Music Activism in Serbia at the Turn of the Millennium

Counterpublics, Citizenship, and Participatory Art

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Abstract: This paper explores subaltern cultural counterpublics in Serbia in the last three *decades*, through different forms of performative and participatory music activism: from radio activism, public noise, and performances in public spaces during the 1990s, to self-organized choirs in the 2000s and 2010s. By referring to the concept of citizenship, it emphasizes the importance of the relationship between politicality and performance in the public sphere. Analyzed case studies have shown how subaltern counterpublics brought together aesthetical, ethical, and intellectual positions, challenging principles imposed by the state and the church. Through music activism, cultural counterpublics addressed different social anomies: nationalism, xenophobia, social exclusion, hatred, civil rights, and social justice, becoming a focal point of civil resistance, a discursive arena that provokes and subverts mainstream politics. An interdisciplinary research framework has been achieved through linking music and cultural studies with political sciences and performance studies, then applied to the data gathered from the empirical ethnographic research covering several case studies.

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Buka u modi! (Noise in Fashion!)[1]

Introduction

This paper explores different forms of dissent and performative music activism in Serbia in the last three decades, developed in response to the breakup of Yugoslavia, the rise of nationalism, a series of armed conflicts during the 1990s, economic sanctions, and hyperinflation, as well as democratic changes and the never-ending transition to a market economy in the 2000s. This period is bordered by the first mass civic protest against Slobodan Milošević's oppressive regime (March 9, 1991) at its beginning and a series of *Ne da(vi)mo Beograd* (loosely translated: Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own)[2] manifestations and protests against the Belgrade Waterfront project[3] and the authoritarian rule of the current President Aleksandar Vučić and his governing Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) at its end. The authors mostly focus on music activism, public noise, and performances in public spaces during the 1990s, perceived as counterpublic participatory activist actions. The main research question is whether the dissenting intellectuals and artists succeeded in creating a parallel discursive and performative realm—so-called cultural counterpublics. This study is one of the rare examples of exploring and encompassing music within the counterpublic realm, given that most of the research in Serbia relating to counterpublics has been published in the fields of theatre, performance studies, or visual arts. Furthermore, the research focusing on music activism so far has been mostly conducted in the sphere of musicology; therefore, this paper is an attempt at making an interdisciplinary analysis by linking musical studies with political sciences and cultural studies.

1 A forceful and influential song by the Serbian new-wave and post-punk band *Disciplin A Kitschme* from 1990.

2 Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own advocates sustainable city development, urban and cultural policies, and citizens' participation in urban development, thus fighting against the appropriation of public spaces in a non-transparent manner for private interests.

3 An urban project designed by the Abu-Dhabi-based Eagle Hills, currently transforming the centrally located Savamala district into Serbia's Dubai. The project has sparked the revolt of a large number of experts and citizens since 2014.

Context

We may say that the musical chronotope[4] of Serbia in the 1990s was embedded in the dissolution of the country (with hundreds of thousands of people killed and exiled), as well as the transformation of the ex-Yugoslav republics into new independent states, which resulted not only in redefining separate national identities and developing staunch pacifist and anti-nationalist movements, but also in rethinking the concepts of civil society and citizenship as such. While the government created a new state—the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia[5]—it was set on maintaining the Yugoslav identity. At the same time, it was looking for ways to integrate the Montenegrin identity into a "wider" Serbian, as if it was a part of Serbian identity.

The civil society was polarized between two distinctive worlds. On one side, nationalist movements (even paramilitary forces) were calling for the eradication of the Yugoslav, therefore, the formation of the Serbian identity which had to include all ethnic Serbs living across the former Yugoslavia. On the other side, the pacifist independent cultural scene, with its cosmopolitan *urbazona*, introduced the art of protest and rebellion in the public sphere based on the concept of citizenship by questioning the official policies and practices imposed by the state. Oppositional intellectuals, artists, and civil-society organizations—often labeled as Other Serbia—were predominantly excluded from public institutions and media. Consequently, they had a crucial role in creating an alternative space for civic resistance and dissent.

In the field of music, the breakup(s) of Yugoslavia(s) sparked the so-called music war, bearing in mind that the "hierarchy of musical differences that was constructed as a tool of racial/cultural separation from the common state" heavily contributed to it.[6]

Turbo-folk, as a musical genre combining traditional *melos*, Greek, and Oriental musical elements (already existing in neo-folk music) with technological advances and electronic sounds, emerged in Serbia in the 1990s and has

4 Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84–258.

5 The *Savezna Republika Jugoslavija* was a federation of two constituent republics, Serbia and Montenegro, created in 1992 that claimed to be the only successor state to the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (today often referred to as *ex-Yugoslavia*), with its six constituent republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia, in addition to the two above).

6 Tomislav Longinović, "Music Wars: Blood and Song at the End of Yugoslavia," in *Music and the Racial Imagination*, ed. Ronald M. Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 629.

provoked numerous controversial theories. However, the majority of social theorists deal with turbo-folk as a socio-political phenomenon close to the regime, neglecting music activism and musical counterpublics. Turbo-folk has usually been linked to the pro/anti Milošević dichotomy, to the disintegration of the state, war(s), nationalism, kitsch, and moral downfall. The official policy imposed by the state through the public radio and television system not only praised and promoted this genre,[7] but also introduced the Warrior Chic iconography[8] and presented pop music "in a different, Westernised light [...]. Pop and rock music became engrafted into seemingly innocuous representations of Serbian patriotism, or 'civic nationalism'."[9]

Even though we could say that the ideological conflicts triggered by popular music reached their peak during the 1990s, this phenomenon was not unique, neither for this particular timeframe, nor for Serbia as a geographic context.[10] The modernization of society (through its historical processes of socio-economic liberalization, industrialization, and urbanization) was usually equated with the erasure of the oriental heritage targeted by the European-oriented urban elite.[11] The development of the music industry in Serbia in the 1970s only intensified this division; popular (pro-Western) music was promoted as something urban, as music intended for the high and upper middle class,

7 Milena Dragićević Šešić, "Media war and hatred: the role of media in preparation of conflicts," *Kultura* 93/94 (1994): 191–207; Dragićević Šešić, *Neofolk kultura: publika i njene zvezde* (Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, 1994); Eric Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives (Post-Communist Cultural Studies)* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Ivana Kronja, *Smrtonosni sjaj: masovna psihologija i estetika turbo-folka* (Belgrade: Tehnokratija, 2000); Stef Jansen, "The Streets of Belgrade. Urban Space and Protest Identities in Serbia," *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 30–55; Radovan Kupres, *Sav taj folk* (TV documentary, Belgrade: Television B92, 2004).

8 Ratka Marić, "Značenje potkulturnih stilova—istraživanja omladinskih potkultura" (Ph.D. diss., University of Belgrade Faculty of Political Science, 1996).

9 Srđan Atanasovski, "Recycled Music for Banal Nation: The Case of Serbia 1999–2010," in *Relocating Popular Music: Pop Music, Culture and Identity*, ed. Ewa Mazierska and Georgina Gregory (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 84.

10 The continuous and constant tension between Eastern-Asian and Western-European influences in Serbian music culture can be traced since the mid-nineteenth century in different historical settings, starting with the liberation from the Ottoman Empire through the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (especially after the "Tito-Stalin split" and the opening of the country to the West).

