znas, tako da ja mislim da taj moment originalnosti *ostaje*, autori su i dalje, i dalje proizvode original. Materijal kojim se oni sluze u tom slucaju, ako je to *sample*, ako je to, ono, citat, je *cak* meni i *interesantniji*, mozda, nego nekakav, potencijalno *ново izmisljeni* autorski izraz; zbog toga sto je mnogo viseznacniji; zato sto okida mnogo vise emocija, mnogo vise *izraza*, mnogo vise, ono, i licne i kolektivne istorije, nego nekakav *zvuk* koji mozda nikada nije *cut*; ali ja mislim da se tako jos uvek ne dogadja.

M: Da se vratimo na *scenu*. Ako scena ne postoji - ti si govorio o *vremeplovu* - hajde da govorimo o *prostoroplovu*, odnosno o cinjenici da ako scena ne postoji, sta definise *sredinu*? Mozemo, *moramo* da priznamo da postoji sredina. Ovo je grad Beograd, koji se nalazi u jednoj zemlji, koja ima... koja je u poslenjih deset godina prosla kroz jednu istorijsku katarzu, i u kojoj definitivno, ta istorijska katarza, je morala da ostavi nekog traga na izraz, u toj specificnoj sredini.

J: Mhm.

M: Zasto kazem '*prostoroplov*' - kovanica koju sam upravo izmislio i koju verovatno vise necu koristiti - ali znaci, kako, da li, moze da se govori o, o nekom izrazu koji je specifican za *ovu* sredinu, *ako* scena ne postoji, i kako taj izraz - ako scena ne postoji, ako izraz postoji - moze da se kaze da je specifican?

## Appendix Eleven: E-mail correspondence with Vladimir Jeric

### -----Original Message-----

**From:** vlidi <vlidi@verat.net>

**To:** mtodor01@bcuc.ac.uk <mtodor01@bcuc.ac.uk>

**Date:** Friday, February 08, 2002 1:18 PM

**Subject:** Re: napokon. ili TUDJE NECEMO - SVOJE NEMAMO...

### -----Original Message-----

From: mtodor01@bcuc.ac.uk <mtodor01@bcuc.ac.uk>

To: vlidi@verat.net <vlidi@verat.net>

Date: Thursday, December 20, 2001 12:00 PM

Subject: napokon.

>Prvo, jedno licno pitanje. Pesma 'potaman' mi je prilicno draga. Mozda zbog  
>Aninog glasa, mozda zbog prizvuka bossanove. Znas li za politicku pozadinu tog  
>pravca? Brazilci znaju mnogo o tome: ima radova, tekstova, analiza; cuo sam  
>i licne ispovesti o bossanovi. Ono sto me zanima je, da li ste imali to u vidu  
>kada je 'potaman' nastajala? Pesma mi zvuci jako dvoznacno, nezno i gorko u  
>isti mah. A tekst mi je tek zanimljiv; imam ideju kako bi se mogao 'citati'  
>ali cu da je precutim. Voleo bih da mi bez direktne sugestije sa moje strane  
>'procitas', protumacis, reci pesme; ili konsultujes autora reci (pretpostavljam  
>da ju je Ana pisala.

Vidis, ovde je u pitanju zanimljiv slucaj projekcije recipijenta (tebe), ili, kako se to u svetu vizualne umetnosti kaze, ucitavanja od strane posmatraca (observera). Iako ja, mada sasvim izdaleka, vise naslucujem nego sto zaista poznajem socioloski kontekst i konotacije citiranja atmosfere bosanove, to je miljama daleko od originalne namere da se nekako iskoristi dobar bass line koji smo imali, bez pripreme i na licu mesta, odnosno u studiju. Miki i Lav su spustili na traku ritam sekciju, i posto nismo imali nikakve instant ideje po pitanju gitara i vokala, tu su bili Vasil Hadzimanov, koji je odsvirao klavijature za pola sata, i Ana Zunic, koju smo bukvalno naterali da peva. Tekst je napisao Vuca, cini mi se za jedan dan, i sumnjam da iza toga stoji bilo sta misteriozno ili da ce se pojaviti bekground koji ce potpuno promeniti nacin na koji ti taj tekst citas; a day in life, cini mi se...A sto se bosanova vajba tice, cini mi se da je tih dana Ana bila u nekom Stereolab fazonu, nista od "silent pain&resistance" ovde...Zao mi je ako sam te razocarao, demistifikacija najcesce boli. I skoro uvek je bezveze, ako izuzmemo ironiju & sarkazam...Jel' znas da su Brusili i Dzimi

Hendriks isli u isti razred?

>Nastavio bih gde smo stali... pricali smo o specificnom izrazu, u kontekstu Beograda  
>i Srbije. Istorijska katarza, kako sam je nazvao, desila se u celom zapadnom  
>Balkanu (izraz mi je kudikamo korektniji nego 'bivsa Jugoslavija'). Srbija,  
>Bograd, pa i svi mi koji sa ta dva drustveno-geografska pojma imamo jake veze,  
>prošli su kroz tu katarzu. Da li je ta katarza stvorila specifican izraz, u  
>muzici izvodjenoj u Beogradu i/ili Srbiji? (da ne govorimo o 'sceni', 'potkulturi',  
>'underground-u' - sve samim pojmovima o kojima smo se dogovorili da su uslovni...  
>da oko njih ne mozemo da se slozimo; vec da precutimo da pojam imenujemo, znas  
>na koju/e/ muziku/e/ mislim...)

Uf, specifican izraz...Mozda i postoji, ali ga je jako tesko locirati i opisati. Gde da ga trazimo?  
U muzici? Mozemo mnogo da pricamo o situacijama od slucaja do slucaja, od benda do  
benda, naci cemo specificnosti, ali tesko i najmanji zajednicki sadrzalac. Tekstovi? Posebna  
prica...

