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Turbo-Folk and Ethnicity in the Mirror of the Perception of the YouTube users*

Popular music played in the second half of the 20th century on the territory of former Yugoslavia became known as the newly composed music. During the 1990s wars, music genre known as turbo folk was especially popular in Serbia. Research has shown that this music contains Oriental, most of all Ottoman, influences. Even though it is very popular, this kind of music has been subjected to severe criticism, which may be divided into two main groups. According to some, turbo-folk has been criticized because it was associated with war, nationalism and crime. In the second group are those who are nationalistically terrified of foreign influences in the music, feeling that this music leads to the "tehranization" of Serbia. In addition, critics think that it is kitsch, which favors immorality.

The focus of this research is on the perception of turbo folk by YouTube users. The material from this Internet page for video exchange is available in the whole world. Many users from the territory of Former Yugoslavia leave their often nationalistic and political comments about songs. This work deals with the way listeners view their own connection with Ottoman past. What they experience as *Turkish* and as *their own* in those songs and what the value system is like. Apart from this, social influence of Internet culture is viewed, in this case on YouTube example.

Key words:

ethnicity, turbo-folk,
YouTube, Serbia

In this paper I studied perception of turbo-folk by YouTube users. Given the complexity of the turbo-folk phenomenon, with which many foreign and domes-

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tic researchers have dealt, I find it useful to point out its history and its perception otherwise in the introduction.

From the Newly-Composed Music to Turbo-Music and so on

Music trends in Serbia in the second half of the 20th century were closely related to political climate in former Yugoslavia. After Second World War Serbia became one of the republics forming SFR Yugoslavia. Compared to the period before the war, many changes took place in social order, economic, political and socio-cultural relationships. Masses of population were moving from villages to the cities forming working class, the proletariat. This class could not keep their songs and customs brought from the village. The newcomers and their music were supposed to be "cultivated" according to "urban" standards of the city. So, it was necessary "to create identity" for this new layer of people, and one way was through the so-called "new folk" music or "vernacular (*narodska*)" music, as Svetislav Pavićević names it (Pavićević 1970, 136). "Newly composed" folk music was formed, the one that was neither city nor village. This kind of songs with primarily entertaining character replaced authentic folk songs with roots in customs and rituals. Style in newly composed folk music greatly varies. Many songs contain music elements of other nations, especially oriental type: melismatic sequences, excessive second etc. The simplest and the closest to original inspiration are newly composed songs in 2/4 tact (Golemović 1997, 180).

Od izvora dva putića (Two paths from the well), recorded in 1964 by Lepa Lukić, is considered to be the first hit of newly composed folk music. This song sold in 260 thousand copies is considered as the beginning of "marketing history" of that music genre in the former Yugoslavia (Vidić-Rasmussen 1995, 241; Đorđević 2010, 139). A number of external factors help the development and spreading of this new folk music. Primarily, those were market demand and the impact of the media (Pavićević 1970, 134). Until 1990s newly composed songs were dominant in media and old village folk songs could not be found (Jovanović 2005, 136).

Despite its popularity among people, from its appearance this kind of music was exposed to the negative criticism of its quality. Due to stylistic incoherence and historical rootlessness it was classified as a kitsch without any artistic quality (Vidić-Rasmussen 1995: 242; Golemović 1997, 179). According to Ines Prica, critique of contemporary Balkan folk music is reduced to its three basic elements: text, musical pattern and visual presentation. It was criticized that it was not "folk" enough, but there are too many "foreign elements" and that "today's nation has been alienated from itself" (Prica 1988, 92).

In early '90s of the XX century, after disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia, many Serbs who previously declared themselves as Yugoslavs had identity crisis. Newly made SR Yugoslavia was under external pressure. Economic and cultural isolation led to "grey economy" and raise of crime.¹ Moral and cultural values were

¹ The European Union introduced sanctions in 1991, and the United Nations in 1992.

degraded. New Yugoslavia accepted large numbers of refugees from Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo who made 10% of population (Jovanović 2005, 135).

During that period besides newly composed folk music "turbo folk" appears on one hand, while on the other hand there was more interest in source of tradition. The term turbo folk was introduced by musician Antonije Pušić better known by his show business name Rambo Amadeus (Radović 2010, 125; Đorđević 2010, 140).

It should be noted that the turbo-folk is not only a Serbian phenomenon. This kind of music also exists in other ex-Yugoslav countries, especially in Croatia (Baker 2007, 3-8; Bejker 2011). This genre exists in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, in many Arab and other countries under different names and with similar musical content (Burton 1994, 87; Radović 2010, 124). However, it should be noted that despite the musical similarity, the whole context of this music in various societies is different.