11 Miša Đurković, "Ideološki i politički sukobi oko popularne muzike u Srbiji," *Filozofija i Društvo* 25 (2004): 274–75.

while a Yugoslav neo-folk (the pop-folk style that preceded turbo-folk) was considered primitive, as music of the lower middle class, working class, and rural population.[12] What is more, turbo-folk is to be understood only as a Serbian version of a Balkan-wide musical phenomenon and post-socialist trend.[13]

Therefore, theorists usually do not define turbo-folk as a music genre, but as an ideological determinant. According to Miša Đurković, there are three different standpoints on turbo-folk: 1) the traditionalists, nationalists, and cultural conservatives (such as composer Zoran Hristić, singer Pavle Aksentijević, and singer Miroslav Ilić), who perceive turbo-folk as an Islamic attack on Serbian spiritual traditions; 2) the so-called globalists and cosmopolitans (such as journalist Petar Luković, sociologist Eric Gordy, and Milena Dragićević Šešić) who also see turbo-folk as a threat to Serbian culture, (mis)used by Milosević's government for nationalist mobilization; and 3) the new Trotskyist leftists gathered around the Center for History and Theory of Culture (Citok) and the magazine *Prelom*, according to whom turbo-folk is just another example of "globalism," while the first two groups are considered cultural racists bothered by its oriental elements.[14] A group of younger theorists gathered around *Prelom* has considered turbo-folk as "populaire," citizen-driven, and authentically subversive towards the socialist neo-folk music, even though it is controlled by the official music industry.[15]

Having in mind that the "culture wars" triggered by music are usually only ideological—as an infighting between the advocates of different musical subcultures—we strongly believe and would like to stress that such conflicts in Serbia during the 1990s progressed into truly political music activism (which will be demonstrated in the examples hereinafter).

On the one hand, turbo-folk as the most broadcasted music genre was (mis)used by Milošević's regime as a means for holding on to power. Such

12 Đurković, "Ideološki i politički sukobi oko popularne muzike u Srbiji," 277.

13 Archer perceives Balkan pop-folk styles as an Ottoman cultural legacy linked to the wider discourse of Balkanism and otherness opposed to a "European" and cosmopolitan society; Rory Archer, "Assessing Turbofolk Controversies: Popular Music between the Nation and the Balkans," *Southeastern Europe* 36 (2012): 178. He argues that there have emerged numerous different pop-folk styles across the Balkan Peninsula, all being criticized by cultural elites on similar grounds—including *muzika popullore* in Albania, *muzică orientală* or *manele* in Romania and *chalga* in Bulgaria (Archer, 201). See also Todorova, Bakić-Hayden, Bjelić and Savić; cited in Archer.

14 Đurković, "Ideološki i politički sukobi oko popularne muzike u Srbiji," 280–82.

15 Branislav Dimitrijević, "Ovo je savremena umetnost: turbofolk kao radikalni performans," *Prelom, Journal for Images and Politics* 2/3 (2002): 94–101; Boris Buden, "Kad budem ustaša i Jugoslaven," in *Barikade* (Zagreb: Arkzin, 1997), 266–71.

an approach was excessively supported by newly established private media stations (TV Pink, TV Palma, Radio Košava) and nightclubs (e.g. Madona, owned by Milošević's son), as well as diaspora-driven private music companies, such as Gastarbeiter and refugee music markets,[16] that soon became the significant financiers investing in this phenomenon. Conversely, turbo-folk was also rejected by the democratic opposition, upper-middle-class counterpublics, and urban radio stations due to its vulgarity and banality of both music and lyrics.

This cultural and political polarization in Serbia was evident in the field of music much more than in other art forms. Emerging civil society organizations (such as the Center for Cultural Decontamination or CZKD and the REX Cultural Center) and few public cultural institutions (including the Cultural Center of Belgrade and House of Youth)[17] gathered around the Belgrade Circle[18], Radio B92, the daily newspaper Borba, and the two radio stations that were repeatedly gaining and losing their independence (Radio Index and Radio Studio B), forming a counterpublic realm known for its performative, participative, and carnivalesque actions.[19]

During particular periods of media censorship introduced after the protests in March 1991, and especially during the ban on broadcasting talk formats on the radio, music genres gained an "informative role" (mostly Western rock and punk), being the only messenger of the voices of dissent. Throughout the NATO airstrikes on Serbia in 1999, when the Radio B92 was deprived of its broadcasting equipment, the internet had already become an alternative space for the censored radio stations and the Association of Independent Electronic

16 Ljerka Vidić Rasmussen, "The Southern Wind of Change: Style and the Politics of Identity in Pre-war Yugoslavia," in *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Mark Slobin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 99–117.

17 At least until 1993 when the re-étatisation of the cultural system definitively abolished the remnants of Yugoslav participatory governance (the self-government model that enabled as much autonomy from the party as cultural workers were brave enough to take). See V.K. Ćurgus, *Kultura vlasti—indeks smena i zabrana. The Culture of the Power—An Index of Suspensions and Prohibitions* (Belgrade: Radio B92, 1994).

18 The Belgrade Circle is an NGO founded in Belgrade in 1992 by a group of dissident intellectuals gathered against the nationalism, xenophobia, and politics of the war during the 1990s. It hosted lectures of renowned Serbian and international intellectuals, including Jacques Derrida, Christopher Norris, and Richard Rorty.

19 See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Milena Dragićević Šešić, "The Street as Political Space: Walking as Protest, Grafitti, and the Student Carnivalization of Belgrade," *New Theatre Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (2001): 74–86. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X00014342.

Media (Anem) to disseminate information and music, with the support of the European media activist community.[20]

Theoretical Framework: Art, Citizenship, and Cultural Counterpublics

In this paper we would like to offer an interpretation of subaltern cultural counterpublics[21] as a specific artistic chronotope in Serbia at the turn of the millennium that used different participatory artistic practices as the primary means of their expression and public spaces as places of their representation. Thus, we use the multi-perspectivist approach[22] by combining notions and concepts from different disciplines: political sciences and concepts of citizenship, public sphere, and urban commons,[23] geopolitics,[24] counterpublics and subaltern cultural counterpublics,[25] through performance studies interconnecting body, movements, performances, citizenship, and participation,[26]

20 Robin Hamman, "Radio B-92 in Belgrade Harnesses the Power of a Media Activist Community During the War to Keep Broadcasting Despite Terrestrial Ban," in *Community Informatics: Enabling Communities with Information and Communications Technologies*, ed. Michael Gurstein (London: Idea Group Publishing, 2000), 561–67.

21 Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig J. Calhoun (Cambridge: Mit press, 1992), 109–42; Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 49–90.

22 Douglas Kellner, "Toward a Multiperspectival Cultural Studies," *Centennial Review* 36, no. 1 (1992), 5–41, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23739831.

23 Engin F. Isin and Patricia K. Wood, *Citizenship and Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1999); Jens Kimmel, Till Gentzsch, and Sophie Bloemen, *Shared Spaces: New Paper on Urban Commons* (a research project and report by Commons Network & raumlaborberlin, 2018), https://www.commonsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/SharedSpacesCommonsNetwork.pdf.

24 Dominique Moïsi, *The Geopolitics of Emotion: How Cultures of Fear, Humiliation, and Hope are Reshaping the World* (New York: Anchor Books, 2010).

25 Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere"; Warner "Publics and Counterpublics."