Od groktanja kako nekog treba ubiti/obesiti/spaliti pa popiti pivo, ili sta vec, preko licnih i pomalo  
hladnih opisa unutrasnjih pejzaza i dozivljaja, do (kao) explicitnih rastaman chant o opression i  
slicno, na engleskom, naravno, i uvek prisutnih (tuznih ili srečnih - prosto ne znam sta me vise  
nervira) ljubavnih prica (Ona zna? Ona nesto zna vec 30 godina, i cini mi se da cu umreti, a nikada  
necu cuti sta to Ona dodjavola zna i zasto i mi ostali ne mozemo da podelimo tu vecitu tajnu sa  
Njom, i sta radi taj DB, zar nije protiv nekog zakona da Ona i dalje cuti), nema nekog socioloskog  
fenomena ni ovde. Ali, ako pogledamo nacin shvatanja i pristupa muzici, tzv. etitjud, onda mozda i  
mozemo da nadjemo jednu specificnost koja razdvaja devedesete od istorije. Kako su se lomile  
veze izmedju drzava, a kasnije i Srbijice i ostatka planete, tako su se lomile i veze izmedju  
generacija, a takodje i veze sa prethodnim sistemima vrednosti. Pogledaj: po prvi  
put se krenulo bez opterecenja muzicke industrije (ne postoji), medija (ne postoje), tradicije i  
nasledja prethodne muzike (zbogom), ukusa koji preovladava (prezir), svako je kreirao sopstvena  
ustrojstva i pravila, tek tako, ili onako kako mu se cinilo da se to tamo negde (Zapad) radi. I eto,  
konacno, nekog benefita od svih raspada i izolacija koje su se desile; zar ne mislis da je muzika iz  
sedamdesetih i osamdesetih, ipak, imala i neku vezu sa roditeljima onih koji su je pravili? Ovako mi  
se vise svidja...

Ja sam, moram da priznam, ocekivao mnogo vise i od muzike i od drugih oblika  
komunikacije/umetnosti, u Beogradu, u jedno vreme tako strasno i intenzivno kao to o kojem  
pricamo. Pala mi je na pamet pre/post revolucije Rusija, sve se raspada, milioni ginu, umiru od  
gladi, ali se pojavljuju ljudi ciji umovi i duse gore, i cine da to moze da se cita/slusa/gleda...Flop.  
Nije se desilo. Cela sredina je, iz onog zaleta krajem osamdesetih i samog pocetka devedesetih,  
verujem da se dobro secas, preko kratkog perioda



neverice (ruzan san, nije cak ni moj, proci ce) upala u loop letargije i autoanestezije (pazi izraz: unutrashnja emigracija), i intelektualno/umetnički proizvod je postao jednak nacinu zivota: kompromis. Postoje i stvari koje ne ulaze u ova sive kategorije, ali znas, izuzetak potvrđuje... Ili, kraci odgovor na tvoje pitanje: nije.

>

>Da li taj izraz, ili ti izrazi (mnogo stilova na mali broj izvodjaca, i to smo  
>pominjali) - imaju neke oznacivace koje bismo prepoznali kao specificne za sredinu;  
>bilo u muzickom, bilo u vanmuzickom smislu... bezbol kapa nije isto na Menhetnu  
>i u Brace Jerkovic, na to mislim... da ne ulazimo u fine nijanse izmedju mikro-geografija  
>gradova i naselja. Da li postoje oznacivaci izraza u muzickom, vizuelnom (video,  
>plakat, omot itd) smislu, u smislu posmatranja ('spectatorship'... npr. odeca)  
>i signalizacije zivotnog stila kroz pomenuta sredstva komunikacije - karakteristicni  
>za Beograd, a da ih je pritom moguće povezati sa necim sto je poznato kao kod  
>(code) u npr. Britaniji? Ima li necega sto u isto vreme odskace a opet je u  
>isto vreme 'prevedivo' na 'jezik' potkultura (ili kako god da ih zovemo) jedne  
>zemlje kao sto je V. Britanija... zemlje u kojoj postoji ogromna sloboda izbora  
>muzickih i drugih kulturnih 'proizvoda'. Naravno, polazim od pretpostavke da  
>ne govorimo o publici koja formira Top 40 listu singlova, nego neku koja voli  
>da bira sama...

Zanimljivo je kako je tesko izbeci opsta mesta, etikete kao, npr. 'alternativa'...  
tesko je izbeci taj izraz, ali kod nas je sve alternativa, sve osim muzike koju produkuju super-turbo-  
folk starova kao sto je Ceca ili Dragana mirkovic ili pak reprezenata onog sto se ovde kaze  
"slusam zabavnu muziku" kao npr. Zdravko Colic (ako hocemo da govorimo o alternativni sa  
socijalnog aspekta na sta se ona originalno i odnosi). Stilski gledano, tesko je govoriti o alternativni,  
pocetkom devedesetih je vazio onaj fazon "slusam alternativnu muziku"...

Ovde vidim da si postavio dva pitanja, hajdemo obrnutim redom.

"Alternativa" kao izraz za vrstu muzike/nacin zivota se ovde koristi poodavno.

U samom pocetku se vrlo usko odnosila na onaj americki gitarski talas, Dinosaur, Sonic i to, da bi se prosirila i na druge stvari koje nisu bile (tako cesto) na MTV-ju a pratile negde ono sto je ljude interesovalo, Happy Mondays, The Fall, dabovi... Prakticno, ono sto se pustalo na B92 i slusalo na Akademiji (1988 – 1991, R.I.P.). U lokalnom kontekstu uzasno zloupotrebljavan izraz (svako ko je pocinjao da se bavi muzikom u to vreme je sam sebe deklariseo ili bio deklarisan kao "alternativa"), ciji se besmisao pokazao malo kasnije, kada su je shvaceno da nema mainstreama u klasicnom smislu – on nije nestao, vec je postao nesto drugo, Pink kao formula za estetiku uspeha i popularnosti. Tako da se ono sto je nazivano "alternativa" naslo u velikom i prilicno praznom prostoru koji treba da zauzme moderna muzika, kao jedina

ponuda, i konfuzija je sada bila potpuna – “alternativa” postaje “mainstream”, ali bez i jednog atributa koji bi trebalo da nosi takva pozicija. Bizarno.

Nesto kasnije, pojavom i ultrabrzim sirenjem popularne dance muzike, taj paradoks se ponavlja – oblak svezine, undergrounda i “alternative” okružuje sve veci broj ljudi koji slusa drum’n’bass, deep house ili sta vec, i okuplja se na partijima i u klubovima, Dj-i postaju definitivno zvezde, ali je to ujedno i sve sto zaista postoji – mainstream se i dalje nalazi tamo gde je zalutao pocetkom devedesetih. Nista od undergrounda ni ovde, osim sto je kraj malo drugaciji. Naime, po prvi put je uticaj dance subkulture uspeo da se odrazi i na tom, “drugom” (i jedinom) Pinki mejnstrimu – sada ti ljudi pokusavaju, na veoma distorziran i prilicno smesan nacin, da imaju zelene kose i drum fill-ove sa ritam masina.

Da se dogadjalo negde drugde, bilo bi mi uzasno smesno.

Tu je negde onda i odgovor na prvi deo tvog pitanja – sta je tu “karakteristicno”, gde je tu “znak”...Vrlo kompleksno je, za pocetak, definisati alatku kojom ovo mozemo da posmatramo.

