

Serbia's Exit and Guča Trumpet Festivals as Micro-National Spaces: Between Nation Building and Nation Branding

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Abstract: *This chapter deals with issues of Serbian national identity articulation in post-Milošević Serbia by using two major and conceptually disparate Serbian music festivals as case studies. Drawing largely on Lefebvre's (1974/2009) theory on space production, I entertain the idea of contemporary music festivals as micro-national spaces in order to conceptualize ongoing national identity narratives surrounding Serbia's two festivals. The ultimate goal of the chapter is to challenge the dominant national identity discourse on 'two Serbias', resting on the underlying assumptions of the West/East split and all familiar dichotomies stemming from it. This is accomplished through the analysis of selected aspects of each festival's marketing and programming strategies, respectively. The ultimate goal of such an analysis is to point towards the liminal status of Serbian society oscillating between obsolete nation-building projections and wannabe nation-branding initiatives.*

Keywords: *national identity, music festivals, micro-national space, post-Milošević Serbia, the West/East split, Balkanism*

The Exit and Guča trumpet festivals are two major music festivals in post-Milošević Serbia and they differ significantly from one another in terms of their conceptualization and music-stylistic output. The Exit festival is a pro-western popular music event founded in 2000 in Novi Sad, the second largest city in northern Serbia, as a lengthy youth protest against the Milošević regime. Since then, it has evolved into the most highly acclaimed international rock music spectacle in south-eastern Europe. The Guča trumpet festival was established in 1961 in the village of Guča in the Dragačevo region of central Serbia with the aim of reviving the vanishing Serbian brass band tradition. Hence, its main focus and appeal reside in the brass band competition part of the programme, which includes a range of awards with the First Trumpet, First Band and Golden Trumpet being the most prestigious ones. Nowadays, the festival in Guča draws up to 600,000 visitors every year, and from 2010 onward, when the category of international competition was introduced into the festival programme, organizers immodestly called it 'the trumpet capital of the world' (Tadić et al. 2010).

Differing fundamentally in their musico-ideological content and aesthetic execution, the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals have been constructed in domestic academic,¹ media and vernacular discourses as representatives of two diametrically opposed evaluative orientations (embodied in the widely exploited concept of 'two Serbias') and, thus, two dominant cultural models at work in post-socialist Serbian society: namely, a pro-western and a populist. This gives us solid ground to think of these two festivals as relevant and legitimate sites for ongoing Serbian national identity imaginings and negotiations. Moreover, in this chapter I intend to explore and develop the idea of contemporary music festivals as micro-national spaces by using the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals as case studies.

To outline such concept, I largely draw on Lefebvre's (1974/2009) unitary theory on the production of (social) space and its post-Marxist, semiological and psychoanalytic underpinnings. More specifically, Lefebvre's theorizing on space allows for a context-sensitive and multi-layered analysis of ongoing

Serbian national identity narratives in light of 'the multiplicity of spaces' that the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals instantiate.

To begin with, both festivals should be understood in terms of 'consumed spaces'. Lefebvre defines the latter as an unproductive form of 'the consumption of space', which functions as a counterpoint to the production-based 'space of consumption', or 'the space of the market', in which flows of capital and goods come to be accumulated, circulated and quantified. In contrast to such spaces, the growing interest in (music) festival consumption, facilitated by the globally distributed channels of tourism, leisure and event industries, can be said to reflect people's nostalgic search 'for a certain "quality of space"', incorporating such elements as sun, snow, sea, antiquity, eternity, festivity, etc. (p. 353).

However, the consumption of festival space is not univocal in its meaning, insofar as such space displays the potential of being transformed into a 'counter-space' by means of 'diversion' (i.e., by having the original space's function put to an alternative use); or a 'utopian space' by means of domination of the symbolic and the imaginary (i.e., by having the original space appropriated by the work of symbols); or an 'organic space' by 'looking upon itself and presenting itself as a body' (p. 274); or a 'masculine space' by means of demonstration of phallic power and so on.

In addition, my use of the term 'micro-national' is driven here by two factors. The first is to emphasize awareness that the field of (Serbian) national identity and music is much larger and more diverse than the musical cultures promoted at the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals could ever entail. If we are to differentiate between 'ethnic, civic and economic constructs of nationality' (O'Flynn 2007:23), then it seems self-evident that the festivals' musical offerings comprise only a small proportion of the Serbian traditional/folk (i.e., ethnic) and popular (i.e., economic) musics, let alone the totality of the national music field. The other advantage of the concept of the 'micro-national' lies in both festivals' self-proclamation of 'statehood'; that is, in their self-promotion as two apparently autonomous spatial entities, operating as symbolic states in their own right during the festival days within (or despite?) the actual (Serbian) state's borders.