26 Janelle Reinelt, "Performance at the Crossroads of Citizenship," in *The Grammar of Politics and Performance*, ed. Shirin Rai and Janelle Reinelt (New York: Routledge, 2015), 34–50; Bishnupriya Dutt, Janelle Reinelt, Shrinkhla Sahai, eds., *Gendered Citizenship: Manifestations and Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) and particularly Shirin Rai, "The Dilemmas of Performative Citizenship," in *Gendered Citizenship: Manifestations and Performance*, 25–44; Patrice Pavis, *Dictionnaire de la performance et du theatre contemporain* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014).

music activism,[27] urban studies,[28] memory studies,[29] and, finally, Bakhtin's concepts of chronotope and carnival that are so important for understanding the counterpublic realm and its performative, participative, and carnivalesque character. At the same time, this research takes into account numerous cultural, sociological, and musical studies related to the phenomena of art and activism in the 1990s in Serbia, from turbo-folk[30] to resistance and cultural dissent.[31]

In political theory, citizenship and identity are often perceived as antinomic principles; however, we need to recognize "the rise of new identities and claims for group rights as a challenge to the modern interpretation of universal citizenship."[32] This was also an issue in Serbia, from the standpoint of both government and civil society. During the 1990s, Other Serbia, a civil society cultural counterpublic, was a sort of "parallel discursive arena"[33] that advocated a kind of responsible, critical, "practicing" citizenship: "Citizenship is not an unmarked, universal status or role which can be equally possessed by all people. Rather, in our view, citizenship is a practice, and as such, it is

27 Mark Mattern, *Acting in Concert: Music, Community, and Political Action* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Žak Atali, *Buka: ogled o političkoj ekonomiji muzike* (Belgrade: Biblioteka XX vek, 2007).

28 Christian Borch and Martin Kornberger, eds., *Urban Commons: Rethinking the City* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); Peter J.M. Nas, ed., *Cities Full of Symbols: A Theory of Urban Space and Culture* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011); Greg Richards and Robert Palmer, *Eventful Cities, Cultural Management and Urban Revitalisation* (Kidlington: Elsevier Science, 2010).

29 Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996–1998).

30 Srđan Atanasovski, "Turbo-folk as 'Bad Music': Politics of Musical Valuing," in *Böse Macht Musik. Zur Ästhetik des Bösen in der Musik*, ed. Sara R. Falke and Katharina Wisotzki (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 157–72; Atanasovski "Rhythmanalysis of the Policescape: The Promise of an Ecological Turn in the Practice of Soundscape Studies," *Musicological Annual* 52, no. 2 (2016): 11–23; Dimitrijević, "Ovo je savremena umetnost"; Ljerka Vidić Rasmussen, "The Southern Wind of Change"; Đurković, "Ideološki i politički sukobi oko popularne muzike u Srbiji;" Archer, "Assessing Turbofolk Controversies."

31 Ćurgus, *The Culture of the Power*; Jana Dolečki, Senad Halilbašić, and Stephan Hulfeld, eds., *Theatre in the Context of the Yugoslav Wars* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Rajko Maksimović, *Tako je to bilo 3: autobiografska sećanja (1990–2002), "Godine koje su pojele bubašvabe"* (Belgrade: Author's Edition, 2002); Marić, "Značenje potkulturnih stilova—istraživanja omladinskih potkultura"; Ana Hofman, *Novi život partizanskih pesama* (Belgrade: Biblioteka XX vek, 2016).

32 Isin and Wood, *Citizenship and Identity*, 4.

33 Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 123.

embodied, enacted and performed through a range of actions and in a variety of settings."[34]

By introducing the concept of citizenship in performance theory—as an essential and constantly evolving component of democracy, underling its aspects of belonging, exclusion, role-playing, performing, representing, and social agency—Janelle Reinelt has emphasized the importance of the relationship between politicality and performance in the public sphere.[35] That is exactly how counterpublics in Serbia perceived citizenship: not as documents confirming their ethnic identity in a form of "a critical materiality of citizenship,"[36] but as a continuous practice of questioning and contestation realized within the public realm. Thus, numerous forms of alternative art were created in a dialogue with different social movements, as methods and tools of social struggle.

Increasingly, these alternative artistic practices and narratives went not only beyond genre boundaries but also outside of traditional cultural institutions. Civil and student protests in 1991, 1996–97, and 2000 were the most dramatic (both forceful and theatrical) examples of social activism through the arts—the so-called artivism in recent Serbian history.[37]

It is important to underscore that such artistic actions demanded not only reflexivity,[38] but also "interdisciplinary scholarship, creative practice and activism."[39] They embodied (mostly middle-class) cultural counterpublics that soon started feeling subaltern due to experienced repression, exclusion, and censorship (the so-called blacklists within the media and public institutions). Accordingly, the Serbian subaltern cultural counterpublic was a space "where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and

34 Dutt et al., "Introduction," in *Gendered Citizenship*, 1.

35 Reinelt, "Performance at the Crossroads of Citizenship."

36 Rai, "The Dilemmas of Performative Citizenship," 26.

37 Aleksandar Brkić, *Cultural Policy Frameworks (Re)constructing National and Supranational Identities: The Balkans and The European Union* (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2014), 164; Milena Dragićević Šešić, Julija Matejić and Aleksandar Brkić, "Mobilizing Urban Neighbourhoods: Artivism, Identity, and Cultural Sustainability," in *Cultural Sustainability in European Cities: Imagining Europolis*, ed. Svetlana Hristova, Milena Dragićević Šešić, and Nancy Duxbury (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 193–205.

38 "Key to performance is reflexivity: to perform is to be aware of the act of doing something, and to show doing it. Performance always bears the traces of this reflexivity—it 'knows' it shows. Not all performance is confined to individual subjects—institutions also perform [...] [and] all performances are transactional—between the performers and the spectators or recipients of the act." Rai and Reinelt, eds., *The Grammar of Politics and Performance*, 4.

39 Dutt et al., "Introduction," in *Gendered Citizenship*, 2.

needs,"[40] succeeding in formulating a parallel public sphere that was influential in spite of all repression.

Citizens' activism through the arts was a new phenomenon, especially in Serbia. Even though the concept of civil society as an agent of democracy had been introduced in political theory and political movements already in the 1980s,[41] cultural/performance/music studies in Europe introduced the notion of citizenship and the role of civil society only in the 1990s. Understandably, in an environment of ethnic nationalist conflicts and social stumbling, with Serbian political and cultural authorities clamoring for at least *l'art pour l'art*, if not "patriotic" artistic contributions, opposition artists openly started to relate their profession to their civic responsibility.

Various artistic subaltern counterpublics have brought together the aesthetical, ethical, and intellectual positions that challenged the principles officially imposed by both the state and the church in the 1990s, including nationalism, xenophobia, patriarchal values, hate speech, and media manipulation. As the "strive for independence" temporarily silenced the Croatian and Slovenian scenes, a particularly strong counterpublic front emerged in Serbia, aggravated by the air attacks on Dubrovnik and Osijek in 1991. Only three days after the first bombing of Dubrovnik, the protest in front of the Presidency of Serbia on October 9, 1991, spawned the NGO Women in Black, one of the key anti-war organizations that has been leading protests in public spaces ever since, often in cooperation with the Dah theatre and other artists.

Apart from such direct political engagement against Serbian politics, cultural and music activism were (and still are) also aimed at different global social anomies of a present-day world: from consumerism and the "spectacularization" of society (including the festivalization of music life) to xenophobia and hatred towards the others (migrants, the LGBT population, women, etc.) as well as the denial of human rights in different regions of the world.

Both in theory and in practice, the concepts of artistic participation and countercultural artistic practices of rebellion emerged in the United States of America in the 1960s, comprising community art projects, murals, underground film productions, and processions led by the politically active Bread and Puppet Theatre, as well as diverse forms of the Theatre of the Oppressed (Augusto Boal). In Europe, artistic participation was developed mostly within the scope of public cultural policies (the democratization of culture, later cultural democracy)—e.g., through the process of the *animation socio-culturelle* in France, as well as community art in the United Kingdom (urban furniture, murals, mosaics, etc.).

