



Hardcore Ljubljana: Punk in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, 1983-1986

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A thesis submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
University of East Anglia
School of History
2019

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Abstract

This thesis explores the Ljubljana hardcore punk scene between 1983 and 1986. Utilising a combination of interviews with central participants and analysis of physical and musical artefacts, it contributes to wider understandings of alternative culture following the death of Tito, and during the pivotal final decade of Yugoslavia. The hardcore scene operated as an incendiary and somewhat utopian counterculture, and was created and maintained by young people as a component of the Ljubljana alternative cultural underground. Encompassing more than politics, incoherent rebellion or music alone, the scene facilitated instinctive reactions to local experiences, incorporated domestic specificities and provided opportunities for communication with like-minded people on a domestic and international basis. Studies of punk in Yugoslavia have tended to focus upon the significance of the popular first wave scene of the late 1970s, culminating in discussions of the short lived wave of stigmatisation that occurred at the beginning of the 1980s. This thesis documents how Ljubljana's counterculture was informed by these dynamics, but also grew to transcend them. In doing so, it outlines how punk survived, mutated and spread throughout the world. The Ljubljana hardcore scene drew upon musical and countercultural forms that were consciously internationalist, but were inspired by elements of western culture. However, they also utilised punk to address domestic realities and made direct contributions to the contemporary international punk scene. This thesis affords specific focus to the issues of sexuality and gender within Ljubljana hardcore, and investigates elements of compatibility with the influential New Social Movements that were also emerging in Ljubljana. Whilst relatively small, and largely confined to underground environments, Ljubljana hardcore left a tangible and enduring legacy, and provides a prism through which the values of its young participants can be understood.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis was made financially possible by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. I feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to study at the University of East Anglia for almost a decade and I have received support from a large number of people throughout this time. I am grateful to them all, but a number of individuals deserve specific acknowledgement.

I would first like to acknowledge the countless hours of support I have received from Richard Mills. Your patience, advice and unwavering understanding was crucial, not only to the production of the thesis in an academic sense, but also on a personal level. When personal upheaval made submission seem like a distant prospect, your reliable influence proved just as valuable as the astute and insightful feedback you also provided. A few sentences acknowledging how important this was feels insufficient, but the fact that this thesis even exists is a testament to the excellent supervision I have received.

Cathie Carmichael has also provided encouragement and invaluable advice throughout the time I have worked on this thesis. I am fortunate to have been able to draw upon her wealth of knowledge for a number of years, and my enjoyment of Cathie's teaching at undergraduate level was a major factor behind my continued focus upon Yugoslav history. I would also like to thank Matthew Worley and Mark Vincent for their interest in my studies on a number of occasions.

To the Hardcore Collective and associated punks of Ljubljana, thank you for allowing me into your lives. This thesis could not exist without your openness, engagement and the resonance of your youthful actions. The afternoons and evenings that I spent interviewing you represent some of the most enjoyable moments I have had throughout my studies. I often walked home afterwards wondering how I had been so fortunate as to meet such engaging, welcoming and fundamentally interesting people. I only hope that you feel that the work I have produced here resonates with your experiences.

Finally, I must thank the friends and family that have supported me throughout my

studies. My parents provided much of the personal support that meant I could complete this thesis. However, your encouragement extended far beyond this thesis, my prior academic life and crucial financial support. You have shaped me as a person. Few would have tolerated me and my strange study habits over the past year and I hope that, in some small way, witnessing me finally complete this thesis represents a small form of payback for the incomprehensible sacrifices you have made for me over three decades. If not, I hope it at least makes up for all the times you have had to listen to me witter on about something.

Morgan, thank you for being there, and for being you. You have heard me endlessly and repetitively complain about all manner of things, not least the academic stresses of the past few years. In a strange and coincidental way, this thesis brought you into my life, and I'm consistently very glad that it did. You've provided me with movements of much needed distraction, fun and escape, even if you never got around to reading much of my work. I'm sorry that I've turned into a strange, irrational, overly emotional and sometimes miserable creature, but thank you for being the constant in my life that I could focus upon when I felt a bit lost. *'Counting the days towards our new construction, moving mountains by compulsion...'*

To Stephanie, thank you for your consistent and often selfless support, first as my partner, and then as a friend. When I found things difficult, and we were experiencing our own issues, knowing that you truly cared and have always wanted the best for me meant a great deal.

To Jaka and Jure, thank you for being my friends, showing me around Ljubljana, giving me a place to sleep and making me feel welcome in a previously unfamiliar city. To Ellie May Roberts, thank you for the specific advice, interest and occasional words of wisdom. To the Punk scholars network, thank you for the academic inspiration and encouragement, and for reminding me that I'm not alone as a strange punk negotiating the world of academia.

To anyone else I have forgotten, please forgive me, completing this thesis has fried my brain.

Introduction

Punk has mutated and thrived in a variety of socio-political environments well beyond the iconoclastic first wave exemplified by Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious and The Ramones. Whilst many of punks originators declared that there was 'No Future', and watched their initial energy burn out within a few short years, punk simultaneously reacted and evolved towards distinct underground countercultures and stylistic offshoots.¹ This thesis focuses upon one such mutation: 1980s hardcore punk, in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, then a constituent republic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. *Hardcore Ljubljana*, a 12" compilation album (See Fig 1), was recorded in 1985 and released the following year by the independent label FV Založba (FV Publishers) and represents the scene's defining artefact and swansong.² The bands featured were UBR (Uporniki Brez Razloga/Rebels Without Cause), Odpadki Civilizacije (Waste Civilisation), III. Kategorija (Third Category), Epidemija (Epidemic) and Tožibabe (Tattletales). They were the creative core of the scene, often referred to as the hardcore collective.



Fig 1: Cover art for *Hardcore Ljubljana* 12" Compilation, featuring the famous Zmajski most (Dragon Bridge) in the city centre.

The first hardcore concert was held three years earlier, on 27th August 1983 (See

¹ Sex Pistols *God Save the Queen* (A&M/Virgin, 1977)

² The activity of the bands featured on the compilation gradually faded from 1986.

Fig 2). It saw a new generation of punks loudly assert their individuality and departure from existing punk conventions. The newly formed Stres DA, UBR, Otpadki Civilizacije and KPJ (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije – a provocative appropriation of the name of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia) performed alongside O'Pizda (O' Cunt), a punk band who had been active for a number of years.³ A contemporary scene report emphasised how the 'new energy' of the hardcore collective had left the 'old style' of the latter looking distinctly uninspired.⁴ A report the following year similarly positioned hardcore as a fresh approach, with a new generation of punks 'developing our own ways... [because we are] 'BORED with what the media and old punks want us to listen to.'⁵ Marsa of Tožibabe describes how the collective regarded themselves as both an 'alternative and sequel to punk', and by 1984, hardcore remained as Ljubljana's only active scene.⁶



Fig 2: Flyer for the first local hardcore concert in Ljubljana, August 1983.

³ Stres DA played their first concert in the spring of 1983, at the Faculty of Philosophy, Ljubljana University. They played a handful more times after this, including the first hardcore concert, once in Bologna and another in Ljubljana with RAF Punk (Italy) on 26/11/1983. Stres DA split up in 1984 when their drummer left Yugoslavia. Stres DA/ Depresija/ III. Kategorija *Red In Disciplina* (Attack Punk, 2013)

⁴ Maximum RocknRoll (MRR) is a longstanding popular punk fanzine based in California, USA. It has consistently featured scene reports, which are short articles sent in by punks from around the world detailing recent events concerning the punk scene in their area. 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 9 (November-December 1983)

⁵ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 11 (January-February 1984)

⁶ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

The scene originated from a 'small and disorganised' group of young people, 'many not yet 20 years old' (See Fig 3). Gathering around Kersnikova and the Šiška district of Ljubljana from 1981, teenage friendships, shared interests in international punk and the adoption of 'orthodox punk images', gradually coalesced into an organised and often insular counterculture, which positioned hardcore as the true representative of the original punk spirit.⁷ An interview with an unnamed punk, conducted for *Punk pod Slovenci*, similarly paints hardcore as an original and inventive 'subcultural alternative scene', which reacted to and built upon punk legacies, departing from the frameworks of traditional music scenes in the process.⁸

The 'serious work' of the scene began in 1983, when bands began rehearsing in small, dark basements, with 'earth on the ground and hanging electric wires that had to be avoided', recording rudimentary demos using 'VCR recorders in barely improvised studios.' Within a matter of months this had transformed into an active subcultural movement, producing tapes, records and fanzines, performing regular concerts and making contact with punks across Europe and beyond.⁹ By the mid 1980s, Ljubljana was widely recognised in contemporary punk fanzines and domestic scene reports as housing the strongest hardcore punk scene in Yugoslavia.¹⁰

⁷ A. Potokar, 'Pank u Lublan' in: N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk Pod Slovenci* (Univerzitetna Konferenca ZSMS, KRT, 1985), p.45

⁸ I. Vidmar, 'Tozibabe- Punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core' *Stop* (12/6/1986); 'Interviews' N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak *Punk Pod Slovenci* (Univerzitetna Konferenca ZSMS, KRT, 1985), p.475

⁹ UBR *Še En Lep Dan Za Umret* (Rest In Punk, 2012); 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 20 (December 1984)

¹⁰ A. Popvić, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *No Concern Fanzine* (1984); G. Obradovic, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Feedback* (1984); M. Stojc, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Ø Zine* Issue 1 (June 1987)

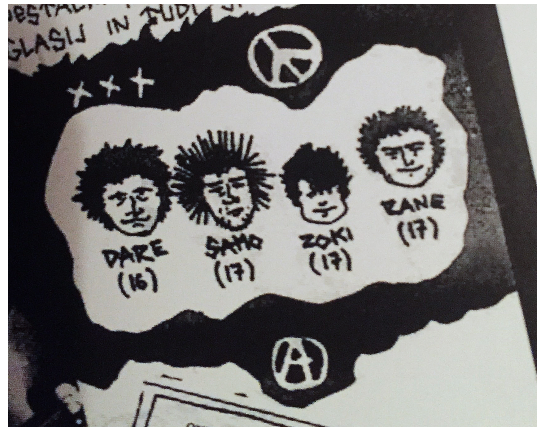


Fig 3: The *Kaj je alternativa* (1983) compilation insert, outlining the members of Odpadki Civilizacije and their respective ages at the beginning of the Ljubljana hardcore scene.

Gregor 'Gigi' Karpov of UBR uses familial terminology in describing the 'brotherly' relations that developed between members of the collective, whilst Marsa, a member of Tožibabe, remembers the community formed around hardcore as:

Something special. It was a communal group, a big family that contained personal relationships. We were always together, basically living together, we just slept at home. It was spontaneous, but we found each other at the right time and place and everything sparked.¹¹

The formation of close-knit, intimate communities around hardcore punk is generally reflective of the relatively small size of these scenes as underground and countercultural communities, in contrast with portrayals of the first wave of punk as a mass youth movement.¹² The influential Gothenburg hardcore scene, which produced iconic bands such as Anti-Cimex and The Shitlickers saw little more than a few hundred participants, in a city twice the size of Ljubljana.¹³ Local scene reports in 1984 describe concerts featuring 400 punks crammed into 200 capacity basements, whilst participants estimated average attendances in the low hundreds, with a 'smaller contingent' of around 30 people representing the scene's active

¹¹ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015; Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

¹² I. Vidmar, 'Slo Punk 1977-1987' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 374 (July 2014)

¹³ *Negative Insight Fanzine* Issue 3 (2017)

contributors.¹⁴ The audience that Ljubljana hardcore could reach is reflected by the number of tapes and records produced, with 200 cassettes made for the 1983 *Kaj je alternativa* compilation, whilst *Hardcore Ljubljana* received a higher, but still relatively small pressing of around 1000 records in 1986. The contemporary output of Ljubljana hardcore, represented by scene reports, fanzines and music is important to any investigation of the dynamics of the scene. In addition, I conducted twenty two interviews in Ljubljana between 2014 and 2017, with members of the scene's creative core. These illuminate dynamics that would otherwise have remained hidden. Key participants were initially identified by studying the names featured within scene reports and local compilations, including *Hardcore Ljubljana* and *Kaj je alternativa*. A Radio Študent show in December 1983, which presented the scene to a wider audience, responding to early dismissals of hardcore, provides an additional indication of those integral to the scene.¹⁵ Whilst the collective largely eschewed the idea of leaders, the recurrence of particular names helped to identify those who were most active within the scene, which subsequent interviews helped to confirm. I was able to interview half of the eight participants involved in the broadcast, including Marsa (once) and Mojca (twice) of Tožibabe, one of only a handful of contemporary Yugoslav hardcore bands to release a 7" EP, *Dežuje*. Alongside Gigi, who I interviewed twice, I also interviewed his UBR bandmate Božo Rakočević. UBR were the first Ljubljana band to produce a 7" EP, *Corpus Delicti*, which cemented their position as the city's most prominent hardcore band.¹⁶ Their bandmate Mare also appeared on the broadcast, alongside Kuri of Stres DA and Boris 'Maus' Mišković of Odpadki Civilizacije, but I was unable to speak with them. The 'thanks lists' from the aforementioned EPs and *Hardcore Ljubljana* also indicate contributors to the scene, several of whom I interviewed. These include Dare of III. Kategorija, and David Križnik, who produced a local fanzine, *Vrnitev odpisanih*, performed in KPJ and 2227, and booked numerous hardcore punk concerts in Ljubljana alongside his

¹⁴ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 11 (Jan-Feb 1984) Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015; Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015; Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014; Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016

¹⁵ *Kaj Je Alternativa* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983); N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk Pod Slovenci* (Univerzitetna Konferenca ZSMS, KRT, 1985)

¹⁶ UBR *Corpus Delicti* (Attack Punk, 1984); UBR were also the Yugoslav representative on a number of international punk compilations, including the popular *MRR Presents: Welcome to 1984* (Maximum RocknRoll, 1984)

(then) partner Irena Povše, who I also interviewed on three occasions.¹⁷ Marina Grzinić and Nikolai Jeffs were key members of the wider alternative scene that supported the efforts of the hardcore collective. I was able to interview Marina and drew upon Jeffs' recent contributions to a retrospective review of FV and Ljubljana's alternative scene.¹⁸

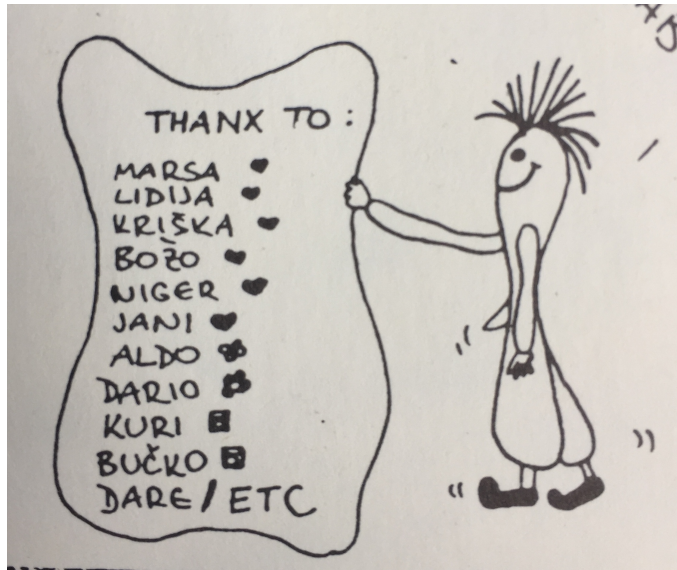


Fig 4: Tožibabe's 'Thanx To:' list from *Hardcore Ljubljana*, something of a role call of important contributors to the Hardcore Collective and wider punk scene.

Punk scenes are comprised of more than just the most visible figures. Whilst hardcore revolved around music, it also incorporated creative partnerships, friendships, romantic relationships and a range of social interactions which were key to its appeal. As Irena describes:

I was less interested in older punk bands compared to the community of people that aligned with my vision of punk. This was why I became more involved. There was no border between bands and the audience, we were all active participants in the scene.¹⁹

Martin Sprouse highlights the importance of 'harder to document people' to the

¹⁷ Tožibabe *Dežuje* (FV Music, Ne! Records 2016)

¹⁸N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990' in: B. Škrjanec (ed) *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni Grafični Likovni Center, 2008), pp.345-394

¹⁹ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

operational dynamics of punk scenes, arguing that whilst music represents the most catchy element, those who 'actually make shows happen from beginning to end' should also be recognised, as they 'are more than fans'.²⁰ Contributors include concert organisers, artists, flyer makers, photographers, fanzine authors, tape traders, letter writers, concert attendees and those who remain on the fringes of scenes. I was able to include the perspectives of a number of these individuals, including Dario Cortese, who produced several scene reports for *Maximum RocknRoll*, Jose Suhadolnik, who photographically documented Ljubljana's alternative scene, including hardcore, throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, and Miha Zupevc, a dedicated but non-musical participant within the hardcore collective. Different roles foster difference experiences, attitudes and recollections, and many of those integral to punk scenes fulfil multiple roles at once. Co-operation and multi-tasking was often crucial, and Dare of III. Kategorija describes how collectivism simultaneously facilitated the discussion and debate which helped shape the scene, with participants 'constantly sharing different ideas and specialising in different fields'.²¹ Irena agrees, stating that whilst individuals 'played a part, often within their speciality field', efforts were combined. This meant that that 'everyone was a part of the overall success of the scene... and together we knew we could do it'.²² Practical organisation also relied upon support from distinct but related subcultures and whilst Aldo describes that the hardcore scene 'became more than the sum of its parts', Ljubljana's wider alternative scene was a crucial support network.²³ Whilst not always harmonious, such interactions called upon the relatively small size of Ljubljana as a defining source of strength, with interactions between different cultural strands facilitated by the fact that 'everyone knew each other'.²⁴

Subcultures are not always harmonious, homogenous or co-operative, and active contributors can remain unacknowledged or excluded, for a variety of reasons. This was, at times, true for Ljubljana hardcore and its inner circle, but a combination of further research into hardcore bands from the city and the content

²⁰ M. Sprouse, *MRR Presents: Turn It Around* (MRR, 1987)

²¹ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

²² Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

²³ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

²⁴ Ibid

of the earliest interviews I conducted helped to identify many of these individuals. I was subsequently able to interview several of the most notable examples. Robert 'Rile' Ristić and his band Quod Massacre operated outside the core of the scene, despite achieving local and international popularity. Robert was friends with and had previously played alongside hardcore collective members in the band Depresija, and was thanked by UBR on the inlay to their *Corpus Delicti 7*", and Odpadki Civilizacije on their inlay contribution to *Hardcore Ljubljana*.²⁵ However, Quod Massacre did not feature on the compilation and remained infrequently acknowledged by the collective. Aleš Češnovar and Igor Dernovšek of the band Niet were also musical contemporaries of the hardcore scene, and, like Quod Massacre received a degree of attention outside of its confines, but were actively and deliberately excluded from the scene. I examine the dynamics that informed this in Chapter One, and both Robert and Niet's contributions were vital to a more substantive account.

This thesis offers an insight into the ways in which young Slovenes self-actualised and interacted with local socio-political events, recasting internationalist subcultures for their own ends. It contributes to understanding the history of young people in the final years of Yugoslavia and the cultural development of punk beyond familiar inceptions, outlining what made punk a phenomenon capable of continually capturing the interest and energy of a range of active participants in diverse contexts. Specific chapters are dedicated to issues especially pertinent to the scene. Chapter One outlines the motives and ideals of participants, examines societal limitations and repression and investigates the immediate environments in which Ljubljana hardcore existed, expanding upon how socio-political factors shaped its development, evolution and diversions. The second chapter examines how hardcore punks in Ljubljana interacted with the global punk scene and their attitudes towards internationalism, and how they viewed their own place in the world. In doing so, it illuminates the importance of international communication to marginal cultural scenes, and 1980s hardcore punk in general, and places the Ljubljana scene within a global punk context. The final two chapters then turn to the ways that punks interacted with sexuality and gender, investigating the extent to which issues of identity were considered, interactions between hardcore and

²⁵UBR *Corpus Delicti* (Attack Punk, 1984); *Hardcore Ljubljana* (FV Založba, 1986)

wider countercultures and social movements, and how experiences of marginalisation could foster empathy and solidarity with other outcasts.

Whilst this thesis focuses extensively upon gender and sexuality, ethnicity is seldom mentioned.²⁶ This may seem surprising given that popular narratives regarding the fall of Yugoslavia, which occurred only a few years after the events detailed throughout this thesis, have frequently featured a rise in ethnic tensions as a central cause.²⁷ However, Nikolai Jeffs suggests that nationalist tendencies were largely absent from Ljubljana's counterculture in the 1980s, which 'never advocated national identity', and instead focused upon the development of cultural production in a society that could transcend both socialism and capitalism.²⁸ This was reflected by my own experiences. Ethnicity was never mentioned by interview participants as pertinent to the dynamics of Ljubljana hardcore or wider alternative scenes. When I actively encouraged discussion of nationalism or ethnic tension, I was met with an almost universal response that they had little bearing upon the punk scene, or the everyday lives of participants, between 1983 and 1986. Many participants referenced the fact that their families were made up of individuals of varying Yugoslav ethnicities and Božo argues that it would have been altogether 'bizarre to think of ethnic wars' in the middle of the 1980s.²⁹ Irena concurs, stating that whilst brotherhood and unity 'was maybe its own kind of indoctrination, we always felt like we were at home throughout Yugoslavia, and connected with that.'³⁰ She concedes that many Slovenes, including punks, supported the idea of Slovene secession later in the decade, but believes that this was motivated by the somewhat illusory promise of western integration, rather than ethnic division. Miha agrees, and states that when punks called for change within Yugoslavia, ethnicity was never specifically referenced. His recollection that the punk scene 'expected a different system with more autonomy for Slovenia, more rights for republics,

²⁶ The 1974 Yugoslav constitution established equality for all constituent peoples and minorities within Yugoslavia. The central communist slogan of 'Brotherhood and Unity' encapsulated an ideology which stressed the importance of ethnic coexistence within the federation. Yugoslav Censuses recognised various ethnicities relating to the constitutive federal republics, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (recorded as Muslim), Macedonia and Montenegro, as well as national minorities, which included Albanians and Hungarians.

²⁷ M. Glenny *The Fall of Yugoslavia* (Penguin, 2003) provides an example of the discourse which dominated western understandings of the Yugoslav war in the aftermath. Glenny cites the rise of popular nationalism as a central factor.

²⁸ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.350

²⁹ Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

³⁰ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

perhaps a confederation... but never thought that such a war or the fall of Yugoslavia would happen how it did' chimes with James Gow and Cathie Carmichael's depiction of the Slovene agenda for self-determination at the end of communist rule.³¹

The absence of discussions of ethnicity within the lyrical content of Ljubljana hardcore further reinforces the impression that it was rarely considered. KPJ made a tongue in cheek reference to Slovene economic prosperity in relation to the rest of Yugoslavia via the song 'Nič več denarja na Jug'.³² Whilst this represents the most direct interaction with nationalist politics within the Ljubljana scene, David remembers that the song was the product of punk provocation rather than sincere identification. He stated, 'it wasn't upon us to have that sort of [economic] shit sorted out... we just wanted things to go peacefully'.³³ The only other identifiable engagement with nationalist politics came via III. Kategorija, who made more serious, albeit still somewhat vague, engagement. Their later material saw a lyrical shift from 'anarchist provocations' to artistic representations of Yugoslav decay, and singer Dare recalled that songs such as *Agresor* suggested a future civil war in Yugoslavia.³⁴

Whilst David suggests that by the turn of the decade 'nationalism became unavoidable as it was kicking off everywhere, with tensions growing' he continues to stress that involvement with punk meant that 'its pull was never as strong... not many punks became nationalists'.³⁵ Gigi also remembers that internationalist idealism within the worldwide punk scene made it incompatible with nationalism:

For me, nationalism is the last station of the dumb, the corrupt and the

³¹ Gow and Carmichael suggest that the eventual Slovene agenda for independence was the evolution of existing discourse regarding autonomy, sovereignty and economic patriotism. Zuperc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/16; J. Gow, C. Carmichael *Slovenia and the Slovenes- A Small State and the New Europe* (Hurst & Company, 2001) p.51

³² The content and title of the song, which translates as 'No More Money to the South', was a direct reference to Slovenia's refusal to subsidise other regions of Yugoslavia. Luthar and Pušnik describe how the Yugoslav policy that dictated that more economically prosperous regions should finance development elsewhere contributed to the Slovene independence agenda. B. Luthar & M. Pušnik 'Introduction' *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (New Academia Publishing, 2010) p.24

³³ Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

³⁴ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/14

³⁵ Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

wicked. It only gives stupid people a way of feeling important. We [punks] were not nationalists. I also cannot be a nationalist. I'm so fucking mixed, I'd end up having to hate part of myself!³⁶

The aforementioned second chapter, which investigates these internationalist tendencies and interactions between hardcore scenes, helps explain why this was often the case.

³⁶ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

Methodology

Throughout the course of my research I conducted twenty two original interviews with participants in the Ljubljana hardcore scene. These form a central component of this thesis and the assertions contained within and necessitated methodological considerations regarding the influence that academics can have over the interviews they conduct and ways that the position and identity of the researcher can affect both the research process and the subsequent utilisation and interpretation of material. My understandings of subjectivity and objectivity and the methodological and interpretative approaches I adopted as a result, were influenced by a range of literature, including studies of the nature of memory, practical and theoretical approaches to oral history, and cultural theory. I tailored existing approaches and conceptions to the requirements of my research, in a practical sense via interview conduct, but also in theoretical and interpretive terms, to conceptualise the thesis and its relation to existing scholarship.

Key to the utilisation of oral history is a consideration of the nature of memory, the ways it can be triggered and conveyed and how this can be influenced by a range of factors, with socio-political contexts, group membership, the passing of time and the research process itself key in this regard. This methodology section outlines theories that underpinned my understanding of the impact of such factors. As this thesis reconstructs and examines the history of a subculture, I also outline cultural theories applicable to hardcore punk, whilst considering the impact of dominant societal, social, political and cultural histories upon an explicitly underground and antagonistic subculture. International influences, cultural variations and intercultural communication affected the contemporary dynamics of the hardcore scene, but also the conversations that took place in the course of my research.

Objectivity and Subjectivity in Research

The ways in which historians can shape research, rather than act as detached, objective observers range from the obvious to the subtle. Identifiable factors include motivations, the impact of immediate, active and personal reactions to testimonies, the feelings that the interviewers hold towards narrators and vice

versa, and the ways in which the assumptions of the interviewer can affect the wider interviewing process. Whilst, in recent years, historians have increasingly accepted the impossibility of a 'value free research process', many historians continued to 'cling' to the idea of achievable objectivity within historical research until the 1980s. Acknowledgement of the presence of hidden and unconscious ideological agendas only featured widely within historical accounts from this point onwards.³⁷ This acceptance was complemented by similar developments within anthropology, sociology, feminist theory and biography studies, which saw the idea of objectivity lose its monopoly status. Age, race, gender, class, politics, outsider positions and life experiences were recognised as potential influences upon what an ethnographer learns from fieldwork. As George Devereux's behavioural science account states, the study of man is impeded by the overlap between the subject and observer, which requires analysis of the nature of partition between the two. Attempting to make observations from an objective viewpoint is impossible. Assuming otherwise proves counterproductive to research, which led Devereux to conclude that 'we must view our difficulties (and I would add, pleasures as well) as important data in their own right.'³⁸ In practical terms this means that the researcher should attempt to be as objective as possible, whilst using subjectivity to the advantage of the study and acknowledging when it may have been disadvantageous. The researcher should attempt to be aware of prior assumptions and ensure that the collection of all information is critically examined, with these methods of examination also subject to scrutiny. This ultimately remains a stated goal to strive towards, as, given the complexities of interpersonal relations and other factors which affect objectivity during and subsequent to interviews, assumptions that full objectivity is even possible would suggest a lack of criticality rather than a perfect process. K. Anderson and D.C. Jack describe how interviewers must 'listen in stereo', recognising that people often frame concepts and values in a manner which reflects societal norms, whilst also expressing views which are informed by the immediate realities of the subjects' experiences on a personal basis.³⁹ This is not to say that participants merely passively accept

³⁷ V. Yow, 'Do I Like Them Too Much?' in R. Perks & A. Thompson (eds) *The Oral History Reader* (Routledge, 2006), pp.54-58

³⁸ G. Devereux, *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioural Sciences* (The Hague: Mouton & Co, 1967), p.xvii

³⁹ K. Anderson and D. Jack, 'Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses' in R. Perks & A. Thompson (eds) *The Oral History Reader* (Routledge, 2006), p.130

dominant, orthodox attitudes, or that competing ideologies will not be encountered, but that a researcher must be aware of the possibility that ideas that are expressed, and indeed, the ways in which they are communicated, are the product of a complex combination of competing views and attitudes. Responses to such revelations should focus upon the process of data gathering, but also on the unpacking of a subjects' viewpoint in a dynamic, reciprocal and interactive manner, with interviews as 'mutual explorations' of problems and issues, presenting the opportunity for an informed interviewer to talk in depth with a knowledgeable participant about a subject of mutual interest.⁴⁰

Differences between interviewers and interviewees can represent an asset, but equally, interest and investment in the topic can harm research, if the researcher identifies with a studied person or cause too closely- a process Yow describes as 'making heroes of narrators'.⁴¹ This is not to say that prior knowledge or identification with the subject of research is an inevitable drawback, but that the possibility of limitations with regards to critical engagement should be recognised. I have previously noted disappointment with academic texts on punk from a research perspective, but also because they fail to resonate with my experiences of punk as an active participant. This can prove a motivating force, aiding the avoidance of perceived pitfalls. A determination to represent something personally important to a researcher can potentially aid scholarship, providing such motives are underpinned by critical approaches. In the context of this thesis, this criticality extended to my own interactions with punk, to ensure that my own identity and values are utilised as a tool, rather than becoming a master. Indeed, reflecting upon my early work on this thesis with some critical distance means I was able to recognise and modify approaches. On the other hand, many of the factors which could potentially impinge upon objectivity, when approached critically proved an asset to my research. Shared ideologies can mean that interviewees are more comfortable opening up to the interviewer, particularly if it is known that they are more likely to understand and engage with their views, aims or actions. Empathy for the narrator (or indeed, a lack of empathy), shared world views, differences in gender, age, social class and ethnicity can influence the ways in which questions

⁴⁰ L. Shopes, 'Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes and Possibilities' in: R. Perks and A. Thompson (eds) *The Oral History Reader* (Routledge, 2006), p.268

⁴¹ V. Yow, 'Do I Like Them Too Much?', p.66

are asked, responded to, interpreted and evaluated in a range of ways. As Yow states, awareness of this should be on the 'main stage [of oral history]... not the side show that it used to be.'⁴² Observations made will always be influenced by the observers activity, as the data which the observer has access to is based upon their own perceptions of reactions, provoked by the observer in some way. As such, Yow suggests several ways of identifying the potential influence of subjectivity upon research, including awareness of the researcher's own ideologies and how similarities and differences in this regard can impinge upon interpersonal situations. She also states that the motivation for the project is important to identify and examine. Researchers should consider other potential avenues for approaching the topic and why they were rejected, such as the questions that were not asked, or topics that were not covered. Yow stresses that the researcher should try to consider other possible interpretations of data and why these interpretations may have been rejected. She suggests that the potential effects of the research process upon the researcher should also be identified, in order to examine how these may have impinged upon research.⁴³ Anderson and Jack highlight the importance of considering the feelings of both the narrator and the interviewer, the ways in which concepts are understood, and the impact of the interviewer's own conduct, stating that it is crucial that the interviewer notices potential areas of confusion or personal discomfort as they unfold, as well as the impact that the interviewers' own hunches, feelings and responses can have.⁴⁴ These considerations were often at the forefront of my mind during the research and helped to shape my approach to interviews.

Oral History, Individual and Collective Memory

Whilst the subjects of this thesis participated in creative cultural actions as young people, their stories have seldom been told. Oral history, allowing them to tell these stories, was therefore a necessary element in the construction of a workable history of Slovene hardcore punk. Direct engagement with the creators of the scene necessitated an element of negotiation, which Michael Frisch describes as 'sharing authority'.⁴⁵ This process can be complicated, contentious and reliant upon good

⁴² Ibid, p.67

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ K. Anderson & D. Jack, 'Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses', p. 141

⁴⁵ M. Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral History* (Albany, 1990),

will, but in exchange, allowing subjects of research an active role in shaping its direction and what is considered important can prevent derivative conformity to existing historiographic trends, providing historians with the opportunity to expand and diversify the voices that are heard on particular subjects, and elevate those that may have been forgotten. In *The Voice of the Past*, Paul Thompson makes an evocative case for the vitality of oral history and how it lends itself towards understanding the impact of politics and economics from the grassroots, thus opening previously closed questions and providing opportunities to extend intellectual, social and cultural history to include more histories of the poor, the disenfranchised and the marginalised.⁴⁶ Paul Connerton similarly describes how oral history can aid the creation of 'personal, more social and more democratic' accounts and can rescue 'from silence the history and culture of subordinate groups... giving voice to what would otherwise remain voiceless, even if not traceless, by reconstituting the life histories of individuals.'⁴⁷ Oral history is not limited to giving voice to the marginalised alone, but can nevertheless be utilised as a dynamic tool in constructing the history of individuals and groups that have previously been overlooked. As I outline in forthcoming chapters, by the mid 1980s, the alternative and punk scene which gave birth to hardcore in Ljubljana had largely shifted to the margins, and, at times, was actively targeted by the police. As such, oral history provides an opportunity to shine new light upon a sidelined subculture.

Memory was once largely regarded as an uncorrupted historical artefact, enabling Jean-Jaques Rousseau to claim that the reliability and consistency of his recollections within his autobiographical work *The Confessions* made it 'a portrait in every way true to nature.'⁴⁸ Despite the overall appearance of coherence, Rousseau acknowledged potential breaks in his memory and that subsequent events and personal reflection could problematise the processes and accuracy of retrieval. Yet, Anne Whitehead argues that his primary approach to memory was based upon a premise that he could 'effortlessly call to mind everything that had happened...

p.xxiii

⁴⁶ P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past- Oral History* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 308

⁴⁷ P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.18

⁴⁸ J. Rousseau, *The Confessions* trans. J. M. Cohen (Penguin, 1953), p.17

[with] nothing forgotten or lost.⁴⁹ Whitehead also points to the influence of imagination upon the veracity of recollections, and the ways in which the communication of inner thoughts and reactions represents a process of subsequent interpretation. Sigmund Freud and Marcel Proust would later emphasise the particular significance of slips in memory, with the latter remarking that 'a forgotten event hides an essential truth.'⁵⁰ R. I. Moore warns that memory should be regarded as both 'an artefact and a trickster... an active trickster at that.' Understandings more dynamic than Rousseau's have presented memory as an active *process* which sees past events shaped and adapted to the use of the present, with what is remembered, what is forgotten, and what becomes altered or reinterpreted subject to numerous factors.⁵¹ Connerton describes memory as a set of narratives which are continually engaged with, updated, manipulated and adapted based upon conscious and unconscious decisions to promote or suppress certain events. In this way individuals can affect their own recollections of events and form 'meaningful narrative sequences' with 'remembering not a matter of reproduction, but of construction.'⁵² Historical accounts which rely upon oral history must contend with the ways in which this construction occurs, and Whitehead states that, utilised correctly, 'memory seems to operate most efficiently at a spatial and temporal distance.'⁵³ This utilisation requires a number of active considerations and recognition that the production of memory involves a continuity with the past, with events presented differently and taking on new meaning with the benefit of hindsight. Charlotte Linde's description of 'the creation of coherence' within life histories and oral testimony outlines the necessity of 'manoeuvre within large scale systems of social understandings, and of knowledge grounded in a long history of practice.' The nature of these stories is therefore reliant not only upon manipulation by individuals, but also 'presuppositions about what can be taken as expected, what the norms are, and what common or special belief systems are necessary to establish coherence.'⁵⁴ Coherence can be created as a result of clear and conscious processes of negotiation, with the narrator naturally and

⁴⁹ A. Whitehead, *Memory* (Routledge, 2009), p.65

⁵⁰ M. Proust, *In Search of Lost Time* (Vintage, 2002), p. 181

⁵¹ R.I. Moore, 'Editor's Preface' in: J. Fentress and C. Wickham (eds) *Social Memory* (Blackwell, 1992), p.viii

⁵² P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p.27

⁵³ A. Whitehead, *Memory*, p.79

⁵⁴ C. Linde, *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence* (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 219

continuously considering these issues whilst they provide oral testimony. Frances Ferguson describes dangers associated with 'expansive memory' in relation to this process, warning that when an author or speaker deliberately aims to reveal inner truths, rather than recounting events as they remember them, the attachment of subsequent meanings and evaluations is potentially limitless and can ultimately result in memories that 'expand forever.'⁵⁵ Stories can thus vary in terms of content and communication, depending upon who they are told to and the perceived purposes of doing so. Fragmented recollections are frequently transformed from narrow and at times haphazard accounts into more understandable, comprehensive and well rounded world views and histories as a result of the inclusion of thoughts, feelings, reflections, impressions, wider contexts and justifications, many of which may not have been clear during the events themselves and can be attributed to changes in world-views, values and opinions. Marsa touched upon this possibility, describing how she was able to perceive and subsequently navigate between how she thought and acted at the time, her contemporary opinions and how events have subsequently altered in terms of significance. Whilst this is a complex process, she stated that she was able to recognise potential divides between her thoughts and feelings at the time and how she feels about things now and as a result prevented allowing the latter to lead the former where possible.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, as Connerton states, the possibility of unconscious processes of alteration should be recognised and answers from first hand participants to direct questions about the subject of inquiry must be questioned and contextualised, 'not because of fear of deception, but because if they are accepted at face value, that would amount to abandoning the autonomy of a practicing historian.'⁵⁷

The time between events and recollection represents another factor which can impact upon the coherence of oral testimony, and memories are subject to interpretation and consistent re-interpretation from the outset. This can potentially obscure content through the addition of influence from social and cultural circumstances that were not present at the time, but can also provide elements of clarity through reflection, the development of opinions and elements of critical distance. The majority of events discussed within this thesis occurred at least thirty

⁵⁵ F. Ferguson, 'Romantic Memory' in *Studies in Romanticism* (Vol. 35, No.4, Winter 1996), p.529

⁵⁶ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁵⁷ P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p.14

years ago, and F.H Allison describes how memories of important events tend to be explained in more cohesive ways as time passes, with initially scattered accounts shaped into understandable stories and incorporating wider focuses. Allison describes how conscious and unconscious decisions can make accounts more interesting and rounded, with narrators becoming increasingly aware of the ways in which audiences react to events over time. This can result in narrators taking on the style of other accounts, seeking to communicate the wider meaning of events and adding extra context that they were not privy to at the time, particularly if they perceive events in relation to historical and cultural movements.⁵⁸ Recollections from narrators regarding the Ljubljana hardcore scene are less likely to be shaped by specific responses to the subject, because my interviews represented the first time many participants had spoken on the subject for this purpose. Moreover, few popular or mainstream accounts have tackled the history of hardcore punk in Ljubljana directly, or for a sustained period. However, the prevalence of general cultural productions that deal with punk can enhance memories, whilst also influencing participants with regards to the ways punk-specific memories are contextualised and presented, as well as potentially shaping their reflections upon punk in Ljubljana and relations to this global context.

Human memories are not only influenced by deliberate processes of reorganisation and reflection, but are also subject to unconscious alterations. They can be undisciplined, fleeting, disordered and confused, often triggered in random and uncontrollable ways. As Andy Medhurst describes, with specific reference to punk and memory, 'the most vivid images people tend to have of their own pasts are not calm, measured narratives, but sudden snapshots and erratic fragments.'⁵⁹ Such tendencies are not the sole preserves of experiences which are similarly wild, erratic and sudden- attributes which are often associated with punks reckless and youthful abandon- and the depth, accuracy and way in which memories may be conveyed are dependant upon, or at least influenced by, a number of factors, including the immediate environments and stimuli that trigger them. The processes by which oral history is done can have specific and notable impacts upon

⁵⁸ F.H Allison, 'Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perspectives Over Time' in: R. Perks and A. Thompson (eds) *The Oral History Reader* (Routledge, 2006), p. 223

⁵⁹ A. Medhurst, 'What Did I Get? Punk, Memory and Autobiography' in: R. Sabin (ed) *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (Routledge, 1999), p.222

recollections, with factors as simple as interview settings or the prior emotional state of participants liable to influence findings. Our ability to connect with our own pasts relies upon the present, our self identity and, indeed, our feelings about this past. As Anne Whitehead states, memory is also 'historically conditioned; it is not simply handed down in a timeless form from generation to generation, but bears the impress or stamp of its own time and culture.'⁶⁰ Similarly, Connerton describes how 'the present influences or distorts our recollections of the past, [just as] the past influences or distorts our experience of the present.'⁶¹ Effective memory studies are aware of the ways in which memory can be devious, creating environments in which speakers can consciously connect the past with the present, provide space to recognise the transformations that may have happened, and facilitate the production of a narrative which allows a speaker to relate different memories and interpretations of events to each other.

Connerton defines the kind of memory mentioned thus far, in which an individual has access 'to facts about their history and own identity, a kind of access that in principle they cannot have to the histories and identities of other persons and things' as 'personal memory.'⁶² But many memories, including those presented within this thesis, are formed, accessed, interpreted and constructed in a collective sense, with members of social groups sharing knowledge and information rather than memory purely operating as a solitary act concerning individual experience, in a process Maurice Halbwachs defines as 'collective memory.'⁶³ Whitehead argues that, whilst collective memory is often categorised as a departure from earlier traditions of understanding memory which focused upon the individual, the concepts are not necessarily incompatible and collective memory may be viewed as 'in dialogue' with pre-existing classical and early modern theories, which recognised how individual practices of remembrance were also shaped by surrounding cultures and societies.⁶⁴ Memories are malleable and can be transformed along with groups which maintain them, are influenced by the individual's interactions with such groups, which can see memories eroded,

⁶⁰ A. Whitehead, *Memory*, p.4

⁶¹ P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p.26

⁶² Ibid, p.22

⁶³ M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (Harper & Row, 1980), p.49

⁶⁴ A. Whitehead, *Memory*, p.127

impinged upon, destroyed or replaced by new ones, influenced by the changing interests of members, conflicting groups and events, or external circumstances. As a result, past events and people can eventually become forgotten, not out of malice or even indifference, but 'because the groups keeping these remembrances fade away.'⁶⁵ Whilst Halbwachs recognised that it is individuals within the group who remember, and that the 'intensity with which they remember may vary', he nevertheless stressed that group membership can dominate individual memories, rendering them 'a viewpoint on the collective memories which will change according to the individual's relationship with other groups.'⁶⁶

In the context of this thesis, the close-knit nature of the hardcore scene and the ideological basis which underpinned the actions of participants make understandings of collective or collected memory key to interpreting the recollections of interviewees. The groups which produce collective memories can range in size from a handful of individuals to entire nations, and the boundaries and borders that mark groups can be fixed, but also, reflecting the wider Ljubljana hardcore scene, informal, flexible and even contested. Shared processes of influence have operated over those who interacted with hardcore, including those integral to the collective, but also those closer to the fringes and those who were excluded. However this is compatible with Halbwachs' understanding of collective memory, as whilst social groups share and draw upon the distinct knowledge and experience of their members to construct memories, this is a continually negotiated process. Members of the hardcore collective have engaged with the importance of collective identity as a magnetising force which ensures shared characteristics and interests, but also how this can be contradictory to the importance placed upon individuality. Academic critiques of collective memory seek to emphasise the role of human agency in the construction of social and shared memory along similar lines. Paul Ricoeur argues that centring the impact of collectives to the production of memory can often come at the expense of individual acts of recollection, resulting in a failure to fully acknowledge agency within groups.⁶⁷ Young focuses instead on 'collected memory' to recognise the fragmented and individual character of memory and the fact that society's memories can exist beyond the individual,

⁶⁵ M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, p.82

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.43

⁶⁷ P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), p.122

which also allows for subjectivity on the part of the individuals within society.⁶⁸ Avishai Margalit similarly proposes group dynamics as producing a process of aggregation of individual memories into a common one, and stresses that individuals nevertheless experience events on an individual basis rather than as part of the collective.⁶⁹ One of my informants, Gigi, describes how, despite criticisms which emphasised elements of conformity within the scene and apparent adherence to subcultural 'rules' and ideologies, punks were 'not simply a flock of sheep, but an incredible collective horde that was made up of individuals, who had their own minds and hearts.'⁷⁰ Whilst much of the hardcore scene in Ljubljana existed as a tight-knit community over several years, to view the recollections of the scene as entirely collectively constructed would be misleading. Whilst the influence of the group remains and interviewees have generally retained occasional contact with one another, the scene and hardcore collective is no longer a functional social group or active influence over individuals. Indeed, the interviews were the first time that several interviewees had engaged with or dwelt upon these memories 'for years', with reinterpretations and evaluation of the memories created more likely to have been influenced by individual agency than the social group.⁷¹

By collecting and synthesising recollections of Ljubljana's hardcore punk scene in the 1980s, I present a thesis which is informed by the reconstruction and utilisation of what could be classed as an aggregated or collected memory. Membership of the hardcore collective shaped contemporary experiences and perceptions of events, as well as influencing subsequent interpretations. Participants were, at times, willing to comply with the perceived orthodoxies or attitudes of this scene, either out of outright commitment to what they regarded as its guiding principles, or as a result of lingering and even unconscious influences. The memories utilised in this thesis are influenced by aforementioned conscious and unconscious processes of interpretation, triggered by socio-political factors and the research method itself, but are also the product of a complex combination of the aggregated social memory of the hardcore scene including the priorities, events and issues it

⁶⁸ A. Whitehead, *Memory*, p.66; J. E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (Yale University Press, 1993), p.xi

⁶⁹ A. Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Harvard University Press, 2002), p.51

⁷⁰ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

⁷¹ Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

promoted, informants agency in perceiving these at the time, and reflections on a more individualistic basis in subsequent years.

Interviews, Transcription and Interpretation

My initial search for participants involved searches on social media prior to arriving in Ljubljana, until a blog documenting my research was seen by Irena Povše, a member of the hardcore collective, who contacted me directly and provided further contacts.⁷² From there, a snowball effect occurred whereby participants provided further contacts and were often prepared to vouch for me, which assuaged the reluctance that others may have had. Many interviewees were vocally keen to utilise the platform I could provide to share their memories and opinions. For the majority, an interview request was an entirely novel occurrence. This proved conducive to rewarding interviews as it meant that the answers given were natural, often enthusiastic recollections, rather than more controlled or jaded responses, influenced by established narratives or honed as a result of regularly recounting stories with a particular audience in mind.

Paul Thompson's description of ideal interviews helped to form a template for my approach, centred on a 'relationship of active and methodological listening... a reflex reflexivity based on a sociological “feel” or “eye” which allows one to perceive and monitor on the spot.'⁷³ Acknowledging the co-constructed nature of interviews, and building upon my previous experience of conducting them (albeit for primarily non academic purposes), I established some basic rules. I encouraged semi-structured, but free flowing conversation, avoiding generalisation or stereotypes and using simple, straightforward and careful questions which encouraged the interviewee to communicate naturally. By utilising a diverse style, I tailored my own contributions to the purpose of the conversation and whether I required specific facts or wished to encourage more general descriptions. I allowed stories and comments to reach natural conclusions, before tactfully mentioning differing views and contentious issues when required. Whilst I had a list of topics to cover, I aimed to discuss these in a natural manner and welcomed digression,

⁷² J. Pitt, 'Hardcore Ljubljana' www.hardcoreljubljanablogspot.co.uk (Created 5/10/2013)

⁷³ P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 227

especially when the interviewee said something unexpected. These lines of discussion informed future interviews and also helped shape the focus of elements of this thesis, most notably regarding state repression and marginalisation of punks. Discussions on this subject provoked consideration of the ways in which punks interacted with other societal 'outcasts' and alternative groups, and the chapters dedicated to a discussion of gender and sexuality were developed as a result of noticing a consistent attitude on the part of participants with regards to the similarities between the experiences of punks and other marginalised people in Ljubljana and how this informed relationships between the two. With a small number of exceptions, initial interviews were with single interviewees, in order to forge a private and candid environment. I also conducted some supplementary interviews with more than one participant present, to try to encourage different approaches to the same issues and discussions. I found that in one particular group interview, the dynamics produced often resulted in one interviewee reigning in and challenging some of the more hyperbolic and exuberant statements of the other. As Thompson argues, group dynamics can lead to useful, enlightening, yet different interviews. Whilst the presence of other informants may encourage 'socially acceptable testimony', group discussions also allow the correction and discussion of information given, the potential stimulation of new memories and the production of different insights as a result of discussions that arise.⁷⁴

I gave participants the option of obscuring their names in the final thesis but none deemed this necessary. The events discussed happened years ago under a different societal structure and the discussion of sensitive information was rare. As mentioned, the idea of complete neutrality in qualitative research is essentially unobtainable, but this does not make a consideration of the manner by which researchers engage with subjects of interest on a personal level any less important. I decided that allowing friendships to form as a result of contact with interviewees aided my research in a range of ways. Ensuring interviewees felt comfortable was important for its own sake, but could also encourage greater candidness regarding formative experiences and facilitate mutual sincerity and sensitivity. I maintained contact with participants after interviews to allow for clarification if necessary, but also to allow interviewees to feel as though they were an active participant within

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.234

my research and to encourage further reflection upon discussions which could potentially result in the remembrance of new information. This proved fruitful, as on a number of occasions participants contacted me with new ideas and material they deemed useful. Many researchers openly strive to maintain a degree of scholarly distance from their subject and interviewees, and Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin warn against overfamiliarity, whereby prior experience transfers from an asset to provoking negative consequences, as the researcher is prevented from noting things that may have become routine or obvious.⁷⁵ However, I was keen to establish a shared pool of values, knowledge and interest in punk, so adopted a cautious and considered approach to ongoing communication, which embraced familiarity with both the subject of research and the participants themselves, whilst attempting to avoid the adoption of assumptions or the projection of specific values on my part. This meant participants felt comfortable referencing certain cultural practices, ideas and moments in punk history that may have been avoided if they felt they were speaking to an outsider.

I viewed interviews as dynamic, interactive and at times fallible resources, best utilised alongside critical theories and combined with contemporary snapshots of the Ljubljana scene in the shape of interviews, scene reports, lyrics and documents. Allison likens interviews that are conducted many years after events to a painting, as a result of subsequent processes of reinterpretation.⁷⁶ Recollections and what interviewees chose to emphasise can alter content which is important to acknowledge, but does not mean that earlier recollections and contemporary artefacts which may more greatly resemble photographs should be entirely privileged. Indeed, by combining the two, the significance of 'photographic' snapshots can be elaborated upon, and the 'paintings' can be contextualised, challenged and cross-referenced, in order to discuss their overall significance, meaning and what they can contribute to understandings of the history and culture of Slovenia and Yugoslavia.

My initial approach to interpreting interview material centred around increasing familiarity, noting salient points and identifying responses to particular subjects of

⁷⁵ A. Strauss and J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory, Procedures and Techniques* (Sage Publications, 1990), p.41

⁷⁶ F.H. Allison, 'Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight', p. 223

inquiry. As interviews progressed I allowed issues or opinions raised consistently to shape the premise and particular focuses of the thesis. However, interpretation begins from the moment interviews are conducted. Recording and transcribing oral interviews represents an interpretative process, as they can never fully cover the entirety of oral conversations. Timings and the tone of responses can become obscured or unclear, non-oral gestures, body language and intangible elements of conversations that may seem clear at the time are often lost, and the imposition of grammar and punctuation can further affect the manner of speech and understanding of points made. Thompson outlines how the transcription process can result in lively and engaging speech transforming into ineffective and seemingly irrelevant prose, with the less effective transcripts potentially 'stripping, adding, or rearranging... to such an extent that the original speech is no longer present, with the removal of idiosyncrasies thus akin to the removal of the nature of the speech itself.'⁷⁷ My main concern was to avoid the transformation of interview content by remaining as faithful as possible to what was said, whilst also remaining conscious of the wider context, characters and meanings. Seeking feedback from interviewees regarding my interpretations, particularly of contentious events, was necessary on a number of occasions as a result.

Further interpretation of material was a constant process of reflection and evaluation. Thompson describes interpretation of oral testimony as 'reconstructive cross-analysis', with interviews a quarry from which to construct arguments about patterns of behaviour or events in the past. Interpretation involves identifying possible meanings and consistent patterns within testimony, testing hunches, questioning and ultimately exploring, whilst also disentangling objective and subjective evidence and evaluating the reliability and internal consistency of the material.⁷⁸ Where possible I crosschecked references that interviewees made, through corroboration with other accounts and contemporary documentation, such as scene reports, fanzines, records and other media. From the beginning of the initial round of interviews in 2014, I allowed the ideas, issues and themes that participants viewed as important to emerge, with this approach underpinned by a deliberate approach of 'grounded theory.' A. Strauss and J. Corbin describe this

⁷⁷ P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p.260

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.176

qualitative approach to research as:

Inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents [and] discovered and developed in a reciprocal relationship... One does not begin with a theory and then prove it, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.⁷⁹

I had broad ideas and expectations regarding how my research would unfold, what it could uncover and how participants would view the hardcore scene and its interactions with wider social dynamics, based upon prior study of Yugoslav history and participation in punk. However, rather than conforming to, or being led by these potentially narrow expectations, I allowed focus to diversify and expand based on the outcomes of each interview. The consistent stress that interviewees placed upon the importance of the hardcore collective, interactions with contemporary social movements, and their fervour for forging international contacts stand out as dynamics that I previously realised were important to the scene, but they were stressed to an extent that I would not have expected based upon the more limited contemporary output and physical legacy of the hardcore scene.

I have already discussed interactions between the individual and group membership with regards to the making and expression of collected memories, but tight-knit punk scenes with shared ideologies, cultural opinions, actions and life stories, can also house a diversity of perceptions of both the extraordinary and ordinary examples of these. As outlined in the introduction, contestation and debate is key to the operation of punk scenes. Thompson states that 'enhanced sensitivity to the power of emotion, unconscious desire, rejection and imitation' is necessary within historical accounts in order to recognise the impact that this can have as an integral part of the structure of peoples lives.⁸⁰ Historical studies must create a sophisticated response which can encompass subtleties and diversities within shared experiences, the ways that these might be subsequently communicated, the impact of expressions of self, and, with regards to accounts

⁷⁹ A. Strauss and J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, p.23

⁸⁰ P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p. 171

which focus upon social groups, the way in which life stories can be used to claim and indeed renounce group membership, demonstrate worthiness to these groups, or justify actions and participation. Just as collective memory can influence memories and their expression, interviewees may also make conscious decisions to articulate views consonant with the views of the Slovene hardcore punk scene, or to share stories which suggest specific characteristics about the scene and their contributions to it. The ways in which interviewees manipulate or place importance upon, evaluate and choose to explain events is complex and negotiated. As I have mentioned, many interviewees noted that 'righting' the balance of existing histories of the alternative culture of Yugoslavia, which overlook hardcore, was an important motivation for their participation, but this was not necessarily incompatible with their ability to realise and communicate limitations, evaluate events as honestly as possible, and also express criticism.⁸¹

Punk and 'Intercultural Competence'

Whilst this thesis focuses upon a specific subcultural cluster from a historical perspective, a grounding in cultural theory and awareness of different approaches to understanding what is meant by 'culture' is crucial. The ways that dominant cultures can affect and relate to subcultures is also important, as is identifying the ways in which culture can transcend, or be controlled by, national borders and ideological boundaries. The meaning and application of the term 'culture' has been subject to centuries of definition, from Edward Burnett Tylor's description of a 'complex whole, which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society', to more recent attempts such as M. Byram's, which refers to culture as 'beliefs, meanings and behaviours'.⁸² The term is often used ambiguously and elastically, reflecting the fluidity and diversity of what it encompasses, but Brian Street's illuminating explanation of culture as 'a verb' compellingly shifts the focus from what culture fundamentally 'is', to what it actively 'does'.⁸³ Culture, rather than a definable

⁸¹ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁸² E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture- Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Languages, Art and Customs* (Holt and Co., 1877), p.1; M. Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* (Multilingual Matters, 1997), p.3

⁸³ B. Street, 'Culture is a Verb: Anthropological aspects of language and cultural process' in: D. Graddol and M. Byram (eds) *Language and Culture* (British Association for Applied Linguistics,

'thing', is ultimately a *process* of collective meaning-making that is constructed by people and binds diverse values, forms of creativity and modes of behaviour, but is also fundamentally and consistently contested. As a result, academic focus upon cultures should be ready to encounter individuals that are capable of consciously and unconsciously replicating or rejecting beliefs and actions understood to be fundamental to a culture they identify with, rather than static, singular, uncontested and universally experienced entities.

Subcultures have also been subject to a range of definitions and theories, from Howard S. Becker's depiction of the ways in which society labels and defines people as 'outsiders' based upon deviance from the objectives and values of mainstream culture, to Dick Hebdige's confluence of subcultures and active forms of resistance, which sees subcultures such as punk as a product of the development of a distinct style to communicate conflict with the mainstream.⁸⁴ More recent works on subcultures, including Paul Hodkinson's focus on goth and Sarah Thornton's depiction of club culture have focused more firmly on distinctiveness rather than the attribution of specific resistant qualities.⁸⁵ Stephen Duncombe, however, centres negative identities within many punk cultures, citing the promotion of rebellion, anti-commercialisation and antipathy to dominant culture, as some of punk's defining features. This re-application of the concept of subcultures as resistance to the mainstream sees Duncombe argue that punk and related subcultures become, in a sense, tied to what they negate, which means that an awareness of the dominant culture that localised punk scenes react against is central to attempts to understand motivations and actions and appeal. Several members of the hardcore collective stated this as a key feature.⁸⁶ Whilst punk is more than just a vessel of negation, or a singular, consistent entity, at certain moments, and within certain strands, common, central and important threads are identifiable. The dynamics of punk scenes are, to an extent, defined, shaped, or at least informed by, the limitations placed upon it by the world 'above ground.'

1993), pp. 23-43

⁸⁴ H. S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in Sociology of Deviance* (Free Press, 1997); D. Hebdige *Subculture- The Meaning of Style* (Methuen & Co, 1979)

⁸⁵ P. Hodkinson, *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* (Berg Publishers, 2002); S. Thornton *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Polity, 1995)

⁸⁶ S. Duncombe, *Notes From Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Microcosm, 2008), p.48; Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

However, understandings of punk should not limit its appeal or vitality to this reaction alone. Whilst punk may have common characteristics with other underground cultures, it is important to also highlight where it may differ, how it relates to and is influenced by wider and mainstream cultures, and also the limits of this. Punk in Ljubljana existed as a medium of communication, facilitated internal conversation and debates, and allowed individuals to build specific communities of support, sharing ideas, constructing personal identities, and forming ideas regarding authenticity in spite of the outside world, rather than purely as a form of reaction. As Duncombe argues, mainstream culture and society 'precedes the alternative by definition, but it doesn't have the last word.'⁸⁷

The analytical frameworks developed around western culture and music mentioned thus far can provide transferable tools for examining punk in Yugoslavia and, as I outline in this thesis, the Ljubljana hardcore scene engaged with the contemporary punk underground as part of a consciously international subculture. However, there are potential pitfalls associated with the uncritical transfer of western-orientated theories and methods of understanding culture to a subcultural movement that was also influenced by specific Yugoslav cultural manifestations, socio-political contexts and day to day realities. The Ljubljana hardcore collective interacted with like-minded hardcore scenes throughout Slovenia, Yugoslavia and beyond, but also represents a defined and largely autonomous scene. As Chapter 2 outlines, hardcore scenes encouraged international co-operation and collaboration whilst simultaneously organising and identifying around specific localities, from cities to entire nation states.⁸⁸ Rather than conscious exclusivity, identification on this basis was often based upon practical realities and day to day interactions, alongside the influence and importance of localised geographical, political and socio-economic opportunities and limitations. Catherine Baker suggests that it is often difficult to detach cultural attitudes and approaches from the socio-economic and political climates within which they are conceptualised, which can mean that issues pertinent to specific cultures in different societies are understood differently.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ S. Duncombe, *Notes From Underground*, p.48

⁸⁸ Alongside compilations which documented specific punk scenes on a local and national basis, scenes also rallied around acronyms such as NYHC (New York Hardcore), UK82 (United Kingdom 1982), USHC (US Hardcore) and countless other similar examples.

⁸⁹ C. Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland- Popular Music, War and Nationalism in Croatia since 1991* (Ashgate, 2010), p.212

National borders and cultural specificities can influence the ways that cultures operate and explain why specific forms may resonate with individuals within, and as a result of, these borders, but Paul Gilroy warns against viewing culture *entirely* within national units, as the entirety of cultural forms and development cannot be contained neatly within the structures of a national state.⁹⁰ Similarly, the kind of 'methodological nationalism' that Nina Glick Schiller and Andreas Wimmer critique, whereby issues are considered on a country by country basis, is inappropriate for understanding hardcore, as the cultural practices, products and lives constructed around hardcore punk scenes are a product of, and flow through, a number of countries.⁹¹

Lina Džuverović outlines how nationalism has influenced representations of Yugoslav culture following the breakup of Yugoslavia, arguing that shared spaces, common ideological tenets and elements of connectedness have often been undermined by the nationalist agendas of former constituents of Yugoslavia. These have fuelled distortion, encouraged growing historical revisionism and stressed 'individual micro-histories'.⁹² She suggests that a focus upon 'smaller, grassroots and often overlooked subcultural moments in the artistic life' of Yugoslavia can combat such tendencies and misrepresentations, and the Ljubljana hardcore scene between 1982 and 1986 represents one such case study of an identifiable grassroots entity that frequently operated as a constituent element of both wider Yugoslav alternative cultural currents and an international subculture. Crucial to this understanding of the Ljubljana hardcore punk scene is a recognition that shared cultural practices and interconnectedness were compatible with the ways that cultural communities are formed 'around the intersections of ordinary lives... the points of connection, tension or alienation'.⁹³ Punk communities are influenced and in part created by the specific locale in which they exist and develop, but this is not incompatible with shared (and potentially globally consistent) social identities. The vitality of hardcore punk and its growth worldwide owed much to the universal applicability of its ideological tenets and the outlet it provided for mutual

⁹⁰ P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Routledge, 2002)

⁹¹ N. G. Schiller and A. Wimmer 'Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social sciences' *Global Networks* (Volume 2, Issue 4, October 2002) pp. 301–334

⁹² L. Džuverović (ed) *Monuments Should Not Be Trusted* (Nottingham Contemporary, 2016), p.10

⁹³ L. Shopes, 'Oral History and the Study of Communities', p.268

communication of commonly experienced daily frustrations. Hardcore embraced regional diversities whilst promoting elements of commonality. Regional diversities and the ways that scenes utilised punk as a basis and springboard to interact with, and often react against, local social, economic and political realities means that localised punk studies can represent compelling snapshots of youth reactions in particular localities. In the case of the Ljubljana scene, they can contribute to overall understandings of these realities in a Slovene and late Yugoslav context, whilst also acknowledging shared worldwide characteristics. Positioning punk in this way emphasises a level of commonality, but the ways in which people interacted and saw value in it were also fluid and subject to the influence of dominant cultures that have traditionally been understood on a regional and more commonly national basis.

I have stressed the malleability of punk and its appeal to the shared concerns of young people living in diverse societies, but it is also necessary to recognise that young people in Slovenia, who had grown up within a constituent republic of communist Yugoslavia, could also engage with punk in distinctive ways to young people in the west. Reana Senjkovič raises the ontological question of whether women in Croatia necessarily 'read Cosmopolitan in the same way as American women.' The same question can be asked regarding international punks and their reactions to the Sex Pistols, Discharge, or Black Flag.⁹⁴ Assumptions over which bands, trends, ideologies, appeals and values are considered seminal and central are often based upon dominant western constructions of punk history, with the appeal of both domestic and western punk in Ljubljana influenced by practical access and exposure (or lack thereof) to music, local sociability, direct interactions, kinship, the quality of the music and the lack of barriers between bands and 'fans'.⁹⁵ The politics, social issues and general frustrations discussed within songs are often described as central to a band's importance in Ljubljana, and the extent to which these appealed was often based upon a direct pertinence to the audiences' own lives and experiences. Despite the existence of common threads, the ways in which lives differed in Ljubljana, and the presence of distinct shared experiences and cultural responses, was also central.

⁹⁴ L. C. Feldman, I. Prica and R. Senjkovič (eds) *Fear, Death and Resistance: An Ethnography of War: Croatia 1991-92* (Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, 1993), p.24

⁹⁵ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

My cultural position as a researcher studying a subculture within the former Yugoslavia, as someone who has primarily lived in the UK, is worthy of consideration. Punk is an evolving, varied and fluctuating culture, and thus my interactions with contemporary, UK based versions, have been shaped by developments since the mid 1980s. Punk culture has been constantly conceptualised, re-defined and re-evaluated, and thus it is important to acknowledge that my own interactions with punk, and perceptions of associated values and ideologies, may differ from those active within hardcore punk scenes thirty years ago, when this underground, DIY-centric strand of punk was undergoing its earliest processes of creation, negotiation and reaction. Whilst, as outlined, academic and popular accounts regularly establish and hinge their findings upon somewhat settled definitions of punk, I have remained mindful of punk's fluidity and diversity, which means that whilst shared ideals and conceptions of punk likely exist between myself and interviewees, we may also attribute different values to the same concepts, events and bands. The way that self defined punks represent their culture and activity may be more predictable to another punk than those outside this cultural sphere, due to shared experiences and knowledge of punk history and culture, but the ways in which this is applied and understood will also vary between punks, exacerbated by involvement with different scenes in different eras. Catherine Baker discusses how the background of researchers can not only impact upon subsequent perceptions and interpretations made within the process of research, but that the social and cultural engagements and personal histories of researchers can become a subject of interest for participants, informing the way that they communicate opinions and describe events.⁹⁶ I found that interviewees would often enquire about the purpose of my research, why I arrived at Ljubljana hardcore punk as my subject of study, and also more generally about my own involvement with punk in a contemporary sense, which could see interviews evolve into mutual explorations of the enduring meaning and relevance of punk, rather than the era and scene I aimed to focus upon. I viewed the rapport that this provoked as advantageous, particularly as it could lead to new lines of enquiry, but was conscious to retain an ability to refocus interviews where necessary, remaining aware of the impact that these explorations

⁹⁶ C. Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland*, p.211

could have upon responses and avoiding a situation in which my own experiences could lead participants. Interviewees also expressed an awareness of this potential dynamic, with Marsa commenting upon how my dual perspective as a punk 'insider' but also an 'outsider' with regards to the Ljubljana hardcore scene could lead to conversations focusing upon and the appraising the significance of certain dynamics that she would otherwise have been less likely to consider.⁹⁷ Whilst this raises the potential of my own values impacting upon testimony and subsequent processes of interpretation, the utilisation of open questions and a broad focus which actively responded to the expressions made by interviewees, alongside the facilitation of an environment which meant participants did not feel compelled to state that they viewed particular issues or events as significant meant that the presence different perspectives or expectations could enhance the research process and facilitate lively, engaging and critical conversations.

One of the key manifestations of intercultural communication and interpretation within this thesis is presented by the issue of language, as all interviews were conducted in English. Whilst many contemporary artefacts such as fanzines and lyrics were written in Slovene, necessitating my own translations. With this in mind, I undertook an intensive beginners course at the Centre for Slovene as a Second and Foreign Language, Ljubljana. The course lasted for three months in the spring of 2014, comprising of 4 hours of tuition each day. By the end of the course I had a basic grasp of the language, which meant that, with the use of a dictionary, my notes, and help from some Slovene friends, I was able to read and translate primary material. I have already mentioned the ways in which transcription of interviews can represent a form of interpretation and, regardless of fluency, the use of secondary languages can impinge upon interviews, transcriptions, translations and the specific character of content. As C. Kramsch argues, there are a range of interpretative outcomes associated with language, and an individual communicating in a second language may find themselves 'in a position of uncommon subordination and powerlessness.' Kramsch outlines a number of ways in which power imbalance may become evident, including the possibility that a researcher becomes liable towards prompting (and thus potentially leading) assertions made by informants, by suggesting certain words to help explain

⁹⁷ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/16

recollections, concepts or opinions.⁹⁸ Some Slovene terms and expressions are not directly translatable, which increases the possibility of the conveyance of slightly different meanings and potential inaccuracy, but participants negotiated this process by explaining phrases they were unable to translate directly and I clarified seemingly ambiguous meanings and views by asking similar questions, in different ways, to verify responses. I also encouraged interviewees to expand upon statements.

Kramsch outlines how native speakers can speak with more than their individual voice, as through language they can also speak 'the established knowledge of their native community and society, the stock of metaphors this community lives by, and the categories they use to represent their experience.'⁹⁹ Connerton outlines how discussions are often built around 'what goes without saying... [and can contain] implicit background narratives which are taken for granted', with interviews therefore featuring unspoken, general assumptions regarding family life, religion, economic practices, politics and sociability that are more obvious to natives than observers from elsewhere.¹⁰⁰ Byram similarly points out that the level of understanding that the non-native has of the 'foreign culture and of their own' impacts upon the power dynamics involved in discussions. The balances at play are often far from clear cut, especially when the intersections of different cultural formations are taken into account.¹⁰¹ Interviewees are often conscious of such processes and can make attempts to meet researchers at the point where they perceive their knowledge of society or culture to be, but this represents a further interpretative influence upon research. I have become familiar with Yugoslav culture and history over the course of several years of study and spending significant amounts of times in Ljubljana. As Connerton argues, 'by living with people who habitually behave in a certain manner... we acquire such habits in the same way we acquire our native language.'¹⁰² As such, whilst I was confident in regards to possessing a broad awareness of local culture and history, I remained mindful of the possibility that I may not possess the same understanding of the

⁹⁸ C. Kramsch, *Context and Culture In Language Teaching* (Oxford University Press, 1993), p.238

⁹⁹ Ibid, p.43

¹⁰⁰ P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p.18

¹⁰¹ M. Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*, p.21

¹⁰² P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p.29

Yugoslav and Slovene communities memory, knowledge, metaphors and way of speaking and made attempts within interviews to recognise and compensate for potential gaps in my awareness where possible, often simply by asking questions and remaining open to diverse meanings and associated attitudes.¹⁰³

By accepting the imperfect nature of intercultural and oral history, remaining vigilant with regards to the possibility of power imbalances and taking steps to minimise their influence, utilising thoughtful interview processes, fact checking, and conducting repeat interviews, I ensured that I took practical steps to minimise the impact of cultural differences upon research findings. Such techniques can often be contained within the wider concept of 'intercultural competence', which is predicated upon an awareness of the potential impact of different cultures and how they might be popularly defined or understood by a specific individual. Byram outlines five areas of competence, or 'saviours' with regards to intercultural interactions, encompassing attitudes, skills and knowledge and the abilities to relativise one's own culture, to interpret and discover other cultures and to interact with and critically evaluate these cultures.¹⁰⁴ As such, criticality, the ability to relate to and empathise with other people, utilise non-judgemental approaches and embrace ambiguity is as crucial to intercultural research as general knowledge and experience of the cultures studied, with the production of a symbiotic relationship between the two paramount to effective research. Benjamin Perasović argues that with regards to subcultural studies, theories can be transferred from the western sites around which they are usually formed to former Yugoslav examples, as long as the subcultures in question are recognised as dynamic and diverse. Indeed, he notes that Croatian ethnographic participants often use the term 'subculture' to refer to their own local activities, demonstrating the extent to which they have conceptualised and evaluated their own activities along lines familiar to western-centric cultural studies.¹⁰⁵ Hardcore punk also saw consistent attempts to stress the common applicability of certain punk ideologies, regardless of the diverse political ideologies and cultural specificities of the environments in which scenes existed.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.30

¹⁰⁴ M. Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*, pp.34-37 & pp.88-103

¹⁰⁵ B. Perasović, *Urbana Plenema- Sociologija subkultura u Hrvatskoj* (Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2001)

This took hold amongst sections of the hardcore punk scene and saw punks around the world regard their experiences in terms of freedom of expression and repression as analogous.¹⁰⁶ Yet, many topics can prove difficult to detach from the political and economic characteristics of respective societies. Indeed, whilst punk can be characterised as an 'anti-authority' 'counter-culture', the authority against which it raged varied, necessitating, as I outline, conscious processes of negotiation by punks.