Indeed, the 'State of Exit' was born at Novi Sad's Petrovaradin fortress as a result of the marketing campaign for the festival production in 2003. The campaign's aim was to depict the Exit festival as 'a meta-state' of all people of good will and vast optimism; as a zone of freedom, love, harmony, tolerance and peace, whose founders and supporters were determined to put up fierce resistance to visa restrictions, drug abuse and the society's various instances of corruption, violence and intolerance (Gruhonjić 2003). That the idea of the State of Exit has, however, gone well beyond the commercial scope of one short-lived advertising campaign can be illustrated by the way in which Miloš Ignjatović, a festival co-founder, reflects on the Exit festival in hindsight: 'Every festival [production] was a campaign. Exit [...] is more than a festival, not only for us, [but] for all visitors, because it's a statement, it's a state of mind, *it's the State of Exit actually*' (*The States of Exit* 2012, emphasis mine).

By the same token, the term 'Trumpet Republic' has been circulating for quite some time, chiefly to designate the region to which Guča belongs, as Nikola Stojić, a co-founder of the Guča trumpet festival, confirmed in a speech at the 42nd festival press conference. Speaking in the capacity of a Guča's Culture House president at the time, Stojić stated: 'These days you are in a special republic – during the festival, Dragačevo [region] becomes the Trumpet Republic' (*Trumpets' Republic* 2006).

To conclude then, both State of Exit and Trumpet Republic share similar aspirations to all instances of micro-nationalism that 'behave in a fashion deliberately imitative of a "true" state – they have governments, citizens, laws, territorial "claims", etc.' (Rasmussen n.d.). On top of this, both mini-states have launched their respective flags and emblems, along with the anthem *Sa Ovčara i Kablara/From Ovčar and Kablar Mountains* in the case of the latter festival.

Another conceptual frame of reference, which is central to this chapter and explains to a considerable extent the antagonistic relationship between the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals in Serbian public discourses, is that of 'Balkanism'. Balkanism is a relatively young and still not fully recognized

academic field in its own right that differs from Orientalism (as a system of representations of the Orient) in at least two respects. For one thing, the specific geo-political position and socio-historical development of the Balkans, above all its exclusion from the European colonization project (unless such colonization is understood in metaphorical terms²), makes it incommensurate with what has been understood as the Orient's history and culture. Second, the Balkans bears no traces of the former grandiose eastern civilizations that could serve as a counterbalance and a redeeming antidote to the hegemony of western discourses (see, for instance, Bakić-Hayeden and Hayeden 1992; Todorova 1997; Fleming 2000). Either way, I would like to argue that the Balkan version of Orientalism in all its manifestations, oscillating between strategies of 'self-colonization' and 'self-exoticization' (Kiossev 2002 and Volčić 2005, cited in Kaneva 2012:7), plays a crucial role in what Naumović (2009) calls a 'political construction of [Serbian] quasi-ethnic identity split', whose two poles might be represented as well through the Exit/Guča dichotomy. Hence, special importance will be assigned to the West/East split and all familiar binaries stemming from it (e.g., Europe/the Balkans, modern/traditional, urban/rural, etc.) in the discussion on Serbian national identity and music festivals that follows.

It is also equally urgent to address nation-branding discourses, which have begun to invade Serbian public space from 2006. This conceptual change in the understanding of the nation as brand has opened up another vista for alternative interpretations of the music festivals in question and their role in ongoing national identity narratives. More specifically, the festivals' gradual integration into the transnational music industry and cultural tourism market, respectively, as well as the moderate consolidation of Serbia's political scene through the disintegration and marginalization of the most hard-core nationalist political parties (especially from 2008), contributed to a more unified view of the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals as national brands having much in common, above all promoting a positive image of the country. Despite all the criticism that the nation-branding rationale, strategies and outcomes invite, this 'discursive formation' has in the case of Serbia's two major music festivals afforded a joint ideological platform from which to cast a new light on issues of national identity representation. Nation-branding talk may, indeed, serve as a springboard for the analysis of both festivals' transnational implications and internal controversies in turn.

The ultimate goal of this chapter is thus to show, following Lazić (2003), that both Serbian music festivals (particularly the trumpet one in Guča) are not only marked by the West/East split from within, but by a range of other conflictual arenas as well. I argue that exploring the liminal status of the Balkans/Serbia (see Fleming 2000; Živković 2001) through these two festivals might yield particularly fruitful results when it comes to understanding the very concept of national identity, marking a shift from a somewhat fixed, essentialized, romanticized and inward-projected notion of nation building, towards a more fluid, dynamic, pluralistic and outward-projected idea of national identifications (see Hall 1996).

To keep in line with all above-cited objectives, the chapter is divided into two sections. In the first, I explore in broad strokes dichotomies surrounding the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals presented in their most extreme forms. Of interest in the second section is the liminal status of both festivals, which I consider with respect to the musical component of their programming as well as some details of their promotion and self-perception, respectively.

The following inquiry is largely grounded in the broadly understood methodology of Foucauldian discourse analysis or 'critical reading' within the framework of post-Marxist cultural studies (Burr 2004; Storey 2012). Using the above methods, I conduct the analysis with reference to sources such as the festival(-related) fieldnotes, collected and produced over the years 2012 and 2013, and a small number of publications and documentary movies, as well as various media shows, reports and online forums on the music festivals in question.

