Gastarbeiter, refugees, and turbofolk in early 1990s Berlin
Some thoughts on migration and the appropriation of music

Alexander Praetz und Matthias Thaden
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Forschungsprojekt: Repräsentationen des sozialistischen Jugoslawien im Umbruch
Teilprojekt: „Balkan Goes Global“

Working Papers 8
Berlin 2013
Gastarbeiter, refugees and turbofolk in early 1990s Berlin

Some thoughts on migration and the appropriation of music

Alexander Praetz, Matthias Thaden

Introduction

The cultural life of guest workers from the former Yugoslavia is a subject area that so far has remained to be widely under-researched. Trying to make a first attempt to contribute to filling this gap, this paper aims to trace the connections between musical and entertainment events taking place in Berlin from the early to the mid-1990s and the (re-) definitions of Yugoslav migrant communities. In this respect, our main goal is to expand approaches that have dealt with Yugoslav citizens outside Yugoslavia by considering them first of all as being subject to propaganda from the “homeland” or as the ones accounting for radicalization due to long-distance-nationalism. Contrary to the treatment of cultural events in Berlin and their meanings as mere reflections of developments within Yugoslavia, we argue that the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a shift in representations of belonging that was also mediated and negotiated through cultural production taking place locally. Attempting to provide insights into processes of belonging we aim to present a more multifaceted picture of former Yugoslav music production that does not preclude the migrant’s experiences. By rather taking them as a point of departure we hope to contribute to recent efforts in overcoming the national and cultural „container-thinking”.

Although the body of scholarship on cultural life of Yugoslav Gastarbeiter in the FR-Germany as well as on the involved identity politics has remained somewhat thin, we could base our research mostly on insights that have been recently put forward by V. Ivanović and N. Baković. Both of whom dealt with efforts on behalf of the SFR

2 One of the most lucid examples of this kind has certainly been the journalistic account given by Hockenos. Cf. Hockenos, Paul (2003): Homeland Calling. Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Yugoslavia to provide means of guest worker information. We will additionally draw upon theoretical approaches that insisted to take into account the transnational dynamics of migration, and we will also give a brief presentation of Yugoslav migration to Germany and the cultural landscape it generated in West-Berlin. The paper’s principal share, however, will be devoted to the shifts that we expect to have occurred during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Based on the overall issue of this project it will furthermore be discussed in how far institutions and actors organizing cultural life were affected by the escalating political situation in Yugoslavia and in how far group belonging was negotiated by music consumption and its staging. In this respect, our particular aim is to scrutinize how the emerging turbofolk-music from Yugoslavia was appropriated in Berlin and whether it was charged with particular meanings. For this purpose we conducted several narrative interviews with people born in Yugoslavia living in Berlin at that time. Throughout these interviews we mostly tried to get a hold on the various intersections between music and belonging by primarily probing into subject areas we assumed to be of importance.

Concurrently and with respect to the overarching project, this paper aims to combine the insights of our first essays: Alexander Praetz has been concerned with the emergence of „turbofolk” in former Yugoslavia, thereby tackling a rather simple minded notion of this music as being a mere feature of a Serbian nationalist political landscape. Instead he focused on contested meanings and the discourse that accompanied this particular genre both within as well as beyond Serbia. Matthias Thaden, for his part, was preoccupied with identity politics of the Croatian Catholic Mission. He demonstrated that the definition of what it actually meant to be “Croatian” was neither static nor shared, but subject to articulatory struggles that involved numerous actors. In the following, we shall try to bring together our findings by presenting aspects of the impact and the appropriation of turbofolk-music in Berlin.

**Turbofolk and its scientific assessments**

Research within humanities on the Yugoslav disintegration process of the early 1990s have dealt with the social processes of change within the (post-) Yugoslav states regarding the social, economic, political as well as the popular-cultural area. In this latter area it was mainly preoccupied with the question about the significance of cultural phenomena for the establishment of nationalism. In doing so, the advent of the so-called turbofolk played a quite a decisive role, which as a musical genre originated in the early 1990s and is perceived to have dominated the field of popular culture in the following period. What is special about the music of turbofolk is its hybrid content mixing various

---

5 A significant confinement is to be made here with regard to our language-skills: We are both studying the Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian language for some six months only. This is why literature from the former Yugoslavia has, for the most part, not been sufficiently incorporated.

genres like folk, house, dance and hip hop as well as often mentioned elements of “oriental music”. The music is usually accompanied by a singer and as an additional means of turbofolk, the accordion is usually supposed to play a central role.\(^7\) Starting from Eric D. Gordy’s fieldwork in Belgrade during the second half of the 1990s turbofolk has been described as a musical phenomenon, which has promoted Serbian nationalism at a cultural level. Gordy argued that turbofolk was deliberately promoted by the destruction of alternative structures in the field of politics, culture and society by the new Serbian state elite and ascended through this support as the cultural mainstream.\(^8\) Gordy especially described the connection between turbofolk and Serbian nationalism with respect to the interdependence between new actors in Serbian politics – which Gordy understands to have constituted for the new elite – and the stars of the music genre. Most clearly indicating this relation, it is the wedding between Arkan Ražnatović and Svetlana Ceca Veličković that scholars refer to in abundance describing it as a mass media event symbolizing the connection between politics, media and show business within Serbia.\(^9\) Another key point in Gordy’s work is the alleged conflict between urban culture and rural culture within Serbia, which in his view, was reflected in the suppression of rock music and the rise of turbofolk as a popular music genre. He perceives rock music to have been a symbol of cosmopolitan cultural faction that, in turn reflected a pluralistic attitude on part of the urban population while turbofolk, on the other hand, is portrayed as a cultural product of the rural population above all representing backwardness. He heavily draws on A. Simić’s argument who considered the „peasant urbanites” as having constituted “a hybrid class halfway on the road from village to city” prone to Novokomponovana Narodna Muzika (NKFM) as opposed to “real urbanites” who Simić primarily associated with jazz and rock-music.\(^10\) In this sense, Gordy considers turbofolk to be a direct successor of NKFM. While this view is somewhat difficult to assess for it is disputable on which aspects one should focus when referring to the musical

---


development” it is to be found not only in Gordy’s work. Turbofolk – similarly to NKFM – is for the most part regarded as an inferior cultural phenomenon as opposed to “higher” (i.e. “western”) musical culture like rock music. Academic criticism of turbo folk is complemented by the rejection of the music on the part of conservative representatives of the Serbian state elite who understand turbofolk as an attack to traditional “Serbian culture” therefore rejecting the music. As an example Zoran Đokić may be mentioned, ultra-nationalist and owner of “Radio Ponos”. He labeled this music as “un-Serbian” because of its alleged “Islamic sounds” and therefore prohibited turbofolk from being played in his program. This example suggests that it makes little sense to entirely follow Gordy’s arguments by making a clear-cut division thus assigning turbofolk and its listeners to the nationalist site while considering those rather skeptical towards turbofolk as “anti-nationalists”. Although Gordy certainly put forward an important work providing for the basis of further discussions on the topic, some of the above mentioned arguments must be considered questionable.

Kronja, for her part, also constantly refers to the close connection between turbofolk and Serbian nationalism. She describes turbofolk as a phenomenon reflecting the rise of a new Serbian elite that included mainly war profiteers from the criminal milieu on a popular-cultural level. In this sense turbofolk by means of mass media dissemination contributed to the legitimacy of criminal structures as well as to the emergence of “militarism and patriotism” within Serbian society. According to Kronja and a considerable amount of her adherents turbofolk represents a sort of „kitsch folk“ thus demonstrating the same negative attitude towards the actors and the audience throughout her work as Gordy did. According to her, and again bearing close

---


12 This has most concisely been described by Grujić, cf. Grujić, Marija (2009): Community and the Popular: Women, Nation and Turbofolk in Post-Yugoslav Serbia, PhD Dissertation, Central European University, Budapest, 49–50.


resemblance to Gordy, turbofolk can be considered a paragon of a “misguided culture.” M. Grujić rightly criticizes Kronja's and Gordy’s approach to turbofolk as a phenomenon that has been deliberately promoted by the Serbian state elite in the 1990s and thereby contributed to the emergence of Serbian nationalism among the rural population which, in turn, brought it to the cities. Although the music’s content cannot be labeled nationalist as such, it was rather the simple messages and the context of turbofolk songs that according to Sonja Vogel linked them to 1990s nationalist ideology. In her opinion, the music functioned as a mediator between the public and private sphere and was therefore able to transport significant meanings of group affiliations like the belonging to the Serbian nation. Whether turbofolk indeed facilitated nationalism cannot be answered exhaustively with regard to prior research literature. This is mainly due to the fact that the music’s reception has so far not sufficiently been researched as those considered to be its fans and followers have largely been muted.

