

Cornelia Lund, Holger Lund (eds.)

TURKISH AND GERMAN-TURKISH POP MUSIC. ANATOLIAN POP AND ROCK, ARABESK, BELLY DANCE, HIP-HOP

Texts 2011 to 2025,
Revised and Enlarged

[transcript] Media Studies

Cornelia Lund, Holger Lund (eds.)
Turkish and German-Turkish Pop Music

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Ever since the neo-*Anadolu pop* group Altın Gün won a Grammy Award in 2019, Turkish pop music has become firmly established in the contemporary global music scene. Interest in *Anadolu pop* and *rock* music from the 1960s and 1970s had waned for decades, notably after the 1980 military coup in Turkey, when it was largely overshadowed by the success of *arabesk* music and later by more globalized pop music, as famously represented by Tarkan. In 2006, U.S. hip-hop beat diggers were the first to spark a revival. As a result, not only is the neo-*Anadolu pop* music scene thriving today, but there is also a renewed interest in the historical music productions, as demonstrated, for example, by the abundance of reissues of Anatolian pop from the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the slowly but steadily growing number of academic studies on the topic. The first major study on pop music from Turkey in English, Ali C. Gedik's book *Made in Turkey. Studies in Popular Music*, was published almost parallel to Altın Gün's Grammy Award, in 2018. However, Turkish pop music has never been exclusively 'made in Turkey.' Indeed, much of Turkish (pop) music is 'made in Germany,' as numerous Turkish labels in the Federal Republic of Germany have enjoyed great success producing music for Turkish communities in Germany, Europe, and Turkey. Some music, such as Kurdish music, has even been produced primarily in Germany for political reasons.

Our work forms part of this field of rediscovery and academic exploration of Turkish pop music. This volume is a collection of texts grouped around the phenomenon of *Anadolu pop* and *rock*. It compiles over 15 years of research on Turkish music focusing on productions from Turkey and Germany.¹ This also implies that we started researching this topic well before it gained widespread international popularity and before a sizeable community dedicated to (re-)publishing, archiving, and researching this music had formed.

How, then, did we find this music or—better still, how did it find us? And why and how did we, two German academics, curators—one of us also a DJ—neither of us of Turkish descent nor trained musicologist, start to dig deeply into this music? Finally, what decisions led us to make this book? Before turning to the book itself and its internal organization, let's start at the beginning: This preface will not dwell at length on our research trajectory, which is addressed in greater depth in the assembled texts, as will be explained further below. The short version is that we encountered *Anadolu pop* through the already mentioned U.S. hip-hop musicians, most notably via the beat producer Egon's now legendary *Stones Throw Podcast #12*, the so-called "Turkish Funk Mix," published online by the Los Angeles-based record label Stones Throw in 2006. Over the years, the wish to learn more about this music resulted in various research activities and outputs combining archival, curatorial, and academic strategies. The main driving force

1 The year 2025 in the title of this book refers to the state of our research.

The year 2026, meanwhile, indicates the publication date of the book and texts within it.

behind these activities is not sheer scholarly curiosity, but rather an attempt to help make an important—yet at least partly forgotten or marginalized—chapter of pop music history accessible again.

The strategies used in this process are intertwined and mutually informative. Thus, our work on re-releasing Anatolian pop and rock on vinyl—published mainly on the labels Global Pop First Wave and, since 2022, on Seismographic Records—has nourished the academic texts assembled in this volume, and vice versa. Guiding key questions in this process address the specific historical, political, media-related, and aesthetic conditions that led to the emergence of Anatolian pop as a hybrid genre, as well as its relationship to other styles such as *arabesk*, belly dance, folk, and hip-hop. At the beginning of our journey into the field of Turkish pop music, I was mostly accompanying the research, giving advice on post- and decolonial approaches, for example, while it was Holger Lund who published the first vinyl compilations and texts. At that time, I was working in a large, DFG funded research project on the history of German documentary film, and I began to wonder whether the large community of so-called Turkish ‘guest workers’ in Germany and their music figured anywhere in those films. Although Turkish musical life in Germany was not at the center of my own research area within the project, conversations with colleagues who were assigned to work on pop music or migrant communities (see Selck 2017), as well as my own research into documentaries on children and youth quickly revealed that it was rarely represented. Very little emerged from my viewings, apart from a few brief glimpses in films concerned with other topics, such as *Der Boxer aus Kars* [The Boxer from Kars] (D: Thomas Tanner, 1977) or *Im Niemandsländ* [In No-Man’s Land] (D: Hans Andreas Guttner, 1983), part three from the TV series *Das Einwanderungsland* [The Immigration Country], that portrays a group of young Turkish men in Munich.

This absence seems even more surprising given that the Turkish communities in Germany have always been musically very active and that, from the 1960s onwards, a large music industry producing Turkish music existed in Germany. These activities were, however, not only ignored or marginalized in documentary film, but also by German mainstream society in general. This situation, in turn, gave rise to a series of new questions, looking for reasons why this extensive musical production was ignored and excluded from the German music market and media for decades.

The texts resulting from our research into Turkish and German-Turkish pop music have been published in different media, formats, and contexts; some of them are easily accessible, others remain more or less hidden. As our earlier web project, *lundaudiovisualwritings.de* (2017), which compiled a comparable array of texts on our research into audiovisual art forms, had generated very positive feedback, we decided to follow a similar path to make our writings on the field of Turkish and German-Turkish pop music more visible and accessible to a wider international community.

This time, we opted for a book that is available in both printed and open-access formats to ensure academic visibility as well as easy, low-threshold availability for anyone interested. This volume is thus presented for the first time as a standalone publication, although several of the collected texts have been published before in different contexts. Transcript seemed like the ideal home for this endeavor, as the publishing house has already devoted itself to Turkish and German-Turkish cultural production through a number of related publications.

Here, the book also contributes to filling a gap: While the aforementioned silence on Turkish music in German documentary films has been skillfully broken by Fatih Akin, Mirza Odabaşı, or Cem Kaya, academic research on German-Turkish music production remains scarce compared to other areas such as German-Turkish cinema and literature (see Neubauer 2011; Alkın 2017; Sievers 2024) or German-Turkish theater (see Boran 2023).

In order to create a more coherent book experience from the collection of texts, we made a number of decisions, starting with arranging the texts into thematic groups: The first three texts explore the historical conditions that led to the emergence and the resulting specific hybrid aesthetic of *Anadolu pop* and *rock*. The second group of three texts focuses on the music and related media, ranging from the *gazino* as a particular musical environment to films, posters, and magazines. The third group comprises two texts that use Turkish pop music as a case study for developing decolonial approaches to pop music and its historiography. The book concludes with three texts that explore the (difficult) status and life of Turkish music in Germany from different angles.

While these thematic groups are intended to facilitate navigation of the content, the texts simultaneously allow us to observe how research on Turkish pop music has evolved. As the texts more or less follow the chronological order of their publication—with the exception of the first, hitherto unpublished text on radio—it becomes clear how little academic research on the topic was available 15 years ago, and how quickly the field has evolved. The texts, of course, also bear witness to our own research journey, leading from tentative approaches to a deeper understanding of the field. As the thematic groups already show, the texts approach the topic of Turkish and German-Turkish pop music from different perspectives and focus on different aspects. Consequently, no single methodology applies to the whole book. While all texts are methodologically informed by our disciplinary backgrounds in media studies, art history, and literature, the multifaceted nature of the topic requires a transdisciplinary approach. The methods used are detailed in each text; in addition to media studies, they draw on musicology, cultural studies, history, and sociology. Non-academic sources such as films or newspaper articles are important for gaining a complete picture, as are the numerous conversations with experts and members of the Turkish communities in Turkey and Germany, without whose help our

research would not have been possible. All texts have been thoroughly checked and discussed with expert members of these communities to avoid cultural misunderstandings and mistakes, and for some texts we have teamed up with expert colleagues.

As already mentioned, the texts assembled in this book come from a variety of sources, printed and online, following different logics of publication. For the sake of keeping the research history readable, we chose not to completely homogenize the texts, but to preserve their different tones and styles as much as possible. We did, however, adapt them to the logics of book publication and to a stylesheet, with the exception of original quotes in English. To facilitate the reading flow, all quotes have been translated into English by the editors.

Although English has become the contemporary 'lingua franca' of academic writing, we are well aware that this decision not only entails accessibility and inclusion but also produces linguistic exclusions. Unfortunately, the means available for this publication are limited and do not allow for translations into additional languages, so that we can offer only this compromise at the moment.

Last but not least, the texts have undergone various degrees of reworking, as indicated at their respective beginnings. Some texts remain unchanged, while others have been adapted and updated with new research. In some cases, an earlier published version has merely been used as a basis for the current text.

The book's textual plurality is expertly woven together by Chan-Young Ramert's perceptive design, supported by the typographical choice of FH Oscar—a font designed by Fatih Hardal of Hardal Studio.

This book certainly sums up our research into (historical) Turkish pop music, mainly released on vinyl from the 1960s to the 1980s. But rather than marking an end, it seems more interesting to look to the future and ask: what comes next? One step further in time, the next medium is the cassette. Turkish music cassettes constituted a mass media market from the 1970s to around 2000, with many of them being produced in Germany. Despite being sold in the thousands, these productions are barely archived and now occupy a niche position in music history and the music market. Consequently, certain independent Turkish diaspora music developments that primarily occurred on cassette—such as *disko folk*, *Anadolu synth*, *gurbet şarkıları*, or even Kurdish music—are difficult to research and rarely heard, a situation that calls for both further archival strategies and research activity.

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THE HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF TURKISH POP MUSIC

Holger Lund

MUSIC FOR REVOLUTION.

KEMALIST MUSIC POLITICS PLAYED OVER THE RADIO IN TURKEY

Nation-building is a difficult endeavor. It requires not only territory, people, and state sovereignty, but also an ideologized, unifying national narrative and shared cultural values and practices—in short, a cultural identity. In the case of Turkey, the cultural revolution of the Kemalists aimed to Westernize and modernize the former Ottoman people on Turkish territory, trying to turn them into new 'Turkish' people (Yazici 2014). Depending on the point of view, the Kemalist's aim of Westernization and modernization can be interpreted as either in opposition to conservative Muslim Ottoman culture or as a continuation and intensification of the efforts of reformist forces within the Ottoman Empire. Yet, the distance of reform to revolution lies in the disruptiveness, velocity, and power of the latter and allows for calling the development a revolution as the Kemalists did themselves (Reinkowski 2022: 53–104).

To implement this cultural revolution in the process of nation-building both music and mass media, especially radio, were central. Next to spoken word programs, 'music for revolution' occupied a special place in Kemalist radio politics.

The article focuses on how Kemalist music politics were played over the radio in Turkey, both literally and figuratively. It develops a concise history of Kemalist radio from 1927 to 1950, examining its connection to Kemalist ideology. To achieve this, the text explores the different types of music that were officially promoted and broadcast on the radio, namely Western and Westernized music, and the types of music that were excluded, namely (post-)Ottoman art and folk music genres. The latter are monophonic, *makam*-based genres, often subsumed under the term 'alaturka' in contrast to Western-oriented polyphonic, modern-modes-based genres called 'alafranga.' 'Alaturka' is a transnational music, that primarily consists of Turkish music but also includes elements from Byzantine, Arab, Persian, Balkan, Indian, and other musics.