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40 Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 123.

41 This initiated changes within youth political culture in Yugoslavia, particularly Slovenia, through such journals as *Mladina*, *Problemi*, etc.

The notion of (cultural) participation in socialist Yugoslavia was mostly linked to festivities, rituals, or certain types of well-planned state or city ceremonies. Ever since the Congress of Yugoslav Writers banned socialist realism in 1952, the direct instrumentalization of art was not so common. The attempts at dissent through the arts were sporadic in the 1960s and the 1970s and were mostly linked to the Yugoslav Black Wave film movement or the "ethnic rights" movements of the Croatian, Slovenian, and Serbian nationalist dissidents.[42]

In a more recent context, Patrice Pavis has described participation as an action aimed at a spectator that participates in the creation of scenic or social event, leaving behind his or her status of a passive observer.[43] The participatory process within artistic and cultural projects diminishes the distance between a spectator on one side and an artist on the other; once only a witness, a spectator becomes a participant and a co-creator.[44] According to Pavis, with the development of political theatre and happenings, audience participation has become more political, as artists engage spectators in order to help them become more independent, self-assured, critically aware, and socially responsible. As a result, participatory art practices are increasingly present in everyday life, depending on the contributions and even co-creation of random passers-by.

Whereas participatory art projects are common in theaters and museums—using the devised theatre methods, or with people often being invited to exhibit their own artifacts (as is the case with the Museum of Broken Relationships in Zagreb and the Museum of Yugoslavia in Belgrade)—participatory projects in the field of music are infrequent, most probably due to the widespread stereotype that people need to be musically educated in order to participate.

However, numerous philosophers, theorists, and political scientists have been pointing out the political dimensions of music. This assumption is based on countless empirical examples of both the uses and misuses of music for

42 The first book that raised such issues in Yugoslavia was *Mixed Media* by Bora Ćosić. Published in 1972, the book was praised in certain underground circles yet was never acknowledged in academia or the broader cultural public. However, it was one of the triggers for the creation of cultural counterpublics that in the 1980s included a few theaters (Glej and SMG in Ljubljana, Atelje 212 in Belgrade), student cultural institutions (including the Student Cultural Center—SKC in Belgrade), and Black Wave film directors (Vučićević, Makavejev, Žilnik, etc.), as well as youth press and student radio stations.

43 Pavis, *Dictionnaire de la performance et du theatre contemporain*, 169–70.

44 Needless to say, the type and degree of participation differs from one artform to another; for example, in multimedia, even a distant "spectator" becomes a participant, by using new digital technologies to interfere and react without any physical interaction (see Pavis, *Dictionnaire*, 170). However, such individual experience is not connected to a community, which is the *sine qua non* of participatory art projects (especially scenic performances).

political purposes—in political criticism, propaganda, environmental and consciousness-raising statements, etc. Even though music activism may or may not eventually result in democratic changes, the political significance of music may include much more than the aforementioned explicit examples—"its impact on human identity and capacity, its role in defining or destroying communities, and its part in cultural revitalization and self-determination."[45] Building on Plato, Luther, John Dewey, and Antonio Gramsci, political scientist Mark Mattern has developed the concept of "acting in concert": community-based political action through music that has the power to mobilize people who might otherwise remain silent.

Music activism is often linked to the phenomenon of art in public space accessible to everyone.[46] As a place of social interaction, public space embodies individual experiences of coming together with other people here and now. Therefore, music in public space cannot be neutral—it contributes to the place-making and meaning-making of shared acoustical sites, influencing people and their emotional and social behavior to a certain extent. It can also encourage communication, social interaction, and social mixing, as well as intercultural and social inclusion, in formal and informal ways.[47]

Since the 1960s, citizens have started to appropriate public spaces worldwide for both protests (against the war in Vietnam, student protests in 1968, etc.) and for artistic and musical performances. Furthermore, many cities have declared themselves "free cities" (Amsterdam, San Francisco), exempting street artists from paying city taxes. Over time, the need to use public spaces has arisen from both bottom-up initiatives (such as community art projects encouraging citizens to appropriate their own neighborhoods[48]) as well as top-down

45 Mattern, *Acting in Concert*, 5.

46 The use of public space has been changing throughout history. Squares and streets have had their social role as a stage for spectacles ever since the Roman Empire and the Caesars' triumphal returns from the wars. In more recent history, nation-state representation was perfected through specially designed public spaces suitable for processions and military parades (e.g., the Champs de Mars and the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris, Red Square in Moscow, etc.). Nevertheless, celebrations of the dates linked to the workers' and feminist movements usually occur at places of special significance, places of memory—*lieu de memoire* (Nora, *Realms of Memory*) or urban symbol bearers (Nas, *Cities Full of Symbols*; e.g., Place de la Bastille in Paris, Slavija square in Belgrade, etc.).

47 Julija Matejić, "Music in Public Space" (Master's thesis, University of Arts in Belgrade, 2009), 107.

48 Public art projects in the 1960s and 1970s can be classified by their relation towards: 1) the—natural, urban, or artistic—environment, 2) audience participation, and 3) social engagement—activism through performances, happenings, theater of the oppressed, theater of social intervention, socio-cultural animati-

(competitive city-branding policies leading towards creative, smart, and eventful cities[49]). Increasingly, citizens are called upon to design their own public spaces as shared spaces of urban commons[50] through different everyday practices of so-called "listening against" and strategies for controlling sonic (sound) spaces as spaces of listening, as well as "fighting" against the consumeristic *horror vacui/silentii*—the "fear of the empty/silent space."[51] This strict separation and, at the same time, overlapping of private and public realms (however contradictory it seems) have had significant implications on the ways music is practiced in everyday life and consumed during "festivities" and consumeristic spectacles. With a foreign aid (mostly from the Open Society Foundation), the civic realm in Serbia has developed different platforms for hosting varied actors (professionals, amateurs, interested citizens, passers-by, etc.), without the risk of being controlled. Sadly, only few of them have survived, such as the CZKD.

Counterpublics in Serbia could relate neither to the music canonized by schools and academia nor to turbo-folk or omni-popular Western pop music, but to music activism mostly rooted in rock and punk music genres, aiming at social justice, the culture of memory, civil rights, and freedom. The difference was not only in the musical language itself but also in places of inscenation and interaction with audiences. Instead of concert halls and stadiums, activism through music requires public spaces and direct audience participation, while disregarding "excellence" as the ultimate demand of music performance.

Thus, in the last decade of the twentieth century, millions of people throughout Serbia brought their voices together as a direct reaction to long-term exposure to repression, nationalism, xenophobia, devastation, and the collapse of not only the country itself but also of its common core values. By examining these voices and focusing on music activism and its role in the socio-political turmoil in recent Serbian history, we are not outlining a retrospective account of all the phenomena that occurred; instead, we choose to discuss only

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on, etc.; see Milena Dragićević Šešić, *Umetnost i alternativa* (Belgrade: Institut za pozorište, film, radio i televiziju, Fakultet dramskih umetnosti, Clio, 2012), 79–80. The terminological evolution from *open spaces* to *public spaces*, from *social engagement* to *activism* and *artivism*, from *audience participation* to *citizen participation*, emphasizes the changes in approach and in the socio-political context. The more that open spaces in cities were privatized, the more the citizens needed to fight for the "public sphere" and for the possibility of using common space for community projects.