¹⁰⁶ *Maximum RocknRoll Presents: Welcome to 1984* (Maximum RocknRoll, 1984)

Chapter 1: 'The sweat that dripped from the ceiling was from all of us there': The Nuances, Appeal and Motivations of Ljubljana Hardcore

During the height of the Ljubljana hardcore scene (1983-1986), Slovenia was the northernmost constituent of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Ljubljana, its largest city, is located in the centre of Slovenia, and housed a population of 225,000 in 1981, a little over 10% of Slovenia's total population. Ljubljana was a central cultural hub and housed a large proportion of the Yugoslav literary, artistic, TV and pop music industries, drawing cultural actors from across the country.¹⁰⁷ Marko Zubak describes how, alongside Belgrade and Zagreb, Ljubljana ultimately shaped Yugoslavia and led its 'cultural, social and political development'.¹⁰⁸ Breda Luthar outlines how the character of Ljubljana as a city owed much to the concentration of cultural and economic resources, with the city operating as a liberal magnet and reflection of representations of Slovenia as a practical and cultural gateway between Yugoslavia and the west.¹⁰⁹

Gregor Tomc argues that this gateway, which was produced via geographical proximity as well as Slovenia's status as the most economically developed region resulted in Slovenia more closely resembling neighbouring western societies than the rest of Yugoslavia.¹¹⁰ James Gow and Cathie Carmichael also highlight the importance of this influence, but stress that interactions are better categorised as a 'crossroads'.¹¹¹ Whilst Slovenia absorbed cultural elements from Italy, Austria and beyond, these neighbours also absorbed elements from Slovene culture, thus producing similar, yet distinct, cultural identities and tendencies. As Mariša Pušnik

¹⁰⁷ D. Vuletic, 'European Sounds, Yugoslav Visions' in : B. Luthar and M. Pušnik (eds) *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (New Academia, 2010), p.343; M. Pušnik 'Flirting with Television in Socialism', in : B. Luthar and M. Pušnik (eds) *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (New Academia, 2010), p.231

¹⁰⁸ Zubak suggests that additional complexities with regards to Ljubljana, particularly regarding language specificities which result from the distinct Slovene language, in fact complicated and at times diminished recognition of the ways in which Ljubljana helped shaped Yugoslavia. M. Zubak, *The Yugoslav Youth Press- Student Movements, Youth Subcultures and Alternative Communist Media* (Srednja Europa, 2018) p.6

¹⁰⁹ B. Luthar 'Shame, Desire and Longing for the West: A Case Study of Consumption' in: B. Luthar and M. Pušnik (eds) *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (New Academia, 2010), p.343

¹¹⁰ G. Tomc, 'A Tale of Two Subcultures', p.165

¹¹¹ J. Gow & C. Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes- A Small State and the New Europe* (Hurst & Company, 2001), p.62

describes, cultural interactions with the west in Slovenia saw socialist values re-codified and altered from the 1950s onwards, but whilst identifiably western conceptions of leisure, freedom, democracy, wealth and consumer goods were consumed and often celebrated in intimate worlds, they also merged with traditional and Yugoslav values. As a result, the gap between the socialist east and capitalist west became reformulated within Slovenia, with socialist everyday life and daydreaming consumerism incorporated into a distinctively socialist consumerism, unique to Yugoslavia.¹¹²

Aleš Debeljak argues that Slovene distinctiveness, which was in part constructed via interaction with the west, was also deliberately constructed internally via a range of means, from culture to language.¹¹³ Gow and Carmichael prioritise the importance of the Slovene language, arguing that it became a key element of Slovenian culture and provided a primary focal point for identity under Yugoslav communism.¹¹⁴ Milica Bakić-Hayden describes how a process of 'Nesting Orientalisms' saw Slovene distinctiveness, primarily regarding interaction with European culture, utilised frequently in order to position Slovenes as more 'civilised' or 'western' than other Yugoslav people.¹¹⁵ Such attempts also became a constitutive part of what became a cultural practice of shopping in Trieste, with Breda Luthar suggesting that access to consumer culture was utilised to establish hierarchical differences between western orientated Slovenes and less civilised 'others' in the south.¹¹⁶ Slovenia's aforementioned economic strength and prosperity was also frequently referenced in this regard. Whilst the Slovene population of around 1.9 million people made up less than 10% of Yugoslavia overall, it was responsible for around 20% of its GDP, and housed the republic's strongest

¹¹² M. Pušnik, 'Flirting With Television in Socialism- Proletarian Morality and the Lust for Abundance' in: B. Luthar and M. Pušnik (eds) *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (New Academia, 2010), pp.243-44

¹¹³ Slovene was one of three official languages of the SFRY, alongside Macedonian and the majority language, Serbo-Croat, which was used in a poly-centric manner across the country and in official capacities. A number of minority languages were also used throughout the republic. A. Debeljak, 'The Political Meaning of the Slovene Neo-Avant-Garde', *World Literature Today* Vol. 78, No.1 (Jan-Apr 2004), p.43

¹¹⁴ J. Gow & C. Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes*, p.61

¹¹⁵ A. Debeljak, 'The Political Meaning of the Slovene Neo-Avant-Garde', p.43

¹¹⁶ Luthar describes shopping trips to Trieste as becoming a quasi-institutionalised tradition after borders between Yugoslavia and Italy were gradually opened. This culminated in what is described as a 'mass shopping frenzy' in the 1970s. B. Luthar 'Shame, Desire and Longing for the West' *Yugoslavia* (New Academia, 2010), p.367

economy.¹¹⁷ Irena Povše suggests that many Slovenes ascribed genuine value to projections of a forward-thinking economic, cultural and political influence, and Ljubljana was accordingly positioned as the republic's creative and economic hub.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Danka Ninković Slavnić outlines how Slovenia's approach to the economy was often presented as different and more rational than federal examples in the Slovene daily newspaper *Delo*. Economic prosperity and interaction with technological trends despite crises elsewhere in Yugoslavia were utilised as evidence of Slovene distinctiveness and greater western orientation.¹¹⁹ However, these attempts to establish differentiation and at times superiority nevertheless had their limits, and largely occurred within a Yugoslav framework rather than as a programme for independence. This largely encapsulated attitudes amongst Slovenian people in the 1980s.¹²⁰

Whilst the exact means and motives behind attempts to establish Slovene distinctiveness varied, it is clear that the environment that was often fostered, particularly in Ljubljana, was particularly amenable to the development of alternative culture. Gow and Carmichael describe Ljubljana as probably the city most affected by intellectual post-modernism throughout Europe. The 'radically open' culture of the 1980s built upon these avant-garde and philosophical traditions to take on a 'truly popular dimension', which was embodied by the radical, ironic and explicitly political graffiti which could be found across the city.¹²¹ Marko Zubak describes how the combination of Ljubljana's permeability to Western influences, its larger culture industry and higher levels of consumerism facilitated this emergence of autonomous and radical culture. Where an enduring delay between western idioms and Yugoslav resonance had previously existed, this

¹¹⁷ For more on the economic development of Slovenia prior to, within, and after Yugoslavia, see: J. Gow & C. Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes* pp. 102-12

¹¹⁸ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

¹¹⁹ D. Ninković Slavnić 'Celebrating Yugoslavia' in: B. Luthar and M. Pušnik (eds) *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (New Academia, 2010), p. 84

¹²⁰ Janez Drnovšek, the former Prime Minister of the independent Slovenia, argued that ordinary Slovenes prioritised gradual improvements in living conditions over desires for independence throughout the 1980s. J. Drnovšek, 'The Political Reasons for the Dissolution of SFR Yugoslavia' in: M. Mrak, M. Rojec, C. Silva-Jáuregui (eds) *Slovenia- From Yugoslavia to the European Union* (The World Bank, 2004) p.7

¹²¹ Gow and Carmichael describe cultural hallmarks of experimentation, modernism, underground political criticism, individualist existentialism and reproach of limitations upon free expression, alongside rejection of elements of Western values embodied by McDonalds and Coca-Cola. J. Gow & C. Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes*, p.93

narrowed, or vanished completely by the late 1970s.¹²² By this time, Ljubljana's alternative political, artistic and social scene operated as 'an organised movement, with its own institutions, spaces and politics', with domestic innovation at the heart.¹²³ Alternative institutions had taken residence in Ljubljana, providing unique opportunities for the largely independent promotion of alternative culture. This framework included domestic newspapers, journals, and youth orientated magazines, which seized upon newly permissible climates, fostered in part by the pivotal student protest movement of 1968.¹²⁴ Gow and Carmichael describe how the range, scope and genuine influence of local journals, which included *Nova Revija*, *Tribuna*, *Katreda* and most fundamentally, the incisive, humorous and often 'explosive', *Mladina* created 'a heady atmosphere of cultural and intellectual expression and exchange' in Ljubljana, which incorporated political subversion, humour and liberal iconoclasm.¹²⁵ Particularly pertinent to the development of punk was the influential and enduring Radio Študent (RŠ), which was also established following the 1968 protests.¹²⁶ Igor Vidmar suggests that Radio Študent was unrivalled throughout Yugoslavia and potentially even 'continental Europe' with regards to its ability and willingness to promote alternative culture, whilst Gow and Carmichael categorise the station as a source of radical irony which

¹²² M. Zubak, *The Yugoslav Youth Press*, p.213

¹²³ L. Silber and A. Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (Penguin/ BBC, 1995), p.49; P. Grafenauer Krnc, 'Look For Me In The Damp Basement' in: B.Škrjanec (ed) *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni Grafični Likovni Center, 2008), p.395

¹²⁴ David Crowley suggests that the student protests combined with the arrival of rock music in Yugoslavia, 'spurring counter culture into life.' Slobodan Divjak also suggests the uprising created 'a new sensibility, a new social climate and new intellectual situation... a generation which began to think differently and which opened itself critically towards the world.' Boris Kanzleiter agrees, depicting the protests as a 'significant rupture in the political development of SFRY', which delegitimised the political system and demystified political power. D. Crowley, 'The Future is Between Your Legs: Sex, Art and Censorship in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia' in: L. Džuverović (ed) *Monuments Should Not Be Trusted* (Nottingham Contemporary, 2016), p.34; S. Divjak, 'Studentske Demonstracije '68 in '91' *Treći Program* 23, No 1-2 (1991), p.50; B. Kanzleiter 'Yugoslavia' in: M Klimke and J. Scharloth (eds) *1968 in Europe, A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 227

¹²⁵ At the end of the 1980s *Mladina* sold 50,000 copies each week, but as Gow and Carmichael outline, research suggested it reached at least 350,000 people. This represented almost half of the entire adult population, giving it 'cultural salience of which others could not dream... defining a generation.' J. Gow and C. Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes*, pp.95-6

¹²⁶ Zubak contrasts the crucially supportive approach of the Youth Press in Zagreb, particularly within the pages of *Polet*, to the more ambivalent approach of comparable journals and magazines in Ljubljana. He argues that indications that punk would become the favourite of the Ljubljana youth press never materialised. *Mladina* expressed only sporadic and mixed interest, whilst *Tribuna's* approach was even less affirmative. A shift to ultra-Marxism saw the latter reject pop-culture as a whole and, Zubak argues, provide some of the first moments of the future campaign against punk, pointing to punk nihilism, lack of class consciousness and associations with Nazism. M. Zubak, *The Yugoslav Youth Press*, p.213

challenged the status quo and tested the 'staid communist way' of doing things.¹²⁷ Radio Študent's liberal editorial board took control as punk was emerging in the city and Marko Zubak describes a 'blossoming love affair' between punk and the station by the winter of 1977. This extended beyond 'compassionate observation' towards the station serving as an ideologue, which shaped popular meaning and understanding of the scene.¹²⁸ Fervent media support was combined with support from independent arts institutions such as the Student Culture Centre (Društvo študentski kulturni center, ŠKUC) in order to provide the infrastructure for punk in the city. The two institutions frequently collaborated and featured shared members, including Igor Vidmar, and occupied neighbouring premises on the Ljubljana University campus, providing the key to the enduring prosperity and increased independence of Ljubljana's cultural scene.¹²⁹

Yugoslavia's official policy with regards to culture suggested theoretical freedom of expression, but the absence of a centralised statement in this regard often resulted in fluctuating responses, particularly with regards to rock music.¹³⁰ Whilst the Party aimed to limit criticism of Tito and the state, any enforcement in this regard was haphazard, and 'official' reactions were primarily confined to zealous youth officials or indignant citizens. As a result, pockets of the country could become particularly amenable to cultural movements, and Oskar Mulej concludes that by the 1970s, the general climate regarding mass culture was relatively relaxed.¹³¹ The Yugoslav entertainment industry in cosmopolitan cities such as

¹²⁷ I. Vidmar, 'Slo Punk 1977-1987- Maximum Impact' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 374 (July 2014); J. Gow and C. Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes*, p.91

¹²⁸ M. Zubak *The Yugoslav Youth Press (1960-1980)*, p.253-7

¹²⁹ ŠKUC was established in 1972 within the frame of the Ljubljana student union as the countercultural wing of the 1968 student movement. Featuring sections for music, film, art, theatre and publishing, it also operated a gallery space in the centre of Ljubljana from 1978. The head of ŠKUC, Peter Mlakar was not a party member, and the institution retained and exercised relative self-autonomy. Yugoslavia's first domestic punk record, Pankrti's *Lepi in prazni/ Ljubljana je bulana* was released by ŠKUC in 1978.

¹³⁰ Svanibor Pettan outlines Yugoslav recognition of the influence that music could have over people, which resulted in attempts to limit expression that could undermine communist ideology from the outset. S. Pettan, 'Music and Censorship in ex-Yugoslavia- Some views from Croatia' *Speech at the 1st Freemuse World Conference, Copenhagen*, (November 1998)

¹³¹ Rajko Muršič argues that this freedom was reflected in a musical sense by elements of a market economy, open borders, and the availability of commercially produced records. R. Muršič, 'Punk Anthropology: From a Study of a Local Slovene Alternative Rock Scene Towards Partisan Scholarship' *Postsocialist Europe- Anthropological Perspectives From Home* Vol. 10 (2010), p.192; G. Tomc, 'A Tale of Two Subcultures' in: B. Luthar and M. Pušnik (eds) *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (New Academia, 2010), p.164; O. Mulej, 'We Are Drowning in Red Beet, Patching Up Holes in the Iron Curtain: The Punk Subculture in Ljubljana in the Late 1970s and Early 1980s' *East Central Europe* Vol.38, No.2-3

Ljubljana became increasingly open to rock and roll via dances, discos, and support from media institutions.¹³² Concerts remained subject to a number of restrictions, but *Mladina* and the *Weekly Tribune* helped to challenge the initial attribution of the popularity of the Rolling Stones, the Animals and the Kinks in Yugoslavia to the success 'of western imperialism'.¹³³ The Slovene Prime Minister Stane Kavčič's advocacy of gradual political democratisation and the introduction of a market economy from the 1960s also facilitated this process, 'opening Slovenia to the world'.¹³⁴ As a result, according to Debeljak, intellectual currents such as 'art for art's sake' were able to take residence in Ljubljana, which in turn helped to shape the content and character of alternative culture, the neo-avant-garde and general socio-political contexts.¹³⁵ Gregor Tomc outlines fluctuation with regards to repressive tendencies within Slovenia. He recognises that the cultural liberalisation of the 1960s hamstrung increased repression during the following decade, as the Party gradually ceded influence over media and culture. He argues that the development of a domestic music industry and the incremental disintegration of the communist project combined to mitigate the worst effects of increased intolerance. Relatively mild disapproval saw rock music categorised as a symbolic threat and a decadent, bourgeois and western import, but it was tolerated providing it remained within what Tomc describes as a 'subcultural ghetto' and focused on music alone.¹³⁶ Zubak describes how this extended to the original punk scene in Ljubljana, with the party and Slovenian youth union showing little interest. This meant that punk could be supported on the lowest institutional levels, and was, initially at least, subject to only occasional informal pressures from above.¹³⁷

(2011), p.368

¹³² I. Bašin, *Novi Rock- Rockovski Festival v Križankah 1981-2000*, p.14

¹³³ Bašin describes restrictions and rules which included a required police presence, compulsory eating, bans on spilling alcohol and control over the way performances were lit. I. Bašin, *Novi Rock*, pp.14-17

¹³⁴ P. Vodopivec, 'Seven Decades of Unconfronted Incongruities: The Slovenes and Yugoslavia' in: J. Benderly and E. Kraft (ed) *Independent Slovenia- Origins, Movements, Prospects* (St. Martins Press, 1996), p.39

¹³⁵ A. Debeljak, 'The Political Meaning of the Slovene Neo-Avant-Garde', p.43

¹³⁶ G. Tomc 'The Politics of Punk' in: J. Benderly & E. Kraft (eds) *Independent Slovenia: Origins, Movements, Prospects* (St. Martins Press, 1996), p.117; Marko Zubak describes how the a 1969 trial regarding the 13th issue of the journal *Pop-Express* demonstrated some of the thresholds of this tolerance. Music alone could usually escape supervision, but the moment other concepts, such as sexuality, were incorporated, problems and attempts at repression mushroomed. M. Zubak *The Yugoslav Youth Press*, p.262

¹³⁷ M. Zubak, *The Yugoslav Youth Press*, p.262

Punk in Ljubljana was also afforded a greater level of autonomy than anywhere else in Yugoslavia, reflecting the levels of urban youth freedom across the country, and consequently, according to Zubak, became the country's punk centre.¹³⁸ The situation was largely reflective of Mariša Pušnik's depiction of cultural institutions throughout Ljubljana, which exercised relative autonomy limited by silent rules.¹³⁹ Miha Zupevc of the hardcore collective also recognises the city as a 'calmer, more accepting, liberal and progressive' environment, and argues that this provided fertile ground for the seeds of a domestic punk scene.¹⁴⁰

Resulting perceptions of Ljubljana as culturally free and more open to alternative lifestyles facilitated a cyclical process, whereby those drawn to the 'openness' of the city continued to push at cultural boundaries. Increased, albeit relatively limited, visibility of marginalised social groups also meant that 'societal outcasts' were attracted to the city, which further shaped Ljubljana's countercultural demographics. One of the interviewees that provided testimony for this thesis, Aldo Ivančič, moved from the Croatian town of Pula to Ljubljana at the start of the 1980s, motivated by the belief that it represented the most 'free and tolerant city' in Yugoslavia. He cites Ljubljana's student community, the existence of countercultural institutions, frequent concerts and Radio Študent as contributing to this perception.¹⁴¹ His subsequent activities via the electronic group Borghesia and FV 112/15 helped to shape the direction of the 1980s alternative scene, including punk, and supported a range of subversive cultural endeavours. Aldo was also central to the establishment of the gay culture festival, MAGNUS. Laura Silber and Allan Little reference the festival, other alternative groups, and the 'New Social Movements' (NSMs), as evidence of an era of unprecedented liberalism in Yugoslavia, with Ljubljana at its heart.¹⁴² The openly politicised punk subculture was explicitly and consistently linked to this concept of civil society and the ecological, feminist and anti-war initiatives that arose during the period that this thesis focuses upon.

¹³⁸ G. Tomc, 'A Tale of Two Subcultures', p.197; M. Zubak *The Yugoslav Youth Press*, p.214

¹³⁹ M. Pušnik, 'Flirting with Television in Socialism', p.232

¹⁴⁰ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

¹⁴¹ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana, 9/10/2016

¹⁴² Ljubljana's NSMs encompassed ecological, feminist, queer, and pacifist socio-political currents. L. Silber and A. Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, p.48

The emergence of Yugoslavia's first punk bands owed much to surrounding cultural environments, but retrospective accounts primarily emphasise attempts at recreation of early UK and US based examples.¹⁴³ Gregor Tomc provides a comprehensive overview of the birth and growth of Yugoslav subcultures, and positions the punk and hippy movements in Ljubljana as Yugoslavia's earliest responses to western cultural trends.¹⁴⁴ However, as he acknowledges, punk was also drawn through domestic filters and influenced by local contexts from the outset, and Pankrti are accordingly credited with specific influence over subsequent endeavours.¹⁴⁵ International inspiration, active domestic bands and support from a range of journalists and radio broadcasters combined to create a 'massively popular... autonomous nationwide youth movement, which operated outside of the official youth culture and commercial currents, literally occupying pubs and squares in Ljubljana.'¹⁴⁶ The first domestic concert was held at the end of 1977 on the Ljubljana university campus. It featured Pankrti, Paraf (Rijeka) and Prljavo kazalište (Zagreb).¹⁴⁷ Punk, post-punk and new wave concerts became a regular feature by the following spring, occurring once or twice a month. Domestic bands featured alongside a number of internationally popular acts including Siouxsie and Banshees, The Ruts, Virgin Prunes and Discharge, and these concerts attracted hundreds if not thousands of attendees, as Ljubljana became the 'punk capital of Yugoslavia'.¹⁴⁸ Igor Vidmar promoted the majority of concerts and presented the popular 'Rock Front' show on Radio Študent, becoming 'the best-connected person on the scene... [responsible for bringing existing]

¹⁴³ A number of domestic punk bands, including Pekinška Patka (Novi Sad) and Ljubljana's first punk band, Pankrti, formed in the immediate wake of these western examples, inspired by western media, music magazines and domestic radio. Contemporary media representations regularly highlighted the influence of the Sex Pistols and the west at the expense of recognising the documentation of domestic realities within punk.

¹⁴⁴ Tomc suggests Buldožer's 'underground progressive rock' of 1975 constituted a watershed moment for local autonomous culture. 'Yug- The Scene in General' *One World Fanzine* Issue 1 (1985); G. Tomc, 'A Tale of Two Subcultures', p.174

¹⁴⁵ Pankrti provocatively announced themselves as 'The First Punk Band Behind The Iron Curtain', although Paraf from Rijeka were formed around the same time if not slightly before. G. Smith, 'Freezing within the Cold War, or punk within Socialist States, Part 1' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 378 (November 2014); I. Vidmar *Interview* <http://members.iinet.net.au/~predrag/vidmar.html> [Accessed 12/08/2017]

¹⁴⁶ I. Vidmar, 'Slo Punk 1977-1987' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 374 (July 2014)

¹⁴⁷ Pankrti also have the distinction of representing the first broadcast of punk on the domestic radio waves, when their October 1977 performance, in front of Radio Študent, was broadcast on the station. I. Vidmar *Interview* <http://members.iinet.net.au/~predrag/vidmar.html> [Accessed 12/08/2017]

¹⁴⁸ G. Tomc, 'A Tale of Two Subcultures', p.175; I. Bašin, *Novi Rock*, p.18; I. Vidmar, 'Slo Punk 1977-1987' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 374 (July 2014)

private punk creativity to the attention of the public.¹⁴⁹ From 1981, he also organised the annual alternative music festival *Novi Rock*, held in the heart of Ljubljana. This provided the largest crowds that punk (and eventually hardcore) bands would perform to, with up to 5000 attendees filling the Križanke outdoor theatre. Various music festivals had existed throughout Yugoslavia from the 1960s, but *Novi Rock* was the only festival of its type in 1980s Slovenia, combining performances from local and international punk and alternative bands.¹⁵⁰

Whilst relative commercial success had opened Yugoslavia's domestic publishers to the idea of rock music as 'big business', they were initially more reluctant to embrace punk's growing following. However, as Vidmar describes, the domestic industry was 'market orientated enough' and featured enough 'open-minded' people that, by the end of the 1970s, labels began to respond.¹⁵¹ This saw what Vidmar refers to as state controlled 'major' labels operate as distributors for punk records and compilations, and Pankrti and Paraf released their debut albums through RTV Ljubljana in 1980. Both records were pressed by Jugoton, the largest pressing plant in Yugoslavia, and sold in their thousands.¹⁵² *Novi Punk Val (New Punk Wave)* (See Fig 1), was released the following year, and represents the first compilation of Yugoslavian punk.¹⁵³ It was curated by Igor Vidmar and released by ZKP RTLJ, another state label based in Ljubljana, specialising in domestic pop and rock and also publishing a range of foreign titles.

¹⁴⁹ G. Tomc, 'A Tale of Two Subcultures', p.174

¹⁵⁰ The first Novi Rock festival featured a number of second wave punk bands from Slovenia, including Kuzle, Indust-Bag, Šund, Ljubljanski psi and Buldogi. Laibach performed the following year alongside a number of punk bands, and Borghesia performed in 1983. Niet was the first hardcore band to perform at the festival in 1984 and appeared again the following year, when Masaker (Maribor), Quod Massacre and Pankrti also played. 1986 saw the hardcore collective represented fully, when Tožibabe were accompanied by III. Kategorija, 2227, SOR, GUZ, CZD and Amebix. The average attendance for these festivals throughout the 1980s was 3500. I. Bašin, *Novi Rock*, p.17

¹⁵¹ Igor Vidmar Interview <http://members.iinet.net.au/~predrag/vidmar.html> [Accessed 12/08/2017]

¹⁵² Pankrti *Dolgcajt* (RTV Ljubljana, 1980); Paraf *A dan je tako lijepo počeo* (RTV Ljubljana, 1980); Jugoton was formed in Zagreb in 1947 when the label and pressing plant, Elektroton, was nationalised. Jugoton was also the largest and most prominent Yugoslav label and record store chain in Yugoslavia. 25,000 copies of Paraf's LP were initially pressed.

¹⁵³ Pankrti and Paraf are featured alongside Termiti, Grupa 92, Buldogi, Problemi, Prljavo Kazalište and Berlinski Zid. *Novi Punk Val* (ZKP RTLJ, 1981)



Fig 1: Novi Punk Val Compilation (1980)

The success of the compilation saw a number similar LPs on domestic record labels follow, including *Paket aranžman* (*Package Deal*) and *Artistička radna akcija* (*Artistic Action*), which documented the Belgrade new wave scene. *Lepo je...* (*It's Nice...*), a compilation of a second wave of Slovene punk bands, including Buldogi, Kuzle, Šund, Indust Bag and Ljubljanski Psi was also released in 1982 (See Fig 2).¹⁵⁴



Fig 2: Lepo je... Compilation (1982)

¹⁵⁴ *Paket aranžman* (Jugoton, 1981); *Artistička radna akcija* (Jugoton, 1981); *Lepo je...* (ZKP RTVL, 1982)

Despite initial acceptance of punk as an offshoot of rock music, its independence within these state controlled channels was somewhat compromised. Young people travelled to purchase rock records and cultivate a 'rock image', domestic labels released a range of Western music under licence, but the state retained ultimate control over the domestic entertainment industry and recording studios.¹⁵⁵ Decision making regarding access to studios via record deals, and indeed, what could be recorded within these studios, remained in the hands of a range of individuals working for these institutions, but were accordingly inconsistent. Lyrics and cover art were often examined by Yugoslav authorities, but pre-emptive self-censorship was a more common limitation, and was utilised by bands, recording engineers and publishers alike. This represented an informal and opaque, but often effective form of control.¹⁵⁶ Combined with mild police harassment and financially punitive measures, practical (if inconsistent) limitations upon expression were established. As decision making was delegated towards cultural actors and institutions, the Party was rarely required to establish a nuanced understanding of punk in order to limit its most provocative tendencies.¹⁵⁷ Other practical limitations contributed to this 'hands off' approach, and Vidmar describes how a lack of venues, promoters and distribution networks - which exacerbated the prohibitive expense of obtaining foreign records - subtly stemmed the growth of punk. He also alleges that many punk records were deliberately not repressed after initial pressings sold out, as part of a deliberate measure designed to acknowledge punk's virtually mainstream appeal, yet simultaneously curb its growth.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ G. Tomc, 'The Politics of Punk', p.117

¹⁵⁶ The prevalence of unwritten rules resulted in 'fuzzy' dividing lines between what was permissible. Mulej suggests that the principle that 'everything that was not specifically allowed could be forbidden' was often utilised, whilst Crowley describes diversity with regards to the application of guidelines in different locations at different times, which were also impacted by shifts in power between liberal and conservative factions of the Party. As a result, 'what was tolerated at one moment, might be prohibited the next.' O. Mulej, 'We Are Drowning in Red Beet', p. 383; D. Crowley, 'The Future is Between Your Legs', p.38

¹⁵⁷ The law which resulted in the so called 'Committee for Trash' was enacted in 1972, prior to the emergence of punk and designed to limit a variety of critical cultural expressions however, imposing a 31.5% tax upon 'kitsch' records and art. Commercial punk bands regarded the application of the tax to their records as a badge of honour, or a necessary demonstration of punk authenticity, but the tax had a limiting effect on punk exposure, as individuals simply could not afford the records as a result. U. Čvoro, *Turbo-folk Music and Cultural Representations of National Identity in Former Yugoslavia*. (Ashgate, 2014), p.45

¹⁵⁸ I. Vidmar, 'Slo Punk 1977-1987- Maximum Impact' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 374 (July 2014)

The effectiveness of auto-censorship and mild repression extended to a variety of cultural forms, creating a general climate of caution within artistic institutions and radio stations. As Nikolai Jeffs describes, the confusion resulted as a result of the presence of 'contradictory [but] co-existing kinds of logic... [which] meant certain content could be censored... then permitted on a different occasion.' This was complicated by more specific disapproval of punk, but Kuzle suggest that punks simply became more adept in 'reading between the lines' as a result.¹⁵⁹ However, attempts to negotiate limitations could also create new problems for bands. Whilst Pankrti travelled to Italy to record their debut 7", aiming to avoid the lyrical restrictions they found domestically, they were held at the border for several hours.¹⁶⁰ Other bands opted to accept lyrical limitations and used domestic recording studios, and adjustments were made based upon a combination of guesswork, their own judgement and the concerns of engineers and labels.¹⁶¹ Variability with regards to the application of laws and regulations throughout Yugoslavia and the speed at which changes could occur were encapsulated by the contradictory noted approaches of official youth organisations and communist officials. Whilst Srečo Kirn viewed punk as a hostile, anarchist or fascist movement, Igor Bavčar, a committed marxist and member of the Union of Socialist Youth, suggested punks could be potential allies.¹⁶² The League of Socialist Youth (*Savez socijalističke omladine Jugoslavije*, SSOJ) was used as a source of cover and funding for punk, providing locations for concerts, opportunities to record, and distribution and media coverage for rock bands. However, activists within the organisation also provided obstacles and barriers.¹⁶³ Pankrti were prevented from playing at a Ljubljana high school after the SSOJ sided with a teacher's view, that described the band as obscene. They were also banned from performing at a Yugoslav Day of Youth concert by the Socialist youth leadership, and Boris Bavdek, the president of the organisation, attempted to prevent the release of their first single.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.366; 'Kuzle Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 378 (November 2014)

¹⁶⁰ 'Pankrti Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 378 (November 2014)

¹⁶¹ Pankrti were advised by their label not to sing about anarchism and had their verses dissected for potential changes. 'Pankrti Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 378 (November 2014); G. Tomc, 'A Tale of Two Subcultures', p.175

¹⁶² R. Muršič, 'Punk Anthropology: From a Study of a Local Slovene Alternative Rock Scene Towards Partisan Scholarship', p.192

¹⁶³ G. Tomc, 'The Politics of Punk', p.129

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p.123

Whilst some early punk bands, such as Novi Sad's Pekinška Patka (Peking Duck), adapted the shock tactics found within international punk to domestic politics, the majority of punk bands accepted that certain subjects, particularly explicit criticism of the Party, were taboo. Paraf describe how punks negotiated these constraints in order to maintain the meaning and purpose of their lyrical statements, and suggest that satire and irony regularly masked explicit political critique.¹⁶⁵ Gregor Tomc states that these limits upon free expression were a source of discontent, but were also accepted as an inevitable:

You had to make compromises if you wanted to do anything. To record in a studio you had to sign a contract with the state. To perform live you had to report to a police station... the state was everywhere and the state was also at the label. It wasn't pleasant, but we never felt it as something very fatal. When you came from these negotiations [over lyrical content] you always felt a little dirty... but without compromises there would be no record. Period. Slovenian punk wouldn't exist if people hadn't made very pragmatic and, in my opinion, reasonable compromises.¹⁶⁶

Whilst early punk centred artistic, cultural and social rebellion, it also eschewed overt politicisation, which made necessary compromises more palatable. A contemporary article for *Antena* saw Tomc emphasise that punk's cultural rebellion regarded serious politicisation as 'a sign of bad taste'.¹⁶⁷ Oskar Mulej agrees, and argues that whilst punk was a form of 'protest music', it also lacked a defined political programme and consistently identifiable outlook. This meant punk bands

¹⁶⁵ An impromptu performance of the communist work action song was reimagined by Pekinška Patka to include vulgar references to Brigitte Bardot's genitalia: 'Brižit Bardo bere čičke; Vidi joj se pola pičk.' This generated a substantial amount of controversy. Their performance at Novi Sad's Klub 24 was halted, whilst a number of subsequent concerts were cancelled at short notice by authorities. Pankrti titled their 1982 LP *Državni ljubimci* (The State's Darlings), but escaped scrutiny. Paraf's 'Narodna pjesma' (National Song) demonstrates fluctuation regarding the risks bands were able to take, as it was excluded from the band's debut LP due to Igor Vidmar's 'overcaution' resulting from his inexperience as a producer and recording engineer. The song, which ironically stated 'There is no better police than ours', was used on the Novi Punk Val compilation the following year. Pankrti *Državni ljubimci* (ZKP RTVL, 1982); 'Narodna pjesma' Paraf *A dan je tako lijepo počeo* (RTV Ljubljana, 1980); 'Paraf Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 398 (July 2016)

¹⁶⁶ 'Pankrti Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 378 (November 2014)

¹⁶⁷ G. Tomc, 'Antenin Punk: Odgovor na Dok st.2' *Antena* (Jesni 1977) in: N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk pod Slovenci* (KRT, 1985), p.108; G. Tomc, 'The Politics of Punk', p.119

could negotiate mainstream limitations whilst also presenting a rebellious artistic vision.¹⁶⁸ Peter Lovšin of Pankrti recalls that his primary motivation was 'to make rock n' roll', whilst providing social commentary represented a supplementary appeal. Indeed, he believes that minor alterations rarely impacted upon a band's ability to 'consider ourselves artists... [and] we did not feel that artistic freedom was taken away.'¹⁶⁹ Lydia Anthanasopoulou suggests that perceptions that punk was disapproved of by Party gatekeepers, which later became confirmed, could often strengthen its appeal.¹⁷⁰ Paraf similarly suggest that limitations often galvanised punks, as whilst uncertainty was discernible, and records became 'more expensive and less accessible... whoever wanted it bought it regardless. Morons tried their best [to silence punk] but they didn't succeed.'¹⁷¹

The most concerted and damaging attempt to stifle punk in Ljubljana however, occurred between 1981 and 1982. Rather than previous conceptions of punk as a provocative symbolisation of youth alienation, the subculture became subject to direct and consistent scrutiny and repression.¹⁷² The media moral panic and the escalation of police repression that became known as The Nazi Punk Affair was sparked by Slovene general secretary France Popit's declaration of disapproval, which stated that punk was publicly 'vomiting on socialism.'¹⁷³ Deliberate attempts to further 'tarnish' the reputation of punk along these lines followed, building upon the sensationalist groundwork which had been laid by tabloid articles, presenting punk as a violent capitalist plot and symptom of social decay.¹⁷⁴ Vojko Flegar

¹⁶⁸ O. Mulej, 'We Are Drowning in Red Beet', pp.376-382

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

¹⁷⁰ L. Athanasopoulou 'Who Gives A Shit?' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 378 (November 2014)

¹⁷¹ 'Paraf Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 398 (July 2016)

¹⁷² The Spring Cultural Plenum of the Association of the Socialist Youth of Slovenia (ZSMS) in 1981 concluded that the idea of punk existing as a foreign capitalist plot was absurd. Punk was regarded with disapproval, but its demonstration of social malaise was yet to be regarded as a specific threat. Kulturni Plenum ZSMS 'O Kulturni Politiki ZSMS in Dejavnosti Mladih na Procu Kulture (Kulturni Plenum Brochure, April 1981), in: N. Malečar and T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk pod Slovenci* (KRT, 1985), p.188

¹⁷³ Tomc describes the affair as an ideological response to the increased visibility of punk in meeting places, bars and clubs around Ljubljana. He suggests that this contrasted with the public and state preference that alternative culture remained confined to 'its own mileu.' G. Tomc, 'The Politics of Punk', p.120

¹⁷⁴ Mulej describes a cynical attempt to associate punk with Nazism in order to provoke public condemnation and violent reaction. Helena Motoh agrees that charges against punks were 'fabricated' and suggests that accusations of Nazism became a useful label applied to discredit newly emerging socio-political opposition. An April 1981 article by Sonči Globokar presented punk as a capitalist plot furthered by 'evil seducers', behind which 'gentlemen in top hats an tuxedos' stood, using punk to 'stultify' the masses. O. Mulej 'We Are Drowning in Red Beet', p.389; H. Motoh, "'Punk is a Symptom': Intersections of Philosophy and Alternative Culture in the 80's

suggested that newspapers acted as mouthpieces for repressive elements of the Party, whilst Igor Vidmar suggests that the media, Party and police acted in 'cahoots' to tie punk to something politically unacceptable.¹⁷⁵ The Slovene tabloid *Nedeljski Dnevnik* had previously published a number of critical articles, but columnist Zlatko Šetinc provided the ideological basis for a sustained period of detraction. Opportunistically conflating unrelated instances of Nazi graffiti, a teenage stabbing and the presence of a fascist punk manifesto, Šetinc associated punk with a toxic mix of communist taboos.¹⁷⁶ The manifesto in question was produced by IV Reich, a local band who were yet to perform live or release any music. They were dismissed by Vidmar, Dario Cortese and other members of the local scene as unrepresentative 'dumb punks', but their existence provided an opportunity to associate punk with criminality and fascism, which was seized upon.¹⁷⁷ Members of the band, alongside the singer of Ljubljanski Psi, were arrested, interrogated, 'tortured' and forced to confess to counter-revolutionary activities and Nazi organisation, remaining in prison for a number of months.¹⁷⁸ Other arrests and generalised instances of repression, intimidation and harassment followed, becoming part of 'the everyday experiences' of young punks in the city.¹⁷⁹ Vidmar was also jailed twice, in what he describes as 'show trials', relating to deliberately obtuse interpretations of 'offensive' badges (See Fig 3).¹⁸⁰

Slovenia' *Synthesis Philosophica* Vol. 27, No.2 (2013), p.289; S. Globokar, 'Nevarna Moda' *Nedeljski Dnevnik* (11/4/1981)

¹⁷⁵ I. Vidmar, 'Introduction to Ex: Yugo Special, Part 1: Slovenia' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 378 (November 2014)

¹⁷⁶ K. Lovrenčič's 1982 editorial also furthered this line of argument, refusing to apply any redeeming factors to punk and positioning it as a sinister conspiracy that undermined socialist ideals. K Lovrencic 'U vodnik zlovesce znamenje na zidu' *7D* (28/1/1982)

¹⁷⁷ Cortese dismissed the band as such in a retrospective scene report, whilst Vidmar recalled attending an IV Reich practice prior to their arrest. He warned the band that they would never play publicly due to the stupid bigotry of their lyrics' before promptly 'forgetting all about them.' I. Vidmar, *Uzurlikzurli ezine* <http://members.iinet.net.au/predrag/vidmar.html> [Accessed Jun 7, 2016]; D. Cortese, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 7 (July-Aug 1983)

¹⁷⁸ A. Zerdin, 'Kratiki kurz zgodovine panka', in: P. Lovšin, P. Mlakar and I. Vidmar (eds) *Punk je bil prej, 25 let punka pod Slovenci* (Cankarjeva Založba/ Ropot, 2002), p.38

¹⁷⁹ Tomc describes forced confessions, investigations, censorship of fanzines and 'ruthless and swift' actions against graffiti, resulting in detentions and fines. Brane Bitenc also details a large scale police operation in 1981, which saw over 100 punks systematically 'picked up' by the people's militia during school hours, with many beaten and intimidated. G. Tomc, 'The Politics of Punk', p.122; N. Malečkar & T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk Pod Slovenci*, pp.485-489

¹⁸⁰ Vidmar had 'taken up the fight' and defended punk publicly, using his radio show and writing letters to *Nedeljski dnevnik*. I. Vidmar 'Pisma bralcev' *Nedeljski dnevnik* (29/11/1981)



Fig 3: The two badges that saw Vidmar arrested. The Dead Kennedys' 'Nazi Punks Fuck Off' badge (left) was an explicitly anti-fascist statement, depicting a crossed out swastika. The other badge, which referenced UK anarcho-punk band Conflict's 'Crazy Governments', featured both a swastika and communist hammer and sickle as part of the band's objection to all forms of government.

The affair also saw an increase in concerted attempts to directly censor punk material. The *Problemi* journal, which produced three annual issues focused upon punk, beginning in 1981, was one recipient of this approach. Combining punk, philosophy, sexuality and 'sharp criticism' of the state, the second issue was published at the height of the affair and drew an official response. Rather than silently accepting the imposition of censorship by removing unacceptable sections, editor Mladen Dolar, responded by printing black blocks over the offending anti-socialist and lesbian material, which did little to appease the authorities. Dolar was fined for allowing the publication of pornographic material, but he continued to resist. The third issue accordingly included articles on erotic asphyxiation, the 'sado-masochism' of the Ljubljana based band Borghesia, and Miki Stojković's photographs of a man and woman playing topless with a 5 pointed star, under the title 'revolution is a whore'.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹D. Crowley, 'The Future is Between Your Legs', pp.31-46



Fig 4: The front cover to the censored issue of *Punk Problemi*, 1982

Whilst the affair was relatively short lived, experiences of repression had a profound impact on the practical and ideological orientation of the hardcore collective, which sprang into life a year later.¹⁸² Bands that had successfully crossed into the mainstream, such as Pankrti, were generally unaffected by repression, but subsequent waves of punk in Ljubljana were adjusted to declining mainstream interest and the shrinking of public space available to punk.¹⁸³ However, as Dare Tome of III. Kategorija describes, watching the affair unfold, and punk's association with subversion and taboo, could make the subculture more attractive and encouraged involvement in subsequent waves, such as hardcore: 'I always felt rather pressured from the regime when I was younger. I saw this turned towards punk after Tito's death, and it attracted me to what it had to say and what it represented. Hardcore became a collective way of presenting my ideas and criticism, and engaging in rebellion.'¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Vidmar describes how the hardcore scene was justified in opposing mass media, as a great deal of damage was caused by media during the affair. This ideological objection reflected their co-operation with FV, but also the constant problems and limitations the scene had to contend with. I. Vidmar 'Tokrat Intervju z: Igor Vidmarjem' in: N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak (eds), *Punk pod Slovenci*, pp.443-44

¹⁸³ J. Greene Jr. *Brave Punk World: The International Rock Underground from Alterta Roja to Z-Off* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), p.107; G. Tome, 'A Tale of Two Subcultures', p.176

¹⁸⁴ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

Dario Cortese's 1983 scene report played down the impact of the affair on a legal basis, but he also acknowledged the long term impact of punk's association with 'racism and totalitarianism', describing how elements of the mainstream and ordinary society came to regard punks as the 'scum of the earth'.¹⁸⁵ Nikolai Jeffs also highlights the practical implications of this 'ideological attempt to homogenise' punk, describing how public meeting and organisational spaces were either shrunk or physically removed. This literally shifted punk to the margins and towards the alternative underground of FV.¹⁸⁶ Repression and police harassment also acted as a catalyst for increased levels of politicisation and ideological rejection of mainstream interaction. Alternative underground environments and DIY approaches were embraced due to practical necessity, but became complemented by the further development of ideological imperatives.¹⁸⁷ Comparable experiences of repression across international punk scenes in the early 1980s created ideological and spiritual bonds, whilst Sabrina Ramet suggests that the retreat 'into counterculture... sustained deviance, reinforced disaffection' and politicised the hardcore punk scene.¹⁸⁸ Whilst Gregor Tomc and Igor Vidmar suggest that the affair was 'fatal' for punk in a commercial sense, leading to 'silence setting in amongst the mainstream', punks in Ljubljana adopted new tactics, applied different metrics for success and embraced the underground in response.¹⁸⁹ This was often forced upon punk scenes, but the formation of translocal networks based around shared ideologies and common complaints represented a vibrant life force for punk

¹⁸⁵ Cortese cites the relatively small number of arrests and describes how those imprisoned 'weren't in jail long.' D. Cortese, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 7 (July-Aug 1983)

¹⁸⁶ Jeffs says that ideological demonisation and harassment was accompanied by raids on meeting places such as the Tavern pod Skalco and Rio Restaurant, and the refusal of service in Medex and Union Cafe. Meeting in public was often impossible or at least unpalatable for young punks in the year prior to the emergence of hardcore. Their acceptance of marginalisation led to their embrace of the underground. N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.352

¹⁸⁷ Mulej suggests that, as the streets became oppressive, punk moved underground. Jeffs similarly describes how political and social transgression became confined to the alternative clubs of Šiška and K4, as the alternative scene accepted that such transgression 'could not be realised in the public space.' O. Mulej, 'We Are Drowning in Red Beet', p.380; N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.376

¹⁸⁸ T. Mohr, 'Did Punk Tear Down the Wall?' *The Daily Beast* (8/11/2009)

¹⁸⁹ Vidmar states that the damage enacted by the affair resulted in decreased radio play, the literal banishment of punks from the streets, and record companies shying away from punk. This resulted in FV and other underground institutions becoming the only source of support. He positioned Tožibabe as the hardcore punk band capable of shattering this silence, but argued in 1986 that this required a change of approach from the hardcore collective and engagement with the world above ground, something they showed little interest in. G. Tomc, 'The Politics of Punk', p.122; I. Vidmar 'Tožibabe Interview' *Stop Magazine* (12/6/1986); I. Vidmar 'Introduction to Ex: Yugo Special, Part 1: Slovenia' *Maximum RocknRoll*, Issue 378 (November 2014)

throughout the 1980s, as Chapter 2 outlines.¹⁹⁰ The affair also failed to mobilise a consistent and substantial public reaction against punk, instead sparking public and intellectual debate that was punctuated by instances of police harassment and quiet public disapproval. Cultural institutions such as ŠKUC, FV and Radio Študent offered theoretical and financial assistance in the absence of record label interest, and Mulej ultimately concludes that the affair simply demonstrated that 'the time of brute force and show trials was gone.'¹⁹¹ Muršič also points at the affair as a pivotal contributory factor towards the success of New Social Movements. He describes how civil society was mobilised by the public appeals, newspaper letters and intellectual discussions that supported punk, whilst issues of censorship and individual freedom were placed on the public agenda.¹⁹² Tomaž Mastnak also identifies punk as a direct precursor to, and influence upon, NSMs, arguing that the ultimate failure of this state repression to stamp out punk represented a democratic breakthrough.¹⁹³ Igor Vidmar agrees, arguing that whilst social movements operated within the slowly loosening system, rather than rejecting it outright, they benefited from, and were inspired by breakthroughs represented by punk's refusal to assimilate or die.¹⁹⁴

Evolution, Distillation, Antagonism: From Punk to Hardcore

The original impetus for hardcore as an antagonistic sub-genre of punk came as a result of gradual evolution from earlier waves, ultimately representing a distinct 'distillation' into a lethal shot of rage and speed towards the end of the 1970s.¹⁹⁵ Influence was taken from punk predecessors, alongside worldwide threads of inspiration, which saw hardcore regularly discard elements of experimentation and exaggerate 'the speed...thrash and distortion' of punk, with 'inexperience and lack

¹⁹⁰ Clegg argues that whilst this could be positioned as a move towards greater insularity, scenes became more democratic and interconnected. M. L. Clegg, "'Through the Roof and Underground'", pp.1-2

¹⁹¹ O. Mulej 'We Are Drowning in Red Beet', p.385

¹⁹² R. Muršič, 'Punk Anthropology: From a Study of a Local Slovene Alternative Rock Scene Towards Partisan Scholarship' *Postsocialist Europe- Anthropological Perspectives From Home* Vol. 10 (2003) p.195

¹⁹³ T. Mastnak, 'From Social Movements to National Sovereignty' in: J. Benderly and E. Kraft (ed) *Independent Slovenia- Origins, Movements, Prospects* (St. Martins Press, 1996), p.94

¹⁹⁴ I. Vidmar, 'Slo Punk 1977-1987' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 374 (July 2014)

¹⁹⁵ B. Beynon, 'Subversive Pleasure: Feminism in DIY Hardcore', in: J. Downes (ed) *Women Make-Noise Girl bands from Motown to the modern* (Supernova Books, 2012), p.215

of technical proficiency only adding to the mix.¹⁹⁶ Visceral expressions of disaffection enticed young people to utilise punk as an opportunity for self expression, whilst malleable processes of variation and fragmentation occurred across worldwide punk scenes.¹⁹⁷ Similar processes of codification of these visceral takes on punk occurred in different locations and under different names and banners. Ian Glasper's oral histories of UK punk from 1980 onwards document the rise of two contemporary scenes that at times overlapped, namely anarcho-punk and what is commonly known as UK82, with the latter representing a 'harder, faster, more aggressive and political third wave.' A third volume outlines the subsequent UKHC scene of the mid-1980s, which, like its Ljubljana contemporary, was influenced, shaped by, and drew upon, a combination of anarcho-punk, UK82 and other international scenes.¹⁹⁸ Glasper outlines the ways all three scenes responded to punk's interactions with the mainstream and domestic socio-political issues of Thatcherism, unemployment, police oppression and overseas military conflict in different ways, with anarcho-punk generally less sonically rigid and centring ethics rather than unwritten musical doctrines. The 'anarchy and chaos' punks of the UK82 scene represented an entrenchment of the sound and look of punk into a more clearly defined category, with the intensity of the music and the forceful expression of working class frustrations forming a potent mix.¹⁹⁹ This largely analogous to the development of US hardcore, albeit more often in the middle class suburbs of America.²⁰⁰

The cultural magazine *Stop* described Ljubljana hardcore in similar terms, referencing a 'reduction of punk to its basic energy, phreneticism and noise, with the rock almost gone and minimalistic lyrics using symbolism of repression, entrapment and limitations.'²⁰¹ The first Yugoslavia scene report in *Maximum*

¹⁹⁶ T. Sommer, *New York Thrash* (ROIR, 1982); S. Blush, *American Hardcore: A Tribal History* (Feral House, 2001), p.42

¹⁹⁷ S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, pp.13-16

¹⁹⁸ I. Glasper, *Burning Britain: The History of UK Punk 1980-1984* (Cherry Red Books, 2004); I. Glasper, *The Day the Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk 1980-1984* (Cherry Red Books, 2006); I. Glasper, *Trapped In a Scene: UK Hardcore 1985-1989* (Cherry Red Books, 2009)

¹⁹⁹ Whilst codification was often celebrated by participants, others eventually found it limiting. John Finch of the Bristol based band Lunatic Fringe describes how an initially vibrant scene gave way to 'thousands of Discharge imitators' and 'stagnant musical times' as punk's boundaries became more rigidly enforced. I. Glasper, *Burning Britain: The History of UK Punk 1980-1984* (Cherry Red Books, 2004) pp.43-5

²⁰⁰ I. Glasper, *Burning Britain: The History of UK Punk 1980-1984* (Cherry Red Books, 2004) p.10

²⁰¹ 'Tožibabe- punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core', *Stop* (12/6/1986)

RocknRoll, produced by Dario Cortese, also emphasises the importance of speed and energy to hardcore. Dare Tome, of III. Kategorija, remembers that for young punks:

Velocity and volume meant we could express anger. By being almost unlistenable hardcore avoided popularisation as a music genre within the mainstream culture. The sound was chaotic, it was rebellion, criticism and negation of the proper means and system, which had its own established rules.²⁰²

Whilst reduction of punk into a primal form was often a deliberate and conscious stylistic choice, the 'minimalistic concept of hardcore' also reflected the technical abilities of many of those involved. As Gigi outlines, 'my favourite punk band to start with was The Clash, but they were never a direct influence on UBR because we couldn't play that well!'²⁰³ Musical and ideological tenets, both deliberate and necessary, combined with a deliberate lack of marketability and common experiences of repression in the early 1980s, resulting in hardcore worldwide creating and maintaining new, DIY (Do It Yourself), models of self-reliance. This process was often framed as taking punk 'back to the streets, away from art schools and hipsters', by recognising that 'punk never died- but the punk within some people had.'²⁰⁴

Disavowal of elements of what punk had begun to represent was often key to developing punk factions. Ana Raposo argues that this was also a means of demonstrating authenticity, as different offshoots claimed to be representative of punk's true nature.²⁰⁵ Anarcho-punks in the UK clashed with what they classed as 'media punks', who sought the personal fame and fortune that anarcho-punks believed was contrary to punk's spirit. Crass had dismissed punk's decline into another 'cheap product for the consumers head' as early as 1978, whilst

²⁰² 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 11 (January-February 1984); Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

²⁰³ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

²⁰⁴ DIY is a catch-all term to describe the promotion of self sufficiency and rejection of traditional music industry models, in favour of independence. T. Sommer, *New York Thrash* (ROIR, 1982)

²⁰⁵ A. Raposo, 'Rival Tribal Rebel Revel', in: M. Dines and M. Worley (eds) *The Aesthetics of Our Anger: Anarcho-Punk, Politics and Music*, p.68

Rudimentary Peni dismissed lying 'rockstars' in *Rotten to the Core*, alleging that John Lydon and Joe Strummer had simply seen it as 'good business to exploit' the original ideals that made punk compelling, in the pursuit of drugs, fame and money.²⁰⁶ Decrying the deviation that older punks had taken from what punk was 'supposed to represent' was a similar ideological rallying point for US hardcore, an intense, often irrational and unfocused suburban expression of rage and a political and cultural response to punk predecessors. Stephen Blush describes how hardcore 'extended, mimicked and reacted [to punk]... appropriating some aspects, discarding others. It reaffirmed the attitude, rejected new wave [and] expressed an extreme: the absolute most punk.'²⁰⁷ Tony Rettman has described the 1980s Detroit hardcore punk scene as a reaction to its 'tepid' punk predecessor, and Nikolai Jeffs takes a similar approach to Ljubljana, positioning hardcore in the city as a critique of 'existing scenes, for emptiness, posturing and commercialisation.'²⁰⁸ Dare describes how the majority of the hardcore collective thought punk had become 'fashionable, with a mainstream approach and cliched and conventional performances, following the classic genre staples of rock bands', which made hardcore, which represented something different, all the more vital.²⁰⁹ Marjan Ogrinc agrees, describing hardcore in Slovenia as a response to:

Expanding pop mentalities and the “šminkerstvo” of punk, a tentative attempt to restore exclusivity and subcultural identity, by appropriating the subversiveness of the subculture in a more direct way, featuring radical lifestyles and more spontaneously delivered criticism of existing conditions... which had been lost in the diversity of the punk scene.²¹⁰

Irena Povše of the Ljubljana hardcore collective describes a conscious attempt to

²⁰⁶ A Gordon, 'They Can Stuff Their Punk Credentials' in: M. Dines and M. Worley (eds. *The Aesthetics of Our Anger-Anarcho-Punk, Politics and Music*, p.232; 'Punk Is Dead' Crass *The Feeding of the 5000* (Small Wonder, 1978); 'Rotten to the Core' Rudimentary Peni *Death Church* (Corpus Christi, 1983)

²⁰⁷ S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, pp.13-16

²⁰⁸ T. Rettman, *Why Be Something That You're Not: Detroit Hardcore 1979-1985* (Revelation Records, 2010), p.2; N. Jeffs, 'Disco FV & Punk in the Early 80s', p.370

²⁰⁹ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

²¹⁰ M. Ogrinc, 'Ni nam do tega, da bi postali zgodovina', in: N. Malečkar & T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk pod Slovenci* (Univerzitetna Konferenca ZSMS, KRT, 1985), p.100; 'Sminkerstvo' is hard to translate directly, but generally refers to commercial, 'normal' and mainstream youth cultures, and is often used in the way 'yuppie' might be in the UK or US.

demonstrate 'that in hardcore, we had something new, a new direction and a new movement, which came across in everything we did, including reactions to the punk rock bands we had listened to.'²¹¹ A contemporary interview with Tožibabe also indicates that the hardcore collective were keen to distance themselves from previous punk bands. Emphasising that their version of punk represented something more relevant to their own lives, Marsa describes how members of the scene 'can't identify with Pankrti's lyrics', due to generational and ideological differences.²¹²

Many retrospective academic analyses of punk almost entirely overlook hardcore scenes across the world and Bryony Beynon describes how, when hardcore is considered, it is positioned as:

At best an unsavoury footnote, a foolish sonic experiment in extremity destined to annihilate itself... a complete dead end, a cultural desert of violence and machismo, a youthful misdemeanour and the worst excesses of punk's death drive.²¹³

Contemporary coverage of later waves of punk similarly exaggerated the violence present within hardcore scenes. Jack Rabid attributes this to inherent elements of snobbishness among journalists, who viewed harder edged punk as absent of the intellectualism required to fit 'their cultural meanings of punk.'²¹⁴ The links between violence and later waves of punk, embodied by bands such as Black Flag in the US and Sham 69 in the UK, meant hardcore and related developments such as Oi became commonly regarded as unwelcome divergence from the redeeming artistic approaches of the first wave, which in turn contributed to the moral panics that hardcore and harder edged punk provoked worldwide. Whilst punk was subject to its own forms of dismissal from the outset, it also benefited from legitimising links with avant-garde movements such as the French Situationist International.²¹⁵ Golnar Nikpour is nevertheless critical of attempts to elevate punk

²¹¹ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

²¹² 'Tožibabe- punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core' *Stop* (12/6/1986)

²¹³ B. Beynon, 'Subversive Pleasure: Feminism in DIY Hardcore', p.215

²¹⁴ S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, p.14

²¹⁵ G. Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Faber & Faber, 2011), p.200

'through associations with the European avant-garde', as such 'predispositions mean that only certain readings of certain parts of the punk archive were authorised', and hardcore is rarely excluded from these processes of reappraisal.²¹⁶ Dare believes that the frameworks by which mainstream musical accounts construct musical and cultural history can further the erasure of hardcore punk, as it represents a proposition that is at odds with traditional understandings, primarily relating to the rejection of 'individual icons and concepts of classic rock stardom, which punk more often replicated, existing only as an alternative genre within rock culture.' By completely negating the idea of individual stars in favour of 'collective movement and a people's rebellion', hardcore undermined the 'heroes who want to project their own charisma or cult of personality through these rock cliches', ensuring dismissal in return.²¹⁷ David suggests that those responsible for the documentation of Ljubljana's punk history, including former members of Pankrti, such as Gregor Tomc, acutely embody this process by virtue of their involvement within the early punk scene and their aspirations for 'rock immortality', which results in promotion of the punk scene at the expense of hardcore entirely: 'Tomc is an ex-rockstar, who, in his role as a professor of sociology, is most often interested only in glorifying his own participation in rebellion against the system, rather than all of those that occurred.'²¹⁸

A desire to avoid what were perceived as the mistakes of previous scenes and determination to forge new paths consistently informed hardcore punk in Ljubljana, but individuals were not always so antagonistic and often acknowledge the influence of previous punk scenes. Gigi describes owning every Pankrti record, whilst Borut Mehle, a fan of the hardcore scene, suggests it is inextricable from punk entirely, likening the process whereby 'you needed the Sex Pistols to have Crass', to how 'you needed Pankrti to have UBR.'²¹⁹ Robert also rejects the idea of hardcore representing a 'return to the roots', as this intimated a disapproval of earlier waves:

²¹⁶ M. Thi Nguyen and G. Nikpour, *Punk* (Guillotine Publishing, 2013), p.10; M. L. Clegg, *Through the Roof and Underground*, p.56

²¹⁷ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

²¹⁸ Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

²¹⁹ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015; Mehle, Borut Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

I liked the quality and diversity of bands before us. Sometimes hardcore just searched for things to fight with, or to label as not allowed. I was more open to other things and I liked punk that was different. For me honesty as a band was more important than proving ourselves by being against punk.²²⁰

Criticism of co-option of punk by mainstream record labels and the promotion of self-sufficient models of operation was often key to hardcore's differentiation from the first wave. Pankrti and their ilk were thus dismissed as 'conservative punks', as their embrace of mainstream norms, according to David, represented 'almost a betrayal... like punk had lost the original spark.'²²¹ Božo similarly states that Pankrti were 'nothing to me. I have a little respect but nothing more. To be punk you have to live like one and they were just rockers.'²²² Miha says that the 'young and wild punks' of the hardcore collective primarily wanted 'harder stuff' and genuine punk ways of living. They favoured the underground, 'spitting at' those who they regarded as 'new wave popstars.'²²³ Elements of disapproval were often mutual. Members of the hardcore collective depict the original wave of 'old farts' as 'sneering at youngsters and looking down on hardcore.'²²⁴ Such perceptions were furthered by the comparative media disinterest in hardcore punk, and the fact that it was often dismissed or belittled when it did reach the attention of the mainstream. The daily newspaper *Dnevnik*'s preview of the 1986 *Novi Rock* describes how (somewhat unfairly given the importance that much of the hardcore scene placed upon ideology) 'one day is enough to say everything this kind of music is capable of saying.'²²⁵ Such reactions only compounded anger at the lack of recognition the scene received in comparison with older punk. Indeed, during 2227's performance, singer David Križnik turned his back to their audience, in what has been described as a physical representation of his rejection of the mainstream (See Fig 9).²²⁶

²²⁰ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

²²¹ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

²²² Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

²²³ Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

²²⁴ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016; Krish, Mojca, Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

²²⁵ 'Kmalu- Novi Rock!' *Dnevnik* (1/9/1986); Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

²²⁶ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014; Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015



Fig 9: 2227 at Novi Rock Festival 1986. Photo by Božidar Dolenc

Hardcore was often met with silence or hostility within the Ljubljana cultural media. Marsa describes elements of support from some 'critics and important personalities', such as Igor and the journalist Peter Barbarić, and a handful of positive domestic accounts of hardcore focused upon the chaos, energy, creativity and challenges to rock traditions the scene represented, but these were in short supply.²²⁷ Tomaž Mastnak's 1984 *Mladina* article presented hardcore as a collection of dissenting voices that were key to the freedom of the alternative scene, and rejected framings of hardcore as anti-intellectual. Radio Študent allowed the hardcore scene to defend itself from criticism made by sociologist Iztok Saksida in 1983, but Igor Vidmar and others involved with the station were also criticised for never fully embracing the scene. Mastnak also responded to Saksida, suggesting that his criticism had demonstrated how 'unfree and undemocratic the alternative scene is'. Outlining the maintenance of 'dynamics of leadership, institutionalisation...and systems of domination', Mastnak argued that hardcore represented a crucial freedom to think differently about alternative culture and the system.²²⁸

²²⁷ Tožibabe *Dežuje* (FV Music, Ne! Records 2016); M. Ogrinc, 'Dežuje' *Plošča Tedna* (1986), Newspaper cutting provided by Miha Zupevc.

²²⁸ T. Mastnak, 'Alternativa je kurba ali: Freiheit is immer Freiheit de Andersdenkenden' *Mladina* (9/1/1984). pp.14-15

Issues with Igor Vidmar provided the sharpest demonstration and performance of generational and institutional divides, and graffiti in Ljubljana declared 'Vidmar je Pizda' (Vidmar is a cunt).²²⁹ His status meant he represented an ideal target for the hardcore scene, in order to make a definitive and visible break with earlier waves of punk. Whilst the collective acknowledged his radio show as providing initial access to punk and hardcore, and Robert credits Vidmar with bringing bands to Ljubljana, Dario Cortese remembers that his engagement with hardcore was 'sporadic' and largely unenthusiastic.²³⁰ This meant his radio show 'missed a lot of important bands and they passed him by because hardcore music just wasn't for him... maybe it was too short and too noisy.' Dario also outlines the presence of genuine and active 'tension and non-acceptance of hardcore from Vidmar and others on the alternative cultural scene, especially to start with', rather than simple ignorance.²³¹ Igor and parts of Radio Študent were perceived as a barrier to 'acceptance of new music' and were held responsible for the perceived isolation of the Ljubljana hardcore scene, which at times escalated towards personal resentment.²³² Gigi concedes that whilst hardcore's disavowal of earlier waves of local punk in Ljubljana was genuinely felt and had a somewhat consistent ideological basis, it was also at times fuelled by performative gestures, relative naivety and generational incongruity: 'We were too shy, and maybe too arrogant. At times these big misunderstandings prevented us from coming together.'²³³ Aldo represented a trusted figure despite being a decade older than the collective, but also depicts conflicts between 'the old and the new.' However, his consistent embrace of the collective approach ensured allegiances between the collective, Borghesia and FV could be maintained, despite stylistic differences: 'They were against everything! I always liked this.'²³⁴ Guido Obradović's 1984 Yugoslavia scene report accordingly mentions Borghesia in the same breath as Stres DA and Odpadki Civilizacije, and David regarded the Ljubljana TV broadcasts of Borghesia videos and the hardcore punk production *Iskanje izgubljene caša* (In

²²⁹ Tožibabe *Dežuje* (FV Music, Ne! Records 2016); Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015; 'Graffiti', in: N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk pod Slovenci*, p.526

²³⁰ Robert states that Vidmar's unpopularity with the hardcore collective was, at times, the product of 'rumours and bullshit. At times it was like if you were doing something, you were bad!' Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015; Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016

²³¹ Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016

²³² Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

²³³ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

²³⁴ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

Search of Lost Time) as comparable alternatives to the 'the usual shit.'²³⁵ Personal and creative respect, alongside close personal relationships, combined with the practical help FV offered as a support system, a record label and via a physical space for concerts and socialising. The collective was open to other cultural scenes, providing they were compatible with their subversive ideals. Aldo also remembers his own conflicts with Igor Vidmar, which demonstrated this:

He didn't like us [FV] and the disco for some reason, but would often attend anyway. I wouldn't say he wanted a monopoly on the punk scene, but perhaps there was an element of that. Borghesia didn't have a cool relationship with him and we knew he didn't like us, but we weren't sure why. I was a big fan of everything new, whilst he would sometimes be dismissive of things until *NME* or *Melody Maker* started to write about them.²³⁶

The ideology of the Ljubljana hardcore scene was shaped by more than just interactions and conflicts with the alternative culture of the city and punk predecessors. Whilst these often operated as a springboard for further action, the individuals that comprised the collective extended critical approaches to a disparate range of subjects.

'Everything is Alive!': Punk, Politics and The Ideology of Ljubljana Hardcore

The Ljubljana hardcore scene represents an antagonistic subculture comprised of a politically and socially engaged section of the final generation of adolescents to live in Slovenia as part of socialist Yugoslavia. The height and subsequent decline of hardcore punk in Ljubljana directly preceded the publication of the 57th issue of *Nova Revija* in 1987, often identified as the start of the process which led to Slovene independence. Involvement in hardcore punk automatically positioned participants as subversive, with Ogrinc describing how, by 1985, the image and music of punk had become 'undoubtedly radicalised', expressing 'visions of

²³⁵ G. Obradović, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Feedback Fanzine* (1984); 'David' *Dvadeset 4 časa* Issue 8 (Aug 1986)

²³⁶ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/16

problems in personal and slightly naïve ways.²³⁷ Dissent often focused upon general desires for freedom and self expression, the will to escape from what was regarded as the willing and unthinking conformity of the majority of citizens and elements of hypocrisy within the Yugoslav political system. Whilst the legacy of the Nazi Punk Affair had informed the approach of the collective, and David describes that the effectiveness of the smears against punk continued to affect the public psyche, hardcore punk focused upon a range of experiences.²³⁸ They decried the lack of media support and public interest, whilst also demonstrating their distaste for the mainstream. UBR suggest that the hardcore collective increasingly rejected dialogue with the Yugoslav system, which they regarded as irreparably corrupted by 'communist opportunists'.²³⁹ The hardcore collective consciously rejected any form of authority beyond the boundaries of subculture and refused involvement with mainstream society wherever possible.²⁴⁰ This cast the scene as an inherently dissident movement, reflecting what Ogrinc outlines as the scene's operation as a 'somewhat isolated' and self sufficient subculture, operating as 'the symptom of the symptom' and embodying the 'hardness of hardcore'. However, whilst satisfied with occupying a 'subcultural ghetto inside the already ghettoised subcultural scene', hardcore simultaneously critiqued the mainstream from this perspective.²⁴¹ This stretched beyond lyrics, artwork and fanzines to see punks seize upon fleeting and limited, but nevertheless crucial, glimpses of alternative ways of living, from the original public punk 'hangouts', such as 'Johnny Rotten Square' and parks in the Šiška district, to the crucial underground spaces that FV utilised for discos and concerts.²⁴² Brian Tucker describes the spaces that punks carve out for themselves in this respect as 'heterotopias of resistance' which operate as 'shelters in which members of a subculture can experience some semblance of freedom'. However, as David describes, hardcore punk in Ljubljana transcended this escapism and expanded personal friendships and 'hangouts' into what he calls

²³⁷ M. Ogrinc, 'Ni nam do tega, da bi postali zgodovina', p.100

²³⁸ David remembers that hardcore punks continued to be occasionally described as 'little Nazis' as a result of the Nazi Affair. Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

²³⁹ 'UBR Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 20 (December 1984)

²⁴⁰ Jeffs states that the hardcore scene 'had no interest in dialogue with the ruling forces or transforming them from within.' N. Jeffs. 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.372

²⁴¹ M. Ogrinc, 'Ni nam do tega, da bi postali zgodovina', pp.100-101

²⁴² Trg Republike in Ljubljana became a gathering point for many punks from 1977 onwards, and was renamed 'Johnny Rotten Square' after the lead singer of the Sex Pistols, with the name scrawled under the sign for Bar Medex on the edge of the square as confirmation, in large greaseproof paint. N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk pod Slovenci*, p.257

'shelters from the harsher side of life'. This in turn fuelled positive creative actions, methods of expression and 'actually doing things together, even as simple as releasing cassette tapes, producing fanzines and making bands.'²⁴³

Punk, often as a result of centralised modes of expression, is credited with pushing against limitations of freedom of expression. In a Yugoslav context it is described as 'helping society open up to the concept of social change, as a powerful force' which broke new ground and subverted the mainstream.²⁴⁴ From a historical perspective this often represents its most compelling characteristic, and Igor Vidmar concedes that whilst the initial explosion of punk in the city may not have changed the system, it had a tangible effect on social atmospheres and dragged:

Latent intolerance within the system out into the open, attacked it and exhibited... an unprecedented freedom of expression... offering an outlet for youth dissatisfaction, provoking public debate on taboo topics and opening up new kinds of media.²⁴⁵

As an alternative grassroots youth culture, hardcore represented a spontaneous and instinctive movement which affirmed cultural pluralisation, with the Ljubljana hardcore scene not only building upon the foundations of earlier waves of punk, albeit as a minor subculture, but regularly interacting with wider social movements and critiquing its surroundings. Vidmar says that punk initially protested against the 'drabness and over regulation of life and culture, the lack of freedom of expression' and 'class divides between the regime elite and ordinary people.' It then expanded towards active mockery of the Communist Party and associated youth conformism, with expressions of alienation and teen angst positioned in opposition to official socialist humanist policies.²⁴⁶ The hardcore scene regularly included wider society in its lyrical crosshairs and many of the aforementioned critiques of their punk predecessors were motivated by what they perceived as failings, limitations and hypocrisies *within* punk scenes and 'the alternative' with regards to

²⁴³ B. Tucker, 'Punk Places: The role of space in subcultural life', in: Z. Furness (ed), *Punkademics* (Autonomedia, 2012), p.210; Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

²⁴⁴ L. Athanasopoulou, 'Who Gives A Shit' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 378 (November 2014)

²⁴⁵ I. Vidmar, *Interview* <http://members.iinet.net.au/~predrag/vidmar.html> [Accessed 12/08/2017]

²⁴⁶ I. Vidmar, 'Slo Punk 1977-1987- Maximum Impact' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 374 (July 2014)

their interactions with the mainstream that they believed punk should reject.