The article seeks to reevaluate the implementation of Kemalist music policy on the Kemalist state radio by comparing the intended goals with the actual outcomes. In order to accomplish this the Kemalist music discourse will be examined, as particularly apparent in academic literature dealing with *Radyo*, the state radio magazine. Furthermore, pertinent musicological literature and literature from neighboring fields, such as film studies or architecture studies, will be considered as well. A brief comparison with music and radio in Brazil will provide a broader context for the developments in Turkey.

The fundamental academic sources dealing with Kemalist music discourse related to radio are the texts by Murat Ergin (2005), Ayhan Erol (2012), Poyraz Kolluoğlu (2019), and especially Patrick Bartsch's book (2011), which probably is the most comprehensive study on the subject so far.

Furthermore, the works of Uygur Kocabaşoğlu (2010) and Meltem Ahiska (2010) are essential for a more general perspective on Kemalist radio in Turkey. The following chapters are to be considered integral for a concise history of Kemalist radio:

1. The cultural revolution. Opening the frame in which 'music for revolution' took place.
2. A brief comparison with Brazil: parallel developments.
3. The musical ban and its effects. Intentions and conflicts.
4. The return of the 'Other.' Music cannot be stopped.
5. Kemalist radio in the 1940s. Listening to the listeners and unexpected musical waves.
6. Reevaluation of Kemalist radio politics. Failure and success.

1. The Cultural Revolution. Opening the Frame in which 'Music for Revolution' Took Place.

Rejecting most of the Ottoman legacy, the new Turkish Republic created a new denomination for its people: 'the Turkish people.' Reversing the pejorative meaning that 'Turks' and 'Turkish' had in Ottoman times, when the terms were associated with Anatolian peasants and used as an insult for their supposed backwardness, the Kemalist elite and its ideologists, namely Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), promoted Turkish people as something much better: People that had lived on the state territory (that is mostly the Anatolian regions) since pre-Muslim times and were now being prepared for modernity by synthesizing East and West in a process of Westernization.

The old multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural fabric of the Ottoman state did not simply disappear with the establishment of the new Turkish Republic, despite significant earlier efforts at the end of the Ottoman Empire with the Armenian genocide (1915–16) and significant Kemalist efforts such as the Greek-Turkish 'exchange of people' (1923–25). Armed conflicts especially between Kurdish and Alevite communities and Turkish military state forces went on for decades and resulted in military interventions and massacres by state forces like in Dersim (1937–38). Against this backdrop the process of Westernization was realized through a cultural revolution in order to suppress Ottoman pluricultural values and practices. The basic idea was to substitute the Ottoman Muslim cultural fabric with a modern, i.e., Western, one that also drew on pre-Ottoman, i.e., Anatolian, roots.

One could also argue, with a shift in perspective toward political and cultural continuity, that the basic idea was to strengthen and absolutize the Ottoman and late-Ottoman Westernizing reforms, which started in the early 19th century and aimed at a modernization of the Empire. However, the Kemalist cultural revolution consisted of a chain of very fundamental

anti-Ottoman and pro-Western reforms at a very fast pace. They include the abolishment of the Sultanate (1922) and the Caliphate (1924), the abolishment of dervish convents as well as mausoleums (1925), the complete secularization of education (1925), the introduction of the Gregorian calendar (1925), the headgear law against the headgear fez (1925), the adoption of Italian and Swiss law, including a ban on polygamy (1926), the change to Europe's system of time, calendars, and measurements (1926), the change to Latin letters (1928), the surname law (1934), and the change from Friday to Sunday as day of rest (1934).

In the 1920s, the Kemalists had not yet built a cohesive ideology. It was only in the 1930s that they were able to systematize their ideological thoughts and establish the state upon the principles of *milliyetçilik* [nationalism], *lâiklik* [laicism], *cumhuriyetçilik* [republicanism], *halkçılık* [popularity], *inkılâpçılık* [reformism], and *devletçilik* [etatism].

The cultural revolution manifested itself not only in opposition to the Ottoman heritage but also in confrontations with ethnic groups considered as insufficiently Turkish or opposed to integration into the Turkish nation. Therefore, Kemalist music politics devalued Ottoman music genres and attempted to invent a new Turkish national music that could include all citizens. The term used here by the Kemalists in the 1930s was "*iç kolonizasyon*" [interior colonization] (Bozdoğan/Akcan 2012: 37). Kemalist "ideologues made explicit analogies to and expressed their admiration for 'American Missionaries' and the 'civilization bearing colonizers in Africa'" (ibid.: 36). In this sense, interior colonization was a "commitment to the 'colonization of the countryside,'" bringing "a progressive and enlightened state [...] modernity to the 'backward' countryside" (ibid.: 37).

But how to achieve this? Mustafa Kemal was aware of the central role of culture in the process of nation-building and declared music to be a key element of the cultural revolution several times in his presidential speeches.

Kemalist music ideology was basically founded on the writings of Ziya Gökalp. In 1923, Gökalp published his influential *Türkçülüğün Esasları* [Principles of Turkism], which Kemal referred to continuously since 1925 (see Bartsch 2011: 45). Gökalp rejected Ottoman traditions and Ottoman history, which, according to his logic, led to the decay of the Ottoman Empire. The Kemalists adopted much of Gökalp's ideas, especially the devaluation and othering of Ottoman-Arab music genres and the promotion of a synthesis of Western and Eastern elements for a new Turkish national music. According to Gökalp, the Eastern elements should not be related to transnational Ottoman-Arab music genres, but to a nationalized Anatolian folk music.

The Ottoman musicscape consisted of a conglomerate of Arab, Turkish, Persian, and, in the final century of the Empire, Western institutions, which were never linked and had not been connected with Turkish folk culture. In order to eliminate this juxtaposition, Turkish folk culture had to be rediscovered and connected with elements of Western culture (see Bartsch 2011: 39).

These efforts resulted in the collection and construction of *türkü* as Turkish folk songs by state institutions. The collecting started in 1926 and mainly relied on folk songs from Anatolia and neighboring countries. As Ramm puts it: "The rural folk genre experienced a deep transformation after the establishment of the republic, when Kemalist cultural engineering aimed at streamlining folk music in a nationalist sense." *Türküler* were integrated in a "state-controlled repertoire [...] that was purged of religious or non-Turkish elements. The reform also affected instrumentation and introduced the performance of folk songs through a choir on radio" (Ramm 2020: 263). The transformation rendered the folk songs homogenous in content and language, polyphonic, urban, and oriented them toward European classical music. In fact, the Turkification often happened to be a severe deformation of the original multi-ethnic folk songs.

A very important instrument for communicating the cultural revolution to the people and disseminating the new cultural values, including *türkü* as new Turkish folk music, were the nationwide established *Halkevleri* [People's Houses, 1932–1951]. People could get free music lessons there, and both polyphonic music and standardized homophonic folk tunes were performed in concerts (see Bartsch 2011: 44, 52). They also provided an opportunity for many people to listen to the radio. In 1943, Radio Ankara started a complementary program called 'People's Houses, Art and Folklore,' which became an outlet for the presentation of folk music to a larger audience (see Öztürkmen 2012: 309) and developed on community singing with the program *Bir Halk Türküsü Öğreniyoruz* [We learn a folk song] (see Greve 2017: 215). In 1948, Muzafer Sarısözen's *Yurttan Sesler Korosu* [Voices from the Homeland Chorus] "played an important part in the building of a national repertoire, which 'gentrified' folk songs of different regions by turning local dialects into Istanbulite Turkish, translating non-Turkish lyrics, and inventing an orchestra of multiple traditional instruments" (Öztürkmen 2012: 309). The program also monumentalized *türkü* by adding an orchestra and thus building a new, 'reinvented' folk music. And indeed, "it was through programs such as *Yurttan Sesler* [...] that the nation as a whole became aware of the music of localities and regions other than those in which they lived" (Bates 2012: 378).

The *Halkevleri* not only disseminated the new national folk music by radio and community singing but also collected folk songs for the national music archive (see Bartsch 2011: 52). This shows how Kemalist cultural engineering worked towards nation building by entangling *Halkevleri*, music, and radio.

2. A Brief Comparison with Brazil: Parallel Developments.

At this point, a comparison with similar processes in other countries may be helpful. Brazil, in particular, offers some parallel developments in the construction of its 'national' music, which is samba. The publication on *Popular Music in Brazil* offers insights:

“With the rise of [military supported fascist-style dictator] Getúlio Vargas to power in 1930, there was an effort to turn the cultural manifestations of the city of Rio de Janeiro into the symbol of a Brazilian nation. This was when samba gained prominence over other musical genres as the synthesis of Brazilian popular music”

(Tupinambá de Ulhôa/De Marchi/Torres Borges 2024: 15).

With Mário de Andrade, an ideologist similar to Ziya Gökalp entered the scene, proposing analogous approaches to achieve similar goals:

“He was the mentor of the so-called ‘nationalist modernism’ movement, whereby the search for a renewal of musical art by erudite composers should involve an immersion in traditional culture as inspiration and material source (rhythms, melodies, forms, timbres) for musical creation. Andrade himself tried to fulfill what he called the ‘Brazilian artist’s mission’ by collecting [...] transcribing, organizing, and mainly writing and teaching about the musical characteristics of what he called ‘Brazilian folk,’ that is, folk music traditions [...]” (ibid.: 16).

To disseminate this new ‘Brazilian folk’—that is, the modern samba as cultural paradigm of a modernist state—radio played a pivotal role. In 1922, and in parallel with European radio, radio began to develop rapidly in Brazil. The Brazilian Rádio Nacional hired composers, arrangers, and singers, becoming the main agent of the music economy from the 1930s onward. Samba from Rio de Janeiro started to play a key role in the radio’s music program, inaugurating a lineage of canonical genres, including bossa nova from the 1950s and MPB (Música Popular Brasileira [Brazilian Popular Music]) from the 1960s (see ibid.: 20–21).

Samba as a folk music-based national style can be seen as a parallel development to the construction of a Turkish national music condensed in the folk music-based *türkü*. And like bossa nova and MPB in relation to samba, *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk* of the 1960s can be understood as rooted in *türkü*.

The comparison shows that the musical developments in Turkey belong to a worldwide context of musical nationalism, based on the nationalization of folk music and mostly occurring under dictatorships, whether communist or fascist.

3. The Musical Ban and Its Effects. Intentions and Conflicts.

In Turkey, radio started only five years after the first European stations in the UK and Russia (1922). In 1927, the Türk Telsiz Telefon Şirketi [Turkish Company for Radio Telephone] set up two state-sponsored and controlled radio stations for broadcasting, Radyo İstanbul and Radyo Ankara. With a transmission power of 5 kw and an estimated radius of max. 250 km, they were the most powerful ones in Europe at the time of their opening, and, for a short period, Turkey was a pioneer in mass communication (see Erol 2012: 42, Bartsch 2011: 59–60, 74, Greve 2017: 36–37).