Yet the acquisition of Gordy’s and Kronja’s central theses in later research projects and newspaper articles suggest that turbofolk is still primarily represented as a phenomenon peculiar to Serbia. A different perspective and an important impulse for further explorations of turbofolk as a cultural phenomenon have been put forward by C. Baker. By suggesting turbofolk not primarily to constitute less “a concrete definition of a genre, but rather a conceptual category” Baker draws on A. Cohen’s insights on “boundary generating Symbols” adapting turbofolk to this theory for she considers this music to be important for groups’ distinction and their respective sustaining. In her research Baker shows that turbofolk can be understood not only as a cultural

17 Quite contrarily, as Đurković has been told by an important actor of the then scene, there was almost no public support for music back then. Cf. Đurkovic (2002), p. 26.
21 This is particularly unfortunate with regard to the parts devoted to turbofolk within Baker’s comprehensive study devoted to popular music in Croatia throughout the 1990s. Cf. Baker, Catherine (2010): Sounds of the Borderland. Popular Music, War and Nationalism in Croatia since 1991. Adshgate, see particularly p. 137–145.
phenomenon within Serbia, but that it also possesses significance in neighboring Croatia where it also carried specific and space-dependent meanings being part of the Croatian popular culture as well. Baker takes up the debate on the issue from a broader perspective and helps to understand turbofolk not as a “static canon but [as] a dynamic field” within which changes depend on the context. Subsequent works, including those by Rory Archer and Uros Cvoro have employed these perspectives on turbo folk and helped to appreciate it as a transnational cultural phenomenon. Cvoro considers turbofolk a musical phenomenon that already during the 1990s has enjoyed distribution in all former Yugoslav republics, thereby tackling the narrow-mindedness of understanding turbofolk to have been an exclusively Serbian cultural phenomenon. In order to highlight the importance turbofolk possessed throughout all former Yugoslav republics, Volčić und Erjavec conducted interviews on Ceca’s popularity in Slovenia, Croatia, Kosovo, Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia. Within the study they revealed that Ceca is primarily seen as a prototype of „a strong lady” as well as a „symbol which unites the Balkans“. Dealing with the turbofolk, Archer, for his part, identifies discourses of balkanism and contested narratives of belonging. According to him, turbofolk and Balkan – being inevitably intertwined – are both assigned with the same negative stereotypes (i.e. backward, uncivilized, violence, barbarity etc.). Another aspect against an exclusively Serbian perspective on turbofolk might be derived from the fact that there are music styles in surrounding countries actually enjoying very similar reputation in their respective societies, such as Manele (Romania), Chalga (Bulgaria), Arabesk (Turkey) and Muzika Popullore (Albania).

Transnational perspectives might help to understand turbo folk not just as an outcome of Serbian society, thus creating an opportunity to appreciate it as a European, or even as a global cultural phenomenon, as was suggested by S. Vogel in her concluding remarks. Taking into consideration turbofolk’s hybrid nature and the continual changes the music underwent, as has been rightly emphasized by W. Fischer, we must not

---

28 Ibid., 12.
attribute one single and explicit meaning to the „symbol of turbofolk“. Therefore and based on these insights, we should probe into a more multi-layered approach when addressing the issue of turbofolk.

Similar to Archer, Fischer as well as Ljerka Vidić-Rasmussen claimed, it was above all the guest workers and their role as cultural mediators that appear to a promising field of investigation. As their role with regard to the popularity of turbofolk has also often been mentioned by persons we have talked to both in Belgrade as well as Pirot prior to our actual research, this seems to be particularly true with respect to turbofolk’s appropriation within a different spatial context we in the following shall attempt to examine turbofolk in the 1990s Berlin. The central question in this case will be whether turbo folk music played a role and whether it was of any importance concerning social and cultural dynamics in early 1990s Berlin.

**Migration from Yugoslavia to Germany. Figures, actors and institutions from 1968 until the early 1990s**

In the following section it will be analyzed how the developments within Yugoslavia were translated in Germany thereby investigating their “musical appropriation” abroad. Firstly, however, it seems necessary to place some remarks with respect to the more recent migration history from the former Yugoslavia to Germany with regard to theoretical issues. Subsequently, we will address the topic of various actors’ cultural politics with special attention to West-Berlin. Furthermore, we shall discuss and question some of the ingrained historical approaches discussing guest workers and their alleged cultural affiliations. These models sometimes bear semblance to the static dichotomies that were sketched throughout the last chapter. They furthermore seem to enjoy increased popularity when comparisons are drawn between the ideal-typical “guest worker” and “the refugee”.

**Some comments on approaches to working migration from Yugoslavia**

While D. Antonijević, A. Bašić, I. Grubišić and M. Krstić identified five principal “waves” of emigration from Yugoslavia, it was above all the recruitment agreement between the

---


39 These interviews have been conducted within the framework of an excursion to the borderland between Bulgaria and Serbia organized by Hannes Grandits and Nenad Stefanov from the Department of Southeastern European History at Humboldt University Berlin.
FRG and the SFRJ in 1968 that must be considered a milestone.\textsuperscript{40} Notwithstanding objections concerning neo-realistic approaches that overemphasize the logics of economic interests and state actors, Yugoslavia’s open borders and the prospect of pursuing manual labor in Germany on a regulated basis certainly constituted a major incentive for migration. This, indeed, is reflected by the sheer quantity of Yugoslav citizens that decided to leave their country seeking for job-opportunities abroad ever since the mid-1960s. According to the Yugoslav census conducted in 1971 the number of „persons temporarily living abroad“ amounted to 775.000, i.e. 3,8 % of the total population.\textsuperscript{41}Western Germany soon became a major destination: 66% of all Yugoslav Gastarbeiter went for the prospering FRG where they - after those coming from Turkey - constituted the second largest group of foreign nationals.\textsuperscript{42}Even though the year 1973, also due to the recruitment ban issued by the FRG, marked the peak of Gastarbeiter-presence in Germany, the amount of Yugoslav citizens continuously raised until the early 1980s, predominantly resulting from family reunions.\textsuperscript{43}While their majority was of rural background the areas most affected by migration were those mainly populated by Croats, that is, South-Dalmatia and Herzegovina. Yet to some extent almost all parts of Yugoslavia were characterized by Gastarbeiter migration.\textsuperscript{44}

When dealing with migration (not only) from Yugoslavia to Germany it is imperative to link up these issues with broader developments and tendencies within an ever-growing field of migration studies. This has also been emphasized by S. Haug and E. Pichler who called for theoretical approaches capable of adapting to the social causes and concomitants of modern migration.\textsuperscript{45}

It was as early as 1967 that the Zagreb based Center for Migration Studies („Centar za Istraživanje migracija“) started its work in order to provide insights to aspects of out-migration.\textsuperscript{46} Although the scholars involved, above all I. Baucić and F. Letić, covered various issues, they favored a rather macro-sociological perspective. In this respect, the data employed in most of the center’s publications consisted of statistics that served as a pool for further deductions. Anthropologically inspired accounts that addressed the


\textsuperscript{42} Novninšćak, Karolina (2018): 127.


\textsuperscript{46} Cf. URL: http://www.imin.hr/povijest-zadaca-i-planovi, last access: 03.08.2013.
everyday life-situation and the reality as perceived by working migrants abroad were virtually absent.\textsuperscript{47}

Focusing primarily on broader figures and officially generated source-material, however, might well entail serious consequences for research on migration and its interpretations. This, for instance, is true for a great deal of literature that tends to regard migration as a matter of individual rational-choice decisions.\textsuperscript{48} Whether this behavior is perceived to be guided by personal desires for profiteering, by collective strategies to counteract regional impoverishment through investments in modernization or by constraints that are imposed on individuals due to world-systemic entanglements – it is the economic reflections that are supposed to determine migration decisions.\textsuperscript{49} This approach is informed by fundamental dichotomies such as “countryside” vs. “city” or “tradition” vs. „modernity“ as well as it maintains a strong belief that structural differences would gradually vanish by virtue of the remittances emigration generates.\textsuperscript{50} For the case of the former Yugoslavia it has been pointed out by O. Haberl as early as 1978 that these expectations did not quite meet the situation on the ground: rather than investing in local infrastructure or other public goods, money from Yugoslav guest workers was predominantly spent for status symbols or houses in their home villages that for the most part were rather remote – often even without electricity or water supply.\textsuperscript{51} Countering economist opinions, U. Brunnbauer refers to the fact that it was not necessarily the poorest who decided to look for job opportunities abroad\textsuperscript{52} but

\textsuperscript{47} A notable exception, however, was put forward by Carl-Ulrik Schierup. An exemplary study dating from 1987 focused on dances as a social practice of Wallachians in Denmark and Sweden in order to grapple with issues of group reproduction and integration. Cf. Schierup and Ålund (1987): Ch. 9, 10.


\textsuperscript{52} Brunnbauer (2009): 31-33.
rather, as P. Goeke suggests quite convincingly, a dynamics that triggered a chain migration that in many regions caused a „brain drain en miniature”.

Apart from notions of economically determined „push” and „pull” factors that often go hand in hand with the limitation to demographic material we must acknowledge that migration is initiated by various causes as well as it unleashes a wide range of dynamics. When dealing with migration from the former Yugoslavia we furthermore are to take into consideration personal and familial networks as well as the „diffusion of consumerism” boosted by migration that conversely stimulated further migrations. As J. Čapo Žmegač was able to demonstrate throughout her research on Croatian Gastarbeiterin Munich, migration can cause the emergence of social spaces that go beyond the state’s societal boundaries. Thus, the nation state’s logics are eluded by thwarting its claim on a definite territory endowed with an allegedly homogenous culture. This transcendence of nationally defined spaces which will be henceforth referred to as „transnationalism” becomes more apparent as the ability to communicate and ease of transportation increase. Migration, therefore, cannot be grasped by drawing on everlasting divisions - „here” vs. „there” - but it is precisely those supposedly static spatial entities that are put into question by migrants’ cultural and social practices. The particular attention paid to human agency when referring to transnationalism probably constitutes for one of the reasons why the field was initially marked out by disciplines rather focusing on everyday life and micro-studies, i.e. social and cultural anthropology. Approaches on a macro-basis, on the other hand, sometimes tend to accept units of analysis deduced from official statistics thereby often taking for granted or even reproducing their tacit homogenizations.

Reviewing the Yugoslav press coverage on the Gastarbeiter-issue D. Goodlett apparently proves right the thesis that migration is not be controlled so easily but was rather bound to a variety of factors, constraints, desires and necessities. Congruent to the „autonomy of migration”-thesis that defies monocausality he asserts that a mere 1/3 of

56It would go far beyond the scope to present a overview on the literature that was close to be sufficient. Hence we only point to the ground breaking article by Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, cf. Glick-Schiller, Nina; Basch, Linda; Blanc-Szanton, Cristina (1992): Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration. In: Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences 645, 1-24.