However, as Mike Dines argues, to merely contemplate subsequent waves of punk as reactions to the first, and to categorise punk scenes as primarily self-referential, misses much in terms of the dynamics and motives of participants and ignores much of the vibrancy of these scenes.²⁴⁷ As UBR describe in a contemporary interview, many bands formed in Ljubljana so that there was a local representative of the kind of punk young people were listening to, simply forming 'because there was no one playing this kind of music.'²⁴⁸ The facilitation of personal and political expression was undoubtedly important, combining with community building, escapism, rebellion, the ability to create distinct personal images as an assertion of difference, and perhaps most importantly, the exciting and visceral appeal of punk from a musical perspective. A contemporary interview with a young female hardcore punk outlines how the complementary appeals of hardcore were rarely experienced or considered in isolation, if at all. She argues that the scene represented an intoxicating, yet variable space which allowed those involved to 'switch off from everything else, except for having fun with like-minded people. We are full of energy, we are crazy and everything is alive!'²⁴⁹

As Matthew Worley identifies in his study of UK punk in the late 1970s, both left and right wing organisations saw punk as a potentially viable political tool and accordingly attempted to gain footholds within the scene. Punk was never fully incorporated into a particular political struggle however, and remained a violently contested site of engagement.²⁵⁰ Lasse of The Shitlickers outlines the apathy, resistance, and suspicion of Swedish hardcore punks in response to political recruitment attempts, as 'hardcore punk rockers were not politically one sided, which was liberating, because a true punk rocker cannot by definition be bound by any political, religious or other agenda.'²⁵¹ This is not to say that hardcore and punk are inherently or necessarily apolitical, and *Maximum RocknRoll* has continually

²⁴⁷ M. Dines, 'Let Your Self-Determination Over-Ride Indoctrination', in: M. Dines and M. Worley (eds) *The Aesthetics of Our Anger- Anarcho-Punk, Politics and Music*, p.267

²⁴⁸ 'UBR Interview' *Vrnitev Odpisanih* Issue 2 (Summer 1984)

²⁴⁹ 'Interviews' in: N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk pod Slovenci*, p.475

²⁵⁰ M. Worley, 'Shot By Both Sides-Punk, Politics and the End of "Consensus"' *Contemporary British History* Vol. 26, Issue 3 (2012), pp. 333-354

²⁵¹ 'Shitlickers Interview', *Negative Insight Fanzine* Issue 3 (2017)

encouraged the utilisation of political potentials. Yet, as founder and former editor Tim Yohannen describes, punk 'has always consisted of a complex and dynamic mixture of progressive, neutral and reactionary elements.'²⁵² Mimi Thi Nguyen outlines how punk can reproduce 'sectarian, masculinist and hierarchal' approaches to 'gender, race, indigeneity and sexuality.'²⁵³ Michelle Phillipov acknowledges that whilst punk often embodies leftist agendas, academic accounts should not treat exceptions to this, such as the presence of right wing or fascist ideologies, as merely insignificant aberrations within an otherwise left-wing movement.²⁵⁴ Central tenets of punk, such as DIY and the emphasis placed upon freedom of expression, can be utilised for a range of political ends. Brian Tucker concedes that whilst punk spaces *can* operate as sites of resistance against power and dominant hierarchies, they also 'remain sites of power, exclusion and normalisation... shielding from certain discourses, but not others.'²⁵⁵

Attempts to define the socio-political content of punk, such as Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Craig O'Hara's *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise!* and Simon Frith's *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock n' Roll*, generally settle upon static categorisations of specific moments of punk history as leftist, subcultural rebellions against mainstream identities and corporate cultural market forces. However, as Mindy Clegg outlines, the 'mirage' of punk as an initially pure subculture which became exploited and appropriated by the mainstream, which in turn resulted in the original innovators burning out and selling out, often attempts to write meaning onto punks rather than utilising their own expressions.²⁵⁶ Treating punk ethics as fixed or homogenous results in the imposition of inflexibility, simplification and selectivity of issues, with researchers thus overlooking the vastness, variability and internal inconsistencies of worldwide punk which are incompatible with the application of universally definable, consistent or dominant philosophies. Punk regularly transcends political spectrums

²⁵² 'The Punk Counterculture', *Utne Reader* (June/July 1986), p.62

²⁵³ M. Thi Nguyen and G. Nikpour, *Punk*, p.3;

²⁵⁴ M. Phillipov, 'Haunted by the Spirit of '77: Punk Studies and the persistence of Politics' *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (September 2006), p.392

²⁵⁵ B. Tucker, 'Punk Places', p.211

²⁵⁶ D. Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Methuen & Co, 1979); C. O'Hara (ed) *The Philosophy of Punk- More Than Noise!* (AK Press, 1999); S. Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock n' Roll* (Pantheon, 1981); M. L. Clegg, *Through the Roof and Underground- Translocal Hardcore Punk in Los Angeles and Ljubljana*, pp.6-7

and incorporates elements of disparate, and at times somewhat incompatible, ideologies. Popular and academic accounts are often guilty of glossing over these complexities and nuances, despite the fact that they can help explain the vitality of punk as an elastic, abstract and disparate culture which reacts in diverse ways to a range of authority. Established narratives, which trace the 'beginning' and, often even more inaccurately, the 'end' of punk are instead favoured, including the attribution of one-dimensional and static oppositional characteristics.

The cultural and societal significance of punk, interactions within and against mainstream culture and society and issues of political relevance and internal political manifestations are frequently considered *within* punk scenes. Almost from the outset punks were conscious of, and reacted against, the potential for descent into posturing and sloganeering and disparities between lyrical stances and practical impacts. Blitz (UK) notably tackled perceived performativity within punk on their debut 7" single, stating that whilst there were '45 revolutions playing on your stereo', there was 'not one revolution on the street'.²⁵⁷ Later scenes were often formed, or at least motivated, upon the basis of putting attitudes into practice, from the ardent adoption of DIY as an organisational principle, to the active maintenance of anarchistic social spaces, such as Dial House, the operational base for Crass. Engagement in punk orientated political disobedience and direct action, notably in the shape of the UK based *Stop the City* protests in 1983 and 1984.²⁵⁸

Punk has often been shaped by refusals to engage with authority figures. Alongside rejections of the mainstream, this can exacerbate the existence of inaccuracies and confusion, with punks on a collective and individual basis often hostile to outsider engagement, especially those which present dynamic and complex actions as the product of simple, static and singular ideologies. This tendency was reflected in Ljubljana by Tožibabe's outright refusal to 'define the hardcore ideology' in a contemporary interview, with Marsa arguing that the requirement of punks to provide a definition of 'what punk is' is simply 'irritating' in its ubiquity.²⁵⁹ Grassroots approaches to understanding and outlining the motivations which drive specific iterations of punk provide more compelling pictures, placing specific

²⁵⁷ '45 Revolutions', Blitz *All Out Attack* (No Future, 1981)

²⁵⁸ I. Glasper, *The Day the Country Died* p.31

²⁵⁹ 'Tožibabe- punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core', *Stop* (12/6/1986)

moments of activity within more accurate contexts, tackling clichés and avoiding the reproduction of tropes that occur when punk is regarded from above, outside, or as part of a pre-conceived process. In order for any conclusions to be made with regards to Slovene hardcore punk's interactions with wider processes in Slovene society, it cannot be relegated to a one-dimensional semantic tool, or simply an example of an uncomplicated manifestation of 'rebellion' or 'protest' alone.

Prior to the emergence of hardcore, punk in Ljubljana generally featured political content only within the context of police repression and other 'extreme situations' that directly impacted upon the scene. As Gregor Tomc argues, for punks, 'the really interesting things were not happening in factories or at political meetings, but in their free time, filled with subcultural self-expression.'²⁶⁰ Neven Korda also suggests that punk did not represent an explicitly or consciously transformative socio-political force, and instead expanded upon pre-existing foundations in punk specific contexts.²⁶¹ For many individuals who became active within the hardcore scene, the fact that it represented a new and different approach in this regard was important, and, as Gigi stresses, the energy, freshness and honesty of hardcore was central to the embryonic, malleable movement.²⁶² As a subculture that was shaped by participants, hardcore offered opportunities for young people to claim control of something which facilitated unique expressions and different forms of creativity. The resonance of conscious politicism, the adoption of specific lifestyles and attempts to enact genuine change varied amongst individuals. Marsa emphasises that hardcore was a vehicle for people that 'had so much to say', but acknowledges that the sheer 'chaos and thrash' of the scene often blurred the expressions that were made.²⁶³ Mojca, agrees saying that desires to participate, 'with our own voices... to have the guts to speak from the heart', reflected hardcore as a broad 'state of mind.'²⁶⁴ The ideas and ideologies which were usually categorised as the 'spirit of the time', represent a compelling, but regularly flexible manifesto, which, as Dare suggests, often reflected the fact that people involved were also 'trying to find themselves', with hardcore representing a learning curve that could influence this

²⁶⁰ G. Tomc, 'The Politics of Punk', p.133

²⁶¹ N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns', in: B. Škrjanec (ed) *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni Grafični Likovni Center, 2008), p.311

²⁶² Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014; Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

²⁶³ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

²⁶⁴ Krish, Mojca, Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

process.²⁶⁵

Peter Dale casts doubt on the extent to which punk has ever regularly embodied anything 'more than music' in practice, and describes the idea as 'largely a conceit', with music consistently central to it's appeal. However, members of the Ljubljana hardcore scene consistently held a stake in the idea of punk as an ideology or a spirit, even if this fluctuated in intensity or varied in scope.²⁶⁶ Whilst music was consistently highlighted as central, and whilst hardcore was often resistant to the adoption of specific political programmes, on a micro level, political interactions were ubiquitous and often inescapable. As one member of the hardcore scene described in 1984:

Punk is more than just music, but it's not just an ideology either, I'm fully invested in the underground. To start with people thought punk was just a fashion, but now they are more threatened, because we have something inside our heads, and we are doing things. We are intellectuals, we think about things and are aware of what is happening around the world.²⁶⁷

More than any other aesthetic or ideological characteristic, punk has, often dismissively, been associated with youthful rebellion, incoherence, incomplete justifications and unspecific targets. Cashmore argues that punk initially blossomed because it could be used to articulate widely experienced, genuine and deeply held sentiments in a mixture of 'bitterness, resentment and sometimes fury', but, despite material socio-economic circumstances and the clear political realities which created them, often presented a 'vague package of criticisms... few of them constructive.' He suggests punk regularly lacked an alternative vision, except for rebellion against 'every institution that seemed part of the status quo' and merely advocated generalised 'anarchy' in the place of existing social orders.²⁶⁸ Aleš of Niet describes his own similarly instinctive motivations for involvement, whereby he 'felt oppressed by everything that surrounded me, so yearned as an individual

²⁶⁵ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

²⁶⁶ P. Dale, 'More Than Music?', M. Dines and M. Worley (eds) *The Aesthetics of Our Anger: Anarcho-Punk, Politics and Music*, p.267

²⁶⁷ 'Interviews' in: N. Malečkar & T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk pod Slovenci*, p.475

²⁶⁸ E. Cashmore, *No Future- Youth and Society* (Heinemann, 1984), p. 36

for freedom, even if I didn't know exactly why at the time.'²⁶⁹ Igor, also of Niet, agrees, 'we rebelled because we were young, I don't think there was much else to it.'²⁷⁰ However, Ogrinc argues that symbolic and artistic rebellion nevertheless contributes to 'the creation of different futures', by shaping 'the spectrum of subcultural responses and the influence they can have on society, through opening spaces for further thinking.' He credits punk with influence over not only fashion, but the encouragement of self expression and protest.²⁷¹

Many scenes in the 1980s, particularly anarcho-punk, actively attempted to harness punk's energy for political means, and reacted against presentations of punk as nothing more than youthful antagonism. This approach influenced sections of the Ljubljana hardcore collective, which developed coherent, albeit often patchy ideological approaches in response. As Miha argues:

The lyrics expressed views, passions and feelings and focused on wanting to be able to live our own lives. They were about everyday problems, but were also concerned with rejecting and protesting against the stereotypes that could symbolically imprison us.²⁷²

Whilst politically subversive domestic bands such as the avant-garde group Laibach developed specific ideologies that dictated their approach, hardcore punk arrived less deliberately at political content. Cultural tendencies, directness of expression and instinctive responses to immediate socio-political circumstances combined into a distinctive ideology.²⁷³ However, as Mojca suggests, this centred on broad 'ways of thinking', rather than specific allegiance to particular strands of political ideologies.²⁷⁴ Aldo suggests this reflected the wider alternative scene in the city, which was also less interested in 'using specific political terms, than the actual ideas behind them.' He describes how desires for alternatives to both western and eastern forms of cultural activity resulted in a focus upon:

²⁶⁹ Češnovar, Aleš, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

²⁷⁰ Dernovšek, Igor, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

²⁷¹ M. Ogrinc, 'Ni nam do tega, da bi postali zgodovina', p.101

²⁷² Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

²⁷³ Ibid

²⁷⁴ Krish, Mojca, Interview, Ljubljana 13/03/2015

Individual freedom and independence from state institutions. We had some theories, but without specific political connotations, and we just did our own things in our own autonomous spaces, connecting different cultures to demonstrate different, utopian aesthetics.²⁷⁵

Nevertheless, a number of interviewees contravene cynicism or political ambiguity and place politics at the centre of their involvement in hardcore. Dare represents the most firm adherent of this approach and describes how:

Hardcore was a social movement and every possibility of expressing criticism against the current system was very welcome. Punks gathering in Lenin Park gave a base for actions and the exchange of ideas, as well as demonstrations, and we used music, lyrics and styles of dress as tools to speak about the things that were important to us. By doing this we demanded changes.²⁷⁶

Joze Suhadolnik similarly regards the wider punk scene, including hardcore, as explicitly and inherently political, describing it as 'the biggest sort of rebellion available at the time and a way of protesting social differences.'²⁷⁷ Marsa also suggests that the central tenets of hardcore punk and the importance placed upon them, such as individual freedom, often necessitated the development of more substantial and expressly political approaches, as 'I could only be free if others were too.'²⁷⁸ Political expressions were also extended beyond purely reactive statements and issues relating directly to punk, and held a genuine appeal of their own. Irena describes how the initial appeal of punk, including the music itself, would have had less resonance and her interest may have faded much faster, if it were not also underpinned by politics. Whilst:

Music came first, and the idea of it as an organised systematic rebellion is bullshit, because we didn't know so much about the system at our age... we just reacted to the ways the state affected our lives, often instinctively. We

²⁷⁵ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

²⁷⁶ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

²⁷⁷ Suhadolnik, Jože, Interview via telephone, 25/8/2014

²⁷⁸ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

promoted anti-establishment ideas and the message that newer generations wanted to change their environments. When we later became more aware of radical ideas we realised the significance of a lot of this, and how we contributed to political changes, civil rights and democratisation. It wasn't as small as some people might say.²⁷⁹

Robert expresses some fatigue with regards to the presence of political punk 'cliches', but stops short of rejecting the political content of the scene outright, recognising elements of politicism to his own approaches and punk's potential as a messenger to connect with people directly,

You'd hear things like fuck the police 20 million times. I remember thinking I couldn't fuck anymore police! I didn't think anything was wrong with those kind of statements but I used more personal lyrics. Criticisms were expressed in more positive ways and I thought more about trying to change individuals rather than the whole country, because you can have some influence over young people that listen to your music. Hardcore could mean that they start to think a bit differently, to stop discrimination, stupidity, homophobia and to think critically about what politicians would say.²⁸⁰

Dario Cortese never became active musically or within the inner workings of the collective. He regards himself as something of an outlier, as the fact that he 'had opinions but was never an activist' separated him from elements of the 'very' political scene.²⁸¹ As Marsa states, for many involved with hardcore, rebellion was about more than 'being different for a pose. It was about daring to express yourself, even if it was not acceptable and little people battling the system, not following their rules, and living.'²⁸² Initial experiences of punk escapism and desires to live differently were channelled into the creation of openly political and international countercultural communities, based around mutual co-operation. As Ian Mackaye of Minor Threat, Fugazi and Dischord Records, describes, the appeal of 'creating

²⁷⁹ Povse, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

²⁸⁰ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

²⁸¹ Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016

²⁸² Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

your own community' and not 'needing anyone to approve it' became crucial.²⁸³ Joe Briggs also describes the appeal of building alternatives to violence, greed and selfishness as 'worlds that bubble and thrive in the cracks and margins, that we can exist in for weekends or moments.' He argues that this appeal goes beyond escapism from unattractive realities, towards more practical action.²⁸⁴ Božo agrees: 'rebellious was important from the start, but we soon became more serious and had ideas we wanted to follow.'²⁸⁵ David describes how more conscious action often grew from initially incoherent rebellious streaks, as whilst 'the will to rebel was almost everything initially, that kind of thing wore out. We grew up and didn't want to just throw bottles and scream forever, we created things and had specific ideas about the world around us.'²⁸⁶ Music, rebellion and associated dynamics that are often considered central to the character of punk undoubtedly proved compelling to Yugoslav youth, but rather than separately considered isolated entities, were viewed as intractable and integral components. Reflective accounts have acknowledged how music, ideas of rebellion and political ideologies may have been particularly important to individuals, but breaking punk into component parts rather than recognising it as a complex whole can often betray experiences of punk as a cultural force, a social dynamic, and a difficult to define spirit or state of mind.

The band names adopted in Ljubljana are often representative of the presence of a guiding spirit which incorporated provocative symbolism and conformity to provocative punk traditions. These rallying cries and mission statements were also informed by societal attitudes towards punk following the Nazi Punk Affair. III. Kategorija referred to the 'third category' of meat available for purchase, 'the worst part of the animal', which was utilised as a metaphor for punk's status in society, housing the 'worst of the human population.'²⁸⁷ Odpadki Civilizacije (Waste Civilisation) and UBR (Uporniki Brez Razloga/Rebels Without A Cause) actively described arriving at their names via reclamation of representations of punk, 'as immature idiots who are rebelling without a cause.'²⁸⁸ Stres DA (Stres Državnega

²⁸³ I. Mackaye, 'Roll Up Your Sleeves' DVD, Dylan Haskins (dir) (Dublin, Project Arts Centre and DCTV, 2008)

²⁸⁴ J. Briggs, 'We Will Do It Ourselves', in: G. Sarell, *Subverse Fanzine* (#2- DIY, 2007)

²⁸⁵ Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

²⁸⁶ Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

²⁸⁷ III. Kategorija, 'Statement' *Hardcore Ljubljana* (FV Založba, 1986)

²⁸⁸ 'UBR Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 20 (1984)

Aparata/Stress of the State Apparatus) explicitly reference the state against which they railed. Many bands also provided explicit ideological and artistic statements within the inlays of records and cassettes, as clear documentation of the ideologies which underpinned their music. III. Kategorija's direct and explicitly political statement which accompanied the *Hardcore Ljubljana* compilation outlines that the band stand for 'justice and honesty, refute the hypocrisy of violent systems and the inherent rot which leads to demagoguery.' The system is positioned as oppressing 'poor and stupid' workers, with society's games of football, the 'manipulated media and television' turning people away from 'real problems' and into 'robots without feelings, without an instinct for self preservation.'²⁸⁹ The statement avoids specific references to communism, socialism or names for political alternatives, reflecting similar statements from UBR and Stres DA, which express criticisms of society and the pacification of individuals within, without advocating specific political alternatives or delving too far into political theory. At times, this explicit, but tempered criticism appears to be influenced by self censorship, with Stres DA actively acknowledging the presence of this within punk on the inlay to the *Kaj je alternativa* cassette (See Fig 5). The use of an anarchy symbol is somewhat obscured, alongside an active reference to censorship, whilst what appears to be an anti-communist statement is entirely crossed out. The seemingly safer statements with regards to Fascism and Capitalism remain, as well as the unmistakably punk statement of 'Fuck Everyone!'

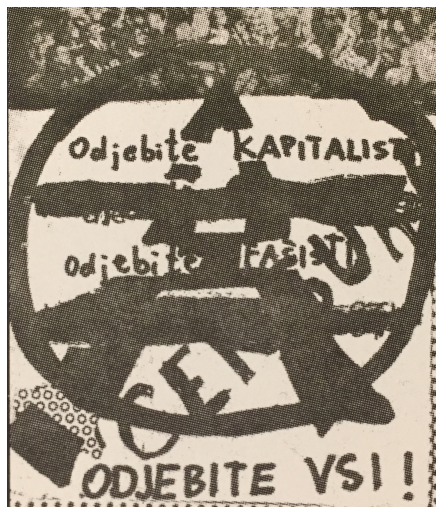


Fig 5: Stres DA artwork from *Kaj je alternativa* (1983)

²⁸⁹ Ibid

Nikolai Jeffs describes the hardcore scene's ideology as 'without question, a latent and sometimes quite manifest anarchist counter culture.' Many punks, whilst 'opposing hierarchy in society', frequently rejected 'belonging to any ideology or political orientation', often due to the perception of rigidity associated with firm associations to specific political programmes.²⁹⁰ As a result, there are few direct contemporary lyrical references to anarchism or other political ideologies and conscious signifiers. Associated concepts were presented in more isolated or subtle ways, which saw punks promoting 'unilateralism, creativity, safety and personal freedom.'²⁹¹ A SOR (Sistem Organizirane Regresije/ System of Organised Regression) retrospective discography features a biography of the band, which describes them as 'bellicose pacifists and caustic anarchists', with punk a 'vision of their protest.' It emphasises their lack of regard for 'social norms' and rejection of 'all forms of state constraint... exploitation, profiteering, racism and violence.'²⁹² This is largely consistent with the outward expressions of the Ljubljana hardcore collective, but few other statements, especially from the 1980s, see bands label themselves in this way.

UBR made statements of explicitly political youthful protest from the outset and described how their generation had been 'cheated', with their ideas 'spat upon and thrown out' for being morally unacceptable, which they suggest exposes the 'lies of our society' behind facades.²⁹³ This was informed by immediate experiences of repression prior to their formation. This imagery was furthered by an uncompromising statement which accompanied the *Corpus Delicti 7"* in 1984. Questioning how long the public could remain silent, falsely happy and healthy, UBR depict the Yugoslav masses 'brainwashed from the cradle to the grave... forced to be a slave and a zombie behind the machine.' They emphatically decried steps towards 'totalitarianism' and 'media control' which made individuals 'just another number in the state machinery', describing the dominant political culture as 'shit... the leaders [are] corrupted and the police have all the power.' The

²⁹⁰ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.372; 'Interviews' N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk pod Slovenci*, p.472

²⁹¹ Goran, 'Interviews', in: N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk pod Slovenci*, p.468

²⁹² SOR were from Idrija, a small town around 50km west of Ljubljana. SOR *System organizirane regresije* (Ne! Records, 2014)

²⁹³ UBR *Kaj je alternativa* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983)

accompanying artwork is similarly evocative, suggesting different realities behind general perceptions. However, the image which adorned the rear of the 7" (See Fig 6) is demonstrative of their political approach, as whilst it outlines the hypocrisies and injustices of Yugoslav society, UBR refrain from endorsing specific alternatives.²⁹⁴ A graffitied wall features a crossed out statement of 'Peace and Love', which is replaced by the acerbic, undeniably punk, but largely non committal, 'Piss and Law'.

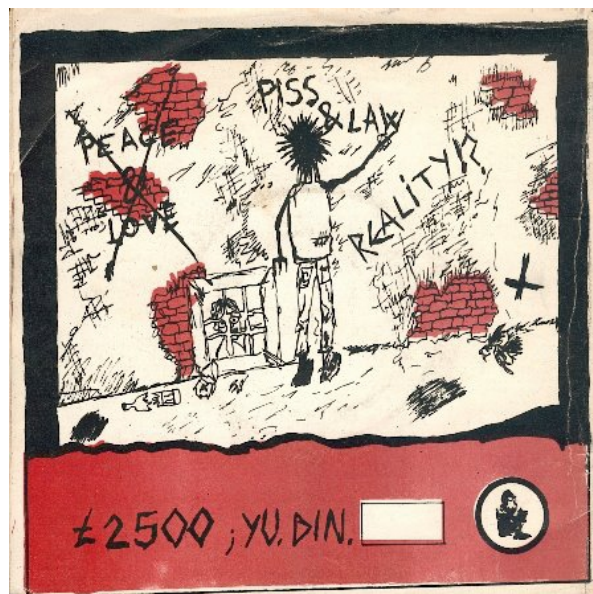


Fig 6: Rear cover to UBR *Corpus Delicti* 7" (1984)

Lyrics were viewed as crucial demonstrations of hardcore's ideological depth. A contemporary interview with Marsa saw her deride the presence of 'stupid lyrics' within the scene. David's scene reports were similarly critical, describing the short lived band Invazija's lyrics as 'somewhat immature and still developing', and referencing the 'same old problem of bad lyrics' with regards to Odpadki Civilizacije.²⁹⁵

Throughout the life of the scene, Ljubljana hardcore bands created a relatively consistent lyrical atmosphere, drawing upon familiar motifs to paint pictures and

²⁹⁴ UBR *Corpus Delicti* (Attack Punk, 1984)

²⁹⁵ Odpadki Civilizacije also acknowledged that their initial lyrics left something to be desired in a contemporary interview with *One World* fanzine. 'Tožibabe Interview', *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 36 (May 1986); 'Yugoslavia Scene Report', *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 31 (December 1985); 'Odpadki Civilizacije Interview' *One World* Issue 1 (1985)

respond to their everyday lives and frustrations. These often depicted a futureless generation, unable to escape undesired and unhappy realities. Recurring themes of darkness, cold winds and rain, most notably in the title track of Tožibabe's EP *Dežuje*, combined with consistent depictions of empty, blank and dead streets and feelings of fear, entrapment, and claustrophobia. Nihilism and extreme personal expressions were less common, but Depresija's lyrics criticised religion, nationalism, humanity and modern society, depicting depression and even suicide as a consequence.²⁹⁶ Epidemija's depict being trapped by a 'grey fog winding through the town' and III.Kategorija use a similarly oppressive metaphor within the song 'Bršljan' (Ivy), describing being forced to 'fight for freedom... the ivy winding around me, climbing the communist walls.' These images also resonate with depictions of a silent and grey societal mass, engulfed by an official ideology which suppresses individualism.²⁹⁷ Titles such as Tesnoba (Anxiety) from Stres DA, Propad (Collapse) by Odpadki Civilzacije, and Tožibabe's 'Moja Prazina' (My Vacancy) are emblematic of mental oppression. Tožibabe describe feeling lost and empty as a result: 'my head is vacant, my heart is vacant, my thoughts are vacant.'²⁹⁸ Their lyrics were consistently ambiguous, but like much of the collective, decried feelings of paranoia, detachment and isolation. The title track of *Dežuje* states: 'I can't see, I can't feel, people are around me, I'm scared, trying to run, to get away, but I can't move', whilst the refrain of 'Trash' sarcastically states that 'there is no reason for panic, no reason for fear, no reason for alarm.' *Dežuje* also utilises atmospheric soundscapes of thunder and rain, alongside Tomaso Albinoni's 'Adagio', with slow, terse and anxious build ups giving way to frantic and menacing gothic punk. The description of a 'head swimming' from 'looking at all these people, grinning maliciously at me, they are not people, they are puppets', is perhaps the most striking combination of the ideological attitudes expressed by the hardcore collective and the utilisation of genre-specific, darkly creative poetic impulses. Tožibabe describe their lyrics as 'much more personal' than many punk bands, juxtaposing imagery of love, murder, violence and blood in often ambiguous ways, but savage indictments of everyday society were also

²⁹⁶ 'Življenje' Depresija *Red in disciplina* (Attack Punk, 2013)

²⁹⁷ 'Varaždinec' Epidemija *Hardcore Ljubljana* (FV Založba, 1986); 'Bršljan' III. Kategorija *Hardcore Ljubljana* (FV Založba, 1986)

²⁹⁸ 'Moja Prazina', Tožibabe *Dežuje* (FV Založba, 1986)

unmistakable.²⁹⁹ Their lyrics represent personal reflections upon a number of adolescent frustrations and emotions, that were informed by, but also transcended, the specific socio-political environments in which they were conceived. However, these approaches were also informed by universally experienced creative impulses and adherence to internationally developed genre-specific trends.

Whilst interviewees often expressed identification with many of the ideological and insular trends that informed lyrical content in other hardcore scenes, few songs in Ljubljana tackled associated issues, such as animal rights, vegetarianism, sexism or racism. David's *Vrnitev Odpisanih* fanzine features an article about healthy eating and the prevention of disease, recommending the adoption of plant based diets for health and animal welfare reasons, but such discussions are fairly rare within the documentary and musical legacy of the hardcore scene.³⁰⁰ Quod Massacre and III. Kategorija both mention alcohol abuse within their lyrics, although both bands seem to be less inspired by the straight edge subculture that disavowed drugs and alcohol in the US, than witnessing localised examples of overconsumption. Alcohol is depicted as a 'sweetheart that destroys thoughts' and provokes ecstasy, whilst sending the drinker to oblivion, corruption and decay on III. Kategorija's 'Alkoholna pozaba' (Alcohol Amnesia), in much the same way that the band decried other societal distractions in their aforementioned statement.³⁰¹

Explicit criticism of the Yugoslav system was often combined with poetic imagery that, like the first wave's utilisation of satire and irony, could obscure content whilst producing compelling forms of artistic and political expression. Epidemija make symbolic reference to a waning 'red star' when describing 'every colour fading sooner or later.' This was a symbolic portrayal of the betrayal of communist ideals that they believed had occurred within Yugoslavia. Stres DA's 'Bla' provides a conversely direct example, featuring the refrain 'Communism ha ha ha! Socialism bla bla bla!'. 'Brez besed' (Without Words) unapologetically depicts the exploitation of individuals within the Yugoslav system.³⁰² III. Kategorija address

²⁹⁹ I. Vidmar, 'Tozibabe- Punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core' *Stop* (12/6/1986)

³⁰⁰ *Vrnitev Odpisanih Fanzine* Issue 2 (Summer 1984)

³⁰¹ 'Alkoholna pozaba' III. Kategorija *Hardcore Ljubljana* (FV Založba, 1986)

³⁰² 'Vaši nismo' Epidemija *Hardcore Ljubljana* (FV Založba, 1986); 'Bla', 'Brez besed' Stres DA *Kaj je alternativa* (SKUČ, 1983)

the process by which ordinary people have become 'tools... giving up their souls just to follow the flag' on 'Vdan v usodo (Found in Fate), and 'Zakaj sem bil lutka' (Why I was a Puppet) unambiguously decries the 'leaders from birth to death', who lie when speaking of ideals 'of democracy, peace and freedom', with the song's protagonist 'blindly following them... becoming a victim of the government.'³⁰³ Gigi describes similar processes of control on 'Clovek vrednota sistema' (Man, Systems Value), directly addressing the listener and referring to a shadowy 'they', who 'manipulate, force into you their ideas and bring you up in the spirit of revolutions past', whilst also claiming that people are regarded as nothing more than a number.³⁰⁴ The majority of lyrics positioned the public as helpless, passive and often unconscious victims, in line with self-perceptions of punks as free-thinkers, who stood apart from the grey mass. Mojca suggests that 'thinking differently to the rest of the population wasn't welcome... we were socially dangerous and had problems as a result.' Gigi suggests that 'young people thinking with our own heads' became positioned as 'foreign agents.'³⁰⁵ Odpadki Civilizacije's 'Mladina' (Youth) is a rallying cry in this regard, depicting young people as a dissident section of society, no longer in thrall to controlling ideologies. They promise an uncompromising youth rebellion against oppression:

You promised us peace, life is now raids and suffering,
At school you taught us to write, but we learned to lie!
Kill me, you're not fooling the youth,
We won't swallow it like cattle.
I'm dying for this system...
I condemn this system, I condemn this shit!³⁰⁶

Whilst hardcore punk expressed rebellion against the official ideology of Yugoslav communism, and, as Ryback highlights, repression of rock culture in communist states was often positioned as an attack upon America's consumer culture and economic system, involvement in hardcore punk did not indicate an outright rejection of socialism or leftist political forms, nor an embrace of capitalism.³⁰⁷

³⁰³ Stres DA/ Depresija/ III. Kategorija *Red In Disciplina* (Attack Punk, 2013)

³⁰⁴ 'Clovek Vrednota Sistema' UBR *Kaj Je Alternativa* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983)

³⁰⁵ Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015; Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

³⁰⁶ 'Mladina' Odpadki Civilizacije *Kaj e alternativa* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983)

³⁰⁷ T. W. Ryback, *Rock Around the Block: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, 1954-1988* (Oxford University Press, 1990)

Punks in Ljubljana developed informed and realised attitudes towards the experiences of punks in the west and political realities outside of Yugoslavia, primarily by exposure to frustrations expressed through punk, but also through direct experiences when travelling. Gigi remembers witnessing homeless and unemployed people in Britain 'searching through junkyards for things they could sell or reuse', and states that whilst he was frequently critical of the system, he also refused to idealise the west. He describes that he consistently viewed his own views as 'more pro [socialist] ideas than the people who harassed me!'³⁰⁸ David agrees with this portrayal, describing punk as genuinely occupying the ideological positions that the Communist Party merely 'claimed to represent', and argues that they were consequently motivated by the awareness of 'hypocrisy, the red bourgeoisie and the bullshit we were fed.'³⁰⁹ A number of songs also depicted unhappy realities behind ideological facades. Odpadki Civilizacije described how 'we organise the olympic games and build the heavenly palaces, but outside of this wealth is misery and poverty', whilst UBR juxtaposed a shining sun, birds singing and 'children playing without fear', with a 'hunch-backed old woman looking through the garbage for a piece of bread', on the ironically titled 'Lepote moje domovine' (The beauty of my homeland).³¹⁰

The hardcore scene also regularly referenced war and the military, combining the pacifist ideological tendencies of punk with Yugoslav-specific socio-political experiences. By the early 1980s anti-war ideologies had become integral to a range of artistic and musical strands of punk. Crass' bitterly ironic poster that accompanied their debut LP declared 'Your Country Needs You', accompanied by an image of a severed hand trapped in barbed wire. Discharge's *Why?* 12" featured the opening track 'Visions of War', and consistently focused upon the evils of armed conflict and casualties of military aggression.³¹¹ UBR would accordingly declare that 'not one anti-war song is boring or bad' and other Ljubljana hardcore bands seemingly took this attitude to heart, with few failing to tackle the subject at

³⁰⁸ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014;

³⁰⁹ Kržisnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

³¹⁰ 'Trenutek renice' Odpadki Civilizacije *Kaj je alternativa* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983); 'Lepote moje domovine', UBR *Kaj je alternativa* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983)

³¹¹ 'Visions of War', Discharge, *Why?* (Clay Records, 1981); Crass, *The Feeding of the 5000* (Small Wonder, 1978)

all.³¹² Odpadki Civilizacije's 'Vojna smrt' (War Death) took the 'haiku like' lyrics of Discharge to a seemingly inevitable conclusion, with the title of the track also representing the entire lyrical content of the song.³¹³ Stres DA's similarly titled 'Vonj smrti' and 'Bojevati se za nic' (Fight for Nothing) represent similarly generalised anti-war songs, but a handful of songs also transferred pacifist sentiments into Yugoslav contexts.³¹⁴ 'Vojaki' (Soldiers), also by Odpadki Civilizacije, makes reference to 'medals for killing', earned through fighting 'for the homeland', and III. Kategorija's 'Za tebe' represents the most comprehensive condemnation of Yugoslav militarism, with the repeated sarcastic refrain of 'for the homeland' decrying the level of spending on arms, generals, security, parades and 'more arms', funded by ordinary people within society.³¹⁵ Pacifist groups gathering within Slovenia in the 1980s represented a sustained political challenge to Yugoslav military celebration, largely built upon the legacies of partisan and anti-fascist victories. These groups would eventually force the introduction of civilian national service for conscientious objectors in 1988 and were complemented by hardcore punk's visceral pacifist vanguard that, exemplified by UBR's declaration that 'we believe in true peace, not peace with arms. PEACE CANNOT BE ACHEIVED WITH WEAPONS! Fuck all armies, throw away your weapons!'³¹⁶

Compulsory military service within Yugoslavia only encouraged resentment amongst members of the hardcore scene with regards to the army. Igor Vidmar describes it as 'the scourge of Slovenian and Yugo-punk... a quite deliberate measure to harass and curb the punk movement, when [the state] realised that it couldn't control it in the usual repressive ways.'³¹⁷ Whilst this depiction utilises poetic licence in claiming that national service, a long standing policy integral to Yugoslavia's approach to national defence, was shaped in response to punk, it nevertheless had a stifling effect on the hardcore scene.³¹⁸ Similar policies affected

³¹² 'UBR Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 20 (December 1984)

³¹³ 'Vojna smrt' Odpadki Civilizacije *Hardcore Ljubljana* (FV Založba, 1986)

³¹⁴ Stres DA *Kaj je alternativa* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983)

³¹⁵ 'Vojaki' Odpadki Civilizacije *Kaj je alternativa* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983); 'Za tebe' III. Kategorija *Hardcore Ljubljana* (FV Založba, 1986)

³¹⁶ 'UBR Interview', *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 20 (December 1984)

³¹⁷ I. Vidmar, 'Slo Punk 1977-1987- Maximum Impact' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 374 (July 2014)

³¹⁸ Yugoslavia's defence policy necessitated a large armed forces and mass mobilisation of civilians in the event of a major threat to its national security. National service was thus required, in order to ensure these individuals possessed a basic level of military training. 'MG15 Interview' *Feedback Fanzine* (1984)

contemporary scenes and bands elsewhere. MG15 describe it as the primary barrier to productivity in Spain. Yugoslav national service was compulsory for all men between the ages of 18 and 27 and included attempts to instil socialist values, which were particularly resented by members of the hardcore scene as they contravened the importance they placed upon individual autonomy and ideological freedom. Individuals were regularly sent to army barracks in a different republic for between one and three years and it was often impossible to maintain any practical links with home scenes.

Gigi describes the process as 'the graveyard of our bands', saying it loomed over hardcore, resented, but inevitable, and usually affected bands within a year of formation.³¹⁹ Marsa agrees, describing it as the primary reason for Ljubljana hardcore's decline, exacerbating the impact of fights and elements of burnout amongst participants.³²⁰ Dario Cortese's experiences encapsulate this dynamic. His first scene report references national service, 'which is supposed to be about honour... and fucking duty...', and he disappeared from the scene for several years after this. Upon his return in 1986, he stated that he had simply lost connection with the scene. Dare, of the punk band Kuzle, suggests that this was not particularly surprising because 'at that age years seem like decades. After we all served the country the world was a different place, we couldn't have continued, it wouldn't have felt right.'³²¹

Whilst it was not a deliberate attempt to stifle punk, national service frequently impacted upon the Ljubljana scene, and was regularly cited in *MRR* as responsible for stifling activity.³²² A 1987 report attributes the decline of Ljubljana hardcore directly to army service, as, whilst 'Ljubljana was once the most known hardcore centre in Yugoslavia, it is now quiet, because band members are in the army'.³²³ Some bands managed to replace members, and UBR trialled an alternative singer

³¹⁹ A scene report from 1986 describes how Bucko of III. Kategorija avoided service based after being sent home for being 'mentally deranged', but few other members of the scene were able to avoid service via the narrow range of available exemptions. 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 35 (April 1986); Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015; O. Berdak 'You're In The Army Now', *Citizenship in Southeast Europe* <http://www.citsee.eu/node/104> [Accessed 29/10/2016]

³²⁰ 'Tožibabe- punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core' Stop (12/6/1986)

³²¹ Kaurič, Dare, 'Kuzle Interview', *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 378, November 2014

³²² 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 35 (April 1986)

³²³ M. Stojc, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Ø Zine* Issue 1 (June 1987)

after Gigi left in 1986, as an indication of their desperation to continue, but for the most part members leaving for the army proved terminal.³²⁴

As with many contemporary scenes, the Ljubljana police represented a frequent sense of ire for the hardcore collective. Božo suggests that police harassment was often accepted as an inherent consequence of involvement in punk: 'I was hassled or in the police station all of the time, just because of my hair, because punks were public enemy number one for a time. They would say we were Nazis, stinky, anti-system, whatever they could.'³²⁵ Dare suggests that at times, even 'standing on a corner, dressed as a punk was regarded as demonstrative provocation to which the police and the conformist public majority responded, sometimes quickly and fiercely', whilst Irena recalls how the police regularly targeted punk discos and concerts, routinely stopping punks on their way home.³²⁶ These instances of police harassment were often routine and relatively mild, and a contemporary UBR interview plays down their experiences: 'The cops have given us some minor problems because of our lyrics, and they raided our house because of a poster, but we were never banned in any way.'³²⁷ Nevertheless, experience of inescapable and consistent, yet unpredictable, instances of harassment, combined with the threat of more violent approaches, influenced perceptions amongst the hardcore collective. As Gigi remembers:

They would stop us to look in our pockets, look at our identification, mostly it was just stupid things like that. But it felt that we were constantly at the customs... and treated like criminals. The first time I was laughing at the police, but then they beat me and I shut the fuck up! Repression felt strong to us sometimes, very strong. It died down after the Nazi Affair and we were left alone some of the time, but we were never sure how long it would stay like that.³²⁸

Punk photographer Jože Suhadolnik also describes how a tangible climate of fear

³²⁴ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 35 (April 1986)

³²⁵ Rakočević, Božo. Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

³²⁶ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014; Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

³²⁷ 'UBR Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 20 (December 1984)

³²⁸ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

persisted, which meant punks were 'a little bit scared all of the time. We felt like the police were chasing us.'³²⁹ David also highlights how 'unexpected' instances of repression, and the haphazard policing of punk contributed to an uncertain and confused situation, which played into this dynamic: 'Sometimes punks suddenly found themselves under investigation. The police would come and search houses early in the morning, just because we were writing letters to people in the UK or America.'³³⁰ Robert of Quod Massacre also suggests that 'talk' amongst the punk and hardcore scenes contributed to an almost paranoid and often imaginary climate, as police harassment and arrests were constantly discussed. Elements of exaggeration and the creation of a narrative of concerted repression could thus lead to inadvertent exaggeration of the actions of individual police and their attempts to limit hardcore:

Of course there were some shitty things, but it wasn't all that common. If you met a stupid policeman, he could make things hard, but that was normal with punk. It wasn't like we were all hiding when we had to go out on the streets, it was still pretty free.³³¹

The hardcore scene became relatively adept at dealing with limitations and police harassment, and Dare describes how it became 'standard practice' to rearrange lyrics and set lists in less incriminating manners when forced to give material to the police 'for personal investigation and control.'³³² Demands that were made in response were often simply ignored. As Igor Dernovšek of Niet remembers, 'a few times they wanted us to change our playlist... but we just played what we wanted anyway.'³³³ These experiences demonstrated the extent to which practical control of punk was often beyond the capabilities of the domestic police, which suggest that the presentation of a climate of police repression in Ljubljana was experienced in complex and often contradictory terms:

³²⁹ Suhadolnik, Jože, Interview via telephone, 25/08/2014

³³⁰ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

³³¹ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2015

³³² Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

³³³ 'Victim of Mankind' focused upon criticism of the failures of the Yugoslav revolution, which had become a 'closed circle', whilst 'The Hero' undermined the heroism of Yugoslav partisan fighters in the Second World War. Dernovšek, Igor, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

The west likes to talk about oppression in Yugoslavia... the communist tiger, and sometimes people in the punk scene believed that too. But in reality, it would maybe bark a little at us, but we mostly found that we could do everything that we wanted. Occasionally policemen, if it was at night and they thought that no one would see, would slap people that dressed different. But I think it was abuse of authority and power by that point, it wasn't so political or anything deeper.³³⁴

Božo was adamant that, regardless of the level to which the police desired control, the collective largely refused to allow it to interfere with cultural output and everyday actions: 'No, no, no, never.'³³⁵ Mojca concurs, stating that she did not 'really care how people saw us.' The importance of 'saying what was on your mind, to not to be frightened if the police was questioning you, to use the right to speak...' trumped reservations regarding involvement.³³⁶ Regardless of whether punks constructed inaccurate perceptions of censorship and repression, their defiance in response to this climate was unmistakable. As David remembers, 'a lot people thought there was control so they wouldn't speak too loud, they would keep their head down. We refused this, we always pushed the boundaries and spoke our minds.'³³⁷

As previously outlined, the hardcore scene privileged and centred conceptions of individualism and repeatedly called for cultural creativity and artistic freedom. Gigi argues that this often became the key motive for continued engagement, as subcultures, particularly punk, represented spaces in which young people could assert their right 'to be left alone and to lead our lives how we wanted, to travel, to play music, to buy records and to bring bands here. Just leave us alone!'³³⁸ Epidemija's 'Vaši nismo' (We're Not Yours) presents this freedom as compromised by the consistent pressure the state placed upon individuals, 'bothering me, following me... lying to me everyday.' It asserts the primacy of individual identities in response: 'I will never believe you, never obey you, I will always live my life, I will get rid of you forever. We are here, but we are not yours!'³³⁹ Božo describes

³³⁴ Dernovšek, Igor, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

³³⁵ Rakočević, Božo. Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

³³⁶ Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

³³⁷ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

³³⁸ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

³³⁹ 'Vaši nismo', Epidemija *Hardcore Ljubljana* (FV Založba, 1986)

how the desire to be left alone was also crucial to his mindset, with other ideological concepts formed as a result: 'I didn't want anything too extreme, just to be able to live! Punks always just wanted the freedom to be different, everything else followed.'³⁴⁰ Dario also emphasises the simplicity of such outlooks, with the hardcore scene embracing an 'open minded focus on what you could do for yourself, being an individual and organising in small groups', as opposed to perceptions of socialist collectivism that removed subjectivity. The reassertion of his individuality was therefore a more important and effective approach than 'directly trying to fight the system.'³⁴¹ Aldo states that punk and the associated alternative culture thus became a site of a political struggle which was primarily focused with 'building our own alternative, autonomous and almost utopian world', rather than actively engaging the world above the underground.³⁴² This approach informed the cultural tactics that the hardcore scene adopted. Lack of engagement with the overground limited the extent to which hardcore could proliferate, but also meant that it escaped forms of repression. Financially punitive limitations associated with the mainstream and the Committee for Trash were largely avoided, because, with few exceptions, bands simply avoided commercial releases in favour of DIY recordings, cassette tapes and trading. This was informed by ideological tendencies as much as fear of punitive taxes, and, as Aldo remembers, FV Založba releases, including *Hardcore Ljubljana*, avoided the label of kitsch as a result of their association with the student cultural centre. This represented a 'good pedigree' for the establishment, which had 'some respect for the alternative traditions of Ljubljana.'³⁴³

Whilst DIY methods of distribution meant exposure was smaller and more infrequent and the quality of recordings may have suffered, independent resourcefulness allowed hardcore and the alternative scene to circumvent limitations without withdrawing entirely. As a marginal counterculture, they avoided the level of scrutiny that would have been afforded to similarly subversive cultural endeavours in the public eye.

³⁴⁰ Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

³⁴¹ Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016

³⁴² Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015; Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

³⁴³ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

Peter Webb describes how the desire amongst some punks for political expression and activism was not always harmonious with the social elements of the scene, with punk's 'progressive' statements continually balanced against, and often undermined by, the nihilistic, chaotic and frenzied environments which housed scenes.³⁴⁴ At times, punk ideologies and these environments were complementary, representing vital alternatives to difficult socio-political environments. Toxic Waste from Belfast describe how punk could 'breathe life into a stagnant hell of adolescent life and social turmoil', and provide a medium for self expression and opportunities for social escape.³⁴⁵ Many scenes which placed emphasis upon punk as something beyond incoherent rebellion remained categorised by elements of 'destructive hedonism and punk as entertainment.' Webb cites the contrast between the 'serious' approach of Crass and the 'fun' of the Bristol scene. Both appear to have influenced Ljubljana hardcore, which housed clear aims, criticisms and ideology alongside drinking, generalised rebellion and socialisation, the product of what Tožibabe describe as 'a colourful party scene within Ljubljana'.³⁴⁶ Aldo describes the space provided by FV for subversive leisure as an inherently political antagonistic alternative to socialist ideologies. 'They focused upon work work work... whilst we said enjoy, enjoy, enjoy. A sort of punk decadence!'³⁴⁷ Irena also remembers how leisure and politics coincided in Ljubljana, which meant that simply participating in a punk scene on a social and musical level felt 'like something knew... you were rebellious just by being different. Even partying in disco bars until 4 or 5am felt rebellious.'³⁴⁸ However, she also acknowledges that for many involved in the hardcore scene, the 'party factor' became more important than serious creative endeavours, which, in her opinion, actively contributed to the decline of the hardcore collective, as concerts became harder to organise on a collective basis, which in turn provoked friction amongst participants.³⁴⁹

Despite their centrality to punk scenes, and the effects that they can have upon the dynamics of subcultures, Michelle Phillipov argues that the social appeal of punk and 'questions of musical pleasure' are regularly treated as subsidiaries to

³⁴⁴ P. Webb, 'Dirty Squatters, Anarchy, Politics and Smack', in: M. Dines and M. Worley (eds) *The Aesthetics of Our Anger: Anarcho-Punk, Politics and Music*, p.179

³⁴⁵ I. Glasper, *The Day the Country Died*, p.416

³⁴⁶ Tožibabe- Dežuje (FV Music, Ne! Records 2016)

³⁴⁷ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

³⁴⁸ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

³⁴⁹ Ibid

conventional analyses which frame punk as an expression of youth disenfranchisement.³⁵⁰ Such accounts directly contravene depictions made by punks across the world. Mike of the band Decadent Few points out that most 'po-faced University bores who analyse it all in cerebral terms' miss the fact that the 'primal, sweaty energy of punk was precisely what attracted us to it.'³⁵¹ Joe Briggs illuminates the 'unburnable passions [in] the hypnotic grooves of a record, the smeared photocopying of a ripped-off-zine, the sticky floors of a venue, the wheedling reels of a cassette tape.'³⁵² Hardcore punk appealed to young people in Ljubljana for these reasons, and Gigi describes how the enduring 'honesty, energy, heart and iron balls of the music can still make my hairs stand on end, even now.'³⁵³ The enduring and borderless vitality of punk as a musical form, and the emotions, reactions and outlet for inspiration and provocation are often devalued, with academic accounts continually reiterating 'assumptions which characterised the initial work in the field', leading to overemphasis of the 'resistance, subversion and political radicalism' of punk.³⁵⁴ Treating music as secondary to ideological practices, rather than something embedded with a variety of meanings in its own right, fails to grasp how movements which are identifiably 'punk' in character can espouse meanings beyond left-wing political rebellion, with the specific pleasures of 'snotty vocals, heavy distorted guitars and three chord structures streamlined into one-dimensional platitudes.'³⁵⁵ Whilst Dare links the music of hardcore to resistance, as 'a way of expressing things that could be done another way, and different forms of rebellion', this is by no means a universally held position.³⁵⁶ Dario, for example, focuses upon how 'punk was loud, minimalistic and fast, so it was easy to become involved. The scene was all about the concerts, the music and lyrics, drinking, friends and even more drinking on top!'³⁵⁷ Music is a site in which people can actively resist power structures and creative alternatives, but as Phillipov outlines:

...isn't just about the politics of resistance. To say that is not to diminish

³⁵⁰ M. Phillipov, 'Haunted by the Spirit of '77', p.384

³⁵¹ I. Glasper, *Trapped In a Scene*, p.349

³⁵² J. Briggs, 'We Will Do It Ourselves'

³⁵³ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

³⁵⁴ M. Phillipov, 'Haunted by the Spirit of '77', p.384

³⁵⁵ Ibid, p.388

³⁵⁶ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

³⁵⁷ Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016

music's political effects but to warn that a blindness to everything but... can lead to an elision of other investments that it also resonates with.³⁵⁸

Musical elements of the punk scene proved initially influential in Ljubljana, combining with a range of other conscious and unconscious factors. As Irena states, 'the musical impulse was the first reason for my involvement, but like a lot of young people, you start thinking about ideology and social problems as a result.'³⁵⁹ Gigi argues that whilst,

music was key, it was also a medium we could use to express ourselves. The noise and the release of the music combined with all the other reasons to like it or ways to make the connections we were seeking, even if we didn't always know exactly what they were.³⁶⁰

Academic considerations of punk in Slovenia have primarily considered contributions by the first wave to wider political processes, such as democratisation and the development of a civil society, in much the same way that punk bands elsewhere have been positioned as signifiers of wider processes or catalysts for change, occurring from the margins to the mainstream. As a result, the political impact that punk could have is often conceptualised via emphasis of particular elements that are conducive to these existing narratives, rather than based on rigorous examinations of the values of early scenes and subsequent offshoots. Whilst punk can have wide-ranging political implications, particularly by influencing individuals or exemplifying cultural shifts, and punks regularly profess a desire to change things, Clegg argues that western punk music and culture is rarely attributed with responsibility for important political developments, and that there is no reason to assume it was especially effective in Yugoslavia.³⁶¹

The Ljubljana hardcore scene was acutely aware of the limitations that punk as a cultural form imposed in terms of being able to enact concrete change, including the fact that its 'anti-establishment rhetoric' and oppositional identity tied it to

³⁵⁸ M. Phillipov, 'Haunted by the Spirit of '77', p.392

³⁵⁹ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

³⁶⁰ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

³⁶¹ M. L. Clegg, 'Through the Roof and Underground', p.12

things it wished to negate.³⁶² Whilst Božo argues that punk changed 'everything, the system, the whole of Yugoslavia', Aleš is somewhat dismissive of the 'limits the scene posted for themselves' through their embrace of the underground, arguing that this informed Niet's rejection of limiting confines by choosing to share their 'message with more than just 50 people.'³⁶³ The majority of those involved in the hardcore scene expressed an awareness of inherent restrictions with regards to direct contributions to political processes, but consistently stress punk's influence.

Dare suggests that punk was effective in simply 'annoying normal people' through styles of dress, aggressive music and demonstration of how 'the youth of the country felt', but notes that concrete influences were confined to alternative communities, creative expressions and the enactment of community spirit: 'There is only so much you can change through music and lyrics.'³⁶⁴ Whilst Gigi agrees that the threat was 'less direct' than some outsiders perceived, owing to a general disinterest in 'causing harm or overthrowing the government', he suggests that by communicating dissatisfaction with 'problems in society', hardcore offered a unique and effective influence upon dissident and alternative cultural movements.³⁶⁵ Mojca suggests that simply by representing 'something outside of the mainline, a threat that expressed dissatisfaction which a dying system could not control', hardcore could provide an indirect threat and influence, simply by screaming "'fuck off" to the government!"³⁶⁶ This reflects Miha's opinion that, by negating 'old cliches, stereotypes and traditions', punk and hardcore helped to 'smash the barriers of what it was possible to say artistically and socially.'³⁶⁷ This in turn opened the doors for expressly political movements to make further change. Robert agrees: 'You can see that a lot of things came from the scene. It was the background to a lot of real changes and ideas.'³⁶⁸

³⁶² K. Dunn, *Global Punk: Resistance and Rebellion in Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury, 2017), p.57

³⁶³ Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015; Česnovar, Aleš, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

³⁶⁴ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

³⁶⁵ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

³⁶⁶ Krish, Mojca, Interview, Ljubljana 13/03/2015

³⁶⁷ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

³⁶⁸ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

The Hardcore Collective: Countercultural Communities, Exclusion and 'Weekend Punks'



Fig 7: Members of the Hardcore Collective, including Gigi (left) and Božo (right).

Photo by Dario Cortese, circa 1984/1985.

Rather than streamlined groups of ideologically uniform participants, the day to day dynamics of punk scenes are regularly characterised by awkward negotiations between conflicting visions. Dines describes punk as a 'plurality of possibilities', with the contradictions and disagreements which abound within complex and diverse scenes allowing ideologies and approaches to develop. This meant that scenes were often well versed in housing diverse and at times oppositional opinions.³⁶⁹ Punk and other subcultural scenes can also fracture as a result of these disagreements, fluctuating personal relationships and conflicting opinions. Stephen Duncombe describes 'ghettoisation' as a common subcultural process in which walls are built 'to repel' designated outsiders to the community. This process simultaneously cements 'bonds amongst those within.' Arguments revolve around commitment to guiding principles of scenes, 'selling out', or contradictory attitudes with regards to engagement with and exploitation by existing mainstream networks of cultural dissemination. Duncombe describes tension between 'the need to reassure the faithful and the need to proselytise among the unbelievers' within punk. At times, members of the hardcore collective, committed to the underground and suspicious of anything outside of it, consciously dismissed those who were

³⁶⁹ M. Dines, 'Let Your Self-Determination Over-Ride Indoctrination', p.264

regarded as less committed to punk as a lifestyle, or more willing to engage with those outside the boundaries of the hardcore scene, as 'weekend punks'.³⁷⁰ A 1984 UBR interview with *Maximum RocknRoll* saw the band outline a consequent preference for direct contact with fellow punks, and the utilisation of punk specific means of distribution and communication, rather than reliance upon the mainstream media for exposure. They accordingly focus upon the importance of 'people listening to our music, having a bit of brains and understanding', and further communication on this basis, rather than representation elsewhere.³⁷¹

The hardcore collective were forced to accept elements of disparity between their idealised approaches to politics and lifestyles and concrete possibilities. Limitations in this regard were often attributed to the realities of the Yugoslav socialist system. Marsa describes how, 'of course there is a way of life, but it is Yugoslavia, so we can't live in squats.' Gigi also accepted that 'anarchy could never be achieved here, maybe in the shape of a commune, but even then the cops would quickly dissolve it'.³⁷² Resentment of restrictions upon hardcore and punk were not unique to Ljubljana. Discharge's 'Always Restrictions' positioned authorities as 'always there to put you down' and called for punks to 'smash to fuck the fucking system' in response.³⁷³ Nevertheless, occasional tendencies to idealise punk lifestyles elsewhere were motivated further by experiences in other countries, particularly RAF Punk's setup in Bologna. Tožibabe nevertheless cast aspersions on the determination of other punks to push these local limits of acceptability and live the most punk lifestyle possible. They describe how, in the summer, certain sections of the scene would awaken, which resulted in concerts filled with 'part time punkers... whilst others *really* live it'.³⁷⁴ Whilst this was purportedly based around ideas of 'commitment' and anti-commercial modes of thinking, Miha remembers that it also became tied to adherence to specific punk styles and codes: 'For me it was always about what you had inside, forming your own style and doing it yourself, but if you didn't dress punk [the collective] might say that you

³⁷⁰ S. Duncombe, *Notes from Underground- Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Microcosm Publishing, 2008), p.63

³⁷¹ 'UBR Interview', *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 20 (December 1984)

³⁷² I. Vidmar, 'Tožibabe- punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core' *Stop* 12/6/1986; 'UBR Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 20 (December 1984)

³⁷³ 'Always Restrictions', Discharge *Why?* (Clay, 1981)

³⁷⁴ I. Vidmar, 'Tožibabe- punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core' *Stop* 12/6/1986

didn't have any specific hardcore punk expressions.³⁷⁵ A review of a Stres DA concert in the early months of the scene's existence also hints at these tendencies, disparaging attendees who were 'more proud of their ten patches and knowledge of the Sex Pistols' than reacting in the correct way to hardcore punk, which resulted in a crowd 'stood around not knowing what to do'.³⁷⁶

Depictions of the Ljubljana hardcore collective, from those integral to it, have acknowledged elements of criticism with regards to commitment straying towards insularity, whilst those who were primarily active outside of the confines of the group are more forthcoming. Jože Suhaldonik recognises the 'closeness of the community' as a source of strength, but suggests that it often led to 'too many rules and ways of thinking... and sometimes the hardcore punks could be more oppressive than the state!'³⁷⁷ Miha mentions elements of 'dogmatism, as the popularity of punk meant [the collective] closed into smaller circles with strict limits, where you had to earn trust. Being a little bit more open would have been good.'³⁷⁸ David describes how, as a result of this strictness, the hardcore scene was inevitably 'small and quite isolated, because we were too hard for anyone to handle, and we liked it that way!'³⁷⁹ Gigi agrees, but believes that:

We took things too seriously sometimes... we despised popularity and could be very orthodox in the expression of our ideas, rather than being open to a range of approaches. We were young, too into our own thing, too honest and sometimes missed the bigger picture or struggled to explain things, but we still made our contribution.³⁸⁰

Retrospective accounts are not the only times that the potential insularity of the scene was discussed, however. Miha provided a draft article, from an unfinished 1984 fanzine, in which he laments conflicts about musical styles, including the speed at which bands played, and calls for increased co-operation amongst different punks and subcultural groups in order to create 'something more' (See Fig

³⁷⁵ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

³⁷⁶ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 11 (January- February 1984)

³⁷⁷ Suhaldonik, Jože, Interview via Telephone, 25/8/2014

³⁷⁸ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

³⁷⁹ Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

³⁸⁰ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

8). Miha frames this dissension as co-constructed by various factions, rather than placing the blame squarely at the hardcore collective, but is also unafraid to critique the latter. Inspired by the band Youth Brigade, he underlines that 'we must unite, not fight against each other!' Some of the most ardent protectors of the ideological integrity of the scene made similar calls, including David, in his *Vrnitev Odpisanih* fanzine. Stressing the necessity of wider participation in the scene, David outlined a range of ways in which individuals could become more involved, whilst simultaneously targeting passive observers and those 'who don't do anything but criticise the efforts of others.'³⁸¹ In the same issue, UBR also call for unity amongst Yugoslav punks, as 'vital for the development of a hardcore scene', although this is seemingly based on a desire for ideological and stylistic continuity, rather than increased acceptance of diversity, with the band stating that 'If we are not uniform, we will not get anywhere!'³⁸² Samo of Odpadki Civilizacije indicates the development of tension within the collective in this regard in a 1985 interview, describing how the 'scene is growing very well and there are a lot of good bands who try to do things for the better', despite 'a lot of backchat between bands.' He accuses David and KPJ of hypocrisy regarding their frequent calls for unity, which was expressed alongside stringent, and sometimes unfair, criticism of others. Whilst most bands 'work on the scene, others just talk a lot. Two of KPJ are the biggest critics of other bands, but have nothing to show for themselves up to now.'³⁸³

³⁸¹ *Vrnitev Odpisanih* Issue 2 (Summer 1984)

³⁸² 'UBR Interview' *Vrnitev Odpisanih* Issue 2 (Summer 1984)

³⁸³ 'Odpadki Civilizacije Interview' *One World Fanzine* Issue 1 (1985)

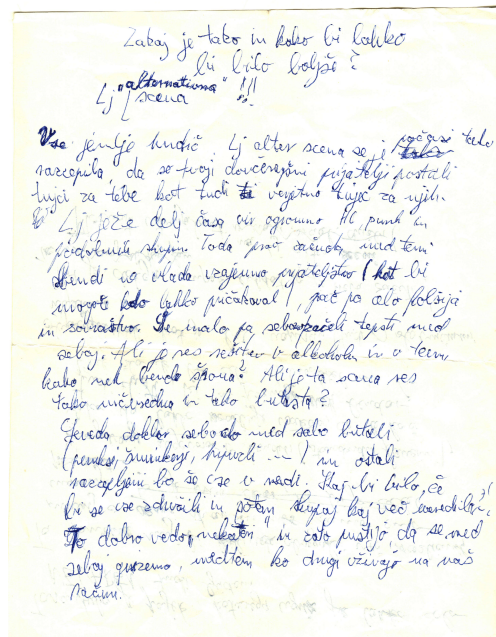


Fig 8: Miha's draft article calling for unity amongst alternative scenes, 1984.

Whilst the group consciously operated as the collective endeavour that their name would suggest, and the portrayal of the group as an autonomous, non-hierarchical and latently anarchistic counterculture is largely reflective of the dynamics of the scene, youthful enthusiasm and abandon could also compound and actively encourage tendencies toward exclusivity. Dare remembers how 'bands didn't want to show that they were above the public, but that everyone was a part of the scene, so they gave people space to get on the stage. The audience was part of the show through this involvement.'³⁸⁴ However, honest attempts to defend the integrity of the scene could also see the 'untameable' collective's strict adherence to conceptions of hardcore punk combine with social and emotional bonds to strengthen the collective, but also potentially undermine the unity they desired. Youthful social rivalries, arguments and 'love issues' could cause further 'strained relations' within the community when relationships soured. Aldo points to some 'natural' tendencies towards leadership amongst those involved, describing how:

There were always more creative people and those who are a little more bold. Gigi, Jani and Božo from UBR definitely were. David too. These were the guys that were more hardcore, the dominant personalities within

³⁸⁴ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

the union.³⁸⁵

Miha agrees, but identifies different influential characters:

Marsa was a few years older than the rest of us, so she had a special influence too. Other groups of punks sometimes called the hardcore collective "Martians!" I didn't like or recognise this, because whilst she was important, she was made out to be a leader amongst pupils, and that wasn't true.³⁸⁶

Marsa recognises how she was 'very bossy', but argues that she believed that this was central to earning respect, rather than an outright attempt to lead the group.³⁸⁷ Whilst, as mentioned, differences of opinion were expected within punk scenes, disagreements could eventually affect continued involvement in Ljubljana, even amongst key participants. Gigi remembers that: 'eventually I had some different ideas. Whilst I didn't cause conflicts and we still hung out, I became less involved.'³⁸⁸ Irena also acknowledges that the group was often protective of the subculture to the point of insularity, and suggests that her own involvement was eased by 'personal relationships with members of the group' and her relationship with David, which meant that barriers erected to block others from participation were removed. However, her own contributions to the scene were also central and her 'contacts... and connections meant concerts could happen', which cemented her inclusion.³⁸⁹

Arguments regarding the prioritisation of authenticity within subcultures are not confined to academic ruminations. Punk scenes consistently grapple with conflicting desires to protect the purity of the culture and often contrary desires to break 'out of the ghetto' in order to act upon promoted ideals. This was a frequent source of tension in Ljubljana.³⁹⁰ Irena acknowledges that punks were often confronted with the incompatibility of their desire for 'exclusivity, which was

³⁸⁵ Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016; Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

³⁸⁶ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

³⁸⁷ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

³⁸⁸ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

³⁸⁹ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

³⁹⁰ S. Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, pp.160-162

sometimes limiting... with the fact that we also wanted other people to join us.'³⁹¹ Increasing formalisation of ideological and political statements into specific codes of conduct within punk scenes regularly become a source of contention and conflict. As Alistair Gordon notes, 'as ethical alternatives crystallise into daily scene practices, transgressions can become frowned upon.'³⁹² Neven Korda argues that desire for subcultural purity often defined actions within the Ljubljana hardcore scene, as 'the important thing about the scene was that it was authentic.'³⁹³ This resulted in the rejection of conventional approaches to rock music and 'success', in favour of inward looking subcultural integrity. Deviation from such approaches became frequent points of contention amongst those inside and outside the somewhat informal, but enforced, confines of the collective. Despite inspiration taken from Crass, RAF Punk and elsewhere regarding collective ideas, co-operation and mutual aid, the hardcore collective could, at times, represent a parochial friendship group. Motives for inclusion and exclusion could be the product of incoherent intersections between stylistic approaches, wider ideologies, youthful rivalries and fluctuations in friendships and relationships, with the latter often able to transcend the apparent importance of co-operation. David remembers the collective as, first and foremost, 'a friendship thing. We were just kids that lived a few blocks from each other, but bigger things were built from there.'³⁹⁴ This dynamic was not unique to Ljubljana, and whilst influential anarcho-punk bands such as Antisect passionately advocated co-operation between individuals, arguing in 'The Buck Stops Here' that '...strength lays within each and every one of us... together we can change the world', members simultaneously disassociated themselves from collective identities under the punk banner for personal and ideological reasons: '...in one sense [identifying as a punk] helped form a sense of identity, but I'd see bands and people I thought were just the same sort of wankers that I was trying to get away from, the only difference was that they had a studded belt and mohican!'³⁹⁵ Anti-System's *Leather, Bristles, Studs and Ignorance* also took aim at the hollowness of 'mindless' punk conformity and adherence to media-led punk fashion rules without the adoption of ideological approaches. They argue

³⁹¹ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

³⁹² A Gordon, 'They Can Stuff Their Punk Credentials', p.234

³⁹³ N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns', p.338

³⁹⁴ Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

³⁹⁵ 'The Buck Stops Here', Antisect *In Darkness There Is No Choice* (Spiderleg, 1983); I. Glasper, *The Day The Country Died*, p.306

that this represented little more than 'the system's accepted form of rebellion.' However, disputes between punks were rarely entirely dissociated from personal conflicts, which could motivate disavowal.³⁹⁶ Irena describes how rather than 'mohawks or whatever, how it was done, creativity and respect was the ideology behind hardcore', but recognises that teenage naivety could often obscure or influence the ways in which this ideological commitment was expressed and enforced.³⁹⁷



Fig 9: Niet's Igor (2nd from right), Aleš (centre) and Primož (right). Primož is wearing a t-shirt featuring the logo of US hardcore band Black Flag. Photo by unknown.

