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Yugonostalgia in the market: Popular music and consumerism in post-Yugoslav space

Jugonostalgija na trgu: popularna glasba in potrošništvo v post-jugoslovanskem prostoru

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IZVLEČEK

Članek se ukvarja s post-jugoslovansko popularno glasbo in jugonostalgijo. Z dotično tematiko se ukvarjam tako, da pokažem, kako v kompleksnem post-jugoslovanskem prostoru vznikne nov glasbeni trendi – trend, ki se poslužuje kulture spominjanja na Jugoslavijo v namen, da bi nastal izdelek, ki bi namara bil zanimiv za post-jugoslovanski trg. Razpravljam o odzivih občinstva na takšen trg.

ABSTRACT

This article deals with the post-Yugoslav popular music and Yugonostalgia. I elaborate on the issue, showing how in the complex post-Yugoslav space a new trend in the musical market appeared – a trend of using the culture of remembrance of Yugoslavia in order to make the products that might be interesting for the post-Yugoslav market. I discuss the reactions of the audience to such market.

Introduction

We are together because we sing some songs together, not as us, the Serbs, the Croats, the Muslims, and the Slovenes, but just as us, the people who sing those songs together after everything [...].¹

After the fall of the socialist Yugoslavia, in the era of new technologies and the Internet, numerous complex sorts of remembrance of Yugoslavia have appeared, most of them taking place in the Internet spaces. It can be argued that certain cyber Yugoslavia(s) appeared in copious discussions on the remembrance of Yugoslavia such as those related to certain you tube links showing videos from Yugoslav era, as well as many Facebook pages and groups. The remembering of the past can happen through the emotional engagement of sharing the same culture, so that the collectivities are made in a concrete space, at a certain time, as a result of listening to the same music or discussing the same issues, watching the same film or consuming other Yugoslav product. Unlike the similar events at the territory of former Yugoslavia that happen alive (such as concerts and similar public events), the same act in the context of the virtual culture can serve as a tool for obtaining the imaginary pre-war Yugoslav collectivities, as well as a means for overcoming the post-Yugoslav political issues. This kind of virtual belonging has been engaged in the tendencies both to keep Yugoslav cultural space and to blur new post-Yugoslav divisions in the context of actual post-Yugoslav conflicted societies.² Thus, the audience appears to be realized both in actual and virtual space and can refer to the actual (physical, material) audience, and the audience that is created virtually through social networking. Through sharing of common cultural memories, reconnecting of the collectives happens.³

One of the manifestations of cyber (post)Yugoslav spaces refers to the issue of nostalgia and the symbols of Yugoslavia in contemporary post-Yugoslav societies. Even though there are many divergent kinds of nostalgia as a cultural phenomenon, as well as different approaches to it, one specific sort of this phenomenon is related to the usage of Yugoslav symbols or even the actual word "Yugoslavia", sometimes seeming to be justified solely for the commercial reasons, i.e. to draw attention to certain (musical) products. I will here elaborate on this issue, showing how in the complex post-Yugoslav space a new trend in the musical market appeared – a trend of using the culture of remembrance of Yugoslavia in order to make the songs that might be appealing to the post-Yugoslav market. After discussing general characteristics of Yugonostalgia, I will focus on the question: has Yugoslavia and Yugonostalgia become popular features of post-Yugoslav musical market? Can Yugonostalgia be in fact commercialized and worn, just as easy as the earrings in a shape of Yugoslavia, sold in the Museum of History of Yugoslavia in Belgrade? Is there any difference between wearing Yugoslavia as

1 The statement given by the musician Goran Bregović in December 2014 on Radio Television Vojvodina.

2 Ana Petrov and Lada Stevanović, "The State of Cyborg Citizens: The After-life of Yugoslavia in the Internet Space," in *Deep Archaeology*, edited by Ana Petrov and Anita Stojnić, forthcoming.