Poredjenje, kao sto proizilazi iz pitanja? U Britaniji nije tesko da se na

ulici uoci hardcore rasta, celavi gospodin koji slusa Oi! ili nejbhrud klinja osisan kao

vest koust gengsta shit “zvezde” – i odmah znas tacan bekground. Ali, sta cemo sa 95%

“neoznacениh” mladih koje u rekama prolaze pored? Ko su oni, odakle dolaze, da li uvece,

“u civilu” idu u Metalheadz na D’n’B, ili u Lux Cinema da gledaju crno bele filmove? A mozda i

jedno i drugo? Ili jednostavno prate samo Premijer ligu? I kako njihov “civilni” (za razliku od

dnevnog, “poslovnog”) image izgleda? Da li se uopste razlikuje? Vidis, cini mi se da je duh

postmodernizma usao duboko i u nacin zivota, i da je nacin odevanja rasterecen

tog eksplicitnog znacjenja koji je ranije imao, ne nosi toliko stavova...Doduse, kada moras da se

bavis biznisom u Sitiju, cini mi se da je “fitilj” oko vrata i dalje obavezan detalj.

Ovde se taj proces takodje odvijao, ali nesto kasnije i na jednom odvojenom delu populacije, tako da osim poredjenja moramo da koristimo i neke posebnosti, ili lokalizme...

Celavi drugari u koznim jaknama, sa privezanim pitbulom i u novom BMW-u svuda i uvek znace

bed njuz. Ali, ovde imamo i nesto posebno: ratove (heroj, branilac, “zrtvovao se za nas”), policiju i

DB (nedodirljiv, saradnik?), naciju (pravi Srbin, “Srbija se saginjati nece”, “jaci smo od sudbine”), ili

biznis na balkanski nacin (decka nikad niko nije “zajebao”, i nemoj ni da probas). U vecini ostalih

sredina, on je samo kriminalac (ili policijska zvezda u usponu)...

Isti takav lik, ali u dronjavijoj jakni i sa kljucevima od ubogog Juga, zadržava mogucnost

nacionalnog i braniteljskog atributa, ali biznis i DB varijanta otpadaju. Zbog svojih ociglednih

ambicija da postane kao onaj prvi, ali i jos ociglednije nemogucnosti realizacije, potencijalno

opasniji po slucajnog prolaznika.

Sa druge strane, histericno ugrozeni tinejdzeri, koji svoj nocni “underground” identitet hrabro

okusavaju da pomire sa dnevnim svetlom. Traju vrlo kratko vreme, prelaze u onaj

postmodernizam o kojem smo pricali, zamenjuju ih novi, mladji, u istom pokusaju.

Izmedju ovih dijametralno suprotnih stvari nalazimo svasta. U svetu “cool” propalih

“urbanih” veterana je jedno vreme bio jako popularan neki “anti – image”, jako dosadna, predvidljiva i besmislena vrsta izrazavanja prezira prema sadašnjosti, prakticno izumrla.

Hip hop nacin odevanja jeste postao karakteristican za dosta mladih ljudi, sve to varira od kraja do kraja grada, ali i od konteksta...Klinac u širokoj trenerci, bajzbol kapi i sa skeitom ispod ruke je cool, isti takav klinac u autu iz kojeg tresti “39 sa 2” je kosmar...

Translation:

Hip hop style in clothing has become the characteristic of many young people... all that depends on context... A kid wearing a baseball hat, with a skateboard under his arm is cool, a kid that looks the same that sits in a car with [a Turbo-folk track] blasting from its stereo is a nightmare...

Prosto ne vredi da ulazimo u mikrokosmos o kojem moze da se napise citava disertacija, preobimno je. Ima i dalje obrijanih glava i fajerki, pojavi se tu i tamo neko u sajkl jakni i sa pola metra kose, ali je to i ovde izgubilo onaj znacaj koji je nekada moglo da ima. Mnogo bi bilo zanimljivije da preskocimo ulicu i da se pozabavimo imageom sajber turbo izvodjaca iz (vec precesto) pomenutog Pinki miljea (Karleusa & Ceca rules!), ali i to je posebna prica, secas se razgovora o onom radu Milice Tomic u Kunstthale Wien (“Hi, my name is Dragana Mirkovic, and this is contemporary art.”). Zapravo, to je vrlo interesantan materijal za ozbiljnu krossover studiju o specificnostima, uticajima, ist – vest relacijama, masmedijima, naciji, kempu...

Voleo bih da vidim da se neko ozbiljno prihvati takvog istrazivanja.

Uf, uopste nisam zadovoljan ovim odgovorom, mislim da je nekompletan i bezveze, ali ne mogu vise. Izvini. ‘Ajmo dalje.

>Da nastavim u kontekstu u kom sam te pitao o publici, znakovnosti, originalosti  
>izraza ili, mozda preciznije, autonomiji istog. Svirao si u Londonu sa Darkvudima.

>Da li mozes da mi opises to iskustvo? Zoo bar, Potemkin, Papagaj - kako god  
>da ga zovu, jeste na Leicester Square-u, ali ga bije glas da je jugonostalgicarsko  
>mesto. Da li je bilo - i koliko - Britanaca koji nisu direktno povezani sa bivsom  
>SFRJ? I dalje, mozes li da zamislis da izvodis pred publikom koja predstavlja  
>neku vrstu 'slucajnog uzorka', britansku, londonsku publiku koja ne mora da  
>ima - vecinski - nikakve veze sa Beogradom, Srbijom, Jugoslavijom? Pod kojim  
>uslovima bi to zamislio, pod kojim bi uslovima to bilo moguće, kakvu bi (pretežno  
>neverbalnu) komunikaciju vi, kao izvodjaci, imali sa slusaocima, posmatracima,  
>publikom kojoj, na kraju krajeva, nije bitno odakle ste?

>

>Da li, i pod kojim uslovima, mozes da zamislis nekog ko se sada bavi muzikom  
>u Beogradu, da se komotno pojavi pred britanskom publikom? Pri tom ne mislim  
>na muzicare cije je opredeljenje klasika, etno-muzika ili 'world music', vec

*>na one koji su pre svega ukorenjeni u nekom od zanrova prisutnih na Zapadu -  
>gde 'etno' elementi nisu dominantni, ako ih mozda i ima.*

Sta fali etno elementima? Na zalost, retko je i ovde i "tamo" da ih neko koristi na ozbiljan nacin. Mislim da im "tamo" ipak malo bolje ide...