Alistair Gordon outlines contestation over what constituted 'the' punk ethic between various punk factions as a constant fixture during the 1980s. Ljubljana's punk scene featured specific divides that resonate with this description, exemplifying the complex and at times inconsistent arguments that abound within punk scenes.³⁹⁸ Conflict between members of the hardcore collective and Niet is perhaps the best indication of the collective's ideological commitment, enthusiasm and energy, but also illustrates the extent to which this could often be dogmatically applied. Niet were contemporaries of the hardcore scene, and describe themselves as part of the same 'younger, new generation of punks', yet Igor reflects that whilst they 'very much appreciated the power of hardcore, and UBR were like the Sex

³⁹⁶ 'Leather, Bristles, Studs and Ignorance', Anti-System, *A Look At Life* (Reconciliation Records, 1986)

³⁹⁷ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

³⁹⁸ A Gordon, 'They Can Stuff Their Punk Credentials', p.235

Pistols in terms of influence... the hardcore collective was closed to us.'³⁹⁹ Neven Korda describes the split as of key importance to the dynamics of the scene, despite the fact that it has rarely been 'understood by punk ideologues.' Dare argues that recognising the different approaches which underpinned the argument is key to avoiding the 'conflation of punk and hardcore', which ignores the latter's deviation away from what they saw as 'marketing and profiting from rebellion.'⁴⁰⁰

Stephen Duncombe suggests that within DIY scenes, 'any hint of popularity' can result in suspicion with regards to motivations, and whilst this is a somewhat cynical approach to genuinely held cultural stances, it also chimes with recollections and subsequent reevaluations from members of the collective.⁴⁰¹ Marsa accepts that the collective were 'quite demanding, sometimes too young and idealistic', but also reaffirms the validity of the 'principles, statements, attitude and sincerity' of the scene.⁴⁰² Major ideological discrepancies between Niet and the hardcore collective saw the former written off as 'commercial HC' in 1984 scene reports, largely motivated by Niet's decision to play alongside 'more popular' bands.⁴⁰³ Božo claims that Niet's wish to achieve popularity conflicted with the value the collective placed upon active participation within subcultures. This included sharing, playing and living together.⁴⁰⁴ Marsa states that Niet were viewed as 'poppy show offs, posers and tycoons that didn't fit with punk.' The second issue of David's fanzine *Vrnitev Odpisanih* emphatically stresses the absence of any 'common ground'.⁴⁰⁵ Irena similarly describes how the 'core of the Ljubljana collective didn't exclude like minded people, but Niet were considered traitors because they tried to appeal to a mainstream audience, whilst we strove to be different.' She argues that issues revolved around personal and ideological conflicts, rather than 'excluding those who were doing the same kind of thing as us.'⁴⁰⁶ Igor agrees with the presence of ideological discrepancies, but categorises these differences as 'simply having different ideas of success. For them Crass and

³⁹⁹ 'Perspektive Pijanih Noči?' *Mladina* (27/9/1984) p.33; Demovšek, Igor, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

⁴⁰⁰ N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns', p.339; Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

⁴⁰¹ S. Duncombe, *Notes From Underground*, p.161

⁴⁰² Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁴⁰³ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report', *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 20 (December 1984);

⁴⁰⁴ Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

⁴⁰⁵ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016; 'Invazija', *Vrnitev Odpisanih*, Issue 2 (Summer 1984)

⁴⁰⁶, Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

the idea of a commune was popular, but we wanted to be free. They said that hardcore was the *only* punk, but we wanted to play differently, to be a rock band and to play to a lot of people.⁴⁰⁷ Aldo agrees, describing the different approaches of bands as, 'like comparing Crass and Stiff Little Fingers, they were just different. The hardcore collective was more devoted and lived as punks 24/7, whilst Niet were "good citizens" and made nice music, but all in all were a bit more mainstream, too much so for the collective.'⁴⁰⁸ Miha agrees: 'We called them "couch punks" or "Friday punks"... because they just wanted to sell records and play to bigger audiences. The hardcore collective only cared about the punk scene, its ideas and the way of life they were devoted to.'⁴⁰⁹ This difference was reflected in early recording choices, as whilst the hardcore collective favoured DIY practice tapes, Igor says that Niet regarded these recordings as 'very bad sounding' and recorded in a 4 track studio instead. As Aleš remembers:

Our name was about there being no borders, just doing as we feel. We accepted some of the DIY ideas, but refused the ideology and wouldn't be told how to play or what to do. It became like a competition between us and the collective, we wanted to show that we could play better.⁴¹⁰

Gigi also describes a degree of resentment from the hardcore collective regarding what they considered to be a lack of recognition from cultural institutions such as Radio Študent and *Mladina*: compared to the 'real support they gave Niet... they just didn't care about the rest.'⁴¹¹ Two articles in the wider press had focused upon Niet towards the end 1984; one was a conventional interview and another provided an 'introduction to the band', a privilege that was not extended to any other bands on the scene.⁴¹² Splits were also motivated by personal conflicts surrounding members of the band, which saw singer Primož Habič, considered to be part of the collective, leave Depresija, which featured Robert and collective members Kuri

⁴⁰⁷ Dernovšek, Igor, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

⁴⁰⁸ Stiff Little Fingers were formed in 1977 in Belfast. They were a popular punk band, releasing their seminal debut LP 'Inflammable Material' on Rough Trade Records in 1979. Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016.

⁴⁰⁹ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

⁴¹⁰ Češnovar, Aleš, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

⁴¹¹ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

⁴¹² 'Kaj Je novega? Niet', *Mladina* (23/2/1984); T. Gračanin, 'Perspektive Pijanih Noči?' *Mladina* (27/9/1984), p.33

and Rok Sieber, in order to join Niet.⁴¹³ Igor describes how the collective felt 'as though we, two outsiders, had stolen Primož from them. He was a Šiška guy, very charismatic, a joker and almost like their mascot.'⁴¹⁴ The resulting dischord became amplified by the fact that Primož also brought the song *Depresija* to Niet, which became their 'first hit.'⁴¹⁵ Igor remembers that the song was considered stolen, but says Niet were unaware of who had written the song, as it 'had only been performed in rehearsals. We always credited Kuri, Rok, Primož and Robert with writing the song as a group.'⁴¹⁶

Niet made a definitive break with the hardcore scene, deciding that whilst their 'music was based on hardcore, we would make our own way and present it to as many people as we could.'⁴¹⁷ The December 1984 Scene Report in *Maximum RocknRoll* references this as a key reason for the scene's further rejection of Niet, describing that 'everyone in Ljubljana hates them' because they were putting down their fellow bands' in the press.⁴¹⁸ This is somewhat true, as the aforementioned interview with Niet in *Mladina*, saw the band explain their ideological differences with the hardcore collective via mentions of 'ideologues who want to control everything', and 'hardcore bands that all play in the same way.' Niet described their exile from the scene as a result of their refusal 'to conform.'⁴¹⁹ The band went on to describe the local scene as 30-40 people, 'who wanted everything to stay in Kersnikova', with Niet rejecting the idea of only ever playing to the 'people who already know everything you'll say'.⁴²⁰ They also described being called 'pussies and sell outs' and whilst they again reaffirmed their links to hardcore as a style of music, they maintained that they had their own principles in opposition to the 'orthodoxy that hardcore people have to adhere to.'⁴²¹ The introduction to the article also proved inflammatory, describing Niet as the only serious punk band in the city, with next to no competition for this title, effectively writing out the efforts of

⁴¹³ Primož Habič was the lead singer of Niet from their formation in 1983 until their original breakup in 1988. He died in 1991. Marsa, Božo, Irena, Robert and Miha all describe Primož as originally part of the hardcore collective, and relations with him generally remained better than with the rest of the band.

⁴¹⁴ Dernovšek, Igor, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

⁴¹⁵ Ibid

⁴¹⁶ Ibid

⁴¹⁷ Ibid

⁴¹⁸ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum Rocknroll* Issue 20 (December 1984)

⁴¹⁹ T. Gračanin, 'Perspektive Pijanih Noči?' *Mladina* (27/9/1984), p.33

⁴²⁰ This is a reference to the underground venue K4, which housed hardcore concerts and FV discs.

⁴²¹ T. Gračanin, 'Perspektive Pijanih Noči?' *Mladina* (27/9/1984), p.33

the entire hardcore collective.

Discrepancies between Niet and the collective were far from fleeting, and have been reflected in approaches to present day attitudes towards reformations. Tožibabe suggested in a contemporary interview that hardcore was actively antonymic to reformations or continued activity once the original spark had dimmed, 'because [a short lifespan] is enough... otherwise you fall into commercialisation and start to repeat yourself.'⁴²² The majority of the collective maintained similar attitudes. Gigi rejected the idea of UBR ever performing again, suggesting that reformations are either motivated by nostalgia or dreams of industry stardom, and are thus incapable of recapturing the youthful vitality and spirit of the time which made the hardcore scene so dynamic, relevant and exciting.⁴²³ The hardcore collective, with the exception of a one off Tožibabe concert to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the release of *Dežuje*, have avoided such gigs, whilst Niet have reformed on two occasions, briefly in the early 1990s and more enduringly between 2008 and 2017 (See Fig 10).



Fig 10: A reformed Niet (Aleš centre, Igor right) at an autograph signing in 2010.

Photo by Zorman Matic

Miha identifies Kuri of Stres DA as one of the most dogmatic members of the collective in regards to subcultural purity and his reactions to Niet, citing his reaction to a video which had been edited to suggest that he was slam dancing to Niet as indicative of the strictness of the hardcore collective: 'He was angry that it

⁴²² I. Vidmar, 'Tožibabe- punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core' *Stop* 12/6/1986

⁴²³ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

could be suggested that he would dance to Niet, so he demanded to be removed from the video!⁴²⁴ The war of words between the collective and Niet culminated at a number of concerts, with Niet 'booed off stage' according to Irena, and 'bombarded with tomatoes' when opening for US hardcore band Youth Brigade shortly after the 1984 *Mladina* interview was published.⁴²⁵ Primož was also on the receiving end of a 'plastic glass filled with piss from different guys', and a fist fight between Primož and Samo of Odpadki Civilizacije, 'the strongest member of the collective', occurred at another concert, although Miha remembers that they were friends again shortly after.⁴²⁶ Gigi expresses regret with regards to the way that the hardcore collective demonstrated these objections, but emphasises that there 'was a genuine purpose' to their anger, with their objections based around the importance of hardcore to participants.⁴²⁷ Igor recalls how 'it mostly just became very annoying, they came to our concerts just to throw rotten vegetables.' The admission of the Yugoslavia scene report, that 'the public don't have very good aim', was of little consolation.⁴²⁸ Robert is similarly dismissive of the collective's actions, remembering throwing 'stuff at concerts' as 'very ugly. Niet wasn't my music and I couldn't connect with the later stuff, but that was bullshit. They didn't have Nazi or sexist ideas, it was unnecessary.'⁴²⁹

⁴²⁴ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

⁴²⁵ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014; 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum Rocknroll* Issue 20 (December 1984)

⁴²⁶ Češnovar, Aleš, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015; Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

⁴²⁷ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015;

⁴²⁸ Dernovšek, Igor, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015; 'Yugoslavia Scene Report', *Maximum Rocknroll* Issue 20 (December 1984)

⁴²⁹ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

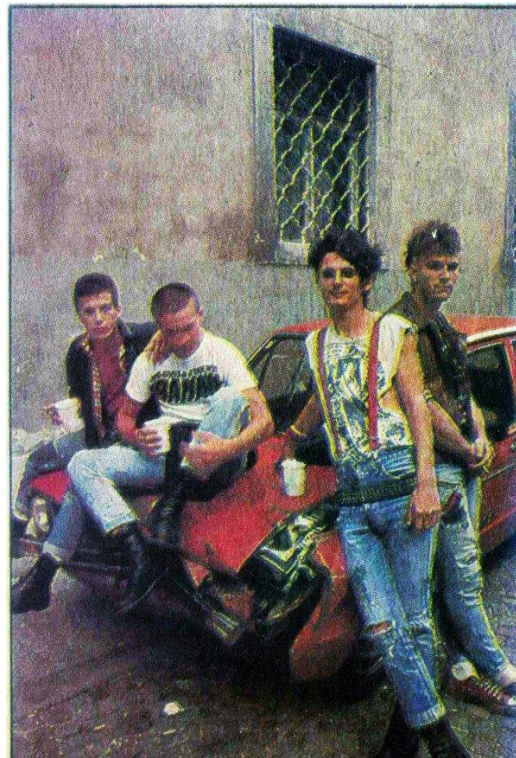


Fig 11: Quod Massacre, Ljubljana, (Robert second from right). Photographer unknown.

Robert's band, Quod Massacre (See Fig 11), were also associated with the hardcore scene, but became subject to their own elements of exclusion. A 1985 scene report in *One World* fanzine describes Quod Massacre as having taken a similar decision as Niet to 'go commercial', but Božo describes a 'different story' with regards to reactions to the former. Both he and Miha express their regard that Robert was 'one of us', or was at least a friend of the collective.⁴³⁰ Božo suggests that Quod Massacre were simply less integrated, as 'they didn't live the punk life so much, it was a hobby, they were weekend punks...'. Miha categorises the differences as relating to their slightly different ideas on how to 'present punk... they were maybe a little too melodic for the small circle, especially Stres DA and Kuri, to really get behind.'⁴³¹ Interviewees generally recall Quod Massacre's music positively and David's first mention of the band in a *MRR* scene report is generally favourable, describing their sound as a 'whole realm of different stuff' in comparison to dismissive depictions of Niet's 'commercial' punk. Robert describes a confusing and inconsistent situation whereby the collective 'would listen to our

⁴³⁰ 'Yug- The Scene in General', *One World Fanzine* Issue 1 (1985); Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015; Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

⁴³¹ Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015; Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

music, sometimes play it like crazy', but simultaneously 'made us outcasts and called us motherfuckers! It's the funniest thing.'⁴³² These 'quarrels' ultimately reflect a somewhat uneasy personal relationship, whereby some friendships were maintained, but Quod Massacre practiced elsewhere, used their own instruments and were ultimately excluded from the *Hardcore Ljubljana* compilation. Aldo recalls that 'everyone on the scene was given the opportunity' to be on the record. Yet, as Robert remembers, 'we recorded 6 songs in the same studio as the other bands, but one day I was told the hardcore collective didn't want us on the record. Each band I asked denied it, nobody said why, but we were not on the record. It wasn't good for us, but we said OK, we'll go our own way.'⁴³³ Reactions from the collective with regards to Quod Massacre were generally less acerbic than dismissals of Niet, but Robert describes the band as 'like aliens on the hardcore scene because we used our own brains, didn't want to belong to anyone or follow the rules they made, didn't just copy the image, hairstyles or clothes, we just played the music we liked.'⁴³⁴ David suggests that the band were perceived as 'trying to be more mainstream', but he is also more willing to attribute the hardcore collective's attitude towards the band to 'pretty stupid reasons... influenced by a lot of alcohol and sometimes drugs', rather than the differing ideological tenets which stimulated clashes with Niet.⁴³⁵

Conclusion

The 'whole story' of punk is ungraspable. Elements of fluctuation, variation, and consistent processes of re-inscription means that specific scenes comprise a singular component of an ongoing, disparate and dynamic conversation. The Ljubljana hardcore scene was one such component. As this chapter has outlined, the collective housed complex, diverse, variable and at times contradictory ideologies, tactics and approaches. Ljubljana hardcore existed as an outlet for a range of self expression, ranging from minute everyday frustrations to sprawling ideologies, ethical frameworks, political philosophies and entire world-views. As

⁴³² 'Yugoslavia Scene Report', *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 18 (October 1984); Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

⁴³³ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016; Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

⁴³⁴ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

⁴³⁵ Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

the members of the hardcore collective demonstrated, participation in punk defines not only the underground lives of participants, but results in a mutual and reciprocal processes of influence. Individuals are responsible for the content and character of the scenes to which they contribute, but can also become fundamentally shaped by their involvement. Punk represented more than a pastime for the hardcore collective. Whilst musical pleasure and socialisation drew individuals towards the scene, and often ensured they stayed, it provided a range of possibilities that were otherwise ungraspable. The young punks of the collective utilised formative interaction with a vibrant and international counterculture to conceptualise and negotiate their immediate environments and day to day existence, as well as and experience moments of freedom, escapism and joy. However, as I examine in the next chapter, punk also provided a medium by which young people challenged their surroundings, understood their place in the world, and mapped out their futures.

Chapter 2: 'Punk Je Internacionalizem': The Internationalism of Hardcore Punk

The world it transcends
Understands comprehends
I hope it never ends
This network of friends
Enthusiasm the only reason
Continuation is our dedication
Participation and respect
Ideas we can project
The network takes effect
A commitment you cannot neglect
Endless range
To exchange...
Thoughts, ideas, hopes and fears
 Heresy 'Network of Friends' *Thanks!* (Limited Edition Records, 1987)

The Ljubljana hardcore punk scene was shaped by local innovation and self expression, with young people responding to their immediate environments, but the creative divergence underpinning hardcore punk in the city was shaped by active dialogue with a contemporary internationalist punk scene. Whilst certain localised scenes exerted particular influence on this global stage and elements of hierarchy can be identified, this was generally overshadowed by the existence of a truly globalised ideology and reflexive processes of influence. Punks placed consistent emphasis upon the importance of conversations between like-minded individuals beyond the confines of their immediate environments and Kevin Dunn describes the 'informal circuits of exchange' that were built around this ideal in the early 1980s, as the 'backbone of the global DIY community.' Dunn positions punk as a 'medium of global communication.' Joe Briggs outlines how this network 'stretched around and through caustic borders', both figurative and literal.⁴³⁶ By the middle of the decade hardcore punk had become inseparable from fervent international

⁴³⁶ K. Dunn, *Global Punk: Resistance and Rebellion in Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury, 2017), p.106; J. Briggs, 'We Will Do It Ourselves' *Subverse Fanzine* (#2- DIY, 2007)

communication and active attempts to seek out and elevate global punk scenes. As Gigi of UBR proclaimed in 1984 interview, 'PUNK JE INTERNACIONALIZEM' (Punk is Internationalism).⁴³⁷

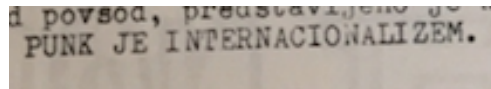


Fig 1: 'Punk is Internationalism', from an interview with UBR in *Vrnitev Odpisanih* fanzine, Issue 2, 1984.

This chapter outlines the importance of international communication to the Ljubljana hardcore scene and, in doing so, demonstrates that attempts to define or map punk and hardcore must recognise the diverse and fluctuating ranges of possibilities they encompass. Hardcore punk in the 1980s was a shared internationalist culture, constructed by interactions between individualised and localised acts of creativity. This chapter outlines why international culture became so important to the Ljubljana scene, and how and why this dynamic became positioned as a central characteristic of wider hardcore punk culture. How influence flowed from scene to scene is also investigated, alongside the means by which scenes communicated and interacted and the ways in which Ljubljana punks repurposed hardcore trends for localised purposes.

The Network of Friends

Autonomous DIY trading networks and the fanzines that emerged in the 1980s operated as deliberate 'sites of resistance and symbols of defiance' to the conventional music industry, and facilitated alternative streams of international communication and critique.⁴³⁸ The discussions that took place within the pages of fanzines were not only integral to the dissemination of information, but also helped to develop ideologies, practices and values of hardcore punk and operated as sites of discussion, debate, co-operation and conflict.

Responses to punk on a societal level often served to increase the impetus for this

⁴³⁷ 'UBR Interview' *Vrnitev Odpisanih* (Issue 2, Summer 1984)

⁴³⁸ M. Grimes, 'From Protest to Resistance' in: M. Dines & M. Worley (eds) *The Aesthetic of Our Anger- Anarcho-Punk, Politics and Music* (Minor Compositions, 2016), p.161

global approach and Mindy Clegg describes hardcore punk as 'explicitly transnational' as a result. She argues that hardcore embraced an underground, yet global identity as a deliberate choice to distance itself from the mainstream, but also as a response to media scrutiny and the moral panics and police repression that became common in many localities, including the aforementioned Nazi Punk Affair in Ljubljana. Whilst much of Slovenia's 1980's culture looked outwards, Neven Korda argues that an international outlook became increasingly vital to the city's alternative underground, as the 'public space in which punks and members of the alternative scene could gather was cut back.'⁴³⁹ Existing tendencies towards internationalism - which saw groups such as FV consistently reach out to exchange cultural ideas and develop distribution networks - became increasingly integral to survival. Previously tentative transnational ties transformed into an integral aspect of alternative scenes and hardcore often led the way, embracing horizontal connections as part of a global network, which saw individuals reach out 'to far flung places' in order to connect with like-minded punks and reaffirm their ideas and cultural approaches.⁴⁴⁰

DIY punk practice was naturally compatible with this consciously internationalist approach, and as Jamie Thomson outlines, the 'tiny degrees' of change that punk can provoke are adaptable to diverse socio-political contexts. Punk can be utilised to address desires that are expressed throughout global alternative scenes, such as the creation of specifically DIY music venues and spaces which enable escape from the mainstream and 'ordinary society', but it can also be turned to address specific local issues.⁴⁴¹ This often produced a positive dialectic between the elements of genuine universality associated with DIY and the subcultural underground, and elements of situated specificity which could not simply be transported. By the early 1980s punk represented a culture which was embraced and actively performed throughout the world, that also facilitated specifically local forms of self expression and communality. Hardcore punk was therefore simultaneously experienced as the *same thing* everywhere, whilst also provoking

⁴³⁹ N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns' in: B. Škrjanec (eds) *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni Graficni Likovni Center, 2008), p.338

⁴⁴⁰ M. L. Clegg, "Through the Roof and Underground": Translocal Hardcore Punk in Los Angeles and Ljubljana' (MA Thesis, Georgia State University, 2010), p.96

⁴⁴¹ J. Thomson, 'How Punk Changed Cities - And Vice Versa' *The Guardian* (17/3/2017) <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/mar/17/how-punk-changed-cities-and-vice-versa>

unique, one-off, discrete and deeply personal events.

Thomson cites punk interactions with harm reduction projects in Toronto, attempts to tackle homelessness in Florida and drug use and child prostitution in Jakarta as evidence that whilst 'the locations and languages may change, the struggles [that punk can be used to address] are universal.'⁴⁴² Rather than merely encouraging conformity to a homogenous example, punk urges individuals to respond and react to their immediate environments, and can be utilised to articulate anger and frustrations relating to specific contexts. It rarely is responsible for creating these feelings entirely and instead provides an outlet for existing feelings, enabling coherent responses to be formed and expressed from what are often previously subconscious and embryonic thoughts. Kevin Dunn describes how 'individuals and groups utilise the resources of the punk cultural field for agency and empowerment' and thus express this agency in local, regional and global terms, in decentralised ways and outside hegemonic control.⁴⁴³ Punk consistently remains malleable enough to be purposed towards localised situations, in part as a result of the importance given to individualistic self expression and associated celebration of diversity. Ian Glasper captures the duality of the hardcore punk scene with regards to the incorporation of local and translocal motivations, describing how punk,

'gave articulation to feelings, desires and frustrations that were previously, and may otherwise have remained, subconscious, unarticulated, misunderstood or dormant. These frustrations could be specific and local, but also general, experienced on an international basis by young people.'⁴⁴⁴

The importance of international communication to the Ljubljana hardcore scene was continually stressed throughout the interviews I conducted, with participation in a worldwide countercultural movement regularly cited as a crucial factor that led to involvement in the scene. The reciprocal nature of communication streams meant that punks in Ljubljana were able to demonstrate what their scene looked like to others, whilst staying informed of developments across the punk world and further developing their own examples in response.

⁴⁴² Ibid

⁴⁴³ K. Dunn, *Global Punk*, p.208

⁴⁴⁴ I. Glasper, *Trapped In a Scene- UK Hardcore 1985-1989* (Cherry Red Books, 2009), p.467

Forming these connections inevitably appealed to smaller, more isolated or culturally peripheral scenes, in locations where restrictions upon movement and opportunities for cultural exchange made contact beyond borders all the more precious. Nevertheless, influential and sizeable contemporary punk scenes also held international communication up as a central tenet of punk. American, British and European fanzines dedicated significant sections to scene reports sent from punks across the world, and as Mark of the band Sarcasm, from Leicester, describes, he personally felt 'no affinity' to the commonly used collective term 'UKHC' and viewed it as overly 'insular', instead stressing his 'personal connection with the international scene' as more compelling⁴⁴⁵ Tam from Sacrilege also describes how, 'just about everyone felt part of the bigger [worldwide] hardcore scene, because it was that far-reaching.'⁴⁴⁶ Documentaries such as *Soap The Stamps* emphatically underline the importance of this global network, whilst Alistair Gordon examines cultural exchange between major punk scenes in the 1980s.⁴⁴⁷ The Heresy song 'Network of Friends', however, represents the most compelling celebration of international co-operation and communication within the 1980s hardcore scene. Describing a non-hierarchical and mutual exchange of thoughts, ideas, hopes and fears, Heresy position punk as a vessel for honest conversation and trade, based upon mutual enthusiasm, respect and admiration.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid, p.118

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, p.40

⁴⁴⁷ *Soap The Stamps*, Dazed Digital Music Nation- Series 2, 2014, Documentary; Alistair Gordon cites the fanzine *Profane Existence* as a UK inspired American punk institution, whilst the influence of the US band Crucifix saw UK bands emulate their injection of energy into domestic anarcho-punk aesthetics. A. Gordon, 'They Can Stuff Their Punk Credentials' in: M. Dines & M. Worley (ed) *The Aesthetics of Our Anger- Anarcho-Punk, Politics and Music* (Minor Compositions, 2016), pp.246-248



Fig 2: Heresy 'Network of Friends' Artwork/T-Shirt Design, 1985

The motivations and the means by which this communication was achieved indicate the ways in which punks in Ljubljana were connected with and were influenced by worldwide scenes, which is especially relevant in a state in which autonomous cultural production that interacted with western popular culture was frequently dismissed as no more than a bourgeois import.⁴⁴⁸ Whilst undoubtedly influenced by the west, hardcore punk in Ljubljana was a site where young people, rather than simply recreating western culture, repurposed, reimagined and actively created their own version, for their own purposes and regarded their own cultural activities as valid contributions to a global culture.

Studying how punks in Ljubljana interacted with the global universality of hardcore can demonstrate the ideals and frustrations that were important to a section of young people in the final years of Yugoslavia. Doing so can not only demystify localised youth interactions with popular culture, but can also counter narratives which further cultural imperialism, by reinforcing the idea that culture and subcultural influences flow purely *from* dominant epicentres in the west. Golnar Nikpour and Mimi Thi Nguyen are scathing with regards to accounts which

⁴⁴⁸ I. Bašin, *Novi Rock- Rockovski Festival v Križankah 1981-2000* (Frontier, 2006), p.16

outline punk's origins as something which started in 'London and New York, then later emerged [elsewhere] as imitation.'⁴⁴⁹ They argue that there 'is no punk well from which all scenes spring', and that punk was 'an explosion at a particular historical moment, in a number of places', that resulted in numerous and variable subsequent manifestations.⁴⁵⁰ Nina Glick Schiller similarly argues that cultural practices, products and lives often flow through and are contributed to by individuals in more than one country, rather than conforming to international borders.⁴⁵¹ Confining studies of hardcore punk within existing national borders can reflect elements of segregation enforced by these borders could have, and punks own categorisation of regional and national scenes as distinct entities. Segmented scene reports were, however, often compatible with the internationalist approach of the hardcore scene, which was more akin to a loosely federal organisation, and to only view hardcore via demarcated regional boundaries can overstate the extent to which these dominate the international scene, and the extent to which scenes were understood as distinctly peripheral or prominent.

Ljubljana punks drew inspiration from a variety of influential creative centres, but the ways in which they interacted with these cultural sparks, and their reasons for doing so, were complex and variable. The hardcore collective generally regarded their scene as an equal component of the worldwide punk scene. Whilst Alan O'Connor's ethnographic research on punk communities recognises the 'socially organised' nature of exchange, which could reinforce imbalances and the presentation of central and more marginal scenes, he attributes this to political and economic factors imposed upon punk, rather than anything inherent to the subculture itself. The greater economic resources available to US punk bands and other major scenes could at times undermine genuinely held, yet somewhat utopian attempts towards free exchange of punk ideas, material and people. Resources which enabled production and dissemination of music and information often came to them more easily than was the case in more marginal scenes. Nevertheless, O'Connor emphasises that local scenes developed around their 'own social resources and political needs', and that the resonance of punk as a subculture, and

⁴⁴⁹ M. Thi Nguyen and G. Nikpour, '*Punk*' (Guillotine Publishing, 2013), p.8

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid, p.20

⁴⁵¹ N. Glick Schiller, 'Who Belongs Where? A Global Power Perspective on Migration' *ASA Globalog* (25 May 2009) <http://blog.theasa.org/?cat=49> [Accessed 17/01/2017]

what elements from established scenes were adopted, often depended upon the needs of the young people in their locality.⁴⁵² Jeremy Wallach agrees, arguing that whilst authenticity has traditionally been conceived as existing spatially in the west, what 'peripheral punks', in places such as Jakarta, take from influential scenes, and what they discard, is determined by their own everyday social experiences, rather than a universal process of emulation.⁴⁵³ As such, punk in a global sense was less an appropriated style, but rather a cultural strategy utilised by young people to conceptualise, react to, and negotiate everyday environments. The authors of *Punk In Russia* accordingly depict a 'particularly Russian stylistic crossover', whereby specific domestic characteristics and ideas shaped local versions of punk.⁴⁵⁴ Whilst punks chose to adhere to some international trends, their adoption of DIY methods was primarily shaped by circumstances, and the style of punk that emerged owed much to localised concerns. Early Russian punk was characterised to a greater degree more by 'aesthetic minimalism and primitive amateurism' than by adherence to particular musical conventions or dominant international aesthetics. Siberian punks concluded that 'punk in its western guise was not powerful enough to express their desperation' and war against society.⁴⁵⁵

However, a rejection of one dimensional approaches which view punk developments as simply flowing from influential centres to the periphery should equally avoid overcompensation that exaggerates local specificities and actions, or understates the importance of these scenes. Almost every interview I conducted highlighted the formative influence of the first wave of punk from the UK, which represented Ljubljana's first exposure to the subculture. Whilst many members of the hardcore collective subsequently rejected elements of this movement in favour of contemporary hardcore scenes, the impact of initial moments of discovery provided enduring memories and influences.⁴⁵⁶ As Anhrefn from Eisteddfodd, Wales, describe, punk could seem all the more vital when individuals were surrounded by rigid forms of thinking and 'stagnant local culture.' As a result, early

⁴⁵² A. O'Connor, 'Punk and Globalization: Spain and Mexico' *International Journal of Cultural Studies* Vol. 1, Issue 2 (2004), pp.176-178

⁴⁵³ J. Wallach, 'Living the Punk Lifestyle in Jakarta' *Ethnomusicology* 52, 1 (2008), pp.98-116

⁴⁵⁴ H. Pilkington, Y.B. Steinholt and I. Gololobov (eds), *Punk in Russia: Cultural Mutation from the "useless" to the "moronic"* (Routledge, 2014), p.22

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, p.34

⁴⁵⁶ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

moments of exposure represented revelatory experiences: 'It was the first time somebody expressed what I felt... I'd been waiting for it all my life!'⁴⁵⁷ Jože Suhadolnik describes a similar reaction in Ljubljana: '...suddenly there was this huge smash, the Sex Pistols. They were our awakening, something else entirely, which changed everything.'⁴⁵⁸ He also describes the 'real cultural shock' of witnessing Siouxsie and the Banshees in the city shortly after:

It was not just the music, but the band as a whole. Very few guys at the time would wear leather jackets, and few girls had makeup like Siouxsie. It was like a prophet coming, telling us what to listen to and how to behave. It was very profound, Siouxsie was so honest and communicated with young people here. I will never forget that.⁴⁵⁹

David remembers that UK punk also remained somewhat 'dominant' as a result of more practical reasons, as whilst licensed records of bands from the UK took some time to become available in Ljubljana, obtaining American records was entirely 'impossible without the network of pen-pals we developed later.'⁴⁶⁰ Gigi emphasises that elements of relatively uncritical awe and excitement were often replaced by more discerning attitudes and elements of tribalism, with UK bands also embraced and rejected on both individual and collective levels.⁴⁶¹

The means of expression facilitated by punk and the visceral impact that hardcore had upon young people in the early 1980s was not conceived in a vacuum, but tendencies towards self sufficiency and innovation were desired and also necessitated by fluctuating or incomplete knowledge of international trends in Ljubljana. Communication with other scenes could validate approaches taken, but this was a reflexive process, with Ljubljana punks contributing to conversations and utilising their own localised motivations and initiatives to fill gaps in their knowledge and produce their own unique examples. Young people adapted existing trends, whilst simultaneously creating their own, inspired by a general yearning for self expression, and the ability to represent personal frustrations and

⁴⁵⁷ I. Glasper, *Trapped In a Scene*, p.456

⁴⁵⁸ Suhadolnik, Jože, Interview via telephone, 25/8/2014

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid

⁴⁶⁰ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

⁴⁶¹ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

desires. Hardcore punk in Ljubljana was a product of both international influences and localised actions, subject to distinct variations and conscious creative impulses and innovation, with deviations from western punk templates reflecting the fact that punks were rarely content to simply replicate examples from elsewhere. Limitations that their immediate environment placed upon expression could further elements of intended deviation, with the recognisable, yet different, character of hardcore in Ljubljana also fuelled by knowledge that direct emulation of other examples was both impossible and contrary to the emphasis placed upon authenticity and personal expression. As Robert of Quod Massacre outlines:

We were obviously influenced by English bands, but we had our own stories because we were living in Ljubljana. I couldn't sing like guys from London, or LA, because they have their own lives and own situations, I can only sing about what is here. We didn't think we should just sound like the Bad Brains, The Clash, The Partisans or Discharge. We had our own stupid sound, partly because our equipment was really fucked up, but also because we also wanted to do our own thing.⁴⁶²

Overcoming obstacles in order to participate in the worldwide hardcore scene was often positioned as a means of demonstrating authenticity, but the extent to which the ordinary operation of the hardcore scene differed from the west should not be overstated. The attitude of the hardcore collective in this regard often fluctuated, between tendencies to idealise elements of the west, and realisation of the contingencies that existed between their experiences. Ljubljana hardcore bands had limited access to basic recording studios, but their tendency to use cassette releases and practice room recordings reflected the choices of many of their contemporaries across Europe and beyond, primarily as a result of the relatively low expense involved. Whilst the hardcore collective relied upon alternative cultural institutions for concerts, practice spaces and practical spaces, punks elsewhere also found themselves reliant upon sympathetic venues, halls, spaces, pubs or bars to hold concerts, and often found that patience ran thin before long.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶² Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

⁴⁶³ Ian Glasper's UK Punk histories feature a litany of examples of disastrous recording attempts, with Heresy and Deviated Instinct providing two notable contemporaries to the Ljubljana scene. I. Glasper *Trapped In a Scene*

The first Yugoslavia scene report in *Maximum RocknRoll* attributes the lack of equipment that bands could call upon more to the age of punks and their dependance on their parents, rather than the belief that it was the system alone which made such things inaccessible.⁴⁶⁴ Nevertheless, bands did have issues with obtaining relatively basic equipment. Dare describes how III. Kategorija were eventually able to purchase a broken 4 track recorder, and by the time they were able to fix and operate it, members had been drafted into the JNA.⁴⁶⁵ Aldo's somewhat farcical tale of importing a drum kit from London to Yugoslavia, which features various permits and numerous train journeys, also indicates the extra difficulties which those within the alternative scene faced compared to elsewhere in Europe. Whilst these difficulties were often cursed, the determination to overcome them and participate in punk was conversely a useful method of demonstrating investment and commitment, and, as Aldo remembers, 'We didn't care about bureaucracy, we always found a way!'⁴⁶⁶

As I have mentioned, the internationalism of punk by the middle of the 1980s has primarily been examined with regards to it's importance to marginal scenes, and is often ignored entirely. This is exacerbated further by tendencies to overlook hardcore punk in general in favour of a focus upon earlier waves of punk, before conscious gestures towards internationalism became common. Whilst Roger Sabin's *Punk Rock So What?* attempts to challenge orthodoxies and serve as a 'controversial reassessment' of punk mythology, Sabin reduces a discussion of this international perspective as something that merely 'would have been nice' to include, rather than integral to the dynamics of countless punk scenes worldwide.⁴⁶⁷ Punk histories which fixate upon the inspirational sparks of the late 1970s regularly fail to address or acknowledge localised realities for punks spatially and temporally beyond these recognised hubs of activity. Bryony Beynon acknowledges that whilst the US may have been a dominant source of inspiration for many hardcore scenes and bands, the worldwide scene of the 1980s is better defined as a 'groundswell amongst disaffected young people, across nearly every urban centre in the world', which saw shared grievances shape scenes and become articulated

⁴⁶⁴ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum Rocknroll* Issue 7 (July-August 1983)

⁴⁶⁵ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

⁴⁶⁶ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

⁴⁶⁷ R. Sabin (ed.) *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (Routledge, 1999), p.9

through hardcore.⁴⁶⁸ Miha describes how connections made between localised iterations of this groundswell, beyond the UK and USA, represented an 'explosion of knowledge', which deeply impacted upon individuals, which could be experienced immediately at local concerts, but also through international communication.⁴⁶⁹

Localised hardcore punk is thus a product of interaction between international cultural strategies and the economic, cultural, social, political and territorial contexts of the specific locales in which it existed. Hardcore punk heralded the connectedness of the worldwide scene that developed, whilst also embracing regional diversities and styles, and upholding the individuality of the punks that created these localised versions. Attempts to understand individual scenes must thus acknowledge the influence of a codified, yet somewhat malleable, international hardcore archetype, but also the impact of different modes of agency available to respond and react to these currents of influence, as well as the importance of local contexts.

'Finding our People': The Importance of Communication

Rather than embracing oppositional, often right-wing stances as a form of rebellion against official ideologies, the Ljubljana hardcore collective generally espoused the belief that hardcore punk practically embodied socialist principles to a greater extent than 'ordinary' Yugoslavs and potentially even the Party itself. This proved to be a frequent source for criticism towards both society and the state with regards to a number of ideological and political tenets, including internationalism. Whilst Tito was one of the founding fathers of the Non-Aligned Movement, which grouped together countries outside Cold War blocs and alliances, stressing 'cultural equality... as one of its important principles', Gigi suggests that punk was a better example of cultural internationalism, which meant that 'punks were truly united in Europe decades before anyone else, including politicians.'⁴⁷⁰ Other protest

⁴⁶⁸ B. Beynon, 'Subversive Pleasure: Feminism in DIY Hardcore' in: J. Downes (ed.) *Women Make Noise - Girl bands from Motown to the modern* (Supernova Books, 2012), p.217

⁴⁶⁹ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

⁴⁷⁰ B. Piskur, 'The Non Aligned Movement and Cultural Politics in the Former Yugoslavia' in: L. Džuverović (ed.) *Monuments Should Not Be Trusted* (Nottingham Contemporary, 2016), p.183; UBR *Še En Lep Dan Za Umret* (Rest In Punk, 2012)

movements within Yugoslavia that acted as subversive predecessors to punk, including the 1968 student protests, were also consciously informed by internationalism. Aleš of Niet argues that cultural and political strategies in Ljubljana often benefited from Yugoslavia's position as a 'filter' between the West and the East, whilst Boris Kanzleiter similarly identifies how dissenting young Yugoslavs were able to synthesise ideological elements of youth protest from each.⁴⁷¹ His depiction of the symbolic and practical benefits associated with the incorporation of internationalism within ostensibly leftist protests also reflects many of the reasons why Ljubljana's hardcore scene looked outwards, from opportunities to exchange ideas with enlightened and radical intellectual currents, to facilitating travel and cultural exchange.

Irena describes how a collective embrace of elements of western popular culture could enhance the impression that the west provided greater opportunities for cultural expression and freedom: 'some thought [the West] could bring us paradise, which we now know it wasn't.' However, she also outlines that whilst misplaced idealisation of western societies was present amongst Ljubljana's hardcore scene, it was just one of the reasons why punks looked to other scenes. They also utilised the critical approach they applied to domestic contexts to societies elsewhere. Network building was thus motivated by the belief that:

It was important to build a network of friends all over the world... of course everyone was primarily interested in music, but we also came to know about new springs of freedoms and aspirations in different societies to ours, which was something unique at the time. People were learning about other countries, cultures and the real lives of people in other countries or continents. We shared the same mindsets, through listening to music and developing our values, even if our everyday lives and personal experiences were different.⁴⁷²

Hilary Pilkington describes how contact with the translocal punk scene reinforced

⁴⁷¹ Češnovar, Aleš, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015; B. Kanzleiter, 'Yugoslavia', in: M. Klimke and J. Scharloth (eds) *1968 in Europe, A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.225

⁴⁷² Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

the ideological appeal of punk, primarily regarding the idea of escaping the 'grey mass' of regular society via exposure and communication with likeminded people the world over. The meaningful interpersonal relationships generated as a result of shared practices often represent 'more meaningful' prospects 'than the practices themselves', with 'friendship central to punk belonging and its everyday practices of support and mutual help.'⁴⁷³ Pilkington also describes how international connections forged through punk in Russia were regularly viewed as more significant than relations with local punks in their immediate environments and a similar dynamic in Ljubljana was fuelled by the hardcore collective's strict interpretation of hardcore as a way of life. The fact that many local punks failed to adhere to this meant affirmation of their scene and its ideological principles was sought elsewhere. Engagement with thriving nonconformist cultures validated their motivations and promoted the idea that those engaged within the hardcore scene were not entirely isolated, and were, in fact, privy to a level of understanding and cultural engagement that remained out of the reach of the 'grey' majority. Michael Mary Murphy outlines the empowerment that can come from international co-operation, arguing that these interactions supported and sustained elements of independent culture, particularly when established scenes engaged with less developed, fledgling scenes.⁴⁷⁴

The primary focus for much of the Ljubljana hardcore collective remained their immediate environment and, as Mojca recalls, 'where we lived, what was going on around us, that was most interesting.'⁴⁷⁵ This was reflected in the subjects of songs, artistic and aesthetic choices, and the language which bands used to communicate. Ljubljana punks almost universally utilised domestic languages and initially at least, the potential implications of doing so were rarely deeply considered. The use of Slovene was something that 'just happened' or was a 'natural choice', as a reflection of the language used in their everyday lives, the ease of singing in a first language and their primary concern towards immediate communication with local people.⁴⁷⁶ As Gigi describes, 'we thought about singing in English, but realised it

⁴⁷³ H. Pilkington, Y.B. Steinholt and I. Gololobov (eds) *Punk in Russia*, pp.200-202

⁴⁷⁴ M. Murphy, 'Anarcho Punk in the Republic of Ireland: The Hope Collective', in: M. Dines and M. Worley (eds) *The Aesthetics of Our Anger- Anarcho-Punk, Politics and Music* (Minor Compositions, 2016), p.199

⁴⁷⁵ Krish, Mojca, Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

⁴⁷⁶ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015; Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana,

wouldn't have been the same. Serbo-Croatian might have been better [to communicate with others across Yugoslavia], but we were concerned with speaking to people here first of all, so we sang in a Ljubljana dialect.'⁴⁷⁷

Despite this, by the early 1980s punks worldwide were constantly engaged with what was happening elsewhere, and drew inspiration from international examples as much as from immediate local predecessors and their local environments. Dario Cortese describes how communication with the international scene helped validate their examples of hardcore and enabled connections based upon shared concerns, but also served complementary practical purposes through expanding musical and aesthetic horizons beyond established domestic and first wave international punk, as 'new information was constantly coming in.'⁴⁷⁸ As internationalism became increasingly integral to hardcore, contact across borders became inseparable from scene dynamics. Whilst punks remained locally orientated, Gigi remembers that 'what happened locally in Ljubljana and what was happening in the worldwide movement became equally important', with the latter often serving the former. International communication helped Ljubljana punks 'exchange experiences, learning from other [punks] about everything.' Whilst this often had mutual benefits, established scenes provided Ljubljana with practical lessons in 'how to make fanzines, how to record records and about the studio experience, and with other things we had absolutely no experience of.'⁴⁷⁹ This information contributed towards goals of self-sufficiency and independence from established culture and, as Dare states, punk existed:

...as an international movement, in which people exchanged tapes, fanzines and so on. We had a network despite regional differences, without any sort of involvement of established media and industry. All these movements were happening at the same time, with local particularities and each scene had something different to rebel against.⁴⁸⁰

2/10/2015

⁴⁷⁷ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

⁴⁷⁸ Dario describes hearing the influential hardcore band Minor Threat, from Washington DC, in 1982, a matter of months after the band had released their first EP 'Minor Threat' in June 1981, and the second, 'In My Eyes' in December of the same year. Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016

⁴⁷⁹ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

⁴⁸⁰ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

Gigi argues that this international character set hardcore punk apart and provided a sense of 'authenticity' that was lacking within other youth cultures: 'The hardcore scene was the most creative, making connections with other scenes, not just through music, but through art, fanzines and comics in order to build a wider scene, whilst some people were thinking about their own arses!'⁴⁸¹ The associated effort and time required, rather than turning people off, was conversely tied to its appeal, with difficulties relating to certain aspects of punk activity cited as necessary demonstrations of commitment. As Irena describes:

to be involved you had to be active, whether it was writing to a friend or making a tape. Everyone was making things so it looked good, so you had to put in effort. You couldn't just buy hair colour, jeans, t-shirts... you had to do it yourself, in order to show your different approach to things.⁴⁸²

Mindy Clegg suggests that international connections had deeper significance in this regard, beyond simply expanding practical knowledge, understandings of life elsewhere and facilitating trade between punks. She argues that punks were motivated to share details of events within their local scene with the 'transnational community' in order to demonstrate 'punk authenticity.' This was transmitted via the exchange of music, demonstrations of style and, crucially, by conformity with what she describes as 'hardcore punk norms' dictated by west coast fanzines such as *MRR* and *Flipside*.⁴⁸³ Clegg argues that these fanzines and the LA scene was responsible for the direction of the DIY punk underground for the next decade, stressing that the presence of egalitarian ideals and international contact 'should not efface the fact that the US dominated the definition of [hardcore] punk' by the early 1980s. This approach contrasts however with contemporary Ljubljana scene reports which also stress the influence of 'European Hardcore' upon their scene, and whilst distinct stylistic categorisation became more common, differences in opinion with regards to where the definitive examples of hardcore could be found is testament to the lack of universality in this regard.⁴⁸⁴ Clegg recognises that

⁴⁸¹ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

⁴⁸² Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁴⁸³ M. L. Clegg, 'Through the Roof and Underground', pp.88-9

⁴⁸⁴ G. Obradović, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Feedback Fanzine* Issue 1 (1984)

hardcore punk initially sprang from scenes that were created largely autonomously, akin to Ian Glasper's depiction of independent grassroots responses to earlier waves of punk, which only began to fall in line 'once they found out about other scenes.' She conflates contact between punks on an international basis with increased conformity, uniformity and adherence to certain rules, rather than the production of new stylistic blends. Attempts to 'join the dots' between ideologically or stylistically similar scenes saw disparate examples of punk drawn together in terms of categorisation, but recognition of shared stimuli or motives did not guarantee uniformity.⁴⁸⁵

Arguing that Ljubljana hardcore positioned itself for a Western audience via Anglo-American trend setters by, 'appropriating a language, style, and music which helped them to express their frustrations about their daily lives', Clegg understates exceptions to this appropriation, often ignoring the influence of scenes elsewhere, as well as the occasions when Ljubljana punks eschewed adherence to established trends.⁴⁸⁶ In the same way that Anhrefn from Wales combined 'rustic influences specific to their locale to shape a new sound and style of their own', by using the Welsh language and selecting specific lyrical targets or visual signifiers, bands from Ljubljana also incorporated specifically Yugoslav elements into their takes on hardcore, using their own language and cultural history, singing about their distinct personal and everyday experiences, and utilising distinctly Slovene imagery. *Hardcore Ljubljana* features the city's Green Dragons as a central part of the cover artwork, whilst UBR's 'purposeful art' for the *Corpus Delicti 7* utilised Triglav, Slovenia's national symbol, as a provocative and evocative component.⁴⁸⁷ Deviation from the use of Slovene orientated imagery and language was relatively rare, and adherence to Anglo-centric codifications of punk and alternative culture were primarily confined to attempts to increase international popularity by adopting to western cultural standards by bands later in the decade.⁴⁸⁸ The

⁴⁸⁵ I. Glasper, *Burning Britain- The History of UK Punk 1980-1984* (Cherry Red Books, 2004), p.12; M. L. Clegg, 'Through the Roof and Underground', p.30; T. Somner, *New York Thrash* (ROIR, 1982)

⁴⁸⁶ M. L. Clegg, 'Through the Roof and Underground', p.96

⁴⁸⁷ I. Glasper, *Trapped In a Scene*, p.456; UBR *Corpus Delicti* (Attack Punk, 1984)

⁴⁸⁸ Borghesia reflected their growing commercial and international status associated with signing to the Belgian record label *Play it Again Sam* by using English, whilst 2227, formed of members of various Ljubljana hardcore bands towards the end of the 1980s, also featured English lyrics, as vocalist David believed it had become a necessary step to gain domestic and international followings. Ivančić, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana, 9/10/16; Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana,

mutualist basis of international links, focused upon the exchange of experiences meant deliberate choices by Ljubljana punks to conform to what Clegg outlines as US standards were influenced primarily by facilitating conversations, rather than assimilation towards global punk homogeneity, or deference to dominant styles.

Bands from Ljubljana were responsive to interest from abroad, and attempted to make their music accessible or understandable to those who did not speak Slovene, but this did not dictate the content or style of their music. Bands rarely abandoned Ljubljana orientated language or cultural references altogether and saw little reason to deviate from tendencies across the globe which saw bands sing in their own language and express reflections upon their own lives.⁴⁸⁹ Dario describes how, 'when we listened to Terveet Kadet [from Finland], we didn't understand a single word, but it was the music that connected us.' He argues that music, image and the personal and political expressions contained within hardcore punk were widely believed to be universally understandable, trumping needs for shared languages or cultural assimilation.⁴⁹⁰ Quod Massacre were perhaps the most accommodating band from Ljubljana in this regard, and were the first (and one of the only) hardcore punk band to specifically incorporate English lyrics in order to facilitate international communication. As Robert remembers, 'I had a message and I wanted as many people to hear it as possible, I didn't care if it was in perfect English, as long as it was crazy and good.'⁴⁹¹ Irena also remembers that:

English became a bit more common, but mostly because we wanted to contribute wider, like we did with *Maximum RocknRoll* scene reports. Established networks meant we thought more about what language to use and we were more bi-lingual. We wanted to attract people from abroad, as well as locals, so we would communicate with others in Yugoslavia in English and Serbo-Croat too, depending on what made sense.⁴⁹²

Whilst authenticity was important to the hardcore collective, few interviewees

2/10/2015

⁴⁸⁹ Tožibabe's *Dežuje* and the *Hardcore Ljubljana* compilation included English translations of the Slovene lyrics for their western audience, but few bands sang in English.

⁴⁹⁰ Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016

⁴⁹¹ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

⁴⁹² Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

suggested that proving this to others was a conscious aspect of their motivations in terms of interacting internationally. Gigi acknowledges a sense of support and validation that came from confirming that punks elsewhere were 'not so different, we were alike, we had the same problems, the same fucking shite.'⁴⁹³ Shared identities with other established hardcore punk scenes worldwide were significant, but to suggest that scene reports and other means of international communication occurred in order to 'prove themselves' implies a level of deference to other scenes that rarely existed in practice. The importance of connecting with punks from other places was based upon ideological grounds, mutual respect and confirmation that somewhat isolated punks were not alone. Dunn refers to this as having a particular 'disalienating effect', where marginalisation was more common, but the self-confident Ljubljana scene seemed altogether unconcerned with any desire to prove themselves as worthy to others.⁴⁹⁴ They also felt little expectation to communicate in specific ways with, as Marsa identifies, commitment to punk as an identity and the belief that this ensured certain shared ideals and values more important to forging connections than conformity. Punks in Ljubljana could utilise these shared values to travel to different places and interact with other punks, but they did so as equals knowing:

...that we would find our people. There was a magnetism that physically drew us together. We connected and when we met people from other places we knew we had the same ideas, we were listening to the same bands. That meant that no matter what or where we were, the mind was the same.⁴⁹⁵

Robert agrees, describing how:

Meeting other people who thought like you, connected through the music and everything else was the best. We could go somewhere completely different, but they thought like we did, even if they didn't know our bands, or they had a different picture in their head of where we are from.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

⁴⁹⁴ K. Dunn, *Global Punk*, p.208

⁴⁹⁵ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁴⁹⁶ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015



Fig 3: The header used for *MRR* Yugoslavia scene reports.

Each regional report featured its own custom heading.

The Ljubljana punk scene existed as its own, distinct entity, but members of the scene simultaneously and resolutely regarded themselves as incorporated within larger punk currents. Scene reports submitted to foreign fanzines usually dealt with events from the reference point of the Yugoslav scene as a whole, as collaborative efforts, split into sections based on regions of the country, with individual punks from Ljubljana, Belgrade, Novi Sad, Rijeka, Zagreb and elsewhere providing updates. In the first *MRR* Yugoslavia scene report Dario Cortese describes how what was initially a centralised Yugoslav scene during the first wave of punk became splintered through a process of 'decentralisation' in the early 1980s which coincided with a second wave of 'faster and more energetic' punk bands.⁴⁹⁷ His use of the term is significant, as Yugoslavia had been subject to its own process of decentralisation in the 1970s with distinctions on a national and republic level enhanced by constitutional reforms. Peter Vodopivec suggests that the 'great majority' of Slovenes welcomed moves towards a 'looser and more open multinational community', and such approaches were often analogous with the hardcore collective's reconciliation of their local approach to interaction with the rest of Yugoslavia.⁴⁹⁸ Vodopivec describes Slovene positivity with regards to recognition of diversity based around national characteristics and the presence of cultural-linguistic individuality, but states that most desired the maintenance of common economic spaces which allowed the exchange of not only goods, but ideas.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ D. Cortese, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum Rocknroll* Issue 7 (July-Aug 1983)

⁴⁹⁸ P. Vodopivec, 'Seven Decades of Unconfronted Incongruities: The Slovenes and Yugoslavia' in: J. Benderly and E. Kraft (eds) *Independent Slovenia- Origins, Movements, Prospects* (St. Martins Press, 1996), p.23

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p.43

The third generation of punks in Yugoslavia made concerted efforts to rebuild the links between cities and create hardcore orientated networks. Irena outlines that whilst cities were separate, the collected scene reports reflected their general position, as 'all under Yugoslavia, and seen as part of the same thing from outsiders.'⁵⁰⁰ Irena remembers that the development of connections between cities nevertheless remained somewhat gradual, in the same way that international links were slowly forged, but a lack of cohesiveness within Yugoslavia at times exacerbated tendencies towards exclusiveness on the part of the Ljubljana hardcore collective, which often privileged the actions of a small number of bands from the city over other Yugoslav examples.⁵⁰¹ Božo describes conscious attempts to remedy these tendencies, by Gigi and himself, who would 'share all the music sent to us with people in Novi Sad, Belgrade, Sarajevo and Mostar' in order to strengthen common knowledge between these splinters.⁵⁰² Punks in Ljubljana believed that 'we were all the same country' and this saw UBR travel to Zagreb, Sarajevo and Belgrade to perform, with punks across Yugoslavia co-operating to organise concerts. Gigi also demonstrates his specific allegiance to Ljubljana, describing it as 'the centre of everything that was happening in Yugoslavia, the scene was here and bands came here.'⁵⁰³

Gvido Obradović's scene report for *Feedback Fanzine* in 1984 describes an 'uneven' Yugoslav scene, with fragmentation exacerbated by issues of communication and co-operation.⁵⁰⁴ The April 1985 Yugoslav Scene Report in *Maximum RocknRoll* provides a specific example, and suggests that Ljubljana hardcore often privileged it's own activities, or bands from Europe and the USA, over events in the rest of Yugoslavia. Several years after the earliest hardcore concerts in the city, with numerous international bands having visited, established Slovene bands such as Masakr in Maribor, just 100km away, remained almost entirely unknown to the Ljubljana collective due to a mutual 'lack of contact.'⁵⁰⁵ UBR had nevertheless urged greater co-operation and unity between Yugoslav scenes in interviews, including within the local fanzine *Vrnitev Odpisanih* in the

⁵⁰⁰ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁵⁰¹ Ibid

⁵⁰² Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

⁵⁰³ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

⁵⁰⁴ G. Obradovic, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Feedback Fanzine* Issue 1 (1984)

⁵⁰⁵ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 24 (April 1985)

summer of 1984, decrying 'rivalry between [Yugoslav] scenes and lies about bands, that are designed to make individual scenes sound the strongest'. UBR state that they believed that unity amongst punks within Yugoslavia was 'vital for the development of a scene... If we are not uniform, we will not get anywhere!' but generally placed the blame for rivalry elsewhere.⁵⁰⁶ David had similarly used the same issue of the fanzine to criticise the approach of punks in Belgrade, citing lack of contact with the rest of Yugoslavia.⁵⁰⁷ UBR would reiterate their calls for greater unity on a larger stage, and an interview with *Maximum RocknRoll* in December of the same year saw them acknowledge the fact that plenty of good Yugoslav bands were forming, but argue that it would all be futile if punks failed to become 'organised or united enough. WE'VE GOT TO UNITE!'⁵⁰⁸

Whilst Slovene hardcore punk had distinct characteristics, the practical method by which this was established, according to David, 'wasn't any different than anything happening anywhere else in the world... we were on the same level, just sometimes we didn't have the same means of production.'⁵⁰⁹ III. Kategorija expressed a similar attitude in 1986, noting that whilst equipment was harder to come by in Ljubljana, their 'scene was as good as anywhere.'⁵¹⁰ Borut Mehle suggests that the absence of a global hierarchy within hardcore punk represented a fundamental departure from existing Yugoslav attitudes towards homegrown popular culture:

There was no difference between my friend's bands and those from the United States, or England... they were equally important. Previous generations made divisions between our "home" music and foreign music, and foreign music was considered better. With punk, that stopped.⁵¹¹

Božo agrees, and argues that this approach was encouraged by wider attitudes amongst the hardcore punk scene: 'it was never like who is better, it's not like football where its a competition, it was music. We were equal and everyone was

⁵⁰⁶ 'UBR Interview' *Vrnitev Odpisanih* Issue 2 (Summer 1984)

⁵⁰⁷ *Vrnitev Odpisanih* (Issue 2, Summer 1984)

⁵⁰⁸ 'UBR Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 20 (December 1984)

⁵⁰⁹ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

⁵¹⁰ III. Kategorija, *There Is No Reason To Be Happy- An International Compilation* (Artcore, 1986)

⁵¹¹ Mehle, Borut, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

happy to hear us represent the Yugoslav scene.⁵¹² Robert describes how his experiences of touring across Europe with Quod Massacre supports this depiction, as whilst knowledge of Yugoslav punk was often somewhat fragmented across Europe, they were routinely met with excitement: 'When we came to a new place, even if they had seen so many American bands, there was not questioning of us or that we were inferior, they would still say "this is fucking great". That was always the point for us.'⁵¹³ Punks the world over, regardless of the prominence of their immediate scenes, engaged with internationalism motivated by genuine idealism and commitment to punk as a unifying force. Yugoslav fanzines such as *Dvadeset 4 Ćasa* reflected external interest in developments within Yugoslavia, and by the middle of the decade, the scene reports featured within the fanzine had expanded from Yugoslav contributions to include reports from punks across the world. The August 1986 issue saw regional US reports from Southern California, Boston and New Jersey, national reports provided by punks in Italy, Finland, Poland, the UK, as well as a report dedicated to Scotland alone, and adverts for *Maximum RocknRoll*, a number of international compilation records and several US, UK, Yugoslav and European record labels.⁵¹⁴ The UK report also demonstrates a degree of awareness and critical engagement with events in Yugoslavia from punks elsewhere, albeit, in this case, via criticism. The UK report describes disdain for foreign punks wearing 'Union Jack T-shirts' as 'from our point of view you look stupid. I'm not proud of my own country and it amazes me that you are!'⁵¹⁵ The lack of deference to influential scenes also resulted in punks in Ljubljana being unafraid to criticise and discuss other scenes in similar ways in return. Scene reports in *Maximum RocknRoll* saw Yugoslav contributors criticise influential punk bands from the UK, including Anti-Nowhere League, who are described as 'assholes', whilst Marsa dismissed the relevance of 'many English bands' in a 1986 interview for the fanzine, because they 'don't say anything, except that they're vegetarians.'⁵¹⁶

⁵¹² Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

⁵¹³ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

⁵¹⁴ Record labels that provided adverts for the fanzine included Children of the Revolution Records, No Profit Tapes, Rampant Nasty Tapes and Purple Zine Distro. *Dvadeset 4 Ćasa* Issue 8 (August 1986)

⁵¹⁵ 'UK Scene Report' *Dvadeset 4 Ćasa* Issue 8 (August 1986)

⁵¹⁶ 'Tožibabe Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 36 (May 1986); 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* (Issue 20, December 1984)

'Send us yours; We'll send you ours': The Means of Communication

The methods by which hardcore punks communicated with each other ranged from traditional means such as obtaining records, writing letters and trading tapes, towards personal contact, primarily in the shape of touring bands and individual travel. The music itself was also viewed as a means of communication and was boosted by impersonal methods of sharing information, such as scene reports and fanzines. Scene reports typically represented brief overviews of recent events and detailed concerts, new releases and bands and other relevant developments. They became a staple feature of punk fanzines during the era of hardcore, and many encouraged their readers to send in their own reports. *Maximum RocknRoll*, first published in 1982, initially focused upon Northern California punk, but soon expanded to incorporate regional US and international reports and dedicated a large portion of the fanzine to these. The third issue of the fanzine, from November 1982, featured a Finnish report, whilst the fifth issue, from the following March, was actively promoted upon the basis of featured reports from Brazil and the Netherlands.⁵¹⁷ Gigi says that the fanzine was regarded in Ljubljana 'as the most important, as everything punk met in there eventually.' Dario Cortese accordingly produced the Ljubljana focused section of the first Yugoslav scene report for Issue 7 in July 1983.⁵¹⁸ His report provided an overview of punk history in Ljubljana, some socio-political context and details of the emerging hardcore punk scene.

⁵¹⁷ *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 3 (November-December 1982); *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 5 (March-April 1983)

⁵¹⁸ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015; *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 7 (July-August 1983)



Fig 4: *MRR* Issue 5, March-April 1983. Features on Dutch and Brazilian hardcore are advertised on the front cover of the fanzine, an indication of the centrality of these international reports.

The early inclusion of international scene reports and the fact that they were placed at the forefront of its priorities, saw *MRR* aid the development of a coherent approach with regards to internationalism. *MRR* was not the only fanzine that facilitated this communication, and many fanzines in the UK and US either complemented this approach on their own accord, or followed suit.⁵¹⁹ *One World* fanzine centred internationalism within its content as the name suggests, featuring a Yugoslav report in the first issue, but as Dario Cortese describes, 'other fanzines were important, but *MRR* was *the* international fanzine and it really had an influence upon people.'⁵²⁰ Dare agrees, describing *MRR* as 'a really important messenger for ideas' both in terms of the influence on the Ljubljana scene, but also upon worldwide punk.⁵²¹ David began distributing *MRR* in Ljubljana from around 1984, which coincided with the height of the domestic hardcore punk scene and Neven Korda cites his efforts, alongside those of Dario Cortese and Gigi, as responsible for 'putting Ljubljana hardcore on the world map.'⁵²² Yugoslav fanzines

⁵¹⁹ US fanzine *Flipside* featured a Yugoslav scene report in Issue 44, November 1984. *Barabbas*, (Finland) also featured international reports and Issue 3 (1983) including a Finnish translation of Dario Cortese's *MRR* Yugoslavia report.

⁵²⁰ 'Yug - The Scene in General' *One World* Issue 1 (1985); Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016

⁵²¹ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

⁵²² N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns' in: B. Škrjanec (ed.) *FV - Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni

positively encouraged further communication with other scenes by sending their own reports to a number of fanzines and Gigi had been writing to 'all of the world participants from as early as 1983', with the collective primarily aiming to benefit personally via trades and exchange with other punks and fanzine writers, but also demonstrating a genuine appetite amongst punks to share events and opinions freely and as far as possible, with an international outlook consistently present within influential and peripheral scenes.⁵²³

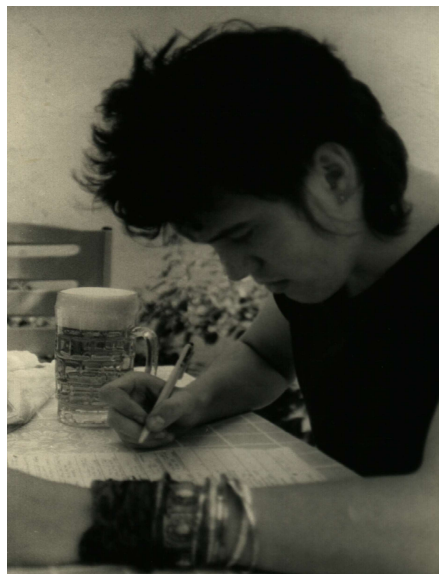


Fig 5: Gigi letter writing, Date Unknown. Photo by Irena Povše.

Other members of the hardcore collective, including Božo, were also active as part of the international network, and music and information was quickly shared with the rest of the scene, as participants 'were hanging out together pretty much every day.'⁵²⁴ Dario's impetus for producing his first scene report reflects a desire to further this exchange of information, whilst also increasing the exposure of Ljubljana's output on a worldwide basis:

MRR was so international. At that time hardcore bands were emerging everywhere in a global boom and I subscribed to the fanzine because it was an important source of information. We were already in contact with bands from the US, in order to exchange records and get new material, so [A local

Grafični Likovni Center, 2008), p.336

⁵²³ 'Hard Core' *Mladina* (1/3/1984), pp.12-13

⁵²⁴ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

Scene Report] was the next thing to do. It felt necessary that readers should know that something was going on here.⁵²⁵

Members of the hardcore collective universally confirmed the importance of *MRR*, which largely conforms with Clegg's depiction that the fanzine and the wider US West Coast scene set the tone for hardcore punk for the rest of the decade. However the stances held by the fanzine were established in response, or at least subsequently, to the emergence of hardcore punk and contributions from individuals outside of its immediate locality.⁵²⁶ Early international reports helped to forge connections and provide information regarding months or even years of prior development, with *MRR* acting as an important conduit that reinforced existing tendencies rather than setting the tone or acting as the initial spark for a worldwide hardcore punk scene. Golnar Nikpour is critical of prevalent 'hegemonic stories of punk' which present it as either a US export, as is the case with Clegg, or a British one. She describes this presentation as 'simply wrong', whilst Tommy 'Stupid' Withers of The Stupids describes how the UK hardcore scene grew from, and was defined by, 'little pockets of activity' across the country rather than dominant scenes which are often presented as dictating the subsequent tone and character of punk: 'Hardcore wasn't just London. In fact, it *wasn't* about London in a way.'⁵²⁷

Accounts which position *MRR* as a 'DIY punk bible' or attribute similar levels of influence to particular scenes, often fail to recognise that any such presentations of definitiveness are primarily deliberately (and necessarily) tongue in cheek, given the vastness and diversity of punk scenes. As Helen Reddington encapsulates, 'the variety of views of people in punk cannot be overestimated.'⁵²⁸ *MRR* was responsive to, and reflective of, worldwide developments, as much as it was responsible for them, and whilst many punks adhered to and adopted ideals espoused within the fanzine, others directly contested them, sometimes out of pure defiance. The fanzine was the site of regular debate and disagreement and operated as a 1980s forum for discussion, and as a messenger for these discussions. It

⁵²⁵ Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016

⁵²⁶ M. L. Clegg, 'Through the Roof and Underground', p.96

⁵²⁷ M. Thi Nguyen and G. Nikpour, 'Punk', p.26; *Soap The Stamps* Dazed Digital Music Nation-Series 2, 2014, Documentary

⁵²⁸ H. Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock Music: Female Musicians of the Punk Era* (Ashgate, 2007), p.165

embodied Teal Triggs' depiction of fanzines as 'places of cultural resistance, a free space for the development of ideas and practices... [and a] vehicles of subcultural communication'.⁵²⁹ The construction of punk identities and political communities were shaped by the actions of individuals on primarily localised levels, which were then articulated in fanzine articles, interviews, scene reports and letters. Duncombe describes how the letters page of *MRR* became a site for a 'war of definition', and helped to 'define and continually redefine what is punk', but punks across the world played an active role within this process, rather than as the subjects of definitions handed to them from above.⁵³⁰ Gigi describes that engagement with scenes outside of its native San Francisco was as key to the vibrancy and appeal of the fanzine, with its potential as a hub for communication and as an influential support system enhanced by its egalitarian openness to contributions, which meant independent but often complementary strands of punk could meet, interact and, in turn, be disseminated:

I have a huge amount of respect for *MRR*, not just because they were at the heart of the world scene, but for the attitude, the way it thought about people. Knowing people in America thought the same way we did was so important to us.⁵³¹



Fig 6: The first Yugoslavia Scene Report, from *MRR* Issue 7, 1983

⁵²⁹ T. Triggs, *Fanzines* (Thames & Hudson, 2010), p.49

⁵³⁰ S. Duncombe, *Notes From Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Microcosm, 2008), p.167

⁵³¹ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

Regional and international hardcore punk compilation records complemented the content of fanzines, increased exposure for particular bands and scenes, whilst also providing inspiration for fledging movements. Gigi mentions that the Finnish *Russian Bombs Finland* compilation acted as an influence upon UBR, but compilations of North American hardcore punk were initially most popular in Ljubljana. The *Let them Eat Jellybeans* compilation, released by Alternative Tentacles in 1981, represented one of the earliest underground punk compilations and as such was the initial exposure to the genre for many. The *Not So Quiet on the Western Front* LP was released the following year, in conjunction with *Maximum RocknRoll*, and showcased California and Nevada bands that also became popular. Miha describes these records as formative 'introductions to entirely new scenes' whilst Dario cites them, alongside *Hell Comes to Your House* and *This is Boston, Not L.A.* as 'bibles... almost', which spurred punks in Ljubljana to:

...find whatever addresses we could, just so we could hear more. The channel of what we would discover was from these records, but it was also down to individuals to make contact, especially because Radio Študent missed much of the American hardcore scene.⁵³²

Dario's first scene report in *MRR* also states that Radio Študent's musical output with regards to hardcore punk was almost entirely limited to a handful of these records. This contrasted with the attitudes and level of research on the part of those who went on to form the hardcore collective, but the frequency with which interviewees cited the bands featured as formative influences underlines the significance of the compilations.⁵³³ Paco of *La Vida Es Un Mus* [London] describes how compilations could elevate relatively unknown bands to international punk prominence and remembers that, like punks in Ljubljana, he would rush to look up the bands featured on such compilations.⁵³⁴

UBR would soon benefit from the expansion of these compilations from regional

⁵³² Zuperc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016; *Hell Comes To Your House* (Bemisbrain Records, 1981); *This Is Boston, Not L.A.* (Modern Method, 1982); Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana 6/10/2016

⁵³³ D. Cortese, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum Rocknroll* Issue 7 (July-Aug 1983)

⁵³⁴ Aranda, Francisco 'Paco', Interview, London, 25/5/2015

documentation towards internationalist representation, exemplified by the *Welcome to 1984* LP (see Fig 7) and *R Radical Records' International P.E.A.C.E. Benefit Compilation*, both of which aimed to bring new bands and scenes comprising the worldwide explosion of hardcore punk to greater prominence.⁵³⁵ The record insert for *Welcome to 1984* is emphatic with regards to hardcore punk's internationalist approach, prominently declaring 'The Hell with Nationalism!' Jeff Bale, who was responsible for the accompanying liner notes focuses primarily upon the dystopian connotations of the record's title, but describes how the bands featured recognised the common thread of 'dehumanising, repressive... totalitarian, institutional, technological and psychological' tendencies within their respective societies, 'operative everywhere in the world, from "communist" Yugoslavia to rightest Brazil, from "socialist" France to "conservative" Japan, and from social democratic Sweden to "republican" America.' Bale placed these issues at the forefront of punks anger and energy, positioning it as a unifying spirit of resistance to commonly experienced obstacles within modern societies. He suggests that the international solidarity and universality that underpinned punk could further inspire others to 're-examine their values and reassess their ideas' regarding universal issues of personal liberty and individualism.⁵³⁶ This reflects the hardcore collective's belief that punks shared common and magnetic threads of ideas and actions that could transcend borders and the diverse socio-political contexts in which they lived.