While it is „pluri-locality”\footnote{Haug; Pichler (1999): 261.} that is of particular importance to advocates of transnational approaches, it is interesting to note that the logics of the nation-state briefly sketched above are in fact superimposing transnational practices making them inadequate as a point of departure for individual everyday identifications.\footnote{ČapoŽmegač, Jasna (2005): Transnationalisation and Identification among Youth of Croatian Origin in Germany. In: NarodnaUmjetnost 42, 9–24, 17.} This, in turn, points to the importance of identity politics that most likely realizes itself by drawing on binary logics\footnote{We are referring here to insights gained from deconstructivist strands within discourse theory that abandon the idea of a subject’s positively definable inner core. Rather, for authors such as E. Laclau and C. Mouffe it is the process of exclusion that, in turn, constitutes inner coherence. Cf. Torfing, Jakob (1999): New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek, Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 39-40; 124.} which is particularly true for ethnic and national entrepreneurs who necessarily depend on clear-cut boundaries and thus aim to maintain them.\footnote{Hall, Stuart (1990): Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In: Jonathan Rutherford (ed.): Identity, Community, Culture, Difference, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 227-237, 229-230.} The manner of how the reproduction of binary logics was actually reinforced in the context of Gastarbeiter living in Germany is, again, indicated by Goodlett’s newspaper-survey in which he traces Yugoslav policymakers’ deep concern to lose influence fueling their “desire to control”.\footnote{Brubaker, Rogers (2004): Ethnicity without groups, Cambridge MA, 16, 19.} Not only did they apprehend a gradual alienation that “their” socialist citizens might experience while living in West-Germany’s consumer society, but they also anticipated a rather strong influence by parts of the political migration\footnote{We are drawing on Anderson’s groundbreaking remark that “[…] all communities larger than primordial villages of face to face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined.” Cf. Anderson, Benedict (2006) [1983]: Imagined Communities, London: Verso, p. 6.} and clerical organizations such as the Croatian Catholic Mission.\footnote{Brubaker, Rogers (2005): The ’diaspora’ Diaspora. In: Ethnic and Racial Studies 28, 1–19, 12.}

At this juncture, it is important to keep in mind that neither the Yugoslav state nor institutions such as the Croatian Mission merely represented already existing groups. They were rather actively seeking to imagine\footnote{Brubaker, Rogers (2004): Ethnicity without groups, Cambridge MA, 16, 19.} them by offering an interpretation of social reality in a situation that, according to S. Hall, is hallmarked by a surplus of meaning and hybridity.\footnote{Goodlett, David E. (2007): Yugoslav Worker Emigration 1963-1973. Government Policy and Press Coverage, New York, 48.} This fixation of meaning cannot be regarded as being accomplished in a vacuum but must be situated within a social field that exhibits numerous actors competing on the articulation of collective identities.\footnote{For a comprehensive overview of the Croatian political migration in West-Germany, see: Tokić,Mate (2009): Landscapes of Conflict. Unity and Disunity in Post-Second World War Croatian émigré separatism.In: European Review of History 16, 739-753.}
Yugoslav citizens in West-Berlin. Aspects of cultural life until the late 1980s

This being said, we in the following will portray efforts to articulate identity politics for Yugoslav Gastarbeiter in West-Berlin and ask how this was pursued with regard to organized cultural activities.

Not quite meeting the number of those coming to southern German cities Yugoslav migrants, however, constituted a significant part of West-Berlin’s population from the early 1970s onwards. As implied by the statistics that have been publicized by the state’s statistical office their number between 1974 and 1987 roughly amounted to 29,000-31,000 persons whereas their share of Berlin’s entire amount of persons holding a non-German passport temporarily diminished from approx. 16% until the year 1978 to a fairly stable 11-12% from the early 1980s to 1991. Notwithstanding that it proves rather difficult to assess reliable numbers of Yugoslav guest workers regarding their regional backgrounds, S. Lipovčan assumes a majority of them to have originated in the south of Dalmatia and western and northern Bosnia, i.e. from agricultural areas mainly populated by Croats. In this respect, it comes as no surprise that it was the Croatian Catholic Mission who put great efforts both into pursuing identity politics as well as into providing extensive means of cultural activities.

Compared to the popularity the Croatian mission’s activities enjoyed the Yugoslav state had a rather hard time pursuing any centrally planned cultural politic whatsoever. While this partly seems to have been a deliberate outcome of a policy encouraging (guest-) worker’s self-management state representatives, however, started to query full autonomy. The Yugoslav state, therefore, also began to be concerned with social assistance and sought for support by the German Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO). This was perceived as an imperative given both the lack of pastimes as well as in order to combat gambling and in order to provide alternatives to the Bahnhof (train station) that became

---

72 Annual Statistical Yearbook of Berlin’s Statistisches Landesamt (1975-1988). It must be taken into account here that this number does not include those who have applied and been granted a German passport.


75 For a more comprehensive account, see Thaden (2013): 5. Having said that, in the Berlin based „Berliner Morgenpost“ it is indicated that as early as 1969 a Serbian-Orthodox community has also been founded in order to provide services for the 2.000 Serbs living in the city. Cf. Berliner Morgenpost, 24 December 1969.

76 At least, this was indicated by the lively memories of Pater Stjepan Grgat that, of course, are by no means “objective” howsoever.


a popular venue to meet each other and to exchange news and information.\footnote{This has been vividly illustrated by Ivanović (forthcoming): 13.} Additionally state representatives started to realize that the „temporary stay” turned out to be more durable as they initially thought. Establishing a more coordinated information policy that was capable of reinforcing and retaining a sense of Yugoslav belonging abroad was thus increasingly considered necessary.\footnote{Baković (2012): 41.} To that end, in 1972 and 1973 two „Culture-and Information centers” were launched in Stuttgart and Köln.\footnote{Ibid., 36.} While those were primarily set up to provide Yugoslav clubs with political material as well as to assist them logistically, they also represented an attempt to maintain guest-worker’s ties to a Yugoslav cultural space.\footnote{In this context, Novinšćak also mentions editions of “Vjesnik” and “Oslobodenje” particularly issued for guest workers. Cf. Novinscak (2008): 137-139.} In Berlin, it was the Yugoslav military mission that attempted to coordinate the activities of autonomous clubs\footnote{Topf, Hartmut (1987): Jugoslawen in Berlin. Neu-Berliner mit Liebe zur alten Heimat, Berlin: Ausländerbeauftragter des Senats, 22.} in order to prevent them from gradually „tavernising” which was generally feared.\footnote{Baković (2012): 29.} From 1978 it also set up language classes that were held for guest-worker’s children in the premises of AWO’s „recreational home for Yugoslav employees” in Berlin-Moabit.\footnote{Topf (1987): 25-26.} This place also functioned as a training place for the Yugoslav pioneer-organization.

While Lipovčan has erroneously stated that no genuine cultural policy was actually allowed to be pursued,\footnote{Lipovčan (1998): 152.} this institution, according to the information gathered for Berlin’s city council by H. Topf, also served as a meeting point for both the 1970-founded Yugoslav club „Edvard Kardelj” as well as for several folklore-groups. It furthermore hosted movie-nights on weekends as well as occasional festivities.\footnote{Lipovčan (1998): 152.} The Berlin based social worker S. Pavlina concedes that the club predominantly served as a meeting point for Serbian migrants\footnote{Rossig, Rüdiger (2008): Ex-Yugos. Junge MigrantInnen aus Jugoslawien und seinen Nachfolgestaaten in Deutschland, Berlin: Archiv der Jugendkulturen, 85.} thereby corresponding with Topf’s data indicating an organization along national and regional lines that informed club-founding in Berlin.\footnote{Topf (1987): 23; this view conforms to Ivanović’s more general assessment. Cf. Ivanović (forthcoming): 22.} Having said that it would be premature to assume that there was no appeal at all emanating from Yugoslav institutions as self-organization along national lines did not necessarily run counter Yugoslavia’s state philosophy but rather emphasized its federative self-understanding as codified in the 1974 constitution.\footnote{For a very accessible, yet comprehensive discussion of this matter, see Jović, Dejan (2009): Yugoslavia: A State that Withered Away, West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 62-93. Yet Goodlett mentions a letter printed in Borba in which Tito warns the representatives of a Serbian migration centre abroad not to forget the ideals of brotherhood and unity not tolerating nationalist activities of any kind. Cf. Goodlett (2007): 127.} On the one hand this holds true for the simultaneity of Berlin’s extremely popular all-Yugoslav football-league (most often
referred to as „Jugoliga”) that was admittedly linked to „EdvardKardelje.V.”

92 though coinciding with clubs that sometimes were nationally defined. On the other it was musical events, namely concert-tours through the FRG featuring artists from Yugoslavia that enjoyed high reputation among guest workers. While it was not until recently that guest worker’s entertainment received broader attention, there have been some attempts to engage in this topic throughout the last years. Initially the tours were organized primarily by national radio stations from 1972, whereas later on the government - corresponding to the mentioned attempt to influence cultural policy on guest workers - strove to get these under its thumb by both granting organization-permissions only to „reliable organisers” as well as institutionalizing a quota on artists’ national representation. The centralization of concerts both caused their increased success as well as it paved the way for musicians’ arguments that could back their claims on appearance with reference to their national belonging.93 Notwithstanding this, concerts by Yugoslavian artists can be considered to have been resoundingly successful.