When Turkish radio started, core elements of Gökalp's ideas were already being played over the radio, both in the choice of music allowed and not allowed to be broadcasted. Ottoman religious music was banned in 1925, and Ottoman art and folk music in 1927 (see Bartsch 2011: 43). The verdict was enforced, for example, by closing down public and private institutions for the teaching and practice of these music genres. A further reason why Turkish folk music was banned until 1940 was the fact that it was monophonic, and a repertoire of Westernized polyphonic Turkish folk music had not yet been built (see *ibid.*: 55).

What could be heard on the radio instead was mainly Western classical music and Western popular entertainment genres, 'alaturka' genres of the period like *fasıl/şarkı* [chamber music/art songs] and *gazel* [improvised art songs], which had already been Westernized to a certain extent toward an entertainment music since the second half of the 19th century (see *ibid.*: 34–35), and Turkified Western genres like *kanto* [*canzone* based songs] and *tango*.

In the early 1930s, a Kemalist campaign was launched to oppose the broadcasting policy of the private radio industry. "Critics," as Özbek notes, "fervently accused private radio producers of acting merely as entertainers and commercial disseminators of 'tasteless and fatalist' Turkish art songs, the so-called alaturka music of the period" (Özbek 1997: 11–12).

After making a first public assessment against 'alaturka' music genres in 1928 (see Erol 2012: 46), Mustafa Kemal explicitly addressed music in two of his parliamentary opening speeches in 1934 and 1935. The first one kicked off a musical ban. In the spirit of Gökalp, Kemal proposed:

"The music that people presume to distribute these days is far from having any value to its credit. And this is something we obviously have to admit to ourselves. It is necessary to collect important folk songs and chants expressing high national feelings and thoughts and to edit them as quickly as possible according to the most modern [Western] general musical rules. Only in this way can Turkish national music rise and take its place in universal music" (quote in: Bartsch 2011: 46).

The ban was the result of the Kemalist music ideology aiming to mute music “far from having any value,” i.e., ‘*alaturka*’ genres, and to broadcast music of value, namely Western music. İsmet İnönü, the second president of the Turkish Republic after Kemal, had discovered a collection of records with European music during his service as Ottoman officer in Yemen and had started to hear them over and over again: “I came to the conviction, that our people would also like Western music, if only they would listen to it all the time” (quote in: Reinkowski 2022: 160). However, continuously exposing people to Western or Westernized music on radio did not guarantee a change in musical taste and preferences.

The story of Kemalist radio can be considered one of disappointment. Apart from polyphonic folk songs, which represent an elementary core of Gökalp’s music-political guidelines, the products of Turkish national music endeavors were extremely unpopular. This applies explicitly to the Republican marches and can also be inferred for other Western music forms, such as operas, symphonies, etc., since Western classical music generally failed to resonate with the listeners (see Bartsch 2011: 226). People—including the Kemalists themselves—closed their ears to the majority of the broadcasted music. Or worse, they tuned in to foreign, mostly Arab or Persian radio stations during the ban of ‘*alaturka*’ genres on Turkish radio. This ban lasted from November 1934 until February 1936 in Istanbul and until January 1937 in Ankara (see *ibid.*: 47). Ergin sees a kind of ‘war of waves’ here; he calls the turning off of state-controlled radio “a vivid example of a history of passive resistance to and accommodation of state policies without direct confrontation” (Ergin 2005: 72–73). “Instead,” Ergin continues, “the alternative spaces and the inevitable conflation of these spaces with the Republican public space eventually rendered the cultural projects of the elite ineffective, inapplicable, or sometimes downright ridiculous” (*ibid.*).

As a new Turkish national music had yet to be developed, the ban created another severe problem: “There were not enough trained musicians and technical infrastructure to create and broadcast the so-called modern songs on the radio. A couple of new polyphonic folk tunes were composed by [...] [national composers] during [...] the *allaturca* censorship but they were not enough to fill up the broadcast time” (Kolluoğlu 2019: 85). Kolluoğlu states: “In fact, music followers found these first experimental pieces of music very ‘odd’ and ‘grotesque’” (*ibid.*).

In consequence, people demanded what they wanted: their (post-) Ottoman Arab music genres on foreign radio. The Kemalist radio lost its audience, finally gave in, and lifted the ban. Losing this ‘war of waves,’ the return of the ‘Other’ on radio occurred gradually, as formerly marginalized (post-) Ottoman-Arab music genres resurged in a powerful, incremental manner.

The failure of Kemalist radio politics is remarkable insofar as the listeners were primarily middle- and upper-class people who, due to their

upbringing, may well have been familiar with Western music or, in principle, may have supported the Turkish music revolution. The fact that 'alaturka' genres were nevertheless favored over Western classical music shows how strongly musical traditions were anchored in the population, and suggests that the attachment of people with a less formal education to Turkish music may have been even stronger (see Bartsch 2011: 226–227). The state radio programs, which had favored Western music in a ratio of 3:1 over Turkish music between 1935 and 1940 (see *ibid.*: 238, 243), caused their own failure.

In the years of the musical ban, divergent positions hinted at a deep conflict, even among the Kemalist elite. The conflict was centered around officially promoted music that received little attention, versus banned music that was beloved, heard, and even performed during state events (see Ergin 2005: 70, 74). Kemal embodied these divergent positions in his own person. Due to the complaints about the ban and confronted with his own unwillingness to enjoy Western classical music, combined with his preference for 'alaturka' genres, "he reminded *alaturka* lovers that generations fomenting a revolution should cope with deprivations and sacrifices" (*ibid.*: 70). And indeed, he himself also dedicated his energy to the development of opera libretti (see Bartsch 2011: 45). According to Ergin, this hints at "a problematic process of modernization" where "people were experiencing the Republican elite's personal dilemma between truth and pleasure: receiving a guilty pleasure from low art, while believing in the 'truth' that it was inferior to high arts" (Ergin 2005: 74–75).

Still, what may appear contradictory in Western logics can also be seen as a kind of co-existence, in a less dissonant, more complementary manner. Erol gives a subtly differentiating insight:

The ban "[...] means that traditional Turkish art music was not legitimized by the political elite. The concept of legitimacy does not necessarily mean that certain kinds of activity are forbidden, but simply that some forms of expression are valued more highly than others. In relation to music, legitimacy means that some musical activities will be considered very important and others hardly recognized" (Erol 2012: 44–45).

In fact, the ban was more a muting of 'alaturka' music on air, not its extinction. Ayas makes a similar argument:

"For the Ottoman reformers, Westernization in music was only a showcase that will show the European powers that the Ottoman Empire is part of Europe politically. They had not any concern about changing the tastes or cultural identity of ordinary people or fighting directly against *alaturka*. However, republican reformers started a war against *alaturka*, dismissed it from the official and educational institutions, conducted insulting media campaigns against it and even prohibited *alaturka* broadcast on radio" (Ayas 2018: 100).

Ayas expands on the question of classification by taking the tango wave as an example: "Many popular genres were placed into higher positions in the hierarchy of musical taste simply due to their Western origin. For example, tango music which is in fact the music of poor people in Argentine, was supported by State radios beginning with the early republican period and as a result adopted by Westernized elites and transformed into an elite music in Turkey" (ibid.: 104). The same could be said about the parallel jazz wave. "In other words," as Erol summarizes, "the Turkish elite, in their attempt to defend a genuine Turkish identity between the East and the West, created their own musical 'Others'" (Erol 2012: 46). In this sense, the "music reform was an example of the most important symbolic violence aimed at imposing a particular vision of the state" (ibid.: 40).

However, the logic of classification applied also allowed for the success of the Kemalist music politics: Even if people could not be persuaded to appreciate Western or Turkish opera, they may still be interested in music politics through Western and Turkified tango and jazz, which offer a less lofty but still Western path.

4. The Return of the 'Other.' Music Cannot Be Stopped.

The return of the 'Other' started in 1940. During a parliamentary session, Kemalist music politics were criticized for the first time for neglecting 'alaturka' genres (see Bartsch 2011: 55). In the same year, "the municipal Istanbul Music Academy revived its ensembles for Ottoman-Turkish music [...], which then gave regular concerts, some of which were broadcast over the radio" (Greve 2017: 247–248). Greve goes on: "Although the nationalistic incrimination of Ottoman-Turkish music continued during the 1950s, the newly founded Radio Istanbul included Ottoman-Turkish music in its program" (ibid.: 248). Statistics even show a turnaround in dominance: "In 1962, *divan müzik* [Ottoman palace music] already comprised 26 percent of the programming of Radio Ankara, folk music only nine percent, Western light music 25 percent, and Western classical music 14 percent" (ibid.: 248). Even the rehabilitation of religious Ottoman music followed, starting from 1952, when hymns and recitations were broadcasted (see Bartsch 2011: 158).

A side effect was the emergence of a new discourse on Turkish music in the early 1940s. The head chief of radio, Vedat Nedim Tör, wrote in the *Radyo* issue from March 16, 1943, that it still remained unclear what 'Turkish' music was and should be, and what not. He argued for a music in progress, like 'under construction,' not yet fully defined (see Bartsch 2011: 187–188). Perhaps his stance was the one closest to the truth.

5. Kemalîst Radio in the 1940s. Listening to the Listeners and Unexpected Musical Waves.

Yet, part of the truth was also that tuning in to foreign radio during the ban, especially to Egyptian radio in Cairo, had enormous effects on the resurgence of the 'Other' in Turkey. The Egyptian wave took over with the outbreak of WWII, when the distribution of European films to Turkey stopped. As American films were instead entering the Turkish market via Cairo as distributional hub, Turkish cinemas were also provided with Egyptian films, which included Arabic singers and their music (see Ergin 2005: 72–73). The Turkish government reacted promptly with a ban on Arabic lyrics in Egyptian musical films, but “the response to the ban was to adapt the films by dubbing the lyrics of Arabic songs in Turkish. Close to one-hundred Egyptian movies were shown in this period from 1938 to 1948 and led to the creation of a music industry in which Turkish composers, singers, and orchestras were writing, singing, and playing musical pieces for Egyptian movies in Turkey” (ibid.). The whole development “resulted in a wave of Turkish musical movies imitating Egyptian movies in both musical and narrative aspects” (ibid.). This development finally nourished *Türk sanat müziği* [highly popular Turkish art music], *gazel*, and *arabesk* in the 1950s and 1960s (see ibid.: 78). Martin Stokes resumes: “[w]hat had been intended as a death blow turned out to be the kiss of life” (quoted in Ergin 2005: 73). Or as Ralph Poole puts it: “Accordingly, one can say that it is paradoxically due to the state-controlled music industry—especially restrictions on radio [...]—that Arabesk came into being” (Poole 2022: 241). Here, the Kemalists lost the ‘war of waves’ again, as undesired genres became part of the ‘musicscape’ (following up on Appadurai 1996) in Turkey, not only via foreign broadcasting but also with emerging new genres inside Turkey.

But in general, after Kemal’s death in 1938, Kemalîst music politics abandoned the hard approach of cultural engineering by force, yet continued the nationalization of radio, which had started in 1936/1937. Following the lifting of the ban, a more liberal attitude towards Turkish music genres emerged under the new president İsmet İnönü (see Bartsch 2011: 246–247). Even an audience feedback system was implemented in the newly founded periodical state magazine *Radyo*, which gave listeners the chance to articulate their demands and critiques through an opinion poll in 1948. The listeners seized their opportunity and showed a high degree of involvement (see ibid.: 212–226). Bartsch’s statements on audience feedback generally stem from this very detailed opinion poll and its statistics.