Na tom nesrecnom koncertu u Zoo baru nije bilo Engleza uopste: zapravo, mozda ih je bilo desetak, jedini prepoznatljiv lik je bio moj prijatelj Perry (kako da ne primetis crnca u prvom redu u Zvezdinom dresu?), i cela akcija je prilicno nevesto i diletantski izvedena od strane organizatora (izbor vremena, narocito mesta, i reklama. Koja reklama?), mada sasvim sigurno u najboljoj nameri. Slicnu vrstu organizacione katastrofe smo doziveli u Budimpesti, na onom ogromnom Pepsi Sziget festivalu, samo na kraju nismo ni svirali. Na zalost, na oba mesta nije bilo kontakata sa publikom koja nije iz YU miljea...Sasvim druga prica je bila u Poljskoj, gde smo uspeli da ostavarimo stvarno dobru komunikaciju sa publikom. I naravno, sve ex – YU varijante. Zagreb, pogotovu...

Uopste ne vidim problem u ideji da se neki od aktualnih bendova u Srbiji pretstave publici bilo gde, ima stvari koje su sasvim zrele u svakom smislu (ideoloskom, izvodjackom, tehnickom). Nema ih bas mnogo, istina...Uskoro idemo u Nemacku i Rusiju, bas me zanima...Zaista ne znam kako da ti odgovorim na onaj deo pitanja o uslovima pod kojima je moguće da se ostvari komunikacija sa publikom, nema uslova u klasicnom smislu...

Mislim da je ta populacija zainteresovanih ljudi veoma slicna svuda, kao sto je komunikacija sa nezainteresovanima nemoguca, i u Beogradu i u Londonu jednako...

Komunikaciju sa zainteresovanima bi sigurno pospesila neka logisticka podrška u smislu investicije u osvetljavanje ovdasnjeg bekgrounda, ali ne mislim da je to presudno.

Zvuk, ritam, atmosfera, energija – to se lako prepoznaje vrlidvajd. I mislim da, u sadasnje vreme, mozda i literarno, govori vise od reci.

Jezik moze da bude problem; ali, cini mi se da i to postaje stvar proslosti. Ako ljudima u Britaniji nije problem da slusaju Massive Attack sa vokalom Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan-a, na tecnom Pakistanskom ili koji je to vec jezik, a to ne zvuci etno, onda...Mada, cini mi se da u anglofonskim okruzenjima postoji nesto sto cini africke, azijske i posebno juznoamericke jezike mnogo egzoticnijim i atraktivnijim u poredjenju sa istocnoevropskim varijantama, ili kontinentalnim varijantama uopste. Francuski da ne pomnjemo. Doduse, cini mi se da i ovde ljudi slicno reaguju. Uostalom, sta osim Kraftwerk-a, zvuci dobro na nemackom?

Zajebani hip hop tjun na ceskom? Nije nemoguće, ali je jako tesko...

Razvoj interneta je apsolutno obesmislio mogucnost da bilo koja pojava ostane izolovana ako postoji zelja da bude predstavljena, ali mi se cini da je u oblasti popularne muzike fizicko prisustvo i dalje, bar na pocetku karijere, vazno za datu sredinu. Uostalom, koliko je internet zaista interaktivan? A fizicko prisustvo podrazumeva mnogo stvari, pogotovu finansijske prirode...

Ali to i nije tako vazno, posto je srbijanski smek je usao u popularnu muziku na velika vrata jos sezdesetih, ako preslusas onaj srednji deo "Yellow Submarine" cuces glas koji na losem srpskom kaze "Otvaraj, jebem ti mater! Pusti me!". Ili me bar u to ubedjuju neki sa radija B92, i onda to stvarno i cujes.

Jos jedna legenda...

*>Pominjali smo pojam 'postmodernizam'. Kako bi ga ti definisao u kontekstu savremene*

*>muzike i/ili umetnosti? Da razjasnimo jos jedno opste mesto.*

*>Ovo mozda izgleda kao nekontrolisano skakanje s teme na temu. Ali nije: ovo*

*>pitam u vezi sa pojmom subverzije, povezanim sa muzikom koja je prividno lisena*

*>ideologije. Naime, techno, house & ostali vidovi tzv. dance muzike nisu ocevidno*

*>buntovnicki na nacin na koji je to bio punk. Mozda se i ne slozis. Ali - da*

*>nastavim - koliko su rave zurke u Beogradu imale subverzivnu ulogu tokom devedesetih,*

*>i da li? Kako vidis istoriju 'techna' u Beogradu/Srbiji? Imajuci u vidu da si*

*>vrlo verovatno dobro upoznat sa razvojem od house & acid house zanrova do sadasnjeg*

*>neopisivo raznolikog spektra dence zanrova, kakve paralele & razlike vidis izmedju*

*>poimanja i istorije u Srbiji i svetskih muzickih metropola? Posebno bih tu*

*>imao u vidu 'ideologiju hedonizma', koja se pripisuje dance kulturi, kao i 'plemenskom'*

*>koje je takodje naglaseno (sudeci po izjavama DJ-eva, muzicara, sociologa, itd.).*

Uloga moderne dance muzike i svih njenih subzanrova je imala presudnu ulogu u odrzanju jednog sloja ljudi u Srbiji (dobro, u Beogradu, uglavnom) i nacina misljenja, stavova i komunikacije...Iz vizure predjasnjeg rezima, to je bila maksimalno subverzivna pojava.

Postoje i misljenja da je rezim cak i pospesivao takav razvoj situacije, jer im je navodno odgovaralo da se oni mladi ljudi koji ne hrle da brane domovinu anesteziraju muzikom i drogama, ne bi li pravili sto manje problema u Slobinom bekjardu, a i lakse je kontrolisati sve te "subverzivne objekte" kada se krecu ustaljenim putevima i okupljaju na istim mestima. Ali, mislim da ova (pomalo histericna) teorija zavere, pada u vodu kada se shvati da je upravo i jedna od stvari koja je dovela do konacnog pada tog istog rezima bila muzika. Znaci, nikada nisu imali kontrolu...I mislim da je njihova ocena da im taj nacin komunikacije ne pretstavlja ozbiljnu pretnju bila, hvala Bogu, pogubna.