According to Miroslava Malešević, although iconography of turbo folk imitates western MTV trends in music, fashion and design, social and ideological pop culture in the west and turbo folk in Serbia are different. While reality of western pop culture is consumer society, to the contrary the reality of turbo-folk in the 1990's in the former Yugoslavia was a society in which nationalist wars were waged and large part of population lived on the edge of existence (Malešević 2011, 39).

With the growth of ethnic nationalism on the whole territory of former Yugoslavia, a rapid growth of interest in tradition, roots, origin, identity and so on occurred. Turbo folk as a style unified elements of newly composed and rock music. This was happening because many rock musicians started playing newly composed music for existential reasons. Any turbo folk performer was higher on economic ladder compared to the colleague in pop-rock department (Marković 2004, 50). While analysing music events in SE Europe, and in Serbia too, at the beginning of the 1990s, Miroslava Lukic-Krstanovic points out that they were a part of political conflicts, economic crises and antagonisms on one hand, and a part of music industry on the other (Lukić-Krstanović 2008, 129–134).

In turbo folk quality of music, lyrics and voice is less important than the spectacle itself. There was borrowing from Greek, Romanian, near and far eastern music and often those different music styles were mixed. Arrangements include wide spectrum from those in accordance with Serbian folk orchestra, gipsy orchestra to rock arrangements. The way of singing connects this kind of music with Serbian village tradition (Gligorijević 1990, 204). This music was successful due to constant presence in the media, because in 1990s other kind of music almost was not transmitted.

Criticism of the turbo-folk can be divided into two main groups. One group criticizes turbo-folk linking it to the wars, nationalism and crime. This group of au-

thors believes that the Serbian turbo-folk is a product of ethno-nationalism. (Dragičević-Šešić 1994; Gordi 2001; Kronja 2001). However, Ivan Đorđević points to the weakness of this ideologically colored approach which prevents a comprehensive insight into the nature of this musical genre (Đorđević 2010, 140). Despite the ethnic conflicts, all warring parties listened to the turbo-folk. Its popularity has not diminished even after the war. Turbo-folk or neofolk is especially popular in Slovenia and Bulgaria (Erdei 2009, 236; Đorđević 2010; Radović 2010). As for the text content of turbo-folk, Serbia or the war were rarely mentioned in the songs themselves (Bejker 2011, 284).

Besides, critics consider turbo folk music to be a kitsch, and "impure mixture of rural and urban" (Simić 2006, 107). Some authors observed the expansion of the turbo-folk as a war between "rural" and "urban" population, which took place in the cultural field parallel to the bloodshed during the wars in former Yugoslavia (Dragičević-Šešić 1994; Gordi 2001; Kronja 2001). By this, as Ivan Đorđević made a good observation, turbo-folk music was reduced to background of criminals, war profiteers, and similar phenomena present in the Serbian society in the 1990's. By this the other aspects of turbo-folk as an element of popular culture are being ignored, as well as the fact that this music survived the 1990's and in its transformations experienced regional expansion (Đorđević 2010, 141; Radović 2010, 124).

In the second group are those who are nationalistically terrified of foreign influences in that music. Seeing it as something that carries a strong Islamic, oriental, and "un-European" sentiment they talk of it in terms of a *tehranization of Serbia* as one of the members of parliament put it in his speech before the Serbian parliament during mid-1990s (Dimitrijević 2002, 23–24; Đorđević 2010, 141). The stereotype of *Turkish* as other from *European* has been a phenomenon through centuries (Jezernik 2010, 9). Western writers from the previous centuries often made a comparative discourse *our music* and *their music* in order to underline the difference. The orientalism of the 19th century did not realise that what was called oriental music was in fact an international art which exceeded religious, ethnic, local and regional frameworks (Aksoj 2010, 244).

Serbian turbo folk performers are labeled as *world music* in the West. Nevertheless, turbo folk represents less music definition than a conceptual category (Grujić 2006). Serbian ethnomusicologist Dimitrije Golemović pointed out that in accordance with "cultural trend in the world" in forming and presentation of popular music newly composed folk music also became syncretic form, relating to stage spectacle or video spot as the most important forms of its existence. That is how folk song traveled the road from ritual to spectacle (Golemović 2006, 222).

YouTube as a Field for Research

Field that I explored was Internet. I focused my research on reception of turbo folk by YouTube users and their communication. So, I analyzed comments on video spots of representative turbo folk performers.