Ivanović even believes that they did a good job creating a „shared ethnic identity“ by virtue of connecting guest workers to their country of origin while they were simultaneously differing from the people there.94 With the aid of the newly founded information-centres it was the autonomous clubs that hosted the concerts thereby reaching for a big audience.95 In Berlin, for instance, the universally known „Bratstvo i Jedinstvo”, situated at Potsdamer Straße and run by Gazda Huso served as a prominent location for such concerts regardless of visitor’s national belongings while simultaneously being a well-recognized institution far beyond the city limits.96 Beyond these smaller concerts hosted by venues such as the „Bratstvo i Jedinstvo“ or „Rujna Zora”, there were also occasional ones taking place in bigger halls and starring famous singers and bands from all Yugoslavia. By then, events of these kinds were seldomly, if ever, organized by locals. It was the Yugoslav state who was in charge for booking tours all over Germany giving guest workers the opportunity to listen to illustrious names such as Šaban Šaulić, Vera Matović, Ivo Robić or Mišo Kovač but also to rock-groups like Azra, Leb i Sol and Bijelo Dugme. As mentioned above and as one of our interlocutors conceded, these concerts also served the purpose for „making the people of Yugoslavia stick together.”97

Refugees and gastarbeiter. Constructing dichotomies and notions of legitimate culture

Gastarbeiter have often been considered as representatives of a rural culture qua origin, being thus stylized – sometimes more, sometimes less implicit - as an antithesis to an alleged europeanized and urban everyday-culture prevalent in Yugoslavia. Ultimately, this approach is based on an extension of the argument put forward by Simić on cities’

95 This can be assumed due to the apparent popularity as is indicated by the persons interviewed in Antonijevic et al. (2011): 990.
96 In our interview Mate told us that he had known this place even before coming to Berlin in 1989.
97 Interview with Mate.
ruralisation due to peasants flooding them during Yugoslavia’s urbanization that was already mentioned above. It is precisely this social background that is often assigned to „the” guest workers leading to a somewhat homogenizing assessment of „their” habits and cultural preferences. In this sense, for instance, Baković bluntly states, that due to their origin guest-workers from Yugoslavia preferred NKFM - a musical genre that according to Ivanović and P. Marković was even reliant upon their revenue for it was particularly them who Ivanović supposes to have lacked of any significant demand for „high culture”. This is further discussed by Marković who also traces the Gastarbeiter’s affinity to NKFM, connecting this matter to stereotypes within Yugoslav society. He even deems guest workers a „visible social type, [and] a symbol” revealing a rather disdainful attitude they were met with. While we neither aim to prove this view wrong nor right, we, however, consider it necessary to state that it draws a stereotype-laden and homogenizing picture of an alleged prototypical guest worker as opposed to urban elites within Yugoslavia. This picture, furthermore, seems to neatly correlate with the official position towards guest workers as put forward by the Yugoslav state that tried to fight „wrong representations of Yugoslav culture” abroad. As this music allegedly undermined modernization-efforts, the state tried to offer alternatives to the apparently dominating NKFM by introducing classical music into concert programs, thus aiming to promote „high culture” among guest workers.

The clear-cut opposition between “high” vs. „low culture” with the guest worker and their supposed penchant for NKFM clearly embodying the latter becomes most apparent in Ivanović’s and Marković’s account on Gastarbeiter’s everyday life. By drawing on arguments of the aforementioned Gordy they even refer to a genuine „counterculture of the guest workers” that led to a „victory of the outlaws”. Rather than grounding such an assertion on a comprehensible argumentation based on source-material, they introduce a negative foil that ideally serves to contrast a supposedly self-contained „urban Yugoslav culture” vis à vis the purported „counter-culture”.


100 Ivanović (forthcoming): 22.
104 Ivanović; Marković (2011): 145.
Supposedly superior with regard to their musical taste it was an ever increasing number of Yugoslav refugees from the early 1990s onwards that brought about another dichotomy with regard to Gastarbeiter’s everyday-culture. Unsurprisingly, when the economic and political tensions in the former Yugoslavia increased, neither Germany nor Berlin remained unaffected by this development: While it was already almost 35,000 Yugoslav citizens living in the city in 1990, some 7,000 more were registered the year later rising up to 78,000 in 1995, thus constituting 18,1% of Berlin’s migrant population. As P. Goeke argued quite convincingly they usually utilized already established familial or personal ties, thus conveying an interdependency of economic and war-related migrations. According to both Marković and O. Daniel the refugees’ composition can be considered to have differed from the guest workers as they primarily consisted of students and white-collar employees. Although references to social stratification are a somewhat vague enterprise with regard to scarce source-material, the distinction between Gastarbeiter and refugees in economic terms apparently corresponds to a more general tendency, that is, to draw a boundary between them and to accuse the former of philistinism. This, for instance, becomes obvious in H. Marquardt’s ethnological account on (former) Yugoslav citizens living in Berlin during the wars for she entirely adopts her interviewees’ perspective. All her interlocutors that mostly arrived here either shortly before or during the wars position themselves in stark contrast to guest workers. Referring to Gastarbeiter and especially their children („Gastarbeiterkinder“) in a rather derogative way, by implying that they utterly lacked of „culture”, they present themselves as culturally superior. R. Rossig takes a similar line by engaging with persons belonging to an “Ex-Yugo”-community to what extent howsoever. While it remains obscure that he actually refers to when using this term, he in any case portrays refugees, primarily those who more or less mourn after the former Yugoslavia and consider themselves as sort of a vanguard. The stories of those who turned nationalist remain to be untold in this vein. The same is true for guest workers who are largely absent with two exceptions who, however, rather prove this rule as they deliberately distance themselves to the aimed Gastarbeiter-narrative Rossig presents, that is, a simple- and small minded, rural and nouveau riche.

These dichotomous views towards high- and low culture embodied by the guest worker-refugee dichotomy correlate with approaches to turbofolk sketched above. Not surprisingly, it is precisely the guest workers who are often accused of having been prone

110 Ibid., 87, 151-152.
to that sort of music. Stretching this argument even further according to their mentioned premise of a guest worker’s “counter-culture”, Ivanović and Marković state that the Gastarbeiter’s idols (that is, the turbofolk-stars) “hillbillied” (verdorframpeln) the Balkans.111

Furthermore, notwithstanding other authors who are in apparent conformity with considering contacts abroad as a main pillar to keep this music going, it is, however, quite astonishing how turbofolk is often mentioned in the same breath with guest worker’s supposed “nationalization”. In this respect, Rossig’s interlocutors constantly link Gastarbeiter’s becoming subject to nationalist agitation with their supposed musical preferences.113 Whereas they in the course of this agitation are supposed to have neatly separated along „ethnic” lines, the refugees in this narrative mostly managed to resist the seductions of hatred.115 Not to mention the problems that accompany such generalizations, the role of music becomes somewhat ubiquitous in this discussion as it often serves as a primal signifier of political affiliation as has been already elaborated in the second chapter. Rossig proves to be an implicit adherent of that view as he upholds Gordy's clear-cut distinction of „turbashi” and „rokeri”116 while extending this culture/musical boundary to the situation in Berlin by projecting it onto Gastarbeiter and refugees. In a similar vein, Marquardt even carries further this perspective for she considers the refugees’ anti-nationalism to have substituted for the nationalist tendencies prevalent on the part of guest workers.117 In this light, the rejection of rock music that purportedly was ever so popular among refugees is not just a mere matter of personal taste, but rather serves as a habitus that supposedly set apart two groups from one another.118 While we do by no means deny that musical preferences are linked to a social field and habitus it is on the one hand the essential notion that the two groups allegedly recognizable by musical taste.. On the other, it is the prevalence of what D. Delic has labeled as „cultural racism”120 we encountered quite frequently throughout prior

---

111 Ivanović; Marković (2011): 148.
113 This is most clearly stated by the “Balkanizer”, aka D. Rabrenovic, who is criticizes the “Gastarbeiterkinder’s” affinity for going to the respective nationalist clubs in order to listen Turbofolk there, cf. Rossig (2008): 153-155.
114 This apparent easiness also shines through Novinscak's argumentation in which the ways of Croatian Gastarbeiter becoming “Diaspora-Croats” remain somewhat untold. Cf. Novinšćak (2008): 142.
115 Rossig (2008): 72, 143-144.
118 This dichotomous view on music within 1990s Yugoslavia with special attention to the ones capable of (re-) producing it, has been tackled very plausibly in Tomic (2013): 13-24.
research identifying both guest workers and turbofolk-listeners as paragons of primitivity and nationalism.\textsuperscript{121}

**Doing fieldwork. Music, evening entertainment and (changing) group belongings in early 1990s Berlin**

Apart from the dichotomies sketched in the preceding chapters, ranging from clearly cut distinctions between guest workers and refugees as well as from high- to low culture, we rather attempt to treat turbofolk as a musical product defying any definite attribution in terms of class or national belonging, thus treating it as a musical example of postmodernism\textsuperscript{122} that becomes even more hybrid when looking at its appropriation outside of Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{123}While the music’s change in meaning has already been sketched with regard to Ceca’s appropriation by Slovenian teenagers, we in the following will try to get a hold on the role that music and especially turbofolk accounted for with regard processes of identification in Germany and Berlin.

For that purpose we conducted four interviews with different persons who either came to Berlin as guest workers or as refugees. They, however, have few things in common with regard both to their socialization as well as to the circumstances they came here.\textsuperscript{124} Within the framework of these interviews, we focused on the period between the late 1980s and early 1990s trying to probe into changes our interviewees have experienced. We were particularly keen to hear them elaborating on group belonging and self-positioning as well as to investigate whether musical tastes were of any importance to them when reflecting on these issues.

Before our findings will be discussed, two difficulties ought to be addressed here that somewhat overshadowed our research. The first one concerns the very basis of anthropologically inspired studies, which is, getting to know adequate people to ask for information. As both of us is of did not have any prior experience with the turbofolk-scene both in the former Yugoslavia as well as in Berlin we were reliant upon a small

\textsuperscript{121} This view is encapsulated by Daniel who asserts that Turbofolk, in fact, mirrored Gastarbeiter’s world view as well as “their” dreams of “fast cars, nice girls, luxury fashion.” Cf. Daniel (2007): 288.


\textsuperscript{124} Mate is a 52 year old builder from Slavonski Brod/Croatia who came to Berlin right before the fall of the wall after having worked in several West-German cities from 1984 onwards. Draško is in his late-30s. He spent half of his childhood in Berlin before his parents returned to Osijek where he grew up as a teenager. Being a Serb himself, he came back to Berlin fleeing the war in 1991. Predrag has about as old as Draško, he also came to Berlin fleeing from military service after having grown up in Belgrade. Dejan came here in 1993 as a Bosnian Serb seeking refuge in Berlin.
range of contact persons. Unfortunately, most of them – despite doing their best to put us into contact with people who might know better – were not able to provide us with valuable contributions to the topic. Hence, we reproduced the very error we initially sought to outdo\textsuperscript{125} as we failed to make contact with „die-hard”-fans of early 90s turbofolk but – quite contrarily – mostly talked to persons that were rather critical towards the „inferior quality” this music allegedly possessed. Several attempts to get a hold on former „players” within the genre fell at the last hurdle: We for example were pretty confident about making contact with one of Berlin’s most famous guest worker-hosts Huso who owned the famed „Bratstvo i Jedinstvo”. Unfortunately, and even though many people assured us to do their best and simply stopped to our attempts at contact.