Bez partija, gostovanja stranih DJ-eva i svega sto prati takav nacin zivota, mnogo ljudi bi ostalo i bez poslednjeg uporista da se brane od medijskog ispiranja mozga i terora sa svih strana; komunikacija, ili iluzija komunikacije (nije bas bila dvosmerna) sa ostatkom sveta bi mozda potpuno i nestala. Interesantno, ljudi koji su i inace pratili desavanja, muziku i medije sa zapada, sada to rade jos vise, skoro fanaticno...Cini mi se da je ovde postojao kompletan i trenutani uvid u svetsku scenu. A taj trajbal element je verovatno ovde bio jos izrazeniji nego inace, slobodnomisleci, normalni (subverzivni) ljudi okruzeni ratovima, izolacijom, policijom i atmosferom

da su izdajnici, ili makar "otpac" od zdravog tela Nacije...Vazno je i pomenuti da je ova scena okupljala i zaista subverzivne politicke elemente (novinari sa B92, npr.) i sluzila kao primer postojanog pružanja otpora intelektualnoj i kulturnoj agresiji od strane drzave, kao i da je bila gravitacioni centar protestnih okupljanja i ulicnih dogadjanja (studentski protest, pa 1996-ta...). Klinci sa ofarbanim kosama, vrlo zivopisno odeveni, sa sajber naocarima za sunce i pistoljkama kao obaveznim detaljem (dobro, pistoljke je valjao Kundak, neki ljudi su stvarno nemoguci. Hm, bili.), koji skacu u ritmu nekog for on d flor tjuna ispred namrgodjenih kordona pod punom ratnom opremom, to je prilicno precizna slika...Sto se tice hedonizma, u ovdasnjem slucaju je to mnogo vise bio stav nego prava stvar, iz poznatih (uglavnom finansijskih) razloga...Ali, i takav je bio dovoljan da ispuni svoju subverzivnu aktivnost, i da posalje jasnu poruku prezira prema drzavi i njenim aktivnostima i dostignucima, kao i prema vecinskom i veoma smorenom delu drustva. Jednostavno, zelali su svoj zivot nazad.

Uostalom, mozes da mislis o punku sta god hoces, ali je cinjenica da je ovde punk bio vrlo lako "pripitomljen" i da su akteri vrlo brzo postajali umorni ili "menjali firmu". Verovatno zato sto je takav pristup mnogo vise poza, izjava ili fashion, nego sto se zaista inkorporira u nacin zivota. Sa druge strane, moderan i eklektican pristup muzici jeste ono sto identifikuje i nacin razmisljanja i zivota, sustinski je mnogo manje kompromisne prirode...Uostalom, nacin buntovnistva u punk pristupu je toliko tupav da je to verovatno vet drim svake vlade.

Svi znamo da David Golijata ne moze da dobije na snagu, ili koriscenjem njegovog oruzija – Golijatova pesnica ili toljaga ce uvek biti i vece i teze. Kada te juri lokomotiva, ne vredi da je ignorises, a vredjanje i psovanje je nece ni malo usporiti. I, nista strategija, to je igra velikih, samo taktika. I brzina...

Postmodernizam? Jao...Zar nemas dovoljno mojih nebuloza i improvizacija iz predjasnjeg razgovora? A ono sto sam ti odstampao, oni mejlovi? Hajde za sada da to preskocimo, pa ako treba, bicu sa druge strane ekrana...

>Gledao sam letos 'Munje'. Da li 'srpski drum'n'bass' zaista postoji? Koliko  
>je relevantan, koliko ga mozda scenarista preferira (kad smo kod scenariste,  
>Pedja Tosovic tvrdi da to nije Mjehur - a ja sam mislio da jeste; ti bi znao  
>odgovor), koliko se tu moze pricati o marketingu, koliko o metafori, koliko  
>o cinjenicama? Da li bismo mogli pricati o nastanku mitologije, gradske price  
>koja je izmenjena do tacke u kojoj se forme zamenjuju a naracija je 'ista',  
>odnosno slicna izvornoj prici? Koliko ta prica, ispricana u filmu, ima veze  
>sa svima a koliko sa pojedinim ljudima. Ko je posluzio za lik Gojka 'sise'??hm?

Pricao sam sa Srdjanom (Andjelicem, Mjehurom), i covek kaze da je on zaista napisao taj scenario, a to je i ono sto sam i sam pratio, posto nas je prvobitno zvao da uradimo ceo saundtrek...A ko bi bio taj pretendent? Hm...

A film? Znas, kada gledam domace filmove snimljene poslednjih desetak godina, a boga mi i duze, na trenutke osecam strahovite napade sramote. Znam da to sto gledam ne bi trebalo da ima ikakve veze sa mnom, ali to osecanje prosto ne mogu da kontrolisem...Zato i ne gledam te filmove, mislim da su Munje jedini domaci film koji sam pogledao u poslednjih 5 – 6 godina. To sto vidimo u filmu jeste neka slika neke ekipe iz neke price u nekom trenutku, naravno dobro unakazena bajatim forama i nevestim, isforsiranim i preglumljenim dijalozima. Znas, ljudi koji glume da glume, nacin govora koji niko nikad ne koristi u realnom zivotu, to je prakticno trejdmark tog novog srpskog dilentantizma, i stvarno smeta...Taj, uslovno receno postmodernisticki (half fiction – half documentary) pristup ume da proizvede zanimljive rezultate, ali samo kada se ozbiljno shvati...Ne znam, ovaj film je onoliko istinit koliko zelis da bude, i onoliko lazan koliko si kritican, ako znas na sta mislim...Ne vidim nikakvu specificnost vezanu za vreme sadasnje; mogao je da bude i crno beli, akteri su mogli da nose odela i haljinice, da se voze u Ficama ili sta se vec tada vozilo, klub je mogao da bude bilo sta, a bend je mogao da se zove "VIS Rolovano pilece", potpuno je svejedno...A panduri u rezervi su uvek panduri u rezervi, naravno. Pazi, to zvuci kao da poseduje neki bezvremeni kvalitet. No, jos jedna ljubavna prica i "sipaticni decaci VS ljigavac – ljubav radja hrabrost koja neocekivano resava stvar" varijanta, i to prilicno tanusna, hm...E, da, pitao sam Srdjana ko mu je bio u glavi kada je dizajnirao Sisu, i, kao i sto sam ocekiavao, nasmejao se i rekao : Uzmi bilo koga (svi su isti)...I, zaista, u pravu je. Grga, ipak? Hehehe...Srpski D'n'B? Ne postoji...Nekoliko izolovanih pojava (neke pesme od Discipline, E-play, DD ili Sile, npr.) ne mogu da cine ni scenu ni fenomen. Ono sto postoji jeste neobicna ljubav u Srba prema tom zvuku, nijedan dogadjaj sa D'n'B prizvukom ne moze da promasi. Moram da priznam, nadao sam se da postoji gomila klinaca koja na kompjuterima pravi opasnu, progresivnu i svezu muziku, ali da zbog situacije sa medijima i izdavackim kucama to ne izlazi iz nekog njihovog uzeg kruga, ali, kako vreme prolazi, sve vise je ocigledno da je to projekcija moje zelje, na zalost...Srpski drum'n'bass, house, techno? Sacekacemo...

>...Klubovi i izdavacke kuce. Konkurencija i selekcija. Ta pitanja su uvek prisutna

>u muzickom i medijskom poslovanju. Koliko su - i koji - klubovi bili, ili sada

>jesu, bitni za razvijanje, kako publike, tako i izvodjaca? Mediji, izdavaci?