49 See Richards and Palmer, *Eventful Cities*, *Cultural Management and Urban Revitalisation*.

50 See Borch and Kornberger, *Urban Commons: Rethinking the City*; Kimmel, Gentzsch, and Bloemen, *Shared Spaces: New Paper on Urban Commons*.

51 Atanasovski "Rhythmanalysis of the Policescape."

the most influential ones. By presenting several case studies, we distinguish different types of music activism: not only individual and collective, professional and amateur, but also "activism within music" and "activism through music."

Sounds of Democracy—Sounds of Counterpublics

Following their own beliefs, members of both art and popular music elites contributed (directly and indirectly) to the overall fight for civil rights and freedom in Serbia during the 1990s. Numerous singers, members of pop, rock, and punk bands, composers, musicians, and professors in music schools and on the university level actively participated in civil and student protests, in numerous concerts of support, increasingly criticizing the political situation in their lyrics, writings, screenplays, and scripts, as well as unfailingly portraying complex relationships within the society in their own musical language.

When it comes to the culture of dissent, counter-discourses, and activism in the field of music, we differentiate numerous types of social and political engagement in the Serbian public sphere over the last three decades. For the purpose of this paper, however, we will focus only on those that undoubtedly crossed with more significant civil society movements, contributing to the counterpublic realm. These include:

a) Concerts of art, rock, and pop music in traditional venues, with the spirit of protests being integrated into the music performed—both in the musical language itself and in the lyrics;[52]
b) Direct political engagements, public speeches during the protests, and manifestations against the regime (symbolically calling on then-President Slobodan Milošević to resign);[53]

52 This includes concerts by the prominent songwriter Đorđe Balašević, which were symbolically organized as part of counterpublics and the culture of dissent. Another example is a concert by the eminent Serbian violinist Mateja Marinković held at the Ilija M. Kolarac Endowment concert hall in April 1998, during the conflicts in the province of Kosovo; in his piece called *Call from Tombs*, Marinković used rhythmic patterns commonly known from the street protests of 1996–97.

53 Probably the most detailed testimonies of such events are given in the 2002 memoirs of composer Rajko Maksimović, one of the most present and active musicians in the dramatic events of the 1990s; see Maksimović, *Tako je to bilo 3: autobiografska sećanja (1990–2002), "Godine koje su pojele bubašvabe"* (Belgrade: Author's Edition, 2002). Other examples include composer Milan Mihajlović's speech at the opening of the First International Review of Composers held in Sremski Karlovci and Novi Sad in May 1992, as well as an open letter to

c) Radio broadcasts of music as a symbol of dissent;[54]
d) Participatory "music" and noise-making civic performances organized and implemented during different mass protests in the winter of 1996–97;[55]
e) Insurgent concerts on main public squares;
f) Ephemeral participatory artistic actions, often in the form of multimedia performances;[56]
g) Permanent troupes and self-organized art collectives gathered around different cultural platforms.[57]

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the public by composers, musicologists, and music artists against isolation, harassment, torture, and killing of people based on their nationality, religious, or political beliefs; the public "kneeling" of approximately fifty composers invited by composer Vuk Kulenović and the Composers' Association of Serbia on June 14, 1992; and composer Dejan Despić's public speech at the Vidovdan convocation of Democratic Serbia held on June 28, 1992. At that time, the Composers Association of Serbia was greatly politically engaged. According to Milan Mihajlović, then-president of the Association: "We reacted at a time when it was critical, when our members were also affected. I continue to believe that our primary role is to pursue the profession and to promote our creativity. But also, when something that I think threatens our work happens, I think the Association should react, and no one has the right to keep our mouths shut." See Dubravka Savić, "Svet nas još uvek sluša" *Večernje novosti* (June 5, 1994).

54 See Dragićević Šešić, "B-92 urbani radio—politika, alternativa, rok."

55 This includes the protests against the electoral fraud attempted by then-President Slobodan Milošević and his party that erupted in November 1996 and lasted for four months, gathering thousands of people on the streets daily throughout Serbian cities. Artists contributed with their wittiness and imagination, creating a carnivalesque atmosphere on the streets, stimulating citizens to join and contribute with their own creativity. This phenomenon was documented in numerous films, including Radivoje Andrić's *January River* (1997), Želimir Žilnik's *Do jaja* (1997), and Goran Marković's *Kordon* (2002).

56 Such as *Potop* (*Flood*), a performance by the Led Art collective (Novi Sad, October 16, 1993), with the New Art Forum contemporary music ensemble wearing Saša Marković Mikrob's masks and performing the "Tuba Mirum" from the Mozart's Requiem, and the musical *Armatura* (authored by Ana Karapešić), performed by Škart, Mikrob, Urgh! on November 8, 1993, at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade. These two events indeed crossed disciplinary boundaries and contributed to the creation of cultural counterpublics. Not only a common denominator of these two actions, Mikrob's masks were soon to be seen everywhere—on the markets, at railway stations, in clubs, shops, etc.—offered by the artist himself to passers-by.

57 Primarily self-organized choirs, which are analyzed in more detail further in this chapter. Additionally, numerous events were organized by independent cultural centers and private clubs as part of Belgrade's fluid club scene. Independent cultural centers introduced extraordinary music programs: Czkd had organized the "drum symposium" Prestup on February 29, 1996, a year before the drums

Musical counterpublics reflect different socio-political contexts in distinct genres. As composer Milan Mihajlović has emphasized, every work of art reflects the time in which it is created, as is the case with the titles of some of his compositions written during the 1990s—*Eine kleine Trauermusik* (A *Little Grieving Music*, 1990) and *Memento* (1993), the contents of which, as he himself admits, "are probably not accidental."[58] Mihajlović has further elaborated on the impact of social reality on his personal poetics: the symbolism of *Memento*, for example, lies in a horrible war environment—an environment of primitivism that surrounds us all: "We must not neglect the feelings of the exiled and the humiliated. We must not forget the dead. Because of this whole situation, I have been terribly upset for a long time, so it makes sense that all of this is reflected in my music."[59]

Similarly, horrified by the war and the refugee convoys in Bosnia (especially the Jewish refugee convoys that had left Sarajevo at the very beginning of the war), composer Ivana Stefanović tried to translate her attitude toward these circumstances into the musical language of her radiophonic piece *Lacrimosa* (1993). It includes not only quotes from Pergolesi, Mozart, Verdi, Penderecki, Britten, and Sephardic songs, but also sounds from the streets of Sarajevo (May 1992) and Belgrade (June 1992). This cathartic piece points to the loss of the sound map of the city under the booms of cannons from the surrounding hills. As a true example of program music, it grasps the composer's outcry: "Full of tears—say the texts of all the prayers of the world... It is full of tears this musical prayer of mine, dedicated to a friend from Sarajevo."[60]

There are not that many examples of explicit and visible political engagement in art music within the walls of traditional concert halls. Some may say that an individual professional (artistic) contribution to music activism seems to be somewhat hidden in personal poetics. However, even though it is perceived as "activism within music" (and is therefore not easily comprehensible

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became a symbol of civic protests (the word *prestup*, meaning "violation," also refers to the leap year), whereas conductor Premil Petrović introduced music theater in Cinema Rex and Beton hala Theater (performing Mozart's *Bastien and Bastienne*, 1996; Manuel de Falla's *El retablo de maese Pedro*, 1997; Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, 1998; and Igor Stravinsky's *Histoire du Soldat*, 2000).

58 Ivana Stefanović, "Susreti sa savremenicima: Milan Mihajlović; Posebna, tvrdoglava sorta," *Politika*, November 3, 1993, 17.