Another person we were initially confident to contact used to be a Nuremberg-based organizer of early 1990s Yugoslav music concerts. After contacting him via a middle-woman, he canceled our meeting right before heading for Nuremberg as he was afraid that we may have actually been tax-investigators. The second problem we must address refers to the fact that most clubs and venues that would have existed back in the early 1990s were opened due to the massive influx of refugees. The majority of which were closed on a big scale when people were forced to leave Germany as a result of the organized deportations from mid-1996 onwards.\textsuperscript{126} We thus could not see these places ourselves but had to rely entirely on second hand information we got from our informants.

On the one hand this lack of first-hand information by turbofolk-„players” surely constitutes a major weakness of this work and should be considered a task for more persistence throughout further studies. On the other hand, however, that grievance somehow proved to be a virtue as all our interviewees were familiar with the term and deliberately related it both to their own musical preferences as well as to the situation in Berlin as was remembered by each of them. Furthermore, the sometimes overt rejections of this music to some extent provoked ambivalent and surprisingly contradictory valuations and classifications. By drawing on the interviews and by clustering them into topic areas we attempted to find out whether the approaches that have been criticized throughout the preceding chapters hold true or if engaging with turbofolk can indeed enable us to see other dynamics at work. According to A. Wimmer’s suggestion that paying attention to specific „events” might serve to avoid reproducing static categories of group belonging,\textsuperscript{127} turbofolk in the early 1990s shall be treated as such an „event” as it

\textsuperscript{125} For this critique, see p. 5.

\textsuperscript{126} This was indicated by Mate in our interview. Berlin’s daily „taz” also covered this subject. Cf. Die Angst geht um. Beginn der Abschiebung bosnischer Flüchtlinge ist weiter ungewiß. In: taz, 11 October 1996; Appell gegen Abschiebung bosnischer Flüchtlinge. In: taz, 31 May 1997.

\textsuperscript{127} Within migration studies Wimmer criticizes a tendency to take for granted stable ethnic categories, thus re-affirming and naturalizing them. Instead of focusing on relations between supposedly pre-existing groups, he proposes to observe the production of boundaries as a social process. This, in turn, requires a “de-ethnisation of research-designs” which might be achieved by engaging with particular “events”. Cf. Wimmer, Andreas (2008):Ethnische Grenzziehungen in der Immigrationsgesellschaft. Jenseits des
provided facility to participate for a variety of actors. We thus intend to take serious P. Bourdieu’s fundamental notion of music as being „predisposed to symbolize group integration and, by symbolizing it, to strengthen it”.\textsuperscript{128}

**New actors, new places, old loyalties?**

As has been already mentioned above, musical entertainment for guest workers had a long tradition and also served political purposes. While according to Mate smaller venues such as pubs and cafés sometimes hosted Yugoslav folk-singers, bigger events like BijeloDugme-concerts would be put on by the state. Both Mate as well as Drasko emphasized that those concerts were visited by people regardless of national affiliations. From the late 1980s, however, new venues gradually emerged resulting in what all of our interviewees refer to as „separation of groups”. Had there been rather few explicitly national clubs before, meeting according to „national-fault-lines” seems to have taken root in Berlin from the mid/late-1980s onwards.\textsuperscript{129} It will be subject for later discussion whether and how these lines could yet be permeated; for now it suffices to note that the large number of refugees corresponded with the establishment of more and more venues that tried to address potential customers primarily with regard to their „national loyalty”. While according to Mate, places overemphasizing those sort of belongings have previously had a rather hard time to gain a foothold, attracting mostly „political migrants and unemployed […] but only few normal people”, this situation started to change: venues such as the „Café Monaco” (there was one at Kreuzberg’s Yorckstraße as well as another one in Neukölln): „Café King” or the pub belonging to the Serbian cultural association at Neukölln’s Grenzallee cropped up being quite unambiguous with regard to their national connotations as all our interlocutors stressed emphatically. Newly founded clubs and cafés were above all linked to the influx of refugees that lead to a doubling of Berlin’s Ex-Yugoslav-population within some five years only. Mate recalled this situation quite drastically:

M.D.: „It was a catastrophe, honestly! Every time you went for the pub people would ask you: ‘You got a Mark? Can you pay a beer for me?’ […] ‘Screw it’ I thought, when I got to know him better, ‘I’ll pay you beer and schnapps’ […] Lots of pubs opened because of those refugees, you bet.”

A.P.: „What kind of people opened these places? Were it people who used to be here before?”

M.D.: „Yes, it was those people who came to Berlin in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many of them used to work on the construction-grounds, they saved quite


\textsuperscript{129} This is also indicated in an article published in one of Berlin’s dailies. Cf. Edler, Silke; Quaiser, Sascha (1994): Freundschaften und Ehen brechen am plötzlichen Patriotismus. Spuren des Balkan-Kriegs. In: Der Tagesspiegel, 28 February 1994. Mate told us that he himself realized first separations in 1988.
some money and when the refugees came they just started to run a pub. You just
do a little live-music and the pub will be crowded.”
A.P.: „But these pubs and clubs – where they like „mixed” places – for
Yugoslav…”
M.D.: „No, no - when the refugees came, it was Bosnians to Bosnians, Serbs to
Serbs and Croats to Croats.”

According to this perspective the situation altered from the previous one –clubs and pubs
confined to nationally interpreted belongings apparently started to play a decisive role
for the organization of both evening entertainment as well as musical events. As Draško
put it:

A.P.: „You told us about the concerts, you said that Ceca did shows in Berlin. Who
was in charge for the organization of such concerts?”
D.M.: „It was the Serbian clubs. [...] I don't know – there were plenty of clubs. I'm
not sure who exactly would have been in charge for this very concert…Proslava,
that's how they would be called back then.”

Acknowledging the fact that our interviewees sometimes (like in this instance) employed
and, indeed, adapted to the logics of groups separated by nations, we should, however,
not run into the trap of reproducing it. As has been outlined for the development of
turbofolk in the former Yugoslavia, it was not state-promotion, but rather a lack of
organizational backing that brought to the fore new persons and institutions while
simultaneously contributing to the vanishing of others. We suggest, that the same can be
argued for Berlin’s music-scene. New scopes and new spaces of action opened up for
new actors to dislodge the former ones. This development has been captured for the
case of Vienna where “Fantom“, aka Fikret Vulačić would raise as one of the main
organizers for a concert sphere that from 1991 can be labeled as pan-Yugoslav. In Berlin,
on the other hand, it was the national clubs that were among the first to detect how
concerts could be utilized for their ends. In this respect, they managed to attract
thousands of people by offering turbofolk concerts – take Dragana Mirković and Ceca as
certainly the most glamorous examples – on a pretty regular basis in a hall close to
Alexanderplatz.

Furthermore and additionally to the actors organizing turbofolk-concerts and
commodifying this music, “national bonds” were not the sole factor for defining newly
established venues’ target groups. Instead, gathering according to regional ties was
something that on the one hand especially refugees were keen to, on the other it served
as an opportunity for people to open up new places when refugees came in vast
numbers. This perspective was put forward the most by Mate who expressed that:

---

130 A sound critique towards this approach has been formulated by the aforementioned Brubaker. Cf. Brubaker (2008): 8-10.
132 We were told about those concerts close to Alexanderplatz by all our interviewees who emphasized that the club organizing them put efforts into drawing a connection between the music and their political purpose.
“It’s just normal – it’s wartime. You are from Banja Luka – you go searching for people from Banja Luka. You are from Niš or Belgrade or – wherever – from Kosovo: you go searching for people from your region.”

He furthermore gave us an impression of the number of regional clubs that would open back then:

“It was mostly private initiatives. We had a club for Slavonians – Slavonski Brod – as well as for people coming from Lika. We would always pay our membership fees... annually, you know. So we came there every Friday [...]. There was the Croatian community which is now situated at Karl-Marx-Straße, it used to be at Urbanstraße and there was yet another one at Hallesches Tor and at Ku’damm – I knew all of them [...].”

Opening and joining „national” clubs was thus not just a matter of „ethnic separation”, as some contemporary newspapers as well as scholarly accounts would like to have us believing, but can also be considered a quest for mutual support on a regional basis.

This being said, the importance of regional ties often laid the foundation of private initiatives. When it comes to musical entertainment they are by no means to be neglected. In Mate’s narrative revolving around activities he pursued himself they played a major role, indeed:

M.D.: „When Croats came to Berlin [in the early 1990s, NB AP and MT] – well-known singers, you know – it was us who brought them here – Maria, me, Boris, Wojca and Mile…. what was the old guy’s name again, the one from Lika - Gordic! He came here, we organized everything ourselves and it was also us who had to pay. It all took place in this hall at Hallesches Tor or down there at Köpenickerstraße – right next to the school, in the ICC-Centre or in the Technical University’s Cafeteria at Ernst-Reuter-Platz. We organized it – with financial aid we would get from the senate. It was cheaper that way.”

A.P.: „And you participated in the organization? How did you manage to make contact to the musicians?”