Exit versus Guča: counter-space versus organic space

As mentioned earlier, the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals can be understood as symptoms of the apparent split between two value systems (i.e., ‘two Serbias’) and therefore two dominant cultural models in Serbian society. To designate these two main evaluative orientations in recent Serbian cultural memory, Kuljić (2006:220) introduces the terms ‘antifascism’ and ‘Hilandar’ (a Serbian Orthodox monastery in Greece). In his words, ‘Antifascism is a mark of rationalism, multiculturalism, brotherhood and unity, left[ist] position and anticonservatism. Hilandar is a mark of religion and national exclusivity and conservatism and the right[-wing] values’.

Clearly, Kuljić’s interpretation fits neatly into the Orientalist model of the West/East split and a potentially endless list of binary oppositions associated with it. When applied to the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals, all such dichotomies point towards a clear demarcation line between the festivals’ respective meanings and representations, situating them as extremes in a continuum (see Table 1).

Exit festival	Guča trumpet festival
West	East
Europe	The Balkans
Modern	Traditional
Urban	Rural
Progressive	Conservative
Rock	Folk
North	South
Austro-Hungarian heritage	Ottoman heritage
Antifascism	Hilandar

Table 1: Binary oppositions surrounding the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals along the West/East split

Translated into the Lefebvrian terminology of space production, the opposition between two Serbian music festivals can be considered on another level as distinguishing between a counter-space and an organically projected space. How this opposition works in each festival’s micro-national universe I examine in turn in the analysis that follows.

The Exit festival: a micro-national counter-space

In this section, I draw on Lefebvre’s (1974/2009:349) concept of ‘counter-space’ to describe the Exit festival as a micro-national space appropriated by a particular social group and put to a different use – one that offers a utopian alternative to the actual spatial/social reality. Such a ‘diversion’ of the ‘real’ space was especially evident in the founding year of the festival (2000), when it took on a prophetic role in the establishment of a new, post-Milošević democratic system, marking the very beginning of Serbia’s second wave of transition. This was accomplished by means of at least two interrelated symbolic spheres: ‘noise’, embodied largely in rock music, and ‘unbounded’ space, located in the green area of the city’s student campus adjacent to the Danube river bank; a space with no fences, walls or any other barriers, including financial ones (the event was free of charge). In short, a space re-appropriated by, and initially intended for, the local student population but open as well for up to 100 days of performative ‘noise’ to all like-minded people from across Serbia. These two symbolic realms were

underlined in addition by the festival's very name: 'Exit – Noise Summer Fest', and its initial idea to motivate young people to move away from apathy into active political resistance.

In the subsequent years, the Exit festival officially 'continues to play an important role in the promotion of liberal values as well as in the determined fight against all sorts of xenophobia, primitivism and nationalism' (Kleut 2002). This time, however, such endeavours are pursued from within the system – or, to put it differently, carried out with the help of authorities across all levels of power (from municipality to state). This change was accompanied by the relocation of the festival in 2001 from the inclusive and uncontrolled space of the student campus area to the city's prestigious and enclosed space of Petrovaradin Fortress. Although coded as a masculine space by definition, the fortress has lost some of its military associations by attaining the status of a historical monument as recently as the mid-twentieth century. The pacification of the fortress space has also been effected through the appropriation of its originally military function for archival, artistic, scientific, educational, cultural and touristic purposes – not to mention the overall makeover of the fortress during the Exit festival days with its 'wonderland' effects (interview with an American festival visitor, July 2012). By the same token, the trenches within which a majority of the festival's music stages are installed might come to be experienced as something resembling a sonic womb.

Another reason for recognizing the Exit festival as a micro-national counter-space lies in its status as representative of a counter-culture proclaimed and believed in by the event's co-founders and organizers (*The States of Exit* 2012). According to them, the festival's major mission is not only to economically and culturally animate Serbian society, with a special focus on the local youth population, but also to 'civilize' it in its entirety. The task of 'civilizing' the nation is understood here very broadly, encompassing a variety of activities such as 'urbanizing', 'modernizing', 'institutionalizing', 'educating', 'individualizing', 'normalizing', etc. – thus, anything that takes to rebuild Serbian society in the image of other 'civilized' nations. And such goals are to be achieved in synergy with quite a number of the companies that have over time sprouted from the Exit festival as a result of the gradual growth, professionalization and diversification of activities in Serbia's initially niche market for event/creative industries.

Paradoxically, the festival's counter-space is discursively constructed as 'hard-core underground' (Pančić cited in Pintarić 2005:22) and, at the same time, as a symbol of normality. As the viewpoint of the RTV B92 general director Veran Matić illustrates well (in Sejdinović 2002), the Exit festival has, indeed, come to represent for many 'the strongest symbol of a return of normal life to this [Balkan] region'. By implication, the dominant cultural model (i.e., the norm) is deemed dysfunctional at its core and, therefore, in dire need of 'normalization' that the festival not only epitomizes but also restores in the long run. What once again crops up from these intertwined discourses of counter-culture and normality surrounding the festival are the ideological implications of the West/East split where the notion of normality is uncritically equated with the West/Europe as a utopian promise of a new paradise. Clearly, the equation of normal and civilized life with the West/Europe presumes that everything associated with Serbia and, more broadly, with the Balkans, comes across as abnormal, uncivilized, destructive and with no positive values to speak of.