YouTube is a video-sharing website on which users can upload, share, and view videos. Before the launch of YouTube in 2005, there were few easy methods available for ordinary computer users who wanted to post videos online. With its simple interface, YouTube made it possible for anyone with an Internet connection to post a video that a worldwide audience could watch within a few minutes. The wide range of topics covered by YouTube has turned video sharing into one of the most important parts of Internet culture (Ristić, Cvetković 2008, 329). Several countries have blocked access to YouTube, mostly from political and religious reasons.²

Comments on YouTube are recorded as a weblog. Weblog is network diary i.e. series of contents on web page in chronological order, with the newest on top of the page. The goal is to take combination of publicly available information and private thoughts and stances over to blog readers. Blogging assumes answering to comments on personal blog, as well as, writing comments on other blogs. Blogs became popular among other reasons due to drop in interest in mass media (less viewing of national TV networks and reading press). Starting from 2004 blogs have been widely used as a political means, most commonly as a kind of political campaign and for gaining voices of the 'blogger population' (Rainer, Turban 2009, 147). The latest medium is a videoblog tool which enables every user to simply set and read in the video material. One of the services that contributed at the most to the popularisation of videoblogs is YouTube (Ristić, Cvetković 2008, 329).

Serbian ethnomusicologists wrote down into their works that the turbofolk songs contain elements of Ottoman/Turkish music. I intended to find out if listeners really recognized this Ottoman/Turkish layer and what was that they experienced as *Turkish*, and what as *theirs*, in those songs and in what way they ranked those experiences in their system of values.

For comparison's sake, besides turbofolk, I did the research on the comments on the most popular newly composed music, as well as on the love songs (*sevdalinke*). *Sevdalinka* is an urban Bosnian folk song, although it was known throughout Southeastern Europe, especially in Serbia and Montenegro (Orahovac 1968). Its roots can be found back in the time of Ottoman's rule on the Balkan peninsula, but the authors of these love songs are mostly unknown, so in this light these songs can be called folk songs.

Perception of Turbo-Folk on the YouTube

One of the most famous turbofolk singers is certainly **Svetlana Ceca Ražnatović** (born in 1973 in Žitorađa, Serbia) (Ceca-online 2011). She is one of the

² For example: Iran (2006), Thailand (between 2006 and 2007), Pakistan (2008), Morocco (2008), The People's Republic of China (2009). YouTube is currently blocked in Turkey after controversy over videos deemed insulting to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Despite the block, Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan admitted to journalists that he could access YouTube, since the site is still available in Turkey by using an open proxy.

highest paid performers in the Serbian music industry.³ In 1995 she married Željko Ražnatović Arkan, leader of the paramilitary forces *Arkan's Tigers* and one of the most influential criminals in Belgrade in the 90s. Ceca's popularity in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia stirred up a lot of resentment. She has been verbally attacked by many Bosnian and Croatian public figures because of her involvement with Arkan and was often labeled a war criminal and četnik. Arkan was killed on January 15, 2000 in Belgrade, leaving Ceca a widow with two children. Marriage with Arkan linked her to extreme Serbian nationalism. Such political, ethnic and cultural combination created Ceca as a symbol of multi-dimensional exclusion. She was politically undesirable person in Croatia, where she never appeared. However, her music was available on CD, in the retail and online even there (Bejker 2011, 209). Ceca Ražnatović became and has remained one of the leading figures in 1990s and post-2000 turbofolk (inside and outside Serbia), seemingly assisted by her husband's transferred notoriety (Baker 2007, 2).

She inherited the football club *Obilić* from her deceased husband and became its president. In 2011 Ceca Ražnatović was accused of misappropriation of money from football player transfers and for illegal possession of weapons. Having pleaded guilty, she was sentenced to one year in home prison and 1.5 million euro fine. The punishment began serving in June 2011 (Vulliamy, 2011).

The song of Ceca Ražnatović "Kukavica" ("Coward") (2.887.014 views) inspired a great deal of nationalistic arguments. The first comments were made by non-Serbian users. Their opinion on this song was that it was created as a consequence of Turkish slavery. This caused Serbian users' responses such as: "The whole Balkans was freed of the Turks by us Serbs", "Ustashas took a liking to folk singers, and then they denied it", "Ustasha nationalists and Albanioses persecute our every clip on YouTube because they have these unhealable complexes". Some comments are insulting concerning Ceca's appearance and private life: "she's so ugly, like she's Turkish"; "she lost her virginity with a Muslim. All Serbian women are whores". Many users of different ethnic affiliations are annoyed by these nationalistic comments, they think that they are shameful. So, there are many appeals to stop these. The most striking are the comments of Bulgarian users since each one of them is very enthusiastic.