M.D.: „That was not that difficult. You just go down there [to Croatia, NB AP and MT]. You will find them by phone. I, for instance, also knew a good band from Slavonija that came to Stuttgart. I just went there by the end of the month and asked them to come. [Mate was born in Lika and moved to Slavonija as a teenager. Before coming to Berlin in 1989, he worked in Stuttgart, NB AP and MT]”

As can be derived from this passage, local ties were of importance to the organization of new venues, entertainment as well as concerts. They, furthermore, constituted a pivotal element of their promotion. As all our interviewees stressed, there were rather few posters, flyers or other printed material that advertised those concerts. It was more common to have them announced via radio programs for Yugoslav citizens living in Berlin133 and one of our interviewees even pointed to the fact that the respective national

133 Since 1976 those were broadcasted by the SFB – Sender Freies Berlin for ten minutes each day. Initially disseminated under the name “Sendung für unsere jugoslawischen Mitbürger” it was renamed in 1992 being henceforth called “Berliner Forum”. Cf. “Parteisch wollen wir sein – für die Opfer”. Die serbisch-
broadcasting organizations also would have announced the very big concerts. Yet by far the most effective advertisement was just accomplished by buzz marketing. While on the one hand this circumstance proved to be quite painstaking for ourselves while doing research, it accounted for a quite peculiar situation for the contemporaries. The musical events – despite having not deliberately addressed hermetically closed national groups – were not prone to attract just anybody as not all potentially interested persons would have even heard about concerts in the first place. Rather, they were communicated in pre-selective circles such as football-matches between clubs partaking in Berlin’s Croatian soccer-league or the respective pubs, clubs or cafés.

In this respect and following the narratives of our interlocutors we can assume an emergence of both new actors as well as of newly founded venues in which music would be played and distributed according to nationally defined boundaries. While we tried to put into context such a view by pointing to somewhat blurring aspects of regionalization, successful commodification-strategies employed by actors like the national clubs or the narrow distribution circles of such musical events, there have yet been few comments on the impact of turbofolk. By taking into consideration the perspective our interviewees’ communicated towards this very music we in the next subchapter shall try to include an actor-centered angle. Interpreting the interviews we, on the one hand, attempt to grasp how asserted boundaries were not only reflected but also perpetuated and/or permeated by turbofolk. Hence, dealing with the music will serve as a vehicle to question the very supposition of an inevitable and thorough breakdown of the „Yugoslav community” in Berlin.

Whose turbofolk? Insights on belonging derived from our interviews

During the early 1990s, journalistic accounts on the (Ex-) Yugoslav community in Berlin were rather prone to reproduce the primordialist and instrumentalist positions that by then prevailed the explanatory approaches to violence in former Yugoslavia. As already mentioned above, we observed a tendency on behalf of our interviewees to tacitly adapt to that logic. This can foremost be discerned from the manner of directly linking the supposed segregations in Berlin to developments within former Yugoslavia. Always feeling the urge to embed their narratives into comprehensive accounts on the causes, casualties and consequences of the war, their definition of what happened in Berlin as sort of an „ethnic disentanglement” often did not require further explanations and was portrayed as something „naturally” taking place. This is all the more surprising as none of our interviewees seem to have been an adherent of any group-logics before. Quite contrarily, all of them pointed to the initial confusion they felt regarding the political vortex in Yugoslavia as well as to their integration within a functioning Yugoslav community in Berlin. Which kind of personal experiences or social expectations, then,


134 We consulted several archives without actually succeeding to find usable information about concerts in any printed form.
caused them to distance themselves and how was this mediated by music- and evening activities? We asked Mate why he stopped going out with his fellow builders from Bosnia and Serbia:

M.T.: „How did you get along with your colleagues at work back then?”
M.D.: „It was ok – we could talk in our language you know. But after work, everybody went his own way.”
M.T.: „How come?”
M.D.: „How come… You cannot imagine how come?! Down there it is war and we’re working here together having fun?! I tell you, there was no more fun on the building ground, no alcohol on the building ground and no more nice words on the building ground. You just go work there for like ten hours, and then: goodbye!”

In this passage a feeling of guilt might be discerned for Mate considers it to have been unacceptable to befriend with somebody who he understands to belong to the „wrong side”. This feeling apparently was reinforced when his brother was drafted and he would not hear from him for months. He tries to explain:

M.D.: „You know what, in my family there are Serbs, Croats and Muslims… it was therefore hard for me to understand all that. But when my brother went for war, my heart was on that [the Croat, NB AP and MT] side… that’s pretty normal, isn’t it?”

This feeling of guilt – apparently also due to the more nationally inclined girlfriend he had back then – resulted to him going to places that according to Mate would be visited by Croats only as well as playing:

„[...] mostly our music – with guitar, you know. Music featuring harmonica was mostly from the Serbs – like turbofolk, you know....”

While a tendency to separation within musical life was also emphasized by Draško, evening entertainment open to an audience for people regardless of nationality does not seem to have been entirely replaced by nationalized clubs. It was, again, Mate, who in his sometimes contradictory account emphasized the fact that he always went to those places whereas on other occasions he would openly deny of having done so. On the one hand, he vividly recalled a place named „Rujna Zora” at Hauptstraße in close proximity to „Kleistpark” tube-station. According to him, the place was very welcoming to a „Yugoslav” public until it closed in the late 1990s:

M.D.: „Rujna Zora was yet another „Yugo-pub” having live-music every weekend.”
A.P.: „And how was it there during the war, did it remain to be a Yugoslav place”
M.D.: „Yes and it was great. Everything went normal. Many people came... drinking and stuff. Sometimes, when somebody had too much they would fight – but this didn’t happen that often.”
A.P.: „And you said that they hosted concerts there as well?”
M.D.: „Yes, musicians from all over the former Yugoslavia, like Muslimović, Anna Bekuta, Zorica Marković....”
Mate mentioned yet another concert-venue that he would frequent fairly regularly attracting people from all Yugoslav republics – a restaurant owned by a man called Lubo situated in a street that made way for today’s „Gesundbrunnencenter” – a big shopping mall in the district of Wedding.

While he had good memories about those places, the famous „Bratstvo i Jedinstvo” run by Huso came off rather badly. Mate remembered going to that place quite frequently in his first years in Berlin in order to drink, listen to music and talk with people. Yet when going there once in 1992 after work to have some drinks he was approached by people he knew who exclaimed „that Croats have no place in this pub.” By then, Mate explains, „I realized that I’m better off just staying away.” Huso eventually closed his place due constant fights as Draško regretfully told us. However, he did not draw any connections to „national”, „ethnic” or „political” fault-lines. Rather, he explained us quite convincingly:

„[...] there always used to be troubles – narodnamuzika, alcohol, fights, shootings – it would always take place there. But now, there was the constant danger for these things becoming political. While it was a personal matter before – ‘you’re going on my nerves’; ‘you insulted me’ or whatever – so, while it was something between me and you [dir] before, it turned into something between you [euch] and us now.”

Afterwards, however, he again employs the notion of groups by asserting:

„By 1991 the Croats had already seceded, it already started before the war [...]. You know, it all went analogous – what took place down there also happened up here. You listen to news, you know – it’s about identification”

Yet recalling Mate’s story and considering the fact that even in 1992 he still seemed to have enjoyed being at Huso’s, we assume this purported determinisms of group belonging not to hold true necessarily. If the incident would not have happened and if these people would not have been there this very evening Mate might not have ended up leaving. Hence, the logic of belonging to only one group was not only facilitated by the war and the ferocious events and their broadcasting itself but also by being involuntarily driven into it by people that would have approached you in Berlin.

The logic of separation, we suggest, was not as self-evident as our interlocutors sometimes put it but it was also due to changes within social interactions in Berlin. This is further underlined by the fact that despite following and reaffirming the logics of national groups they sometimes deliberately referred to behaviors and expectations undermining this very logic. This, for instance, can be followed from their assurance that it would not have caused any problems for them to accept anybody from the „other side” but that it was rather „them” worsening the situation by not accepting „us” culminating in what they perceived as national segregations. Or, as Draško puts it:

„Let me put it that way, with the Croats, it was like: ‘we do not want any Serb at all’, whereas with the Serbs it was rather like: ‘if you’re ok, we’re also fine with you’ [...] ok, it was not as if the others came to us in shoals [...] but if you brought somebody, this would not have caused any troubles at all.”
Similarly, though representing a „Croatian” point of view, being asked what would have happened if some Serbs had showed up at one of the concerts he organized with his friends, Mate answered:

„Nothing would have happened at all, but it never happened – I never heard of such a thing. We did not have any police or anything – everybody was free to join.”

Despite not being explicitly uninvited, most people, however, seem to have known where not to go. Seemingly, this situation was interpreted that way particularly with regard to turbofolk. As we already mentioned above, our interviewees – even without our explicit demand – felt the need to position themselves to this sort of music or – as Draško termed it – to „that kind of anti-quality that has been pushed into society”. Mate makes clear his point with regard to turbofolk most drastically when stating that this music was played only in Serbian clubs where he never went in the early 1990s on the other hand bluntly saying that playing Ceca at one of Café Monaco’s boozy nights would have caused „dead people”. And also Draško leaves little space for ambiguities when he refers to nationalism and turbofolk-stars Ceca and Dragana Mirković in the same breath:

D.M.: “Yes, this [concerts organized by the Serbian club, NP AP and MT] started off from the early to the mid-1990s. Until Dayton it worked out like that - you beautifully mobilize the people according to the national cause […]”.

Turbofolk and national solidarity. What kind of dance partners?

Notwithstanding these definite statements that evoke a nationally uniform picture, turbofolk in Berlin and the symbolic meaning it carried seems to be far more nuanced and ambiguous. While our interviewees willingly acknowledged that lots of musical events were symbolically and nationally laden with the along coming side-effects sketched throughout the preceding pages, turbofolk apparently featured ambivalences that call for further elaboration. Qualifying the statement above, Draško also emphasized a principal candor towards other „nationalities” on such events:

„It was ok [to bring Croatian acquaintances, NB AP and MT], it was no brotherhood and unity anymore though… on the other hand, the common theme did not vanish entirely. That was the case even with those radical turbofolk-guys.”