Another wave emerged in the 1940s alongside the above-mentioned Egyptian wave. In 1944, Kemalîst radio policies enhanced airtime for American music genres, giving especially American jazz music more airplay, thus making audible on which side the Turkish government tended to place its bet (see ibid.: 68, 144–145).

Unintentionally, this kicked off a jazz wave:

"A genuine jazz audience truly crystalized in the 1940s. This jazz trend reached to such a point that these enthusiastic fans bombarded the Ankara station with petitions demanding an increase in the 'jazz music hours.' Upon this growing enthusiasm, several jazz and dancing bands were formed both in the İstanbul and the Ankara radio stations. This unbridled enthusiasm [...] surprisingly spread to the small cities in the countryside. [...] Hence, the Cairo radio station was not the only unpredictable element in the Turkish music revolution. I would argue that it generated an uncontrolled enthusiasm for jazz as well" (Kolluoğlu 2019: 86–87).

Kolluoğlu identified another wave in these years, the mandolin wave:

"The Kemalist-nationalist intelligentsia, in the 1930s and 1940s, did not appreciate much the local, non-Muslim folk songs played by the mandolin. [...] The mandolin enthusiasm, I would suggest, was as widespread, uncontrolled and surprising as that of jazz. There were even some music followers desiring to hear mandolin in Turkish folk tunes and Ottoman high-art religious music" (ibid.: 88–89).

In 1945, even a *Mandolinat Takımı* [Mandolin Ensemble] was founded for the radio, which played both Western and Turkish folk music genres (see Bartsch 2011: 118).

Overall, the music genres favored by the audience after the ban did not conform to the idea of a Turkish national music as an opera based on *türkü*. And more difficulties arose:

"the radio officials and responsible authorities announced they were searching for 'talented' and 'educated' musicians in the radio journal. What they meant [...] was that the instrumentalists [had] sufficient knowledge on solfège skills and 'the Western vocal techniques.' [...] In fact, the hiring committee itself was not pleased with the 'quality' of the competitors despite the fact that there were over hundred applicants [...]. The head chief of the radio station, Vedat Nedim Tör describes the quality of competitors with words such as 'misery' and 'heartbreaking.' He complained that not even a single musician in the competition could 'recognize' the musical notation signs, and majority of the vocals sung by using their 'throats making sounds like they were ill'" (Kolluoğlu 2019: 94).

No wonder that the audible outcome of Turkish opera music efforts, for example by Ahmed Adnan Saygun, "were labeled as 'groans' even by the organic intellectual and ruling elites themselves" (ibid.: 96).

Although people were very critical of Turkish opera, the Western music approach was indeed appreciated when applied to arranging popular *türkü* (see Bartsch 2011: 182, 226). Thus, Gökalp's central concept of playing traditional Turkish songs using Western technique was widely accepted by the Turkish audience (see *ibid.*: 219). However, Bartsch makes it clear that the attempts to reform Turkish music did not start with Gökalp and the Kemalists. As early as the 19th century, music in the Ottoman Empire began to be Westernized, especially the *fasıl*, which evolved into entertainment music. The Kemalists took up this development, incorporating it into their ideological system and their cultural revolution. Therefore, the popularity of polyphonized *türkü* played on Western instruments is not necessarily a sign of the successful realization of the Turkish musical revolution but can also be seen as an extension of musical developments in the Ottoman Empire since the 19th century (see *ibid.*: 220, 249). However, the Kemalists' bet on polyphonizing monophonic songs from Turkish folk music using Western musical techniques and instruments, in order to create a polyphonic folk song canon, can be described as successful in terms of the popularity of these songs among the people (see *ibid.*: 226).

With the change in government following the elections in 1950, the Kemalist music revolution came to an end and the liberalization in music politics on radio gained drive. Together with an Americanization in the urban way of life (see Zürcher 2017: 231–232), it was not European classical music that reached radio listeners in the late 1950s, but rather new Western pop music. In the early 1960s, this kicked off Turkish versions of Western pop, called *aranjman* [arrangements], being strongly supported with regular airtime by Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) (see Uyar 2021: 111). Even a Turkish pop music genre of its own followed in the mid 1960s, called *Anadolu pop* [Anatolian pop]. It is a pop genre mainly based on Anatolian folk tunes, yet played with Western pop music instruments. At the same time, in the 1960s, (post-)Ottoman-Arab genres like *Türk sanat müziği*, *fasıl/şarkı*, *gazel*, *kanto*, or other forms of *piyasa müziği* [urban entertainment music, including e.g. belly dance] got mixed with Western pop music. This led to the development of *arabesk* in the late 1960s, a new post-Ottoman genre. Both *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk* had their relations to and with Western pop music (see Bartsch 2011: 252). Here, Gökalp's idea of an East-West synthesis in music came to new life—yet in another, unforeseen way: *Arabesk* was not a synthesis of Western classical music with Turkish folk music, but rather a synthesis of different Arab and Persian musics with Western popular music. This development was even discussed at the first music congress, which took place in Ankara in 1988. The unanimous opinion expressed there was that the Kemalist music revolution had failed and that the popular *arabesk* had taken the place originally intended for Turkish national music (see *ibid.*: 57).

But radio policies also came into play unintentionally in the birth of *Anadolu pop*. “In the 1930s the criterion the Ministry of Interior Affairs employed for music broadcasting on the radio [...] was ‘playing songs [*türkü*] that are composed with the application of western technique and played by musicians who have knowledge of western music’” (Ergin 2005: 71). Exactly this criterion was later implemented as mandatory requirement for the highly popular *Altın Mikrofon* [Golden Microphone] pop music contest and complemented with the mandatory requirement of using Western pop music instruments when playing *türkü*. *Altın Mikrofon* then kicked off *Anadolu pop* in 1965 (see Lund 2026/2013: 49).

As the radio audience resisted the officially promoted Western classical music and the new Turkish national music by first turning to Arab radio stations and by later favoring *arabesk*, the evaluation of Kemalist music politics was, for a long time, overshadowed by its high-profile failure to introduce a Turkish national opera and Turkified European classical music.

Nevertheless, in some respects the Kemalist music policies were successful—for example, in establishing the acceptance of certain Western musical structures and elements in combination with popular *türkü*, and in introducing Western genres such as jazz and tango. Indeed, in the 1940s the *Radyo Dans Orkestrası* [Radio Dance Orchestra] of Radio Ankara consisted of two orchestras, the *Radyo Tango Orkestrası* [Radio Tango Orchestra] and the *Radyo Caz Orkestrası* [Radio Jazz Orchestra] (see Bartsch 2011: 115). Jazz and tango were the most popular Western musical genres among listeners, as radio listener feedback statistics show at the end of the 1940s (ibid.: 223). But one should bear in mind, that the Western genres of jazz and tango were also transformed into Anatolian jazz and Anatolian tango in a sort of accordance with the Kemalist doctrine of synthesis (see ibid.: 143). Later, in the 1960s, both music genres, in their Turkified styles, served as blueprints for the development of the even more popular *Anadolu pop* as a kind of Turkified Western pop.

6. Reevaluation of Kemalist Radio Politics. Failure and Success.

In summary: In order to build a new Turkish nation, it was necessary for the Kemalists to develop a new common ground and to forge a Turkified cultural identity. This identity should encompass all ethnicities living within the country's borders regardless of their differences—or abolish those differences.

The process of nation building was achieved through a kind of internal colonization, in which the new Kemalist government also tried to appease (or suppress) the numerous interethnic and interreligious armed conflicts throughout the country.

The strict top-down process of the Kemalist movement in the early years of the Turkish Republic (c. 1920s–1940s) included the devaluation and, for a time, the ban of Ottoman-Arab music genres on radio, as well as a dual approach towards Westernization. This approach on the one hand consisted in the promotion of a newly established Turkish national music using Western classical style for opera as well as for *türkü*, and on the other hand in the dissemination of Western classical and popular music genres through state radio programs.

As the radio audience resisted the Western classical music and the new Turkish opera and instead tuned in to foreign radio stations, Kemalist music politics was considered a failure for a long time. Nonetheless, Kemalist music politics achieved some of its objectives, including the recognition of certain Western musical components in conjunction with popular *türkü* and the introduction of highly regarded Western popular genres such as jazz and tango. These genres were subsequently also transformed into Anatolian jazz and Anatolian tango, adopting the Kemalist idea of synthesis in a new way. Later, in the 1960s, this musical thinking supported the development of the even more popular *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk*.

Music for revolution—a failure in terms of manipulating the masses through top-down radio music politics; a success, however, in terms of directly supporting Western popular genres and indirectly supporting Turkish popular music genres that were appreciated by the masses and Anatolian, respectively 'alaturka' and Western in identity. Another indirect outcome is *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk*, two very popular genres that also acquired the notion of protest music—albeit to different extents—in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. Once more, genres for (another) revolution (see Ramm 2020; Söylemez 2022).

However, *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk* were not only connected to disruptive revolutionary aspirations but also served to stabilize the political agendas of ruling governments. A comparative look at Brazil might be of interest here as well. In Brazil, it was not a newspaper contest like *Altın Mikrofon* (1965) in Turkey, which gave way to *Anadolu pop*, but rather the TV show *Jovem Guarda* [Young Guard], which promoted the new beat music in Brazil.

Jovem Guarda was also the name of the musical style that originated from this TV show, starting in 1965. The style no longer offered Brazilian-Portuguese versions of international pop songs—a common practice in Brazil since the 1950s and parallel to Turkish *aranjman*, which provided versions of international pop songs in Turkish. Instead, it gave way to a musical movement featuring original songs using Western pop instruments, comparable to *Anadolu pop*. Although *Jovem Guarda*’s romantic ballads were rooted in traditional Brazilian music, the typical pop elements stood out (see Tupinambá de Ulhôa/De Marchi/Torres Borges 2024: 33–34).

Jovem Guarda’s relationship with the pop music of the United States interested the new Brazilian government, a military dictatorship with ties to the United States—and both the TV show and *Jovem Guarda*’s music were supported by the government (see *ibid.*). Thus, despite the counterculture lexicon and looks, and the use of electric musical instruments, *Jovem Guarda* music was officially supported—just as *Anadolu pop* was revolutionary in terms of music and supported by official newspaper media connected to state powers, as a means of implementing an American way of life in Turkey. In conclusion, it can be said that these musical styles are subject to ambivalent evaluation, a characteristic often associated with pop music in non-Western countries. Like *Jovem Guarda*, *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk* were both revolutionary musics challenging an existing system, yet also used to consolidate it.

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Holger Lund

THE AESTHETICS
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:
WHAT IS
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?

Updated and adapted version of:

Holger Lund (2011).

"The Aesthetics of Imperfection and Hybridization:

What Is so Interesting about

Turkish Funk and Pop Music of the 1960s and 1970s?"

Oscillation Series, ed. by Shintaro Miyazaki,

now retrievable as

<https://web.archive.org/web/20150124055939/>

<http://www.shintaro-miyazaki.com/archiv/sonictheory/index-p%3D474.html>.