59 Maja Smiljanić, "Milan Mihajlović, kompozitor i dobitnik nagrade Stevan Mokranjac. Muzika bez predumišljaja," *Borba*, April 21, 1994, 15.

60 Dragićević Šešić, *Umetnost i kultura otpora*, 197; Ana Kotevska, *Isečci s kraja veka: Muzičke kritike i (ne)kritičko mišljenje (1992–1996)* (Banja Luka: Besjeda; Belgrade: Clio, 2017), 36.

by everyone), such a professional contribution is of great importance since it is written/recorded as a trace of a zeitgeist for generations to come.[61]

In a way, a similar, yet slightly different approach to social activism within music can be seen in numerous theatrical performances and films, produced both in the country and abroad, as a reaction to the madness of nationalism and the wars. As explained by undoubtedly the most active and socially engaged composer in the field of applied music at that time—Zoran Erić—"it is active music that is not just a mere décor but participates equally in the plot, and its absence would be noticed."[62] Some of the most significant theater plays and films interwoven by his music, (directly or indirectly) referring to the atrocious social reality, include *Mother Courage and her Children* (Bertolt Brecht/Lenka Udovički, 1992), *Der Prozeß* (Franz Kafka/Sonja Vukićević, 1998), *Ubistvo s predumišljajem* (*Premeditated Murder*, Gorčin Stojanović, 1995), and *Stršljen* (*Hornet*, Gorčin Stojanović, 1998), all of them expressing either the dreadfulness of the wars or covering a wide range of complex and appalling socio-political actualities in the region.

Due to the political and social circumstances, music activism "grew" from the individual to the collective (mass), from the professional to more amateur, spontaneously moving the stage from concert halls into the public space so that the impact would be more effective and efficient.

Music activism in public space in Serbia owes its character to the programs and activities of Radio B92, one of few genuinely free media outlets in Belgrade, which gained both political and generational credibility in March 1991 when, despite the ban on broadcasting talk formats, it continued to fight against the regime by spreading its political messages through music.[63] As a result, its

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61 In addition to the art music pieces already mentioned, we also single out Svetlana Kresić's *Klinički kvartet* (*Clinical Quartet*, 1991), Vojin Komadina's *Tužne pjesme* (*Sad Songs*, for voice and piano, 1992), Dejan Despić's *Dies irae* (for oboe, violin, viola, cello and piano, 1992), Vuk Kulenović's *Boogie* (for piano and orchestra, 1993), Zoran Erić's *Images of Chaos* IV—*I Have not Spoken* (for alto saxophone, bass mouth harmonica, actor and mixed choir, 1995), Srđan Hofman's *Nokturno beogradskog proleća 1999* (*A Nocturne of Belgrade Spring 1999*, for chamber ensemble, live electronics and audio tape, 1999–2000), Ivan Jevtić's *Izgon* (*Exodus*, 2001), and Aleksandra Vrebalov's *...hold me, neighbour, in this storm...* (2007). See Melita Milin, "Art Music in Serbia as a Political Tool and/or Refuge During the 1990s," *Musicological Annual* 47, no. 209 (2011), 209–17, https://doi.org/10.4312/mz.47.1.209-217.

62 Biljana Lijeskić, "Kompozitor Zoran Erić, dobitnik specijalne nagrade na Bijenalu scenskog dizajna: Inspiraciju čuvam kao izvor čiste vode," *Glas javnosti*, September 19, 2000, 14.

63 Dragićević Šešić, *Umetnost i kultura otpora*, 53.

Figure 1: Led Art collective, New Art Forum ensemble for contemporary music, and Mikrob, Potop (Flood), 1993, performance, Novi Sad. Photo by and courtesy of Vesna Pavlović.

radio audience increased significantly, and people realized that anyone could contribute.

In 1992, a supergroup named Rimtutituki brought together members of the then most influential rock and roll bands and musicians (Partibrejkersi, Električni orgazam, and Ekatarina Velika—Ekv) for the purpose of signing the petition against the mobilization.[64] At first, without a permit for a public performance, they started their fight against the futility and folly of the war from a truck, by performing live on the streets of Belgrade, spreading slogans such as "Mir brate, mir!" ("Peace brother, peace!"); "Nećemo da pobedi narodna muzika" ("We do not want the folk music to win"), and "Ispod šlema mozga nema" ("There is no brain underneath a helmet").[65] Once permission to perform was obtained, a concert called "Sos peace or do not count on us" was organized at the Republic Square on April 6, 1992, against the Serbian government's involvement in the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its slogan was an anti-war message addressed to Serbia's generals and government as a direct paraphrase of the famous song from 1978: "You can count on us!" ("Računajte na nas!") by the rock

64 Even the name of the group is a form of a protest, as it is directed to those in power and loosely translated from an argot understandable throughout the former Yugoslavia as "up yours!"

65 Električni Orgazam Official, "Rimtutituki Uzivo Na Kamionu [1992]," music video, 53:16, posted March 8, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJUyhL3dRbU.

band Rani Mraz (*Early Frost*), a patriotic song that glorified Yugoslavism. The concert gathered between 30,000 and 50,000 citizens.[66]

Over four months of civic and student protests during the winter of 1996–97, citizens throughout Serbia gathered daily and organized mass protest walks against the election rigging, which entirely changed the profile of the public space: "this type of spatial emancipation in the city center determined rebellious freedom of movement, and as such definitely opened new horizons for street freedoms."[67] We would agree that the streets of Belgrade succeeded in staging life itself, with sound, noise, and music having a significant role. Protest rallies advanced into a mobile sound force, often including orchestras, drummers (grouped around Dragoljub Đuričić), trumpets, ravers, and other kinds of innovative, creative, and witty handmade noisemaking instruments. The sound-base of these protests was music, particularly rock and punk, known for their subversive drive. Such a "culture and art of resistance," with the use of performativity in public space, aimed at direct criticism and a change of government and its apparatus.[68]

These protests were not static gatherings; they were defined by walking (symbolizing the effort to exercise the freedom to move throughout the city) and noise (*Noise in Fashion!*—action based on the eponymous aforementioned song), conceived as a noise production during the broadcast of State Television News at 7:30 PM, in front of government and media buildings. Obviously, the choice of institutions was not random; if French economic and social theorist Jacques Attali is to be trusted, the fear of noise is particularly noticeable in totalitarian systems, as nothing essential happens in the absence of noise and there is no real power without the control of noise.[69] That is precisely why it is not surprising that the initiative was massively accepted by the citizens, with their inventiveness best seen in the production of noise, with instruments made from drainpipes, found objects, wires, and kitchen pots. Those who could not join the walks contributed from their balconies (by placing banners and speakers on their windows, producing noise, or throwing confetti and balloons), and we would say that this inter-stimulation of the events on the streets and the facades created a specific ambiance in the city as never before in the Balkans.[70] Over time, this noise advanced into music, culminating with the mass

66 Električni Orgazam Official, "Rimtutituki—Mir brate mir—Ne Racunajte Na Nas [Live 1992]," music video, 5:59, posted March 9, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-TobTR5NdY.

67 Miroslava Lukić-Krstanović, "Belgrade Street Drama of the 1990s: (Re)constructing History and Memory," *Prace Etnograficzne*, no. 2 (2018), 27–48.