3 See: Ana Petrov, "Popular Music and Producing Collectivities: The Challenges of Audience Research in Contemporary Musicology," *Musicology* 18 (2015): 99–113; Ana Petrov, "The Songs We Love to Sing and the History We Like to Remember: Tereza Kesovija's Come Back in Serbia," *Southeastern Europe* 39/2 (2015): 192–214.

an accessory and thinking about it nostalgically while listening to the music that was made after the dissolution of Yugoslavia but has references to the country? Drawing on the mentioned audience research, I deal with the issue from the perspective of the virtual audience reception of the specific musical products.

Yugonostalgia: an emotion, an ideology, a theoretical issue

There is an extensive amount of research debating the concept of Yugonostalgia. Being highly controversial and contradictory, the term itself can be generally understood as “nostalgia for Yugoslavia” and for the lost “golden age”. However, its usage is multifarious and ambiguous. Regarding musical practices in post-Yugoslav spaces, Yugonostalgia can refer to the capacity of (Yugoslav) music to construct and (re)interpret the Yugoslav past. Certain authors have a more critical approach to the Yugoslav musical past, interpreting it as manipulation with the nostalgic memories. The past (Yugoslav) experiences – initially very familiar and strongly felt – are lost, but constantly return to trouble the stable boundaries, representing something that challenges and resists the (spatial and temporal) dichotomies. Yugonostalgia can be manifested in space, time, and persons.⁴ Furthermore, it can generally said that it appears to be as an emotion (recognized in the reactions), promulgated or rejected ideology (manifested in the discourses), and a product (since it can be commodified and can sell emotions and ideologies, mostly through the souvenirs produced in post-Yugoslav time and space, but referring to Yugoslavia).⁵

Theoretically, the problem in dealing with nostalgia seems to be in the approaches that tend to present simplified and one-sided interpretations of the phenomenon. It has often been argued that it is: 1. a regressive and passive phenomenon, opposed to the supposedly progressive post-Yugoslav capitalist societies, and thus often commercialized; 2. a feature with an emancipatory potential that functions like opposition towards nationalist paradigm in post-Yugoslav societies, often spontaneous. However, it is rarely claimed that it might be a combination of the approaches – in both cases the emotion and the ideology can equally be subdued to the process of commercialization. Having in mind the mentioned, I here argue that: Yugonostalgia functions as an integral part of the (music) market. I draw on an extensive research dealing with divergent kinds of nostalgia (the so called post-socialist and post-communist being the

4 For an overview of the approaches to Yugonostalgia see, for instance, Claire Bancroft, “Yugonostalgia: The Pain of the Present,” *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*. Paper 787, 2009, accessed on March 28, 2015, http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/787; Monica Palmberger, “Nostalgia Matters: Nostalgia for Yugoslavia as Potential Vision for a Better Future,” *Sociologija* 4 (2008): 355–370; Tanja Petrović, “The Territory of the Former Yugoslavia in the Mental Maps of Former Yugoslavs: Nostalgia for Space,” *Sprawy Narodowościowe*, Seria Nova. Zeszyt 31 (2007): 263–273. For the critique of the concept see: Zala Volčič, “Yugonostalgia: Cultural Memory and Media in the Former Yugoslavia,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24/1 (2007): 21–38; Zala Volčič, “Neither “East” nor “West”: The Past and present Life of Yugoslav Identity,” in *Rules and Roles: Fluid Institutions, Hybrid Roles, and Identities in East European Transformation Processes (1989–2005)*, edited by P. Kabachkchieva and A. Kiossev (Sofia: University of Sofia, 2009), 251–266.

5 One of the most typical examples of the above mentioned process seems to be evident in one specific sort of Yugonostalgia – in Titostalgia. Mitja Velikonja, *Titostalgija* (Beograd: XX vek, 2010).

most common but not the only one),⁶ in which it has been discussed upon the usage of allegedly personal feelings for selling products, music being very common one.

Yugoslavia sells? Yugoslavia and Yugonostalgia in the market

Together with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the music market did not disintegrate completely. Continual consuming of the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav music, as well as the concerts of former Yugoslav stars led to a blurring of newly made (and supposedly clear) borders between national music practices and markets. The borders, however, were actually never that clear and strict. The porousness of the musical boundaries within the successor states stems from the institutional infrastructure inherited from Yugoslavia. Even though in Yugoslavia republican markets functioned independently, inter-republican ties were essential for the success of major artists. This, moreover, has been a pattern replicated in the post-Yugoslav time in the form of artists' returns to the concert stages of their political adversaries.⁷ At the same time, it seems that the post-Yugoslav market lacks the organisation and interconnectedness, so that the musicians have been trying to draw attention to themselves and to make a sense of continuity with previous Yugoslav market using various strategies, the reference to Yugoslavia (including the actual word "Yugoslavia") being one of them.