Turkish funk and pop music of the 1960s and 1970s is very little known outside Turkey, though its special character makes it worthy of consideration. For example, Moğollar's "Çığırık" (1972) offers an initial insight into what this music sounds like. Not much research has been done on the subject (Van Waes no date; Reier 2009; Aya 2001), and this paper, while imperfect, is a small attempt to take things a step further.

Today, the periphery is the new center, and B-music (following Andy Votel's term¹) has become the new A-music—just think, for example, of genres like *cumbia digital* or *favela funk*. More and more people are focusing on phenomena of hybridization, where the former periphery (non-Western cultures) and the former center (Western culture) have come to intersect. Ex-B-music is now regarded as a model for a future A-music, and reissues and compilations are coming out constantly to prove this development, especially over the last two or three years.²

I am a white middle-class German—how did I get in touch with Turkish music? In 2006, the L.A. record label Stones Throw put the *Stones Throw Podcast #12* online, called "Turkish Funk Mix" by beat producer Egon (Egon 2006), and in 2007 they followed up with a proper release, the hip-hop-style double album *Dr. No's Oxpériment* by DJ and producer Oh No, which was based exclusively on Turkish funk and pop music samples.

Hip-hop producers and beat creators are continuously searching for new beats, finding fresh material in the former periphery. As an example, one could mention DJ Not-I, who has worked with the track mentioned above, Moğollar's "Çığırık." His mashup of "Touch It Çığırık" (feat. Busta Rhymes and Moğollar) was released online only as a digital file in 2008.³

But what is so special about Turkish funk and pop music? Simplifying things a little, one could say that Turkish funk and pop music developed its specific aesthetic through imperfection and hybridization.

The term imperfection has to be put into relation. Imperfect—compared to what? Here the standard of comparison is the sound of Western pop music produced in technologically well-equipped Western studios with all the means of high fidelity, effects, filters, equalization, and so on.

The term hybridization is used in its biological sense, meaning something which is a product of two different species that have been crossbred. A hybrid is something consisting of different origins, transgressing the old order of the former species to build up something new.

Unless stated otherwise, all online sources in this text were accessed on April 29, 2026.

1 Andy Votel is part of the worldwide network and record label Finders Keepers. Here, he released three various-artist compilations called *B-MUSIC—Cross Continental Record Raid Road Trip* (2007), *B-MUSIC—DRIVE IN, TURN ON, FREAK OUT* (2008), and *B-Music—Radio Galaxia* (2010).

2 See the releases of the already mentioned Finders Keepers or releases of record labels like Academy, Analog Africa, Now Again, Numero Group, Soul Jazz, Soundway, Strut, World Psychedelic Funk Classics, and many more.

3 See <https://freelistenonline.com/artist/dj+Not-I>, Track 62.

Coming back to Turkish pop music: Where did it all begin? In 1965, the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* held the first edition of an annual music contest. First attempts of imitating Western pop music had been undertaken since the start of the 1960s, but the language barrier was hard to overcome. Accordingly, the most estimated band in Turkey was not The Beatles, but rather The Shadows or The Ventures, whose instrumental music did not pose the problem of incomprehensible words. At this point, *Hürriyet* had an idea: the lyrics of the pop tunes should be written in Turkish, or traditional songs should be rearranged in the style of Western pop music, with electric instruments.

What did this music sound like? One of the winners of 1967 was *Yabancılar* with "Ağıt." The song brings up a psychedelic feeling and some Ventures style by combining traditional elements with an electric instrumentation. The inconstant dynamics, swelling up and going down, are on the original vinyl itself.

The contest organized by *Hürriyet* became so important because the newspaper released the music on vinyl and made the bands tour the country, laying the foundations for a distinctively Turkish pop and funk music.

What are its characteristics? Imperfection and hybridization, as stated before. Imperfection had to do with the technology used in the studios, with the instruments the musicians were playing, as well as with sound and mixing. Till the mid-1970s, some sources say even until the end of the 1970s, no studio existed in the country that would have measured up to the Western standard. Electronic instruments were new to the Turkish musicians; encouraged by the *Hürriyet* contest, they electrified their own traditional instruments like the *saz* and burst into the low-end 'studios' they had, where they went under the treatment of sound engineers and producers who often learned their craft through the experience. BUT: This was not a disadvantage, on the contrary. It makes the music rough, mysterious, psychedelic, unpredictable, and surprising, full of exciting energy, and did not smooth things down by a too professional-sounding technology and too clever producers, like Phil Spector's so-called Wall of Sound did with The Beatles. Another, rather jazzy example of that energy delivers Emin Fındıkoğlu's instrumental "Çeçen Kızı" (1973), which combines e-saz sounds on a rare groove setting.

The sound technology used often provides a life of its own, some sort of 'arte povera' sound with lots of reverb especially on the voices, a thin drum sound, and a bass ranging more in the middle. Often the sound engineers pushed a certain instrument or a voice drastically to the fore- or the back-ground, volume levels are therefore very disruptive and inconstant, sounding strange to Western ears. This can be observed in some of the following listening examples.

The interest of the musicians in both following the tradition and making experiments at the same time led to the phenomenon of hybridization. Turkish musicians and producers built up something extraordinary, blending Western and Turkish cultures in a special way.

Again, it was *Hürriyet* that promoted the idea. New interpretations of traditional Turkish music were allowed in the contest, as long as they were electrified. That rule was the definitive starting point for blending Western music, which was based on its media technology, and Turkish music culture, based on its structures as well as on its instruments.

The next three examples offer different approaches of blending traditional and Western music, ranging from more traditional to more funky interpretations of the Turkish folk tune “Zühtü.”

Sevda Alpay’s “Şu Samsunun Evleri” (1975) is a version of a very similar tune and done in a belly dance-orchestra style, but the saz is electrified. Note the volume fluctuations of the band in relation to the voice.

Oya’s “Zühtü” (1976) has more Western instruments, although in the whole it is not too far away from the Sevda Alpay example before.

And Esin Afsar’s “Zühtü” (1976) is played mainly on Western instruments, only a flanged electric saz remains, and it is a funkier interpretation.

These three examples show the whole range of possible references from traditional to Western music.

It seems as if Turkish music had just been waiting for electrification, so easily could its structure, instruments, and compositions be transferred to a new Turkish pop and funk music. This can be shown in the numerous in-between tunes, which move on a gradual scale between traditional folk and new Turkish pop music. Bedia Akartürk’s “Yaylanın Çimenine” (1970s) is an example of traditional Turkish music, already sounding a little proto-funky. Some traditional tunes integrate a drum set or an electrified saz, but stay more or less traditional in composition and vocal melody, like Arif Sağ’s “Bizim Şarkımız” (1974).

Other tunes are made with pop instruments—electric bass, electric guitar or saz, organ, and drum set—but still remain traditional in composition and vocal melody, like Hakkı Bulut’s “Ben Köylüyüm” (1975). And some tunes are based on Western pop music structures but are played with a mainly Turkish instrumental setting as Fikret Kızılok’s “Söyle Sazım” (1970).

There seem to have been no restrictions; many musical concepts were developed between traditional and Western pop music, mixing them, changing them, building hybrids. A special hybrid is realized by Sevil and Ayla’s “Bebek.” In 1974, Sevil and Ayla took Led Zeppelin’s “Whole Lotta Love” from 1969 and blended it with Barış Manço’s “Bebek” from 1968, which was a really clever idea. Here, Manço’s “Bebek” was plugged onto Led Zeppelin’s “Whole Lotta Love” both in terms of melody and lyrics, producing a hybrid that covers two numbers in one.

Summing up, one could say that an imperfect, low-end media technology—right the opposite of today's normative autotune—and individuals handling it in an imperfect way, can be of great value for the music. Whereas a too-perfect production can strangle the music it aims to enhance.

Setenay Gültekin has recently shown that modifications like the electrification of the saz were completed by modifications of guitar effect pedals. The musician Elektro Hafız had told, that “in electronic stores in Ankara, where they were selling a pedal called ‘nesli,’ a version of the pedal that they rearranged from Leslie pedals: ‘Everything connects in reversed ways. You cannot do it right. When you ask them why they are made like this, they say it is much easier for bağlama players, and the sound is also explicitly designed for bağlama with a unique texture’” (Gültekin 2025). Gültekin continues: “Other examples of new types of instruments, such as çağlama, microtonal guitar, and pedal inventions to catch Neşet Ertaş tone, should be mentioned at this point” (ibid.) (see fig. 1). The Neşet Ertaş Tone Pedal shows that the distinctive sound of the early e-saz serves as a reference and model for today's sound expression.



Fig. 1: Neşet Ertaş Tone Pedal.
Source: Gültekin 2025: 470.



Fig. 2: Bojidar's Alaturka Ritm-Box (RB1200), Istanbul 1970s. Source: Hainbach 2025. A big thank you to

Here, one should also mention inventions like the DIY-based Bojidar Alaturka Ritm-Box (RB1200, see fig. 2), which allows to cope with standard non-Western rhythms used in Turkey and with special sounds needed for them like the wooden spoon sound (*kaşık*).

Savio Banholzer for pointing this out to me.

The imperfect production of music was also the choice method of operation in other 'B-music' countries like Lebanon, Iran, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Senegal, to name just a few, at the same period of time. But it seems none of these non-Western countries could provide such a strong musical identity and such a quantity and quality of music productions—except for India's Bollywood music production. The special manner of hybridization, following the *Hürriyet* principles, surely has to do with that. Looking at the cultural situation, some other aspects play a role, like the Atatürk spirit of modernization, the long democratic period in Turkey from 1961 till the end of the 1970s, the socio-economic development enabling both music production and consumption.

To conclude: the recognizable aesthetic of imperfection is not a result of a Kittlerian idea of misuse of media technology (Kittler 2014/1988), but more the point of a non-intentional intersection where low-end technology and limited know-how came together with the necessary enthusiasm for a new way of expression and self-definition (Gültekin 2025: 470), open to build hybrids not as a way of cultural clashes but of cultural mashes. This makes the Turkish pop and funk music so adoptable and interesting, even for a white middle-class German.

Following Byung-Chul Han's concept of hybrid culture, based on Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, the voice of the 'Other' is already present in the self, as identity is based on difference (Han 2022/2005). According to Bhabha, hybridity "reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter [...] the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority" (Bhabha 1994: 114). Perhaps we can hear Turkish pop and funk music of the 1960s and 1970s as both: Western music through Turkish music and Turkish music through Western music. And sometimes, and that is interesting, no one's the boss, hierarchies are melting down—which could also become interesting for the future of music, since the future always lies in the past. Perhaps, as Byung-Chul Han says, we are today "approaching a culture [...] that, expressed in acoustic terms, has become a boundless, even site-less hypercultural acoustic space in which the most diverse sounds are jammed together side by side" (Han 2022/2005: 13), a hypercultural condition of juxtaposition, simultaneity, and coexistence. And perhaps Turkish funk and pop music could be regarded as such a hypercultural sonic space—a space we could learn from.