68 Dragićević Šešić, *Umetnost i kultura otpora*, 26.

69 Atali, *Buka: ogled o političkoj ekonomiji muzike*, 10–12.

70 Dragićević Šešić, "B-92 urbani radio—politika, alternativa, rok," 277.

Figure 2: Student protests, 1996, Belgrade. Photo by and courtesy of Vesna Pavlović.

performance of the *Symphony for Whistles, Trumpets, and Drums* directed by the composer Zoran Hristić in the closing ceremony of the civil and student protests.[71]

71 Gordana Suša and Voja Donić, *Pištaljka jača od pendreka* (Belgrade: VIN Production, 1996), video, 1:08:07, posted November 19, 2016, by "N1," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3tQ-RDN8L0, 0:00–2:50.

These protests were also marked by popular, rock, and punk bands that were staunch opponents to the regime, and were not afraid to send a clear message, including Električni orgazam, Partibrejkersi, Eyesburn, Love Hunters, Atheist Rap, Kanda, Kodža i Nebojša, Darkwood Dub, Del Arno Bend, Rambo Amadeus, and others. One of the largest rock concerts in recent Serbian history—the concert for New Year's Eve 1997—was organized by the members of the student protest marketing team and non-governmental/non-profit association Šta hoćeš ("What Do You Want"). It was attended by more than 500,000 people, with Đorđe Balašević, Partibrejkersi, Familija, Love Hunters, and Darkwood Dub performing on stage, with Prodigy, Sting, Harvey Keitel, Emir Kusturica, Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and others greeting people via a video link.

Rock music has been identified as urban, cosmopolitan, and dissident music of engagement and rebellion, as opposed to the folk, neo-folk and turbo-folk music that was widely used for state propaganda. Therefore, rock music was a cultural vehicle not only for political changes but also for collective identity construction and the deprovincialization of society: "as a genre that expressed cosmopolitanism and individualism, rock provided not only a discourse but a set of shared practices for identity construction, [...] stories within which Serbian students of middle-class, professional backgrounds could locate themselves and through which they could narrate their desired participation in a European civil society." What is more, rock music was "a soundtrack for the story that students told of their collective resistance."[72]

Various groups of artists and individuals (professionals, students, and amateurs) participated in the protests in many different ways, through artistic actions, happenings, provocations, performances, and interventions, mostly in partnership with non-governmental community organizations. Therefore, it is not easy to classify particular actions within particular branches of art because of the conscious violation of all traditional art conventions and forms, as well their ritual form of expression and specific process of realization. Of course, it was not all about "festivity, music, and fun," as an oblivious reader might assume—the fight against the regime brought people together in dangerous settings (which are not the subject of this paper). Even though they were unsafe, city streets were deliberately chosen as places where citizens could demonstrate their disobedience, intellectual superiority, creativity, progressive

72 Marc W. Steinberg, "When Politics Goes Pop: On the Intersections of Popular and Political Culture and the Case of Serbian Student Protests," *Social Movement Studies* 3, no. 1 (2004), 3–29, https://doi.org/10.1080/1474283042000194939, 19–22.

ideas, cynicism, wittiness, dignity, and pride as instruments of rebellion against the regime, wars, dictatorship, and autocracy.

Probably the most striking example of music artivism was the performance of the ballet *Macbeth/It* (William Shakespeare/Sonja Vukićević, Belgrade, 1996), produced by CZKD. Ballerina, choreographer, and director Sonja Vukićević and actor Slobodan Beštić passionately and violently performed to music composed by Zoran Erić in front of a police cordon in Kolarčeva Street, surrounded by protestors, almost naked and splashed by water in the middle of a freezingly cold night. It was a real example of an art performance as a medium for spreading radical artistic ideas.

Figure 3: Sonja Vukićević and Slobodan Beštić, Macbeth/It, 1996, performance, Belgrade. Photo by and courtesy of Vesna Pavlović.

We would agree that the politicization of art during the protests was beneficial in two ways: not only did it help to mobilize student and citizen support, but it mostly prevented the protests from escalating to violence (though, unfortunately, not always). As rationalized by Đorđe Tomić: "it was much more difficult for the police to use force against protesters who were sharing flowers or reading poetry aloud in front of the police cordon."[73] Unlike the aforementioned "activism within music," this is an extreme example of political "activism through music" and performance, which could be considered "confrontational," since

73 Đorđe Tomić, "Ulične studije—odsek: protest! Studentski protesti tokom ere Miloševića," in *Društvo u pokretu. Novi društveni pokreti u Jugoslaviji od 1968. do danas*, ed. Đorđe Tomić and Petar Atanacković (Novi Sad: Cenzura, 2009), 214.

"music helps assert the claims of the community, which are believed to stand in direct opposition to the claims of others."[74]

Such carnivalization of a city[75] imposes the idea of a "city-as-action," which involves not only political struggle as such but also its dramaturgy and its *mise-en-scène*. As defined by Silvija Jestrović, "it involves the construction, decomposition, and re-creation of the city through action—through dynamic self-design—suggesting the idea of space as a palimpsest in which both synchronous and diachronic elements of the city are seen. The theatricality of protest is a strategic, conceptual, deliberately thought-out aspect of counter-spectacle."[76]

After an era of fear and hopelessness, and a culture of humiliation during the 1990s, democratic changes and socio-political events in the 2000s brought a culture of hope.[77] But the sense of togetherness and community belonging was short-lived. The culture of hope was soon replaced by the culture of disappointment, especially after the assassination of Serbia's first democratic prime minister, Zoran Đinđić, in 2003. As a result, in the following years, different artivistic initiatives attempted to bring back the sense of connectedness to the community through bottom-up artivism and civic imagination aiming at raising awareness, introducing critical thinking, as well as promoting peace and an inclusive society.

That is when alternative choirs, orchestras, and self-organization as the way of operating came to the forefront. Horkeškart (in Serbian, *hor* meaning "a choir," and *škart*—"a discard") was the first self-organized choir within the territory of the former Yugoslavia. It was founded in 2000 by the members of the art group Škart to perform the song "Svete krave" (Holy cows, by Croatian singer Arsen Dedić) at Czkd, alluding to the fact that, even after the democratic changes, specific individuals in the society were still untouchable (such as criminals and politicians). Open for everyone to join, led by professional conductors, and with rehearsals held in different cultural centers (Czkd, Rex, the Parobrod and City cultural centers) and private flats, the collective was centered around the concepts of self-organization, equality, social activism, non-profit engagement, and unrestrained "expression of both personal opinion and of course talent."[78] With diverse repertoire (from the socially engaged and

74 Mattern, *Acting in Concert*, 25.

75 Dragićević Šešić, *Umetnost i kultura otpora*, 275.

76 Silvija Jestrović, "Grad–kao–akcija," in *Umetnost i kultura otpora* by Milena Dragićević Šešić (Belgrade: Institut za pozorište, film, radio i televiziju, Fakultet dramskih umetnosti, Clio, 2018), 411.

77 Moïsi, *The Geopolitics of Emotion*.

78 Marija Macić, "The Alternative Choir as a Creative Platform," in *Equal Yet Different: Self-Organisation of an Alternative Choir and Orchestra*, exhibition catalogue (Belgrade: UK Parobrod, 2015), 34–35.

revolutionary re-actualization of partisan and workers' songs to their own songs), Horkeškart performed in public spaces, village schools, orphanages, refugee camps, festivals, art galleries, museums, and markets, often wearing pajamas or workers' uniforms. Over the years, the collective has become divided: while some members had a growing ambition for the collective to become a well-rehearsed rock and roll band, others wanted it to be more socially engaged. Consequently, the group Škart left the choir in 2006, with its name being changed into Horkestar (from *orkestar*—"an orchestra"). During the twenty years of its existence and through music activism enriched by humor, the "Horke" phenomenon has been raising awareness of the importance of both individual and social responsibility.