Another popular singer is **Jelena Karleuša** (born in 1978 in Belgrade). In 2004, Karleuša married Bojan Karić, the son of Serbian businessman Sreten Karić. They divorced after few months. She married in 2008 to football player Duško Tošić (Karleuša 2011). She began her singing career as a turbo folk singer in the mid-90s and gained popularity with her debut album *Ogledalce* (1995) selling more than 100,000 copies in Serbia and Montenegro. Later, she started singing pop music

³ Discography: Studio albums: *Cvetak zanovetak* (1988), *Ludo srce* (1989), *Pustite me da ga vidim* (1990), *Babaroga* (1991), *Šta je to u tvojim venama* (1993), *Ja još spavam u tvojoj majici* (1994), *Fatalna ljubav* (1995), *Emotivna luda* (1996), *Maskarada* (1997), *Ceca 2000* (2000), *Decenija* (2001), *Gore od ljubavi* (2004), *Idealno loša* (2006), *Ljubav živi* (2011).

exclusively.⁴ Karleuša has often been called the biggest gay icon of the Balkans, mostly because of her fighting for LGBT rights but also because of her looks some describe as camp and her songs that are hugely popular among the gay population in the Balkans.

Her song "Insomnia" has 7.947.084 views (!) There are a lot of negative comments on the part of Serbian viewers. They say that she is a bad singer and that her looks is shameful. The rest of these are mostly political arguments again where Turks are mentioned as conquerors: "Hahaha, the worst thing I've ever heard. Balkan people obviously like listening to things without meaning"; "maybe you like Karleuša, but all of her songs are plagiaries taken from Turks"; "I've been a Croat since the sixth century, and you stopped being Serbian in 1389. There have been no real Serbs since then, there are only walking Turkish zombies full of Turkish pigment who live on the other side of the Drina".

Some viewers complain about plagiaries and wonder if Karleuša asked for permission to redo the song: "Serbian singer Jelena Karleuša is at it again! After lifting Himesh's Aashiq banaya aapne and A R Rahman's Maiya Maiya, here she goes, lifting Salim Sulaiman's Rab ne bana di jodi track, 'Dance pe chance' for her new song titled, 'Insomnia'. Unabashed lift...did she seek permission from Yash Raj Films or Salim Sulaiman? Has she credited them in the CD? No information yet on these questions".

There are many comments on the songs of **Milojko Mile Kitić** (born in 1952 in Derventa (Bosnia and Herzegovina). He started his career in the year 1982, when his first album "2200 days" was released. He sang a lot of songs with the singers Nikola Babić - BABS, Dragana Mirković, Kemal Malovčić and Šemsa Suljaković. They all were in a contract with the record company "Južni Vetar" ("South Wind"). In the year 1998, Mile switched to one of the biggest and best known record companies, "Grand Production". During the war in the 1990s he moved to Belgrade.

The song "Plava ciganko" ("Blond Gypsy woman") has several videos, and one of them has 1.707.276 views. Many viewers of YouTube believe that this song represents a typical example of a Turkish song: "They are good songs, but he overdid it with this Turkish music"; "Actually he gets a lot of his beats or melodies from Iran/Persia and the Arabs"; "Very beautiful song but does anybody know the origin of the song? It's Algerian western music origin called "lalaoui" style this song belongs to O.N.B band from west Algeria. I like Balkan music so happy that you like Algerian music as well."; "Go ahead, soon you will be able to change your names into Ahmet, Mustafa and Durman"; "In a couple of years your children will be Turks dancing to the tambourine"; "This is a typical Turkish gay style of music". They even call the singer a Turk with a curse: "Mile Kitiću – a curse – who ever

⁴ Discography: Studio albums: *Ogledalce* (1995) *Ženite Se Momci* (1996) *Veštice, Vile* (1997) *Jelena* (1998) *Gili, Gili* (1999) *Za Svoje Godine* (2001) *Samo Za Tvoje Oči* (2002) *Magija* (2005) *JK Revolution* (2008) *The Diamond Collection* (2009) and DVD: All About Diva Live Concert Show.

made you, you Turk!" To the ridicules of Croatian viewers, Srebian viewers reply: "Better Turks than Ustashes!"

Slovenians and Bulgarians almost always make enthusiastic comments: "Woohoo... keep it goin'.. hehe... in every Balkan disco in Slovenia they play this song and people go crazy"; "Greetings from Bulgaria! The song rocks!" A lot of positive comments from Croatia on the song "Milion kamioni" ("Millions, trucks") (1.671.023 views).

Many comments on the account of Roma people with the song "Ciganče" ("Gypsy child") by **Mitar Mirić** (born in 1957 in Ugljevik, Bosnia and Herzegovina). His professional career started in 1975. In his career he worked mostly with Novica Urošević, who wrote a great number of his songs from 1979 to 1997 (Poznati.info 2011).