I will point to two representative and recent examples, both from 2015: two songs, one performed by Ana Bebić and Željko Vasić, and other by Amadeus band,⁸ both entitled *Yugoslavia*, and both actually have nothing to do with Yugoslavia itself. Namely, Yugoslavia here stands for a metaphor for lost love, a love relationship that was broken up, just like Yugoslavia. In Ana Bebić and Željko Vasić's duet, whole text refers to the relationship, with no reference to Yugoslavia or Yugoslav past. However, the love story is connected to the former country in the refrain, where it is stated:

We used to be an example for others, but fatal destiny happened to us
Life is war and peace and there are no rules in it
Our love is broken just like Yugoslavia.⁹

The actual word "Yugoslavia" is then repeated a few times, making an impression that the song itself is completely devoted to the country, which is apparent from the reactions of the virtual audience who in fact expected more concrete relations to the country itself. In fact, the complete discussion related to the link with the song is devoted to Yugoslavia, its qualities, supposedly better past, but also, the reasons for the

6 Tonya K. Davidson, Ondine Park, Rob Shields, eds., *Ecologies of Affect. Placing Nostalgia, Desire, and Hope* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

7 Catherine Baker, "The Politics of Performance: Transnationalism and its Limits in Former Yugoslav Popular Music, 1999-2004," *Ethnopolitics* 5/3 (2006): 275-293. See also: Ana Petrov: *Jugoslovenska muzika bez Jugoslavije. Koncerti kao mesta sećanja* (Beograd: Fakultet za medije i komunikacije, 2016).

8 The musicians are representatives of a new post-Yugoslav pop scene in Serbia, popular in recent years, especially in the case of Amadeus band, which music belongs to the genre that is in between pop and folk, thus being present especially in the scene in diaspora where the band has regularly performed.

9 The video is available on the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YrwrurahAQs>, accessed January 5 2017.

dissolution of the country and the wars.

In Amadeus band's song, the word "Yugoslavia" is used in almost the same fashion, since it is stated that "our love was beautiful just like old Yugoslavia".¹⁰ There is, furthermore, another playing with Yugoslav symbols in the text, for instance, the eyes of the ex girlfriend are blue as Adriatic and her soul is like Macedonia; Sarajevo, Zagreb and Belgrade cannot sleep now, everyone from Vardar to Triglav knows that the couple is not together anymore (which is a reference to the unofficial Yugoslav anthem *Jugoslavijo* that opens with a verse "From Vardar to Triglav"). However, the singer also has a line: "everything is flat to Kosovo to me with whom you are now", which means that he is not afflicted anymore. The focus is in the refrain, just like in the first example. It is stated:

Sarajevo, Zagreb, nor Belgrade aren't sleeping
We are not together anymore and the whole city is talking about that
Everyone from Vardar to Triglav should know that we are not together anymore
Everything is flat to Kosovo to me with whom you are now.

Furthermore, both of the mentioned songs also use Yugoslav symbols in the videos. In the first mentioned song, the dancers are wearing the hats and scarps that were a part of the pioneer uniforms in the socialist Yugoslavia.¹¹ The second song's video is realised in between a segment from Yugoslav national anthem *Hej Sloveni*, and a quotation by Josip Broz Tito, in which he points out that "all of the republics would be nothing if they aren't united in Yugoslavia". The video starts as if it was a part of the newsreel *Filmske novosti*,¹² and ends suddenly with an (unexpected and almost inexplicable) explosion.

10 The video is available on the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kN5rrayhrQI>, accessed January 10 2017.