Harmonija by UBR featured on the *MRR* compilation, alongside 16 bands from 23 countries in total, and Gigi remembers that *MRR* founder and editor Tim Yohannan initially 'wanted to include several of our bands, but unfortunately there was not enough space. For some reason they decided to choose us as the representatives of Yugoslavia.'⁵³⁷ Paco suggests that this decision is at least partly responsible for UBR's status on the worldwide stage and Gigi recalls increased contact from other punks as a result. A contemporary interview with UBR confirms that they viewed hardcore punk as an international movement, and were inspired by the records

⁵³⁵ *Maximum RocknRoll Presents: Not So Quiet on the Western Front* (Alternative Tentacles, 1982); *Maximum RocknRoll Presents: Welcome to 1984* (Maximum RocknRoll, 1984); *International P.E.A.C.E. Benefit Compilation* (R Radical Records, 1984)

⁵³⁶ *Maximum RocknRoll Presents: Welcome to 1984* (Maximum RocknRoll, 1984)

⁵³⁷ 'Harmonija' UBR *Maximum RocknRoll Presents: Welcome to 1984* (Maximum RocknRoll, 1984); Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/14

'complete presentation of punk across the world', whilst also hoping that it would generate increased awareness and interest in the Yugoslav and Ljubljana punk scenes:

We have been in contact with *MRR* for some time, and it has already featured some articles about events on the scene, but it is good that Yugoslavia is represented [on the compilation] because more people will find out that something is happening here!⁵³⁸

Gigi laments the fact that the band was unable to capitalise upon the exposure they received and 'do more' as a result, but feels that they were hindered by the fact that they 'chose the wrong song to include!', but perhaps more pertinently, were not active for long enough after the record was released.⁵³⁹



Fig 7: 'Maximum RocknRoll Presents- Welcome to 1984, An International Punk Compilation' (1984)

The *Hardcore Ljubljana 12*", which Gigi describes as a 'phenomenal document of the scene' was released in 1986, and presented the vibrancy of the city's domestic hardcore scene for both domestic and wider audiences.⁵⁴⁰ The compilation helped to increase the prominence of Ljubljana hardcore on the worldwide stage, but

⁵³⁸ 'UBR Interview' *Vrnitev Odpisanih* (Issue 2, Summer 1984)

⁵³⁹ Aranda, Francisco 'Paco', Interview, London, 25/5/2015; Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

⁵⁴⁰ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/04/2014

many of the bands featured split up shortly after its release. David recognises the compilation as a 'farewell' from the scene, which meant it represented posthumous documentation rather than facilitating communication for an operative scene. Indeed, amongst the few interviewees that remembered the specific dynamics which led to the release of the compilation, there was seldom acknowledgement of the facilitation of international contact as a primary motivation. A number of other compilations, released in the preceding years, including *Kaj Je Alternativa?* and *Noć Nad Jugoslavijom*, more actively centred this approach and were accordingly released on cassette, intended to be passed cheaply via tape trading networks between punks across Europe and beyond.⁵⁴¹ The lyrics contained within these compilations accordingly demonstrate an outward looking scene, although 'Propadanje' appears to indicate that the fledgling Ljubljana scene, or at least Stres DA, were particularly in thrall to US examples of hardcore. Whilst its depiction of a world characterised by love being replaced by human graves and the presence of evil is a recognisably punk and seemingly universally applicable motif, the song also makes direct references to President Reagan and the Ku Klux Klan, both of which had become staple (if not cliché) targets within American hardcore, in the same way that Thatcher became a common target in the UK.⁵⁴²

Dare says that finding and trading records and cassettes represented the first active engagement he had with contemporary hardcore punk scenes, but initial links were somewhat sparse, which made information patchy. Nevertheless, this development represented an incremental departure from outright reliance upon figures such as Igor Vidmar, Radio Študent and those with modest disposable income and the ability to travel, who were initially key to dissemination of information. Aldo remembers travelling to buy 'hundreds of New Wave, Punk, Post-Punk and Mute Records LPs in London', but also that valuable and enduring connections were formed closer by, which the hardcore collective expanded upon:

I went to Bologna a couple of times too, because there was a video company that sold us bootlegs of John Walters films and so on, which we would play at the discos. This is where I met Jumpy [of RAF Punk and

⁵⁴¹ *Kaj Je Alternativa* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983); 'Noć Nad Jugoslavijom' *Izazov Fanzine* (1984)

⁵⁴² 'Propadanje' Stres D.A. *Kaj Je Alternativa* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983)

Attack Punk Records], we became friends, their band played in Ljubljana and became associated with UBR.⁵⁴³



Fig 8: Flyer for the first RAF Punk concert in Ljubljana, Siška, Ljubljana, November 1983. The inclusion of the anarchy symbol indicates the explicitness of RAF Punks political approach, whilst the flyer also includes the Crass logo, the most famous proponents of anarcho-punk, who had become almost synonymous with any expression of anarchism within DIY punk by the early 1980s.

Links with nearby western cities were often crucial to peripheral or emerging scenes, including in Ljubljana, and could ensure ongoing dialogue with international punk. Hilary Pilkington describes how punk in Leningrad took on a specifically western character due to its status as a port, which made punk merchandise and records from the west more accessible and meant that the city possessed a more relaxed cultural atmosphere, the kind which Ljubljana is often attributed with.⁵⁴⁴ Travel to other cities, such as Trieste and Bologna, remained problematic for Ljubljana punks, due to a combination of parental reluctance, the financial cost and problems with border guards.⁵⁴⁵

Punks in Ljubljana therefore could not rely on personal travel alone, and regularly called for scenes elsewhere to make further contact, emphasising the mutual benefit of trading. In his first scene report for *Maximum RocknRoll*, Dario

⁵⁴³ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

⁵⁴⁴ H. Pilkington, Y.B. Steinholt and I. Gololobov, (eds) *Punk in Russia*, p.50

⁵⁴⁵ Border guards would occasionally confiscate material they deemed to be 'inappropriate' according to Dare. Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015; Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015; Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

guaranteed exposure across Yugoslavia for any records or cassettes sent to him, whilst David would also encourage further tape trading in a later report, valuing the opportunity to hear new bands over any potential financial reward associated with selling local tapes: 'We prefer swapping. Send us yours; we'll send you ours.'⁵⁴⁶



Fig 9: Božo pictured in the basement of K4, Ljubljana, clutching a C90 cassette tape, the favoured medium of the international tape trading network. Photo by Jože Suhadolnik, circa 1985.

Whilst information remained somewhat piecemeal, Irena states that the contact which did occur consistently reassured the collective that 'we were on the same vibration as people in the US and that we shared the same mentality.'⁵⁴⁷ James Sherry describes how this was not only important to punks in smaller scenes, and remembers that punks in the UK would also spend 'hours on end going through fanzines, writing letters to trade tapes and fanzines or hear demos, slowly digging deeper and deeper' into the international scene.⁵⁴⁸ Members of The Stupids describe the 'huge underground network [as] fundamental to the worldwide scene', with the level of commitment, thought and time that was required representing a source of vitality common to all hardcore scenes. The requirement 'to put pen to paper and to think' in order to form these connections gave relationships particular resonance and authenticity, and became attributed with personal and ideological significance. Irena echoes this for her experiences in Ljubljana:

⁵⁴⁶ D. Cortese 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum Rocknroll* (Issue 7, July-Aug 1983); D. Kržišnik 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum Rocknroll* (Issue 31, December 1985)

⁵⁴⁷ Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁵⁴⁸ *Soap The Stamps* Dazed Digital Music Nation - Series 2, 2014, Documentary

When everything is easy and on a plate, it can be hard to distinguish who is truly involved and committed to the alternative... you have to show it in real life to convince me, and the difficulties in doing this sometimes helps to show where substance lies, and who is real.⁵⁴⁹

Thus far the connections I have outlined generally involve impersonal and indirect methods of communication rather than face to face contact, which was less ubiquitous, but no less precious. Punk bands from outside Yugoslavia had performed within Ljubljana from the late 1970s, and the earliest concerts featuring foreign hardcore punk bands represented formative moments for the existence of hardcore in Ljubljana. Kevin Dunn describes how touring bands can come to represent 'connecting and nurturing' influences upon punk's social networks, bringing 'new ideas, new musical forms... tapes, zines and connections from other scenes... as conduits for ideas, styles and other aspects of communication between national and international punk scenes.'⁵⁵⁰ Immediate and personal connections with established examples of punk could provide affirmation for the approach of the Ljubljana collective, and also further inspired local punks to broaden and diversify their own approaches and begin to make music. Processes of inspiration were constant and often cyclical, with influential scenes influenced by examples of punk elsewhere. Dunn describes how the Washington DC hardcore scene was, in part, sparked into life as a result of examples of punk from the UK and New York, but went on to influence punk in these localities.⁵⁵¹ Anhrefn from Wales recall how first hand exposure to hardcore could not only provide inspiration, but at times forced punk bands into turning their 'live shows... up to 12 on the energy levels' in order to compete with its explosiveness. Paranoid Visions from Ireland describe the impact that the Subhumans (UK) tours had in Ireland as a 'turning point' for the local scene, not only as a result of their sonic presence and performance, but also as a result of the practical processes associated with organising the show. As they remember, previously: 'no band like them had been over... nobody had organised a DIY gig involving a non-local band before. It opened channels to Belfast, gave us

⁵⁴⁹ *Soap The Stamps* Dazed Digital Music Nation - Series 2, 2014, Documentary; Povše, Irena Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁵⁵⁰ K. Dunn, 'Never mind the bollocks: the punk rock politics of global communication', *Review of International Studies* Vol.34 Issue S1 (2008), p.203

⁵⁵¹ Ibid

the credibility and impetus to organise other gigs', and experiences of organising collectively proved that such things were tangible.⁵⁵² The establishment of more solid international touring networks also represented concrete links for communication and practical or theoretical support.

Whilst the airwaves of Radio Študent usually provided initial encounters with hardcore punk in Ljubljana, Robert remembers that the visceral impact and power of punk in a live setting added an important layer of appeal, and the earliest developments of a domestic hardcore punk scene coincided with a handful of performances from international hardcore style bands.⁵⁵³ A number of contemporary reports underline the importance of these concerts on a local level, and Nikolai Jeffs describes the performance of Discharge in Ljubljana in 1981 as a 'key reference point' for the rise of Ljubljana hardcore.⁵⁵⁴ The first *Maximum RocknRoll* scene report concurs, describing their tour, which stopped in both Ljubljana and Belgrade, as the catalyst for the emergence of 'real hardcore bands' in each city.⁵⁵⁵ A contemporary *Mladina* article cites Discharge as Ljubljana's first introduction to 'the energy of hardcore', (See Fig 10) whilst UBR's brief biography in the *Welcome to 1984* Compilation deliberately cites the date of the concert as the date of the bands formation.⁵⁵⁶ Dario describes the volume and speed of Discharge as something which punks had not yet experienced, and Božo agrees, remembering that whilst the (then embryonic) hardcore collective was already aware 'of Discharge, The Varukers and Crass, it was a big shock when we saw Discharge play live.'⁵⁵⁷ David agrees: 'everyone was blown away, it was really like putting gas on a fire for a lot of us. It was really the first hardcore shit, loud and out of anyone's league at the time.'⁵⁵⁸ Gigi is even more effusive:

When we saw Discharge, we were completely speechless... We were not

⁵⁵² I. Glasper, *Trapped In a Scene- UK Hardcore 1985-1989* (Cherry Red Books, 2009), pp.457-466

⁵⁵³ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/15

⁵⁵⁴ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene", 1980-1990', in: B. Škrjanec (ed.) *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni grafični Likovni Center, 2008), p.

⁵⁵⁵ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* (Issue 7, July-August 1983)

⁵⁵⁶ 'Kaj Je Novega? Niet' *Mladina* (23/2/1984); *Maximum RocknRoll Presents: Welcome to 1984* (Maximum RocknRoll, MRR 001, 1984)

⁵⁵⁷ Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016; Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

⁵⁵⁸ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

ready for them. We were just so amazed, we thought let's try to do something like this! Not exactly the same, or better, or worse, but just something! It was very powerful, short lyrics... the image, everything combined perfectly.⁵⁵⁹



Fig 10: Discharge in Ljubljana, 1981. Photo by Matija Praznik

The Dead Kennedys concert in October of the same year proved comparatively formative and Gigi describes how the dates of both remain forever etched upon his memory: 'I went to Italy by train on the 10th October 1981 to see Dead Kennedys. The two most important gigs in my life were that and Discharge.'⁵⁶⁰ Irena describes Dead Kennedys as: '*the* band... the message was very strong, the name, the artwork... and their frontman, Jello Biafra, was totally irreplaceable.'⁵⁶¹ The concert was held in Gorizia, Italy, but this was under 100km from Ljubljana which meant that, as a contemporary *Mladina* review mentions, the city saw an invasion of punks more commonly found outside Bar Medex in Ljubljana (also known as Johnny Rotten Square).⁵⁶² Miha describes it as a pivotal moment, resulting in a:

...big change towards hardcore... this was the first time we saw the American scene for ourselves. We had heard of Dead Kennedys, the Germs

⁵⁵⁹ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid

⁵⁶¹ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁵⁶² 'Medexovci, Ostali in Napad Mrtvih Kenedijev', *Mladina* (October 1981), p.23

and stuff, but nobody had much material... In England the first wave of punk was kind of vanishing and a lot of the second wave felt too commercial for me. American hardcore felt like a fresh wave of punk.⁵⁶³



Fig 11: Peter Barbarić's review in *Mladina* of the Dead Kennedys concert in Gorizia, October 1983.

It is no coincidence that Discharge and the Dead Kennedys were consistently mentioned by interviewees as important influences upon the hardcore scene in Ljubljana, but within a few years of these formative concerts, Ljubljana housed 'probably the most important scene in this part of the world' according to Robert. Ljubljana witnessed relatively regular performances from prominent worldwide hardcore punk bands as part of European tours, which in turn became frequent reference points for local punks.⁵⁶⁴ Recognition of the impact of these touring bands upon the Ljubljana scene as a result of their direct contact provides a vital counterpoint to accounts which overemphasise the impact of more distant scenes, which were engaged with less viscerally.

⁵⁶³ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

⁵⁶⁴ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/03/2015

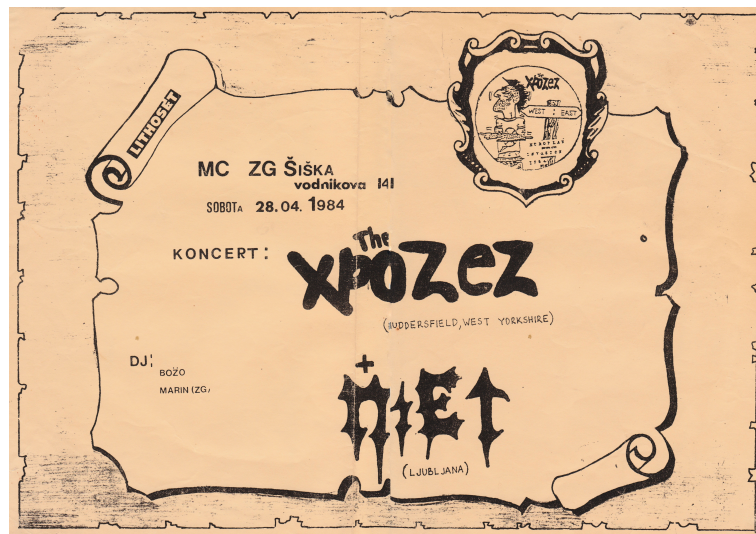


Fig 12: Flyer for The Xpozez in Ljubljana 1984, supported by Niet and Božo of UBR DJ-ing.

The Xpozez from Huddersfield performed in Ljubljana in the Spring of 1984, followed by Rattus [Finland] less than a month later in the same venue, whilst DOA, from Vancouver, also graced the city in the same year. David would review the Rattus concert, which featured Distress [Belgrade] in support for his own fanzine in the summer of 1984, and cites the 'extraordinary performance' from a 'furious band' as guaranteeing their iconic status amongst Ljubljana's hardcore collective, as the band more than met their reputation amongst the local contingent.⁵⁶⁵

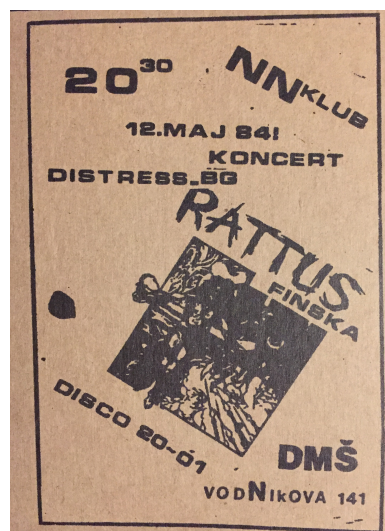


Fig 13: Flyer for Rattus (Finland) and Distress (Belgrade), Vodnikova 141, Ljubljana, 12 May 1984.

⁵⁶⁵ 'Rattus Concert Review' *Vrnitev Odpisanih* Issue 2 (Summer 1984)

David was pen-pals with the singer of The Xpozez, which led them to the city in April 1984, although the collective often collaborated with (or relied upon) Igor Vidmar in order to attract bands to the city.⁵⁶⁶



Fig 14: The Xpozez with Igor Vidmar, Radio Študent, April 1984

Gigi remembers that this somewhat uneasy combination was actually fairly common, and was able to bring Amebix to Ljubljana for the 1986 Novi Rock festival:

Arise was a popular record here and Igor agreed it would be fantastic to have a band like this as a guest, so I brought my favourite band to Ljubljana! We met them at the airport, brought them to the city and had four days partying... at that time I was too young and stupid to be a tour manager, but at least I helped to bring them here!⁵⁶⁷

Andy Turner of The Xpozez remembers that a reliance upon prior personal relationships as a result of a 'less finely tuned' touring circuit made co-operation with haphazard young punks crucial. These often dictated routes across Europe and beyond, with relatively established bands reliant upon tape trading networks and 'hookups' from other friends in order to find concerts, just as punks in marginal scenes relied upon these networks for a sense of connectedness, exposure to new

⁵⁶⁶ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

⁵⁶⁷ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

bands and records and the gateway it provided to ensuring their cities became and remained touring destinations.⁵⁶⁸



Fig 15: DOA in Ljubljana, featuring Gigi of UBR (R) 'troublemaking' onstage.

Dom Svobode Sentvid, 1984. Photo by Irena Povše

DOA, thanks to the development of international contacts, were 'big pals' with members of the Ljubljana hardcore scene by the time of their concert, and David remembers that a number of the collective travelled with the band between Ljubljana and Zagreb.⁵⁶⁹ Joey 'Shithead' Keithley describes his own experiences of the tour in his autobiography, with Ljubljana confounding his expectations of what a communist country looked like: 'We were amazed at how prosperous it looked... cars in good shape, the shops were full.'⁵⁷⁰ His prior contact had evidently failed to prevent Keithley's underestimation of Ljubljana's exposure to punk by this stage, and whilst he describes how he felt that 'they hadn't seen too much' he concedes that they certainly 'knew what to do.' This apparent conformity to modes of behaviour analogous to trends found within North American hardcore suggests that, in Keithley's mind at least, these examples represented the definitive examples, but he was also impressed by the specific vibrancy of the Ljubljana scene. Keithley remembers appreciating opening band UBR's 'trouble-making', which saw members of the scene running across the stage, knocking over stands and monitors and describes the general atmosphere of the concert as positively

⁵⁶⁸ Turner, Andy, Email Interview, 10/1/2015

⁵⁶⁹ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

⁵⁷⁰ J. Keithley, *I, Shithead: A Life in Punk* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2003), p.143

'bezerk!'⁵⁷¹ His 'bizarre' experiences in Poland a year later, of state repression and economic depression seem only to have enhanced his experience of hardcore in Yugoslavia, which seemed altogether more relatable to his own experiences and values in Canada.⁵⁷²

David suggests that the somewhat limited prior knowledge of Yugoslavia that Keithley exemplifies was common amongst many punks from Europe and North America, but that the intersection of a recognisable punk scene in a seemingly unfamiliar societal formation often benefited the local scene. He suggests that travel to Ljubljana and Yugoslavia was viewed a less extreme way to experience an authentic 'communist society', than travel to East Germany or the Soviet Union:

We were part of the hardcore scene and the concert network, which began to work well, so you'd have local promoters in all these bigger European markets that tried to get bands to travel further east. Bands usually wanted to have a different experience in these “eastern countries”, and they knew what was happening here.⁵⁷³

Irena agrees, but says that a lack of knowledge of Yugoslavia meant that western bands regularly associated entry into the country with crossing into the 'communist east', and had accordingly distorted perceptions of the country: 'Sometimes they were shocked we had electricity! I'm exaggerating slightly of course, but they were often surprised how much we knew about hardcore, sometimes more than they did themselves!'⁵⁷⁴ She argues, however, that despite naivety, bands generally approached this experience with excitement and enthusiasm, even if they encountered issues at the border. Gigi believes that bands often found their perceptions of Yugoslavia shattered, with their partial knowledge embellished by stereotypes of socialism and eastern societies, happily confounded:

It was funny, when bands from England, Germany, Italy or America came

⁵⁷¹ Ibid

⁵⁷² Keithley describes witnessing queues for basic items in supermarkets and how DOA were the only band performing to relatively small numbers of people who were unaware of their songs, with shows starting unusually early. Their promoter, Wojeck, was passed out drunk when they first met him. J. Keithley, *I, Shithead*, pp.171-3

⁵⁷³ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

⁵⁷⁴ Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

they were very surprised. Maybe they couldn't have imagined where they were going, but everyone really wanted to come back. The singer of *Scream* asked us, "do you realise what a beautiful, great country you live in?" We had been told the same by British people, who said they wouldn't mind living here!⁵⁷⁵

Gigi would often provide a place for bands to sleep after their shows in Ljubljana, which further cemented personal friendships and contact with punks internationally, and often led to offers of concerts in return, and ensured enduring subsequent contact via letters: 'they called me Hotel Gigi! I don't even know how many people would stay over, but my parents would often go away at the weekend, so I could have lots of people stay.'⁵⁷⁶ Irena remembers that bands always 'appreciated the hospitality they were shown... we cooked, everybody did what they could to make the band happy. We got to know them personally, it became a community of sharing.' This extended from warm receptions in person, places to stay and to the concerts themselves, which were often crucial to overall perceptions of a place and central to any willingness to return, regardless of wider socio-political contexts or friendly welcomes and food.⁵⁷⁷



Fig 16: 'Hotel Gigi'- Rattus with Gigi (R) in Ljubljana, May 1984. Photo by unknown.

⁵⁷⁵ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷⁷ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

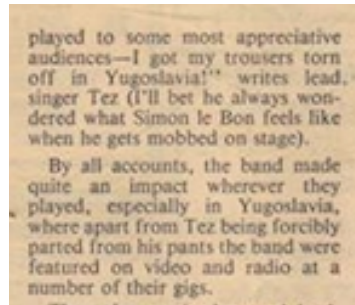


Fig 17: Report of The Xpozez's European Tour, 'On the Grand Tour'
by Gary Cannadine, *Huddersfield Examiner* 3/11/1984

Andy of The Xpozez suggests that the band had no real preconceptions about life under socialism, but also acknowledges that they had little specific knowledge of life in Slovenia, and thus viewed the Ljubljana concert as a component of 'one big adventure.'⁵⁷⁸ He concurs with depictions of Ljubljana as a relaxed city, which provoked mild surprise, but remembers the contrast between everyday life and Ljubljana hardcore concerts which were 'absolutely mental, with bodies flying everywhere.' He attributes this enthusiasm to appreciation that another western band had made the effort to travel to the city.⁵⁷⁹



Fig 18: 'Bodies Everywhere...' The Xpozez in Ljubljana, 28/4/1984
Photographer Unknown. Provided by Andy Turner.

Stig of Amebix explains that Amebix did not regard Ljubljana as a particularly

⁵⁷⁸ Turner, Andy, Email Interview, 10/1/2015

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid

exceptional touring destination, remembering that the band were mostly just looking forward to playing the 'decent sized show' that *Novi Rock* represented.⁵⁸⁰ However, he recalls a 'strange kind of atmosphere', despite viewing Ljubljana as a very beautiful place, remembering that 'it was tense on the streets, you could feel bad things coming... a palpable sense of approaching and looming evil... the sky was grey. I guess I was feeling war approaching.'⁵⁸¹ Božo rejects any 'impression of war' at this time and suggests that the tension Stig felt may have been retrospectively linked to war in his mind, akin to the creation of coherence within oral testimony, or as a result of his somewhat unique talent for conveying the dark and macabre.⁵⁸² Nevertheless, whilst images of the Balkans as a 'war prone... region with tribal passions, blood feuds and ethnic strife... later confirmed by the outbreak of war' may have shaped Stig's memories or his interpretation of events, a number of reports of their time in the country suggest that they are underpinned by a range of violent events.⁵⁸³ Stig remembers a 'weird bar fight' between punks and 'guys from another area' which 'exploded in nasty violence, with glasses flying and all that shit', with the provocation beyond his understanding, and whilst Gigi could not recall the fight itself he acknowledges that it was not unlikely, and may have been with some local skinheads. Stig's recollections of the *Novi Rock* festival are also laced with violence. He describes the concert as remaining only just 'on the right side of dangerous:

...by the time we came onstage it was pretty dark and not everyone was there to see a band, so we just played as hard as we could and hoped for the best. I looked down and could see a lot of blood and broken faces, people getting beaten up or crushed against the barriers, but no one seemed to mind a bit of blood, so we gave it fuck. I would say it was a very charged atmosphere, with political and social tension and that always makes things really kick off.⁵⁸⁴

Igor Bašin's retrospective of the *Novi Rock* festivals largely correlate with Stig's memories. He recalls roaming fights between punks, members of the hardcore

⁵⁸⁰ Miller, Stig C., Email Interview, December 2014

⁵⁸¹ Ibid

⁵⁸² Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

⁵⁸³ M. Todorova, *Imagining The Balkans* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p.124

⁵⁸⁴ Miller, Stig C., Email Interview, December 2014

scene and local skinheads throughout the venue, whilst the stage, in danger of collapse, was held up by individuals from Radio Študent, using only broomsticks.⁵⁸⁵

When asked about the importance of touring bands to marginal scenes from the perspective of the western bands involved, Stig suggests that the impact or influence of live performances and first hand interactions with local punks are rarely considered or quantified on a contemporary basis: 'you can never really understand how what you did could affect people, but I have heard that people were inspired by seeing us. That's obviously a good thing.'⁵⁸⁶ The perspectives of punks on the receiving end however provide a clearer picture. Direct personal experiences with touring bands and the sharing of common frustrations and experiences regularly strengthened their perception of the universality of punk responses to what may have initially seemed to represent outwardly different social and political contexts. Members of the Ljubljana scene ultimately recognised common concerns, and were increasingly able to place their own frustrations within a shared global context. Gigi remembers that the Ljubljana hardcore scene accordingly began to gain a more enlightened perspective on cultural limitations within the west, and as a result believed that there was actually not 'much difference between our lives and experiences... here it was a bit less luxurious, we didn't have fancy cars and you couldn't always buy things like bananas or chocolate everyday, but we were still allowed to go around like they could.'⁵⁸⁷

Personal interactions between Ljubljana punks and other scenes were not limited to a one way process of visits from touring bands. Ljubljana hardcore bands performed outside of the city on a semi regular basis, frequently in Yugoslavia and occasionally in Europe, albeit less frequently than many of their international contemporaries. Tožibabe travelled to Rijeka, Novi Sad, Idrija, Kranj, Nova Gorica, Goriška brda, Belgrade (remembered as their best concert), Zagreb, Pula, and beyond Yugoslavia, playing a festival in Thessaloniki, Greece.⁵⁸⁸ Niet played in both France and Italy, whilst UBR travelled to the Netherlands, performing in

⁵⁸⁵ I. Bašin, *Novi Rock*, p.125

⁵⁸⁶ Miller, Stig C., Email Interview, December 2014

⁵⁸⁷ Bananas and chocolate were available in Yugoslavia at this time, but were often expensive. Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/15

⁵⁸⁸ Tožibabe *Dežuje* (FV Music, Ne! Records 2016)

Venlo and Amersfoort in 1985 and Italy for the first time in 1984. Members of the hardcore collective also stayed in Amsterdam for 10 days and the close connections developed with members of the Dutch scene resulted in the reciprocal exchange of gigs and places to stay. However, it was links with punks in Bologna that proved especially pivotal to the band's legacy, and for the Ljubljana hardcore collective, representing a local connection with the European hardcore scene, and a practical means of support through the label Attack Punk Records.⁵⁸⁹ Miha remembers the earliest connections:

RAF Punk invited UBR to their house in Bologna, where they had their record label and somewhere bands could practice. The concert was in an alternative disco club and there were hundreds of people there, all different kinds of people too, including punks and darkers.⁵⁹⁰

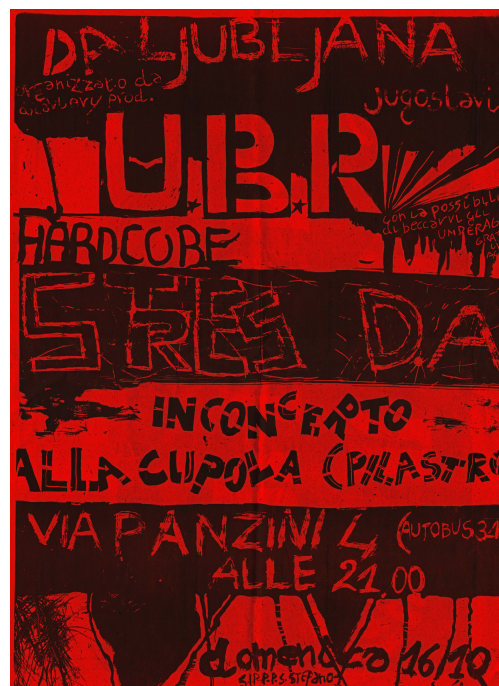


Fig 19: Flyer for UBR and Stres DA in Bologna, Italy, 1984. Courtesy of Miha Zupevc.

UBR played with 'the Finnish band Bastards, the Dutch band BGK, and I think LARM too', with these concerts representing some of the most formative personal

⁵⁸⁹ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015; 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* (Issue 31, December 1985)

⁵⁹⁰ Darkers' refers to fans of darkwave music, a term which was first used to refer to various post-punk, gothic and synth music bands in the 1980s. Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

interactions that the hardcore collective made.⁵⁹¹ As Gigi remembers:

When these guys in Bologna... who already knew of UBR... said that we should come to play, We were just like “what! Are you fucking kidding us? For us it was like a dreamland, they were lovely, nice, beautiful people, they had their squat with a small pressing facility, they made their own covers, printed things themselves and could make badges. The ideas behind this was very common to us, but anything on this scale was completely out of our reach!”⁵⁹²

Irena describes how punks in Ljubljana witnessed 'what [RAF Punk] were doing, and we tried to do something like it here too.'⁵⁹³ These interactions were far from deferential, and UBR were received in Italy with the same kind of excitement that Ljubljana reserved for international bands. Bologna punks accordingly joined UBR onstage during their set, even singing along to their songs.⁵⁹⁴ Miha remembers the growth of a 'very close connection' between the cities, which culminated via collaborative opportunities that would otherwise have remained out of reach, with Attack Punk releasing UBR's *Corpus Delicti 7* in 1984. The validity and popularity of Ljubljana's hardcore scene also complemented FV's aforementioned outlook and attempts to make international contacts, with Nikolai Jeffs outlining a mutually beneficial network emerging as a result of their mutual efforts.⁵⁹⁵

Personal contact also stretched beyond these relatively limited, yet no less important, examples of travel directly relating to touring. Irena visited San Francisco in 1986, witnessing vaunted US hardcore bands and venues on a first hand basis, which helped cement the influence of a scene previously experienced in fragments. She likens her individual travel to the way that RAF Punk gave UBR something to aspire to, and acknowledges that, whilst at times she was 'blinded' by her experiences of America, it also spurred her own domestic activities. The impact was instantaneous, and she:

⁵⁹¹ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

⁵⁹² Ibid

⁵⁹³ Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁵⁹⁴ 'Hard Core' *Mladina* (1/31984) pp.12-13

⁵⁹⁵ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990' in: B. Škrjanec (ed.) *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni Grafični Likovni Center, 2008), p.380

...started booking shows soon after ... I met similar people to me and who thought like me at The Farm, where all the shows were happening. Meeting punks from different countries around the world through *MRR* had a super influence upon me, and I saw everything you can imagine from that scene. I worked there, helped sweep the floor, pick up trash and I slept there too, covering myself with a filthy American flag to keep warm!⁵⁹⁶

The latter half of the 1980s saw the decline of Ljubljana hardcore in terms of local bands, but this experience, and the ideological and personal inspiration that Irena took from her travels meant that she and David continued to bring US and international hardcore, punk and eventually other alternative bands to the city. The hardcore collective eventually took control of the concert activities of the Ljubljana student cultural centre, and the practical connections Irena had made, including with Dolf of *Trust* fanzine, meant she had the means to contact Fugazi and the 'other legendary bands' that performed in Ljubljana.⁵⁹⁷

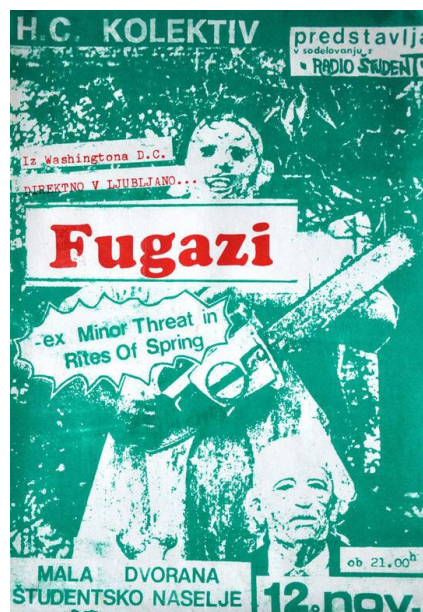


Fig 20: Poster for Fugazi concert, presented by the Hardcore Collective in conjunction with Radio Študent. The concert was held in the small hall of the Ljubljana student campus, 12/10/1988.

Courtesy of Irena Povše

⁵⁹⁶ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁵⁹⁷ N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns', p. 331; Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

Europe remained a more common destination for travel, however, with hitchhiking often the hardcore collective's method of choice. Miha remembers that the collective were determined to travel, but 'were too young, had no cars and the train was so expensive, so we would hitch separately and meet up in Berlin, Amsterdam or wherever.'⁵⁹⁸ This travel often occurred in conjunction with the foreign performances of Ljubljana bands and David remembers:

Crews of 20 people all travelling together to Holland for the UBR shows... we did things with a really low budget, so bands would hitchhike and borrow their equipment, including guitars. We had good relationships with punks in Eindhoven so we travelled there quite often, and they would visit Ljubljana every year.⁵⁹⁹

But personal travel unrelated to concerts was also important and common. As Miha remembers:

A few times I went along with bands, but we would travel by ourselves too. I would travel alone to places, to record shops or underground clubs, and sometimes a small group of friends would hitchhike together... one time 5 or 6 of us, including Gigi, Božo, Marsa and Jani... went to Hanover for the annual punk rebellion which thousands of punks would attend, fighting against skins and the police.⁶⁰⁰

Somewhat inevitably, these cross country trips came with their own issues and dangers, and Miha recalls that in 1984 or 1985 a group of punks were deported back to Yugoslavia and banned from returning to Germany for a year:

They were broke and had a problem with the police in Germany so they had to spend a night in prison. They were then sent to the embassy and deported by train back to Yugoslavia! To look like a punk at that time and hitchhike was always difficult, policemen would always stop them.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁸ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/16

⁵⁹⁹ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

⁶⁰⁰ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

⁶⁰¹ Ibid

Locating Authenticity and Punk Melting Pots

Whilst musical, stylistic and ideological characteristics were integral to the process by which scenes became influential, this was also dictated by geographical location and associated socio-economic factors. These included the accessibility of touring, alongside punk specific exposure, primarily via fanzines and the dynamics of trading networks. These combined to enhance reputations and create legends, but in a fluctuating and haphazard manner, and it is accordingly difficult to track such processes precisely. This reflects the chaotic and sprawling international punk scene and the autonomous and underground means of communication that it relied upon. As the Glasgow hardcore band Sedition state, 'everyone' involved in the global hardcore scene was 'listening to a lot of different bands', which made universal or consistency with regards to influences across and within scenes rare.⁶⁰² Particular scenes could become associated with a tendency towards specific traditions, styles and aesthetics, but whilst certain bands became consistently influential across local, regional and international divides, this was far from uniform, or the result of a strictly linear process, and scenes were actively and consciously heterogeneous. Indeed, divisions between major and peripheral scenes can be useful in order to indicate the size, influence and endurance of scenes, but, as I have argued, to present flows of information and influence as a one way process is misleading. The presence of mutual respect and the absence of deference on the part of the Ljubljana hardcore collective does not mean that flows of influence were of equal volume, and the reality with regards to cultural influence is somewhere in between the two extremes. Smaller scenes could enact occasional degrees of influences upon larger and established distant localities, but their primary influence was upon those in their direct regional vicinity. Ljubljana punk thus engaged in common and effective creative exchange and influence with other scenes in Yugoslavia, but the relative scarcity of concrete or clear examples of influence indicates the extent to which the relatively small Ljubljana scene remained somewhat marginal on a global scale. The difficulties in producing records and communicating in general meant the level to which they engaged, demonstrated primarily by the diversity of scene reports in domestic fanzines, is remarkable in itself. This is testament to both the hardcore collective's tirelessness

⁶⁰² I. Gasper, *Trapped In a Scene*, p.492

in this regard, as well as the success of the international punk network. The reach this network had is perhaps best demonstrated by the example of Colombia's RDT (See Fig 21). The bassist of the band is pictured wearing a t-shirt which carries the logo that was featured on the Hardcore Ljubljana LP.⁶⁰³



Fig 21: RDT from the inlay of the *La Ciudad Podrida* compilation. The bass player (left) is wearing a homemade t-shirt with the logo featured on the *Hardcore Ljubljana* Compilation cover art.

Hardcore punk may have become associated with distillation, but rather than uniformity through direct processes of influence alone, interaction with other scenes also operated on the level of appreciation of existing mutual approaches, comparable mentalities and similar examples of punk. *Soap the Stamps* presents the mid-1980s UK hardcore scene as a broad and fluctuating collection of local scenes, with diverse examples of punk pushed together within these localities and beyond to produce a diverse scene. Napalm Death, who primarily exaggerated examples of punk associated with the UK, from Discharge to Amebix, thus becoming pioneers of what became known as grindcore, performed seamlessly alongside remaining UK82 bands such as The Varukers, anarcho-punk bands like Chumbawamba and Icons of Filth, as well as UKHC bands including Concrete Sox and The Stupids. The latter, from Ipswich, represented an opposite end of the hardcore spectrum in terms of influence, adopting styles more common to the contemporary USHC scene, with their fast thrash punk incorporating comical

⁶⁰³ RDT, *Ser Y No Ser 7"* (No Label, 1989); RDT, *La Ciudad Podrida* (No Label, 1990)

lyrics and a love of skateboarding.⁶⁰⁴ Many bands deliberately eschewed local expectations in this way, to distinguish themselves from dominant trends, with the adoption of influences from other major or marginal scenes furthering elements of diversity and consistent variation that were also drawn from localised innovation.

As punks in Ljubljana became increasingly familiar with the size and scope of the international punk network and contact became easier with specific scenes, the diversity of influences which were utilised expanded accordingly. Whilst the 1980s saw attempts to order previously unorganised and instinctive splinters of punk into a number of designated subgenres, the boundaries of each remained flexible and as contested as the definition of hardcore and punk, whilst bands sought to break free from the imposition of the shackles they associated with codification. Hardcore thus represented a dynamic, consistently evolving alternative to punk orthodoxy and whilst the Ljubljana collective stressed unifying ideologies and approaches, individual scenes and bands were also championed by different individuals. The Ljubljana scene housed a range of diverse, yet often complementary, stylistic, ideological and musical preferences, with hardcore operating as a wider unifying umbrella. Some interviewees described how particular geographical or musical scenes appealed to them particularly, whilst others, including Marsa and Božo, had contact with numerous international scenes from which they would cherry-pick favourite bands, often based on style, including Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and South America.⁶⁰⁵ Irena also recalls contact with punks in Chile, Dario states that the Brazilian scene was important, as scenes and collectives were continually conceived of and understood along geographical lines. Indeed, Dare specifically compared the 'Slovene mentality' to the cultural psyche of Finland, arguing that this provided specific appeal: 'We were both small countries with small populations, surrounded by strong nations... whilst the sound and how they played was always the most important thing to me, Finnish hardcore also felt like something that was local!'⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰⁴ *Soap The Stamps* Dazed Digital Music Nation- Series 2, 2014, Documentary

⁶⁰⁵ 'Tožibabe Interview', *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 36 (May 1986); Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

⁶⁰⁶ Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014; Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016, Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

A *MRR* report from July 1984 describes the style of the Ljubljana scene as a product of a combination of styles adopted from the UK, Finland and America, alongside elements of domestic innovation, whilst Gvido Obradović cites admiration for US bands such as DRI, but categorises the blend of influences which took hold as 'European Hardcore'.⁶⁰⁷ The UK continued to provide a 'big influence', and UBR covered Flux of Pink Indians at their early concerts, whilst the ideological influence of the anarcho-punk scene also provided the early templates with regards to DIY: 'the way they worked, producing cheap records and recordings that had a power mainstream music didn't'.⁶⁰⁸ This influence became increasingly complemented by first hand experiences, such as in Bologna. Various terms were used to refer to this amalgamation of styles, and a range of divergent scenes were utilised as reference points. Ljubljana punks drew from manifold streams, combining shared and disparate influences to create their own distinctive variants, flavoured further by individual autonomy and localised characteristics.

Miha suggests that rather than heralding strict codification, variety within hardcore scenes often accounted for their popularity. He cites the combination of melodic bands such as The Adolescents or Bad Religion, and 'aggressive' acts such as The Necros and Minor Threat, in the 'dynamic' US scene as key to its popularity in Ljubljana.⁶⁰⁹ This was reflected in the domestic scene, and the range of bands which the city's hardcore acts were likened to reflects its portrayal as a melting pot of external influences and domestic originality. Whilst Niet were compared to UK acts such as The Partisans and The Subhumans, and Tožibabe cited similar influences, the latter also heralded the energy of US hardcore whilst simultaneously eschewing direct comparisons with any particular band or scene.⁶¹⁰ Otpadki Civilizacije and III.Kategorija were more commonly compared to Finnish hardcore, although the former's logo on the *Hardcore Ljubljana* compilation features a backdrop utilising iconic album covers of bands from the US and the UK. This only tells part of the story however, as it was dictated by what artwork

⁶⁰⁷ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 15 (1984); G. Obradović 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Feedback* Issue 1 (1984)

⁶⁰⁸ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014; Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015; Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

⁶⁰⁹ Zupevc, Miha, Interview, Ljubljana, 11/10/2016

⁶¹⁰ 'Kaj Je novega? Niet', *Mladina* (23/2/1984); 'Tožibabe Interview', *Maximum RocknRoll* (Issue 36, May 1986)

was available to photocopy rather than particular allegiance to the scenes represented.⁶¹¹ Indeed, Odpadki Civilizacije's musical contributions to the compilation, particularly 'Vojna Smrt', utilise aesthetics commonly witnessed within Finnish and Swedish hardcore, with simple 'buzzsaw' guitars and a rumbling bass line underpinned by an unrelenting d-beat and simple, war focused lyrics, that had become a staple in Scandinavia.⁶¹² UBR's *Corpus Delicti* also drew from the region, alongside the USA and the UK, but their music represents a compelling sonic contemporary of Brazil's Ratos de Porão, particularly their 1984 LP *Crucificados Pelo Sistema*.⁶¹³ Whilst it seems likely that each band primarily moved independently towards these resemblant sounds, members of each scene communicated, and members of UBR have acknowledged their contemporary appreciation for Brazilian bands, including Ratos de Porão and Olho Seco.⁶¹⁴

Influences were not only exemplified sonically, but were also demonstrated by the aesthetics and fashions which punks in Ljubljana adopted and created. Whilst Stephen Blush describes hardcore as 'decidedly anti-fashion' and Crass had previously rejected the descent of punk into 'a fashion, like hippy used to be', later waves of punk were nevertheless associated with stylistic codification and the adoption of 'punk uniforms.' However, the extent to which hardcore represented a overzealously policed rulebook in contrast with the musical and stylistic freedom of earlier punk was frequently overstated by detractors.⁶¹⁵ Indeed, whilst Lauraine Leblanc describes a 'harder edged, more masculine' codification of hardcore punk style in the US, the adoption of staples such as leather jackets, metal studs, combat boots, spiked armbands, chains, dog tags and patches was far from universal.⁶¹⁶ Punk sects and scenes, both within regional borders and on an international basis, consciously varied in terms of aesthetic presentation. Many individuals within scenes conformed with prevalent local trends, whilst others consciously took

⁶¹¹ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report', *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 24 (April 1985); 'Yug - The Scene in General', *One World* Issue 1 (1985); *Hardcore Ljubljana* (FV Založba, 1986)

⁶¹² 'Vojna Smrt' Odpadki Civilizacije *Hardcore Ljubljana* (FV Založba, 1986)

⁶¹³ Ratos de Porão, *Crucificados Pelo Sistema* (Peculio Discos, 1984); UBR, *Corpus Delicti* (Attack Punk, 1984)

⁶¹⁴ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014; Rakočević, Božo, Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

⁶¹⁵ S. Blush, *American Hardcore* (Feral House, 2001), p.45; 'Punk is Dead' Crass *The Feeding of the 5000* (Small Wonder Records, 1977)

⁶¹⁶ L. Leblanc, *Pretty In Punk- Girl's Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture* (Rutgers University Press, 1999), p.52-3

inspiration from elsewhere.

Members of the hardcore collective valued elements of collectivisation achieved through image. Marjan Ogrinc accordingly highlights the 'unifying' effect associated with the adoption of 'black, embroidered and inscripted vests or jackets' and a 'more militant image'.⁶¹⁷ Irena suggests that whilst the adoption of identifiable styles drew like-minded people together and, crucially, symbolised difference from 'the norm', it also enabled the assertion of a 'collective individuality.' She argues that individuals were able to maintain their distinct identities, but these were nevertheless demonstrated via collectively shaped methods of asserting difference.⁶¹⁸ Dare links image choices to other forms of anti-social behaviour and the negation of basic rules of conduct, which were 'deliberately broken.' He suggests that 'swearing, improper behaviour and styles of clothing' combined to represent a symbolic, if small scale, expression of criticism and rejection of dominant ideologies and modes of living. Instinctive refusal to co-operate became manifest within unconscious and at times incoherent symbolism, shaped by the materials and ideas that were available to punks.⁶¹⁹

Punk style could also represent assertions of personal freedom, which was nevertheless achieved via collective identification and adherence to elements of community standards. Punks rejected the idea of countercultural identification as representing a limiting framework, but image also provoked discussions and contestation regarding authenticity and the commodification of punk style and music. Indeed, many punks are aware of elements of theoretical contradiction associated with the continuing privilege afforded to the assertion of individuality and rejection of specific dogmas, whilst valuing elements of unity and continuity amongst punks across the globe. The Japanese hardcore band Life reference this on their appropriately titled 'A Collective of Individuals' from 1999.⁶²⁰ Members of the hardcore collective consciously and openly responded to influences, and responded to elements of overarching ideologies. However, they consistently believed that

⁶¹⁷ M.Ogrinc, 'Ni nam do tega, da bi postali zgodovina', *Punk Pod Slovenci*, p.100

⁶¹⁸ Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014; S. Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, p.47

⁶¹⁹ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014

⁶²⁰ 'A Collective of Individuals', Life on: *The World Lies Across Them* (Punk Bastard Records, 1999)

they did so without surrendering their own subjectivity and represented regional distinctiveness. The dynamics of this process were given visual articulation through the way that they looked and their stylistic choices. Elements of contradiction were, at times, inevitable as a result of the requirement to celebrate local independence, variability and individuality, whilst also adopting elements of a collective culture which frequently contained socio-economic power imbalances.



Fig 22: Gigi adjusting his JNA boots. Photo by Dario Cortese, date unknown.

The Ljubljana scene directly incorporated or recreated elements of western hardcore style but also amended and repurposed general outlines and developed localised trends on an autonomous basis. As Dunn describes, when 'global punks borrow style and ideas... they do so to create their own styles and ideas.'⁶²¹ The diverse, yet recognisable appearance of many Ljubljana punks owed much to individual innovation and creativity, which was utilised to overcome limitations in terms of access to particular items of clothing, but it was also responsible for creating autonomous trends. Leather jackets, described by Leblanc as one of the key staples of punk wardrobes, were impossible to come by locally, which meant that the punks that could afford them were forced to import them directly from Britain or Italy.⁶²² The same was true for bullet belts, spikes, studs, and punk badges. David recalls importing them from London in order to allow local punks to

⁶²¹ K. Dunn, *Global Punk*, p.209

⁶²² L. Leblanc, *Pretty In Punk*, pp.52-3; Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

adopt a recognisable aesthetic.⁶²³ However, as Gigi recalls, punks also displayed disapproval towards those who were able to 'buy every single item of their clothing from London', with the idea of simply 'importing an entire image' unpalatable to much of the collective. He remembers that they dismissed such individuals as 'punk rock snobs... and maybe we envied them sometimes, but we also thought it was much better to show originality.'⁶²⁴

An article in David's *Vrnitev Odpisanih* fanzine indicates that hardcore punks did however wish to directly import some stylistic trends from other scenes, with the fact that they were unable to occasionally, as a result of it being impossible to do so, rather than their desire for complete originality. David describes how 70% of skateboarders in the USA were punks, which meant that the two scenes had become somewhat inseparable, citing The Germs, Black Flag, Minor Threat, JFA and Die Kreuzen as popular bands which embodied this crossover. He also mentions the adoption of skateboarding in the UK, and largely decries the fact that Yugoslav punks had to accept that they were not able to follow suit, as 'the conditions for it to develop simply do not exist - no manufacturers, no places to buy skateboards, no skateparks and no other places where we could skate.'⁶²⁵

Ljubljana punks were able to be more resourceful in order to adopt western trends elsewhere however, and accordingly adopted the readily available JNA boots as their standard footwear. Gigi remembers 'they became our own version', a Yugoslav specific amendment of styles found in the UK.⁶²⁶ The cost and lack of access to the desired Dr Martens boots played a more compelling role than any specific attempts to distinguish themselves in this regard, and David remembers that 'they were just too expensive, it was almost like buying a house, so we wore our Yugoslav boots instead.' More compelling examples of creativity in terms of punk style was represented by locals who made and altered their own clothes. Maus of Stres DA and III. Kategorija was an 'excellent tailor', which enabled self sufficiency and as Gigi remembers, combined with original approaches to result in Ljubljana punks:

⁶²³ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

⁶²⁴ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

⁶²⁵ 'Skateboarding', *Vrnitev Odpisanih* Issue 2 (Summer 1984)

⁶²⁶ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

...looking like nobody else in the world... we might not have had the money but we had the soul. We thought “fuck this, we are what we are” so we’d make our own shirts and whatever else we wanted. I can’t speak for everyone but I think I was really original.⁶²⁷



Fig 23: Irena (left) and friends in Ljubljana, demonstrating the combination of styles common within the Ljubljana hardcore scene, including JNA boots and studded jackets.

Photo by Igor Modić, 1985.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how the Ljubljana hardcore scene exchanged ideas, aesthetics and styles with punks across the world, as well as the impact that this contact had, both upon the character of the Ljubljana scene and the individuals around which it was formed. These interactions, which were crucial to the appeal of hardcore punk, occurred on an egalitarian basis and were informed by overarching and mutual globalist ideologies, which resulted in reflexively influential relationships. The reciprocal nature of information sharing and music trading shaped the character of established scenes. Internationalism and the 'network of friends' remained one of *the* common ideologies across 1980s hardcore, in as much as it is possible to pin these themes down.

⁶²⁷ Ibid

Instinctive desires to connect with other punks often fuelled international interactions and could validate experiences and approaches. The fact that punks outside of Yugoslavia were interested, not only in the music that was being produced, but in the lives of individuals in Ljubljana also helped to reinforce and intensify the existing appeal and resonance of punk amongst young Yugoslavs. Global communication was an important and invigorating element of hardcore, worthy of acknowledgement as important in its own right, but it also served to amplify other factors that made hardcore feel vital, and combatted feelings of marginalisation that punks experienced. The connections that were formed helped to justify rejections of the grey mass and dominant culture, through confirmation that other young people in diverse settings across the world shared their bellicose worldview.

Punks in Ljubljana shared their music, opinions and ideas with the rest of the global punk scene, but were equally eager to listen and learn, in order to diversify their understandings of life elsewhere. They also *needed* to do so, in order to feed insatiable appetites for more music, which was made all the more fundamental by hardcore's retreat to the level of the countercultural underground. The initial moments of awe that were provoked by first hand interactions with international hardcore bands, records, artwork and fanzines soon became replaced by an attitude that maintained elements of admiration, but did so on a non-deferential basis, valuing and venerating hardcore as a non-competitive, unified subculture, of which the Ljubljana scene was a component. The ethos shared by much of the contemporary hardcore scene saw bands and individuals value internationalism, global communication and worldwide exposure as an integral element of the scene, which meant that those in marginal and more peripheral scenes interacted on an egalitarian basis. This did not completely alleviate elements of power imbalance that were imposed upon scenes as a result of political and socio-economic circumstances well beyond the control of even the most vibrant counterculture. However, the emphasis that the underground placed upon connecting beyond immediate localities reduced elements of isolation. Mutualist communication was based around the universal power of punk, the pure excitement associated with discovering new examples of punk in far flung places, and genuine interest in the lives of likeminded people. In its most vivid guise, internationalist punk saw

individuals share and expound their local examples of punk as important contributions that enriched and contributed to a global counterculture, fuelled by excitement and enthusiasm rather than competitiveness or exclusiveness.

Internationalism indelibly shaped the Ljubljana hardcore scene and collective, as well as the outlooks of the individuals that poured their energy into it. A global outlook, as a key ideological component of the scene, helped to shape how the young people that represented Ljubljana hardcore and its collective saw their immediate place in the world, and how they envisioned the future. The commonality that hardcore stressed throughout diverse societal contexts took hold and meant that the hardcore collective consistently looked outward, beyond borders in order to connect with youth in other societies. Other contemporary social movements in Ljubljana and Yugoslavia may have shared this approach, but the directness and the level of engagement that was facilitated by a collective network of equals remained somewhat unique. The Ljubljana hardcore collective utilised and exploited an existing worldwide network for their own ends, whilst also reinforcing and expanding their political ideas, informing their approach to their daily lives, and developing new methods to conceive of, and ultimately express, resentments, frustrations and desires.

Chapter 3: 'Kiss the Girls, Make Them Cry': Women and Ljubljana Hardcore

'Punks are not girls. If it comes to the crunch we'll have no option to fight back.'

Mark P, *Sniffin' Glue*, October 1976

Rather than relegated to the periphery of the Ljubljana hardcore collective, women were central to the cultural, musical and interpersonal dynamics that combined to form the scene. By the middle of the 1980s, Tožibabe - comprised of three young women – represented a key component of the Ljubljana scene, had received international recognition and, as Nikolai Jeffs argues, successfully challenged how Slovene 'rock music as a whole, including punk, was dominated by men.'⁶²⁸ The band's defining statement, the *Dežuje (It Is Raining) 7"*, was released in 1986 and served as emphatic confirmation of what those familiar with the international hardcore punk scene were already well aware - that women were frequently producing compelling and enduring hardcore punk records.

Women also occupied key organisational roles in Ljubljana, ensuring gigs occurred and international bands could visit the city, which, as I outline in Chapter 2, was of crucial importance. These pivotal roles and 'backstage' contributions, which, as Martin Sprouse outlines: 'actually make shows happen from beginning to end', are often harder to document, as existing academic punk narratives often conform to traditional music history frameworks that overstate the actions of individual 'stars', at the expense of the multitude of 'participants', that combine and co-operate in order to form underground punk scenes.⁶²⁹ Tendencies to overlook these roles, which include fanzine writers, photographers and general organisational contributors affected women in particular because they regularly offered the most immediate means of participation and potential acceptance for 'outsiders' within hardcore scenes in the early 1980s, some of which continued to present women in accordance with the quote that opens this chapter.⁶³⁰ Accounts which fail to

⁶²⁸ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990' in: B. Škrjanec (ed), *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni Grafični Likovni Center, 2008), p.373

⁶²⁹ M. Sprouse, *MRR Presents: Turn It Around* (Maximum RocknRoll, 1987)

⁶³⁰ S. Blush, *American Hardcore- A Tribal History* (Feral House, 2001), p.38

challenge these orthodoxies or highlight moments that represent subversions of female exclusion allow men to continue to dominate the spotlight, and further erase female contributions. As a result, many essential but 'unglamorous' tasks remain subject to gender orthodoxies and are positioned as mere support roles, whilst communities such as the hardcore collective - the true driving forces of hardcore scenes - are ignored or devalued.⁶³¹

Punk is often positioned as a movement which amplified previously marginalised voices and provided space for personal and politically liberatory experiences, yet many histories merely acknowledge an inherently liberatory nature, whilst continuing to focus on the same male contributions and ignoring examples which could be used to make a more forceful case for punk as an egalitarian subculture. This is not entirely surprising, as subcultural studies regularly centre masculinity and present women in roles of 'structured secondariness' based upon conscious and unconscious choices on the part of those representing the culture.⁶³² Attempts by women to subvert masculinity within subcultures are regularly ignored or glossed over and, as Lauraine Leblanc argues, 'male focused and male-generated subcultural theory' has consistently yet inaccurately positioned girls as passive, ancillary, sexual and less resistant than their male peers.⁶³³ Rather than constructing female participation upon the basis of male perspectives which often shape academic and popular presentations of punk, accounts which allow the women involved an active voice can provide nuanced and appropriately complex representations of the ways it has been experienced and utilised. These reappraisals confirm the potential for punk women to resist patriarchal norms and engage with an often empowering culture, and shine light upon female contributions to punk's dynamism and vibrancy. They also contribute to better understandings of punk in general, illuminating interactions between liberatory moments, elements of oppressive behaviour, reluctance to reconstruct rockist constructions of masculinity

⁶³¹ B. Beynon, 'Subversive Pleasure: Feminism in DIY Hardcore' in: J. Downes (ed) *Women Make Noise- Girl bands from Motown to the modern* (Supernova Books, 2012), p.216

⁶³² A. McRobbie & J. Garber, 'Girls and Subcultures' in: S. Hall and T. Jefferson (eds) *Resistance Through Rituals* (Hutchinson, 1975), p.211

⁶³³ Lauraine Leblanc cites influential subcultural work such as Frederic Thrasher's 1927 study of Gangs, William Whyte's research on Italian slums and John McLeod's ethnography of black and white inner city youths focus as exemplary of this tendency and argues that the lauded work of the Birmingham School also frequently placed males at the centre of research. L. Leblanc, *Pretty In Punk- Girl's Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture* (Rutgers University Press, 1999), p.68

and focus upon 'provocative ambiguity over social progressiveness.' All of these were regularly and often simultaneously encountered within punk scenes.⁶³⁴

Women utilised the Ljubljana hardcore scene as a means of self expression and as a platform to experience different forms of freedom and reject elements of marginalisation and patriarchy within alternative culture. Mojca of Tožibabe states that whilst she feels she no longer needs punk to encourage or enable her to express her opinions and feelings, as a teenager in the early 1980s, it 'gave [her] the guts to do it!'⁶³⁵ Her bandmate Marsa, who was slightly older and had already been active as vocalist of the punk band Čao Pičke (Hello Cunts), agrees that exposure to punk was crucial to her finding 'a voice', and that Tožibabe encouraged her to further express her thoughts and feeling through the production of music.⁶³⁶ She outlines that she did this 'not as a woman', but as an individual. Her primary desire was 'to sing... to be yourself and to dare to express that which was not very acceptable... I liked the chaos, but it was not just about rebelling without a reason. We had a cause, to battle the system.'⁶³⁷ This captures the importance of acknowledging and examining the impact of gender upon the experiences of punk women, whilst also avoiding understanding their actions entirely through a prism which privileges gender above all else. Punk was often central to conceptions of identity and reflected the multitude of opinions and interests that female members of the scene possessed.

This chapter aims to contribute to a wider narrative which counters accounts which present the early moments of punk in 1976 and riot grrrl in the 1990s as exceptional moments in the history of punk, whereby women suddenly claimed

⁶³⁴ Roger Sabin states that punk has at times been 'very reactionary' with regards to gender. Linda O'Brien combines depictions of punk boys as 'regular knobheads who happened to have spikey hair', alongside the prevalence of boundary pushing yet potentially sexist lyrics as indication of ambiguous and at times negative attitudes towards emancipatory gender politics in early punk scenes. R. Sabin (ed), *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (Routledge, 1999), p.4; L. O'Brien, 'The Woman Punk Made Me' in: R. Sabin (ed) *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (Routledge, 1999), p.195

⁶³⁵ Krish, Mojca, Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

⁶³⁶ Marsa joined the band as vocalist in 1981, alongside Jani Sever, Ljubo Kopač and Iztok Vidmar. She recalls that her creative contributions and avenues for self expression within the band were relatively limited, which encouraged her to form her own. Whilst the subversive connotations of the band's name are clear, it thus appears to be the product of male-led shock tactics, rather than feminist appropriation and reclamation. Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁶³⁷ Ibid

elements of the counterculture for their own purposes.⁶³⁸ Rather than a consequence of isolated explosions of female activity, these moments reflect the fact that pioneering women throughout the world continually seized upon developments within punk in order to further an agenda which placed female participation at the frontline, motivated by a complex combination of motives. The Ljubljana hardcore scene of the 1980s provides a number of instances of women doing exactly that, and examining these contributions and positive affirmations of gender, alongside the motives and views of the women involved, the presence of negative experiences and sexism, as well as the embrace and antipathy of feminist ideologies can not only inform wider understandings of female contributions to punk, but also the ways that a section of young people in Ljubljana interacted with issues of gender, marginalisation and feminism. This chapter first outlines the general position of women within Yugoslav society, before turning to examine both the experiences and contributions young women made to the Ljubljana hardcore collective and wider scene. It then turns to focus in more depth upon punk fashion, and the implications and motivations behind the stylistic choices which women made, before finally examining the impact (or lack thereof) of feminism on the hardcore scene, particularly in terms of the attitudes of female members had with regards to this ideology and the extent to which their actions can be described as deliberately or latently feminist.

Proclamations and Lived Realities: Women in Yugoslavia

Yugoslav communist ideology positioned the role of women in socialism as a broad ideological issue that could be solved via working class liberation and socio-political measures, underlined by changes in consciousness. The emancipation of women via Article 24 of the 1946 Yugoslav Constitution granted symbolic gender equality and was positioned as an answer to the 'woman question', through the provision of some political and economic changes.⁶³⁹ Tito avoided any embrace of

⁶³⁸ Lucy O'Brien, counters accounts which suggest that punk feminism, evident in the UK in 1976, dissolved into nihilism, factionalism and assimilation to the mainstream, by highlighting grunge and riot grrrl in the USA as a revival of this spirit. She does however, fail to acknowledge examples of feminist activity within punk in the intervening years. Riot grrrl was an explicitly feminist underground punk movement, with origins in the Pacific Northwest of the USA. An initial manifesto which demanded female punk production was published in the second issue of the *Bikini Kill* fanzine in 1991. L. O'Brien, 'The Woman Punk Made Me', pp.188-9

⁶³⁹ Jancar-Webster provides an overview of the political and economic privileges granted to women

'bourgeois and anti-socialist' feminism within official ideology, and what became regarded as a 'western ideology' was accordingly accused of prioritising women above the greater project of developing self managing socialism.⁶⁴⁰ This created a paradox which constrained feminist activity throughout the existence of Yugoslavia, which as Lina Džuverovi argues, accounted for the absence of explicitly feminist movements prior to the 1970s.⁶⁴¹ Whilst the state was often perceived to be failing in terms of the practical realisation of gender equality, any activity outside of the Party which aimed to highlight these failings was framed as unnecessary, counterproductive and counter-revolutionary.⁶⁴² Yugoslav communists promoted aspects of gender equality through propaganda, films, periodical media and programmatic statements at Party forums, yet, as Sabrina Ramet argues, these attempts were insufficient with regards to radically 'reshaping peoples thinking about gender differences', partly due to a belief that socialism would solve all social problems.⁶⁴³ Schoolbooks continually focused upon male characters and reinforced masculine characteristics of 'strength, courage and creativity', with little mention of fatherhood or physical appearance, whilst women were encouraged to be 'maternal, beautiful, indecisive', but also objects of male conquest.⁶⁴⁴ Whilst basic socio-political improvements saw the most egregious examples of inequality diminished, and women benefited from liberal attitudes in relation to reproductive rights, disparities between socialist proclamations and realities remained and patriarchal norms were often left intact.⁶⁴⁵

General educational improvements resulted in a drastic decline in female illiteracy,

in accordance with the proclamation of female emancipation. B. Jancar-Webster *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945* (Arden Press, 1990), pp.164-7

⁶⁴⁰ S. Ramet (ed) *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans- Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p.5

⁶⁴¹ L. Džuverovi, 'In Praise of Unreliable Monuments' in *Monuments Are Not To Be Trusted* (Nottingham Contemporary, 2016), p.20

⁶⁴² Sabrina Ramet describes how feminism was regarded as operating: 'against the entire Party program, including its policy of promoting gender equality, and hence, feminists were described as working against the achievement of gender equality.' S. Ramet (ed) 'In Tito's Time' *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans*, p.92

⁶⁴³ Ibid, p.95

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid, p.103

⁶⁴⁵ Rights with regards to contraception and abortion were underlined by the 1974 constitution. This did not amount to an entirely free atmosphere for women in terms of sexuality. They remained subject to dominant constructions and projections of female desire, but Jalušić outlines that 'nobody would have thought about questioning reproductive rights- at least not in public.' V. Jalušić 'Troubles with Democracy: Women and Slovene Independence' in J. Benderly, E. Kraft (eds.) *Independent Slovenia- Origins, Movements, Prospects* (St. Martin's Press, 1996), p.136

but women remained confined to certain areas of education, based upon patriarchal conceptions.⁶⁴⁶ This was reflected in employment, with women underemployed in higher posts, concentrated in certain professions and relegated to lower skilled occupations, and all but excluded from others. Whilst Slovenia had the largest amount of women in the workforce of all the Yugoslav republics, they nevertheless represented under 44% of those employed and were concentrated in social welfare, education and cultural activity.⁶⁴⁷ The most prestigious jobs continued to be occupied by men throughout Yugoslavia, which Vlasta Jalušić attributes to a failure to implement quotas for female employment and the nature of self management, as decision making remained opaque and was compounded by a lack of crucial decision-making in lower level bodies and the lack of female representation within self management councils.⁶⁴⁸ These practical failures were compounded by the aforementioned maintenance of patriarchal stereotypes, some of which were disguised whilst others were openly maintained. Jalušić suggests that everyday experiences of sexism in Slovenia continued and were largely analogous to those in neighbouring non-socialist countries, whilst Maxine Molyneux argues that failures to appropriately redefine the role of men within Yugoslav society and the household meant that 'female tasks' remained less well rewarded, the burden of domestic labour continued to fall upon women, and a new role of participation in the labour force was simply added onto an 'almost completely unreconstructed' role of mothers and housewives.⁶⁴⁹ Pejić agrees, stating that that for a Yugoslav women: 'in private (that is, at home) she was expected to conduct her domestic duties as if the revolution had never taken place.'⁶⁵⁰

A failure to permeate the domestic arena with the ideology of gender equality represented a key barrier with regards to the actualisation of emancipation, and often accounted for further political disenfranchisement - both within communist political structures and as part of oppositional feminist currents - as the absence of

⁶⁴⁶ B. Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia*, p.169

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid, p.168

⁶⁴⁸ V. Jalušić, 'Troubles with Democracy: Women and Slovene Independence' in: J. Benderly & E. Kraft (eds) *Independent Slovenia- Origins, Movements, Prospects* (St. Martins Press, 1996), p.138

⁶⁴⁹ V. Jalušić, 'Troubles with Democracy' p.138; M. Molyneux, 'Women in Socialist Societies' *Feminist Review* Issue 8 (Summer), p.29

⁶⁵⁰ B. Pejić, 'The Morning After: Plavi radion, Abstract Art, and Bananas' *N. Paradoxa: International Feminist Art Journal* 10 (2002), p.79

household socialisation meant women saw no increase in free time, which would have provided greater opportunities for political engagement. Jalušić argues that this was exacerbated further by limited female participation within the organs of self management, the shrinking of women's political public space, the 'feminisation' of certain professions, and a loss of importance and influence amongst the spheres in which women were present.⁶⁵¹ Whilst the Communist Party acknowledged and at times addressed the role of women within the ongoing socialist project, responses such as The Conference for the Social Activity of Women in the early 1960s simply saw re-affirmation of existing Party lines, which stated that the socialist revolution had established class consciousness, thus guaranteeing a genderless society.⁶⁵²

Cultural depictions of women also reflected conflicts between the idealisation of genderless ideologies and lived realities. Linda Džuverović argues that femininity was subject to narrow portrayals and limited to a contradictory combination of: 'sex symbols, temptresses, women out of control... housewives embracing the new consumer bliss of western-facing, liberal Yugoslavia [and] a new image - that of the nude woman supposedly enjoying new sexual freedoms.'⁶⁵³ Nudity and naturism became increasingly normalised within the Yugoslav culture of the late 1970s and 1980s and was justified as a representation of modernity, yet sexist imagery remained integral to presentations of sexual freedom. This combined with the absence of public discourse in relation to gender issues to produce a seemingly 'liberal', but unequal environment, in which female autonomy, already undermined by patriarchal indifference was further undermined by objectification.⁶⁵⁴ Modern commercialism accordingly presented women as 'always smiling, well groomed and well dressed.... cardboard dolls, whose idealised glamorous bodies are used as sex lures to satisfy male needs and sell products.'⁶⁵⁵ Slavenka Drakulić-Ilić also describes how women were regularly criticised for the ways in which they engaged with popular culture, whilst forms of consumerism targeted at women offered few solutions to their everyday problems. Bojana Pejić agrees with the repressive

⁶⁵¹ V. Jalušić, 'Troubles with Democracy: Women and Slovene Independence', p.142

⁶⁵² B. Pejić, 'The Morning After: Plavi radion, Abstract Art, and Bananas', p.80

⁶⁵³ L. Džuverović, *Monuments Are Not To Be Trusted*, p. 20

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵⁵ S. Drakulić-Ilić, 'Smrtni Grijesi Feminizma' *Ogledi o Mudologije*, (Zagreb, Znanje, 1984)

implications of supposedly liberalised media and culture, arguing that: 'With the ascetic post-revolutionary phase long over, and with the sexual revolution completed, women... were seldom exposed to romantic desire. They were not even idealised as mothers; they were simply represented as liberated and treated as whores.'⁶⁵⁶

Džuverović acknowledges that the increased accessibility of popular culture did help to loosen some boundaries of artistic production, which meant that women were able to publicly articulate issues relevant to their lives, even if this remained unreflected in a political sense and could be undermined by the aforementioned popular representations of femininity.⁶⁵⁷ She also outlines examples of proto-feminist countercultural art that failed to engage with the inconsistencies between socialist gender egalitarianism and the realities of maintained patriarchal private traditions.⁶⁵⁸ It was not until the mid 1970s that explicitly feminist art emerged, in the shape of Sanja Iveković's engagement with the male gaze and discrepancies between public and private spheres, domestic violence and the formation of female identity. However, Džuverović argues that this represented little more than an embryonic feminist movement as Iveković remained somewhat exceptional and isolated, as other artistic attempts to highlight or subvert female roles were occasional, unformed and seldom publicly articulated.⁶⁵⁹

Lacklustre policy with regards to women continued into the 1980s, where the general approach of 'After Tito, Tito', prevailed. Women remained underrepresented within the Party, and as Branka Magaš argues, whilst the communist vision had once been 'ahead' of society at large with regards to gender issues, a failure to innovate or progress meant that the latter had not only caught up, but left it lagging behind. Ideologies that existed 'outside of the communist normative system, and often in direct opposition to it', enjoyed increased popularity, and Ramet describes how 'a generation of articulate women gave up on the Party's formulae and began organising various independent associations and

⁶⁵⁶ B. Pejić, 'The Morning After: Plavi radion, Abstract Art, and Bananas', p.80

⁶⁵⁷ L. Džuverović, *Monuments Are Not To Be Trusted*, p. 20

⁶⁵⁸ Džuverović cites Marko Pogačnik's comic strips in *Problemi*, which outlined the double standards of Yugoslav society as illustrative in this regard. L. Džuverović, *Monuments Are Not To Be Trusted*, p. 20

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid

groupings.⁶⁶⁰ Western intellectual and feminist currents began to have a discernible impact upon women's movements, primarily via academic literature and the internationalism of feminist communication, which reflected the approach of a younger generation of Yugoslavs who were eager to make cross-cultural connections.⁶⁶¹ Women's groups were established in the late 1970s and early 1980s, primarily in the larger cities of Yugoslavia, and like other NSMs including the gay movement, represented genuine resistance to both the Communist Party and elements of emerging ethno-nationalism. Whilst domestic feminist initiatives were diverse and at times conflicting, they were a significant example of an organised rejection of the reduction of gender issues to a question of class inequality, and represented a search for alternative ideologies that centred upon the interests of women, combining academic discussion with practical provision of services, including rape crisis centres.⁶⁶²

The first women's group in Ljubljana was established in the early 1980s and was set apart from similar currents in Belgrade and Zagreb by associations with other liberalising social movements. Feminism in an activist sense remained condemned, marginal and primarily bound to alternative cultural institutions, but nevertheless impacted upon the wider Slovene consciousness as both a distinct campaign and an intellectual tendency within the New Social Movements.⁶⁶³ Feminist activity in Ljubljana, operating under the banner of the Lilith group, was often dependant upon interaction with wider liberalising social and cultural movements, as independent activities for women were limited by a lack of diversity of forms and a low degree of political self organisation.⁶⁶⁴ Whilst general depictions of interactions between alternative cultural currents (including punk), gay and lesbian interests and other NSM's are largely harmonious, latent antifeminism within some Slovene alternative circles remained. Jalušič argues that this not only affected the

⁶⁶⁰ B. Magaš 'Afterword' in: S. Ramet (ed) *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans- Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999) p.208; S. Ramet, 'In Tito's Time', p.103

⁶⁶¹ V. Jalušič, 'Troubles with Democracy: Women and Slovene Independence', p.143

⁶⁶² B. Jancar-Webster *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945*, p.181

⁶⁶³ New Social Movements is an umbrella term for the socio-political and protest groups that emerged in Slovenia in the late 1970s and the 1980s, focused upon a range of concerns including ecology, pacifism, feminism and gay rights. They have been credited with a transformative impact upon the political culture of Slovenia, democratisation and independence. Ž. Vodovnik 'Democratisation and New Social Movements' *World Political Science* Vol 13, Issue 1 (2017) p.1

⁶⁶⁴ V. Jalušič, 'Troubles with Democracy: Women and Slovene Independence', p.144

extent to which feminism became incorporated in the daily practices of the alternative scene, but also meant that in order to organise women's spaces for socialisation, group work and solidarity, self-sufficiency became important to feminist groups.⁶⁶⁵ The embryonic feminist movement was not entirely isolated, and the Ljubljana based intellectual journal *Problemi* published two women focused issues, which acted as precursors to the emergence of independent feminist publications in the early 1980s. Common public actions between social movements also occurred, including a successful collaborative campaign by Lilith and the Peace Movement Working Group, which targeted proposals for obligatory military training for women. Mass action against nuclear power stations in 1987 was also organised by the Working Group for Women's Movements and Women's Studies alongside the Ecology Group and the Working Group for Peace Movements and resulted in a 4000 strong protest, the largest public demonstration seen in Slovenia since the 1960s.