The Guča trumpet festival: an organic micro-national space

According to Lefebvre (1974/2009), the idea of 'an organic space' is typically exploited by the societies that feel threatened and insecure about their own identity. As a result, such societies tend to explain themselves in physiological terms, by means of analogies with nature and the body. As Lefebvre clarifies further, 'The ideological appeal to the organism is by extension an appeal to a unity, and beyond that unity [...] to an *origin* deemed to be known with absolute certainty, identified beyond any possible doubt – an origin that legitimates and justifies' (pp. 274–275).

Likewise, the Guča trumpet festival should be understood and defined as an organic micro-national space, whose symbols of 'organic' nationhood project outwards the image of the nation as a static, invariable, ancient (if not eternal) entity with a basis in blood kinship and an ethnically 'pure' core. Or put into the language of physical analogies, such a concept of nation generates the image of an 'organism' whose head (i.e., the national elites), soul (i.e., the church), and body (i.e., the people) operate under conditions of perfect equality, unity and harmony. Let me illustrate now in more detail how each component of this organic unity functions in turn within the context of the festival's micro-national space.

The Guča trumpet festival has traditionally been 'home' to the representatives of Serbian political, economic and cultural elites from both ends of the political spectrum. Yet, the fact that the festival organizers and most dedicated supporters (among politicians, intellectuals, artists) are predominantly members of the right-wing, populist structures must not be overlooked. It goes without saying that the concept of organic nation, as Milosavljević (2002: 38) notes, generates a belief that there are 'the ideologies (and the systems of governing) which are closer than others to a people's "spirit" – namely, those taking on the form of "'authentic" governing regime, composed of people, church and elite, organized within the "natural" patriarchal order'. Indeed, both visual appearance and rhetoric of the authorities involved in the festival realization intend to 'naturalize' their relationship with the people by 'present[ing] themselves as folk culture devotees, people who are *of the people and with the people*' (Lukić-Krstanović 2011:276).

Orthodox Christianity in general and the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in particular embody the next pillar within the organic nation's 'elite-church-people' trinity. Representing an important marker of Serbian national identification, the SOC and Orthodoxy came to exert a growing influence in Serbian society after the collapse of Yugoslavia. Their actual and symbolic presence fills the space of the Guča trumpet festival as well. For instance, the very opening of the 40th festival anniversary featured the commemoration of 2000 years since the founding of Christianity. Likewise, from 2000 on, concerts of Serbian sacral music and exhibitions inspired by religious motives have regularly formed part of the festival programming. The high status of the SOC can be witnessed as well in its power to impinge on the festival timeframe as the former coincided with the fasting period (since 2002). Also, the festival ceremonial programme frequently involves the presence of SOC representatives, some of whom would deliver dirges or blessings dedicated to the persons and events of great importance to the national history or the festival itself (see Bojanić 2002; Timotijević 2005; Tadić et al. 2010).

In fact, Serbian Orthodoxy, including the system of theological ideas and the various elements of Orthodox culture associated with it, is considered one of three instances of the vernacularly understood notion of tradition. The other two correlate to the systems of representations arising from the fields of Serbian national history and Serbian folk peasant tradition, respectively (Naumović 2009:134). Unsurprisingly, all three components of Serbian tradition have been successfully integrated into the very ideological agenda of the Guča trumpet festival. Its overall conception rests, indeed, on the values, ideology and aesthetics of the Serbian peasant-warrior.

On the one hand, the Serbian trumpet practice continues to serve as a stage for the inscription and projection of many historico-mythological narratives of the nation and the 'exclusive pseudo-characters' ascribed to it, such as victimization, heroism and freedom fighting (cf. Milosavljević 2002:131–155). Clearly, the trumpet's status as a symbol of Serbia's numerous 'liberation' wars (pursued from the nineteenth century until the end of the Second World War) emanates from its military origins. It does not come as a surprise then that the festival opening rituals evoke strong military connotations, albeit combined with ceremonial procedures inherited from socialist times (cf. Lukić-Krstanović 2006:190). Nor is it surprising that the official festival programme includes the museum exhibitions in which the Serbian 'glorious' war-waging past can come to the fore (covering, for instance, topics from the First and Second Serbian Uprisings, the Goračić Upheaval or the Second World War).