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Holger Lund

ANATOLIAN
ROCK
:
PHENOMENA
OF
HYBRIDIZATION

Updated and adapted version of:

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Anatolian rock—what does it sound like? Why does it sound the way it sounds? How has it started and how can this music be contextualized? These are some simple questions to begin with. I will try to answer them following a musico-ethnological approach, which is rooted in Alan P. Merriam and Jacques Attali's ideas of music as culture and music as politics, complemented with a historical perspective (Merriam 1964; Attali 1985).¹

So, what does it sound like? A first and early example is a tune called "Abudik Gubudik Twist" by Adnan Varveren, recorded around 1965. This tune is played with Turkish instruments, sung partly in Turkish partly in English, and shows a smooth, apparently natural transition from Turkish folk to American twist music. It contains both Anatolian folk and Western pop. The title, "Abudik Gubudik," means "weird," "strange," or "odd." In fact, this tune is mocking twist music. We will later come back to this tune and its specifics.

1 Many thanks to Volga Coban and Akin Kazuk for their helpful corrections and comments throughout this paper.



Fig. 1: Boat on the Bosphorus named after Barış Manço.
Photo: Holger Lund (2013).

The First Wave of Global Pop

To provide some historical background: Anatolian rock belongs to the first wave of global pop, which took place from the end of the 1950s through to the 1980s worldwide, including countries such as Uzbekistan, Nepal, North Korea, and Mongolia. After the first wave of global pop, the second wave followed, so-called 'world music,' which was released on labels like Peter Gabriel's Real World Records (1989 onward). Like the earlier 'exotica' genre it was primarily produced by Western music companies for the Western market and its aural tourists (Regev 2013: 23). From 2000 onward, a third wave of global pop emerged, so-called 'hyper pop.' Examples for the latter are offered by M.I.A. with tunes like "Bad Girls" (2012).

Also, relevant here are tendencies in hip-hop to use beats from all over the world, like the hip-hop-style double album *Dr. No's Oexperiment* by US DJ and producer Oh No, released in 2007 and based exclusively on Turkish funk and pop music samples. Another example is Action Bronson's use of Ferdi Özbeğen's jazzy "Köprüden Geçti Gelin" (1969), which he sampled for his tune "The Madness" (2012).

Back to the origins: three more short examples of Turkish participation in the first wave of global pop will give you a more precise idea of what we are talking about. The chosen examples include some of the most popular figures of Anatolian rock: Erkin Koray, Barış Manço, and Cem Karaca. Barış Manço was the most popular of them all, and even today ships are named after him (fig. 1).

- Example 1: Erkin Koray—"Cemalim" (1974)
The music is played with the typical instrumental setting of a rock band, it sounds like Anglo-American rock, until the guitar comes in and composition, melody, and harmonies become Turkish. Indeed, the composition is based on a Turkish folk tune, a *türkü*, composed by Refik Basaran and entitled "Şen Olasın Ürgüp." The Turkishness is enforced through the lyrics sung in the language and with a phrasing typical for Turkish song.
- Example 2: Barış Manço—"Dere Boyu Kavaklar (Kolbastı)" (1975)
Manço's "Dere Boyu Kavaklar (Kolbastı)" is a *türkü*, from the Black Sea region. The intro is performed on a Turkish instrument, an electrified saz, combined with electric guitar. The singing is again in Turkish, composition, melody, and harmonies as well, while the rest of the tune is Western, as is the band's fashion sense, featuring long hair and some psychedelic clothing.
- Example 3: Cem Karaca—"Obur Dünya" (1973)
The music starts in a Turkish folk manner with the zurna, a double-reed wind instrument, playing solo, then Turkish percussion jumps in combined with a drum set, sounding almost traditional, until an electric guitar begins to play alongside the Turkish vocals. Later, an electric bass and a hard drumbeat transfer the tune into a Western musical idiom.

These four sound examples from Varveren's "Abudik Gubudik Twist" to Karaca show different ways of building musical hybrids. Two patterns are involved: the relation between the different parts and the amalgamation of these parts. Even though the language is still separated into English and Turkish parts, Adnan Varveren's tune shows strong amalgamation. The twist sounds grow naturally out of the Turkish folk music, as if there were no ruptures between the styles at all. In contrast, Cem Karaca sticks to a sort of juxtaposition, where a Turkish folk part precedes a Western-dominated rock part. Erkin Koray and Barış Manço build a continuous mix of both Turkish and Western elements to construct their musical hybrids. Karaca, Koray, and Manço are all singing continuously in Turkish, combining Turkishness at a linguistic level with Western rock music.²

2 The complete picture, of course, includes Koray, Manço, and Karaca singing cover versions of Western pop with Turkish lyrics and also own songs written in English.

If we look at the history of these musical hybrids, three key dates stand out: 1957, 1965, and 1923. This order is not chronological, but helpful to understand the development.

First 1957: European, Arabic, and Turkish radio stations played surf rock by the Tornados or the Ventures and films with Elvis Presley and Bill Haley were shown in Turkish cinemas. This inspired musicians like Erkin Koray to start playing cover versions of rock 'n' roll tunes on the new electric guitar as early as 1957 (see Wald 2025). According to recent research by Elijah Wald "the first rock 'n' roll band seems to have been formed in 1955 by students at the Naval Academy led by the drummer Durul Gence, who played covers of US hits, and began performing in clubs and concerts outside the school under a pseudonym." Wald also brings Erol Büyükburç into play, who "began singing US and European songs with the İsmet Siral band in the late 1950s." Wald states: "In 1961 he [Büyükburç] recorded a series of singles on the Odeon label, beginning with Neil Sedaka's 'One Way Ticket' b/w the Diamonds' 'Little Darling' and Sedaka's 'Oh, Carol' b/w his own English-language composition, 'Little Lucy,' which were very popular, and prompted national tours on which he mixed English-language rock 'n' roll and Turkish folk and pop songs" (ibid.). It seems that Barış Manço's single "The Jet/Twist in USA" was the first pop single by a Turkish artist, released in Turkey in 1962. Therefore, it took some years of playing cover versions of American pop music until the first release of this music on vinyl. So, it seems Büyükburç and Manço have been the earliest ones to release pop music on records in Turkey.

In 1962, İlham Gencer covered Bob Azzam's "C'est écrit dans le ciel" under the title "Bak Bir Varmış Bir Yokmuş." He was the first to fully realize a cover in Turkish. In 1966, Erkin Koray released his first single with "It's So Long" on one side and his own version of the Rolling Stones' "Paint It Black," called "Bir Eylül Akşamı" on the flip. Among the first to leave the cover versions for Anatolian folk music was Tülay German with her song "Burçak Tarlası," released in 1964. Turkish musicians, including female artists like Tülay German, Ajda Pekkan, Rana Alagöz, and Ayla Dikmen were among the earliest participants in the first wave of global pop worldwide.³

"Burçak Tarlası" by Tülay German is already a fully developed example for a musical hybrid, a blueprint for what would follow historically, as demonstrated by the musical examples at the beginning: Turkish folk and Western elements combined in language, instrumentation, rhythm, melody, and harmonies. In 1966, the term *Anadolu pop* was coined by keyboardist Murat Ses, who had joined the band Silüetler, and then in 1971 the term was used as the title of an LP by Moğollar (fig. 2) and again in 1983 by Ersen ve Dadaşlar (fig. 3).

3 Later on, female artists became dominant: "The Turkish pop industry was once dominated by female vocal funk and synthesizer pop [...] over a 30 years gestation period" (Votel 2013).

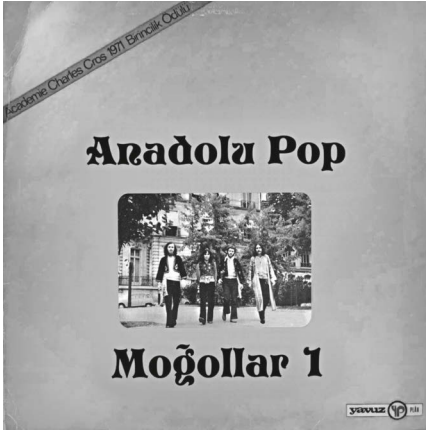


Fig. 2: Record cover of *Anadolu Pop* by Moğollar (1971).

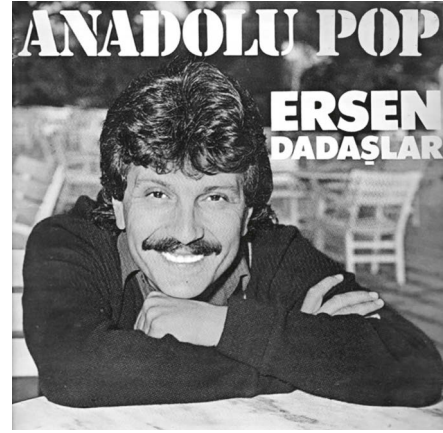


Fig. 3: Record cover for *Anadolu Pop* by Ersen ve Dadaşlar (1983).

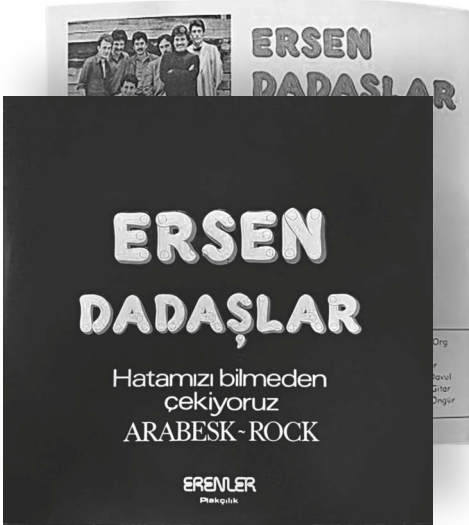


Fig. 4: Record cover for *Arabesk-Rock* by Ersen ve Dadaşlar (1980).

The term changed to *Anadolu rock*, meaning Anatolian rock, a notion most probably introduced by Moğollar (see Karahasanoğlu/Skoog 2009: 60–61). The term *arabesk rock* also emerged later (fig. 4).

All these terms were used to describe the same synthesis of Western pop or rock and Anatolian folk (Spicer 2011: 42). Many of these tunes were based on *türkü*, often written by composers like Neşet Ertaş, Aşık Mahzuni, and Aşık Veysel. And just to be clear: the term Anatolian rock is not bound to Anatolians playing rock music, but used as an umbrella term for all sorts of music which combine different styles of Western pop and rock, psychedelic, funk, disco, progressive, folk, and so on with Anatolian folk music. At the same time all these terms function as a differentiation, separating a specific version of pop-rock music from purely traditional styles of music on the one hand and from Western pop-rock music on the other (Regev 2013: 53).

In 1965, the second important date, a very popular music contest took place that included record releases. The contest was named *Altın Mikrofon* [Golden Microphone] and was initiated and organized by the Turkish newspaper Hürriyet. The requirement was to compose a new song in Turkish or to rearrange a traditional Turkish tune, which should be performed in a Western style incorporating electric instruments. The significance of this contest cannot be overestimated (Lund 2026/2011: 29; Spicer 2011: 42). It led to a music, which was no longer just copying The Beatles or Buddy Holly in language, composition, or instrumentation, as was the norm in many other countries participating in the first wave of global pop. This contest opened the gates for the development of a specific Turkish hybrid—Anatolian rock, with a fundament in Turkish language, Turkish compositions, and Turkish instruments, combined with modern electric instruments and a modern rock approach.