Similar choirs were also formed throughout the region, including the lesbian-feminist choir Le zbor in Croatia in 2005, Prrrroba made of ex-Horkeškart members in Belgrade in 2007, the female choir Kombinat in Slovenia in 2008, Raspeani Skopjani in Macedonia in 2009, the lesbian-feminist choir Le wHore in 2010, and the anti-fascist choir Naša pjesma (Our Song) in 2016 in Belgrade. These self-organized collectives have been more than choirs; as creative platforms, they have been carrying and spreading socially engaging messages, calling for solidarity and humanity, stressing the importance of musical association and the (out-)loud expression of resistance and social criticism.

Figure 4: Horkestar on regional tour: Festival of self-organized choirs, 2018, performance, Zagreb. Source: Courtesy of Horkestar.

The wider general public got to know the work of Horkeškart/Horkestar through different actions aimed at collective mobilization, such as "Nazad" (Back!) in 2006, with the choir performing the song "Back!" in front of the building of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the Supreme Court, the University of Belgrade, the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, and the Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as a direct critique of the slowing down of country's path toward European integration, as well as certain regressive occurrences in the society, if not created by then at least not prevented by those institutions. Within the program of the Belgrade International Week of Architecture (BINA) in 2014, and in direct interaction with citizens, Horkestar created lyrics and music on the theme of public spaces, aiming to preserve Belgrade's public spaces and point out their shortcomings. The same year, Horkestar not only performed songs previously censored by the Belgrade Youth Center in front of the very institution, on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, but also performed in front of Zvezda cinema, privatized under suspicious circumstances, yet occupied by a group of activists (students, filmmakers, and other cultural workers) for the purpose of screening films for free to citizens of Belgrade. Since 2014, Horkestar has been most socially active in support of the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own) movement, by participating and performing in their mass protests against the Belgrade Waterfront project. Horkestar's cover of the anti-fascist revolutionary "¡Ay Carmela!" became the anthem of the movement.[79]

As acts of social engagement and protest against the public reality, such examples of music activism and new genre public art situated outside conventional art spaces are dialogical, based on dialogue and participation, forging "a provisional sense of collectivity."[80] Therefore, we would agree that "Horke" phenomenon has offered "a positive and unique influence on the lives of individuals."[81]

Conclusions

The cultural domain, especially the field of music, brings to the fore social and political dichotomies. Musical counterpublics have used different means to send a message and to achieve their goals in different historical and socio-

79 Ne da(vi)mo Belgrade, "Čiji grad? Čiji glas? [2016]," music video, 2:13, posted June 7, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Swh69bhW0U.

80 Grant Kester, "Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art," in *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, ed. Zoya Kucor and Simon Leung (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 76–88.

81 Momir Josipović, "The Trajectory of Horkestar Members' Social Circles," in *Equal Yet Different*, 39.

political contexts. Specific musical genres were considered mainstream in one *hic et nunc* and musical chronotope, while at the same time being regarded as dissenting and rebellious in another.[82]

As the study of Serbian musical chronotope(s) in the last thirty years has shown, after more than a decade of an unfinished transition and democratic changes (2000–10), certain specificities of the 1990s reemerged in the 2010s, such as a disjunction of public and counterpublic realms in the field of music. Such polarization in musical circles is based on a musical genre and its status within society (public and counterpublic spheres). Even though the polarization implies that musical literacy and taste are often regarded as critical elements of social and cultural identity constructions, it does not suggest that contemporary art music cannot be heard in both spheres—rather, that the manner and place of performance of a particular piece of music determine its contextual meaning. On the one hand, the official, public music realm (constructed by the public music education system) shapes apolitical performers (regarded as "music professionals") and implies traditional concert venues for a high-culture audience profile qualified to comprehend (art) music. On the other hand, musical counterpublics use collaborative and socially engaged community-driven practices, advocating for the values that are not only cultural but also sociopolitical and ideological. Therefore, the subaltern counterpublic realm often imposes a dislocation from traditional concert venues, demands direct and outspoken politicality and the joint production of both knowledge and artistic practice, the reintroduction of alternative, (experimental) exploratory research and creative practices, forgotten (socialist, but also other) traditions, and inter/transdiciplinarity, including new media, as well as uncommon ways of music production and dissemination.[83]

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82 Even listening to a certain type of music can proclaim an affiliation to either public or counterpublic realms; however, this paper focuses on socially engaged civic practices and not on passive listeners and particular audiences.

83 This claim was recently confirmed when, after two months of the global Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, the first Ars vs. Corona music concert outside of the virtual space was organized by cultural counterpublics, including the Ngo Bunt (an acronym meaning "rebellion," standing for *Beogradska umetnička nova teritorija*—Belgrade Artistic New Territory). The concert was organized in a symbolic place of today's cultural counterpublics—a space of the academic cultural and artistic society Ivo Lola Ribar (named after the antifascist national hero, one of the leaders of the youth and student revolutionary movement in Yugoslavia, killed during World War II). As it seems, the public cultural system was not ready (or not brave) enough to take an action in such turbulent and risky times, while musical counterpublics and their loyal audience—experienced in tough situations—have found the strength to make such a significant act. Created in 2013 by the prominent Serbian flutist Ljubiša Jovanović and composer

Thus, if we discuss the musical chronotopes in Serbia in the 1990s and today, we may conclude that some of the elements from the 1990s have been reinstalled in recent times, yet the carnivalesque spirit and forms of artivism have changed. Though the "carnival as the subversive undercurrent in modernity 'discovered' by Bakhtin"[84] was the key form of artivism and resistance during the citizens' and students' protests in the 1990s, it has lost its subversive force over time, due to its overuse by the political parties in power, organizing top-down public manifestations in different populist formats. However, sparks reminiscent of the 1990s are certainly visible in the protests of the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own movement. It seems that Bruegel's painting *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent*, which inspired Jacques Attali's analysis of the political economy of music, might be appropriate to denote the contemporary Serbian carnivalesque musical chronotope. Although the dichotomy (between an inn and a church as symbols of two societal poles) cannot be directly applied, we can imagine the dichotomy between the two types of the carnival itself—a populist-consumeristic one in the official public cultural realm on one side, and a participatory-activist one self-organized within cultural counterpublics on the other. Although Bruegel foresaw a well as a space for gathering the whole community, the two aforementioned realms in Serbia do not share a common space where the two carnivals could meet. As we have shown, the music sphere in Serbia is much more complicated, organized in separate and utterly different realms (value chains) that rarely intersect. Nevertheless, we dare to imagine a symbolic well, created through numerous actions forming the counterpublics' places and platforms of cultural and social engagement, such as Czkd—Belgrade's epicenter of civil resistance.

In that sense, we believe that music activism in Serbia has developed within civil society movements to form a discursive arena of cultural counterpublics and the culture of dissent, mostly represented by the aforementioned social and pacifist movements and artistic Ngos active on the so-called independent scene. These groups have been subverting mainstream local politics since the 1990s, fighting for democratic values in Serbia, but also developing solidarity across the borders throughout the region. Thus, practices of dissent and citizenship within and through participatory civic musical actions at the turn of the

Ivana Stefanović, Bunt organizes an annual alternative music festival of the same name.

84 Nele Bemong, Pieter Borghart, Michel De Dobbeleer, Kristoffel Demoen, Koen De Temmerman, and Bart Keunen, eds., *Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives* (Gent: Academia Press, 2010), iii, http://library.um.edu.mo/ebooks/b28005533.pdf.

millennium have been resonating ever since, as the sounds of counterpublics and sounds of democracy that still have their *raison d'être* today.

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