Jao. Tuzna prica, zaista...Interesantno, ali su mnogi klubovi i mediji funkcionisali bolje ranije, pre "demokratskih promena". To je opet tema za sopstvenu pricu i pazljivu analizu.

Klubovi su, sada, skoro potpuno izumrli u smislu koncerata novih i malih domacih bendova. Na sreću, gomila diletantsko prevarantskih zahvata iz domena male privrede a pod maskom izdavackih kuca vise ne postoji. Na nesreću, neke jos postoje. Koncertne agencije i "menadzeri" se

pojavljaju i nestaju kao piramidalne banke. Ali zaista, o ovome može mnogo da se priča, ako treba ti javi, a trenutna situacija je ukratko:

Izdavačke kuće: B92, naravno, i sublabel Stereofreeze, a treba obratiti pažnju i na sublabel kuće Automatic koji se zove Tilt i bavi se hip – hopom, tu bi moglo nešto da se desi... Ume i Metropolis, ali retko, da objavi nešto što ima smisla.

Mediji: jako sareno i prilično konfuzno, pogotovu sada...Što se gledanosti tiče, mislim da rejting ide ovim redom: Pink, RTS, ANEM, s tim što ovi prvi otpadaju jer emituju samo svoje (City records/Grand production) horror izvodjace...U BG je idalje u igri i Studio B.

Slušnost: niko ne zna...Specijalizovani muzički časopisi: ne postoje, ako ne računam neke hevi metal fanzine...Specijalizovani multimedia magazini: jedino što se sporadično pojavljuje se zove O.K. i prilično je jadno...Što se tiče situacije sa klubovima, trenutno je konfuzija potpuna, samo se otvaraju i zatvaraju ili menjaju imena ili profile, a praktično nigde nema mesta za nove & mlade bendove, malo ko se uopšte i bavi domaćim koncertima. A možda i nema novih & mladih bendova...Mislim da će situacija na ovom planu da bude mnogo jasnija za otprilike godinu dana. I ranije je postojao taj problem; mi smo se trudili da se ne ponavljamo, pa smo između SKC-a, Doma omladine, Akademije, Hale sportova i Barutane počeli da tražimo druga mesta, nenamenska, kao slep na Savi, pa brod Kolos, Bitef teatar, ko zna šta još...

Uh, izvini, sada moram da završavam, ubice me ovi u studiju...Nisam baš zadovoljan odgovorima, šteta što nismo to mogli da uradimo onda, u jednom dahu...Ako ti treba nešto od ovoga detaljnije ili šta već, pošalji, neću biti toliko spor ovog puta...'Ajde javi kako ti ovo izgleda, i da li uopšte možeš nešto da upotrebiš...Hevi metal vječno živi!

>Tu bih se zaustavio. Voleo bih tvoj odgovor što pre, to bolje. Ako može da bude

>podjednako naporan za čitanje kao i moja pitanja: to su stvari zanimljive za

>analizu na nivou jedne doktorske teze. Ako može u MS Word 97 formatu.

>

>Pozdravi devojku (Jelena? Izvini ako sam pogresio). Šteta je što nisam stigao

>da popricam sa onim ortakom, Pedjom (ti ga zoveš 'Jozha'...)

>

>Cujemo se,

>

>M.



Appendix Twelve: Excerpts from other interviews (poor audibility)

*This Appendix consists of reconstructed conversations with several key individuals involved with the Belgrade underground music scene. Apart from the conversation with Zeljko Kerleta – which was not recorded, but notes were made – all others are interviews, which suffered from long digressions (B. Podunavac) and poor audibility, due to background noise (others). Elements of these conversations are combined with the notes from my reflexive diary.*

Boris Mladenovic, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001, Belgrade.

M T: So... I saw some activity in the Atrium [of the club]. What's going on?

B ML : It's the international Art Students' Festival. The town is full of foreign art students these days. They're preparing [something] ... but I ... think that the club will [reopen] soon –

M T: And is it going to be based on the same concepts? Someone suggested that it might become a gallery or something...

B ML: Yes and no ... not sure ... the guy who's taking it, or trying to do so ... he's pretty cool and quite serious. He released that CD I told you about, 'Leopardov rep' ('Leopard's Tail')...

M T: I need to get hold of that.

B ML: Ask Darko, he's working with him.

...

B ML: well, if you want a good example of what underground is... have you heard of CRSN?

M T: Of course. Some time ago... and I saw them in Subotica.

B ML: Yes, sure, you were there... this is also important, the role of Low Fi should not be underestimated... they discovered them and promoted them... well Corrosion [CRSN] are a proper example of underground here... they represent a genuine underground project.

...

M T: So... what would you recommend ... where could I find some real underground music? I've noticed that there are not that many big venues ...cafés are everywhere but most of them play CDs at the bar...

There's this place, a riverboat... just a short walk away from Branko's bridge...

M T: Cool. The river, that's good...

B ML: Yes, there is this DJ team, they're kids, very talented, they call themselves 'Free...' (inaudible) –

M T: 'Free *Right* Culture'?

B ML: No, no, man, Free *Ride* Culture.

M T: Aaah, yes. It didn't make any sense...

B ML: Have you been to Krivi Stojko?

M T: Yep, weeks ago. I met many people I haven't seen for *years*...

B ML: Yes, it's quite popular with the 'ekipa' ('team', 'crowd'). The only problem is... works Fridays only... as [a club].

M T: What's happening other days.

B ML: Nothing... the guys don't have enough money [to run it] so they rent it out for wedding bashes and stuff... with folk music and that...

M T: (laughs)

...

M T: What about the scene, do you think there is a viable Belgrade scene?

B ML: I don't think that there is any such thing as the scene... it is not monolithic at least, not homogenous... because there is no stylistic unity there, although in the New Wave as well as in our case, we're all friends, we know each other, we also exchange musical influences, but there is no scene... there was always a fashion in Belgrade, to invent some kind of 'scene', people like following trends, but that's merely a construct...

...

M T: Back to the subject – I really could subscribe to your definition of mainstream-underground, that's what you mentioned on the train back from Subotica a while ago, specifically in relation to B92...

B ML: Yes, yes... well, you see, these guys are scared of competition now, they're ageing, and not exactly knowing what's going on in the real underground level... and while in the past they did a good job, now it's all

about their little privileges and stifling competition. I work with them, through my band Jarboli, but I am signed to a London label, Cosmic Sounds through the Coxless Pair ...

M T: Interesting name.