As always, there are those who attack and those who condemn the attacks, and the latter talk about the equality of all people, races. A terrible argument and nationalistic attacks on the song "Gledam Drinu" ("Watching Drina") (748.139 views), while there are positive comments on the song "Sve je tužno u životu mom" ("Everything is sad in my life") (318.281 views). In this case, the public reaction are connected with the textual content of songs. The river Drina by its geographical position is not just "an ordinary river", but it represents the border between Bosnia and Serbia, which gives her the symbolic character. The song "Watching Drina" is about a man who crosses the Drina running away from his home town where he committed the murder out of jealousy, "I found out who kiss her at night, I didn't want others to judge them." While the another song is about a desperate man who cannot get over his beloved wife who left him. This song was commented like this: "Mitar, you are a legend! We love you! You know the best! Hit it! Long live Yugoslavia!", or: "This is the music and life. I am an Albanian from the New York City, there were no better than this one in the world."

There are some interesting comments to the song "Lopov" ("Thief") which a folk singer **Indira Radić** and an ex-rock singer **Alan Islamović** sing together (1.152.281 views).

⁵ Discography: Nikoga svoga nemam – Diskos (1979); Voli me danas više nego juče – Diskos (1980); Hocu mesto u tvom srcu – Diskos (1981); Dobro jutro rekoh zori – Diskos (1982); U svanuće ne idem do kuće – Diskos (1982); Sve su iste osim tebe – Diskos (1984); Zivela ljubav – Diskos (1984); Ne diraj čoveka za stolom – Diskos (1986); Ako umrem da mi zao nije – Diskos (1987); Dajte mi da živim – Diskos (1988); Ne može nam niko ništa – Diskos (1989); Najjaci smo, najjaci – Diskos (1990); Nepopravljiv – Diskos (1992); Devojka preko puta – JV (1993); Dotakni me – PGP RTS (1995); Čudotvorac – Diskos (1996); Ja ne živim ovde – Diskos (1997); Haljine svilene – ZaM (1998); Samo kazi – Grand Production (2000); Nekad sam i ja voleo – Grand Production (2002); Pomirenje – Grand Production (2003); Neka puca – Grand Production (2006); Licis na sve moje bivše – Vujin Records (2009).

Indira Radić (born in 1966 in Dragalovci, Bosnia and Herzegovina) is a Serbian folk, turbo-folk, pop-folk and pop singer.⁶ She has established herself on the Balkan music scene without creating controversy in the mass media (Baker 2006, 284). Her songs from the album *Zmaj* were translated to Bulgarian, Romanian, Greek, Albanian and Romani. In the successor states of Yugoslavia, Radić became initially successful in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia. Radić then went on a Balkan tour. In 2005, in Bulgaria she was awarded the most popular and best singer on the Balkans. In 2008, the controversial single *Pije mi se, pije* (*Drink To Be Drunk*) which included a video in which two men are kissing. In 2009 she received an award for singer of the year, and was declared Serbian gay icon of 2008.

A milestone of Radić's career was when she recorded the duet *Lopov* (*Thief*) with **Alen Islamović** (born in 1957 in Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina). He is a well-known and popular Bosnian singer in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other former Yugoslav republics. Islamović is best known as the vocalist for the bands *Divlje jagode* from 1979 to 1986 and *Bijelo dugme* from 1986 to 1989.⁷ The duet, which incorporated a new music genre called "pop-folk", which is a mix of Serbian folk melodies and western pop music has achieved great success.

Rock music fans strongly criticize Islamović. They say he betrayed rock music: "he fell low", "rock music is sold, shame". But there are also some delighted listeners who think this is a typical Bosnian song: "This is what my dad sings to me always, its pretty much like "our" song... Its my favorite Bosnian song". There are some arguments about the language in which the song is sung: is it Bosnian or Serbian. A comment on the song "Moj živote" ("My life") (247.251 views) by Indira Radić: "If she wasn't Serbian, she would be prettier".

The song which YouTube viewers especially experience as Turkish is "Malo viski malo koka kola" ("A little bit of whiskey, a little bit of coca-cola") by **Fazli-**

⁶ Discography: *Nagrada i kazna* (1992) – Južni Vetar; *Zbog tebe* (*Indira Radić album*) (1993) – Južni Vetar; *Ugasi me* (1994) – Južni Vetar; *Idi iz života moga* (1995) – PGP-RTS; *Krug* (1996) – PGP-RTS; *Izdajnik* (1997) – Zam; *Voliš li me ti* (1998) – Zam; *Milenijum* (2000) – Grand Production; *Gde ćemo večeras* (2001) – Grand Production; *Pocrnela burma* (2002) – Grand Production; *Zmaj* (*album*) (2003) – Grand Production; *Ljubav kad prestane* (2005) – Grand Production; *Lepo se provedi* (2007) – Grand Production; *Heroji* (2008) – Grand Production; *Istok, sever, jug i zapad* (2011).