11 An important segment of Yugoslav politics was the pioneer culture. Founded in 1942 in Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the 1st Congress of the United Alliance of Anti-Fascist Youth of Yugoslavia, the Pioneer Alliance of Yugoslavia had its origin in World War II and the National Liberation Movement. For the first eight years it was tied to the youth organisation, but then it was put under the jurisdiction of the newly established Council of the Pioneer Alliance and the republican and federal organisations for the care and upbringing of children. Throughout the socialist period all first graders at the age of six or seven were admitted to the organisation and stayed members until the seventh grade, when at the age of thirteen or fourteen they entered the Alliance of Socialist Youth. As pioneers, children were active through the sections in elementary schools and took part in different activities. A few times a year, on state holidays, anniversaries and special events, children would wear their pioneer uniforms of regular dark blue trousers or skirts and white shirts or blouses. The symbols and the idea of such an organisation found direct inspiration in the Soviet pioneers, a fact which made some want to disband the pioneer organisation after the Yugoslav-Soviet split in 1948. However, the Pioneer Alliance survived and was active until the late 1980s. On the pioneers and socialist ideology see Igor Duda, *Danas kada postajem pionir: Djetinjstvo i ideologija jugoslavenskoga socijalizma* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2015).

12 The Yugoslav newsreel company *Filmske novosti* (Film News) was founded on 20 October 1944, on the day when Belgrade was freed in World War II, as a film section within a department of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia. Initially they worked under the name *Zvezda film* as a 'state economical firm for production of documentaries and newsreel' (Kosanović 2004), until 1950 when the company was renamed *Centralni studio Filmskih novosti* (Central Studio of Film News). *Filmske novosti* succeeded in producing a regular weekly national film journal which contained several reports. *Filmske novosti* can be seen as one of the prominent propaganda mechanisms which promoted the cult of labour, the narratives of Partisan struggle and the ideology of 'brotherhood and unity'. It featured reports from different spheres of social life, including political news, building infrastructural projects and new industrial capacities, as well as information on cultural and sport events and general reports on everyday and leisure activities. *Filmske novosti* also included relevant news from abroad, both filming reports on trips made by Yugoslav politicians, sportspersons and other relevant presenters and engaging in international collaborations. Srdan Atanasovski and Ana Petrov, "Carnal Encounters and Producing Socialist Yugoslavia: Voluntary Youth Labour Actions on the Newsreel Screen," *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, 6/1 (2015): 21–32.

The songs are obviously done with a simple idea to provoke the reactions with the reference to Yugoslavia. Yugonostalgia is here directly addressed and expected from the audience, since it is obviously counted on the possibility that the word “Yugoslavia” itself can bring attention. Additionally, the visual texts are also explicit, with pioneers and divergent segments from popular culture, such as disco and folk dancers, incorporated in a dialog happening in an elevator in the video of the first song, and actual archive materials in the second video, mostly representing Tito. It is rather clear that we are here dealing with a specific manifestation of Yugonostalgia and specifically the manipulation of Yugonostalgia, the one that is used with the aim to address nostalgic people and to intrigue the audience, possibly the younger generation that could be assumed to be the consumers of such songs. This kind of visibly commercial usage of the very word “Yugoslavia”, which has obviously somehow become a brand that can sell a music product, can also be labelled as a phenomenon that Mitja Velikonja calls neo-nostalgia, a nostalgic practice that plays with stereotypes of socialist Yugoslavia, but does not (necessarily) correlate with actual reactions of the audience.¹³

Moving on to the issue of consuming such products by the audience, the most relevant feature to mention is that the comments on the mentioned videos are sometimes opposite of what one would imagine it was expected by the songs’ and videos’ producers. Despite the transparent effort to attract potentially Yugonostalgic audience with the reference to Yugoslavia and its past, the Yugoslavia catchy word did not actually always work, for various reasons, and especially regarding the first song. I would highlight two most common arguments for the mentioned statements. On one hand, the usage of one word just in order to bring attention to the song is too transparent way of playing with the Yugoslav past, although there were comments stating that playing with the word “Yugoslavia” makes the song somewhat intriguing. However, the critical remarks were prevalent. As it is stated in one commentary:

People think that they can just put the word Yugoslavia and that would be enough for a song to be interesting.¹⁴

Some even clearly stated: “I listened to the song because of the title, it simply drew my attention”.