B ML: (laughs) yes, that was the problem, translating Dvojac Bez Kormilara into English... has another connotation, Cox-less, without Carl Cox (famous DJ)... so through this band, my priorities are with a London label... back to B92... I worked at the radio for a while, and I saw the inside stuff... they did to Dragan [Ambrozic] what they did to Fleka... he was sacked, after they used his help... what else should I say? And now they're promoting this so-called underground, which I call 'mainstream-underground', or 'underground-mainstream' if you like...bands like Darkwood Dub, Eyesburn, and all that stuff, they definitely aren't underground. What they [B92] achieve with this is that they are selective in a bad way... warding off healthy competition, preventing new things to emerge, because they feel insecure... while people like Corrosion ... part of that *hacker scene* don't get heard on B92 at all, there is no place for them there, because they are genuinely underground... same as with the Leopard's Tail album, which has recordings that are so rare... no way they could be heard on B92... not commercial enough...

'Domin8r', 'Corrosion' project (CRSN), 30<sup>th</sup> August 2001, Belgrade.

'Domin8r': ... it was the great mistake of our... producers and music businesses to blindly follow and imitate international trends. I hate the term 'DJ-stardom'. I am disillusioned with the whole concept of 'DJ culture'. We [CRSN] had cut our ties with 'Integra' [DJ alliance]. We worked with DJ Mark Wee for a while and it was good until he started playing this commercial crap. You see, in Belgrade, people ... follow trends... fashions... but all of us, me and my friends in CRSN, we all have this... enormous will power... we know what we're doing is right. We resist the industry and its trends ... we are individualistic ... if I'm doing business it will have to be ... individualistic... now, many Serbian DJs ... slipped into commercialisation over the past few years... and we definitely are underground. Though I don't like that word

either. Our aesthetics are pretty strict, and we do not... accept [stylistic] compromises in music, or digital art or whatever we do... We've severed all ties with the commercialised clubbing scene... let me show you some stuff...

...

You see, we only use computers as instruments... DJ-ing is not the real thing...

M T: What I've noticed on your gig in Subotica was that you're not that defined in style... I heard Drum n Bass, Techno-Trance, Hardcore-techno and everything in between, more or less...

Domin8r: For us... genre does not exist. We do not accept such limitations we're uncompromising... in our freedom... that's the main thing...

...

I wouldn't mind making lots of money... we do music, digital art, web-design, animation, name it... money is not on the top of my list [of priorities]... but we did play in Amsterdam, we had great feedback from the audience, we'll play everything... and everywhere... but I can't be bothered with seeking attention or record deals ...if it comes to me that's OK... we'll start a label soon, that's a plan. I want to stay independent... like Warp records, for example...

Nikola Savic, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2001, High Wycombe.

M T: You said you didn't like those –

N S: ... 'Cults'. Yes.

M T: - representing Academy, Soul Food...

N S: You know what defines this frustration of mine, as I told you... because I always was a connoisseur of the electronic sound... it all started from Kraftwerk... I couldn't listen to lots of electronica 'cos there wasn't much made at first... All of my dissatisfaction with those clubs [Academy, Soul Food etc.] was the one ...related to the *sound* [style] itself. That's why I told you I HATE those 'cult [places]' – they annoyed me for their regional character... playing... Rock 'n' Roll and ...NO futurist sound... I never minded the existence of Soul Food because ...it was a place propagating a different sound – not Techno, to be honest, but House and that stuff, but the change

was phenomenal... for a while, the elite was gathering there... but *that too lasted 3-4 years only*, and again it was this one place, the only place – it was inevitable that its intensity... they worked on quantity not quality... but, by the way, what's going on with the Academy now, you told me you were there?

M T: Well, it was a bit of a strange feeling to be there again, especially because the place was barren and the excuse for my visit was... there was this art performance, some Italian students came over and our kids, you should have seen them, they haven't a clue about the old Academy, they stood there as if ... it was ludicrous, the Italians played some balalaikas or mandolins, I don't know, next to the toilet, of all places, why did they choose that part of the club, beats me... but never mind, continue.

N S: ... then we started this whole new thing, the association of young artists (UMUB)... our idea [in 1995] was to continue ...and filter the quality of that music in other spaces and unconventional places – where... you were not supposed to see a club, I saw that as a spatial experiment ...

...

I was not in favour of those *organic spaces*, like our first party was, which was organised in *the balloon*... a disturbance had happened, a *primordial* disturbance...not everyone could get in, technically, there was a problem with the entrance, because of the air (pressure), and that whole process of *maintaining the balloon*... by the middle of the party... from the top of the balloon, sweat started dripping... the air was almost contaminated... that was a horrifically organic, organic-, organic- disturbance, that happened. Immediately after that, the next party turned out to be - in that functional sense - much, er, much more interesting, because that was (going on) in that sugar-production plant, where, *of course*, all those spaces were *terribly* large, they are... let's say, fifteen metres high, so we had no problems of the kind, *factually*, everything was *clean, minimal*... those problems were not appearing... But coming back to the topic of *space*... every space has its own qualities but it also has its own irregularity... it always has to be had in mind that a specific sound has to come in there, a specific lighting... and it is always a question of *what do you want*, what do you want to make of that space. Of course, it is clear that this is a *musical night and a party*, but you always have that possibility, to change that space, *not with sound only, that is*

*very obvious*, but also with lighting. Suddenly you pose the question spatial organisation... and that creates a *very interesting, a very interesting situation*, which, for me, is one of the most creative parts, of the whole project, *of every project*. And, secondly, that all of us looked at it as an *instant... an instant-position*, where we never wanted to repeat ourselves, with the same space, but we always wanted to *open those channels, those forgotten places*. That is very interesting... That is, I think, our greatest quality. Because we had a lot of shortcomings, when it comes to sound, lasers, lighting... in that, others did an immaculate job, like when the 'Enlightenment' party was organised...

...

What I find quite appealing about our parties was that they were all No-Logo, whereas the situation you have in the West dictates commercialisation. In fact that was the difference between us and the Enlightenment event, which was heavily sponsored.

...