This contest also changed the music market. The big old record companies (Odeon, Pathé, and HMV) which had dominated the Turkish market so far, backed out because of piracy practices and a difficult legal situation (Yazıcıoğlu 2010: 241). With the vinyl record releases of the *Altın Mikrofon* contest winners numerous local, often musician-owned Turkish record labels began to flourish (see Stokes 1999: 134)⁴ and “were providing an avenue of creative expression” (Özbek 1997: 174), something which the global major companies probably could not have done the same way.⁵

A New Music for a New Nation

One part of the hybrid, the Anatolian one, leads us back to the third important date, 1923. The decline of the Ottoman Empire as a history of territorial losses shrunk the territory down to the frontiers of the Turkish Republic in 1924. Replacing the old Islamic Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic with its leader Kemal Atatürk tried to invent a new Turkish nation, based on secularism and the project of modernization through westernization. What Kemal Atatürk and his chief ideologist Ziya Gökalp, who wrote the book *The Principles of Turkism* (1923), did was nothing less than nation building (see Hecker 2012: 2; Yazıcıoğlu 2010: 240). And a new nation needed a new music, for sure. Therefore, the classical Arabic-Islamic Ottoman music had to be discarded and instead the research for a ‘true’ Turkish music started.

4 One of the most important labels was Sayan. When the *Altın Mikrofon* became a popular song contest, Sayan started to release *Anadolu pop* and *rock*, and almost all artists in the 1960s were on the label's roster.

5 This is something special about the Turkish music market compared to other countries taking part in the first wave of global pop. It was an almost independent music market, with some more important companies, but also a huge number of smaller players releasing music (see also Votel 2013).

And it was found by Gökalp in Anatolia, as Anatolian folk music was a pre-Islamic, secular music and for him it “represented the essence of Turkish culture” (Hecker 2012: 2).

So, the new music for the new nation consisted partly of a very old, even pre-Islamic and pre-Ottoman music. For the other part, Gökalp was convinced that European classical music had to be regarded as the peak of Western civilization. Pierre Hecker relates: “With this in mind, he proposed a synthesis of Anatolian and European music traditions” (ibid.). The main point here is that Gökalp’s political strategy for infusing a new music into the new nation from the start in 1923 contained the idea of a “modernized” and “westernized” Turkish folk music (Özbek 1997: 182). Hence, as Daniel Spicer says, “conditions were perfect for Western pop music to take root” (Spicer 2011: 42). Martin Stokes calls this concept “nationalistic cosmopolitanism” (Stokes 2000)⁶ as part of a musical strategy of the state, welcoming Western music to merge with indigenous folk music, opening the path for the aforementioned other two dates, the start of rock ‘n’ roll in 1957 and the Hürriyet song contest in 1965.

6 Regev brings in another concept, that of an aesthetic cosmopolitanism. It “refers to the ongoing formation, in late modernity, of world culture as one complexly interconnected entity, in which social groupings [...] share wide common grounds in their aesthetic perceptions, expressive forms, and cultural practices” (Regev 2013: 3).

According to Regev this aesthetic cosmopolitanism is based on an “expressive isomorphism” (ibid.: 30), that means “music consciously created and produced by using amplification, electric and electronic instruments, sophisticated recording equipment (including samplers) [...] filtering all these through sound editing, modification, and manipulation devices” (ibid.: 18).

Furthermore, Regev stresses the “status of pop-rock music as a signifier of a universal modernity” (ibid.: 4), and describes non-Western pop-rock music as a “quest for status, participation, and parity in the modern world culture” (ibid.: 10).

While this seems to be quite true, Stokes’ paradoxical expression brings the intersection of national and global components much more in focus and his terms are preferred here. The nationalistic component is the point of view from which a cosmopolitan perspective is developed for the case of Turkish pop-rock music. Still Regev’s ideas on musical nationalism have their value: “The historical musical event of pop-rock is [...] the event that altered the way musical nationalism [...] is practiced and experienced.” It “admitted openness to ‘otherness.’ Musical nationalism has mutated from being organized, primarily, around acoustic sonorities to a realm in which amplified, electric and electronic sounds are the standard mode of making music.”

And “it afforded [...] the execution of a change in cultural orientation from being directed toward separatism to one that embodies aesthetic cosmopolitanism” (all quotes ibid.: 96).

But history wasn't that easy. The attempts to construct a new Turkish music were a big failure at first. In the 1930s, Turkish radio played Western music like waltzes, tango, and jazz as well as European operas in Turkish translation. In government-sponsored ballrooms, Western music was preferred, Turkish music was even banned from the radio for several months (see Özbek 1997: 182; Yazıcıoğlu 2010: 241). But Western polyphony failed to attract, and in consequence the people turned to Arab radio stations, especially Egyptian and Lebanese, instead of the Turkish ones, and Eastern infusions became increasingly popular.⁷ Later on, parallel to the *Anadolu pop* and *rock* music in the 1960s, an Arab-like music was invented, called *arabesk*, relying mainly on Eastern music traditions. An example from the year 1973 by one of the most famous *arabesk* singers is Orhan Gencebay's "Dertler Benim Olsun." Typical for the *arabesk* genre are the singing in Arabic style and the Arabized strings. Before we come to the relationship between *Anadolu pop* and *arabesk*, which gives character to both styles, we should take a look at the East-West-conflict underlying each style, which could also be heard in the four examples of Anatolian rock provided at the beginning.

The Electrification

The Eastern music tradition is connected to the music of the Ottoman past, meaning a music that ranges from Asian to Persian as well as from Arabic to Balkan sources. To simplify things a little, one could say that the Eastern music tradition is *makam*-based, consisting of defined types of interval structures and melodic structures used in classical Turkish music. It is monophonic and microtonal music. A typical instrument for this kind of music would be the *saz*, which later became very prominent in *arabesk* music. Western music tradition on the contrary is well-tempered and polyphonic like European classical music. A typical instrument for this kind of music would be the piano or the violin. The new Anglo-American pop-rock music had the guitar as its most typical instrument, well established in European classical music, but now electrified. This electrification made it a symbol for a young, modern, and urban music.

The opposition of 'saz vs. electric guitar' symbolically shows the antipodes, which, however, were not antipodes at all in the actual musical practice. Moreover, historically the guitar and the *saz* are not antipodes, but rather cordophonic instruments which go back to ancient Arabic-Persian instruments such as the *santur* (Votef 2013). All types of mixtures of East and West

7 For a more thorough discussion of the concepts of 'East' and 'West' in this context, see Lund 2026/2020: 145.

took place, in *arabesk* as well as in Anatolian rock, and perhaps the perfect symbol for these mixtures is the electrified saz as an old Eastern instrument driven by modern Western electricity. The range goes from the *arabesk* singer and saz player Orhan Gencebay to electric saz players Hakkı Bulut and Arif Sağ, who played both *arabesk* and Anatolian rock, sometimes even mixed, to electric guitar players like Erkin Koray and Barış Manço.

Example 1: In Orhan Gencebay's "Hatasız Kul Olmaz" (1977) one can hear an acoustic saz but also an electric saz. Typical for Gencebay is the string section.⁸

Example 2: In Arif Sağ's "Osman Pehlivan (Püfde)" (1973), the electric saz, allegedly invented by either Sağ himself or by Erkin Koray, is in the foreground, with a lot of wah-wah effect on it.

Example 3: Despite being one of the most 'Western' musicians in Turkey, Barış Manço's version of "Gönül Dağı" (1973), a *türkü* composed by Neşet Ertaş, nevertheless relies heavily on an 'Eastern' *arabesk* string section.

To sum up: *arabesk* and Anatolian rock music were developed in parallel during the 1960s and coexisted until the end of the 1970s. Each style has Eastern and Western elements: the 'Eastern' *arabesk* has Western strings and is electrified, the 'Western' Anatolian rock has Eastern instruments like the saz or the zurna, as featured in the introduction of the Cem Karaca example above. Therefore, it is proposed that the opposition of *arabesk* vs. Anatolian rock should not be stressed as much as it has been done before (see Stokes 1999: 134–35; Bulut/Kaya 2010), but to have a closer look at the *arabesk*-Anatolian rock hybrids, which are not seldom at all. Here are two more striking examples of what makes Turkish music so rich in building hybrids:

Example 1: In Yıldırım Çınar's "Kıbrız Kızı" (1974)⁹ rock drums and an electric saz are used, amalgamated with a traditional folk style in respect to composition, rhythm (asymmetrical 9/8), melody, harmonies, and instrumentation.

Example 2: In Yıldırım Çınar's "Komşunun Kızı" (1974) deep hard drums can be heard, amalgamated with traditional folk style elements, but this time coming more from a rock approach due to the straight rhythm.

8 The Western violin was introduced to *makam*-based Turkish music between the 1930s and 1960s, due to Gökalp's and Atatürk's Westernization of the Turkish music as well as the influence of Egyptian music, which had already incorporated string sections into its popular music tradition. This kind of music was used by one of the first *arabesk* musicians, Suat Sayın, as reference (see Özbek 1997: 175).

9 In fact, not Yıldırım Çınar but his arranger Zafer Dilek should be credited for the hybrid here. Dilek has brought Western elements to Çınar's music which usually, without him as arranger, are not present.

Listening to these two examples one gets the clear idea that Yıldırım Çınar and his arranger Zafer Dilek had studied the developments in rock music and were now constructing an amalgam between traditional folk elements and Western rock music. Is this Anatolian rock? Yes, as it contains a Western rock drum set played in a rock style. Is this *arabesk* music? Yes, that too, just listen to the *arabesk* singing. It is a hybrid of Anatolian rock and *arabesk*, of which so many exist, often neglected in music perception and music studies since Western DJ and beat-making cultures are not able to work with asymmetrical rhythms and *arabesk* singing.