On the other hand, the song did attract the attention of a collectivity of people that could be labelled (and sometimes they did it themselves) as “genuine” Yugoslavs: the people who identify themselves with certain aspects of the life in socialist Yugoslavia and connect their life experiences with the symbols related to Yugoslavia. Some of them clearly declared: “I admit, I am a Yugoslav”. Additionally, they sometimes have specific expectations from Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav music. They expressed their disagreement with the commercial usage of the Yugoslav past, since they simply expected more of the song entitled *Yugoslavia*. Hence, it is also argued that:

13 Mitja Velikonja, “Rock’n’retro: novi jugoslavizam u savremenoj slovenačkoj popularnoj muzici,” in *Nebeska Jugoslavija*, edited by Ivan Čolović (Beograd: XX vek, 2015), 67–175.

14 All of the comments here listed are available with the link with the song in question: accessed January 5, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yrwurahAQs>.

The socialist Yugoslavia was a good country, people lived normally and the music was of higher quality, and this kind of commercialization is disrespecting.

Furthermore, it is stated that such songs point to the fact that “new generations cannot understand how music market used to be developed”. It is also noted that it is “regretful that this kind of music propaganda can be used in order to supposedly promote the socialist system”. Thus, the intention to provoke the attention of the audience with a simple reference to Yugoslavia was mostly seen through, so that the songs were regarded as being of such a low quality “even to use the word Yugoslavia, let alone represent the country itself”. It is also very symptomatic that the people tried to “defend” the Yugoslav music itself, claiming that such songs should not use the reference to the country in which the music of high quality was made. Even the examples are listed, from very divergent genres, such as: EKV, Šarlo Akrobata, Toma Zdravković.

However, it would be misleading to generalize and conclude that there are no other discourses apart from the one on the love towards Yugoslav culture and the regret about the end of Yugoslavia, as well as those referring to popular culture and the high quality of Yugoslav popular music. The discourse on the war, the national separation and even hate, is also possible to locate. Thus, in the world of these virtual citizens there are also reminders that post-Yugoslav divided territory is real and it corresponds to the symbolic boundaries among the people, which is evident in plentiful comments about the Serbs who “always regret about the past, unlike the others”, and also the comments about the responsibility for the dissolution of the country. A part of the discussion was even realised as statements and replies about pros and cons of Yugoslavia and socialist system. Still, the prevailing were the reactions concerning the commercialisation of the remembrance on Yugoslavia and the comments regarding the actual music in Yugoslavia. It can be concluded that even the audience itself agreed that the intention to provoke the potential listeners and viewers with the word “Yugoslavia” was transparent, banal, too commercial and market oriented, and thus futile.

The second video appears to be rather provocative referring the discussion about the Yugoslav past itself, not just the Yugoslav music and popular culture in general, possibly due to its original archive materials and the national anthem, since there were plenty comments that reveal regretting that Yugoslavia broke up.¹⁵ The concept of brotherhood and unity is also mentioned.¹⁶ In fact, most of the comments, unlike the first mentioned song, refer to Yugoslavia, not to the song, nor the supposedly banal usage of the name of the former county. In other words, in the virtual space of the comments, there is one symptomatic phenomenon; namely, it is not discussed about certain vague emotional space, such as “our youth”, “our past”, “our love” (which is often

15 The comments on the video are available on the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kN5rrayhrQI>, accessed January 10, 2017.

16 Ideals upon which the society in the socialist Yugoslavia rested were the ideology of brotherhood and unity (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*), among divergent nationalities and national minorities in the country, the cult of labour and the legacy of the Partisan struggle, all of which were connected to the idea of creating a “new man”, a young person who creates, propagates and embodies the ideas of the new socialist state in his/her daily life. See, for instance, Ivana Dobrovojević, “Između ideologije i pop kulture. Život omladine u FNRJ 1945-1955,” *Istorija 20. veka* 1 (2010): 119–132.