On the other hand, there are narratives surrounding the Guča trumpet festival that place more emphasis on the integration of Serbian trumpet practice with the people's everyday life (see, for instance, Guča Culture House 2007: 24–25; *Trumpets' Republic* 2006). In fact, the festival's rural origins, setting and iconography all work together to evoke and essentialize a sense of the people's aura. Given that the peasantry used to constitute 'the most numerous and autochthonous portion of Serbian society', as Naumović (2009:88–89) notes, symbolic linkage between rurality and the nation (i.e. 'the People's will/voice') is made to seem natural. He further points out that the great symbolic power of peasantry is, in general, typical of the societies lagging behind in modernization – hence its heavy exploitation at the Guča trumpet festival as a source of legitimacy for those in power. No wonder that more than once it has been stated that those who do not understand the festival do not understand Serbia either. Nor are descriptions of the festival as the 'heart', 'soul', 'spirit', 'essence' and similar incarnations of the Serbian folk, unexpected.

Among different traditional forms of cultural expression, Serbian folk music in general and the Serbian brass band tradition in particular hold a prominent place in the ongoing debates on articulations of Serbian national identity. Relevant here are two crucial interpretations of the brass band music's status as an authentic Serbian musical tradition. On the one hand, Lajić Mihajlović and Zakić (2012:227) argue that its actual continuity as a traditional musical practice can be traced back to the first half of the twentieth century. On the other, Lukić-Krstanović (2006:189, 191) takes the Guča trumpet festival itself as the most certain factor behind the installation of this musical practice. This, by extension, means that Serbian brass band music can be interpreted as an 'invented tradition' given that the question of its genesis remains vague and unresolved. Either way, within the scope of the festival-related 'organic' nationalist discourse, not only is this musical tradition regarded as an incarnation of the Serbian people's 'soul', but a claim over its authenticity figures as well as a guarantee of 'the salvation of the folk's soul' (cf. Naumović 2009:111). The authenticity issue of Serbian brass band music is therefore always raised whenever 'foreign' or 'external' musical elements and influences have been acknowledged as 'contaminating' traditional (trumpet) music. In all such instances, the idea of what Regev (2007:126) calls 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism and cultural (ethno-national) uniqueness' is clearly understood through the lenses 'of early to high modernity, when the invention of national traditions and imagining of nations were characterized by a quest for essentialism and purism'.

Exit and Guča: micro-national spaces of liminality

The exploration of the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals as 'consumed spaces' in the era of 'neoliberal corpo-nationalism' (Surowiec 2012:140) will be excluded from the analytic purview of this chapter for reasons of the limited objectives it can accomplish within these pages. It is, however, necessary to acknowledge that a social change involved in Serbia's politico-economic transition has undoubtedly left its mark on the 'discourses about space and about things and people in space' (Lefebvre 1974/2009:281). Nation-branding talk plays a significant part in this discursive shift, and its effects have already been critically assessed in the cases of two Serbian music festivals (Mijatović 2012:213–235). However, it is not my intention to consider here the processes of spectacularization, commercialization and corporationalization that both festivals have undergone and that have surfaced in public discussion domestically thanks to the festivals' joint-status as Serbia's two leading national brands in culture and tourism. I would rather focus on those effects of nation-branding talk that have allowed for moving beyond the West/East split in the perception of these two festivals vis-à-vis the question of national identity articulations. More specifically, I approach the analysis of both festivals as micro-national spaces of liminality that are not only marked by the West/East divide from within, but by many other internal tensions as well.

One way to look at the in-between status of post-Milošević Serbian society is to tackle some of Serbia's ethnic (self-)stereotypes and the ways in which they have been embedded into various accounts of the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals. Following Živković's (2001) categorization of possible responses to stigma in Serbian society, I would like to argue that the strategies involved in both festivals' self-representation along national lines are characterized by strong ambivalence.

To begin with, the Exit festival is discursively constructed as a micro-national counter-space, using a pro-western cultural model (called 'counter-culture' by the festival organizers) as a means of urbanization and modernization of Serbian society. Such an approach is a clear-cut example of internalization of Western dichotomies and values, which, by extension, leads to the evaluation of one's own group and other society members through the lenses of the accepted stigma (see Živković 2001:105). Then again, the Exit festival introduces at the same time into its organizational activities and self-narrativizing strategies selected elements of Serbia's ethnic (self-)stereotypes, such as those of hospitality and victimization, which are by definition evocative of imaginings of the Balkans/East.

One of the most widespread (self-)stereotypes about Serbs is, indeed, that of 'hospitality', portraying the nation as generally warm, kind, sociable, generous and welcoming. The institution of the Serbian host, be it related to family, nation or any other type of social groupings, forms a part of such (self-)stereotyping and is symptomatic of the society's deeply patriarchal origins. Within the Exit's organizational structure, the 'hosting team' has been introduced to take care of the festival performers and visitors' needs during their entire stay in Serbia. To paraphrase Dušan Kovačević (Buha Milović 2008), one of the festival founders and general managers, such an approach has been described by the festival guests as something unique that can be experienced nowhere in the West, and it has developed into a distinguished Exit-related brand in its own right.