Feminist activism in Ljubljana was able to bring issues to national consciousness and its success in this respect was reflected by attacks from elsewhere in Yugoslavia.⁶⁶⁶ The environments in which lesbian and feminist groups such as Lilith existed by the mid 1980s illuminate the nature of alternative social and cultural movements, as well as state responses to feminism. Like punk, Lilith was generally regarded as an unwelcome presence, but provided opportunities for the articulation of views that would have been previously unthinkable, operating as something of an 'incubator' for a range of groups and views that would later appear.⁶⁶⁷ The group organised women only lectures and meetings which focused upon discussions of female identity, the nature of womanhood within socialism, the practical and theoretical limitations that the socialist state placed upon feminist organisation, reproductive rights, the prevalence of violence against women and analyses of Yugoslav media and culture. They also contributed to the translation of feminist texts and facilitated production of independent Slovene feminist works, which helped to gradually expand the intellectual public space available for women

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶⁶ The first Yugoslav feminist conference, Drug'ca Žena, organised by the Student Cultural Centre, was in fact held in Belgrade in 1978, but also received negative press, including from established Yugoslav women's organisations which regarded it as superfluous.

⁶⁶⁷ B. Jancar-Webster *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945*, p.181; V. Jalušič *Women in Post Socialist Slovenia*, p. 147

and in turn created a perceptible interest in feminism amongst younger generations. This was reflected by the student affairs magazine *Mladina*, which increasingly began to accept articles on feminist issues in accordance with its exercise of greater editorial autonomy and promotion of democratisation, even if the attitudes of some editors were not universally receptive.⁶⁶⁸

Slovene feminists acknowledged and, at times, celebrated the legal achievements of Yugoslavia, but aspects of legislative equality could often present difficulties with regards to mobilising women, outlining the need to fight for gender specific concerns or providing critiques of the limitations of state feminism. Many refused to believe that their rights or protective legislation could be endangered, and as the state became increasingly discredited by the 1980s it became even more difficult to encourage them to demand concessions or legislation, as the 'fight for preservation became perceived as suspicious.'⁶⁶⁹ Jancar-Webster also outlined that attempts by feminists to 'define their identity in their own language' were hamstrung by the fact that the majority of women who longed for freedom in an abstract way continued to lack the framework necessary to conceptualise what this freedom looked like in a radical sense. Whilst 'ordinary women had complaints about her salary and opportunities', this rarely became linked to 'any coherent philosophy... liberation may have meant hard work at home and on the job. Like some of her Western counterparts she may dream of a freedom in which she will not have to work at all, but can let her husband support her.'⁶⁷⁰ Džuverovi makes a similar argument with regards to artistic representations of Yugoslav emancipation, arguing that women in Yugoslavia often lacked both the methodology and language to engage with and analyse the complex manifestations of patriarchy within Yugoslav society.⁶⁷¹ Gradual attempts to relocate women's positions outside of these limiting frameworks saw feminist sections within the Ljubljana Student Cultural Centre setup engage in conscious moves towards 'more grassroots level' forms of organisation and engagement, but feminist currents in Ljubljana nevertheless continued to pale in comparison with the extent, scope and co-ordination of

⁶⁶⁸ V. Jalušič, 'Troubles with Democracy: Women and Slovene Independence', p.146

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid, p.145

⁶⁷⁰ B. Jancar-Webster *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945*, p.184

⁶⁷¹ L. Džuverovi, 'In Praise of Unreliable Monuments' in: L. Džuverović (ed) *Monuments Are Not To Be Trusted* (Nottingham Contemporary, 2016), p. 21

western activity.⁶⁷² By 1987, Slovenia was home to four independent feminist groups, but attempts to gather all under a single umbrella in the Working Group for Women's Movements and Women's Studies, in 1987, failed due to differences in personality and principles amongst the relatively small number of active feminists.

'Tearing up the Rulebook': Tožibabe, Women and Hardcore Ljubljana

The Ljubljana hardcore scene was a site where young women engaged with subversive subcultural activity to an extent that, according to participants, was almost without precedent within domestic culture. A contemporary interview with an anonymous 20 year old woman, featured in *Punk pod Slovenci*, suggests that opportunities for involvement within hardcore exposed the sexism of preceding alternative scenes, including those that were presented as somewhat equitable, as it diverged from approaches which had positioned women as 'a means for sexual release, or snotnoses.' As an underground scene, Ljubljana hardcore subverted mainstream norms and demonstrated 'fundamental opposition to the exploitation of women', which meant that, in practice, 'chicks and guys were incredibly equal.'⁶⁷³ Contemporary depictions of punk as a potentially different proposition to mainstream norms were common to worldwide scenes, and Rachel Minx of Rubella Ballet says that whilst women were viewed as 'spare parts' by the mainstream, punk environments were often palpably different. She argues that this was represented by conscious examples of encouragement towards female musicians, but also became manifest via more abstract instances of female engagement in 'traditionally masculine' behaviour, including simple feelings of freedom represented through drinking pints of lager without fear of judgement: 'On the floor, we were equal with the blokes.'⁶⁷⁴ Nikolai Jeffs says that the Ljubljana hardcore collective practically reflected their belief that punk should allow space for 'total and social revolution' with regards to gender.⁶⁷⁵ Aldo also describes the hardcore scene as 'very, completely open-minded', and states that a general absence

⁶⁷² B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain: The Beginnings of the LGBT movement in Slovenia' in: M. Chateauvert (ed) *New Social Movements and Sexuality- Conference Papers 2004* (Bilitis Resource Center, 2006), p. 89

⁶⁷³ N. Malečkar & T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk Pod Slovenci* (KRT, 1985), p.480

⁶⁷⁴ R. Minx, *She's a Punk Rocker*, Documentary, Directed by Z. Minx (2007, Ultra Violet Punk Productions)

⁶⁷⁵ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene"', p.373

of sexism allowed women to not only feel safe, but included as active contributors, which was reflected by the level of female participation.⁶⁷⁶

The US hardcore scene, which was often a source of contemporary inspiration for Ljubljana punks, has often been attributed with an entirely contrary attitude in regards to female participation, however. Many accounts describe hardcore as responsible for ushering in an era of increased violence and demonstrations of aggressive adolescent forms of masculinity. Cynthia Connelly describes how she 'hated going to shows when it became so violent and insane and as it got more hardcore, I got more disinterested... most women I know bailed.'⁶⁷⁷ Accounts of this nature tend to present earlier waves of punk in the USA as gender fluid, inclusive and creatively open, in contrast with the rigidity and boisterousness of hardcore. Brendan Mullen reinforces this narrative in reference to LA punk in the 1980s, presenting hardcore as a degeneration 'into bizarre post-pubescent all male warrior bonding rituals.' He attributed decline in female attendance and participation to a combination of police oppression and violence within the scene. A number of female punks from LA, including Alice Bag and Jane Drano of The Go-Gos support this assertion, describing how the inclusivity of punk, which encouraged female and queer participation, became 'quickly annexed by white dudes.'⁶⁷⁸ Stephen Blush entirely refutes the existence of an active voice for women in the USA in the early 1980s and suggests that the men that dominated the scene merely viewed women as sexual outlets, or something entirely peripheral.⁶⁷⁹ He suggests that these roles were often internalised, which meant women accordingly adopted 'asexuality' and masculine behaviour such as stage-diving, or utilised sex, lots of makeup and leather miniskirts in order to gain a semblance of subcultural capital.⁶⁸⁰

There have been instances of contestation with regards to the presentation of US

⁶⁷⁶ Ivančić, Aldo- Interview, Kranj, 9/10/2016

⁶⁷⁷ S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, p.39

⁶⁷⁸ B. Mullen, D. Bolles and A. Parfey (eds), *Lexicon Devil- The Fast Times and Short Life of Darby Crash and The Germs* (Feral House, 2002), p.156

⁶⁷⁹ S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, p.39

⁶⁸⁰ Laura Albert is quoted as saying that she 'learned to play the game... since I wasn't a boy I couldn't be a part of it. I wanted something from these people but I knew I didn't want to actually have sex with them.' Blush positions this attitude as emblematic of the role of women in the US scene. S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, p.39

hardcore as entirely off limits to women. Whilst Ian Mackaye of Dischord Records and the influential US band Minor Threat concedes that US hardcore often incorporated performances of masculinity that could discourage female participation, he also defends hardcore from accusations of outright misogyny, arguing that it helped to usher in an era in which more women were in bands than ever before.⁶⁸¹ Associated hardcore scenes throughout Europe also represented contradictory or fluctuating environments with regards to attitudes towards women, and Pauwke Berkers' account of the Dutch punk scene during the same period is largely exemplary of overarching tendencies. She presents hardcore as a male dominated, albeit largely inclusive environment where female participation was encouraged and women musicians were regarded as part of the community.⁶⁸² Whilst she acknowledges that women were occasionally portrayed as sex objects and could struggle to control the ways they were perceived within punk scenes, Berkers suggests that these relatively rare negative experiences were generally attributable to the maintenance of wider patriarchal norms within punk, rather than tendencies specific to hardcore. Indeed, whilst it is important to acknowledge the presence of violence, machismo, and patriarchal replications within hardcore punk scenes of the early 1980s, Bryony Beynon warns against simply assuming that women were forced out of a previously more welcoming punk scene en masse as a result, or that such tendencies were necessarily integral. She states that the dichotomy of a peaceful and 'gender fluid' '77 punk and its repressive, violent and stifling hardcore punk brother', is frequently overemphasised, highlighting the consistent 'persistence of many [women]... in claiming an active role for themselves... forming a blueprint for DIY punk rock feminism' as a pertinent counterpoint.⁶⁸³ Indeed, suggestions that patriarchal prejudices, sexism or homophobia were heightened within all punk scenes and shut marginalised individuals out entirely can exacerbate tendencies to ignore their numerous contributions, can stifle attempts to amplify these voices and overlook the genuine possibilities and opportunities that were encountered via hardcore. Acknowledgement of assertions of masculinity and expressions of sexism within

⁶⁸¹ S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, p.38

⁶⁸² P. Berkers, 'Rock Against Gender Roles-Performing Femininities and Doing Feminism Among Women Punk Performers in the Netherlands, 1976–1982' *Journal of Popular Music Studies* Vol. 24, Issue 2 (2012), p.160

⁶⁸³ B. Beynon, 'Subversive Pleasure: Feminism in DIY Hardcore', p.216

the scene can also lead observers to associate some of the staples of the genre, such as aggression, energy and anger as male pursuits and ignore the fact that, as Marsa of Tožibabe outlined in an interview from 1986, they appealed to women just as much as men: 'I like other music, but for me energy is the best feeling and I live for it. I see this energy only in hardcore.'⁶⁸⁴

This thesis utilises the recollections of a number of female participants within the Ljubljana hardcore scene. The diversity of their contributions reflects the range of roles that women were able to occupy within the scene, refusal to accept marginal or tokenised roles, but also the specificities of female activity. Suzana Tratnik was a regular attendee of punk concerts but remained on the periphery and became most active within the alternative scene as part of the feminist group Lilith and subsequent LGBT activism. She recalls that women were: 'involved more actively in the bands, and had more power' than within both previous and contemporary Yugoslav cultural movements. They were able to maintain elements of femininity, channelled in 'different and more aggressive ways.'⁶⁸⁵ Irena Povše was initially integrated within the hardcore collective as a result of her relationship with fanzine writer and performer, David Kržišnik. Whilst she remained deferential at times to many of the longer standing members of the scene, she also became an integral component and booked numerous concerts. David agrees that personal connections, alongside the openness of the scene, contributed to female involvement, but is keen to stress that the impetus behind Irena's involvement was her own.⁶⁸⁶ Marsa and Mojca of Tožibabe were two central members of the collective, and their impact upon the scene is demonstrated by their inclusion on the emblematic *Hardcore Ljubljana* compilation and the release of the *Dežuje (It's Raining) '77'*, which made them one of a handful of Yugoslav hardcore bands to release an EP.⁶⁸⁷ Mojca describes her exposure to the hardcore collective as a 'lucky' occurrence, with the large friendship group based around 'mutual support and acceptance' facilitating her cultural output and social growth.⁶⁸⁸ Whilst they

⁶⁸⁴ 'Tožibabe - punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core' *Stop* (12/6/1986)

⁶⁸⁵ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁶⁸⁶ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

⁶⁸⁷ 12" records were even less common amongst Yugoslav hardcore bands. This was due to a combination of factors, notably the prohibitive extra expense associated with recording more songs, and pressing the larger format.

⁶⁸⁸ Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

stood out as an all female hardcore band, the supportive ethos that surrounded Tožibabe meant this was often regarded as a positive thing: 'Sometimes it was easier for us to get a gig, to get interviews, to be seen.'⁶⁸⁹ Gender based realities accounted for distinct specificities with regards to the formation and ultimate demise of the band. Whilst male punks bemoaned the imposition of national service, Tožibabe suffered from the fact that child raising responsibilities continued to fall primarily upon women. As Marsa remembers: 'Other bands had members who had to go to the army. In our case, one of our members got pregnant. It was just one year in the army, but pregnancy is a lifetime!'⁶⁹⁰

Women also shaped the personal dynamics of the Ljubljana hardcore collective. Whilst the formal recognition of leaders was rejected, in favour of designating members of the collective as equal components, Marsa was highlighted as a particularly influential personality. She describes how this was often attributable to sheer force of will, and a decisiveness that was incompatible with relegation to the margins: 'I was not regarded as a star, but I was bossy and realised that sometimes people needed to take charge.' She uses the gendered term 'bossy' to explain her actions, but also states that outright expressions of stereotypically feminine traits were not always conducive to conceptions of leadership, and that her uncompromising approach was also attributable to 'boyish' aspects of her personality.⁶⁹¹ Concessions in this regard, whilst necessary, were also indicative that women in the scene were capable of forging and utilising identities that combined stereotypically masculine and feminine traits, which could be utilised in order to:

Prove that women were just as capable as men, even if it was in a different way. We refused any excuses that came from people expecting less from women. We made everything ourselves and we were in charge of our own destiny, just like any other band. It was never that the men were showing us what to do, I knew exactly what I wanted. It might not have been perfect, but we had an attitude, I was demanding and I wanted the best.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid

⁶⁹⁰ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/16

⁶⁹¹ Ibid

⁶⁹² Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

The hardcore collective was the primary subcultural group to which Tožibabe allied themselves, but members of the band also looked towards each other for mutual and specific forms of support. Viv Albertine describes how the formation of 'girl gangs' within subcultures could often strengthen resolve and promote solidarity amongst those included.⁶⁹³ The musical dynamics of Tožibabe became a representation of mutual support and co-operation. As Marsa describes: 'Sometimes I would show Mojca the song on guitar, she could learn very fast and practice until she was sick of it... we'd get ringing in our ears from practicing so much.' Their unapologetic 'stubbornness' and dedication was also underpinned by practical support and personal bonds between the members, most obviously reflected by the fact that the band became accustomed to switching instruments in response to the needs and abilities of individual members: 'We just took the positions that would make it sound best, who was most suited and who found it easier.'⁶⁹⁴

Experiences of mutual support and female solidarity were not always entirely consistent or universal, however, and female co-operation within punk scenes could give way to active competition and exclusion. Marsa says that some women were forced into jostling for position based upon a perception that there were only so many positions open to women, which resulted in occasional bouts of 'jealousy, chick fights and quarrels.'⁶⁹⁵ The social capital which women in Ljubljana could utilise also varied, and less active women could become subject to greater scrutiny with regards to their involvement, particularly in comparison with the most active female contributors. Marsa suggests that less 'dedicated' women represented the individuals most likely to be regarded as 'posers' amongst the scene, placed into different positions from 'creators', with female solidarity failing to transcend the primacy of contributions to the scene as a form of evidence of essential authenticity. As a result, the scene occasionally lapsed towards patriarchal interactions and failed to account for some of the barriers that may have existed for less assertive women, and could also discount the prospect that remaining on the

⁶⁹³ J. Savage, *England's Dreaming- Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (Faber and Faber, 1991), p.194

⁶⁹⁴ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid

margins of scenes was a valid choice.⁶⁹⁶ This dynamic was nevertheless a somewhat inconsistent presence and whilst members of the collective have acknowledged various elements of insularity, exclusion was rarely motivated by gender. The majority of those excluded in this respect were male and this was primarily motivated by failures to adhere to certain approaches that dictated how underground punk should operate.⁶⁹⁷

The hardcore collective developed into a recognisable counterculture from the seeds of teenage relationships, which continually impacted upon relations and incorporated gendered dimensions. Interpersonal tensions were often undocumented, but could prove pivotal to the ways in which events unfolded and operated as motives for conflict, as well as connection. Irena says that this often explained the presence of frictions and allegiances and accounted for instances where ideological divergences became more substantial.⁶⁹⁸ Members of Niet also recall how personal connections exacerbated their tensions with the hardcore collective. When their singer Tanja began to date Gigi, 'the king of hardcore', the dynamic which saw the hardcore collective regard Primož Habič as 'stolen' by Niet became reversed. Aleš and Igor argue that Tanja was 'taken' from them by the collective, and that her refusal to go on tour was attributable to an act of jealous revenge by Gigi.⁶⁹⁹ Other friendships between women and men could be sources of tension, and Marsa recalls a physical fight that occurred between her and Jani of UBR the night prior to the recording of *Dežuje*. What could have proved disastrous, as she was 'totally fucked up... didn't sleep all night, because we were quarrelling and fighting', had an inadvertently positive impact as Marsa arrived at the studio the following morning with 'drum sticks, vodka and so much anger and energy', which resulted in a great performance on record: 'I was so exact, so fast, so powerful, so so super. You can hear my passion and anger and Lidiya could barely play bass fast enough to keep up!'⁷⁰⁰ This belies the majority of personal connections between the male and female members of the scene however, which are described in much more positive terms, often as a 'brotherhood', which

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid

⁶⁹⁷ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

⁶⁹⁸ Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 15/3/2015

⁶⁹⁹ Češnovar, Aleš, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015; Dernovšek, Igor, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

⁷⁰⁰ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

transcended gender.⁷⁰¹ Romantic connections were also important, but Gigi and Robert remember that the major consequence for the scene in this regard was translation into further practical and personal support amongst men and women.⁷⁰²

Tožibabe acknowledged the support they received from male members of the scene in their lyrics, declaring: 'Tožibabe, we are representing the scene, playing on instruments from UBR.'⁷⁰³ and Marsa recalls that established bands, particularly UBR, helped with everything: 'except actually playing! They would lend instruments and equipment, help with carrying things, and with producing and sound checking.'⁷⁰⁴ However, she emphasises that this support was accompanied by respect for Tožibabe's autonomy and personal authority over their own musical output, which Gigi reflects, remembering that support for the band was not based only on personal proximity, but also genuine admiration.⁷⁰⁵ He praises Tožibabe effusively, including their 'deeply poetic' lyrics and aesthetics, describing a 'really great band. Very weird, so unique, but so good!'⁷⁰⁶ Whilst Tožibabe's importance as an all-female band was occasionally recognised by male members of the scene, positive accounts more frequently regarded gender as irrelevant. *Stop* magazine praised their uniqueness within the hardcore scene and the potential effect this could have on the wider scene, but this assertion was motivated by their diverse musical style rather than the fact that the band was comprised of women: 'Tožibabe are hardcore, but different. Maybe they will encourage other bands to... engage with the broader [alternative and punk] scene. It's not only what the Ljubljana scene needs, it's what they need as well, if they don't want to atrophy in the hardcore ghetto.'⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰¹ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

⁷⁰² Gigi suggests that the fact that Marsa and Božo dated helped to further existing connections between UBR and Tožibabe, whilst Robert recalls lending his guitar to Pika (a brief fourth member of Tožibabe) as they were dating at the time. Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015; Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2015

⁷⁰³ 'Tožibabe mi smo delamo reklamo za sceno, igramo na opremo od UBR.' This self-titled song was never officially released, but recordings are available online and was traded via bootleg tapes.

⁷⁰⁴ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid

⁷⁰⁶ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

⁷⁰⁷ 'Tožibabe- punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core' *Stop* (12/6/1986)



Fig 1: Members of UBR (Gigi and Božo), Tožibabe and other members of the Hardcore Collective.
Photo courtesy of Irena Povše

This supportive environment was never experienced as a purely one way or paternalistic process bestowed upon women, and the presence of assistance and encouragement had mutual and reciprocal benefits. Neven Korda describes 'horizontal connections' within the scene, conducive to female empowerment, which provided opportunities for women to exercise their own forms of influence and become integral components of the scene, but also to support and encourage others in theoretical and practical ways.⁷⁰⁸ Marsa had previously forged connections as a member of the band Čao Pičke, which provided access to the Basement IV building for practices in the early days of the scene, which Korda categorises as giving the collective 'an in', that would otherwise have been beyond the young members of the scene.⁷⁰⁹ Similar support continued throughout the life of the scene, most notably in relation to the 1986 *Novi Rock* festival (See Fig 2). Tožibabe were described by the newspaper *Dnevnik* as one of the central attractions of this edition of the festival. Their appearance was significant, not only because it represented a moment in which the wider Ljubljana media acknowledged the hardcore scene, but because they were pivotal to the representation of the hardcore collective at the concert.⁷¹⁰ Whilst the festival 'as an

⁷⁰⁸ N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns' in: B. Škrjanec (ed) *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni Grafični Likovni Center, 2008), p.337

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid

⁷¹⁰ 'Kmalu - Novi Rock!' *Dnevnik* 1/9/1986

institution', had been boycotted and actively disrupted by members of the hardcore collective, Igor Bašin describes how Igor Vidmar found himself 'forced into a bargain with [them]', as a result of his initial desire to have Tožibabe perform.⁷¹¹ David remembers that the collective's opposition to the festival had softened based on the fact that it provided the opportunity 'for bands to produce studio recordings at the expense of National Radio.' Numerous discussions culminated in '20 or 30 punks sat discussing things with [Igor]', but Tožibabe were crucial to the opportunity arising in the first place.⁷¹² A lack of viable local alternatives resulted in Vidmar acquiescing to their demand that other bands from the hardcore collective, including 2227 and III. Kategorija, were also invited to perform. As Marsa remembers: 'We said that we wouldn't play with other rock bands, only the hardcore collective. We demanded a separate evening for ourselves, or nothing.'⁷¹³



Fig 2: Novi Rock 1986 Flyer, designed by NSK. Tožibabe feature alongside male members of the collective and wider Slovene hardcore scene.

⁷¹¹ Igor had initially planned for the festival to represent Laibach and the NSK in 1986, but the band were unable to perform. I. Bašin *Novi Rock- Rockovski Festival v Križankah 1981-2000* (Frontier, 2006), p.59

⁷¹² Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

⁷¹³ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

In contrast with presentations of an almost entirely frictionless egalitarian environment, some interviewees suggest that gender equality within the Ljubljana hardcore scene was by no means universal, in line with Berkers' depiction of the contemporary Dutch scene. Negative experiences were also placed within the context of a variable but broadly equal scene, but men within Ljubljana hardcore possessed complex and fluctuating conceptions of gender roles and sexism and represented contradictory attitudes as a result. Some failed to apply pervasive ideological stances to their own conduct or challenge underlying reproductions of normative societal views, assuming that statements of intent were enough, rather than necessitating deeper introspection and analysis.⁷¹⁴ Indeed, recognition that the hardcore collective valued the idea of punk as an inclusive environment is compatible with acknowledgment of instances of practical failures to reflect this. Whilst the collective explicitly rejected elements of machismo within both the Yugoslav mainstream and, at times, punk, which saw David decry the presence of only 'irrelevant dick bands [and] macho bands in huge halls, playing to pigs', Mojca acknowledges that sexist attitudes were not entirely eradicated.⁷¹⁵ Niet were often accused of adopting orthodox rock approaches rather than the more 'radical' tactics of the hardcore collective. They provide illustration of the contradictory presence of moments of inclusivity that were unaccompanied by more fundamental reappraisals of gender roles. Whilst they featured a female singer, which many punk predecessors failed to even consider, they also commented unfavourably upon the general 'unattractiveness' of women involved in the hardcore scene.⁷¹⁶ This was expressed flippantly, rather than as an indication of an ardent disregard for women who failed to conform to specific beauty standards, but the underlying focus upon female appearance as integral to involvement, and the association of punk with 'unattractive' women, was frequently replicated throughout worldwide punk and could become a barrier to participation.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁴ Antisect had suggested that, despite the pervasive ethos of anarcho-punk in the UK, a significant section of the men involved in punk were able to merely adopt the style rather than any associated ideologies, remaining: 'Wankers... the only difference was that they had a studded belt and a mohican.' An interview with Goran conducted for *Punk Pod Slovenci*, describes how supposed punk rejection of all hierarchies was inconsistently reflected in practice. I. Glasper, *The Day The Country Died* (Cherry Red Books, 2006), p.306; N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk Pod Slovenci*, p.468

⁷¹⁵ David also criticised 'macho hardcore punks' in Issue 2 of his fanzine a year earlier in 1984. *Vrtnitve Odpisanih* Issue 2 (Summer 1984); *Iskanje Izgubljene Ga Casa* FV Video, 1985, Music Video Compilation; Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

⁷¹⁶ Dernovšek, Igor, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

⁷¹⁷ Nigel Wingrove of *Stains* fanzine similarly complains that there 'were very few sexy women in

Contemporary scene reports also provide a demonstration of the variability of expressions with regards to female punks, reinforcing the combination of generalised and often genuine expressions of support alongside latently sexist attitudes and underlying tensions. Every scene report featured within *Maximum RocknRoll* between the embryonic origins of the Ljubljana hardcore scene and its disintegration in the latter half of the 1980s was written by a man, a tendency reflected within Yugoslav scene reports published elsewhere and the producers of domestic fanzines, with men more commonly taking on the role of localised spokesmen. *MRR* is often credited with attempts to specifically elevate contributions of women in a modern context, but this dynamic was less visible at the time.⁷¹⁸ The men that produced Yugoslav reports rarely expressed actively sexist views and generally provided a portrayal of a Ljubljana scene consistent with interviewees, but rarely afforded specific focus to the position of women. Approaches within contemporary scene reports also seem to resonate with the presence of underlying sexism and instinctive dismissals of female musicianship, but Tožibabe were rarely, if ever, dismissed outright. Gvido Obradović's report for *MRR* in April 1985 nevertheless condemned Tožibabe's apparent lack of seriousness, stating that in order to gain respect upon the scene 'they must make some serious lyrics.'⁷¹⁹ M. Stojc's 1987 Yugoslavia scene report, for the French *Ø Zine*, represents one of the most pertinent examples of the band being held in male disregard. He decries the fact that they were apparently planning to reform and perform abroad and remained one of the few Yugoslav bands to have released an EP: 'Tožibabe, the female slow trash band are the best known band for foreigners... nevermind my thinking they are not a band for an EP, when you know that only three bands [from Yugoslavia] have...'.⁷²⁰ David's initially reserved approach to Tožibabe is potentially in tune with suggestions that female musicians

punk... for me Blondie, Siouxsie and Gaye Advert were the only ones that were ok'. Stephen Blush also seems to attribute value to women in the US hardcore scene based on their failure to adhere to particular beauty standards, describing the majority as 'trolls'. C. Colgrave and S. Sullivan (eds) *Punk* (Cassell, 2004), p. 208; S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, p.212

⁷¹⁸ M. Thi Nguyen & G. Nikpour, *Punk* (Guillotine Publishing, 2013), p.14

⁷¹⁹ Whilst it is of course possible that this represented genuine objection to a playful approach, women in punk were often perniciously dismissed in this regard. Hagar the Womb described being called 'The Silly Girls' by men in response to their light-heartedness, and it is reductive to reduce Tožibabe's musical and aesthetic output to this alone. 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 24 (April 1985); I. Glasper, *The Day The Country Died*, p.101

⁷²⁰ M. Stojc, 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Ø Zine* Issue 1 (June 1987)

had to confound negative expectations from the outset, and the October 1984 issue of *MRR*, saw him describe them as a 'female band, who play for fun.'⁷²¹ However, to attribute these comments to sexism would be incongruous with his general attitudes in regard to female participation, his subsequent comments, overwhelmingly positive recollections of the band and a generally more rounded approach.⁷²² He accordingly described their demo in December 1985 as 'very interesting', and argues that they 'have gotten better than ever', suggesting either a more dedicated approach and subsequent improvement from the band, or a willingness to reappraise his own opinions.⁷²³ David was consistently unafraid to offer criticism of local bands in scene reports. His own fanzine, the similarities between his reactions to Tožibabe and other all-male Ljubljana bands, and the consistency of criteria he utilised to make such judgements, suggests that he criticised, and indeed praised, Tožibabe like any other band.⁷²⁴

Perhaps the most compelling example of sexism within the Ljubljana scene is represented by the fact that Tožibabe became subject to a rumour which suggested that members of UBR were responsible for writing and performing the *Dežuje 7"*, with Marsa, Mojca and Lidija simply providing the vocals.⁷²⁵ This claim endured beyond the life of the band despite the absence of any substantiating evidence. Whilst Tožibabe were happy to acknowledge links with UBR, and their music was accordingly placed side by side on a widely traded tape (See Fig 3), this, alongside personal connections and sharing equipment, represented the full extent to which the bands became entwined. Marsa believes that the roots of the rumour may have come from within the Ljubljana punk scene, fuelled to an extent by personal animosity and attempts to detract from the achievements of women. She also suggests that it was sustained as a result of the record confounding some of the low expectations some men had for the band:

⁷²¹ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 18 (October 1984)

⁷²² Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

⁷²³ 'Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 18 (October 1984)

⁷²⁴ This consistency is most effectively demonstrated by his description of Odpadki Civilizacije's early lyrical content as immature, and his overall depiction of Invazija, about whom he is generally effusive and positive, despite their similarly immature but 'still developing' lyrical approach. Yugoslavia Scene Report' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 31 (December 1985); 'Invazija Interview' *Vrnitev Odpisanih* Issue 2 (Summer 1984)

⁷²⁵ Paco of *La Vida Es Un Mus* Records first alerted me to this rumour, which had become fairly well shared amongst international punk record collectors in the years following the release of *Dežuje*. Aranda, Francisco 'Paco', Interview, London, 25/5/15

At the time, the response to the record was really great, but some people [speculation regarding specific individuals was given off the record] said that men played it for us. It was almost like it was a compliment about how good it was, like they thought it was impossible for us to have played that.⁷²⁶

This represents a departure from general celebrations within Ljubljana of amateurism as a virtue, which Aldo encapsulates: 'At the start we were bad [technical] musicians, which meant that we couldn't imitate those who inspired us, even if we wanted to, so we created new sounds.'⁷²⁷ Rumours regarding the recording processes of iconic bands are common, but often stem from historic studio practices which regularly kept session musicians on standby in case producers deemed band members inadequate.⁷²⁸ The motives behind the endurance of similar punk rumours are hard to ascertain, as a result of their often unclear origins, and whilst they are certainly not exclusively levelled against female musicians, Beynon argues that female musical achievements often saw usual celebrations of attitude over aptitude become a means of dismissal. This tendency can often transform into active attempts to discredit their contributions.⁷²⁹ These dynamics meant that, when women across punk scenes 'tore up the rulebook', and produced music that emulated or bettered attempts made by men, sexist elements of punk gossip and the regularly unacknowledged influence of gender stereotypes could result in detraction.⁷³⁰ Igor Vidmar suggests that 'a different emphasis on technical skill... [and prioritisation of] energy, belief, self expression and

⁷²⁶ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁷²⁷ Ivančič, Aldo. Interview, Kranj, 9/10/2016

⁷²⁸ This tendency also became occasionally present within punk. Josef Portar of Zounds does not appear on the *Can't Catch Karma 7*", as the drums were performed by a session musician at the request of producer Penny Rimbaud. I. Glasper, *The Day The Country Died*, p.296

⁷²⁹ Debbie of Dirge (UK) echoes this statement: 'People never expected you to know very much or have much of an opinion. Few people expected women to even be really into hardcore thrash, let alone be able to play it on guitar. B. Beynon, 'Subversive Pleasure: Feminism in DIY Hardcore', p.220; I. Glasper *Trapped in a Scene* (Cherry Red Books, 2008) p.114

⁷³⁰ Lorna of early US hardcore band The Germs had her involvement as bass player on the seminal *G I L P* called into question. Drummer Don Bolles describes the rumour as 'absolute insulting nonsense... her trademark "wall of whump" was our secret weapon.' Substantiated accusations relating to male musicians are far more common, including Sid Vicious and his somewhat celebrated lack of musical ability. Stephen Blush suggested that Vinnie Stigma 'played' with an unplugged guitar and a range of rumours have stated that bands deliberately 'cheated' by speeding up recordings, including Koro (US), Svart Framtid (Norway) and Bad Brains (USA). B. Mullen, D. Bolles and A. Parfey (eds), *Lexicon Devil*, p.171; S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, p.42

communication', made punk in Ljubljana a spontaneously egalitarian subculture, but also argues that this was at times ignored by male punks in order to associate female musicians with a lack of skill or overall inability to play.⁷³¹ Mojca also remembers that 'people definitely reacted differently [because] there weren't that many female bands at the time', and states that reactions of outsiders could specifically affect women.⁷³² Contemporary videos of Tožibabe concerts confirm the spuriousness of rumours in relation to the band's musical abilities, but Marsa recalls that the survival of these rumours nevertheless affected her own recollections and ultimately contributed, at least in part, to her agreement to reform the band for a 2015 concert: 'We had such little time before we split up, and that was mostly why I wanted to play again, but I also just wanted to prove to everyone that we could!'⁷³³

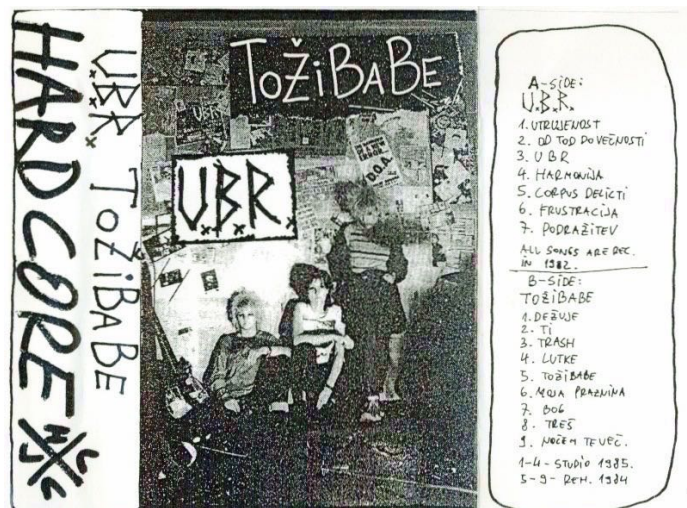


Fig3: Inlay for a bootleg cassette recording of UBR and Tožibabe recordings. The cover features an image of Tožibabe alone.

Whilst some women associated the continual presence of sexism within 1980s punk with the 'feeling of head-butting a wall for years', and Liz of Intense Degree (UK) describes how broadly inclusive attitudes were often undermined by individual men, interviewees in Ljubljana suggest that occasional experiences of being 'looked down upon', and the maintenance of stereotypes were fleeting, rather

⁷³¹ I. Vidmar 'Tokrat Intervju z: Igor Vidmarjem' *Punk Pod Slovenci* pp.443-44; Beynon suggests that this dynamic 'speaks volumes for the latent tendencies of rock conservatism often inherent across punk.' B. Beynon, 'Subversive Pleasure: Feminism in DIY Hardcore', p.220; Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/16

⁷³² Krish, Mojca, Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

⁷³³ *Iskanje Izgubljene Ga Casa FV* Video, 1985, Music Video Compilation; Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

than definitive problems.⁷³⁴ Jane Bradley also argues that experiences of hostility or excessive scrutiny could also often 'inspire [women] to aim higher... [refusing positions of] novelty acts given a tokenistic nod', whilst Hilary Pilkington suggests that the presence of sexism within Russian punk could often guarantee that the women involved were some of the most committed, active and ideologically engaged participants in the scene.⁷³⁵ Mojca echoes this, and states that her 'deliberate choice to form an all female band', and the desire 'do something', was, in part, motivated and made more compelling by a desire to prove to some of the most sexist 'culprits' on the scene 'that females could play hardcore just as well.' She acknowledges however, that these attitudes sat in contrast to more regular expressions of genuine support, and that the most vocal naysayers were generally found outside of the scene itself.⁷³⁶ She also stresses that this motivation sat alongside a range of compelling complementary incentives, including refusal to adopt passive 'supportive roles for our friends and boyfriends.'⁷³⁷ The facilitation of musical and personal expression, and opportunities for women to 'learn together' or exchange experiences often proved to be more compelling with regards to active involvement within hardcore than reactions against occasional instances of exclusion. As Branka Magaš emphasises, gender informed and often dictated the daily existences and interactions of Yugoslav women, but it was not the only identity that did, and was rarely conceived as distinct.⁷³⁸ Female participation in Ljubljana hardcore should not be framed entirely in relation to gender, their interactions with men or via frameworks which privilege the importance of subversion of masculine arenas above all other motives for involvement. This risks underplaying the commonality of experiences across the entire hardcore collective, regardless of gender. As Mojca recalls 'For us, it was always about who you were living with, who shared your ideas and who was capable of being in a band with you. None of us really knew how to play an instrument to start... but our energy

⁷³⁴ The Lost Cherrees split up in 1986 and cited the continued presence of sexism at gigs as contributing significantly to their disillusionment with the UK scene. Liz highlights the drunken conduct of a spurned Belgian tour promoter as an example of how individuals could loudly and often violently undermine her general experiences of equality. I. Glasper, *The Day The Country Died*, pp.106-152

⁷³⁵ J. Bradley, 'You Create, We Destroy: Punk Women' in: J. Downes (ed) *Women Make Noise- Girl bands from Motown to the modern* (Supernova Books, 2012), p.170-1; H. Pilkington, Y.B. Steinholt and I. Gololobov (eds) 'Conclusion' *Punk in Russia: Cultural Mutation from the "useless" to the "moronic"* (Routledge, 2014), p.204

⁷³⁶ Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

⁷³⁷ Ibid

⁷³⁸ B. Magaš, 'Afterword' in: S. Ramet (ed) *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans*, p.276

and passion was there, and that was always why we did things.'⁷³⁹

Fashion, Style and Personal Image

Punk provided space for non-hegemonic interactions with gender, and this potential often became most visible via the adoption of distinctive forms of fashion. The Ljubljana hardcore collective regularly positioned punk as a means to represent the inner thoughts and feelings of those involved in the scene, and Mojca argues that personal style and fashion were central components of the ways individuals 'asserted the right to be different, and to be yourself.'⁷⁴⁰ John Gill describes how female punk pioneers were able to inspire subsequent positive assertions of femininity through fashion, their personal appearance and musical contributions, but also suggests that these women simultaneously fell victim to the sexist marketing techniques of the mainstream record industry, which were preoccupied with their appearance and sexuality.⁷⁴¹ As the initial wave of punk was 'scavenged' by the mainstream, women within the scene became well versed in negotiating conscious ownership of their sexuality and associated elements of empowerment, but the fact that this did not happen in a vacuum meant they were often forced to contend with uncontrollable exploitation.⁷⁴² As Jane Bradley argues, whilst influential figures such as Siouxsie Sioux were able to 'utterly annihilate what was previously deemed suitable' for women, many punk women who actively flaunted their sexuality in more conventional terms became subject to a backlash.⁷⁴³ These tendencies continued to impact upon the international contemporaries of the Ljubljana collective, but punks continually seized upon opportunities for self-expression, the assertion of difference and the potential to demonstrate socio-political views through style and aesthetic choices.⁷⁴⁴

⁷³⁹ Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid

⁷⁴¹ Gill references the marketing of the New York band Blondie as an example. Their 1977 single 'Rip Her to Shreds' was advertised by posters featuring singer Debbie Harry alongside the question 'Wouldn't You Like to Rip Her to Shreds?' J. Gill, *Queer Noises* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p.43

⁷⁴² J. Bradley, 'You Create, We Destroy: Punk Women', p.178

⁷⁴³ Ibid, pp.174-175

⁷⁴⁴ Becki Bondage of Vice Squad, 'punk's first real pin-up', according to Ian Glasper, decries consistent industry pressure that encouraged her to use her appearance as a marketing tactic, with the band's management also consistently stressing that she was an easily replaceable member of the band as a form of coercion. I. Glasper, *Burning Britain* (Cherry Red Books, 2004), p. 101

Lauraine Leblanc emphasises the duality between elements of profound liberation and the replication and production of constraints throughout waves of punk activity, which often become clear with regards to the appearance of punk women. Whilst punk provided a place to protest and exhibit forms of aesthetic self-expression, it could also put:

Many of the same pressures on us as girls as the mainstream culture we strove to oppose. Punk had been the instrument of my liberation and self empowerment... but the masculinity of its norms problematises participation... punk girls must accommodate female gender within subcultural identities that are deliberately coded as male.⁷⁴⁵

Involvement in punk requires negotiation between a range of conflicting expectations and Leblanc argues that the aforementioned masculinity of hardcore which maintained boundaries between different 'types' of women - including those who decided to 'collude' with masculinism and those who adopted more traditional feminine characteristics – often became apparent via appearance and stylistic decisions.⁷⁴⁶ She also argues that intersections between punk identity and femininity can subvert norms associated with both dominant cultures and those of the subculture, in a form of 'sartorial terrorism', which revises femininity through subversive punk constructions, whilst also feminising masculine norms of punk. Participation within male-dominated youth subcultures could also offer elements of refuge, alongside opportunities to challenge images of women as both consumers and producers. Under this understanding, punk becomes an ideal testing ground for subversion or experimentation with regards to gender based conventions and personal presentations, not because the subculture is particularly supportive, but because it is a space where women were able to express themselves.⁷⁴⁷ Just as experiences of punk varied between and within scenes, women in Ljubljana negotiated and reacted in different ways to these expectations and attitudes with regards to the way they looked.

Marsa acknowledges that, whilst women across punk scenes often utilised

⁷⁴⁵ L. Leblanc, *Pretty In Punk*, pp.7-8

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid, pp.130-131

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid, p.163

appearance in provocative ways to make explicitly political statements, she was more immediately concerned with constructing a visual representation of her feelings, opinions, values and personality. This reflected her wider attitudes to punk, which she positioned as a means of discovering and sharing a sense of self, and her interactions with image thus related to finding 'something that fit me, and having the guts to live it... not for the sake of being different, but to be myself, no matter if it suited others.'⁷⁴⁸ She was far from alone in terms of this approach across the worldwide punk scene, with early punk icon Catwoman describing punk fashion as something which 'came from inside', whilst Viv Albertine of The Slits describes 'wearing [my] thoughts and attitudes to life. Clothes reflected this in a very obvious way.'⁷⁴⁹ Suzana agrees with regards to the links between self expression, the messages of personal freedom that were often central to the local punk scene and the ways in which women visually represented this attitude, describing how 'creating you own image' became a touchstone.⁷⁵⁰ Creative punk images were often associated with fun, joyfulness and the realisation of personal feelings. Whilst the political implications and practical applications of punk regularly became apparent, Mojca suggests that, initially at least, she simply 'didn't care how anyone reacted', as sartorial decisions were conceived as purely personal statements.⁷⁵¹ The hardcore collective regarded the adoption of specific punk images as potentially inauthentic when they were believed to be incompatible with inner feelings or engagement with the scene itself, or if fashion was the sole method by which an individual communicated their punk identity. As Irena remembers: 'You can wear all the right t-shirts every minute of the day, but if you didn't have the mentality, you couldn't be punk.'⁷⁵² The hardcore collective's fervent desire for authenticity was applied fairly consistently, but Marsa suggests that women could become subject to greater scrutiny when it was believed that the adoption of a punk image represented mindless adherence to fashion, rather than an outlet for the expression of genuinely held attitudes, world-views and ideas.⁷⁵³

⁷⁴⁸ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/16

⁷⁴⁹ J. Dyson, 'Punk: Out of Bondage' *The Independent* (26 May 1999)

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/punk-out-of-bondage-1083239.html>- [Accessed 15 July 2016]; J. Savage, *England's Dreaming*, p.195

⁷⁵⁰ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁷⁵¹ Krish, Mojca, Interview, 13/03/2015

⁷⁵² Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁷⁵³ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

Gigi agrees that the adoption of specific forms of fashion was initially conceived as an authentic representation of inner self, but argues that it soon became recognised as a visual representation of punk's creativeness and social disconnection.⁷⁵⁴ Aesthetic choices almost immediately encompassed additional dimensions for women, primarily because they represented clear and forceful subversion of gender expectations. Suzanna describes how style often became an outlet for informed expression of, long held and instinctive feelings, drawing specific links to her adolescent image, involvement in the Ljubljana alternative scene and her childhood dislike of particular gender roles and conventions, including her resentment towards having to wear skirts.⁷⁵⁵ Alternative constructions of femininity were physical manifestations of deeply held beliefs, and became embodied fiercely by those involved. Gigi accordingly argues that 'no one could ever have imagined' that Mojca, 'the wildest of them all', would ever consider marriage or raising a family, with her decision to do so many years later remaining as something of a shock.⁷⁵⁶



Fig 4: Suzana (right) and friends on the Ljubljana University campus, 1985. Photograph courtesy of Suzana Tratnik. Whilst her style was less adherent to punk conventions, her short hair and personal style resulted in firm association with the alternative scene.

Whilst it would be an exaggeration to say that women of the hardcore collective were consistently engaged with a process of carefully constructed and explicitly

⁷⁵⁴ Karpov, Gigi, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

⁷⁵⁵ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁷⁵⁶ Karpov, Gigi, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

political alternative femininities, or that they believed such choices had specific impact in this regard, as Pauwke Berkers states, it was inevitable that female punks became conscious of the implications and interpretations of their stylistic choices.⁷⁵⁷ Caroline Coon argues that applying strict demarcations to the purposes of punk fashion ignores the fact that 'creating your own style can be both political *and* a pleasure.' Irena echoes this, stating that whilst fashion choices and the creation of personal images were often initially conceived of as 'impulsive', the reactions received, and the hardcore collective's commitment to incorporating ideological statements meant that 'the content of the rebellion, and why we reacted was often subconscious, but we also had an ideology and knew about the implications behind it.'⁷⁵⁸ The construction of specific forms of style was primarily regarded as an indication of wider resistance, rather than an effective political demonstration, largely in keeping with Helen McCookerybook's conclusion that punk posturing and image 'annoyed parents, but was useless in terms of proper resistance.'⁷⁵⁹ Cashmore suggests that creativity with regards to personal style has often been presented as resistance to the societal ill 'which makes [young people] feel as if they are protesting', and such perceptions diminish the perceived need to engage with wider society or challenge the social order and systems through direct action.⁷⁶⁰ However Wendy Chapkis argues that, whilst style based rebellion and provocation may not have been politically effective on a direct societal level, it:

Utilised the bodies of women as a visual shout... a rejection of goals and expectations... [and a] demonstration of anger- "Do I look angry, Do I look dangerous? Do you still feel safe in thinking the system works just fine? Think again."⁷⁶¹

This was reflected in the somewhat insular approach of the Ljubljana collective, as whilst responses in this respect were far from uniform, representations of dissatisfaction were rarely limited to style alone, and the hardcore scene engaged with ills and communicated their objective in numerous ways that extended beyond

⁷⁵⁷ P. Berkers, 'Rock Against Gender Roles', p.167

⁷⁵⁸ J. Bradley, 'You Create, We Destroy: Punk Women', p.169; Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁷⁵⁹ J. Bradley, 'You Create, We Destroy: Punk Women', p.176

⁷⁶⁰ E. Cashmore, *No Future*, p.14

⁷⁶¹ W. Chapkis, *Beauty Secrets: Women and the Politics of Appearance* (Women's Press, 1986), p.7

visual representations of dissatisfaction.

Tožibabe retained meticulous control over their visual presentation, were deliberately infrequently photographed and avoided being filmed unless they had a degree of control over production. However, when they did produce visual media, the band consciously utilised the visual signifiers and their personal appearance to make specific points.⁷⁶² Mojca states that the band used videos to represent their ideas and values, deliberately cultivating specific aspects of their day to day appearance and: 'exaggerating some things on purpose a little bit... to shock people.'⁷⁶³ The video for 'Dežuje', the title track of their 1986 EP, features the band dressed in black coats and leather jackets, with their pale faces accentuated by dark, heavy makeup and imposingly spiked hairstyles (See Fig 5). This image is especially striking when juxtaposed directly with a crowd of ordinary people at the Ljubljana railway station, and the video concludes with the band walking, guitars in hand, in the opposite direction to the flow of this mass of people (Sees Fig 5&6). The accompanying lyrics, which exclaim: 'Around me people, afraid of me' confirm the purposes behind this imagery, with stylistic choices positioning the band as feared outcasts.⁷⁶⁴ Their decision to quite literally walk against the grain is embodied not only by their appearance, but in terms of their wider attitudes. Mojca suggests that their choice to actively encourage rejection and claim a marginalised position had particular resonance in Slovenia, as 'Slovene people never liked to stick out.'⁷⁶⁵ Suzanna agrees, saying that visible non-conformity could lead ordinary people to assume that 'there was something wrong with punks, or that they could not possibly be Slovenians.'⁷⁶⁶ Embraced exclusion via conscious choices to circumvent beauty standards and adopt confrontational forms of fashion became an abstract source of power, as young women made a deliberate choice to exist on the margins rather than having marginalisation thrust upon them.⁷⁶⁷ Refusal to conform to social conventions regarding appearance extended to modes of behaviour and deviation from the aspirations which women were expected to hold, but visual representations of rebellion and non-conformity were utilised as an

⁷⁶² Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/15

⁷⁶³ Ibid

⁷⁶⁴ 'okrog mene ljudje, strah me je' 'Dežuje' Tožibabe *Dežuje* (FV Založba, 1986)

⁷⁶⁵ Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

⁷⁶⁶ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁷⁶⁷ Krish, Mojca, Interview, 13/03/2015

outlet for striking statements. As Jane Bradley argues: 'by dressing in a way that upset and angered the establishment, women punks were refusing to be defined by traditional boundaries that helped to shape them via their gender.'⁷⁶⁸ This process inspired a complex range of feelings, and Mojca describes a combination of tentativeness, enjoyment and empowerment:

It was so weird wearing those clothes around Stožice... people were completely in shock at us. I'll never forget the woman who stared directly at me in shock for 20 minutes on the bus one day. You'd also see strange reactions from men. Sometimes there would be a couple in a car, with the husband driving and he'd end up looking wide eyed at us. His wife would have to stop him!⁷⁶⁹



Fig 5: A scene from Tožibabe's 'Dežuje' Video, 1986, featuring the band visibly standing out amongst a crowd of people at the Ljubljana railway station, walking in the opposite direction.

⁷⁶⁸ J. Bradley, 'You Create, We Destroy: Punk Women', p.164

⁷⁶⁹ Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015



Fig 6: The final image from Tožibabe's 'Dežuje' Video, 1986.

Whilst Tožibabe rarely attributed their musical or visual output to explicitly or consciously feminist or political statements, their refusal to conform to gendered expectations also contained interaction with, and utilisation of, their own femininity in a visual and political sense. The 1985 production *Iskanje izgubljene caša* (*In Search of Lost Time*) was comprised of music videos produced by the hardcore collective in conjunction with FV Video and features a section in which Tožibabe's music forms the soundtrack to video footage of two contrasting apartment parties, presented side by side.⁷⁷⁰ A deliberately decadent scene features the band and a number of other women drinking, smoking and posing provocatively in costumes comprised of lingerie, stockings and high heels, influenced by the flapper fashion of the 1920s (See Fig 7). The other party features the band in their everyday attire of leather jackets, studs and bullet belts, sporting backcombed, spiked hair and an excess of dark makeup (See Fig 8&9). Both scenes present the band as disregarding modesty and expectations upon female demeanour, with the flapper influenced scene utilised as a means of demonstrating identification with non-conformist female predecessors. The latter, according to Mojca, was an authentic demonstration of their own style: 'What you see us wearing... at the second party, that was what our image was like.'⁷⁷¹ Bradley describes how avoidance of modesty and demureness, in favour of extreme

⁷⁷⁰ *Iskanje izgubljene caša* (FV Video, 1985), Music Video Compilation

⁷⁷¹ Krish, Mojca, Interview, 13/03/2015

clothing regularly had both inadvertent and deliberately politically liberating dimensions. The image based rebellion of this video represents a compelling example of the way that women in Ljubljana in the 1980s were willing to actively dismantle societal expectations, and construct modern, outward looking alternatives.⁷⁷²



Fig 7: Stills from *Iskanje izgubljene caša*. Members of Tožibabe and other women are pictured in 1920s inspired fashion and lingerie, posing in a sexually provocative manner.



Fig 8: Still from *Iskanje izgubljene caša*. In this scene women are pictured applying dark eye make up, backcombing and spiking their hair and wearing the staple punk accessories of spikes and bullet belts.

⁷⁷² J. Bradley, 'You Create, We Destroy: Punk Women', p.168



Fig 9: A photograph of Tožibabe in their everyday attire, featured alongside their interview in *Maximum RocknRoll*, May 1986. Alongside backcombed and dyed hair, they are wearing T-shirts featuring the international punk bands Crass (UK) and N.O.T.A. (Oklahoma, USA). N.O.T.A. Were featured on the *Welcome to 1984* compilation, alongside UBR.

The development of subversive personal images as forms of visual protest offered real opportunities for empowerment to women in Ljubljana, but this process also had practical implications upon the everyday lives of women. Adverse personal reactions remained somewhat variable, but Suzana Tratnik says that, whilst outright violence or aggressive negativity remained rare within the 'bubble' of Ljubljana, women were consistently aware of the potential for adverse reactions.⁷⁷³ Marsa remembers that simply wearing miniskirts had the potential to cause shock, and says that the generalised negative reactions which punks received were routinely extended to incorporate gendered dimensions when women were targeted. This saw stock insults that positioned punks as 'evil, horrible monsters', giving way to labels of 'whores'.⁷⁷⁴ Whilst punk women across the world had regularly utilised shocking, 'hyper-sexualised', images as a deliberate 'means to repel' unwanted attention from men, attempts to confront unwanted sexualisation in this respect were rare in Ljubljana, and gendered and sexualised insults were rarely provoked by conscious decisions from local women to present themselves as sexualised objects of either disgust or desire.⁷⁷⁵ Similarly, provoking shock via

⁷⁷³ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁷⁷⁴ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁷⁷⁵ Bradley cites Wendy O' Williams of The Plasmatics as an example of hyper-sexualisation, whilst early UK punk fashion icon Jordan depicts her sexualised image as exuding a 'leave-me-aloneness.' O'Brien and Cooper highlight the contrasting 'dowdy' image of The Raincoats, Poly Styrene's braces and 'tomboyish' style and Ari Up of The Slits on-stage urination as examples of women

personal image was seldom cited as motivation for the adoption of punk fashion and Suzana describes how female punks usually provoked confusion, whilst Irena describes an perceptible 'awareness of the different look, without too much more.'⁷⁷⁶ The most stringent attempts to undermine the pervasiveness of the male gaze generally occurred on a theoretical level and were concerned with the creation of individualised alternatives. The adoption of specific images was accordingly regarded as somewhat negotiable. Women escaped the implications of adopting specific styles when expedient, as a contemporary interview with Tožibabe outlines: 'Parents can become accustomed to you acting differently to others and looking different. We can be good at home or at school, then put on an image before we go out.'⁷⁷⁷ Whilst women were often selective in terms of when or where they decided to make specific public statements, Irena outlines that such actions nevertheless required an element of 'courage', which was provided or boosted by the collectivism of the scene and identification with likeminded people.⁷⁷⁸ Suzana agrees, describing how the power of creating a visual embodiment of personalised rebellion combined with wider motives for positive identification and engagement with punk, which was intoxicating enough to render a label of 'bravery' redundant, especially as the reactions that were provoked were often relatively mild.⁷⁷⁹

Tožibabe and other women active on the Ljubljana scene often centralised the expression of personal feelings and values over explicitly political motives. However, as Jane Bradley argues, any action which conflicted with, or rejected, the idea that women should be demure, modest, sedate, sexless and utterly passive, stretched the limits of public decency and can thus be seen as a progressive step towards liberation- whether that was the motive or not.⁷⁸⁰ The personalised images that were adopted by the women of the Ljubljana hardcore collective on a daily basis, as well as in visual media, represented active rejections of expectations of how women should present themselves or express their ideas, but also can be

embracing 'ugliness' to buttress themselves from unwanted sexual attention. J. Bradley, 'You Create, We Destroy: Punk Women', p.175; J. Savage, *England's Dreaming*, p.187; L. O'Brien, 'The Woman Punk Made Me', p.196; L. Cooper, 'No Bondage' *The Guardian* (8/8/2007) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/aug/08/gender.arts> [Accessed 11 June 2017]

⁷⁷⁶ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/16; Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁷⁷⁷ 'Tožibabe- punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core' *Stop* (12/6/1986)

⁷⁷⁸ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁷⁷⁹ Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁷⁸⁰ J. Bradley, 'You Create, We Destroy: Punk Women', p.168

regarded as instinctive, fluctuating, but nevertheless vital and enduring constructions of alternative forms of femininity.

Feminism and 'Showing Your Skills'

When I look back, I can see that it was feminism in action. The catch was that we never said that we were feminists, we just did it. We didn't just say we want to be an all woman band, we created one.⁷⁸¹

The promotion of equality and active rebellion within an instinctively utopian anarchistic subculture suggests that the somewhat loose ideology of the Ljubljana hardcore collective would be amenable to feminism. Accounts such as Craig O'Hara's *The Philosophy of Punk* position the core ideals of punk as feminist, or at the very least, explicitly anti-sexist.⁷⁸² However, whilst the hardcore collective interacted with social movements and the cultural and intellectual currents that combined to form the Ljubljana alternative scene, including topics integral to feminist theory, the extent to which it actively embraced feminism as a conscious ideology is more complicated. Punk scenes throughout the 1980s incorporated feminist statements and, at times, embodied such principles, if only in the sense that they allowed women to enter and subvert arenas which had previously been designated as male enclaves. Ruth Elias of Hagar the Womb describes the importance of simply 'being a band that was predominantly female, with a following that wasn't just based on people who thought we were attractive.'⁷⁸³ Further engagement saw initial access expand into artistic expressions which reflected the 'full spectrum of female concerns.'⁷⁸⁴ Mullen argues that within many punk scenes awareness of feminism primarily saw it incorporated within the existing narrow roles that were available to women. He describes how the 'Piranha Clique', became regarded as an 'extremist, man-hating feminist thing', in contrast with other groups of women such as the 'The Poodles' who were more 'typical girls', with a binary, almost caricature-like perception of feminism dominating the

⁷⁸¹ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁷⁸² C. O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk- More Than Noise!* (AK Press, 1999), p.104

⁷⁸³ R. Elias, *She's a Punk Rocker*, Documentary, Directed by Z. Minx (2007, Ultra Violet Punk Productions)

⁷⁸⁴ P. Berkers, 'Rock Against Gender Roles', p.161

stifling understandings and identities women had to negotiate.⁷⁸⁵ Jane Bradley argues that punk was regularly open to female involvement, but that this does not necessarily mean that a multitude of subsequent evolutionary strands were also consciously or practically feminist.⁷⁸⁶

Suzana Tratnik suggests that her associations with punk and feminist currents in Ljubljana saw her articulate what had previously been her own silent perceptions of disparities between official ideologies and the Yugoslav status quo. However, whilst both had something to say about the position of women in society, conscious links between them were rarely forged.⁷⁸⁷ Helen Reddington attributes the generalised discord between punk and feminism to the 'prioritisation of lived experience over scholarly theory and mediated opinion', which was reflected by regular insistence from members of the hardcore collective that punk represented an instinctive, natural and energetic form of expression. The value placed upon action and productivity thus positioned reliance upon theory as enforcing another 'set of rules', and the imposition of specific ways of thinking, which contradicted and could shackle punks anarchistic openness.⁷⁸⁸ Suzana remembers that the 'spontaneity and instinctiveness' of hardcore did not lend itself to the adoption of explicit labels, and as Stephen Duncombe argues, even when punks critically engaged with ideologies such as anarchism, they were often interpreted in ways which centred the idealisation of freedom and existing without 'being told what to do... [as] pure negation, pure rebellion', positioning elaborate theoretical frameworks as dogmatic brakes on action.⁷⁸⁹ Resemblant attitudes were prevalent within Ljubljana, which meant that intellectualism was often presented as contradictory to the natural and autonomous energy that was vital to the vibrancy of the local hardcore scene. This often underpinned female engagement, and as Mojca states: 'We didn't just talk, we didn't shout... we created, we did it.'⁷⁹⁰ Aldo remembers how women 'just said "we want to make fucking rock and roll. It doesn't matter that we are girls!" For them, energy and action were all that

⁷⁸⁵ B. Mullen, D. Bolles and A. Parfey (eds), *Lexicon Devil*, p.156

⁷⁸⁶ J. Bradley, 'You Create, We Destroy: Punk Women', p.163

⁷⁸⁷ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁷⁸⁸ H. Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock Music: Female Musicians of the Punk Era* (Ashgate, 2007), p.139

⁷⁸⁹ Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016; S. Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, p.47

⁷⁹⁰ Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

mattered.⁷⁹¹ Suzana agrees:

Tožibabe didn't need to apply labels because they were living it. They didn't have to declare anything, because they were doing it in reality. To do an all women hardcore band, that was enough, to declare themselves as feminist or worry about deeper meanings might have spoilt things.⁷⁹²

Such representations reflect D.M. Withers' suggestion of an inherent instability associated with attempts to understand how feminism informs music and is presented in practice. The incompatibilities between music and feminist theory mean that attempts to provide blueprints for what 'feminist music is' remain an open challenge, even when feminism is actually cited as a motivating factor.⁷⁹³ Duncombe argues that it is perhaps misguided to expect subcultural scenes to engage with socio-political theories beyond a superficial level, as radical cultural politics provide opportunities for radical acts and the enjoyment of revolutionary practice without necessitating the application of frameworks which seek to remove the causes of alienation outright. He argues that struggles over ways of seeing, thinking and being take place and participants can become radicalised by underground culture, but this stops short of concrete political action.⁷⁹⁴ Whilst some punks have attempted to instigate radical political action via punk practice, and Bryony Beynon refers to the 'radical potency' of simply playing music with other women regardless of the inclusion or exclusion of explicitly feminist themes, punk has also been subject to the deliberate erection of barriers that prevent the reconciliation of punk practice and feminist ideologies.⁷⁹⁵ Indeed, as Pauwke Berkers argues, when punk did interact with feminist issues, it was often situated 'ahead of the curve' of many second wave feminist contemporaries, which resulted in rejection from many western feminists who otherwise championed efforts to challenge traditional gender roles within rock music, often arguing that punk was irretrievably tainted by masculinity, its chaotic nature, elements of aggression and

⁷⁹¹ Ivančić, Aldo. Interview, Kranj, 9/10/2016

⁷⁹² Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁷⁹³ D. M. Withers, 'Feminist Musical Resistance in the 70s and 80s' in: J. Downes (ed), *Women Make Noise- Girl bands from Motown to the modern* (Supernova Books, 2012), p.127

⁷⁹⁴ S. Duncombe, *Notes From Underground*, pp.200-202

⁷⁹⁵ B. Beynon, 'Subversive Pleasure: Feminism in DIY Hardcore', p.230

overall immaturity.⁷⁹⁶

The presence of overt feminism within punk scenes could also represent specific challenges for women, and Mandy from the UK band Mere Dead Men describes how specific applications of theory encouraged the idea of unwieldy incompatibility. She recalls that she was simultaneously criticised by some women for not being 'feminist enough' whilst recognisable anti-feminist and sexist perspectives remained.⁷⁹⁷ The aforementioned construction of hardcore punk as a particularly masculine strand of punk could also exacerbate difficulties in this regard, and many women involved in worldwide hardcore scenes were forced to either disavow feminism, or navigate the idea that it was possible to be a radical feminist whilst also loving music that was consistently and pejoratively categorised as 'macho', with precious few alternative characteristics.⁷⁹⁸

Numerous decisions made by women involved in punk have been retrospectively attributed with specific feminist significance and have become subject to attempts to expand upon or highlight the presence of an embryonic feminist spirit. Helen Reddington describes the power of 'reinserting women into historical discourses and understanding the reasons for omission', thus correcting tendencies to omit or gloss over particular nuances, but meanings and motives can be written onto actions in a variety of ways.⁷⁹⁹ Particular scrutiny upon spontaneous actions, combined with a wilful desire to attribute certain significance can potentially lead to divergence from contemporary intentions or suggest that dynamics that went unrecognised shaped scenes. However, many accounts have conversely ignored important dynamics altogether, and tended to gloss over gender dynamics or even contributions to scenes made by women, necessitating carefully handled approaches, the likes of which Reddington advocates. Many participants in the Ljubljana scene have recognised subconscious or latent tendencies with the benefit of hindsight and as Marsa suggests, can attribute additional meaning to actions that were initially experienced as intuitional. As Suzana describes:

⁷⁹⁶ P. Berkers, 'Rock Against Gender Roles', pp.155-6

⁷⁹⁷ She also outlines how some women involved in the UK hardcore punk scene displayed jealousy towards the band, or accused them of utilising their sexuality in order to gain an audience. I. Glasper, *Trapped in a Scene*, p.153

⁷⁹⁸ B. Beynon, 'Subversive Pleasure: Feminism in DIY Hardcore', p.220

⁷⁹⁹ H. Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock Music: Female Musicians of the Punk Era*, p.109

We might once have said that gender didn't matter, or that the fact that Tožibabe were all women wasn't important, but it was! Only now we realise what a big thing certain things were. Sometimes you have to look back to fully understand the ideas you had, that maybe you didn't realise at the time.⁸⁰⁰

Many of those active within the Ljubljana hardcore collective generally believed that general commitments to - and the achievement of - broad equality within the confines of the local punk scene rendered the need for a punk specific feminism largely dormant and potentially cumbersome. This was reflected in tendencies amongst women involved in punk to downplay the significance of their involvement. Tožibabe, when asked about their reasons for forming in an 1986 interview, suggest that their motives were as 'boring' as any other band: 'We formed for no particular reason, we just came together and wanted to play.'⁸⁰¹ Irena explains that unwillingness to highlight the importance of an all female band was primarily encouraged by equal treatment of men and women within the Ljubljana scene, which meant that women wanted their input to the scene to be the focus of discussion: 'We did not think gender mattered, you just had to show your skills regardless. That was the important thing.'⁸⁰² A *Stop* feature on Tožibabe from 1986 suggests that this belief was largely justified, calling for the band to receive: 'Broader attention, not because they are girls, but because of the music and the suggestive lyrics.'⁸⁰³ Whilst some punk scenes consciously strove to engage with feminist thought, with anarcho-punk channelling a 'yearning for internal and external peace and freedom' into an active embrace of 'sexual equality', many of the scenes that the Ljubljana hardcore collective interacted with, or was influenced by, simply suggested that the question of gender equality within punk had been resolved.⁸⁰⁴ Feminism in punk was thus regarded as an unnecessary intrusion within a level playing field, rather than a means of remedying the disadvantages and oppression that women encountered. Berkers argues that this often extended to

⁸⁰⁰ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁸⁰¹ 'Tožibabe Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 36 (May 1986)

⁸⁰² Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁸⁰³ I. Vidmar, 'Tožibabe- punk je mrtev, naj živi hard-core' *Stop* 12/6/1986

⁸⁰⁴ I. Glasper, *The Day The Country Died*, p.9

attitudes regarding the need for feminism outside of punk as well, as continued experiences of genuine gender parity within punk scenes could reduce the apparent necessity of feminism that might have otherwise been realised.⁸⁰⁵ Marsa describes how punk may have been open to intellectual and political currents that could be boiled down to basic human 'desires for freedom and equality', but that interpretations of feminism often associated it with the promotion of tokenism, with women respected purely for the fact that they were making music, rather than the quality of their contributions to a scene.⁸⁰⁶ Mojca accordingly remembers that Tožibabe 'joked' about the necessity of feminism far more than they ever consciously engaged with it, believing that the semantics of feminism undermined their commitment to proving that women could produce hardcore that was just as compelling as that of their male counterparts.⁸⁰⁷ Suzana agrees, and suggests that reluctance towards feminism within Ljubljana hardcore, and elsewhere in Yugoslavia, was often predicated upon the idea that:

Women wanted to emphasise that they were strong enough to overcome their problems by themselves. Embracing feminism could be seen as an admission of weakness. This always surprised me, because even intellectual women would say that becoming part of the feminist movement sent a message that you needed support or couldn't compete with men.⁸⁰⁸

Punk itself was seen as a ground in which women could both compete and productively co-operate with men. Penelope Houston of San Francisco band the Avengers encapsulates a common approach: 'Scenes were so small that just being a punk was enough... the idea that there were boy punks and girl punks or male punks and female punks was not really something anything thought about.'⁸⁰⁹ Whilst the all female Tožibabe were almost unique across the worldwide scene in the early 1980s, and many women encountered practical barriers that prevented them from following suit, their existence was generally positioned as almost

⁸⁰⁵ P. Berkers, 'Rock Against Gender Roles', p.168

⁸⁰⁶ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁸⁰⁷ Stephen Blush describes rejection of feminism within the contemporary US hardcore scene, as it was believed to conflict with the ability of women to be 'judged for their actions... and earn respect through sheer force of will.' Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015; S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, p.39

⁸⁰⁸ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁸⁰⁹ J. Bradley, 'You Create, We Destroy: Punk Women', p.163

prosaic in Ljubljana, as Irena says: 'it was simply natural... if its three girls, its three girls.'⁸¹⁰ Aldo says that whilst FV Založba supported Tožibabe because the promotion of distinctly female art was compatible with their fight for sexual and political emancipation, the democratisation of culture and their embrace of 'utopian activism', the existence of the band, whilst significant, was an almost inevitable product of the internal logic of the hardcore scene. It was 'always very open to girls' and rarely regarded female participation as something worthy of specific attention.⁸¹¹ The hardcore collective rejected segregation but often extended this to essentially ignoring gender altogether, subverting it beneath what a contemporary *Mladina* article summaries as: 'A singular wish to live a free life, in which every individual can decide their own destinies and live in freedom.'⁸¹² The consistent failure to make gender a consideration across international punk scenes sat uncomfortably alongside many contemporary western interpretations of feminism, radical calls for gender separatism and active hostility to co-operation and interaction with men, or the portrayal of male involvement as inherently corruptive.⁸¹³ However, the lack of interaction between hardcore punk and Ljubljana feminism owes much to the relatively small size and reach of the latter and what Neven Korda depicts as the hardcore collective's obsessive concern with only 'their own work.' A focus upon the inner workings of the scene, individual scene dynamics and cultural production regularly accounted for failure to actively interact with generalised socio-political theories, including feminism.⁸¹⁴ Whilst the hardcore collective was sporadically politically active, particularly via engagement and interaction with other elements of the Slovene New Social Movements such as environmental and pacifist protests, punk specific ideologies and compatibility with such ideological currents were generally at the forefront of such

⁸¹⁰ Tožibabe stood alongside these all-female pioneers and outliers across the world, including the proto-hardcore band Kandeggina Gang (Italy), Inside Out and The Wrecks (USA), Nurse and Rap (Japan), the Basque band Las VulpeSS, and Nog Watt (Netherlands) who released the *Fear 7"* in 1985, a year before *Dežuje*. A handful of contemporary bands in Yugoslavia featured female members, including Kaos, Niet and Distress, but there were no other all-female outfits in Yugoslavia. The Joyce McKinney Experience (UK) were originally envisioned as an all female band, but found that 'girl musicians were very thin on the ground in 1986', and whilst The Hippy Slags (UK) did manage to put together an all-female lineup, they encountered a scene that was 'otherwise dominated by insecure males.' I. Glasper, *Trapped in a Scene*, p.59-451; Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁸¹¹ Ivančič, Aldo. Interview, Kranj, 9/10/2016

⁸¹² 'Kaj je novega? Niet' *Mladina* (23/2/1984)

⁸¹³ P. Berkers, 'Rock Against Gender Roles', pp.155-156

⁸¹⁴ N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns', p.337

interactions.⁸¹⁵ The collective was informed and at times spurred by opposition to the realities of everyday society, including the position of women, but was primarily content to focus upon an alternative social world. Aldo describes engagement with an 'uncompromising' war against the establishment, but also states that this battle saw the collective retreat to subculture and the creation of 'autonomous zones, separate to society.'⁸¹⁶ The freedom experienced within these subterranean pockets, and the fact that theoretical equality was regularly reflected by the internal realities of the scene, meant that critical frameworks were considered to be more relevant to the rejected world above ground.⁸¹⁷ This was exacerbated further by what Suzana describes as a general fluidity with regards to the rejection of societally imposed boundaries, which led those involved away from adopting: 'fixed identities and strict labels... it was more acceptable to say I'm open to everything, I'm bisexual, I don't care about gender'.⁸¹⁸ For many men involved in the scene, considerations of feminism were even less relevant. As Dario states, whilst women and other 'social misfits' were supported within the scene:

I can't remember too many conversations about it and it wasn't too important to me personally at the time, or relevant to my experiences. I was never thinking in a special feministic kind of way, but Tožibabe didn't seem like this kind of band either. We were connected by the music, the need for general independence and the desire for freedom for all, and that meant that I just accepted them as another good band on the scene.⁸¹⁹

Men within the Ljubljana scene often acted in accordance with the idea of a genderless punk reality, which opened doors for female involvement, but this impetus was rarely explicitly feminist and largely conformed with Dario's

⁸¹⁵ SOR's biography from a 2014 retrospective discography describes the involvement of punks in opposing the building of power stations. Irena cites the involvement of members of the hardcore collective in a range of protests in Ljubljana, particularly with regards to the pacifist movement, and the mass protests in 1988 that were provoked by the arrest of Janez Janša. Gigi also recalls attending the protest, in defence of the 'political prisoner.' SOR *System Organizirane Regresije* (Ne! Records, 2014); Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014; Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

⁸¹⁶ Ivančič, Aldo. Interview, Kranj, 9/10/2016

⁸¹⁷ Ibid

⁸¹⁸ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁸¹⁹ Cortese, Dario, Interview, Ljubljana, 6/10/2016

presentation of a supportive, if somewhat passive approach. Niet's inclusion of Tanja on vocals was inspired by the British anarcho-punk band Dirt, but rather than an explicit attempt to broaden the band's perspective, Igor describes a purely musical consideration and an attempt to emulate Dirt's 'unexpected and interesting' dynamic onstage (see Fig 10).⁸²⁰ Women were recruited and encouraged to participate in the scenes of the 1980s for diverse reasons, including the 'success' of women-led groups, which was often associated with their ability to stand out in scenes that were increasingly swamped with 'standardised' takes on punk and hardcore.⁸²¹ Niet's approach, is seemingly closely aligned with somewhat 'cynical' motives that positioned women as 'selling points', but Tožibabe themselves engaged in a similar process, recruiting an additional member, Pika, as much for the overall image of the band as for her musical ability or ideas of female support and camaraderie. Barbara Stuhec, on the other hand, was recruited as a primarily musical contributor, performing keyboards on *Dežuje* and at a number of concerts in 1986.⁸²² Gigi describes how the consciousness of the anarcho-punk scene was nevertheless important within Ljubljana, and men became increasingly open towards the inclusion of women on an ideological basis and in order to broaden song-writing approaches to include female perspectives. This was bolstered by the approach of leading lights such as Crass and Poison Girls, with bands such as Rubella Ballet, Hagar the Womb and the Lost Cherrees following in their footsteps.⁸²³

Regardless of whether the motives were cynical, egalitarian, or a combination of

⁸²⁰ Dirt have described seeking female collaborators as a way of distinguishing their music from 'macho bands' and diversifying their musical and lyrical output. Dernovšek, Igor, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015; I. Glasper, *The Day The Country Died* p.210

⁸²¹ Action Pact, The Expelled, The Partisans and Dawn Patrol all cite attempts to set themselves apart from the prevalence of all-male UK82 lineups as informing their decision to recruit female singers and musicians. Jim of Dawn Patrol actively describes this as a 'cynical attempt' to increase coverage for his music. I. Glasper, *Burning Britain*, p.300

⁸²² Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁸²³ Crass, the archetypal anarcho-punk band, were shaped by female involvement. Gee Vaucher defined the band's overall aesthetic including their iconic logo. The band's explicitly feminist third LP 'Penis Envy' saw Eve Libertine take over vocal duties from Steve Ignorant as a deliberate response to claims that the band were unconcerned with gender politics. Poison Girls were fronted by the uncompromisingly radical Vi Subversa, a mother in her 40s, who was spurred into musical action by the growth of punk. As she remembers, being an older, female musician was a radical proposition in itself, before an idea had even been expressed, 'It was a challenge to male dominated ideals... when I came on stage, I wasn't what was expected.' I. Glasper, *The Day The Country Died*, p.14; H. Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock Music: Female Musicians of the Punk Era*, pp.103-105; V. Subversa *She's a Punk Rocker*, Documentary, Directed by Z. Minx (2007, Ultra Violet Punk Productions); Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 4/10/2015

the two, increased female involvement followed. Barriers to engagement were eroded and women seized the chance to forge new avenues for involvement and expand the range of perspectives that could be heard within punk. Olga Orbit of UK band Youth in Asia says that the gradual expansion of an initially somewhat 'open' subculture saw proclamations that 'anyone could be in a band... [and that punk] was for everyone', become utilised to make punk increasingly accessible for women, regardless of whether any feminist motivations can be identified.⁸²⁴ Indeed, whilst Igor bemoans the fact that Tanja was not 'the best singer', his bandmate Aleš describes how the spirit with which Tanja approached the band helped to overcome initial reservations over her technical failings, whilst providing a positive example of female activity within Ljubljana punk, contributing to an inclusive atmosphere.⁸²⁵



Fig 10: Niet, 1984, Aleš and Igor stand either side of dual singers Primož Habič and Tanja, in a demonstration of the 'different stage dynamic' Niet desired.. Photo by Unknown.