We unfortunately did not ask what he exactly meant by „radical-turbofolk-guys”. However, this example illustrates, that concerts of turbofolk stars must not solely be classified as „Serbian”. This is further elucidated in a passage from an interview we conducted with Mate:

“A.P.: Did you listen to Ceca as well?
M.D. [having a sly look on his face]: Yes, I also did.
A.P.: I heard that she played a concert in Berlin in the early 90s. Would you have ever visited such a concert?
M.D.: I went to see her! Brena [Lepa Brena, NP, AP, and MT] as well. I’m going to that concert – screw it! You’re going to a concert – for me this has nothing to do
with politics or religion, I love the music, so I go there. When the Beatles are coming tomorrow, I'll be going there as well."

In spite of the Beatles being certainly not as symbolically charged as Ceca was back then Mate with this statement demonstrates that Ceca’s concerts did not necessarily carry intrinsic nationalism and that it was by no means impossible for him to go there. Yet the emphasis he put on the belief that music and politics are not to be conflated hints to the fact that there probably were people who might have drawn this connection. Furthermore, the look he gave us when answering the question suggests the assumption that he might well have been aware that listening to Ceca and going to her concerts could have posed a transgression of boundaries. This is partly implied in the following sentences:

“A.P.: But would this music be played in the Croatian clubs?
M.D.: Not in those times, no. It was not forbidden back then but we just didn’t want to listen to this music. At that time I was in the Croatian community pretty often – we would rather listen to our own music. But every now and then, when you’re a little drunk, you know... the Folk comes out.
A.P.: Ceca as well?
M.D.: Ja, ja.”

While at the first sight we are confronted with a quite surprising rejection of the aforementioned statements of having „loved” Ceca’s music, it is above all the context that seems to have accounted for the differing assessments. Whereas listening to turbofolk was certainly not appreciated in the Croatian clubs where it was – if ever – turned on when everyone was drunk already, it was to some extent alright to enjoy it on concerts in big halls more or less regardless of nationality.

Interpreting turbofolk as a mutually accepted dance-music staged in places supposedly uncontaminated by politics was a recurrent theme throughout the narratives of many persons we talked with. This holds true for Dejan who after fleeing Bosnia in 1993 initially kept some distance to anyone and everything connected from former Yugoslavia but nevertheless in the mid-1990s visited a Ceca concert. According to his remarks the music was not related to anything but entertainment. His view might have some particular importance considering the fact that he was one of the organizers of Đorđe Balašević’s first concert in Berlin after the war.135

The blatant connection of turbofolk and national affiliations was also doubted by Draško, who told us:

„Well, actually, we were rather participating in those Rock- and Alternative circles but we certainly went to narodne proslave. You would find more girls there compared to the alternative-parties... and the more beautiful ones as well. And then you just go there listening to narodna muzika [loud laughter].”

Mate put it in a similar way, stating that:

“M.D.: With some of those [turbofolk] songs you can have more fun – you can dance, you can sing. You can just have more fun. When you are, like, a little bit drunk – it’s just like playing Doors or Beatles here [the venue we met, NP AP and MT].
A.P.: So you cannot derive from the fact that somebody listens to turbofolk that he is a nationalist?
M.D.: No, not at all. It had nothing to do with being a nationalist.”

All these statements seriously put into question a direct link between turbfolk and nationalist sentiments, but suggest the opposite: turbofolk apparently rather embodied an ongoing possibility of sharing a good time with young, attractive and party-prone people from all former Yugoslavia.

“Turbashi” vs. “rokeri”? Unraveling “Gordyan knots” in Berlin

The passages just quoted also bring us back to one aspect of the alleged dichotomies that have been sketched throughout the preceding chapters, that is, the alleged clear-cut dichotomy between “rokeri” and “turbashi” that allegedly transported political opinions via musical tastes.

It is interesting to observe that also in everyday-life identifications Draško recalled the importance musical preferences exhibited and which kind of values were supposed to be related to them. Offering an interpretation of societal changes in Serbia that bears close similarities to Gordy’s position Draško drew the connection between village-people and turbofolk:

“D.M.: Turbofolk is sort of a defeat of the intellectuals. For me, this is the real defeat. [...] Be it narodna muzika or turbofolk – previously it used to be real narodna muzika, with turbofolk it became different, but it always were the same people listening to this kind of music.”
M.T.: „And who would have been these places in Berlin?”
D.M.: Here, it was the working people, the villagers – it was them who went abroad [...] Those who were unemployed down there.”

Notwithstanding the fact that we have serious doubts concerning the causal explanation of unemployment and poverty causing migration it is interesting to hear Draško heavily borrowing from the idea of turbofolk constituted a reflection of a narrow minded „village-mentality” which he, of course, does not attribute to himself, as he:

„[...]would always hang out with people of all nationalities. It was above all this rock- and alternative-scene that served as sort of a proof that you did not have anything against anybody [...]”

Interestingly enough, though, and partially relativizing this initial statement he a couple of sentences later admitted that:

„at least you had to pretend that you didn’t have anything against anybody [our italics].”

136 On this matter, see pp. 9-11.
While with this confinement he himself put into question the alleged cosmopolitanism and open-mindedness that accounted for the “rokeri’s” principal distinction from the “folkies” it was also Mate’s statement that raised our doubts about it. Claiming to be a fan of old-style rock music such as Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones or the Doors, hence being a prime example of what according to Gordy could be labeled a “rocker” Mate nevertheless went to see turbofolk-stars on a quite regular basis. He by no means conceived of turbofolk as a reflection of any subordinate forms of belonging – be it national – as has already been queried above – or socio-cultural. Predrag for his part, although making jokes about the “trash” epitomized by turbofolk and its lyrics, also rejected the idea of a profound distinction between turbofolk-listeners and those adherent to rock music as well as he seriously doubted any underlying and determining attitude or political sentiments. Assessing turbofolk as a mere entertainment music he simply stated:

„Those who listened to alternative music just listened alternative and those listening to turbofolk listened to turbofolk. Nobody cared about whether and how this affected society. Nobody put too many thoughts in those matters, you know – they just listened to the music they liked.”

Draško encapsulated this point of view by ironically asking: „I mean, who gives a damn about music anyway?!“ after explaining to us why going to Ceca’s show in Berlin did not necessarily prompt an unacceptable deviation from considering himself to be a rocker. To put it in a nutshell he widened the binary opposition by just claiming:

„Yea, I like listening to narodna muzika and turbofolk. It has to be a good song though. I just listen to the music I like.”

Although musical taste is certainly more charged with meaning than Draško and Predrag put it in their quotes, the stone-set dichotomy of „turbashi” and „rokeri” could not be found in our interviewees’ narratives. This opposition firstly introduced by Gordy has been considered a prime signifier of political, social and cultural belongings. We, however, did not come across such distinctions when engaging with that music in Berlin. Rather, it seems that even if our interlocutors were not particularly keen listeners and favored rock music, rather seldomly did we encounter any haughty or arrogant views towards turbofolk and its listeners but quite the opposite: they for entertainment’s sake would occasionally visit concerts without considering this to pose a contradiction to their general habits.

„[...] nur irgendwelche nationalistischen Scheißlieder”? On the dichotomy between gastarbeiter and refugees

While turbofolk has both been assumed to have attracted mostly nationalists as well as it has been often regarded to have constituted a demarcation line between the supposedly cosmopolitan rockers and the rather simple minded “folkies”, a somewhat similar point

has been made with regard to the guest workers. Putatively being their main consumers, Marković and Ivanović related turbofolk’s success to their preferences. Rossig, for his part, made a similar point by starkly contrasting refugees’ and guest workers’ backgrounds and cultural preferences.

It proved somewhat difficult to give a well-balanced assessment to this question since we should avoid assuming our interviewees’ perceptions to be representative. In any case, however, our findings and interviews do not indicate that distinctions between refugees and guest workers – as Rossig argued most prominently – were of such an importance with regard to cultural taste. Rather, it should be taken into account solidarity that, as has been already outlined above, was primarily organized on a regional basis. This was recalled by Barbara John – then-Berlin’s servant for the integration of foreign nationals, who remembers the infrastructure that was provided by the nationally defined clubs.\(^{138}\)

B. Schedlich, president and founder of Berlin’s „Südost e.V.” also commented on that situation seeing it rather critically:

“Sometimes we had forty doctors, many highly competent specialists among them and lots of architects as well. The guest workers were welcoming them with scorn and derision. It was those people they would have envied being home on holidays. Now – thanks to their money – they could look down upon them […] They [the newly founded national clubs, for their part] tried to attract the people with money.”\(^{139}\)

Having already pointed to the fact that the changing situation brought about new actors we, however, could not discern any of the hostilities or separations throughout our interviews that Rossig and his interlocutors claim to have prevailed in Berlin. Even Draško who – as we found out later – belongs to Rossig’s wider circle of friends, neither mentioned huge differences nor did he remember any practices of distinction. It was rather us who would mostly draw the attention to these matters:

“D.M.: […] sometimes, I went out with the guys from the construction site, you know, they all were from the countryside, only few of them were from the city […] I was actually one of the very few coming from the city [he was born and raised in Osijek and Zagreb, NP AP and MT].

M.T.: … so, these were all old guest workers?

D.M.: No, no… most of them were refugees just like me, the majority of them – like 90% - were refugees and they got some work here. And of course I would also go to Gazda Huso with them […]”.

In this passage we could not discern any of the supposedly striking habitual differences between guest workers and refugees as was purported by Rossig as well as Marquardt. Rather, it seems as if the former provided infrastructure for the latter not


\(^{139}\) Rossig (2008): 87.
only in terms of humanitarian aid, but also with regard to music and entertainment. This is indicated by the statements Mate made:

“A.P.: Where would you meet refugees back then?
M.D.: In our pubs, but also in other places scattered all over Berlin. Many of them are closed by now.
A.P.: In those clubs, was it also guest worker who would come there prior to the refugees’ arrival?
M.D.: Yes, people that came to Berlin in the late 60s and early 70s as well.
A.P.: So, you also had things to do with the newly arriving persons?
M.D.: You know, when you go into a pub... you see old people and then you from one moment to another see new people – many new people. And then you just talk about sports, about music - you know, in our language. And you just make contact with those people [...]”