⁷ Discography: *Divlje Jagode – Stakleni hotel* (1981); *Divlje Jagode – Motori* (1982); *Divlje Jagode – Čarobnjaci* (1984); *Divlje Jagode – Vatra* (1985) ; *Bijelo Dugme – Pljuni i zapjevaj moja Jugoslavijo* (1986); *Divlje Jagode – Wild Strawberries* (1987); *Bijelo Dugme – Live. Mramor, kamen i željezo* (1987); *Bijelo Dugme – Čiribiribela* (1988); *Alen Islamović – Haj, nek se čuje, haj, nek se zna* (1989); *Alen Islamović – Gdje je moj rođeni brat* (1993); *Alen Islamović - Hitovi* (1994); *Alen Islamović – Bauštelac* (1994); *Alen Islamović – Nema meni bez tebe* (1995); *Alen Islamović – Live Eurotour* (1996); *Alen Islamović & Co – Samo nebo zna* (1998); *Alen Islamović - Istok, zapad, sjever, jug* (2001); *4 Asa – Live* (2003); *4 Asa – Nakon svih ovih godina* (2004); *Alen Islamović – Hitovi za sva vremena* (2005); *Alen Islamović & Srčani udar – Mrtvo hladno* (2005); *Bijelo Dugme – Turneja: Sarajevo-Zagreb-Beograd* (2005).

ja.⁸ (4.120.066 views): "Ahahaha what Turks hahahah!!! With letters like these you can draw cobras out of baskets!!!", "Long live Turks and Gypsies", "How much longer are you Serbs going to steal Turkish and Albanian songs".

Dragana Mirković (born in 1968 in Kasidol, Serbia). She is considered to be one of the biggest female music stars in ex-Yugoslavia and in the Balkans (Dragana 2011). Many consider her the greatest star of the 90's and one of the greatest Serbian stars ever. Dragana Mirković is most rewarded singer from Serbia of all time.⁹ There are over thirty golden Oscar for singer of the year, the hit of the year, singer of the decade, etc. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, she toured and recorded with the band *Južni Vetar* (Southern Wind). Dragana Mirković got married to an Austrian businessman of Croatian origin, Toni Bijelić, and decided to take time off and dedicate herself to her newly-formed family. They live in Vienna (Austria) (Dragana 2011).

There are some exceptionally good comments on her songs: "As a Croat I can only say that you can be proud of Dragana". With the song *Varala bih, varala* (I'd be cheating, cheating) (732.523 views) nostalgia for the 1990s: "The 1990s were the best, politicians may bullshit as much as they want (that's why we're paying them). Those were the times (at least compared to nowadays)!" It is possible that the comments on the song are positive because the content of her songs are neutral, i.e. love. Besides, neither she, nor her husband, were actively involved in politics. It is possible that her marriage to a businessman of Croatian origin further has a positive affects to Croatian audience.

It should be pointed out that along with nationalistic comments there are some yugonostalgic ones where users leave very positive notes on Yugoslavia and "the good old times". Some examples can be found with the song *Jači nego ikad* (*Stronger than ever*) by the group *Južni vetar*, i.e. Dragana Mirković, Kemal Malović, Sinan Sakić, Šemsa Suljaković, Mile Kitić (60.745 views). There are some yugonostalgic comments on the song by the same performers *Nek puknu dušmani* (344.969 views), but also on the Balkan type songs "Long live Balkan! *Južni vetar* is the best!"

⁸ Discography: *Prosjak i kraljica* (1997), *Boginja* (1998), *Stani srećo, okreni se* (1999), *Sad je sve drugačije* (2000), *Još sam živ* (2003), *Neka ona živi* (2004), *Sudar* (2006). Singlovi: *Malo viski, malo Coca Cola* (2007), *Viski Coca Cola 2*, Remix (2007), *Sipaj care* (2008), *Potpiši se* (2008), Fazlija i Emil Rasić: *Pare mogu sve* (2010).