the case when Yugonostalgia is in question),¹⁷ but rather the actual Yugoslavia, bringing the chat to the manifestation of a clearly expressed Yugonostalgia verbalised in the regrets about the past times. Another symptomatic feature is to be seen in divergent dialect of the language formerly known as Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian, that is, the official language in Yugoslavia. Thus, it can be concluded that manifested Yugonostalgia is not one-sided, but is rather collectively constructed by the virtual audience that comes from different parts of former country. For instance, it is stated: "What a country Yugoslavia used to be. Why was such a beautiful country destroyed?" As answers to the comment, it is stated that "there are no such similar nations in the world as the ones that used to live together in Yugoslavia". The people in this virtual conversation clearly stated that they are from divergent parts of former Yugoslavia, as well as that they are young, never had lived in Yugoslavia, and similar. Despite the mentioned fact, they claimed to be regretful about the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Moreover, the people from different parts of Yugoslavia share positive attitudes on Yugoslavia and address each other with well-known socialist greeting "comrade" (*druže/drugarice*), or in some cases, with "my brother/sister", thus expressing the rejection of current usual greeting "sir or madam" (*gospodine/gospodo*). On the territory that suffered from great losses of lives and had witnessed intense immigration during and after the dissolution of the country, it seems that the music have much intense emotional potential, since the music and public figures tend to become triggers for dealing with the troubled past. An intriguing feature regarding the reactions to the second song seems to be in the fact that those reactions were triggered by a song that was made long after the break up of Yugoslavia. Namely, it is not rare feature that the music from Yugoslavia can embody the symbolism for the whole Yugoslavia and thus can trigger the emotions and recollections on Yugoslavia. However, in this case, the music made long after the end of Yugoslavia also provokes memories, as well as discussions on Yugoslavia.

However, just like in the first case, the discourse on the war, the national separation and hate, is also present. Also in the world of these virtual citizens there are also examples that point to post-Yugoslav divided territory that is real and that it corresponds to the symbolic boundaries among the people. One exceptional comment regards this perspective:

I do not think that this song is made in praise of Yugoslavia. It is about a great love between two people and it is a metaphor for former great Yugoslavia in which the peoples were together and they love each other, or at least it seemed so. But, in the end [...] each republic went to its own path and we (the Serbs) do not care anymore, just the same as the guy in the song does not care about the girl anymore. He overcame the love and so should we. This is how I understand the song.

The comment, however, was also completely ignored, except for one reply in which it is pointed that "people do not care about nationalism or communism, but rather they just want to live without hate." This response in fact show that the intention of the

17 See, for instance, Ana Petrov, "The Songs We Love to Sing."

musicians to bring the attention and provoke the reactions with the Yugoslav symbolism actually worked, since the love in the song is multifariously connected to Yugoslavia, mostly directly, but sometimes, as in the last example, just on the level of symbolism for love and peace among divergent peoples on the territory of the socialist Yugoslavia.

Conclusion

"Entitle a song Yugoslavia and it will be viewed because of the arguments in the comments. It is genius".¹⁸

Considering both cases, it can be concluded that these kinds of commercial expectations from the post-Yugoslav audience can be futile, but can also work out completely, for seemingly banal visual, verbal or musical triggers of memories related to the country, such as, for instance, Tito, or the Yugoslav national anthem. The comments on the second song were often: "Long live Tito", or: "Long live Yugoslavia", and some contained the parts of the national anthem of Yugoslavia, such as: "Proklet bio izdajica svoje domovine" (Let the traitor of the homeland be cursed). Trying to explain different reactions to two songs (I remind that there is almost no criticism to the second song, unlike the first one), it is important to notice that the usage of the symbolism in the second song was much more successful. The national anthem and the appearance of Tito himself seem to be powerful triggers of memories.

Having in mind such examples, the following question can be posed: What does it mean to capitalize on nostalgia, is commodified nostalgia here to stay? Do such commercial usage of Yugoslavia and its past tend to be manipulative with people's feelings and memories on their own past? Finally, are the former Yugoslavs sometimes consumed by nostalgia?