Citing these statements in such a detailed way might seem somewhat banal as they merely reproduce common-sense knowledge that one would have expected in the first place. However, with regard to the prevalent tendencies presented above, the perspective presented by the people we talked to is indeed instructive as it does clearly not suggest a distinction between guest workers and refugees with regard to music entertainment. Coming back to turbofolk-concerts, Mate – at apparent discord with Rossig – points to the fact that due to the age patterns among refugees, it was rather them who most likely were to be encountered at those kinds of events:

M.D.: „There also was a discotheque, you know – K1, you’ve heard about that one? [head-shaking, AP and MT] It was down there at Anhalter Bahnhof. I know the owner who also tried to engage many groups for concerts. He eventually closed and opened a pub in Wedding.”
M.T.: „And at those concerts, would you meet also refugees there?”
M.D.: „It was mainly them who came to these concerts because they mostly were young – between 16 and 30. I’d say it was about 70% of them at these concerts.”

**Summary, Conclusion and Prospect**

The aim of this paper was to shine a light on dynamics that took place in early 1990s Berlin among former guest workers as well as refugees coming here due to the political developments and the eventual war in Yugoslavia. In so doing, we largely focused on the narratives and perceptions of the four persons we interviewed with regard to their views, opinions and memories concerning their music and entertainment habits. Trying to probe into changes we assumed to have occurred in the early 1990s, we were particularly interested in turbofolk-music and its appropriation in Berlin. By also taking into consideration scientific positions on turbofolk that have been put forward throughout the past 20 years as well as approaches dealing with ***gastarbeiter*** from the former Yugoslavia we sought to link and interrelate our findings to an already existent research body. After critically discussing some major assumptions that pervade most of these
approaches in the first and second parts and matching them against the perspectives we were confronted with while doing fieldwork in the third section, we will now draw conclusions.

It became apparent that both preoccupations with turbofolk as well as with guest workers’ popular culture have so far been dominated by congruent dichotomies. On the one hand this is most distinct with regard to the separation of “high- and low culture” with turbofolk representing the latter. On the other hand, a link between this music and nationalist orientations on behalf of its listeners has frequently been asserted. By drawing the connection between “primitive culture” and “nationalist kitsch” turbofolk could on the one side superiorly be rejected by those that counted themselves to a better, a druga Srbija. On the other side, the music has so far been assessed by muting its transnational points of reference by favoring a perspective that is solely devoted to Serbia instead.

Comparable dichotomies are also widespread among the reviewed works dealing with guest workers from former Yugoslavia coming to the FR Germany. Most often this is accomplished by closely linking their cultural tastes with reference to NKFM to the so called “peasant urbanites” and by considering them of having been immune to „high culture”. They are thus homogenized and positioned in stark contrast to those that stayed in Yugoslavia. We also reconstructed the intensification of this view when compared to refugees who, for their part, are also perceived as a uniform group vis à vis the guest workers. This binary view is, again, realized with reference to cultural tastes and musical preferences as the latter are supposed to have been more „nationalist” which “automatically” made them prone to listen to turbofolk. The refugees, on the other side, are supposed of having followed their “own” musical paths. Thus, the very same argument of a “low culture” that is vulnerable, if not even favorable to nationalism and embodied by turbofolk as opposed to cosmopolitan “high culture” most likely embodied by rock-music also prevails the assessment of guest workers and refugees in Germany.

We throughout our research did not identify clearly cut boundaries of this kind. Dealing with turbofolk in Berlin rather made us see ambiguities regarding this music’s perception as well as group belongings. Having said that, notions of nationalization, which are often merely stated and detected in journalistic accounts, have also been prevalent throughout our interviewees’ narratives. Yet dealing with music and entertainment venues also enabled us to see other dynamics at work: music consumption and the organization of turbofolk-concerts in Berlin not only point to national separation but also to an increase of private initiatives as well as of newly emerging actors commodifying that music. At the same time regional ties grew in importance which affected the concert’s promotion. It would, however, be nothing but foolish to neglect the role nationalisms started to play – also in Berlin. Whereas we should not underestimate the influence media from former Yugoslavia imposed on people living here, we nevertheless also should avoid to just presuming fragmentation to have “naturally” taken place along ethnic lines. Engaging with music made us come to the

conclusion that Yugoslav institutions decreased but did not entirely cease to exist. The same is true with regard to turbofolk music events that, while on one hand being charged with negative connotations, became an occasion where group-belongings did not play such a decisive role. We tried to elaborate on this matter according to the differences this music was supposed to entail, that is, turbofolk as a music symbolizing national affiliations, as an important site where the difference of “turbashi” vs. “rokeri” is clearly marked and as a demarcation line between “refugees” and “guest workers”. To put it in a nutshell, none of these differences could be encountered with reference to the perspectives put forward by the people we talked with. Rather than signifying any sort of group belonging to all of our interlocutors – being fond of this music or not – primarily mentioned its entertaining aspects. This was even true for Mate who pointed to the fact that while his Croatian club-acquaintances would not have been happy with him turning on this kind of music in the club house, however it was perfectly acceptable to listen to turbofolk in different locations and settings. We also did not encounter anyone sharing Gordy’s notion of turbofolk- music marking a distinct line between the “rokeri” and the “turbashi”. Rather, we were confronted with people who found this sort of boundary quite alien to their experiences for all of them stated that going to such events did not pose a compromising conflict of interest to them at the time. The same can be said about the alleged differences between guest workers and refugees with regard to music entertainment. Rather than being separated and wary of each other, it was especially the musical landscape that brought them together by having shared venues where people could mingle both quite naturally and regularly.

Based on our research on turbofolk in early 1990s Berlin we recommend to be rather careful when projecting asserted “group belongings” from former Yugoslavia to the situation here. It seems that coexistence in a multicultural city did prevent a shared sub-culture from entirely collapsing and that for this development turbofolk indeed played its role. However, our statements must be qualified considering the fact that we only captured some individual views and memories only. Therefore, it would be necessary to gather more material which is particularly true with regard to published and pictorial sources, i.e. posters, flyers, photographs, video-material etc. This, in turn, might be accomplished by establishing contacts with pub owners – such as the owner of “Bratstvo i Jedinstvo” that is now living in the Montenegrin Sanjak or the founder of “Café Monaco” now residing close to Split. More primary sources may also have been gathered by systematically browsing the non-electronic archives of Berlin’s dailies “B.Z.” and “Berliner Morgenpost” and the radio-archive storing the SFB broadcasts for Yugoslav guest workers.

Also entirely absent throughout this paper were questions sensitive towards gender-relations and constructions. While these aspects have been of major interest to some scholars with regard to turbofolk, we - partly due to our general difficulties finding

suitable contact persons at all – did not succeed in choosing our interviewees with regard to an equal gender ratio. It, however, would be important to include those matters in further researches as our interlocutors’ angles – and hence the perspectives presented here as well – are inherently biased and inevitably male dominated. 

During our research we furthermore became increasingly aware of the fact that the boundaries and categories we imposed on people for analytical reasons (i.e. „guest worker”, „refugees”, „Yugoslavs”, „Serbs”, „nationalists”, „rural origins” etc.) not only lack of differentiation but actually constitute acts of symbolic violence. We came to realize that we cannot process people’s everyday realities by assigning particular labels to them, even when intending to put those into question. In fact, not only were all of our interlocutors socializing between members of different Yugoslav nations, refugees, guest workers, „turbashi” and „rokeri”, but they certainly were also part of a „mainstream-society” (Mehrheitsgesellschaft). Their perceptions of how to deal with the political, social and cultural developments in Yugoslavia as well as their cultural tastes were not only determined by virtue of them belonging to any of the mentioned groups but also influenced by the fact of being confronted with German media and living in a multicultural city like Berlin. Hence, with regard to music and its reception it would also be interesting to incorporate questions that take into account this situation by including issues such as exotization and self-exotizations as well as the hybridization of music and its consumption. While these issues have explicitly not been scrutinized throughout this paper, especially Berlin must be considered a major topic for further investigation. This is both true with regard to the appropriation and merging of various „traditional” music styles such as Klezmer, Turkish and Arab pop-music, Hip-Hop and turbofolk-music etc. as well as with negotiations of new forms of Balkan-belonging. As film-director Milan Miletić told us in an interview, it is the internet and a highly hybridized form of “Turbofolk 2.0” that succeeded to bring about new patterns of identity formation among teenagers from the former Yugoslavia born and living in today’s Berlin.

---

142 This sort of music had its point of departure in the late 1990s operating under the name of “Balkan Beats”. Meanwhile and after meandering through Berlin’s, Germany’s and Europe’s clubs it has been constantly mixed with elements of reggae, latin and ska elements constituting a sort of “world music”. An interesting analysis of this music with regard to its protagonists and their legitimation strategies has been put forward by Brunner and Parzer. Cf. Brunner, Anja; Parzer, Michael (2011): They say I’m not Balkan – but I am! Die Aneignung “fremder” Musik und ihre Legitimation am Beispiel der Balkanclubszenen. In: Rosa Reifsamer, Wolfgang Fischer (eds.): „They say I’m different...” Popularmusik, Szenen und ihreAkteur_innen, Wien:Löcker.

143 This term was coined by Miletić himself. His movie has not yet been screened. A trailer is available, though: http://www.behance.net/gallery/Turbo-folk-documentary-project/4325701, last access: 18 September 2013.

144 We would like to thank Fraser J. Wilson for his proof reading and for helping us avoiding some serious English-errors.
References

Primary Sources

Interviews
Mate Đurković
Stjepan Grgat
Draško Milanović
Milan Miletić
Pedrag Stojanović
Dejan Vučković

Newspaper-articles

Statistical Material

Literature


Insitut za migracije i narodnosti (ed.): Povijest, misija i zadaća. URL: http://www.imi-n.hr/povijest-zadaca-i-planovi, last access: 03.08.2013.


Miletić, Milan (2013): Trailer to the upcoming movie „Turbofolk“. URL: http://www.behance.net/gallery/Turbo-folk-documentary-project/4325701, last access: 18 September 2013.