⁹ Discography: *Imam dečka nemirnog* (1984), *Umiljato oko moje* (1985), *Spasi me samoće* (with Južni Vetar) (1986), *Ruže cvetaju samo u pesmama* (with Južni vetar) (1987), *Najlepši par* (with Južni vetar) (1988), *Simpatija* (with Južni vetar) (1989), *Pomisli želju* (with Južni vetar) (Diskos, Južni vetar, 1990), *Dobra devojka* (1991), *Dolaze nam bolji dani* (1992), *No. 10 (aka Do poslednjeg daha)* (1993), *Slatko od snova* (Soundtrack) (1994), *Dragana* (aka Nije tebi do mene) (1994), *Dragana* (aka Plači zemljo) (1995), *Nema promene* (1996), *Kojom gorom* or *Niko nikog ne voli* (1997), *Dragana & Zlaja Band* (aka U godini) (1999), *Sama* (2000), *Trag u vremenu* (2004), *Luče moje* (2006), *Eksplozija* (2008).

Parallels: Perception of the "Old Newly Composed Music" and Sevdalinke Songs

The songs which belong to the newly composed style by Jašar Ahmedovski, Predrag Živković Tozovac, Predrag Gojković Cune got mostly positive comments independently on the users' ethnicity. It's interesting that there are no provocative comments on the song "Janičar" ("Janissary") by Predrag Gojković Cune (220.807 views) in spite of its title and contents. This song is also sung by Sinan Sakić.

Songs by **Šaban Šaulić** got only some positive, often yugonostalgic comments "Šaban, you're more popular than Jesus". A comment on Šaban's song "Gore pisma, svedoci ljubavi" ("Letters – witnesses of love are burning") (54.401 views): "What can I do, shall I sit and cry and think of my youth when there was peace and nobody even thought about the damn war, when life was good and there was music and some nice drinks. We were free than, but then enemy came and spoiled everything. Wasn't everything good for them? Why did they have to spoil everything? Damn".

I guess that Yugo-nostalgic are those comments on newly-composed songs that were incurred during the SFRY, so that are reminiscent of the "good old days" before the war.

The comments on sevdalinke (love songs) are regularly positive, full of admiration, no matter the ethnicity. With the song "Emina" (157.029 views) performed by **Himzo Polovina**: "There's no better song than a Bosnian love song... Greetings to all Bosnians of all religions even if they may be Hindu Bosninas..."; "Love songs are the only thing that brings people together no matter the nation or religion... but there are always some fools who want to destroy Bosnian treasure! Greetings/selam from Bihać"; "Can not be translated because the words in the song such that only the Balkans can understand. There are a lot of Turkish expression. A song was written by famous writer Aleksa Santić 1903" But there are also some arguments there.

The song "U Stambolu na Bosforu" ("In Stambol, on Bosphorus") (44.979 views) performed by **Zaim Imamović** got only the positive comments: "Brother, grief (sevdah) beats the hearts of us who come from Serbia, too! Greetings to all good people from the territory off ex-Yu"; "A beautiful song. I'm a Croat from Bosnia, but the grief (sevdah) is in the souls of all Bosnians!"

The song "Moj dilbere" ("My lover boy") (724.503 views) sung by **Safet Isović** got some positive comments: "A man like this isn't born twice. Golden voice like nowhere else in the world. Greetings from Serbia". The song "Mujo kuje konja po mjesecu" ("Mujo calks horse in the moonlight") by the same performer got no nationalistic comments "There's only one Safet, he's a great man and a great singer. No other singer could convey feelings in a song in such a high-hearted and sensitive way and keep them. Sevdah (grief) is characterized by this 'long a', without yelling that can be heard by those idiots who sing on playback and live. SEVDAH IS MUSIC, TURBOFOLK IS TRASH". However, when the same song is sung by Mi-

tar Mirić and Mile Kitić, there are a lot of nationalistic comments. Comments are related to the personality of these singers, because in the minds of Croatian listeners they are associated with the Serbian turbo-folk and wars in the 1990's, even when they sing songs of other content.

The songs performed by **Nada Mamula** got some enthusiastic and respectful comments: 'Sing, wonderful Nada, to all the angels in Heaven! Let them rejoice too, just like we used to rejoice in your singing for such a long time and in such an artistic way. We miss you, but we're lucky that some smart people recorded you singing, so we can listen to it now and cry from joy. Memories come, heart breaks for the past youth. But, thanks to your voice, we get the impression that nothing has changed, and everything has stayed the same. But it hasn't. God help us, it hasn't. Rest in peace, wonderful Nada". The same on Zehra Deović, Silvana Armenulić (Zilha Barjaktarević): "Another proof that there is no song without Bosnia. Greetings from Serbia"; "When I hear these songs, and I listen to them very often, they are in me... and when I think of today's boom boom turbo... it's all pitiful, let these songs stay with us forever."

Conclusion

The analysis of turbofolk songs shows that the YouTube users do not feel this music genre just as music. More likely, this is a concept which reflects life values and life styles. Users argue in blogs and verbally attack each other on several levels, in the first place on the nationalistic, esthetic and moral levels.