As mentioned before, nostalgia can be treated with regard to its cultural dimension, can be interpreted as a social state, an emotion, as well as ideology. Concerning the issue of nostalgia and commercialism, it is often argued that they can be tools supporting a wide range of paradigms, and thus can be tools designed to promote a nationalistic or hegemonic agenda, but also can be engaged in divergent personal dealing with the past. Drastic changes in economic and political life in the years after the collapse of socialism have led to anxiety and uncertainty, together with excitement and hope. This is no specificity of post-Yugoslav spaces, since economic rationalization of the cultural industries has resulted in extensive repackaging and repurposing of existing content in order to secure customer acceptance elsewhere.¹⁹ However, specific for post-Yugoslav context is definitely highly emotional reactions, remembrance of both the socialist and the war past, and thus the existence of copious stands regarding the politics during and after Yugoslavia.

It can be stated that to capitalize on nostalgia is to profit from the sale of such memories and that emotions, no matter how manipulated, retain their naturalness and

¹⁸ A comment regarding the first here discussed song entitled *Yugoslavia*.

¹⁹ S. D. Chrostowska, "Consumed by Nostalgia?," *SubStance* 122 (2010): 52–70.

remain a counterweight to materialism. Still, capitalized nostalgia can cost parts of our ability to bear the weight of private memory - that is, memory that is alive not in spite but because of its solitude. It puts into question the value of lived experience, whose reproduction becomes patented and marketed as authentic, further becomes itself "nostalgogenic". Certain authors hence argue that "commodified nostalgia is predictably self-consuming nostalgia".²⁰ Such conclusions, however, do not fully explicate the cultural conditions in which "the relics of symbolically polluted time re-emerge as its purified signifiers and culturally successful icons within new circumstances".²¹ It is highly important to locate possible meanings of a feature in post-Yugoslav societies: people articulate nostalgic commitments to the past they might have themselves recently jettisoned, or, opposed to that, younger generation supposedly feel nostalgic about the time, state and system in which they had never lived. There are scholars who suggest that certain kinds of nostalgia are "primarily connected to persisting, defensive ideological attachments of the older and sheer vogue among the younger generations facilitated by denial and historical ignorance, respectively".²² It can even be noted that nowadays there is a general "popular curiosity" towards the past, the concrete one, or some mystified past, since we are living in a time of uncertainty, combined with the commercialization of content, which can "converge in a 'rediscovery' of history". From this perspective, "with characteristic commercial manipulation, historical narratives are injected with a heavy dose of melancholy and sentimentality, quite appropriate for nostalgic invocation".²³

Moving back to the actual audience that consume the musical products here discussed, some remembering the past with nostalgia, whereas others debating on various political issues, I argue that Yugonostalgia is an important feature of the post-Yugoslav collectivities. As such, it should be considered with regard to many concomitants with which it is often manifested, whether it might be simple recollections on the past, or it provokes discussions, or it brings to conversations about the quality of popular music and the comparison with contemporary production. It is a feature that is rather common in those societies and it certainly points to the issues of the past, present and possibly the future of them. It is not a passive audience, having in mind that they tend to express their statements in abundance regarding divergent issues, often disapproving the fact that they are addressed with the expectations to react nostalgically. At the same time, however, this collectivity of the virtual post-Yugoslav audience does tend to react as expected. Namely, both of the songs have provoked reactions solely due to the reference to Yugoslavia, that is, due to their catchy titles. From this perspective, it can be concluded that such virtual audiences show complex and often contradictory characteristics, which in fact point out to the actual characteristics of the post-Yugoslav societies themselves - they are conflicted and networked in copious narratives regarding the past and the present.

20 S. D. Chrostowska, "Consumed by Nostalgia?," 54.

21 Dominik Bartmanski, "Successful icons of failed time: Rethinking postcommunist nostalgia," *Acta Sociologica* 54/3 (2011): 213-231.

22 More on such an approach see Dominik Bartmanski, "Successful icons of failed time," 213.

23 Wu Jing, "Nostalgia as Content Creativity: Cultural Industries and Popular Sentiment," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 9/3 (2006): 359-368.