By the same token, the story about Exit in the narratives of those who have been in charge of its development deploys as well the recurrent Serbian self-stereotype of victimization. The latter implies that Serbia's century-old tragic destiny, which continues to be imperilled by other nations' attempt at suppression, is precisely what has made Serbs exceptional (see Milosavljević 2002:132–138). Considering the Exit festival's critical approach and strong opposition to Serbia's recent warmongering past as well as to its nationalist and xenophobic sentiments enduring to the present day, such a self-stereotype reveals itself in the festival's self-narration through the characterization of toughness that comes along with the collective experience of adversity and oppression.³ Given that the group in question feels anyway hard done-by for one reason or another, I understand any such expression of toughness as part of the victimization (self-)stereotype or, in this particular case, what Živković (2001:86) calls a 'Turkish stake' (a reference to impalement as a brutal form of execution performed by Ottomans) to designate the victim's 'claims over the wisdom originating from the[ir] agony and moral superiority'. Indeed, the implication of the 'Turkish stake' mode of ethnic self-characterization can be especially grasped in the following statement by Rajko Božić, an Exit strategic PR manager and State of Exit Foundation's board president:

I'm quite sure that somebody facing difficulties on this scale in the Netherlands, in the UK, the US, or in Sweden, for that matter, would abandon this festival after four years, and we're still doing it. Probably these unrealistic expectations to make your dream here and now, it's a result of the war years we lived. (*The States of Exit* 2012)

The narratives surrounding the Guča trumpet festival are likewise infused with the same type of ethnic (self-)stereotypes but articulated within the horizon of nationalist discourse. More specifically, the Serbian self-stereotype of victimization is exercised in the festival's self-narration as part of the nationalist rhetorical arsenal to glorify the national history and culture. The original patriarchal sentiment and a sense of collectivity are preserved as well in the role of the festival 'host', which was added to the list of festival rituals back in 1995. In contrast to Exit, the hosting role is assigned here to

(male) representatives of the (inter)national elite chosen to welcome the festival visitors at the very opening of the event and/or at the finals of the brass band competition. Within the perspective of an organically projected micro-national space, the role of host performed at the festival seems to replicate well the relationship between the nation state as 'home' and the national elite as 'host' (cf. Milosavljević 2002:37), reinforcing the view of the Guča trumpet festival as a state (i.e., the Trumpet Republic) in its own right. Predictably, the honour of the festival hosts was given from 2004 through to 2011 to the leading political figures from the conservative nationalist parties. In doing so, the festival organizers clearly show no intention of giving up their strong political ties with influential Serbian politicians (and, thus, their own particular interests); nor do they appear willing to change the festival's populist agenda and rhetoric. In consequence, the ethnic (self-)stereotype of Serbian hospitality fails to go beyond the limited scope of its traditionally conservative and male-dominated implications.

Discourses on the Guča trumpet festival incorporate and feature some other ethnic (self-)stereotypes coded as Balkan/eastern, too. This is most vividly articulated through the construct of 'madness' emerging from both *emic* and *etic* media representations of the festival (Gligorijević 2012:10). Here, the local response to stigma and negative stereotyping undergoes an inversion process and becomes re-interpreted in an affirmative way, depicting the demonized Balkan characteristics as somehow more authentic, real and vital than those that are associated with the western world.

Yet, this strategy of positive 'self-exoticization', as Živković (2001: 105) calls it, is not exercised without ambivalence. Various reports on the Guča trumpet festival show that many different occurrences of the internalized western gaze and valorization practices are put into effect as well. This is, on the one hand, performed through the so-called 'aesthetics of distancing' by those festival visitors who are able to recognize positive values in the Balkans mainly thanks to the possibility of staying away from its 'dark' reality (Jansen 2001:60–63); or, alternatively, through the process that Čolović (2006) describes as the 'internal exoticization of the ethno sound', which allows the festival visitors to experience the (post-)traditional sound of their own musical culture as something sonically remote, archaic, marginal – in a word, exotic.

On the other hand, internalization of Western views vis-à-vis the Guča trumpet festival can also be detected in an ambivalent stance, which the Serbian population assumes towards the Romany minority and which can be described in terms of a familiar 'mixture of extreme disparaging and romanticizing' (Živković 2001:98).⁴ As for the former (i.e., the disparaging attitude), it is important to stress that within the Serbian/ex-Yugoslav context, the expression 'Gypsies' has often carried a pejorative meaning, operating 'as a metonymic signifier for everything considered to be a weaker, debased item in dichotomies' (Živković 2001:89). This explains convincingly the popularity of the Serbian public standpoint, whereby Emir Kusturica, a Serbian director whose internationally acclaimed movies have made Serbia's Gypsy brass band music widely known and appreciated, is to be blamed for creating abroad a misleading image of Serbs as Gypsies (cf. Jansen 2001:54). What is revealed here is, of course, a scornful attitude towards Romanies, whose status as Other in Serbian society (and beyond) can also be recognized in the ever-present polarization and tension going on between the festival's 'white' (i.e., Serbian) and 'black' (i.e., Romany) competing brass bands. Despite the festival's official politics of multiculturalism and inclusivism, the evidence of discrimination against 'black' bands has already been documented on several occasions (see, for instance, Lukić-Krstanović 2006; Arsenijević 2012; Lajić Mihajlović and Zakić 2012). According to Goffman (1963:107, cited in Živković 2001:99), this is the mechanism by means of which one social group (i.e., Serbs) renders itself 'normal'/'ordinary' and, thus, superior when compared to those (i.e., Romanies) whose stigmatized status and 'extraordinariness' are displayed even more dramatically.