As for the national dimension, very often there are comments in the form of ethnic stereotypes made by the users of non-Serbian nationality, mostly Croats, and they are insulting on the nationalistic basis, and there are also those comments in which the influence of Turkish music is mentioned, and they say that all in all that's "something Turkish". They want to provoke Serbian users, in which they usually succeed, they insist on the fact that Serbs were under the Turkish rule and that the Balkan people are therefore non-European. The responding comments claim that Serbs liberated the Balkans from Turks, "better Turks than Ustashes", etc.

Most insults on the nationalistic basis and nationalistic comments are made on the songs of those singers who were involved in politics in one way or another. The example of this is Ceca who is not looked upon only as an estrade person. On one hand, she is "the turbo-folk queen Ceca", but on the other she is often described as 'Arkan's wife', 'Arkan's widow' or 'widow of the war criminal Arkan' (Baker 2007, 7). According to Miroslava Malešević the marriage of Ceca and Arkan actually represents the link that connects the turbo-folk music and lifestyle which is promoted through it along with wars, crime and nationalism. Paradoxically, on one hand, this couple was engaged in "pure defense of Serbdom" while on the other, Ceca sang songs that had nothing do with Serbian folk songs, and during the severe economic crisis in the 1990's in Serbia they both lived in world jet-set style, which was in stark contrast to the universal misery around them (Malešević 2011, 39-40).

On the other hand, Slovenians, Bulgarians and Romanians make strikingly positive and enthusiastic comments on all turbofolk songs including Ceca's. These comments often contain the concept of the Balkans and Balkan people and claim that these songs are "the best in the Balkans".

There are also some comments on the music claiming that it is Turkish independently on the political engagement of the singer, but only on the basis of the sound.

As for esthetics and the moral dimension most comments represent the confrontation of opinions on the value of the music and its moral consequences in society. Rock fans and some other modern music genres' fans often make comments, too. They criticize the performers and their audience wondering how can anyone listen to such low quality music. Many object to the use of naked female bodies in music videos, which makes the audience watch this music rather than listen to it.

It is interesting that old hits of the newly composed music and *sevđalinke* almost never get nationally based insulting comments. Turkish inheritance is also rarely mentioned. Quite the contrary, yu-nostalgia dominates here, grief for the good old times. Balkan is often mentioned as a common territory. Nobody refers to the love songs as 'something Turkish' although they contain Turkish melody lines and there are a lot of Turkish words in the texts. The users from the territory of former Yugoslavia agree that these songs are of good quality, that they used to live and sing well back then. They claim turbofolk to be something completely different in the negative sense. There is a certain paradox here. Turbofolk, which was made in the 1990s in the time when nationalism went wild, is at the same time the only kind of music described as something that has elements of Turkish music.

It has been shown in this research that the negative attitude towards the 'Turkish' in the context of both folk and turbofolk music is almost entirely related to the persons who were connected with the events from the 1990s. Therefore, this negative attitude does not have any real connection with the Ottoman heritage, but with the 'pseudo-ottoman' heritage, which can be clearly seen from the positive attitude towards *sevđalinke*.

Translated by author

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Гордана Благојевић

Турбо-фолк и етницитет у огледалу перцепције корисника јутјуба

У фокусу овог истраживања налазе се перцепција турбо-фолка од стране корисника јутјуба (YouTube) и њихова међусобна комуникација. Материјал са ове интернет странице за размену видео фајлова доступан је широм света. Многи корисници са простора бивше Југославије остављају своје коментаре о песмама, који су често националистички, политички обојени. У раду се истражује начин на који слушаоци виде своју повезаност са османском прошлошћу. Шта доживљавају као *турско*, а шта као *своје* у тим песмама. Осим тога, посматра се друштвени утицај интернет културе, у овом случају – *јутјуба*.

Кључне речи:

етницитет,
турбо-фолк,
јутјуб,
Србија

Анализа коментара корисника јутјуба показала је да су код старих хитова новокомпоноване музике и код севдалинке веома ретки они који су националистички обојени, а и *турско наслеђе* се у контексту ових песама веома ретко помиње. Управо супротно, доминирају југоносталгични коментари, а Балкан се помиње као заједнички простор за живљење свих народа. Корисници јутјуба не доживљавају севдалинке као *нешто турско*, иако су њихови текстови пуни турцизама, а мелодијске линије садрже оријенталне елементе. Овде се појављује извесна врста парадокса, јер за већину корисника јутјуба са територије бивше Југославије турбо-фолк који је створен деведесетих година 20. века, у време бујања национализма, представља уједно једину врсту музике у којој препознају елементе турске музике у негативном контексту.