Perceptions of gender dynamics and reactions to instances of sexism within punk were, to an extent, shaped by wider patriarchal norms. Leblanc suggests that active resistance to instances of sexist replication within punk could often be tempered by

⁸²⁴ O. Orbit *She's a Punk Rocker*, Documentary, Directed by Z. Minx (2007, Ultra Violet Punk Productions)

⁸²⁵ Dernovšek, Igor, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015; Češnovar, Aleš, Interview, Ljubljana, 3/10/2015

awareness of the potential cost of doing so, specifically expulsion from the subculture. She also argues that women could often internalise sexist attitudes and as a result primarily focused upon external experiences of gender oppression rather than those encountered within the scene.⁸²⁶ Women also occasionally lacked the necessary vocabulary and ideological frameworks to fully conceptualise and engage with complex structural factors and internal fluctuations with regards to sexism in punk. Mandy of Mere Dead Men (UK) suggests that women often simply 'grew thicker skin and resigned themselves to never being taken as seriously' as a result.⁸²⁷ Women in Ljubljana were resilient to the everyday pervasiveness of inequality, and often extended this resilience to experiences within the more egalitarian punk scene and this meant that they could potentially be more inclined to ignore, accept, or even fail to frame certain experiences as particularly noteworthy.⁸²⁸ Whilst the application of feminism to subcultural lives was regarded as somewhat redundant, Ljubljana punks did possess and express views relating to associated concepts. Irena states a resolute awareness of the failures of Yugoslav ideology with regards to female emancipation, based on her own lived experiences, and echoes Daša Duhaček's conclusion that Yugoslav socialist ideology merely 'superimposed a thin layer of ideologically based egalitarianism' onto a stable, 'almost untouched patriarchy'.⁸²⁹

There are few suggestions that socialist dismissals of feminism as 'an unnecessary bourgeois capitalist thing', had significant impact upon subcultural incorporation of feminism, as this contrasted with the collective's embrace of internationalist contact with western subcultural scenes, but few forms of resistant culture are ever completely absent of strains of accommodation. As Berkers acknowledges, external factors and punitive and regulatory social measures influenced even the most resistant underground punk scenes.⁸³⁰ Hilary Pilkington similarly emphasises the impact upon punk of social structures and local contexts, which guide not only

⁸²⁶ L. Leblanc, *Pretty In Punk*, p.133

⁸²⁷ I. Glasper, *Trapped in a Scene*, p.154

⁸²⁸ Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015; Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁸²⁹ D. Duhaček, 'Women's Time in the Former Yugoslavia' in: N. Funk and M. Muelle (eds) *Gender Politics and Post-Communism* (Routledge, 1993), p.135; Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 15/3/2015

⁸³⁰ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016; P. Berkers, 'Rock Against Gender Roles', p.161

horizontal relations between scenes, but also the relationship of punk to the parent culture and the ways in which this culture's conventions become socially embedded.⁸³¹ Suzana acknowledges this with reference to the Ljubljana alternative scene, describing how 'the general ideologies we were brought up with could sometimes affect women', including the starting points for approaching gender issues.⁸³² The incorporation of parent cultures varies both within and between punk scenes, guided by socio-economic and cultural contexts and Irena acknowledges that events in Ljubljana could often become influenced by the relative political immaturity of members of the hardcore collective. This meant they were not always able to 'understand the full political implications of things... beyond the desire to rebel.' Marsa also acknowledges that conduct that has since become commonly recognised as sexist was occasionally accepted as unremarkable at the time.⁸³³ However, Irena and Suzana both conclude that the impact of Yugoslav ideology upon the hardcore scene was relatively minor, and this was reflected in regular criticism of ubiquitous ideologies. Suzana argues that success in terms of rejecting imposed frameworks and 'thinking for ourselves' meant that female punks were acutely aware that 'there was little to no discussion of domestic violence, family hierarchies, and the fact that we didn't really have good positions.' Whilst engagement with societal issues and inequality may have been inchoate, the importance attributed to an egalitarian ethos and their penchant for almost dogmatic internal criticism served to diminish the possibility that sexism within the scene was simply overlooked.⁸³⁴

The aesthetics and imagery which punk bands utilised often represented deliberate interactions with race, sexuality and gender, and bands also made explicitly political statements through the names that they adopted. This includes the reclamation of a variety of derogatory terms via specific feminist frameworks, including the UK anarcho-punk band Poison Girls and Tožibabe's UK hardcore contemporaries, the Hippy Slags. The latter describe how the frequent shout of 'slaaaaags' at gigs was accordingly regarded as an indication of success.⁸³⁵ The

⁸³¹ H. Pilkington, Y.B. Steinholt and I. Gololobov *Punk in Russia*, p.203

⁸³² Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016; Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

⁸³³ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁸³⁴ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁸³⁵ The band also cite some negative responses from women based upon their interactions and subversion of sexist attitudes and language. Women in punk could become subject to ire directed

name 'Tožibabe' has been subject to diverse conclusions regarding the purpose behind its adoption and its potential, and provides an example of the diversity of interpretations that can be made in response to ambiguous artistic statements. Neven Korda translates the term as 'snitch' or 'tattletale', and presents a commonly agreed view that the internal workings of the Ljubljana scene were pivotal to its adoption.⁸³⁶ Mojca accordingly describes an internal conflict within the Ljubljana punk scene, which resulted in name-calling and the labelling of some punks as 'snitches', which led to the band adopting Tožibabe.⁸³⁷ Marsa also corroborates this description and cites the word's use in common parlance as indicative of their intent, rather than any explicit socio-political statement. She suggests that whilst 'Tožibaba' is a female noun, the term was primarily used in a genderless way, most commonly as part of childish vernacular and rarely by adults, except as a joke.⁸³⁸ Positioning their decision as any sort of feminist statement therefore risks the potential of writing meaning onto the name, but Marsa also accepts that the situation is not necessarily entirely clear cut. A secondary interpretation, also put forward on a contemporary basis, makes a more conscious statement with regards to gender. A *MRR* interview and the translations within the *Dežuje 7"* (See Fig 11) both presented the name as meaning 'peevisish girls', which was extrapolated as either an adoption of the position of righteously angry women, willing to fight, or a comment on the way outspoken women were positioned as irritable, irrational and bad tempered.⁸³⁹ The term 'baba' also had derogatory connotations, primarily utilised for older women, which Marsa acknowledges was exacerbated further by the addition of 'Toži, which was to complain.'⁸⁴⁰

Whilst both Marsa and Mojca urged caution with regards to attributing particular gravitas to interpretations of their name, and indeed many of their other actions, if simply performing in a band as a woman can be perceived as an inherently feminist statement - regardless of whether this was intended – any deliberate or

from a range of ideological positions, including not being 'feminist enough.' I. Glasper, *Trapped In A Scene*, p.420

⁸³⁶ N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns', p.336

⁸³⁷ Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

⁸³⁸ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁸³⁹ An interview with the band in Issue 36 of the fanzine sees the name translated by Ane Zihert as 'Peevisish Girls', whilst the band did not express any endorsement of this translation within the interview, its inclusion on the *Dežuje 7"* seems to indicate they did not oppose it. 'Tožibabe Interview' *Maximum RocknRoll* Issue 36 (May 1986); Tožibabe *Dežuje* (FV Založba, 1986)

⁸⁴⁰ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

subconscious interaction with gendered terms can accordingly be acknowledged, without positioning this motivation as pivotal. The reclamation of negative terms may be regarded as instinctive, subconscious or latent statements of feminist principles, whilst the potential for interpretations beyond the conscious intent of artists is an inherent possibility, where culture, music and art is concerned. However, examinations of female interactions with punk should avoid viewing actions entirely through the prism of gender. As Branka Magaš outlines, women in Yugoslavia were 'moved into action not just by what could be termed as feminist issues', but also by more general political and national concerns, and in this case, the dynamics of punk and countercultural production. Yet, it is possible to highlight potential interpretations of their actions and illuminate the presence of initially unacknowledged dynamics.⁸⁴¹ The aggression, forcefulness and passion of punk can often provide associated expressions with extra gravitas, and result in the attribution of specific significance to generalised discussions of personal experiences. This includes expressions which may be positioned as feminist rejections of the status quo. Indeed, the poetic, passive, wistful and even romantic statements that dominated *Dežuje* may be interpreted as calls to action or socio-political statements, simply as a result of the atmosphere created by punk music and their desperate delivery. Expectations of punk as inherently political and rebellious subculture can subsequently flounder when lyrics and outward statements fail to represent desires for social change. Whilst members of Tožibabe have confirmed the extent to which they desired societal change, and their choice to engage with hardcore punk reflected this, they agree that calls within their music in this regard are difficult to find.⁸⁴²

The wider Ljubljana scene also rarely incorporated direct feminist statements within lyrics, and explicit discussions of gender issues are similarly rare. As I have previously mentioned, the scene often promoted self-expression in poetic terms over active politicism, and female engagement in punk was rarely contingent upon opportunities for expression relating to their gender. Indeed, the inlay of the *Kaj Je Alternativa* compilation, which saw Stres DA incorporate a Yugoslav bill of rights, annotated with notes casting doubt upon the extent to which individuals enjoyed

⁸⁴¹ B. Magaš, 'Afterword', p.276

⁸⁴² Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

these in practice, represents one of the rare examples of explicit, non-poetic engagement with the disparity of lived realities. However, it also features no mention of female emancipation and instead focuses upon the absence of more generalised freedoms. Igor Vidmar argues that this tendency related not only to general failures to adopt specific political identities, but to the fact that specific demands for liberty and democracy were rendered somewhat contradictory: 'We realised these values were already on paper, in the Yugoslav constitution and all kinds of official proclamations', even if it was clear that 'reality was different from their words.'⁸⁴³

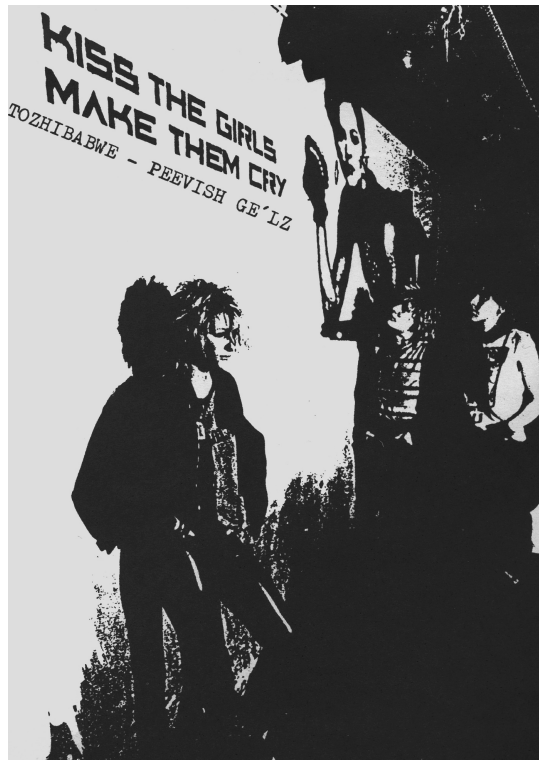


Fig 11: Insert of the Tožibabe *Dežuje 7*”, featuring the band in front of the backdrop of K4's underground grafitti.

The hardcore collective shared resources with other elements of the Ljubljana alternative scene, and this accounted for the most consistent moments of interaction with explicit feminist theory. Nikolai Jeffs identifies how environments cultivated by FV helped to shape the alternative scene's identity, social experiences and politics. The club represented one of the homes, or at least one of the regular

⁸⁴³ I. Vidmar, 'Slo Punk 1977-1987 - Maximum Impact' *Maximum RocknRoll* (Issue 374, July 2014)

hangouts, of the hardcore collective, whilst simultaneously providing space for New Social Movements, including the feminist group Lilith.⁸⁴⁴ The transgressive graffiti which adorned the walls reflected a collaborative aesthetic and intellectual environment, with members of the collective influenced by, but also actively contributing to this visual character. Dare of III. Kategorija highlights the subversive importance of underground graffiti in a city in which 'the walls were grey and there were no decorations.' He suggests that if he had not formed a band, his rebellious streak and will to protest could seamlessly have been channeled via this interchangeable method of expressing dissatisfaction.⁸⁴⁵ Jeffs describes the graffiti of the alternative scene as a visual 'transgressive' embodiment of the aforementioned attitudes towards gender, sexuality and politics, which became especially pervasive and resonant amongst the underground, as 'such imagery could not have been realised elsewhere in the public space.'⁸⁴⁶ Much of this aesthetic character was produced by the Irwin art group, a component of the NSK movement, and Dušan Mandić's erotic imagery and neo-avant-garde graffiti sat alongside explicitly political and feminist pieces inspired by Kathy Acker and Jenny Holzer.⁸⁴⁷ Whilst it is of course hard to measure an exact impact upon the ideology of the hardcore scene or individual participants, the collective's ethos was harmonic and consciously engaged with the aesthetics of this milieu, incorporating them as part of their own visual legacy. At times this was unavoidable, as alternative institutions provided the space required for concerts and to produce videos, but moments of conscious affiliation can also be found. Graffiti proclaiming 'KISS THE GIRLS MAKE THEM CRY' looms over the members of Tožibabe in one of a handful of promotional photos of the band (See Fig 11), which was featured on their 7", and provides a compelling example of deliberate incorporation of sexually provocative and transgressive messages, and a compatibility with alternative feminist culture, even if specific labels were eschewed or fleetingly incorporated.

⁸⁴⁴ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene"', p.378

⁸⁴⁵ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/14

⁸⁴⁶ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene"', p.373

⁸⁴⁷ A brief overview of the Irwin art group can be found on the NSK website. <http://nsk.mg-lj.si/artist/irwin/> [Accessed 2/2/18]

Conclusion

In place of explicitly labelled or fixed ideological agendas, the Ljubljana hardcore collective placed emphasis on autonomous individuality, cultural freedom and co-operation with like-minded individuals, organised around shared mindsets and values. This character, whilst not necessarily amenable to deliberate application of feminist theory, frequently allowed the presentation of alternative framings of womanhood, which became manifest via interpersonal dynamics within the collective, as well as outward presentations of style. Female punks on the scene may have frequently played down adherence to a feminist agenda as a contemporary motivating factor, but as Bradley suggests, punk often possessed an inherent agenda, which saw messages of female empowerment conveyed via defiant non-conformity, the subversion of stereotypes and the development of alternative means of cultural interaction.⁸⁴⁸ Whilst the women of the hardcore collective embodied socio-political principles primarily in relation to their adherence to dynamics specific to the ideology and character of hardcore punk, rather than any admiration or indeed deeper attempts to understand contemporary feminist ideology, the lack of feminist rhetoric does not necessarily indicate an absence of the spirit which this rhetoric attempts to capture. By adopting influential roles within the hardcore collective and actively developing its character, women exercised not only personal autonomy, but feminised the scene through their participation and the extent to which this opened further opportunities for female involvement. Feminism may have been considered restrictive or unnecessary, but this resulted in it being present in a latent sense, in the same way that specific political ideologies were conscious in deed more so than in active theory. As Aldo describes, in place of an organised manifesto, the multitude of presentations of femininity by women of the hardcore collective shared an uncompromising and laconic cry of 'fuck you!'⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁸ J. Bradley, 'You Create, We Destroy: Punk Women', p.174

⁸⁴⁹ Ivančić, Aldo- Interview, Kranj, 9/10/2016

Chapter 4: 'Homosexualnost in Kultura': Hardcore Ljubljana and Sexuality

There are a small number of historical overviews of the 1980s LGBT movement and prior history of gay people in Slovenia. However, the regular interactions between this movement and the punk scene that was simultaneously housed within Ljubljana's alternative culture has only been hinted at 'here and there'.⁸⁵⁰ By 1984, Ljubljana was the 'natural place for alternative social movements to emerge', as New Social Movements (NSMs) combined previously disparate ideological, social and cultural strands into a wave of oppositional initiatives.⁸⁵¹ Building upon the examples of the 1970s Ljubljana student scene, Student Cultural Centre (SKUČ), the LGBT movement and NSMs contributed to the growth of Slovene civil society by offering platforms for leftist and liberal ideas to a degree that previously would have been thought impossible within Yugoslavia. Roman Kuhar describes Slovenia's LGBT history as the 'story of how it emerged and developed in Ljubljana, and how it fought for space' within and via this alternative cultural environment. Coalescence from previously embryonic, hidden or disparate gay and lesbian cultures into a recognisable social current occurred as a result of domestic innovation and evolution, which included interaction and co-operation with the city's hardcore punk scene and other countercultures.⁸⁵² These interactions were frequently receptive and supportive, and as Bogdan Lešnik states, homosexual activism was placed alongside the other concerns of NSMs and was espoused no less. The majority of those involved in transgressive socio-political movements and countercultures demonstrated identification with marginalised queer contingents, which saw the gay movement 'queerify' NSMs in return.⁸⁵³

The nature of Ljubljana and the alternative scene it housed was crucial to this process, not only as Slovenia lacked other comparably sized cities, but also as a result of Ljubljana's reputation as a somewhat unique magnet for elements of transgressive culture.⁸⁵⁴ Ljubljana's cosmopolitan character drew a range of

⁸⁵⁰ Email correspondence with Roman Kuhar, 16/8/2016

⁸⁵¹ B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain: The Beginnings of the LGBT movement in Slovenia' in: M. Chateauvert (ed) *New Social Movements and Sexuality- Conference Papers 2004* (Bilitis Resource Center, 2006), p. 93

⁸⁵² R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city' in: M. Cook and J.V. Evans (eds) *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures- Europe Since 1945* (Bloomsbury, 2014), p.135

⁸⁵³ B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p. 94

⁸⁵⁴ The city regularly operated as a beacon within attempts to associate Slovenia with 'progressive'

creative and nonconformist people from across Yugoslavia to the city, many of whom subsequently became key to queer subcultures. Suzana Tratnik became involved in alternative culture and punk, but was also a central contributor to the LGBT and feminist movements. She grew up in Murska Sobota, a town around 200 kilometres northeast of the city and was drawn to Ljubljana in the early 1980s by the belief that it provided space for the fulfilment of transgressive desires and the development of subversive personal identities.⁸⁵⁵ Indeed, when she returned home from the 'Ljubljana bubble', her personal image and identity was often seen as inseparable from its avant-garde, which meant she came to be regarded as an outsider in her own hometown.⁸⁵⁶ Aldo Ivančič moved to Ljubljana from Pula in Croatia, in order to study at the university and join friends that already lived in the most culturally 'free town' in Yugoslavia.⁸⁵⁷ He describes how he felt 'much more comfortable' in the city and immediately became involved in the subcultural scene as a founder of the theatre group FV 112/15, which blossomed into a subversive multimedia institution that represented the cutting edge of Ljubljana's alternative culture.⁸⁵⁸ Aldo could also regularly be found DJ'ing at club nights in the city (See Fig 1), was instrumental within the gay pride festival MAGNUS, and was a key member of the internationally successful band Borghesia, alongside Dario Seraval. Each of these were integral to the wider reach of FV, and grew from the foundations it had laid.



Fig 1: Aldo DJ'ing, 1982, Photo by Siniša Lopodja

and liberal political ideas. R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.135

⁸⁵⁵ Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid

⁸⁵⁷ Zemira Alajbegović and Dario Seraval, fellow founders of FV, had also moved to Ljubljana from Pula. Ivančič, Aldo. Interview, Kranj, 9/10/2016

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid

The history of punk and queer culture is contentious and has often fluctuated. Punk is often understood as featuring rebellion - primarily against society - at the essence of its ethos and has accordingly provided space for moments of freedom and self-expression, and created punk-specific moments of resistance.⁸⁵⁹ Mark Sinker says that punk has allowed a range of individuals to create different presentations of non-male, LGBT and ethnic identities, which appealed to those marginalised by the mainstream. He describes how 'being a girl, or gay, or not white', was also, at times, associated with punk authenticity.⁸⁶⁰ Rather than strictly delineated, punks were queer, queer people were punk, and the cultures often overlapped. The earliest punk scenes featured a range of discussions of sexuality, with leading figures such as Patti Smith, The Ramones, Sex Pistols and Buzzcocks all incorporating queer references and iconography.⁸⁶¹ Donaldson argues that initial ambiguity, engagement with taboos and fleeting sexual references progressed towards the development of a dominant ideology that was identifiably anti-homophobic. However, in practice, the full range of interactions with sexuality were complex, varied and could be entirely oppositional.⁸⁶² Punk has also replicated forms of societal discrimination, prejudice and exclusion, often alongside these liberatory tendencies, which have also taken on specific punk characterisation.⁸⁶³ Donaldson classes these 'hostile undercurrents', as frivolous moments within punk history, whilst O'Hara depicts them as a betrayal of this 'original' and integral punk ethos.⁸⁶⁴ Nevertheless, particular moments within wider

⁸⁵⁹ Stephen Donaldson describes how punk rejection of mainstream norms incorporated opposition to 'moral prescriptions' and embrace of taboo subjects. He argues that this made the counterculture fundamentally open to engagement with queer culture and towards marginalised sexual expressions and proclivities. S. Donaldson, 'Punk Rock' in W. D. Dynes (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality Vol. 2* (Routledge, 2016), p.1087

⁸⁶⁰ M. Sinker, 'Concrete, So As to Self-Destruct- The Etiquette of Punk, It's Habits, Rules, Values and Dilemmas' in R. Sabin *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (Routledge, 1999), p.130

⁸⁶¹ John Gill suggests that Pete Shelleys bisexuality added a 'queer spin' to Buzzcocks songs such as 'Orgasm Addict' and their most iconic single 'Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldnt've)'. He also cite the style adopted by the Ramones, featuring skimpy shirts and ripped jeans as representing the normalisation of gay aesthetics in punk. J. Gill, *Queer Noises* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p.128

⁸⁶² S. Donaldson, 'Punk Rock', p.1087

⁸⁶³ Hilary Pilkington suggests that whilst punk deviated from societal norms and often represented active forms of opposition to the mainstream, scenes often resembled the societies which surround them. H. Pilkington, Y.B. Steinholt and I. Gololobov (eds) *Punk in Russia: Cultural Mutation from the "useless" to the "moronic"* (Routledge, 2014), p.163

⁸⁶⁴ O'Hara argues that punk inclusivity and resolute opposition to the mainstream is reflected within consistent attempts to challenge homophobia throughout international scenes. He acknowledges marginal elements of 'hate and tension', but externalises these as contrary to punk ideals, tending to

punk history have been associated with increased masculinity, heteronormativity and, in turn, homophobia, and associations between hardcore and increased machismo often suggest that associated scenes in the 1980s were rendered inherently unappealing to gay people. These often resemble the depictions of how women were also almost entirely excluded from the culture, that Chapter 3 examines.⁸⁶⁵ Indeed, as argued in that chapter, depictions of the ways that second and third wave scenes undermined the experimental provocativeness and 'sexual permissivity' that characterised punk in 1976 and 1977 are regularly simplistic, and regularly overstate the gender and sexual fluidity of these initial moments.⁸⁶⁶ Norma Coates concurs, suggesting that whilst punk in the 1970s may have provided new cultural opportunities for women, heterosexuality remained very much 'the norm.'⁸⁶⁷ Matthew Worley suggests that presentations of later waves of punk as wholesale retreats into 'territoriality, masculinity, patriotism and rejections of the language of progressivism' are often sourced via projections of ideals onto genres, rather than being drawn from the scenes themselves.⁸⁶⁸ Representations of punk's 'return to the streets' and rejection of the redeeming avant-garde tendencies

gloss over elements of contention and inconsistency in this regard. The inclusion of 'dominant cultural and political trends' within punk are primarily attributed to mainstream interference and resulting disparities between punk creators and the conventional prejudices of those he positions as consumers. C. O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk - More Than Noise!* (AK Press, 1999), p.120

⁸⁶⁵ Holly Ramos highlights the inherent (but unintended) homoeroticism of rituals of 'male bonding/sweating/being naked/dancing...' in US hardcore, whilst Michael Alago describes how he was enticed by the presence of 'big-dick-swinging tattooed loveboys to take home.' Tesco Vee also acknowledges the appeal of this machismo and homoeroticism to gay magazines, which led to himself and Henry Rollins appearing in LA magazine *In Touch*, and the speculation over the latter's sexuality which followed. S. Blush, *American Hardcore* (Feral House, 2001), pp.37-8

⁸⁶⁶ Siouxsie Sioux categorises the early London punk scene as a rallying point for a number of unorthodox identities, youth experimentation and sexual permissivity, with the associated Bromley Contingent a 'club for misfits... waifs, gays, bisexuals, non-sexuals, everything... everyone was screwing everybody else.' Jon Savage suggests that this was soon diminished as the Sex Pistols became subject to the heteronormative trappings of the UK music industry. John Gill similarly argues that the dichotomy presented - between initial permissivity and the stifling constraints of later scenes - is complicated and overstated, citing the famed heterosexual relationship between Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungeon and the 'beery lad' members of the Sex Pistols as contrasting with presentations of consistent alternative sexualities. J. Savage, *England's Dreaming- Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (Faber and Faber, 1991), p.189; J. Gill, *Queer Noises*, p.128

⁸⁶⁷ N. Coates, 'Teenyboppers, Groupies and Other Grotesques: Girls and Women and Rock Culture in the 1960s and Early 1970s' *Journal of Popular Music Studies* Vol.15, No. 1 (June 2003), p.73

⁸⁶⁸ Worley outlines how Oi! (a specific mutation/evolution of punk in the UK) encompassed a range of perspectives that could not be contained within a standard political framework of left and right. Existing as a forum for protest and a means by which those who were often denied a public voice could engage with the world, Oi provided coherency via emphasis on class, locality and youth, but Worley argues that 'popular references to Oi! have tended to be filtered through competing interpretations as to its point and purpose' rather than drawing from the characteristics of the scene itself. M. Worley, 'Oi! Oi! Oi!: Class, Locality, and British Punk' *Twentieth Century British History* Vol. 24, Issue 4 (December 2013)

of the first wave were informed by conceptions of working class communities as 'incubators of sexism, racism, homophobia and parochialism'. This exacerbated tendencies to overstate elements of machismo and reactionary politics, and ignores the contrary examples necessary to provide a more nuanced and substantial understanding of gender and sexuality within enduring punk scenes.

Indeed, whilst Gary Floyd of The Dicks acknowledges elements of homophobia within the US hardcore scene of the early 1980s - which acted as a contemporary to the UK scenes which Worley outlines, and the Ljubljana hardcore scene - he also describes the presence of positive assertions of queer identity. Describing how hardcore provided an 'edgy new era', Floyd outlines a range of personal and collective liberatory potentials, whilst Donaldson similarly cites MDC's 'celebrated feud' with the homophobia of Bad Brains as evidence of 'vigorous discussion [and debate] within [hardcore]... which continued throughout the decade.'⁸⁶⁹ Experiences varied and continually fluctuated between and within scenes, Gene October of UK band Chelsea was forcibly outed and unable to define his sexuality on his own terms, whilst other scenes could at times house consistent forms of homophobia.⁸⁷⁰ Indeed, whilst the punk clubs of the influential LA scene were often positioned as 'clubhouses' for misfits, Claude Bessy of *Slash* fanzine suggests an undercurrent of latent homophobia.⁸⁷¹ Blush also cites instances of homophobic violence from 'skinhead types', who engaged in 'notoriously vicious fag-bashing sprees', and also argues that elements of homophobia were compounded by the dysfunctional and marginal existences of many involved in the scene.⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁹ Floyd suggests that his homosexuality was often rendered secondary to his commitment to punk, elements of subcultural capital and the fact that he was 'good for a laugh.' He also cites support and friendly competition between himself and other gay men, including Randy Turner of the Big Boys. Floyd incorporated his sexuality within wider forms of provocation, but was largely left alone by homophobic elements of the scene, despite his reputation as a 'queer commie'. He also remembers moments of support from members of his band, and positive reactions from wider audiences. The most notable example came at an anti-government concert in 1984, when he spoke on the HIV crisis and was met with 'thousands of people... fists in the air, pissed and profound.' G. Floyd, D.A. Ensminger, *Please Bee Nice, My Life Up 'Til Now* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), pp.16-39; S.Donaldson, 'Punk Rock', p.1087

⁸⁷⁰ October was forced to reveal his sexuality following the emergence of his involvement in gay pornographic magazines.

⁸⁷¹ Bessy recalls that, in early 1980s LA, 'basically, we were all homophobic.' B. Mullen, D. Bolles and A. Parfey, *Lexicon Devil- The Fast Times and Short Life of Darby Crash and The Germs* (Feral House, 2002), p.70

⁸⁷² Blush suggests some forms of homophobia resulted from perceptions of the scene and individual attempts to disguise their own sexuality, with the most extreme cases featuring 'starving young skinheads' engaging in sex work before 'fag-bashing' in order to 'right themselves.' S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, p.37

As outlined in this chapter, the hardcore collective was often ahead of the Yugoslav curve with regards to interaction with queer identities and departed from the most restrictive portrayals of US hardcore in this regard, but the scene also contained its own paradoxes, inconsistencies and variation.⁸⁷³ The hardcore collective generally lacked active contributions from openly gay people, but links between young punks in Ljubljana and figures such as Aldo reflected instances of mutual support and the prevailing egalitarian ethos of the scene. These connections mean that the histories of queer cultural politics and Ljubljana hardcore are regularly intertwined and were, at times, co-dependant. A study of the Ljubljana hardcore collective in this regard can therefore aid understandings of the ways in which subcultural scenes and civil rights movements cross paths. It also contributes to a wider and richer history of LGBT people in Ljubljana in the final years of Yugoslavia. This chapter first outlines the cultural, sexual and political context in which the Ljubljana gay scene developed and existed, before discussing the ways in which sexuality was manifest at the forefront of Ljubljana's underground, and the links that were forged between disparate strands of a wide and diverse counterculture. It then turns to a discussion of the specific and discernible impacts of this environment and the interactions that occurred within the ideological makeup and cultural output of the hardcore collective. It then concludes with a consideration of the nature and kinds of marginalisation that young people in Ljubljana encountered, and the relationship between marginalisation based on punk identity, and that which was provoked by sexuality and presentations of queer culture.

LGBT History in Slovenia and Yugoslavia

Slovenia's history of multi-national statehood resulted in fluctuation regarding approaches to homosexuality, but it was nevertheless criminalised throughout its history. Tito oversaw the criminalisation of homosexuality from the outset of Yugoslavia, with Article 186 of the Penal Code focusing upon unnatural acts of chastity between persons of the male sex. Bogdan Lešnik suggests this was used relatively sparingly during the early years of communist rule and was primarily

⁸⁷³ H. Pilkington, Y.B. Steinholt and I. Gololobov (eds) *Punk in Russia*, p.163

applied opportunistically to 'besmirsch' Catholic priests or other political enemies.⁸⁷⁴ Nevertheless, throughout Yugoslavia, sexual relations between men were rarely presented as anything other than the product of mental disease or sexual disorders, and this was accompanied by what Zoran Milutinović identifies as a generalised silence on the subject culturally.⁸⁷⁵ Roman Kuhar suggests that Ljubljana's geographic position and cultural character, at the crossroads of Slavic, German and Latin influences, resulted in a somewhat distinct attitude, which ultimately became manifest as a complex 'love/hate relationship' in the latter half of the 20th century.⁸⁷⁶ Slovene prosecutions were also relatively infrequent, within both Yugoslav and contemporary European contexts, and generally only resulted in short periods of imprisonment or suspended sentences.⁸⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the effects of homosexuality's legal status consistently shaped the queer landscape of Slovenia, and Kuhar argues that rather than an indication of a particularly liberal approach, the rarity of active criminalisation throughout the 1950s and 1960s demonstrated the success of the penal code in encouraging stigmatisation. This meant that 'shameful actions' remained hidden and active applications of the law were accordingly unnecessary.⁸⁷⁸ The few accounts of homosexual life in Slovenia at this time describe isolation, unhappiness and the inability to openly assert sexuality, which was compounded further by the absence of both visible and private gay communities.⁸⁷⁹ Suzana Tratnik suggests that everyday instances of homophobia and attacks on gay men, who were 'easy targets', were continually unreported at this time, as victims felt they could not go to the police and saw few allies throughout society.⁸⁸⁰ The lack of any public discussion of sexuality ensured

⁸⁷⁴ Lešnik specifically references the rumoured compilation of a 'pink list', as a means to discredit individuals. B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p. 86

⁸⁷⁵ Milutinović categorises Slovenes as an 'industrious, conservative people who clung to their Roman Catholic roots' and suggests that this was often reflected in attitudes towards homosexuality. Z. Milutinović, W. Petersen, 'Slovenia' in: W. D. Dynes (ed) *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality Vol. 2* (Routledge, 2016), p.823

⁸⁷⁶ R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.135

⁸⁷⁷ The potential punishment for conviction under Article 186 was up to 5 years imprisonment. Frank Dota's research outlines that of 500 convictions in Yugoslavia, 41 occurred in Slovenia and Macedonia, whilst the majority were in Serbia and Croatia. Dota also suggests that convictions in Yugoslavia are dwarfed by figures in Italy, West Germany, Austria and the UK (where there were 49000 convictions under 'gross indecency' laws), although the size and scope of laws varied, and convictions and police records only indicate one facet of homophobic experience and societal attitudes. 'In Former Yugoslavia 500 Men Went to Jail For Being Homosexuals' *Telegraf* (15/2/2016) <http://www.telegraf.rs/english/1999904-in-former-yugoslavia-around-500-men-went-to-jail-for-being-homosexuals> [Accessed 14/2/16]

⁸⁷⁸ R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.137

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁸⁰ Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

only marginal increases in queer visibility before the latter half of the 1960s.⁸⁸¹ From this point onwards a small network of private spaces for gay men emerged, including places for socialising and cruising.⁸⁸²

The growth of grassroots LGBT activism in Ljubljana in the 1970s and 1980s began to gradually erode the barriers that had previously prevented associations between gay people. This culminated in a stigmatised, but nevertheless visible and uncompromising movement primarily focused upon gay men and lesbian women, which represented the most vibrant scene of its type in Yugoslavia. Autonomous underground efforts were to an extent facilitated by legislative changes, and the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution represented a watershed for the gay scene. Delegating authority to national units over sexual matters, the constitutional changes prompted a decriminalisation process in Slovenia, as the introduction of a uniform age of sexual consent allowed Ljubljana's gay and lesbian culture to 'come out'.⁸⁸³ Bogdan Lešnik argues that the move was an 'eminently liberal' decision, that aimed to demonstrate 'what distinguished Yugoslavia from the rest of Eastern Europe, [by removing] moralistic and religious leftovers from previous political regimes', and recognising that the state should not interfere with the private lives of consenting adults.⁸⁸⁴ This promotion of civil liberties and privacy nevertheless failed to suggest any positivity in regards to queer lifestyles. Aldo Ivančič describes how this meant that homosexuality became privately legal but remained publicly taboo and was generally considered 'a personal or medical problem, rather than a social issue'.⁸⁸⁵ Whilst organised gay and lesbian scenes were increasingly able to assert themselves publicly, they remained on the fringes of society and continued to be associated with ideas of degradation. Kuhar says that whilst homosexuality was not considered to be especially dangerous, it was nevertheless framed as a social problem that required a 'solution'.⁸⁸⁶ Increases in legal tolerance were balanced by

⁸⁸¹ Ibid

⁸⁸² The student magazine *Tribuna* published a guide to these locations in 1970. R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.137

⁸⁸³ Other Yugoslav national units also legalised homosexuality, but issues of sexual morality were treated differently across the federation, often symbolising increasing divisions and incongruities.

⁸⁸⁴ R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.138

⁸⁸⁵ Applicants were referred to state funded gender reassignment therapy from the early 1980s, but this was again regarded as a medical issue or a 'sickness'. More revolutionary and fundamental societal reappraisals of transgender issues were less forthcoming. Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/16; B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p. 87; Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/16

⁸⁸⁶ B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p. 86

failures to challenge stigmatisation, which saw homosexual relations remain categorised as a 'mute sin'.⁸⁸⁷ Just as Article 186 was used sparingly, reactionary figures within Yugoslavia realised that active repression was a less productive brake on increases in queer visibility than fostering a climate of social intolerance which meant 'gay people knew where they stood'.⁸⁸⁸

Subtle and silent forms of censorship with regards to portrayals of homosexuality complemented this approach, and Stanko Jost outlines that mainstream cultural approaches largely followed the maxim that people were 'allowed to live as they wish and to love who they wanted', providing anything out of the ordinary remained private.⁸⁸⁹ Strict censorship of transgressive artistic representations of sexuality were largely unnecessary within state run film production and distribution, as provocative film makers were simply not provided with opportunities to produce or direct. Whilst books and journals more frequently necessitated formal bans, as a result of their relative independence, the nature of self management meant that protests regarding content often came from printers themselves.⁸⁹⁰ Pin-up magazines emerged from the end of the 1960s and thrived in the following decade, promising public enlightenment, sexual freedom and genuine attempts to break repressive taboos. These magazines, representing private publishing enterprises, were often presented as evidence of Yugoslavia's social and economic freedom and genuinely treated sexual pleasure 'with a degree of seriousness'.⁸⁹¹ However, whilst they occasionally printed letters from homosexuals, David Crowley describes how they were simultaneously constricted by paradoxes, and 'limiting visions of femininity' and heteronormativity.⁸⁹²

Official approaches to sexuality remained inconsistent and censorious throughout the history of Yugoslavia, especially when combined with politics. As Crowley argues, this limited the range of sexualities presented, and meant editors of liberal magazines continually 'couched their arguments in terms that aligned with state

⁸⁸⁷ R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.139

⁸⁸⁸ B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p. 86

⁸⁸⁹ Jost directed *Dečki* (1977), the first Slovenian 'gay movie'. R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.138

⁸⁹⁰ B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p. 87

⁸⁹¹ D. Crowley, 'The Future Is Between Your Legs' in L. Džuverović (ed) *Monuments Are Not To Be Trusted* (Nottingham Contemporary, 2016), p.37

⁸⁹² Ibid

ideology.'⁸⁹³ More substantial attempts to represent homosexuality were therefore restricted to counterculture and the underground, and as a result often focused upon 'darker and more morbid drives', than the humanism of the mainstream.⁸⁹⁴ Lešnik argues that the resulting absence of mainstream cultural representations of homosexuality contributed to misconceptions amongst much of the general public, which became 'fortified by fantasies'.⁸⁹⁵ However, he also acknowledges that reactions in Slovenia were complex, fluctuating and often 'split' regionally, rather than strictly hostile, with subtle forms of exclusion featuring alongside outright homophobia and the presence of active support.⁸⁹⁶

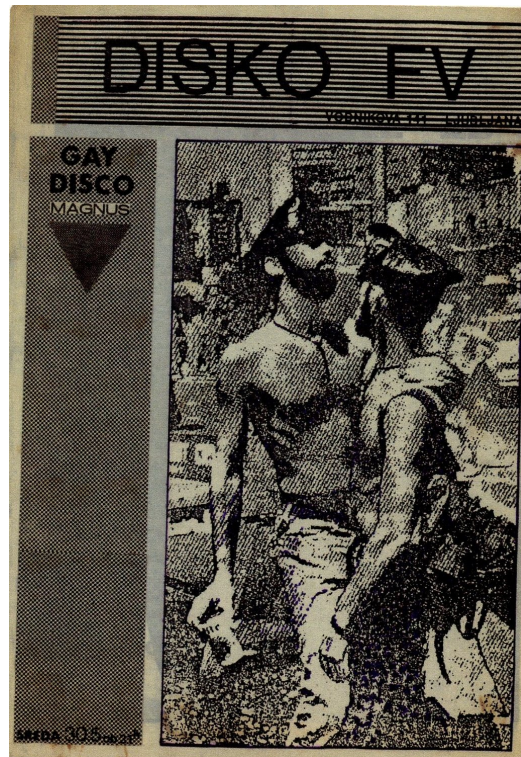


Fig 2: Flyer for the FV/MAGNUS Gay Disco in Ljubljana, 30th May 1984

The organised gay movement which emerged in Ljubljana before the middle of the 1980s helped to gradually relocate infrequent discussions regarding the morality of homosexuality towards recognition of queer culture and politics. MAGNUS, a festival of homosexual film, art, culture and theory was established in 1984 and provided one the first 'official' gay spaces in the city. Representing an outward-

⁸⁹³ Ibid p.39

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid

⁸⁹⁵ B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p. 93

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid

looking culmination of the gradual development of queer and queer-friendly countercultural institutions, MAGNUS built upon existing forms of 'liberty in the city... and tried to take another step forward.'⁸⁹⁷ By unashamedly presenting homosexual culture to wider audiences MAGNUS represented a notable expansion of representation at a time in which homosexual sex remained illegal or 'entirely underground' in other parts of Yugoslavia. It was the first openly organised gay and lesbian movement within socialist Eastern-Europe.⁸⁹⁸ The associated Gay Disco, which was subsequently held weekly provided new opportunities for socialisation, which was made all the more vital as the public spaces occupied by gay men became subject to similar forms of repression as punk had experienced. A contemporary interview with a gay man from Ljubljana describes veiled but pernicious repression of cruising areas and saunas by the local police, alongside 'bands of frustrated guys who expressed powerlessness through [homophobic] violence', which had taken on 'tragicomic proportions' in the city and left gay men with fewer places to go.⁸⁹⁹ Alongside Disco FV's diverse club nights, the gay disco represented a key part of the city's alternative nightlife and received visitors from across Yugoslavia and beyond.⁹⁰⁰ The feminist group Lilit also utilised FV as a platform for their operations, and began a complementary woman only disco in April of the following year. Lešnik describes how partying and socialisation became a socio-political and liberatory arena in Ljubljana, with gay cultural currents increasing queer visibility and transforming the kinds of expression that could be heard with regards to sexuality. 'Agency and action', was brought to the forefront of the alternative movement, whilst 'categorisations of normalcy and deviancy' were challenged.⁹⁰¹

Calls for further legislative equality became a key component of the movement, but as with the hardcore collective, rejection of assimilation to mainstream norms and the promotion of alternative lifestyles, culture and creative endeavours were

⁸⁹⁷ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

⁸⁹⁸ D. Crowley, 'The Future Is Between Your Legs', p.44

⁸⁹⁹ A. Ivančič, 'If I die I die' *Viks* Issue 2 (1984), p.11

⁹⁰⁰ The gay disco was initially held on Saturdays before being relegated to Sunday nights, which Kuhar describes as a 'clear symbolic message' that gay culture was secondary. *Roza Nedelja* (Pink Sunday) became an inclusive reference to homosexuality as a result of the disco, but was also used mockingly in heterosexist public spaces. R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.141

⁹⁰¹ Ibid

continually placed at the forefront of queer countercultures.⁹⁰² Public advocacy in the shape of the MAGNUS festival both complemented and contrasted with the embrace of what Crowley depicts as 'queer alterity'.⁹⁰³ The Ljubljana LGBT movement negotiated elements of insularity associated with the creation of an underground countercultural world, alternative forms of socialisation and assertions of difference, and recognised the necessity of engagement with the mainstream in order to force legislative and societal change to a greater degree than the hardcore scene. This Niet criticised, as 'orthodox, confined and exclusive, concerned only with its own interests instead of pleasing [or interacting with] the public'.⁹⁰⁴ As previously outlined, conflict with regards to engagement with the world above ground represented a seismic barrier between groups of punks in Ljubljana, but Nikolai Jeffs credits the gay movement with a successful negotiation of this potential contradiction, describing how it avoided both social isolation and assimilation within ruling structures, whilst remaining fiercely critical.⁹⁰⁵ Open sexual attitudes and creativity fostered within alternative clubs facilitated attempts to branch out into a recognisable and uncompromising social movement. By 1986 MAGNUS had produced a manifesto demanding the immediate abolition of anti-gay laws in other Yugoslav republics, the introduction of anti-discrimination laws, and changes in approaches to schooling.⁹⁰⁶ Lešnik suggests that the manifesto was a consciously 'utopian agenda', with very little chance of contemporary implementation, but the unquestionable premise of equal rights was essential to the character of the LGBT movement.⁹⁰⁷ The Slovene media generally presented tolerance of homosexuality in Slovenia as an indication of domestic liberalism, and MAGNUS also found allies and supporters in the city, from *Mladina* and established institutions such as Cankarjevo Dom and ŠKUC-Forum, which 'understood what they were trying to do', and provided venues for the festival and other events.⁹⁰⁸ However, homosexuality was also utilised as a tool by opposing political factions within Yugoslavia and homophobia was directed 'from Belgrade

⁹⁰² Ibid

⁹⁰³ D. Crowley, 'The Future Is Between Your Legs', p.44

⁹⁰⁴ 'Perspektive Pijanih Noči?' *Mladina* (27/9/1984), p.33

⁹⁰⁵ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990' in: B. Škrjanec (ed) *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni Graficni Likovni Center, 2008), p.364

⁹⁰⁶ Homosexuality remained illegal in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro. MAGNUS called for pupils to be taught that homosexuality had the same status as heterosexuality.

⁹⁰⁷ B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p. 90

⁹⁰⁸ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

and sometimes Zagreb' towards against Ljubljana as a result of its liberal image.⁹⁰⁹ Reactions to the fourth edition of the MAGNUS festival in 1987 demonstrated the extent to which institutional support could crumble and how currents of homophobia could be triggered when politically expedient via moral panics.⁹¹⁰ The 'legal but stigmatised' situation of the 1970s was robustly challenged, but nevertheless remained intact. Whilst the LGBT movement was generally tolerated in Ljubljana, and had moderate success when calls for reform were deemed compatible with the frameworks of socialist ideology, societal change was largely limited to infrequent recognition of a narrow range of queer identities and the avoidance of interference with the private intimate lives of adults.⁹¹¹

Whilst the political demands made by the LGBT movement relating to the elimination of homophobic discrimination may not have been met or fully addressed under Yugoslav socialism, and gay people were often faced with varied forms of opposition, the cultural vitality and ideologies of alternative and subcultural movements represented a crucial development on societal, cultural and individual levels. This saw realisation not only via MAGNUS, but through the VIKS journal, AIDS campaigns and the existence and expansion of various gay and lesbian friendly newspapers, magazines, discos, cafes, restaurants and subcultural movements in the latter half of the decade. Social and cultural autonomy and explicitly queer politicisation also radically altered the environments in which young queer people could exist and express themselves. The combination of social, cultural and sexual revolution also left sections of Ljubljana, in particular the alternative and countercultural scene, a hitherto uniquely and increasingly queer environment in the 1980s.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid

⁹¹⁰ The festival was due to start on Tito's official birthday, 25th May. The Yugoslav government pressured Slovene authorities to release a statement regarding the threat the festival posed, with homosexuality unhealthy, anti-communist and to be kept out of sight from 'ordinary' citizens. Negative economic consequences, impacts on tourism and the potential for public acts of homosexuality were also cited, which resulted in reactions so charged that the festival became presented as 'The World Congress of Homosexuals' in media accounts. These also drew upon fears of 'queers from abroad' and the internationally prevalent depiction of the AIDs epidemic as a primarily gay disease. The Bosnian newspaper *AS* suggested that Yugoslavia could become 'the promised land for fags' and suggested that straight Yugoslavs should wear badges to express their objection. R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.143

⁹¹¹ R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.146

The Rainbow Alternative: Ljubljana's Countercultural Scene

The Ljubljana alternative environment was a confrontational yet collaborative movement, which largely rejected the Yugoslav mainstream and promoted autonomous creativity, personal individuality and countercultural co-operation.⁹¹² Gigi describes how a range of individual identities were drawn together within the spaces of the alternative, and 'many different ideas travelled through the same tube... running parallel and rarely in conflict. Even if our experiences might have differed, our ideas flowed in the same way.'⁹¹³ Nikolai Jeffs echoes this depiction, describing a 'rainbow' alternative scene whereby those who formed constituent parts interacted and breathed the same 'dominant ideological air'.⁹¹⁴ The development of shared ideals, and the promotion of instinctive cultural production was accompanied and facilitated by the creation of alternative spaces, which operated beyond the reach of the world above ground.⁹¹⁵ Artistic impulses combined with discussions of self identity, which had resonance for a wide range of individuals and combated feelings of isolation amongst those who otherwise felt marginalised. The 'creative community' of the Ljubljana underground was comprised of often inseparable intersections and overlaps between hardcore punk, institutions such as FV, and New Social Movements, including the LGBT scene. Active alliances were formed via what Aldo describes as shared desires for:

War against the political and cultural establishment. For me, and for hardcore too, the important thing was always this artistic and ideological battle with the mainstream. We were on one side, they were on the other. We all enjoyed this confrontation.⁹¹⁶

MAGNUS centred the political implications of cultural productivity within its operations as the slogan 'Homosexualnost in Kultura' (See Fig 4) suggests, whilst FV's full name also confirmed, that a confrontational approach existed from the outset. The numbers 112/15 refer to the page and entry number for the phrase 'C'est

⁹¹² B. Lešnik 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p. 86

⁹¹³ Karpov, Gregor. Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

⁹¹⁴ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene"', p.373

⁹¹⁵ R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.141

⁹¹⁶ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

La Guerre' (It Is War) from a Slovene dictionary of foreign terms, whilst FV refers to the author, the Slovene translator Franc Verbinc. Marina Gržinić describes how those amongst the alternative scene in Ljubljana were acutely aware of the inherent associations made between unorthodox cultural presentations and politicism and resistance, which made 'every form of non-heterosexual positioning exclusively and entirely a political stance. This queerness - and the word literally means "not right" – demands... a rethinking of conditions of life, work and possibilities of resistance.'⁹¹⁷

FV provided practical support to transgressive cultural resistance as an emblematic proponent of socio-political dissidence. Its expansion from incendiary and unconventional 'punk theatre' built upon existing forms of cultural activism and celebrated music, art, sexuality and socialisation as tools for political engagement. In doing so, according to Nikolai Jeffs, FV helped to shape the alternative scene's identity, social experiences and politics and 'pushed 'back the boundaries of the permissible and pluralised public space.'⁹¹⁸ This became physically manifest via a number of club nights or discos, a subcultural infrastructure and the record label FV Založba, which released records, videos and tapes for hardcore punk and alternative groups from the city.⁹¹⁹ Neven Korda describes FV as a 'comprehensive subsystem that could withstand political, economic and ideological pressures from ever-changing centres of power and make possible production beyond the sphere of influence of the dominant decision makers.'⁹²⁰ Igor Vidmar described how, in 1984, this subsystem represented one of the few sources of support for the hardcore scene, whilst Lilijana Stepančič and Breda Škrjanec placed FV at the practical and ideological heart of the wider alternative scene. The assertion of difference promoted by FV incorporated specifically sexual dimensions and expanded horizons throughout the alternative scene.⁹²¹ Whilst this influence transcended

⁹¹⁷ M. Gržinić, 'The Video, Film and Interactive Multimedia Art of Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid, 1982-2008' in: M. Gržinić, T. Velagić (eds) *The Video Art of Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid* (Erhard Löcker, 2008), p.48

⁹¹⁸ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.377

⁹¹⁹ Ibid; A discography of the label is available at <https://www.discogs.com/label/23503-FV-Založba> [Accessed 10/2/2018]

⁹²⁰ N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns' in: B. Škrjanec (ed) *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni Grafični Likovni Center, 2008), p.314

⁹²¹ I. Vidmar 'Tokrat Intervju z: Igor Vidmarjem' in: N. Malečkar & T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk Pod Slovenci* (KRT, 1985) pp. 443-4; L. Stepančič, B. Škrjanec, 'Introduction' in: B. Škrjanec (ed) *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni Grafični Likovni Center, 2008), pp.277-8

LGBT-dedicated events and ideologies, queer identities and expression were consistently present within the alternative frameworks that the hardcore collective utilised. Hardcore collaborated with the alternative scene for a range of reasons, including self interest, and it would be misleading to position interaction as purely occurring as a result of ideological compatibility or egalitarianism. However, the collective were unafraid of burning strategically useful bridges as a result of dogmatism, and members have regularly expressed the dual benefit of FV, as a necessary practical and financial support system and an institution with access to otherwise inaccessible methods of production. But they were also trusted and valued advisors, collaborators and fellow misfits.⁹²²

The ideals that developed within these artistic hubs regularly complemented the instinctive ideology of the hardcore contingent and their common desires for a more open society, but also provided distinct influence.⁹²³ The individuals involved within these currents viewed themselves as operating beyond a government/opposition dichotomy and positioned themselves as a fully fledged alternative to bureaucratic malpractice and incompetence, centralising the importance of the individual.⁹²⁴ Whilst, as Nikolai Jeffs describes, 'segments' of the alternative scene prioritised dialogue with the mainstream in order to force change, and the gay movement called for legal equality, this was often relegated behind the importance of self expression, artistic impulses and experiences of underground freedom.⁹²⁵ These were regarded as indicative of fundamental dissatisfaction with society, but rarely resulted in direct interaction or active dialogue with dominant forces, instead promoting the creation of alternative worlds.⁹²⁶ Suzana Tratnik suggests this also reflected generalised tendencies to eschew obsessive focus upon theoretical ideological frameworks throughout the alternative, which were presented as stultifying.⁹²⁷ This promotion of 'just doing something!' accounted not

⁹²² FV drew upon publishing grants from university organisations alongside the successful utilisation of international distribution networks to fund their operations, including concerts, video production and a record label, which would otherwise have been well beyond the reach of the collective. N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns', p.333

⁹²³ Lešnik draws a direct line between the 1968 student protests, the resulting student counterculture, New Social Movements of the 1980s and local punk scenes, arguing that each criticised the state for failing to embody the professed objectives of freedom, social justice and equality. B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p.88

⁹²⁴ Ibid

⁹²⁵ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.377

⁹²⁶ B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p.88

⁹²⁷ Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

only for the simultaneous individual appeals of punk and Ljubljana's queer counterculture, but also contributed towards their convergence underground, and ongoing compatibility.⁹²⁸

Aldo and Suzana, key members of Ljubljana's queer and feminist orientated NSMs and alternative culture, both stress the extent to which queer identities were explicitly tied to subversive cultural forms in the 1980s. Aldo would distance himself from involvement with the MAGNUS festival within 5 years as he felt that it had lost most of its transgressive character. He expressed the belief that queer culture should be somewhat incompatible with immersion within mainstream norms. Citing the deeply political connotations of the Stonewall Riots, he decried departure from confrontational origins towards an 'apolitical carnival.'⁹²⁹ Suzana remembers similar feelings of disconnect with regards to mainstream orientated LGBT movements and describes how her experiences of queer culture in Ljubljana led her to believe that gay and lesbian identities were largely inextricable from alternative culture. She consequently struggled to adapt to the development of queer politics which primarily focused upon assimilation and centred 'being seen as normal.'⁹³⁰ 'The desire to be different was important', and the fact that people within Ljubljana's underground were willing to fight for this became an important cornerstone of queer culture and the alternative scene of the 1980s.⁹³¹ Punk scenes orientated around similar dynamics emerged in North America in the late 1980s. What became known as Queercore responded to experiences of homophobia and a lack of queer representation within punk, but also utilised the scene to demonstrate opposition to mainstream queer culture.⁹³² The Ljubljana gay movement of the 1980s did not have an equivalent localised queer mainstream to either embrace or reject, and was therefore initially far more resemblant of queer counterculture. It represented the shared anti-mainstream priorities of both punks and queer people,

⁹²⁸ Ibid

⁹²⁹ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

⁹³⁰ Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁹³¹ Ibid

⁹³² G.B Jones, Bruce LaBruce and Tom Jennings were influential figures behind the growth of queercore as a distinct punk subculture and regarded the North American gay movement as a 'co-opted farce' by the late 1980s. Jennings argues that token acceptance of queer lifestyles in mainstream culture resulted in a 'gay mainstream' which kept 'rebel spirits' asleep. This provided a gap for queer punks to reject two status quos, targeting both the heterosexual mainstream and 'assimilationist' gays who believed that 'equal rights means women and homos in the army, the right for a shitty job for life, and that freedom of choice means Coke, Pepsi or Seven-Up.' T. Jennings, *Homocore* Issue 7 (1991)

further conflating elements of the two scenes. The hardcore collective stressed a desire for cultural freedom unencumbered by repression, with punk a visual representation of disaffection. Outward representations of queer identities were similarly regularly presented not only as representations of self, but were also exceptional and striking signifiers of defiance. Transgressive erotic, sadomasochistic and outright pornographic material within the alternative scene provided internal representation and encouragement of a range of sexualities, whilst also 'pointing to the real life existence of a private world, that operated autonomously from authority... occupying political space from the intimate world outward and from the bottom up.'⁹³³

Ljubljana hardcore rarely embraced sexuality as a source of artistic inspiration, but the collective occupied the physical spaces that FV created as part of this alternative world. As David Kržišnik remembers, they were taken 'under their wing', resulting in resolutely supportive and positive immediate contact, solidarity and moments of collaboration with a range of cultures.⁹³⁴ Aleksandar Popvič's 1984 Yugoslav scene report for *No Concern* fanzine celebrated FV as the: 'best independent label in the country', and depicts the practical support it had offered to the Ljubljana scene, which had allowed it to thrive.⁹³⁵ This support and consistent interaction led Irena to place the hardcore collective 'under the umbrella of FV', whilst Božo describes the influence of the group even more emphatically, positioning himself as 'a child of FV'.⁹³⁶ Whilst this influence and support was crucial, the hardcore collective were also contributors to the alternative scene rather than merely recipients of support. The hardcore collective also definitively contributed to the character of alternative environments and Nikolai Jeffs describes the scene as a 'central contingent' of the FV disco, which was initially held in their native Šiška district, before moving to the basement of Kersnikova 4.⁹³⁷ Engagement with specific strands of alternative culture often involved contact with other elements by default. Describing 'links' between hardcore punk, NSMs and the LGBT movement often suggests a greater degree of delineation than

⁹³³ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.363

⁹³⁴ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

⁹³⁵ A. Popvič 'Yugoslavia' *No Concern* (1984)

⁹³⁶ Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 15/3/2015; Rakočević, Božo. Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

⁹³⁷ Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 15/3/2015; Rakočević, Božo. Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/15; N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.372

participants conceived. Hardcore consistently stressed its independence and autonomy, and other components also self-defined as fiercely distinct entities. They were also experienced as malleable, interchangeable, co-operative and overlapping parts of a complex and sprawling counterculture.⁹³⁸ As Neven Korda recognises, reciprocal influence saw FV and the alternative institutions influence individuals and component countercultures, but the alternative scene was also shaped and 'belonged' to these same participants.⁹³⁹ Suzana Tratnik credits punk with providing the impetus for a range of subversive cultural initiatives and providing a rallying call which made this cohesion possible:

Everything was the same, connected as part of the same question. We listened to the same kinds of music and shared similar ideals. The New Social Movements were new, rebellious and individual, but punk had always shared and promoted that message. It was influential in making people realise that it was possible to be different, and that could be a source of power in a socialist society.⁹⁴⁰

The promotion of individuality associated with punk also influenced the experiences of queer people in the city, and Suzana suggests that this made it easier for her to come out. The emphasis that was placed upon the importance of 'being your own person', and embracing outsider identities within Ljubljana countercultures also made openness with regards to sexuality less daunting: 'A few people asked me if coming out was a problem, or caused issues with my family. I already did a lot of "stupid" things, and I was already an outsider, so it was just another thing on top!'⁹⁴¹ Tendencies to embrace dissidence and marginalisation alongside the existence of subcultural support also empowered Aldo: 'At the time it was not that common for gay people to come out, but for me it was different. A few of us from the Student Cultural centre came out collectively, and we had a support system throughout the 1980s.'⁹⁴² Queer-led currents within Ljubljana's underground built upon existing forms of sexual openness that could be found

⁹³⁸ Jeffs similarly describes an 'intertwined, heterogeneous, overlapping and sometimes mutually exclusionary' alternative culture. N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.350

⁹³⁹ N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns', p.314

⁹⁴⁰ Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁹⁴¹ Ibid

⁹⁴² Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

within pockets of Ljubljana student culture to ensure that a range of sexual identities were at the forefront of Ljubljana's alternative scene.