...the decline of Techno culture ... [in Belgrade] happened with the Enlightenment event... unfortunately, 2-3000 people who didn't even HEAR of Techno before turned up, together with another 1000 that totally enjoyed that sound... the fall of Techno was – to me – totally predictable, but it was not catastrophic, because the same phenomena occurred in the West – in Europe, America and elsewhere... but with [Belgrade] it had a political connotation, because a couple of groups, including ours (UMUB) received letters preventing us from making parties 'because drugs were' – apparently – 'sold' in our events. In such a way, the [City Council] tried to place their *paw* over our programmes, which was totally stupid, because healthy competition comes from a variety of groups and scenes... not from stifling some and supporting others. It was a bit of a parody... Kasanin, representing the City Council Authorities, thought that they could organise projects, with good DJs, where they would be financially covered. Of course they had the media power... all the power. What was interesting, I saw it with my own eyes, was that MTV – at the time – interviewed the DJs: Strob, Eye and others... AND Mr Kasanin gave an interview to MTV – saying that we are a free country, because we make raves for 5-6000 people while these are banned in England, and that... we are a VERY free society... without a repressive

system... unfortunately the Techno-culture was defused after that party, and all the organisers, including us, were weakened. Events became uniform – which was not the case before. Still... going to Techno parties was a kind of salvation... getting away from the false picture around us, and the false society in which we lived, and that's what factually saved me through those five, six years, while that sound was around.

...One thing I would add... Kozmik saved the day. The guys from B92, especially Boza Podunavac, they did a great job, keeping the criteria high. They really kept the spirits high, they brought many DJs from abroad, that was really good...

9<sup>th</sup> November 2001 Laki (The Unexpected Force), Belgrade.

Laki made a number of interesting comments on why he doesn't like the term 'underground'. I liked the metaphor 'flower that never bloomed'. It was a fine chat but it took him ages to open up. Then, he suddenly became confident. I know that he knows that I know that he was right about the question who was first to play electronic music on non-electronic instruments. He let out a sigh of relief after we finished the interview. When I listened to the tape, I realised that there was a lot of background noise. I will make notes.

...

M T: ...so I understand... you don't like the term 'underground', but I need some workable definition – would you agree ...it's suitable?

L: It is, but because it was so overused and misused by so many people over the years... especially here... I am not too keen on it... but I must agree with you, if you need a working term [of reference], it could be [of use]... what I don't like in particular is that underground is synonymous with some people... and their efforts to justify... doing nothing... it is like a flower that never blooms... always in anticipation but nothing's happening... not enough... I found that... junkies are especially inclined to use it for whatever reason... Orge prefers the term 'overground' ...it is a bit of a comment on all that... but you see 'underground' implies rebellion ('bunt') ...and you can't be a rebel all your life.

M T: you mean...?

L: ...I am not dismissing rebellion as such but you need to mature... that's when you start actually getting something out [of your work]... material and moral satisfaction... I'm not saying that I wasn't a rebel... punk influenced me profoundly... but, then, look at punk... it was a genuine sell-out, a movement that made money ...it eventually became quite commercial...

...

M T: is there a scene now in Belgrade?

L: You could [say so] ...but the scene needs some centre of gravity and that is missing... all the big clubs now are closed... which maybe isn't that bad... for socialising... many small cafés and venues where people congregate... you have more privacy to chat with your friends... to mingle, socialise... with big clubs and music pounding... that is different... then again... not much [space] for gigs nowadays...

...

M T: I find it interesting... you [The Unexpected Force] are primarily a live band...

L: yes. And that is because ...we don't come up with prepared concepts... I wish there was more of that... some stability... it is a negotiation on-stage... sometimes it works... we capture the moment... but I would prefer a bit of stability...

M T: I call you... as people did, initially... 'hand-made techno'... it kind of coincides... like a synchronous development ...without mutual influence... with what – for example – 'Faithless' did and do...

L: Come on, you *know* who did it first... we did...

...

M T: I find it interesting... you go through so many changes on stage... transforming from something that sounds almost like blues... to some psychedelic stuff ...reminds me of Pink Floyd, to something like trance-techno... with repetitive beats and whirling guitars and effects... techno...

L: I have to correct you there... none of us... I know... ever listened to Pink Floyd... what you might [have heard] as 'Floyd' is an influence from Alan Vega's 'Suicide'... that influenced us a lot... but so did Fela Kuti... many influences are there... we just recombine them into something new...



11<sup>th</sup> November 2001, DJ Boza Podunavac, Belgrade.

(There were many digressions and interruptions. As with Laki and Boris Mladenovic, it was not possible to reconstruct everything, because of a poor recording).

Boza Podunavac made an interesting point on the enormous variety of music available on the net, though I don't agree with him that we will never be able to compete. This cannot last forever, and there are people who work well, including him, by the way. He is an OK guy, we talked for hours.

M T: I still think that there is some power in the sound of the Belgrade streets

B P: *Why would you think something like that?*

M T: its creative potential... could we compete in the world market?

B P: No way... we are so much behind, we have to face it... this country is in ruins... how can you talk about that if we have some basic problems to solve... you still need to rebuild the place and get the economy right... which will take ages... we are left behind... well behind... listen, I spend a lot of time on the Internet ... look at this database... thousands of tracks... thousands of people... and it's all technically superior... any kid in the West could do it now... Italy for example... they have hundreds, thousands of DJs and small producers... look at the offering in the world... we could never compete with that, we're too much behind... you can't build a social superstructure on a ruined infrastructure...

7<sup>th</sup> December 2001, Zeljko Kerleta (Cosmic Sounds), London.

On 7<sup>th</sup> December 2001 I spoke to Zeljko Kerleta from Cosmic Sounds. We spoke over the phone and I made notes. He was quite open and friendly, as I referred to Dule Petrovic (from Coxless Pair) who gave me his number. He was quite honest. When I asked him about the term 'Serbian Underground Music', he suggested a definition of underground as something subject-specific, genre-specific, a part of a smaller cultural niche, a minute market

segment. When I asked him whether there is room for Serbian musicians involved in that kind of production, he said, of course there is, and that this was one of the things that brought him to start a label. But he disagreed with any definition that would imply a homogenous approach based on nationality. The market is so vast, he said, that there is enough room for many. He offered one example. The way he initially defined his label was through 'Eastern European Jazz'. The whole idea started from Dusko Gojkovic, a Jazz trumpeter who was world-renowned from the late Fifties/early Sixties. He performed with the legendary Kenny Clark. Kerleta started his label, re-releasing Gojkovic's record from 1961, and then moved on to contemporary musicians. He firmly believed that there is a niche for him and his label, since his work has a tiny audience – spread the world over. His estimate was that at any given time he could sell up to 10,000 records world-wide. The perennial problem was - he maintained - distribution: how to reach such an audience? On the point of Serbian, or Belgrade underground music, he added that in London's cosmopolitan market 'nobody cares about national origin of a musician', but that the only things that matter are musicianship and professionalism. He asked me if I heard of 'Suba' and I was a bit confused. He went to explain that this was the name under which a seminal author from Novi Sad, Mitar Subotic, worked in Brazil. Then I connected things, realising that he is referring to the same man whose artistic pseudonym was 'Rex Illusivii'. Suba was recognised and respected in London as a Brazilian musician, having had a loyal niche audience. Interesting point.