For a brief analysis of the Exit and Guča festivals' musical programme within the perspective of micro-national spaces of liminality, I will address some of their internal tensions by deploying once again Regev's (2007; 2011) theory of aesthetic cosmopolitanism and cultural uniqueness. In his own words:

Aesthetic cosmopolitanism is the contemporary cultural condition in which the representation and performance of national uniqueness is largely based on art forms and stylistic elements deliberately drawn from sources exterior to indigenous traditions. (Regev 2011:110)

Here it is also important to call attention to the dividing line Regev (2011: 110-111) draws between 'inadvertent' or 'banal cosmopolitanism' as a widespread and unintentional consumption of those standardized cultural products amalgamating local expressive forms and elements with transnational stylistic trends and technologies; and 'advertent' or 'reflexive cosmopolitanism' that consciously seeks to replicate, incorporate and build on the latest transgressive forms of transnational culture within the specific local, ethnic and national contexts. Regev's theoretical model can, indeed, explain well the enduring tensions inherent to any one domain of human activity, including those in the cultural field articulated through all-too-familiar 'high/low', 'art/commerce', 'underground/mainstream' binaries; and so it does with respect to the tensions displayed at the level of the official music programming at both Serbian festivals.

On the one hand, the Guča trumpet festival is characterized by the tension between a competition and a manifestation part of the programming,⁵ in particular between competing domestic brass bands and (inter)national neo-folk/World Music (WM) stars, where the latter are accused of not only financially profiting at the expense of the former, but also of compromising the original idea(l)s and authentic values of the festival. The Exit festival's musical programme is, on the other hand, split between pleasing the cultural needs of a wider audience (as most evident in some highly commercial and popular DJ sets featured at the festival's Radio AS FM Stage or Dance Arena), and meeting the expectations of the festival crowd with a more specialist and/or innovation-oriented taste (as exemplified in the underground-flavoured and experimental agenda of the festival's HappyNoviSad Stage or Suba Stage).

Nonetheless, Regev's theory of aesthetic cosmopolitanism and cultural uniqueness fails to accommodate some other occurrences taking place at these two Serbian music festivals. In the case of Guča, it does not seem to be nuanced enough to recognize a distinction between the musicians who are perceived as genuine (authentic) representatives of traditional (brass band) music and those who are said to capitalize on its elite appropriations. A good case in point for the latter is a well-established love-hate relationship of the domestic population to the Bosnian Serbo-Croat, Goran Bregović, as a globally recognized soundtrack and WM artist. Namely, some appreciate his international achievements and his capacity to make Balkan music famous, whereas others openly accuse him of music plagiarism.

The case of the Exit festival shows in addition that the artistic contribution of peripheral countries such as Serbia to the transnational contemporary music culture does not necessarily have to adhere to the idea(l) of 'ethno-national difference' in order to be acknowledged in the global cultural arena – although this is, admittedly, a desired and well-expected route to follow. Such a contribution can also be made along the lines of affinities, or what Slobin (1993:68) calls 'affinity intercultural', which implies a cooperation and exchange of musicians and musical experiences across national borders on the grounds of shared musical sensibilities and within the scope of transnational contemporary musical idioms. The partnership between the British festival Bestival and Exit, established in 2012 within the Association of Independent Festivals' initiative called 'Twin Festivals', could serve here as a relevant illustration. The aim of this partnership is to enhance cultural cooperation between the two festivals through exchange of their respective festival experiences, general ideas, musicians and even audience members (*Exitfest.org* 2012).

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to show that the analysis of two major Serbian music festivals, Exit and Guča, as micro-national spaces might be a helpful way of understanding the ways in which the national identity has been articulated in post-Milošević Serbia. The outcomes of such an analysis confirm that the West/East split continues to underline much of the public debate surrounding the two festivals, where the notion of the West, and all values associated with it, comes into being through the Exit festival's 'counter-space' and constitutes itself in the opposition to the Guča festival's 'organic space' as an epitome of the East. However, the proclamation of both festivals by the domestic political and, partly, cultural elites as Serbia's two leading and unique national brands in culture and tourism has bridged a glaring gap between them by foregrounding the festivals' recently formulated joint-agenda – their survival on the market in times of what Surowiec (2012) calls 'corpo-nationalism'. Although not addressed in this chapter in detail, the shift of public focus away from the discussion instilled by the West/East split towards the festivals' transnational, corporate and marketing aspects has somewhat given way to the public construction of Exit and Guča as 'consumed spaces' within which the nation is imagined as a brand. Instead of looking critically at nation-branding talk pertaining to the festivals, which is undoubtedly much needed, this matter has been approached as both festivals' middle ground from which to question their internal controversies. The analysis of certain aspects of the festivals' marketing and programming strategies has, indeed, tended to confirm Lazić's (2003) findings valid – namely, that Serbian society dwells somewhere in between the two poles of the West/East split.