In his reminiscences on Yugoslavia, Alvaro Guerra, former Portuguese ambassador in Yugoslavia, posed a question: “what does it mean when someone declares that he/she is an ex Yugoslav?”²⁴ If the country is labelled as former or ex Yugoslavia, are the people, the past, the experiences, the memories, the culture also ex? Yugoslavia as a geopolitical entity does not exist anymore. In many other contexts, however, Yugoslavia is not gone. Former is the state apparatus, but not the space of Yugoslavia, nor diverse aspects of Yugoslav culture. It appears that certain phenomena are former, others are post-Yugoslav, but, there are still many of them that are simply Yugoslav. If Yugoslavia is regularly written about as “dead”²⁵ and “late”,²⁶ how should we then treat its cultural continuation, and, after all, its citizens? It can be argued that even though the category “Yugoslav” has been officially distinguished, there are still Yugoslavs, at least in certain micro dimensions of the post-Yugoslav cyber space. They might not be visible in a material sense but they in fact do form a unique sort of the community of the citizens who lost their country and who often tend to problematize current political situation, sometimes appearing even when not expected, and sometimes just to confirm that they are still vulnerable enough that a song entitled *Yugoslavia* could provoke tremendous emotional reactions.

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²⁴ Alvaro Gera, *Jugoslovenske hronike* (Beograd, Paidea, 2015), 7.

²⁵ Ante Perković, *Sedma republika. Pop kultura u Yu raspadu* (Beograd and Zagreb: Službeni glasnik and Novi liber, 2011).

²⁶ Mitja Velikonja, “Povratak otpisanih. Emancipatorski potencijali jugonostalgije,” in *Zid je mrtav; živeli zidovi. Pad Berlinskog zida i raspad Jugoslavije*, edited by Ivan Čolović (Beograd, XX vek, 2015), 366–398.

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POVZETEK

Po razpadu socialistične Jugoslavije, v obdobju novih tehnologij in interneta, se je pojavilo veliko kompleksnih oblik spominjanja na Jugoslavijo, večina v internetnih okoljih. Ena od manifestacij kibernetских (post)jugoslovanskih okolij se nanaša na temo nostalgije in jugoslovanskih simbolov v sodobnih post-jugoslovanskih družbah. V članku dokazujem, da jugonostalgija zavzema bistveno mesto na (glasbenem) trgu. Ustvarja občutek 'izbire' in podobnost alternativni, ki je lahko v nekaterih primerih ničeva, v drugih pa produktivna. Črparam iz obširnega raziskovanja, ki se ukvarja

z različnimi oblikami nostalgij (pri čemer sta t. i. post-socialistična in post-komunistična najbolj pogosti, ne pa tudi edini), v katerem se je razpravljalo o uporabnosti domnevno osebnih čustev za prodajo izdelkov. Kljub temu, da obstaja veliko različnih vrst nostalgij kot kulturnih fenomenov, kot je tudi mnogo načinov za spoprijemanje z njimi, je ena specifična vrsta tega fenomena povezana z uporabo jugoslovanskih simbolov ali celo s samo besedo »Jugoslavija« – včasih izključno v komercialne namene oz. za to, da se pozornost usmeri k določenemu (glasbenemu) izdelku. Po razpravi o splošnih lastnostih jugonostalgije se osredinim na sledeče vprašanje: sta Jugoslavija in

jugonostalgija postali popularni in komercialni značilnosti post-jugoslovanskega glasbenega trg? Opozorim na dva reprezentativna in aktualna primera. Oba iz leta 2015: dve pesmi, ena v izvedbi Ane Bebić in Željka Vasića in druga od Amadeus banda, ki sta naslovljeni *Jugoslavija*, a nobena od njiju ni zares povezana z Jugoslavijo. »Jugoslavija« je tukaj mišljena kot metafora za izgubljeno ljubezen, za ljubezensko vez, ki je razpadla – tako

kot sama Jugoslavija. Opirajoč se na raziskave občinstva, torej na odzive občinstva v virtualnem okolju interneta, se ukvarjam s temo komercializacije Jugoslavije in jugonostalgije, pri čemer pokažem, kako se je v kompleksnem post-jugoslovanskem prostoru na trgu pojavil nov glasbeni trend – trend uporabe kulture spominjanja na Jugoslavijo z namenom, da bi ustvarili pesmi, ki bi nemara bile zanimive za post-jugoslovanski trg.