Whilst ongoing contact often shaped cultural and ideological forms, furthering mutual characteristics, Ljubljana's queer underground and the hardcore collective possessed compatible origins and ideological tenets and also utilised similar tactics. Both were outward looking, and Roman Kuhar traces influence between the earliest moments of the Ljubljana LGBT scene and contemporary West Berlin gay and feminist scenes. He cites the example of Slovenian feminist Mojca Dobnikar as indicative, as she was inspired by her visits to the city, stating that she would 'not stop before I have Berlin in Ljubljana.'⁹⁴³ Suzana also describes how the gay movement, like hardcore, regarded connections with groups elsewhere in Europe as 'very important', and they were achieved via similar means, including tape trading and film festivals.⁹⁴⁴ The practical appeals of crossing borders, travel, sharing technology and contributing to mutualist international movements were important to a number of young people in Ljubljana, and queer culture often facilitated this in a manner similar to punk.⁹⁴⁵

However, queer communication and international co-operation fluctuated, and was less fervent and constant than within the hardcore scene. This is largely unsurprising given the extent to which 1980s hardcore centred internationalism as a facet. Indeed, whilst punk was present within Slovene society within a matter of weeks of its first international reverberations, which meant domestic innovations acted as contemporaries to international scenes, Slovene gay activism often lacked the experience and knowledge of contemporary gay movements, which were able to develop over previous decades.⁹⁴⁶ The response to this situation however, resembled the approach of the Ljubljana hardcore collective as fluctuating experience and interaction with western queer movements was bolstered and often superseded by the promotion of domestic originality and innovation. As Suzana acknowledges, the 'unique situation' of Yugoslavia often impacted upon the ways internationalist queer culture became incorporated into Slovene contexts, which

⁹⁴³ R. Kuhar, 'Ljubljana: The tales from the queer margins of the city', p.140

⁹⁴⁴ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁹⁴⁵ B. Lešnik, 'Melting the Iron Curtain', p.88

⁹⁴⁶ Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

served to magnify the cruciality of localised culture.⁹⁴⁷ As with punk, whilst queer individuals in Ljubljana rejected insularity, they also promoted and valued local specificities and the dynamism of their own cultural creations. These were based upon domestic circumstances, lived realities, personal expression and cultural possibilities.⁹⁴⁸ Nikolai Jeffs describes how, whilst Borghesia eventually became aware of similar examples of music in the west, such as Front 242 and Skinny Puppy, this primarily acted as confirmation of the presence of shared international values rather than influence, as the group had 'developed the genre on their own', focusing upon their own styles and self expression.⁹⁴⁹ As the *Synth Britannia* documentary outlines, this dynamic was not confined to Ljubljana. Borghesia, and many UK based synth bands, initially operated entirely independently and without knowledge of contemporaries at the start of the decade.⁹⁵⁰

The FV Gay Disco fostered a reputation for an uncompromising and boundary pushing approach to aesthetic presentations, and Gigi recognises ongoing compatibility with hardcore as a result, with each providing an 'alternative to the alternative'.⁹⁵¹ Crowley describes how sexual liberation within subcultural Ljubljana rejected the rhetoric of sexual liberation that had been provided elsewhere, rejecting both the morality of the League of Communists, alongside the prescriptions of 'humanist libertarians.' Jeffs describes how the appeal of the alternative, and particularly hardcore, was often sourced within its ability to expose reactionary elements within 'supposed' progressivism and provoke attacks or dismissal from people who otherwise positioned themselves as enlightened.⁹⁵² Whilst hardcore punk generally engaged in more subtle forms of outward provocation, the subversive nature of FV was unmistakably conveyed via promotional material that was confrontational and unconcerned with assimilation or palatability from the outset (See Fig 3). This material only became more explicit with the establishment of a specifically gay night, and flyers and posters incorporated images that were rarely seen above ground, even within more

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid

⁹⁴⁹ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.382

⁹⁵⁰ *Synth Britannia* BBC Productions, 2009, Documentary

⁹⁵¹ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

⁹⁵² D. Crowley, 'The Future Is Between Your Legs', p.44; N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.372

sexually open platforms. Aldo remembers that when he designed posters: 'I always tried to use very "nasty" stuff. There were cocks everywhere! We were inspired by Tom of Finland and that sort of stuff, so incorporated that into our approach.' (See Fig 4)⁹⁵³ Overtly sexualised and unmistakably gay flyers were inherently subversive as whilst sexualised imagery was not uncommon within the socialist public sphere, this was limited to 'conventionally heterosexual' images.⁹⁵⁴ Transgressive queer institutions and cultural actors represented a sexual vanguard which actively challenged and pluralised sexual representations, in a manner analogous to the ways that punk was credited with stretching the limits of what was permissible in the public sphere.⁹⁵⁵ FV, The Gay Disco and Borghesia's coherent and wide-ranging artistic identity consistently centred unambiguously subversive presentations of sexuality and cultural aesthetics. Music complemented practical infrastructures, demonstrating transgressive political and anti-nationalist ideologies alongside punk and queer aesthetics. The diversification and expansion of sexual presentations in this regard found frequent allies, admirers and collaborators within hardcore, regardless of the inclusion of explicit sexuality, in part because these forms of provocation resembled examples familiar to punk scenes across the world.⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁵³ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

⁹⁵⁴ Lina Džuverović argues that the 'liberally permissive' Yugoslav mainstream failed to reconstruct the narrow representations of sexuality that were culturally visible. L. Džuverović, 'In Praise of Unreliable Monuments' in: L. Džuverović (ed), *Monuments Are Not To Be Trusted* (Nottingham Contemporary, 2016), p.20

⁹⁵⁵ J. Rosenthal, 'Ljubljana Punk: Ironists and Conceptualists' <https://yugoslavpunk.omeka.net/exhibits/show/scenes/ljubljana-punk--ironists-and-c> [Accessed 17/2/18]

⁹⁵⁶ Whilst the provocations of Ljubljana hardcore tended to be somewhat veiled, the aesthetics and shocking tactics of FV, MAGNUS and the Gay Disco had noticeable parallels with a range of punk predecessors. Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood's SEX boutique commonly featured the same forms of taboo sexual imagery and homoerotic fetishism within their designs, including an iconic 'Cowboys' design featuring two semi-naked cowboys with large penises, which has often incorrectly been attributed to Tom of Finland. P. Gorman 'Roots of the Cowboys T-Shirt' <http://www.paulgormanis.com/?p=2603> (5/5/2011) [Accessed 18/02/17]



Fig 3: Flyer for Disco FV, designed by Jane Štravs, featuring explicit male nudity, 1982.

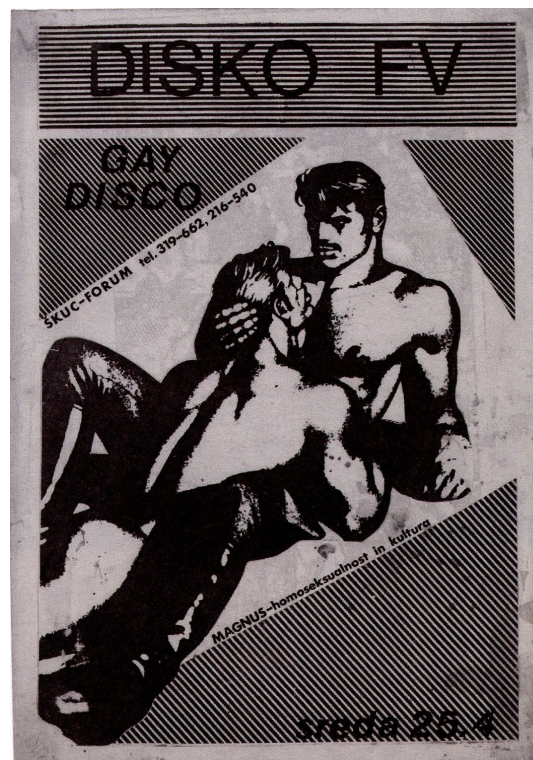


Fig 4: Flyer for FV Gay Disco 1984, designed by Aldo Ivančič and featuring a Tom of Finland illustration.

Belief in the radical potential of subversive culture as a driver for grassroots political change often unified otherwise distinctive musical forms. Borghesia's artwork, lyrics and theoretical statements frequently demonstrated common influences and mutual cultural interaction with punk, and Aldo rejected firm

distinctions between their electronic music and their guitar based contemporaries found on *Hardcore Ljubljana*.⁹⁵⁷ Gigi suggests that whilst their musical output failed to meet the strict criteria that the hardcore collective enforced, which meant that Borghesia 'weren't necessarily punk rockers', their shared commitment to the alternative was never in doubt.⁹⁵⁸ This made them: 'Our godfathers. They were the alternative, open minded, very cool, and they understood.'⁹⁵⁹ As I have previously mentioned, Aldo acknowledged and admired the orthodoxy, confrontation and strictness of the collective, but is nevertheless adamant that he regarded Borghesia as a punk band in the wider sense of the term: 'Of course a lot of punk was about the form, but the content was also crucial. That was what we all shared. When I first heard Cabaret Voltaire, that was fucking punk to me.'⁹⁶⁰ Just as Aldo and Borghesia had helped to pluralise the alternative scene in the 1980s, expanding upon the underground spaces available for later waves of punk creativity, they were also inspired by punk in the first instance, and seized upon the possibilities it had created. A mutual history saw alternative culture in Ljubljana draw from both prior and contemporary punk culture, whilst simultaneously facilitating its continued existence. This compatibility was not limited to Ljubljana, and many of Borghesia's synth based contemporaries, including Cabaret Voltaire, drew inspiration from punk, whilst also forging new paths. Despite experimental departure from focus upon 'three chords' and other ideological and practical punk dogmas, kinship was maintained via mutual assertions of subcultural and political dissidence, artistic individuality and defection from rock clichés.⁹⁶¹ The *KAJ JE ALTERNATIVA? (What Is The Alternative?)* Symposium in November 1983 illustrated the ideological and cultural compatibility of electronic music, queer culture and hardcore in Ljubljana, which extended beyond tactical convenience. The symposium was organised by Radio Študent and ŠKUC Forum in collaboration with FV, and included two concerts at Disco FV in Šiška. The first night saw the hardcore collective - Stres DA, UBR and Odpadki Civilizacije –

⁹⁵⁷ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

⁹⁵⁸ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid

⁹⁶⁰ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

⁹⁶¹ Cabaret Voltaire are an influential electronic music group from Sheffield, UK, formed in the mid 1970s. Since their formation the band have exerted considerable influence upon industrial, post-punk, EBM and electronic music genres. They, alongside other UK bands such as The Human League and Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark acknowledge shared motivations with punk, and underline its importance in breaking cultural boundaries and providing space for musical expansion. *Synth Britannia* BBC Productions, 2009, Documentary

perform, whilst the following evening featured the electronic music of Marcus 5 and Borghesia. Disparate styles were thus presented as somewhat distinct but related and compatible strands of a subversive alternative. The poster for the event (See Fig 5) was designed by Dušan Mandić and reflects the interlocking nature of elements of Ljubljana's counterculture, via a process of artistic appropriation that is resemblant of punk aesthetics. Combining a Laibach woodcutting with the badges that represented a trigger for the Nazi Punk affair, Mandić subverted and rendered absurd the petit-bourgeois, romanticised and heteronormative socialist presentations against which punk, FV, electronic music and queer subcultures often rallied.



Fig 5: Flyer for Kaj Je Alternativa? Concert and Symposium, 1983. Designed by Dušan Mandić.

Borghesia's album titles, including *Resistance* (1989), *Ni Upanja ni strahu* (No Hope No Fear) (1987), and songs such as 'Kdo Je Ugasnil Luč' (Who Has Turned Out the Lights), from their debut LP reflected political expressions that were also comparable to the Ljubljana hardcore scene. Borghesia actively sought to radicalise listeners in this manner, and Jeffs' depiction of their focus upon 'everyday life, sexual liberation, new social movements, the repressive and

militarised elements of socialism and instances where socialist practice diverged from its utopian content', is almost synonymous with the latently anarchist political content of hardcore.⁹⁶² Crowley similarly describes a 'combustible' approach which 'snatched recognisable political personalities, rituals and manifestations' and subverted everyday imagery and mainstream culture, alongside pornographic programmes, as part of a process of 'appropriation art', which was also common to punk in the city and worldwide.⁹⁶³ Centring instinctive and immediate responses to localised environments whilst drawing upon recognisable symbols and heroes saw Borghesia's music imbibed with the political significance, dissatisfaction and often veiled but unmistakable opposition to dominant ideologies that could also be found amongst the city's hardcore contingent. Each rejected the imposition of any form of ideology, including Yugoslav socialism, upon the individual and presented this process as creatively stifling and antithetical to personal freedom, prioritising autonomous worlds as gateways to liberatory experiences.⁹⁶⁴

The utilisation of tactics, aesthetics and methods of cultural production that were familiar to the hardcore collective meant that the complementary ideological instincts and manifestos of autonomy presented by the LGBT movement, FV and Borghesia were also reflected aesthetically. Cheap, autonomous and accessible means of reproduction, such as photocopying, were often necessitated in order to bypass elements of censorship and in the absence of viable alternatives. Teal Triggs describes fanzines as 'free spaces for the development of ideas, practices and visual space', which can operate beyond the 'prying eyes' of the mainstream. Both the gay and punk scenes in Ljubljana seized upon this opportunity.⁹⁶⁵ *Gayzine* and *Lesbozine* were produced in Ljubljana from 1985 and 1988 respectively, whilst MAGNUS also produced the explicitly homosexual journal *Viks*. As with the physical spaces of Ljubljana's counterculture, punk and the queer scene also converged within the same countercultural journals, which is best demonstrated within *Problemi*. Its third issue in 1983 contained numerous cultural defences and expressions of support for the city's punk scene, and provided space for the

⁹⁶² N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.381

⁹⁶³ D. Crowley, 'The Future Is Between Your Legs', p.372

⁹⁶⁴ Borghesia *Resistance* (Jugoton, 1989); Borghesia *Ni upanja ni strahu* (Play It Again Sam, 1987); 'Kdo je ugasnil luč' Borghesia *Ljubav je Hladnija Od Smrti* (FV Založba, 1985)

⁹⁶⁵ T. Triggs, *Fanzines* (Thames & Hudson, 2010), p.49

Ljubljana scene to represent its ideas and lyrics, but also placed this alongside unorthodox and seldom seen sexual material, including a feature on erotic asphyxiation, translated from an Italian magazine.⁹⁶⁶ The conflation of these ideas, and the incorporation of queer and alternative sexualities within punk focused media often became somewhat trendy, as it allowed participants to demonstrate affiliation with the perceived edginess of a marginalised and subversive erotic underground. However, this process also opened participants up to new sexual worlds and identities.

Borghesia's name, like the hardcore collective's tendency to adopt monikers which playfully referenced the illicit, saw them rally under a bourgeois banner, in direct opposition to the dominant ideology of Yugoslav socialism. Their artwork also utilised the DIY methodologies important to hardcore, including cut and paste cassette sleeves, which accompanied their self-titled debut release (See Fig 6). Distinct artistic references and inspiration from punk aesthetics expanded upon these similarities further. Aldo recalls how the style of the anarcho-punk label Crass Records, which included multi-panel fold out posters, directly influenced the design of Borghesia's debut LP.⁹⁶⁷ Their incorporation of videographers as integral band members, the fact that Borghesia represented an extension of FV into music production, alongside a record label, club nights and other multimedia elements, also emulated Crass, who regularly and somewhat accurately presented themselves as an art collective as part of an attempt to diverge from rock traditions.⁹⁶⁸ As Aldo remembers: 'Our idea was to be distinct and different whenever we could, rather than following tradition. We said that we were not a rock and roll band, but a video band.'⁹⁶⁹

⁹⁶⁶ *Problemi* (Issue 3, 1983)

⁹⁶⁷ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/16

⁹⁶⁸ Crass incorporated visual artist Gee Vaucher from the outset of their formation, whilst Borghesia included FV filmmakers Neven Korda, Zemira Alajbegović and Goran Devide as members of the group. This emphasised the extent to which Borghesia and FV were often one and the same thing, and Aldo frequently emphasised the importance of Borghesias' video content on a contemporary basis. An interview for the Croatian television show *Van struje* on 24 April 1991 saw him state that the 'end product' of Borghesia was logically a videocassette, rather than a record.

⁹⁶⁹ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016



Fig 6: Borghesia S/T Cassette Artwork, (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983). Designed by Aldo Ivančič, the image features a local punk woman wearing a studded bracelet, laddered tights and suspenders and was also used for a Disco FV flyer in April of the same year.

Borghesia's cultural performances and music were also met with the same detractions and limitations that the hardcore collective negotiated, illustrating the consistency of societal responses to subversive culture which combined music, subversive lifestyles, politics and responses to Yugoslav society in a latently anarchist manner. Slavenka Drakulić-Ilić equated the utilisation of 'sex perversion, violence and militarism' within a Borghesia performance with fascism.⁹⁷⁰ Suzana also highlights how popular cultural detractions of punks amalgamated them with queer culture, creating folk devils who were 'lazy, workshy and concerned only with music, partying and having same sex relationships.'⁹⁷¹

The videos Borghesia produced, including *Tako mladi* (So Young) in 1984, are emblematic of a heterogeneous and eclectic visual perspective, but also underline affiliation with punk.⁹⁷² Utilising motifs and iconography frequently found within punk saw Borghesia visually subvert and appropriate mainstream symbolism. Similarities between these aesthetic presentations and the visual character of the hardcore collective were occasionally somewhat coincidental and the product of

⁹⁷⁰ S. Drakulić-Ilić, 'Fašizam na alternativnoj sceni' *Start* (28/7/1984)

⁹⁷¹ Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

⁹⁷² The title of the video represents another example of the Ljubljana punk and alternative scenes reclaiming insults in an empowering and subversive manner. The phrase 'Tako mlada a već Slovenka' often accompanied stories regarding the sexual promiscuity of Slovene women. Borghesia *Tako mladi* (FV Video & ŠKD Forum, 1984)

using the same directors and stages for films. The walls of K4 were plastered with graffiti which included homoerotic images designed by Dušan Mandić alongside the names of various Ljubljana punk bands, and provided a regular backdrop for a number of FV directed videos, live performances and attempts to capture Ljubljana's countercultural environment.⁹⁷³ However, videographers also used deliberate aesthetic approaches across the videos which were integral to Borghesia's aesthetic character and also appealed to the hardcore collective, underling a firm stylistic compatibility. The use of repurposed military imagery strikes a particular chord in this regard, and is featured within *Tako mladi*, as well as accompanying Odpadki Civilizacije's 'Vojna smrt' on the *Iskanje izgubljene ga casa* (*In Search of Lost Time*) compilation.⁹⁷⁴

Aldo suggests that this shared visual character demonstrates how enforcing strict demarcation between the two belies the nature of Ljubljana's underground culture and the extent to which countercultures became blended.⁹⁷⁵ Aesthetic compatibilities between Ljubljana hardcore, Borghesia and elements of the gay movement owed much to the history of international punk scenes, which had seamlessly incorporated iconography and fashion from S&M, queer and fetish culture, to such an extent that origins became obscured. Aldo suggests that it thus became 'difficult to say if something was punk, or if it was gay.'⁹⁷⁶ Smith suggests that a common outcome of interaction between queer and other forms of music and culture is that the importance of the former becomes erased, leaving gay men 'central, yet marginalised, informing culture without making inroads... standing in the shadows unloved... left with the stuff no one else wants.'⁹⁷⁷ However, as Aldo suggests, more positive forms of collaboration can be found within historic punk culture, especially within the Ljubljana alternative scene. Stressing common motivations, he highlights the mutual cultural benefits that were inspired by moments of collaboration: 'The truth was that a lot of things were actually both gay and punk. The basic ideas of each were very similar, so the cultures always mixed

⁹⁷³ Mandić's homoerotic and political graffiti saw him combine crossed out swastikas, with large red phalluses.

⁹⁷⁴ Borghesia *Tako mladi* (FV Video, ŠKD Forum, 1984); 'Graffiti No.1 & No. 2' Borghesia *Clones* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1984); *Iskanje Izgubljene Ga Casa* (FV Video, 1985), Music Video Compilation

⁹⁷⁵ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

⁹⁷⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷⁷ R. Smith, *Seduced and Abandoned*, p.11

in a positive and supportive way.⁹⁷⁸

Nevertheless, the weight Borghesia gave to elements of explicit and purposeful sexualised imagery contrasted with the vast majority of punk and hardcore bands, both in Ljubljana and beyond. The title and cover art of their 1988 LP, *Escorts and Models*, gave sexualised imagery centre billing, and their artwork featured explicitly queer signifiers, fetish imagery and challenges to heteronormativity from the outset.⁹⁷⁹ *Tako mladi* frequently features carnal depictions, and whilst homosexuality was often central, also grants empowerment to a range of individuals who were often denied sexual agency within mainstream depictions. This included women, and the VHS depicts female public nudity in the grounds of a Ljubljana graveyard, alongside the dreamlike eroticism that accompanies the song 'Cindy Sherman'.⁹⁸⁰ In the latter, a number of almost statuesque women, naked apart from underwear, are depicted emotionlessly eating ice cream, smoking, drinking and applying makeup and oil to Aldo, as he stands inside an empty swimming pool (See Fig 7).⁹⁸¹



Fig 7: Still from *Tako mladi* (FV Video, ŠKD Forum, 1984)

⁹⁷⁸ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

⁹⁷⁹ Borghesia, *Escorts and Models* (Play It Again Sam, 1988)

⁹⁸⁰ The song was released in 1984, on the bands second cassette. Borghesia, *Clones* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1984)

⁹⁸¹ The title of the song references the American female photographer, which also gives an indication as to Borghesia's intent. Sherman's work is often attributed with attempts to parody and undermine the pervasiveness of male gaze and female struggles to conform with facades of desirability. L. Mulvey 'A phantasmagoria of the female body: The work of Cindy Sherman' *New Left Review* 188 (1991), p.136; Borghesia *Tako mladi* (FV Video, ŠKD Forum, 1984); Borghesia *Clones* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1984)

The aforementioned sleeve design for Borghesia's debut LP, *Ljubav je hladnija od smrti* (*Love is Colder than Death*), is dominated by a screen-capture of the most explicitly queer and fetish influenced scenes from the VHS, depicting two men wearing stockings and underwear, clutching chains and a cane and engaging in homosexual sadomasochism (see Fig 8).⁹⁸² The footage, which was filmed to accompany the song 'On' (Him), visually depicted lyrical subversiveness of the song, which stated 'He likes sex of a sharp kind', and referenced tall leather boots, whips and the protagonist's fetish for authority.⁹⁸³ Their live performances also directly presented sadomasochist sexuality to audiences, and *Lustmörder* (*Lust Murder*), in May 1984, combined looped videos, music and tableaux vivants performed by members of FV.⁹⁸⁴

Ljubav je hladnija od smrti incorporates a range of sexual themes throughout, and the opening track of the same name immediately set a sexualised tone via the use of an unmistakably pornographic sample.⁹⁸⁵ 'No ne šetnje' (Night Walks) made reference to cruising spots in the parks of Ljubljana, suggesting that, despite the legalisation of homosexuality which had resulted in the growth of a visible queer culture elsewhere and the fact that such spots were often targeted with homophobia, the seditious expressions that characterised earlier queer environments remained. Sexual acts were accordingly depicted alongside a poignant and somewhat melancholy reminder that gay identities and desires were still subject to stigma and secrecy: 'Under the statue of a national hero... warm lips, lustful eyes, serpentine tongues, cold hands. I only want to be loved.'⁹⁸⁶ Publicly orientated and unashamed representations of stigmatised sexuality

⁹⁸² Dario Seraval was one of the men depicted. Borghesia, *Ljubav je hladnija od smrti* (FV Založba, 1985); Borghesia, *Tako mladi* (FV Video, ŠKD Forum, 1984)

⁹⁸³ 'On' Borghesia, *Ljubav je hladnija od smrti* (FV Založba, 1985); N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990' in: B. Škrjanec (ed) *FV- Alternativa Osemdesetih* (Mednarodni Grafi ni Likovni Center, 2008), p.383

⁹⁸⁴ Amongst the acts featured were men, including Dario, in sadomasochistic dress smearing blooded liver on each others chest and cutting it with a knife, whilst women appeared on stage in underwear, brandishing whips.

⁹⁸⁵ Borghesia used similar samples on a number of other records. 'Lovci' (Hunters) from the 1987 LP *Ni upanja, ni strahu* (Play It Again Sam, 1987) featured repeated simulated sexual noises performed by Karmen Mihajlovič, which were manipulated and accompanied by somewhat menacing industrial noises. 'Ljubav je hladnija od smrti I.' Borghesia, *Ljubav je hladnija od smrti* (FV Založba, 1985)

⁹⁸⁶ Borghesia, *Ljubav je hladnija od smrti* (FV Založba, 1985)

throughout Borghesia's output was especially compelling as a result, and also guaranteed an inherent degree of subversiveness. This was furthered by explicitly political statements. 'AR', saw the band explicitly declare substantial deviation from other staples of Yugoslav society. Dario expresses an outright refusal to conform with idealisation of the 'homeland' and the promotion of heteronormative ideals of marriage and the family, and exclaims 'Idem dalje' (I'm moving on).⁹⁸⁷ Aldo describes how lyrical representations of antagonism were not simply idle expressions of non-conformity, but reflected their genuine belief in their ability to create alternative micro-societies:

We declared that "their" world was absolutely not ours. We were sometimes hostile, like the LP suggests, but our songs were more often completely uninterested in engaging with their society. We simply created an alternative world where we could exist how we wanted.⁹⁸⁸



Fig 8: Cover art for Borghesia's 'Ljubav je hladnija od smrti' LP. Designed by Aldo Ivančič (FV Založba, 1985)

As with the hardcore collective, fashion was an additional arena in which

⁹⁸⁷ Like many Borghesia lyrics, this song uses Serbo-Croat rather than Slovene language. The band later adopted English for many of their lyrics and song titles. 'AR' Borgheisa, *Ljubav je hladnija od smrti* (FV Založba, 1985)

⁹⁸⁸ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

Borghesia demonstrated artistic ideologies, world-views and personal individualism. Aldo describes how the presentation of a 'very gay image', reflected not only their day to day style, but the wider blending of punk ideologies and aesthetics with distinctly queer signifiers.⁹⁸⁹ As with shared musical characteristics, this process was relatively straightforward because, as Aldo describes, punk fashion had already previously incorporated aspects of queer culture within a recognisable alternative style. Complementary desires amongst participants to demonstrate rejections of 'straight society', were represented by conscious appropriation, adoption and borrowing.⁹⁹⁰ Holly Johnson suggests that limits with regards to the sexual permissiveness of heterosexual punks remained, but also acknowledges that punks were more liable to accept and support explicitly queer stylistic presentations as: 'they all wanted to look like that anyway.'⁹⁹¹ Aldo's distinctive style (See Fig 9), incorporated a leather cap, jacket and knee high boots and was complemented by aviator sunglasses and a thick moustache, fusing contemporary punk and alternative style with the leather subculture.⁹⁹² He represented a striking figure, even within the alternative scene, let alone mainstream society, but describes feeling 'comfortable and completely accepted' by the hardcore scene and wider underground.⁹⁹³ The ambiguity offered as a result of the difficulty to strictly separate punk and gay styles stretched the boundaries of sexualised fashion and allowed a number of gay men to experiment and express themselves stylistically in supportive environments. A contemporary interview featured in *Viks* with an anonymous gay man emphasised the extent to which alternative environments such as Šiška and K4 provided a genuine alternative to other cultural and social environments in this regard: 'The music is very hip, the dress styles are very interesting, and people are able to behave and act quite freely.'⁹⁹⁴

⁹⁸⁹ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

⁹⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹⁹¹ R. Smith, *Seduced and Abandoned- Essays on Gay Men and Popular Music* (Cassell, 1995), pp.185-6

⁹⁹² The leather subculture grew from the post-war US motorcycle scene to incorporate a queer counterculture, which was associated with kink and BDSM, often motivated by dissatisfaction with other, co-existent queer cultures. Staples of the style often overlapped with punk fashion.

⁹⁹³ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

⁹⁹⁴ A. Ivančič 'If I die I die' *Viks* Issue 2 (1984) p.10



Fig 9: Early photo of Borghesia. Aldo Ivančič is on the left, Dario Seraval on the right. Photo by Dušan Mandi / Jane Štravs

Dario's personal style was similarly distinctive and featured androgynous punk symbolism, combining heavy eye makeup with spiked and dyed hair (See Fig 9), and later longer dreadlocks (See Fig 10). His day to day appearance also incorporated a number of distinct subcultural styles, including studded wristbands, which were common amongst members of the hardcore scene and the long, dark overcoats favoured by darkwavers, both of which were featured on the Crass inspired poster that accompanied *Ljubav je hladnija od smrti*.⁹⁹⁵ Even within a more permissive and often sexually ambiguous underground, Borghesia's assertion of specifically sexualised, androgynous and homosexual images positioned them as a distinctive and instigative presence. This is underlined by the visual contrast Dario provided with more conservative styles of dress that were adopted by many of those involved in underground culture (See Fig 11). Suzana credits Borghesia's everyday presence as an important evolutionary contributor to the normalisation of unabashed presentations of queer identities within the Ljubljana underground, which complemented their their more considered artistic attempts to pluralise sexual presentations. The aforementioned anonymous interview also specifically references the encouragement that Dario's transgressive image alone provided: 'A person really does feel less discouraged when he sees a guy in a garter belt flirting a

⁹⁹⁵ Borghesia, *Ljubav je hladnija od smrti* (FV Založba, 1985)

little with women, a little with men.'⁹⁹⁶ The explicit confrontation of taboo subjects and incorporation of somewhat outrageous forms of personal style opened space for a range of presentations in their wake, including measured but openly queer personal declarations, just as subversive cultural expressions could break the barriers of permissibility.⁹⁹⁷



Fig 10: Borghesia in the mid 1980s. Dario's makeup includes lipstick and heavy eyeshadow. Outtake from *Ljubav je hladnija od smrti* (FV Založba, 1985) LP. Photo by Jane Štravs



Fig 11: Dario is pictured second from left at a Ljubljana concert, wearing a leather vest, stockings and garter and a bondage style choker. He stands out amongst a backdrop of more conservatively dressed men. Photo from 'Balkan Pank' by Jože Suhadolnik, 2013

Elements of cultural overlap between punk and LGBT movements could be found

⁹⁹⁶ A. Ivančič 'If I die I die' *Viks* Issue 2 (1984) p.10

⁹⁹⁷ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

internationally, and were often reinforced by instances of convergence in shared spaces (see Fig 12).⁹⁹⁸ Whilst Smith suggests that this dynamic in early punk scenes often saw existing gay spaces exploited for punk purposes, with punks taking refuge and taking inspiration from these experiences without reciprocating this support towards gay men, Hilary Pilkington, with reference to punk and other divergent cultural movements, suggests that potential hostility or indifference can be regularly reduced as a result of physical convergence, as elements of otherwise unrealised compatibilities become highlighted.⁹⁹⁹ Whilst it would be an exaggeration to describe the impact of FV upon the hardcore collective as entirely transformative, the countercultural currents it drew hardcore towards had profound impact upon the actions and ideals of many involved in hardcore, and also accounted for distinct specificities. Borut Mehle, of the hardcore collective, describes how congregation encouraged diversity and produced a counterculture in which diverse assertions of difference from mainstream norms were exalted, with punks supporting analogous forms of dissidence.¹⁰⁰⁰ Božo's declaration that 'without gay people nothing would exist here!', is also testament to the extent that the hardcore collective acknowledge the importance of elements of Ljubljana's queer counterculture in a wider sense, with interaction stretching beyond elements of opportunism or convenience.¹⁰⁰¹ Convergence occurred for practical reasons, as homophobic repression and the shrinking of public space for punks associated with the Nazi punk affair channelled the cultures together into a narrow range of underground spaces such as K4 that could provide 'common shelters'.¹⁰⁰² As such, heterosexual interaction with queer culture was inevitable within the basement, but cultural compatibility and the aforementioned overlaps between disparate strands was also actively encouraged and cultivated by FV. Aldo was acutely aware of the power of socialisation, and prioritised active and consistent attempts to harness this co-existence. Disco FV initially made a point to encourage gay attendance (See Fig

⁹⁹⁸ The earliest waves of punk in the UK had seen gay, lesbian and transvestite clubs presented as refuges for punks. John Savage depicts congregation within these 'desirable and hassle free environments' as a response to experiences in straight clubs, where patrons 'either wanted to fight [punks] or didn't want them there at all.' J. Savage, *England's Dreaming- Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (Faber and Faber, 1991), p.183

⁹⁹⁹ R. Smith *Seduced and Abandoned*, p.11; H. Pilkington, Y.B. Steinholt and I. Gololobov (eds) *Punk in Russia*, p.202

¹⁰⁰⁰ Mehle, Borut. Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

¹⁰⁰¹ Rakočević, Božo. Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

¹⁰⁰² David describes Disco FV as 'the most important underground club at the time' as a result of its ability to house and protect a range of subcultures and identities. Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015; N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.352

13), and the gay disco was similarly and purposefully 'open to all.'¹⁰⁰³

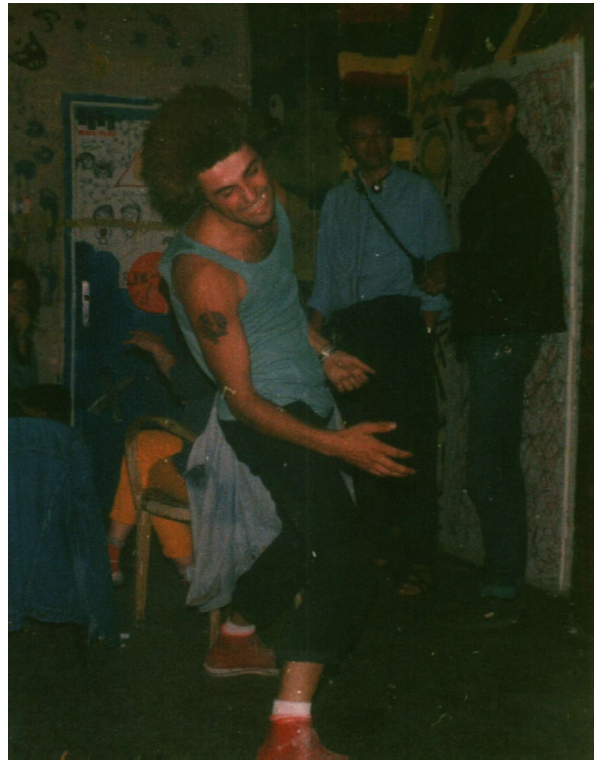


Fig 12: A member of the Hardcore Collective dances in K4 as Bogdan Lešnik and Aldo Ivančič look on, circa 1984. Photo courtesy of Irena Povše.

¹⁰⁰³ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016



Fig 13: A Disco FV flyer from 1983, designed by Aldo Ivančič. The flyer outlines the range of music played at the disco and explicitly encourages gay attendance. Predating the establishment of the MAGNUS festival the following year, the flyer underlines FV's pioneering inclusivity and recognition of queer identities.

The lure of the 'alternative' meant different things to a range of people, but overarching motivations and shared outlooks resulted in consistent ideological and practical overlaps. They also meant countercultures and ideological tendencies were inextricable, existing within the same rooms and basements, becoming manifest within events, parties, friendships and cultural allegiances. Many of those active within the Ljubljana underground scene aimed to produce a utopian alternative which encompassed a variety of related tactics, world-views and personal identities and were drawn together by overarching egalitarian ideologies and rejections of the mainstream. As Aldo summarises: 'Our political struggle was about creating temporary autonomous zones and creating an alternative utopia through culture. We just wanted to build our own world.'¹⁰⁰⁴ Ensuring the vitality of this underground was often more important than any attempts to change the system as a whole, as punks and queers aimed to create different ways of existing culturally, from the bottom up. The insight into queer culture that this shared

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

approach and resulting interaction provided often impacted upon the attitudes of hardcore punks, with exposure to alternative identities increasing open-mindedness and amenability by osmosis. Nikolai Jeffs describes how Šiška (and later K4) 'operated as a gallery... with those looking solely for music introduced to art forms and other material they would otherwise have missed or would not have been interested in.'¹⁰⁰⁵ This forged identification, alliances and mobilisation. Hardcore's rejection of 'the destruction of subjectivity', and promotion of assertions of individuality as a means of distinction from the 'mindless robots' and 'normal' mass of society, also positioned the collective as instinctive allies for radical queer culture.¹⁰⁰⁶

Punks n' Gays United: Sexuality Within the Hardcore Collective

Despite regular contact and amalgamation with the queer scene, the extent to which this impacted on the content and internal dynamics of the hardcore collective varied. Tomaž Mastnak describes how Belgrade newspapers insulted the Ljubljana underground with broad strokes and assumed 'the worst thing that could be said... was to call its protagonists queers.' However, rather than attempting to distinguish themselves from queer culture as a response to societal homophobia, the collective primarily extended existing forms of solidarity and emphasised common victimisation.¹⁰⁰⁷ A contemporary interview with an anonymous punk woman featured in *Punk pod Slovenci* suggested that 'everyone on the scene exists together, so we look out for each other', whilst UBR argued that the hardcore collective embodied the principles of 'brotherhood and unity' to a greater extent than 'the communists that said they believed in this... [there was] so much solidarity.'¹⁰⁰⁸ Božo uses similar imagery, describing the queer underground as 'our brothers and our sisters... our people. It was like we were all marginalised... not punks n' skins united, but punks n' gays united!'¹⁰⁰⁹ Whilst Gigi stresses that the

¹⁰⁰⁵ N. Jeffs, 'FV and the "Third Scene" 1980-1990', p.374

¹⁰⁰⁶ As UBR would declare in a contemporary interview: 'We are against the systemic destruction of human subjectivity. We would like to see that human life still means something in this world.' 'UBR Interview' *Vrnitev Odpisanih* Issue 2 (Summer 1984)

¹⁰⁰⁷ T. Mastnak, 'From Social Movements to National Sovereignty' in: J. Benderly, E. Kraft (eds), *Independent Slovenia- Origins, Movements, Prospects* (St. Martin's Press, 1996), pp.101-2

¹⁰⁰⁸ N. Malečkar and T. Mastnak (eds) *Punk Pod Slovenci* (KRT, 1985), p.475; UBR *Še en lep dan za umret* (Rest In Punk, 2012)

¹⁰⁰⁹ Rakočević, Božo. Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

hardcore scene regularly extended the critical regard it directed towards the wider world to alternative culture, he also identifies visible dynamics of mutual respect. As a result, he categorises the scene as both a collaborator and specific outgrowth of an alternative world.¹⁰¹⁰ The resonance of building these alternative societies that transcended constrictions upon personal individuality was regularly extended to supporting demonstrations and culture relating to marginalised sexualities, and David attributes this to shared perceptions of 'being outcasts' from society.¹⁰¹¹

Active homophobia was accordingly rare across the hardcore scene. Robert cites one instance of casual homophobia directed towards Quod Massacre relating to their later adoption of a 'poppish' and 'gay image', but also acknowledges that this contrasted with the ideological tenets of punk and was rarely used as a specific tactic of the collective.¹⁰¹² Attempts to identify the presence or relative absence of homophobia within Ljubljana hardcore is rendered difficult by the relatively small size of the scene, which meant few, if any, participants were openly gay. This increases the possibility that subtle forms of exclusion and micro-aggressions may not have even been noticed or considered important by the heterosexual majority who were unaffected and unable to fully engage with the experiences of gay punks and queer people in general. Depictions of the broad ideology of the scene and instances of genuine inclusivity were nevertheless consistently stressed by those involved, and Aldo and Suzana corroborated these depictions of inclusivity including hardcore as an unequivocal component of a 'cultural bubble', that allowed individuals to relax and 'be themselves'.¹⁰¹³ Božo describes how inclusivity also extended to active defence of gay people, describing his responses to discrimination he occasionally witnessed when working at Siška as exemplary of general attitudes to homophobia. Empathy, shared experiences of being 'outcasts', and the fact that the queer scene happened to share the same 'underground home', informed his approach, and desire to cleanse underground shelters of

¹⁰¹⁰ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

¹⁰¹¹ Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

¹⁰¹² He describes how anger was fuelled by the perception that Quod Massacre's departure from orthodox hardcore aesthetics represented the band selling out. The response to a Quod Massacre promotional video saw: 'A few people say that we looked like we were gay. None of us were, but we just said "OK, we are cool with that! I'm gay, fuck off!" They didn't say the music sucked, they just focused on our appearance.' Risti, Robert. Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2015

¹⁰¹³ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016; Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

discriminatory impulses antithetical to his conception of hardcore.¹⁰¹⁴

More specific acknowledgement of the importance of the queer movement to the evolution of Ljubljana's wider counterculture in the 1980s was less consistent on a contemporary basis, and the majority of the collective's members acknowledged this dynamic only with the benefit of hindsight.¹⁰¹⁵ The collective, as I have outlined, was fiercely independent in design, practice and self regard, which conflicted with acknowledgement of external influences, limiting the extent to which ideological bonds became evident within aesthetic outputs.¹⁰¹⁶ Explicit musical expressions of solidarity were essentially non-existent, and only a handful of direct references to any kind of sexuality were incorporated. This is consistent with tendencies within international hardcore punk, regardless of other interactions with homosexuality. Tomata du Plenty of LA band The Screemers suggests that it was initially rare that anyone (including openly gay men) actually 'sang about being queer.'¹⁰¹⁷ Stephen Blush links this tendency to hardcore's general rejection of the trappings of 'rock and roll relics', which ruled out any focus upon sex as a whole.¹⁰¹⁸ The consequence of this in North America was decried by G.B. Jones and Bruce LaBruce, who saw Queercore and their fanzine *J.Ds (Juvenile Delinquents)* as a response. Describing how their local punk scenes had failed to develop apparent celebrations of androgyny into a genuinely 'welcoming' and queer friendly alternative, they concluded that gay punks often found that they were placed in a constricting bind, whereby they were 'not accepted in punk places

¹⁰¹⁴ Rakočević, Božo. Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015

¹⁰¹⁵ Božo describes how certain queer figures were noticeably important to the alternative culture of Ljubljana on a contemporary basis, but that this rarely resulted in discussions of sexuality and usually failed to influence the musical and artistic output of the collective. Irena also describes a visit to San Francisco in 1986, towards the end of the scene, as 'eye-opening', towards the possibilities of queer visibility, which led to her developing 'new ways of thinking' with regards to integration of LGBT issues. She accordingly realised that there was room for greater interaction, normalisation and representation of queer relationships and identities within the alternative. Rakočević, Božo. Interview, Ljubljana, 30/9/2015; Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 15/3/2015

¹⁰¹⁶ N. Korda, 'Alternative Dawns', p.314

¹⁰¹⁷ He indicates regrets in this regard. Whilst he outlines elements of respect afforded to 'elder queers' within punk, he also believes that his failure to actively combat elements of homophobia that were also present in LA meant younger people struggling with their sexuality did not receive sufficient support from the older generations, who had experienced similar difficulties. B. Mullen, D. Bolles, A. Parfey, *Lexicon Devil*, p.260

¹⁰¹⁸ Blush places straight edge- which completely rejected promiscuous sex, drugs and alcohol as the culmination of wider tendencies to reject these 'vices' in general. He suggests that this made a lack of consideration of sexuality (and gender) inevitable, but also appears generally unwilling to interrogate this, beyond a cursory mention of notable gay hardcore bands. S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, p.36

because we were gay, and because we looked punk would often get refused entry to gay places.¹⁰¹⁹ Aldo suggests that in Ljubljana, experiences of respect and support from the hardcore scene were more compelling: 'I never had a problem with that scene, they just treated it all as a normal thing.' Active representations of queer identities or sexuality in general were seldom featured.¹⁰²⁰ David's band occasionally went by the name 'Relax with Ris', which referenced a domestic brand of condoms, but this moniker was primarily adopted as a disguise for the politically inflammatory connotations of their real name, KPJ.¹⁰²¹ Engagement was primarily confined to playful utilisation of taboo subjects and juvenile forms of provocativeness, rather than serious attempts to confront sexual repression (See Fig 14) and Richard Smith suggests that these dynamics within hardcore often led intentions open to interpretation. He describes how the absence of a clear moral approach within US hardcore often made it questionable 'whether bands were homos or homophobes... whilst some audience members took punk provocativeness as a chance to laugh at fags.'¹⁰²² Ljubljana hardcore generally avoided this dynamic, and confirms more closely to Tim Kerr's depiction of homosexuality being regarded as a 'non-issue' within scenes, which meant that sexuality was confined to interaction with queer individuals, gay led cultural institutions and specific aspects of queer culture, rather than visible representation.¹⁰²³

¹⁰¹⁹ S. Krishtalka, 'Art essay: We are Queercore- A "porntastic fantasy" made flesh', *DailyXtra* (3 January 2007) <http://www.dailyxtra.com/canada/arts-and-entertainment/art-essay-queercore-53697> [Accessed 24/08/16]; R. Smith, *Seduced and Abandoned*, p.73

¹⁰²⁰ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

¹⁰²¹ The bands name, which referenced the Yugoslav Communist Party, meant that they often used a disguise to avoid a potential backlash. Kržišnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

¹⁰²² Bands such as Fear demonstrated the ambiguity of straight interactions with sexuality and homophobia, as whilst their 'fag shtick' was targeted at homophobic jocks within the audience, it was often unclear who was intended as the butt of the joke. R. Smith, *Seduced and Abandoned*, p.11

¹⁰²³ S. Blush, *American Hardcore*, p.36



Fig 14: Božo engaging in some 'playful provocation' with the statues outside the Ljubljana Museum of Modern Art. Photo by Dario Cortese, 1983

Gigi describes how broad but unspecific expressions of acceptance and equality became incorporated as part of a latent and generalised socio-political world-view, but also suggests the hardcore collective was categorised by relative naivety with regards to sexuality. This was conducive to support, rather than consistent representation or network building:

At that time, I didn't really know what being gay was. I met gay people who were not the way everyday people talked about them, which opened my eyes. They [FV and Aldo] were kind, intelligent, into art and never caused me any harm, and this probably resulted in my current attitudes towards gay people and is why I'm not a stupid jerk! I didn't really think about the fact that Aldo was gay at the time though, because it just didn't matter to me.¹⁰²⁴

Jože Suhadolnik agrees that straight punks in Ljubljana often recognised that queer people were 'an oppressed minority, that we needed to support', but also suggests that applying this more extensively to day to day dynamics was rarely considered necessary.¹⁰²⁵ Robert agrees, describing how contact with diverse personal identities 'in Šiška and K4' resulted in an increased familiarity with queer culture,

¹⁰²⁴ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

¹⁰²⁵ Suhadolnik, Jože, Telephone Interview, 25/08/2014

but that his 'support for the gay scene' was broadly theoretical and had little impact upon his contributions to hardcore.¹⁰²⁶ As with attitudes towards female participation, the scene was believed to have achieved broad equality and freedom from internal oppression, which positioned sexuality as irrelevant rather than worthy of consistent focus. Whilst the primacy of subcultural authenticity and adherence to hardcore ideologies which incorporated a generalised egalitarianism were crucial and non-negotiable, deeper consideration was rarely encouraged. More sophisticated ideologies were rarely developed and sexuality remained off the agenda.

Tendencies to reject fixed ideological positions, which accounted for failures to adopt feminist theoretical frameworks, also affected the extent to which discussions of sexuality became present within the scene.¹⁰²⁷ The adoption of ambiguity in terms of personal identity and the avoidance of specific labels, could provide breathing space for elements of sexual openness and experimentation, whilst reducing stigmatisation of non-heterosexual relationships and identities. Suzana suggests that these ambiguous claims were often fleeting and posturing however, and simultaneously failed to sufficiently consider the impact of sexuality upon people's lives. Regarding homosexuality as 'unremarkable' insufficiently combatted the elements of isolation, erasure and marginalisation that queer individuals experienced within society, and the extent to which these could be reproduced on a micro level within countercultures:

I sometimes met other gay people, but mostly people would say that their friend was gay, or that they were a supporter. There was always this tendency for people to say "Of course I support it, but it's not for me." I couldn't hide or diminish my sexuality and I didn't want a whole system of lies to become my life, whereas a lot of people who were involved believed that in ten years times they could be elsewhere and living an "ordinary" life. I never had this alternative, I didn't want it either.¹⁰²⁸

The importance of gender and sexuality was primarily confined to the realms of the

¹⁰²⁶ Ristić, Robert, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2015

¹⁰²⁷ Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid

personal. This discouraged references to labelled sexualities, which consequently diminished explicitly queer representations within hardcore, inadvertently decreasing the possibility of positive assertions.¹⁰²⁹ Individuals may have been 'dragged' towards hardcore and punk by a genuine belief that it provided opportunities for destroying boundaries and experiencing equality, as Mojca suggests, but her conclusion that 'people should be left alone, to be themselves... what they do is their business', is reflective of the broad egalitarianism Suzana describes as insufficient.¹⁰³⁰ Gill suggests that tendencies to avoid consistent socio-political concern or engagement with such issues were observable throughout a variety of punk scenes, which meant that 'curiously few gay men took advantage of the cease fire' punk provided.¹⁰³¹ Tim Kerr concurs, suggesting that gay punks were often reluctant to 'push the agenda' beyond elements of ambiguity, whilst others felt unable to come out of the closet altogether.¹⁰³² Gill suggests that punk provided important contributions to the breaking of societal moulds with regards to presentations of gender and sexuality, encouraging a degree of fluidity, but highlights that this failed to entirely prevent marginalisation, remove elements of homophobia and heteronormativity, or provide the means to combat experiences of stigmatisation outside of the margins of the scene.¹⁰³³ It would be remiss to expect an insular, musically focused and marginal counterculture to be able to fully combat the full range of external and societal factors that regularly impact people's sexual openness. Darby Crash of LA band The Germs provides an example of the complexity of this process, and his own attempts to come to terms with his sexuality. Brendan Mullen describes the toxic mix of 'macho culture', societal derision towards homosexuality and the extent to which desired elements of normalcy were unobtainable as dominating his decision to project asexuality instead of homosexuality. He speculates that this may have contributed to his potentially deliberate death from a drug overdose at a young age. Within this understanding, the variability of attitudes towards homosexuality, which make defining a subcultural environment in this regard a substantial undertaking, is also acknowledged. Mullen suggests that these dynamics were a constant and

¹⁰²⁹ Ibid

¹⁰³⁰ Krish, Mojca. Interview, Ljubljana, 13/3/2015

¹⁰³¹ J. Gill, *Queer Noises* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p.128

¹⁰³² S. Blush, *American Hardcore* (Feral House, 2001), p.36

¹⁰³³ J. Gill, *Queer Noises* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p.128

significant presence, but urges caution in terms of drawing conclusions based upon subcultural interactions alone, or viewing punk as something which entirely sheltered participants from repressive societal influences.¹⁰³⁴ Expressions of support within Ljubljana hardcore failed to provide substantial and often crucial networks, and for many within the Ljubljana alternative scene, the possibility of sharing experiences or demonstrating queer identities seemed more compelling within related strands. Hardcore was a welcoming aspect of a wider safe haven, but elements of this underground catered more specifically to queer people.¹⁰³⁵ As Aldo, Suzana, Dario and others demonstrate, this did not preclude involvement with the hardcore collective, but is reflected by the general absence of queer musical or organisational participants.

Conclusion

Kinship between a range of punk scenes and queer culture has regularly been built upon shared ideological instincts, inspirational origins, and moments of convergence.¹⁰³⁶ Craig O'Hara describes how the historical nonconformity imposed upon homosexuals, and the political views, distaste for authority, attitudes and appearance that followed within queer communities often chimed with the deliberate embrace of dissidence that many punks regarded as a central principle of engagement.¹⁰³⁷ In practice, interactions between punk and queer identities regularly fluctuated between support and exclusion. The presence of simultaneous, competing and contradictory moments of egalitarianism, heteronormativity and

¹⁰³⁴ Members of the Germs suggest they failed to discuss or place too much importance upon Darby's sexuality at the time. However, 'Tony the Hustler', a romantic connection, describes his fear of being 'heckled and ridiculed'. Whilst Bob Biggs of Slash Records believes that Darby was erroneous to think that anyone cared, there were frequent flashes of genuine homophobia. Penelope Spherris suggests punk was initially 'extremely anti-homosexual', which made his concerns understandable, the scene was often contradictory featuring genuine apathy, homophobia, and positive representation and support from older members of the scene and the bands X and Flesh Eaters, which stemmed the presence of homophobia and allowed occasional relaxation. B. Mullen, D. Bolles and A. Parfey (eds) *Lexicon Devil*, pp.227-260

¹⁰³⁵ Tratnik, Suzana. Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

¹⁰³⁶ John Savage describes punks' gay roots as: 'damn near central... many of punk's original participants were gay and much of the original aesthetic was too.' A. Gallix, 'Londons Outrage' *3am Magazine* (2002) http://www.3ammagazine.com/litarchives/2002_jun/interview_jon_savage.html [Accessed 16/3/17]

¹⁰³⁷ O'Hara cites the original, 1950s, meaning of 'punk', which referred to members of the US prison population who would engage in homosexual sex, which later became adopted to describe the musical genre and subculture, as evidence of a continuous affiliation between punk and LGBT culture from the outset, which he argues became increasingly fortified as the genre developed. C. O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk*, p.119

homophobia means the declaration of consistent approaches is problematic if not impossible. Nevertheless, co-operation, interaction and mutual admiration represented consistent features within the 1980s Ljubljana underground. Solid contemporary links were fuelled by necessity, cultural expediency and co-dependence. Support was also motivated by cultural and ideological compatibility, and mutually positive exchanges of cultural aesthetics and information, resulting in an inconsistent and informal, but nevertheless identifiable, merger.

Whilst distinctions remained, the corresponding experiences of repression aimed at 'punks and queers' which saw each occupy 'an outlaw position', strengthened existing compatibilities and shared political objectives.¹⁰³⁸ Individuals active as part of the alternative scene often experienced comparable forms of marginalisation, repression and normalised elements of hassle, that failed to declare whether ire was directed against either homosexuality or punk. Identities often became blended within public perceptions to the same extent that they shared underground spaces and experiences. Odpadki Civilizacije underlined this tendency in a contemporary interview, describing how feeling like 'true outcasts' had informed not only the aesthetics of hardcore, but their broad approaches to other marginalised groups.¹⁰³⁹ Recipients of repression primarily categorised fear of the unknown and the provocation that open expressions of dissidence represented as the mutually applicable motivations for the reactions that they became subject to.¹⁰⁴⁰ Many individuals sourced inspiration and constructed personal identities via a combination of countercultural and queer focused presentations, alongside the experiences of stigmatisation that followed. However, the adoption of punk style and identity involved personal agency and deliberate decisions towards the self imposition of marginalisation, sourced via a conscious choice to interact with an explicitly rebellious subculture and what Stephen Duncombe categorises as a 'negative identity.'¹⁰⁴¹ Punk identities in Ljubljana were routinely presented as representations of innermost feelings and rejection of straight society and

¹⁰³⁸ A. Ivančič, 'If I die I die', p.11

¹⁰³⁹ 'Odpadki Civilizacije Interview' *One World Fanzine* (1984)

¹⁰⁴⁰ A. Ivančič, 'If I die I die', p.11; Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015; Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

¹⁰⁴¹ Duncombe describes how rebellion sat at the 'core' of punk, with resulting negative identities dependant upon what it rebelled against for meaning, and setting yourself up against "them" integral. S. Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, p.47

mainstream mass identities, but this deliberate construction primarily occurred with explicit knowledge of the reactions that would be provoked. Rejection in this sense was frequently an intended and desired consequence of cultural engagement. On the other hand, the marginalisation which queer people experienced, relating to expressions of fundamental sexualities, was inescapable and a product of societal attitudes. Avoidance of stigmatisation therefore necessitated fundamental personal denial. The difference in this regard, and the contrast in motives that led to individuals embracing the underground, is particularly resonant, as homosexuality had only been decriminalised in the previous decade and continued to be attributed with an inherent transgressive character. Craig O'Hara centralises shared awarenesses of unjust societal attitudes as a galvanising factor, drawing queer people, punks and other outsiders together. He suggests that this mutuality and the exchange of culture which followed could awaken collective 'rebel spirits', but fails to sufficiently acknowledge elements of incongruity and the diversity of reasons that lead to outsider status.¹⁰⁴² As Suzana Tratnik outlines, the majority of people on the alternative scene had embraced self-marginalisation as part of a subversive personal identity, but retained the potential to simply embrace conformity at some point in the future (which, indeed, many punks chose to do).¹⁰⁴³ Punk non-conformity remained negotiable, fluctuating and primarily related to the adoption of particular forms of style and rebellious behaviour. Whilst Marsa describes punk identities as integral representations of values, she also acknowledges that necessary or expedient adaptability was possible in accordance with surrounding environments.¹⁰⁴⁴ Punks were therefore precluded from dropping out of society altogether or confining themselves to the margins permanently, a possibility their queer contemporaries found less available, without fundamental levels of self-denial.

Nevertheless, the queer interviewees featured within this chapter, alongside a number of contemporary accounts, were generally comfortable with suggestions that punk was a comparably marginalised identity in 1980s Yugoslavia.

¹⁰⁴² C. O'Hara *The Philosophy of Punk* p.119; Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

¹⁰⁴³ Suzana recalls how many regarded their underground involvement as a rebellious phase, which could eventually be abandoned in favour of 'regular lives' in the following decade. Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

¹⁰⁴⁴ Marsenič, Alenka, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

Recollections and statements primarily highlighted the frequency of shared experiences and rarely expressed concern over the alliance of self-imposed marginalisation and their personal experiences, focusing more on the mutuality of reactions and the compatibility of cultural demonstrations than how these were arrived at.¹⁰⁴⁵ The mutually expressed importance of 'doing something', and demonstrating instinctive and forceful opposition to society often left little room for introspection or investigation of power dynamics, as mutual opponents proved to be a more compelling source of focus.¹⁰⁴⁶ Indeed, Aldo equated interactions between the hardcore scene and the LGBT alternative movement with solidarity directed towards a range of groups and individuals who had been forcefully placed 'on the border of society.'¹⁰⁴⁷ His analysis of events and understandings of societal exclusion were continually conceived through an explicitly countercultural lens, which reflected the seamless conflation of his experiences of sexuality alongside the value placed upon transgressive culture and socialisation.¹⁰⁴⁸ Cultural and social engagement with homosexual identities for young people in Ljubljana consistently occurred within subversive and resistant subcultural movements, that reinforced sexuality as one of many facets that could contribute to an embrace of the underground. Suzana Tratnik suggests that this unifying thread often transcended individual distinctions and focus upon the differences between the motivations of queer people and heterosexual members of the scene, even if this became apparent at times and was often crucial to the experiences of the former.¹⁰⁴⁹ Individuals stressed the importance of individuality throughout countercultural Ljubljana and centralised opposition to 'them' - the heterogenous grey mass of conformist straight society – regardless of how rebellious individuals arrived at this rejection, the level of choice that was involved, and why it was perceived as unpalatable or unreachable. The pervasion of the idea that subcultural identity was a representation of innermost feelings and ideological instincts, personal individuality and dissidence from the norm, meant punk and sexuality were regarded as diverse but largely equitable informant characteristics. Edward

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016; Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016; A. Ivančič, 'If I die I die' *Viks* (No. 2, 1984), p.11

¹⁰⁴⁶ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016; Povše, Irena. Interview, Ljubljana, 15/3/2015

¹⁰⁴⁷ Aldo describes how his experiences as a gay man meant he often saw commonalities with the experiences of disabled people in the city, whilst also recognising differences between their situations. Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

¹⁰⁴⁹ Tratnik, Suzana, Interview, Ljubljana, 7/10/2016

Sagarin's description of how experiences of societal prejudice, oppression, rejection and alienation can provoke resistant strength within individuals 'from handicap to strength', may have preceded the Ljubljana hardcore punk and alternative scene by several decades, but underground orientated individuals in Ljubljana drew upon analogous experiences of being 'untouchable' to foster very real and tangible forms of understanding and reciprocal solidarity.¹⁰⁵⁰

¹⁰⁵⁰ D.W. Cory, *The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach* (Literary Licensing, 2012), p.12

Conclusion

It was no coincidence that Ljubljana became the most vibrant hub of punk activity across Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe. The city's hardcore scene, which emerged at the beginning of the 1980s, was enabled by, and built upon a cosmopolitan atmosphere, amenability to alternative culture, Yugoslavia's relatively liberal character and elements of a market economy . However, it also represented a subversive counter to mainstream values and interests and was shaped by responses to repression and censorious impulses. Hardcore reflected this contradictory environment, evolving into a politically and socially conscious counterculture that challenged societal boundaries and worked towards the creation of utopian alternatives. 1976 saw short lived and explosive punk scenes spark into life and burn out almost as quickly, but Ljubljana hardcore, which burst into activity half a decade later, represents a different proposition. Contributing to a long standing and sustainable punk underground, the hardcore scene mutated stylistically, developed new tactics and expressed new ideas, and adapted in order to react to changing and diverse contexts.

The hardcore collective brought together dissident young people during a pivotal moment in the history of Ljubljana, Slovenia and Yugoslavia. Understanding of the expressions, motivations and ideals contained within can contribute to a history of youth reactions and culture in the late socialist states of the twentieth century. As this thesis demonstrates, hardcore scenes provide prisms through which a number of social dynamics can be viewed. The Ljubljana scene indicated how young people saw their place in the world, provides examples of attitudes and interactions with gender and sexuality, and vivid examples of youth rebellion and disaffection. As Aldo remembers, hardcore was 'timeless, unbelievable stuff', which unearthed previously hidden and obscured truths.¹⁰⁵¹ The Ljubljana punk underground of the 1980s represented the fundamental spirit of a proportion of the first generation of adolescents to come of age after Tito's death, as one of the final countercultural movements to emerge prior to the breakup of Yugoslavia.

As the second chapter of this thesis outlines, young people in Ljubljana

¹⁰⁵¹ Ivančič, Aldo, Interview, Ljubljana 9/10/2016

increasingly valued internationalist and outward looking cultural movements. Ljubljana hardcore was a component of an internationalist counterculture which transcended and indeed disregarded national borders that divided young people. As David Križnik outlined, hardcore punk centred shared experiences, values and ambitions, which meant 'it wasn't really any different in Ljubljana to anything else going on at that time.'¹⁰⁵² The output of the hardcore collective was aesthetically and sonically comparable to their international contemporaries and appealed for similar reasons, and the communication it facilitated made the world seem smaller and more relatable. This universality was central to the survival and strength of hardcore worldwide, but the Ljubljana scene saw individuals look towards the west for inspiration and interaction. However, hardcore also represented an alternative to understandings of western influenced cultural forms in socialist states, as something more than a one-dimensional celebration of capitalism. Hardcore was, fundamentally, a shared culture to which individuals in Ljubljana contributed to on an equal and mutual basis. The hardcore collective utilised a critical and informed approach, highlighted shared experiences of political corruption and hypocrisy, and were able to incorporate and synthesise these frustrations with the specificities of their domestic culture and everyday lives. The stylistic mores of hardcore often defined or influenced the expressions that participants made, but this rebellious and uncompromising nature was often the reason it appealed to them in the first place. Their focus upon authenticity meant that it represented a counterculture which was layered with genuinely held feelings and thoughts.

Ljubljana was regularly at the cultural, political and social vanguard of Yugoslav liberalisation, in a society which already diverged from common perceptions of socialist states. Whilst the New Social Movements, including the LGBT movement with which the hardcore collective interacted, were relatively embryonic, individuals active within the underground culture of the city genuinely believed in the creation of autonomous and inclusive utopias. Glimpses of this possibility provided individuals with opportunities to experiment and demonstrate their personal identities in a range of ways and experience support and shelter. Tožibabe and Borghesia's cultural output drew upon this environment, and was also responsible for shaping it, and their subversive, transgressive and ambitious music

¹⁰⁵² Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015

continues to represent a striking demonstration of the transgressive potential of music.

Gigi emphasises the enduring relevance of expressions found within 1980s punk and hardcore. He states that the provocations and expressions of the scene provide insight into a particular moment in time, but also highlight elements of consistency and continuation:

Sometimes it feels like you could just copy and paste our lyrics, and what we stood for, to apply them to today. It feels like it's more applicable than ever. I got my ideals, my roots of life, the way I see the world from hardcore. I still live according to these everyday. Whenever I feel like I need a church, or a priest, I look back to that time. It was the most honest time of my life and still influences me.¹⁰⁵³

The alternative culture of Ljubljana appealed to the fundamental but often instinctive and undefinable gut feelings of individuals, and participation cultivated this, fundamentally shaping their lives and world-views.¹⁰⁵⁴ However, the practical influence of the scene has extended far beyond this, a testament to the enduring relevance of its music, and ideological content. The active core of the collective did not extend far beyond a handful of actors, yet the scene continues to be represented and celebrated by modern punks around the world (See Fig 1).

¹⁰⁵³ Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/2014

¹⁰⁵⁴ Tome, Dare, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/4/2014; Križnik, David, Interview, Ljubljana, 2/10/2015; Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014



Fig 1: Current punks demonstrate their love of Ljubljana hardcore. From Top Left- Sara (USA), John (UK), Compton (USA), Mattie-Sue (USA), Ricardo (Mexico/USA), Stephen (USA), Emma (USA), Ignacio (Chile), Hafiz (Singapore), Jack (UK), Rachel (USA), Joe (USA), Lara (USA), Tave (Canada), Mike (USA), LeAnn (USA), Tamara (USA), Laura (USA).

Whilst David describes the visible legacy of the hardcore scene as relatively small, interest in the scene has endured. This has culminated in a number of record labels dedicating themselves to unearthing, re-releasing and remastering recordings. All three vinyl releases of the collective have become subject to various bootlegs and official releases in recent years, whilst a number of record labels dedicated to Ljubljana and Yugoslav hardcore have emerged.¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ne! Records*, under the direction of Habi of Mostar hardcore band *Ženevski Dekret*, represents the most prolific example, regularly compiling officially sanctioned exhaustive LP discographies for bands and unearthing and remastering previously 'lost' recordings.¹⁰⁵⁶ *Zagreb based Doomtown Records* has also released a number of

¹⁰⁵⁵ FV, which is now run by Monika Skaberne released an anniversary edition of the *Dezuje 7"* in 2016. The band performed a reunion concert at Metelkova in Ljubljana in April 2016, alongside a number of current Ljubljana bands to celebrate the anniversary.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Robert of Quod Massacre has regularly worked with the label as a mastering engineer. A list of available titles and a label discography can be found at <http://www.nerecords.se> [Accessed

recordings from former Yugoslavia, whilst simultaneously documenting their current scene.¹⁰⁵⁷ *Rest in Punk Records* has also pressed to vinyl a number of retrospective discographies and 'classic' records, which were originally released on cassette. International labels have also demonstrated a marked interest in the scene. *Dark Entries Records* from the US, which releases a range of electronic, goth and darkwave bands, has recently reissued the debut *Borghesia* LP, whilst UBR's contemporary influence has spread as far as Japan.¹⁰⁵⁸ The *Crust War* label, which has primarily released contemporary punk bands, released UBR recordings originally produced for the 1983 *Kaj je alternativa* tape, under the title *Yugoslavia Panic* in 2002.¹⁰⁵⁹

Contemporary punk bands throughout the world have also paid their own tributes to Ljubljana hardcore. All-female band Anti-Sex from Mexico City have performed and recorded a cover of Tožibabe's 'Dežuje', whilst Finnish hardcore act Maailmanloppu paid tribute to UBR via their artwork for 2014 release *Haista Vittu Maailma* EP (See Fig 2).¹⁰⁶⁰ Such tributes and visual homages are relatively common within contemporary punk, and Alexi from the band describes how they wanted to shine a light on the Ljubljana scene.¹⁰⁶¹

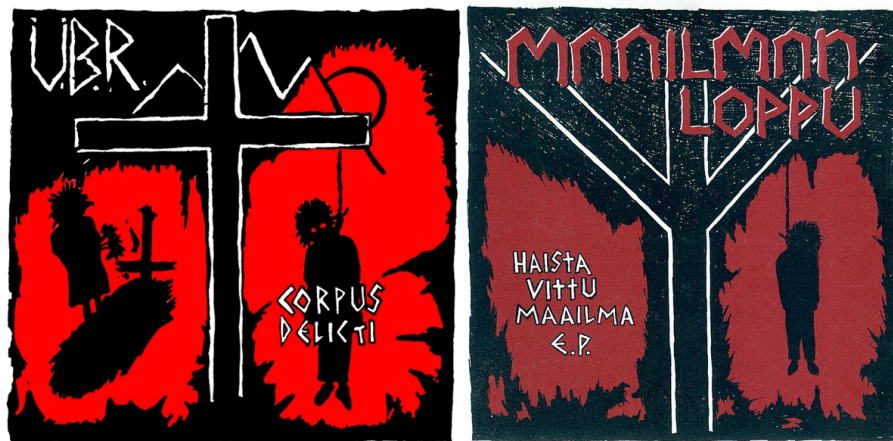


Fig 2: UBR's *Corpus Delicti 7"* (Left), Maailmanloppu's *Haista Vittu Maailma 7"* (Right)

21/03/2018]

¹⁰⁵⁷ A collection of the label's releases (including a 7" by the author of this thesis) can be found at <https://doomtownrecords.bandcamp.com> [Accessed 21/03/2018]

¹⁰⁵⁸ <http://www.darkentriesrecords.com/bands/borghesia/> [Accessed 21/03/2018]

¹⁰⁵⁹ UBR *Yugoslavia Panic* (Crust War, 2002)

¹⁰⁶⁰ 'Dežuje' Anti-Sex (Unreleased, 2015) <https://anti-sex.bandcamp.com/track/dezuje-tozibabe-cover> [Accessed 23/03/18]; Maailmanloppu *Haista Vittu Maailma* (Combat Rock Industry, 2014)

¹⁰⁶¹ 'Maailmanloppu Interview' *Artcore Fanzine* (Issue 34, 2016)

Members of the collective have described these tributes as additional validation of the enduring vibrancy of their youthful activity. As Gigi remembers:

I always smile when I see kids wearing leather jackets with my old band written on the back. It makes you realise that we did some good things. It warms my soul to see. Of course, we never did anything for money, beer was our motivation. So as long as I get a copy for my collection or to give to my grandchildren one day I'm happy that people still care and want to listen. We didn't imagine that this would happen at the time.¹⁰⁶²

The Ljubljana hardcore scene is rarely positioned as a definitive proponent of the 1980s movement. However, it demonstrates, as well as any other scene, the constant contestation and discussion that occurred within and between hardcore scenes, the antagonistic energy of the counterculture and the proliferation of consistent ideals. Studies of punk have increasingly expanded and diversified from focus upon a narrow range of actors in a handful of locations, to highlight scenes and individuals that have often been regarded as marginal or on the periphery. By looking beyond what has become the traditional canon of punk, this study contributes to a richer and more expansive understanding of punk in general, the place marginal scenes occupy within countercultural currents and the flow of influence. As Ljubljana demonstrates, 'peripheral' scenes were more than just imitators, they were diverse, original and vital contributors to an internationalist movement.

Hardcore punk was a complex, instinctive and divergent entity. At times the full extent of this can be ungraspable, and the scene meant different things to different people. Scenes simultaneously contained rebellion and conformity, progressivism and reactionism, individuality and collectivism, alongside politics, socialisation, personal relationships, and most importantly, the specific pleasures of loud, fast and confrontational music. As the Ljubljana hardcore collective demonstrates, scenes endure and become vital entities fundamentally because they represent something meaningful to the individuals involved. Rather than a homogenous

¹⁰⁶² Karpov, Gregor, Interview, Ljubljana, 24/4/14

entity, Ljubljana hardcore was sprawling, often contradictory but fundamentally inspiring and energising culture, and, as Irena describes, 'was a process, an ongoing, living thing.'¹⁰⁶³ It endured, altered its surroundings and left a legacy on a number of young people at a pivotal time in their lives, and a pivotal moment in the history of the city.

¹⁰⁶³ Povše, Irena, Interview, Ljubljana, 14/3/2014

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Marko Zubak, *The Yugoslav Youth Press (1960-1980)- Student Movements, Youth Subcultures and Alternative Communist Media* (Srednja Europa, 2018)

Fanzines/Magazines

Dvadeset 4 časa

Feedback

Flipside

Homocore

Kill Your Pet Puppy

Maximum RocknRoll

Mladina

Negative Insight

No Concern

One World

Subverse Fanzine

Vrnitev Odpisanih

Ø Zine

Records/Tapes

Antisect, *In Darkness There Is No Choice* (Spiderleg Records, 1983)

Borghesia, *S/T* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1983)

Borghesia, *Clones* (Galerija ŠKUC Izdaja, 1984)

Borghesia, *Ljubav je hladnija od smrti* (FV Založba, 1985)

Borghesia, *Escorts and Models* (Play It Again Sam Records, 1988)

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