In the case of Guča, this can be convincingly illustrated with reference to Boym's (2001, cited in Buchanan 2010:129) two-part notion of 'reflexive' and 'restorative nostalgia' developed in her study on the power of remembrance in post-communist Eastern European identity construction. A key difference between these two types of nostalgia lies in the drives behind each. The former is fascinated with the idea of distance, be it temporal or geographical, and therefore with sentimental explorations of the past as a vast field of possibility for one's imaginings in the present times. The latter is, in contrast, largely occupied with the projects of national past and identity revisions that revolve around 'an ahistorical discourse of origins, authenticity, truth, tradition, and ethnic and cultural purity' (Buchanan 2010:129). Indeed, the chronicled projections of restorative nostalgia onto the Guča trumpet festival's space coincide well with the re-discovery process of 'ethnicity' in culture within Serbia's post-socialist context. This is most clearly revealed in the anxious narratives generated around the issues of the Serbian brass band tradition's origins, authenticity, homogenization and commodification.

Conversely, the instances of reflexive nostalgia can be traced in those narratives on the Guča trumpet festival that celebrate the ideas of intercultural exchange, equality, harmony, tolerance, unity, hybridity and neoliberal multi- and trans-culturalism. Their sources originate from the closely intertwined and celebratory discourses surrounding global WM and New Age practices. Both are principally committed to the search for new forms of spirituality and the universal values of humankind, which WM is believed to embody by 'allegedly offering authentic and universally appreciated experiences of the human soul and the world of nature' (Čolović 2006). Another fascination they have in common is the sound of 'exotic' musical cultures – in short, all the properties that Serbia's (post-)traditional brass band music is deemed to have.

In contrast to the Guča trumpet festival, Exit is largely defined through the lenses of internalized western values and dichotomies, and as such is more inclined to fulfil and instantiate the collective and individual reflexive nostalgic needs; in fact, it does so even when promoting domestic WM bands. Not only do the festival organizers openly acknowledge the Exit's 'inauthentic' status, as the festival has developed by implementing the transnational model of other massive pro-western popular music festivals across Europe, above all Budapest's Sziget festival, into the local context. They also do not seem

to be concerned with any sense of authenticity loss and related questions of origins, cultural purity and/or ethno-national uniqueness. On the contrary, the widely shared image of Exit as a 'copy' is rather seen as a guarantee of its capacity to stay in line with other highly praised, gigantic European music festivals, as well as a great opportunity for more equal participation on the global cultural market within the scope of western standards and sensibilities. The liminality of the Exit's micro-national space emerges rather in the tensions arising from the festival's promotional and self-narrativizing strategies – where ethnic (self-)stereotypes are entertained with ambivalence – as well as from contradictory details of its musical programming.⁶

Yet, it is crucial to bear in mind that if analysed solely at the level of the hybrid nature of cultural interaction and production (see, for instance, Lajić Mihajlović and Zakić 2012), the discourses of multi-/trans-culturalism and hybridity might obscure the actual situation on both festivals' ground vis-à-vis the issues of capitalist exploitation, westernization of Serbian national space, racial/ethnic/gender/sexual discrimination, internal power struggles and so on – which all, admittedly, require further analysis. Then again, in post-Milošević Serbia, burdened by the recent experience of several civil wars, poverty, exclusion, violence, intolerance and systemic corruption, the cultural expressions of reflexive nostalgia that are put on display within the Exit and Guča trumpet festivals' micro-national spaces would secure at least a move away from the purist and exclusivist ideals of nineteenth-century nation-building projects towards more fluid, flexible and outward-projected models for national identification.

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¹ For more details on the Exit and Guča festivals (albeit rarely ever as a topic in its own right) as symptoms of the ideologically charged polarization of Serbian cultural life and society on the whole, see Simić (2006), Vuksanović (2007), Lukić-Krstanović (2010), Mijatović (2012), and Spasić and Petrović (2012).

² See Goldsworthy (1998).

³ This is clearly one way to authenticate the group's identity and experience, and is typical of many cultures with a fundamentally underdog mentality (as is the case with Finnish *sisu*, or the working-class ethos of northerners in Britain).

⁴ In addition, the Serbian attitude towards Romanies is also often fused with the self-deprecating strategies in the national self-narration in which Serbs think of themselves as Gypsies (Živković 2001:98); or with the self-praising strategies that allow Serbs to perceive themselves as a very tolerant people living in perfect harmony with Gypsies (Jansen 2001:54–55).

⁵ The former is focused on selected Serbian folk brass bands (within the senior, junior and pioneer categories) that are competing among themselves for a range of awards, whereas the latter is organized around a display of overall national folk production (within music, visual arts, literature, crafts, customs, etc.), as well as several concerts of both national and international brass bands and popular musicians.

⁶ There is, of course, other evidence for both festivals' liminal status, but it is omitted from the analysis because of the chapter's limited space.