All the more: *arabesk* music has a 'bad' reputation, especially in Turkey itself. This has to do with its public. *Arabesk* was made for the poor rural immigrants and workers, living in informal *gecekondu* settlements in the periphery of the big cities like Istanbul. *Arabesk* music was also called 'minibus'-music due to the social group it aims to. It was even regarded as impure, dirty, degenerated with its Arabic and therefore non-Turkish orientation, being so far away from the bourgeois urban center and its well-educated, Western-orientated population.¹⁰

Between Westernization and Turkishness

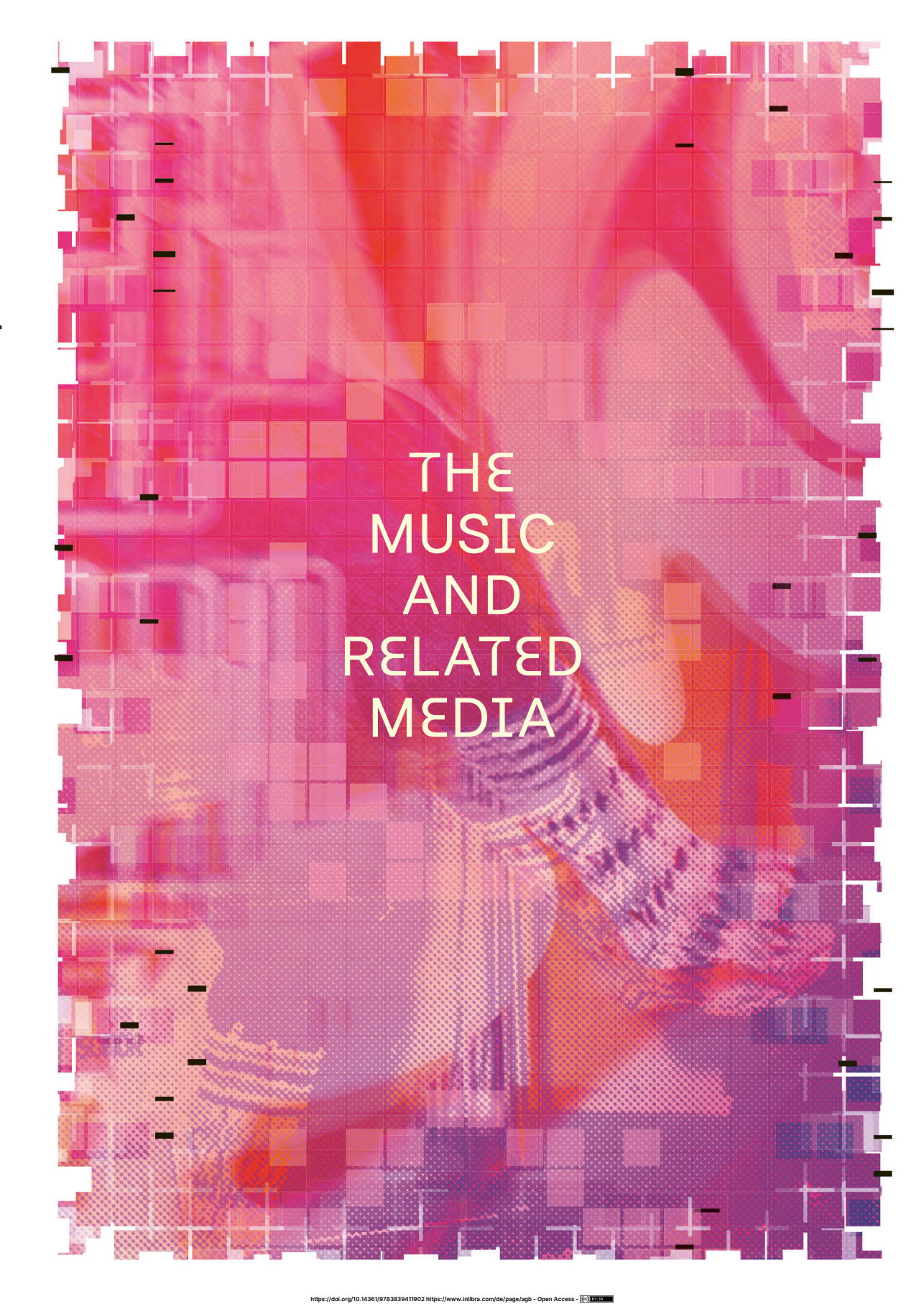
Martin Stokes has made a very subtle analysis of the mixing of *arabesk* and Anatolian rock and its connotations: "If the guitar was turned up relative to the voice, the result was *Bati*: Western, intimate, polyphonic, the product of a shared group socio-musical process. If the reverse [if the voice was turned up relative to the rest], *Doğu*: Eastern, dependent on the authoritative, monophonic, coercive presence of the solo voice" (Stokes 1999: 124). Interestingly you may even have both structures, *batı* and *doğu*, in one tune.

To conclude, Anatolian rock may be perceived through two patterns: Turkishness and Western world as the first pattern, and the Turkishness itself ranging from *arabesk* to Anatolian rock, from East to West, as the second pattern. Hence the music reflects the range and problems of Turkish identity. Music on the Turkish territory was practiced in the Ottoman past, then separated from this past by state politics of the new Turkish Republic. Later on, this past came back via *arabesk*. The young Turkish Republic was orientated toward the modern Western culture, even by law, which did not work out at first. With the infusions of Western pop-rock music in the frame of the first wave of global pop, a Westernization took place, perhaps more intense than ever imagined by the founders of the Turkish Republic. This Westernization did not erase Turkishness, on the contrary it built up a new Turkish identity in hybridity.

¹⁰ This image is now corrected more and more in musical studies, see e.g. Stokes 2010. Problematic for a wider appreciation also seemed to be the partly transsexual connotations (e.g. Bülent Ersoy) of this music.

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The background of the cover is a stylized, pixelated illustration in shades of pink, red, and orange. It depicts a person from the chest up, singing into a vintage-style microphone. The person's face is partially obscured by the grid pattern and the text. The entire image is overlaid with a grid of squares, some of which are filled with different colors or patterns, creating a mosaic effect. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

THE MUSIC AND RELATED MEDIA

Cornelia Lund, Holger Lund

STYLE
AND SOCIETY
—
ISTANBUL'S
MUSIC SCENE
IN THE
1960s AND 1970s
:
MUSICAL HYBRIDISM,
THE GAZINO
AND
SOCIAL TOLERANCE

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Bielefeld: transcript, pp. 177–198,

online in:

http://geb.uni-giessen.de/geb/volltexte/2017/12973/pdf/Popularmusikforschung42_11_Lund.pdf.

Like many countries all over the world, Turkey was hit by the first wave of Anglo-American pop-rock music in the 1950s and 1960s. Various styles of pop-rock were appreciated in Turkey; they were, however, not simply copied but combined with local, indigenous elements in many different ways. This led to the birth of musical hybrids, especially Anatolian rock, *arabesk*, and belly dance. The specific qualities of these combinations, that differentiated them from parallel developments in other countries, seem to be rooted in the unique situation of the Turkish music scene. Turkey had an independent music market with a large number of non-major and non-state-run record labels as well as a complex and autonomous musical tradition of combining foreign and indigenous elements. This had mainly to do with the people involved: they mixed and mingled, ignoring social boundaries to a surprising extent, producing musical syntheses consisting of unpredictable combinations and stunning turnarounds. The main place for this kind of musical practice was the *gazino*, a special venue somewhere between restaurant, concert hall, and nightclub, with its open-minded musical programming.

This article examines the acting agents and their styles, starting from selected musical examples and taking into account—aside from Anglo-American pop-rock music and Anatolian folk music—the three styles mentioned above: Anatolian rock, *arabesk*, and belly dance. Although each addressed a very different audience, these styles were freely combined, for example in *arabesk* rock as a mixture of Anatolian rock and *arabesk*. The main question for us will be: how was it possible that in Turkey apparently paradoxical combinations could come into being, which never could have happened in the Western world? Why would elements be combined that, according to the logic of pop-rock music, appear contradictory? It seems there was a special Turkish pop-rock logic at work, which had the *gazino* at its heart, this special location for Turkish hybridized music.

Our point of departure will be a short survey of the musical scene in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s. We will have a look at the persons involved, the styles they played, and the extraordinary musical hybrids¹ they constructed. These hybrids will lead us to the fundamental question for our research: how could they even be created, despite of the music-sociological paradoxes in style and audience? This article may not deliver final answers, but, hopefully, some outlines to be filled in by future research.

Unless stated otherwise, all online sources in this text were accessed on April 29, 2026.

1 The term hybridization is becoming more and more common in scholarly literature on music. It is here used as defined in a previous text by author Holger Lund: "The term hybridization is used in its biological sense, meaning something which is a product of two different species that have been crossbred. A hybrid is something consisting of different origins, transgressing the old order of the former species to build up something new" (Lund 2026/2011: 36).

Much of the resurgence of Turkish rock and funk music of the first wave goes back to 2006, when hip hop-beat producer Egon compiled the *Stones Throw Podcast #12*, the so-called “Turkish Funk Mix” (Egon 2006), which for many of its listeners changed their perspective on the world of music forever. They found themselves listening to a stunning combination of familiar-sounding elements of rock and funk music and much less familiar-sounding elements of Anatolian music.² The more so as Turkish rock and funk music were not mere copies of Anglo-American models, but themselves very distinctive hybrids of local and indigenous elements on the one hand, and global, Anglo-American elements on the other (see Skoog 2012: 3f.). This podcast pushed the interest in Turkish rock and funk music worldwide and many re-releases give proof of a continued interest until today.³

1. The Field of Music in Turkey

The Turkish Republic itself, as constructed by Kemal Atatürk and his chief ideologist Ziya Gökalp, was founded on the idea of combining East and West. Musically, this combination was realized by building hybrids of Eastern and Western elements. Not all of them were successful, but three styles in the 1960s and 1970s attracted large audiences: *Arabesk*, Anatolian rock, and belly dance music.⁴ These styles aimed at totally different audiences. Nevertheless, multiple hybrids between these three already hybridized styles took shape, in music and also in its visual, iconographic representation. For someone not familiar with the Turkish music scene, the paradoxical elements of these hybrids can be hard to disentangle.

To begin with: Which style is which and how does it sound?

First: *Arabesk* can be translated as “made or done in the arabic fashion” (Özbek 1997: 185). It is regarded as a “Turkish version of Arab popular music” with “romantic melodies” and a “saccharinic, Bollywoodish” (Spicer 2011: 46) effect—at least this is how the leading British music magazine *The Wire* still puts it today, in a pejorative manner. *Arabesk* was already a hybrid construction,

2 Gabriel Skoog said about this irritating listening experience: “One of the pleasures of list[en]ing to hybrid genres for the first time is the bending of frame involved as we re-orient ourselves in relationship to the piece” (Skoog 2012: 91).

3 See the re-releases of Finders Keepers, who pioneered Guerssen and Pharaway Sounds: <http://www.discogs.com/label/38112-Finders-Keepers-Records>, <http://www.discogs.com/label/105479-Guerssen>, and <http://www.discogs.com/label/424574-Pharaway-Sounds>; or the *Saz Beat. Turkish Rock, Funk, and Psychedelic Music of the 1960s and 1970s I–III* compilations curated by the authors (2013, 2016, and 2017; Corvo Records/Global Pop First Wave).

4 With its similarities to *arabesk* in status and Easternness *Türk sanat müziği*, a kind of classical, post-Ottoman ‘*alaturka*’ style, is not discussed here as a genre of its own, which of course it is (see Stokes 2003: 314). Moreover, Anglo-American and European pop music were played in Turkey as well as *türkü*, a sort of standardized folk song (see Skoog 2012: 61f.). All in all, these were the main styles one could hear during the 1960s and 1970s in Turkey.

an East-West music. According to Martin Stokes, *arabesk* originated as an “absorption of a variety of Western popular and classical genres and performance styles into a [...] monophonic Eastern or Turkish form” (Stokes 1999: 123). This was also reflected in the wide array of instruments used: classical Turkish instruments like kanun and ney, folk instruments like the saz, as well as drums, electric bass, electric guitar, piano, and Western string instruments (see Burhan Bayar in Bulut/Kaya 2010: 22:50–23:50 min, 31:31 min).⁵

Second: the terms Anatolian rock or *Anadolu pop* were used by Turkish musicians to describe hybrids of Western pop-rock music of all kinds combined with Anatolian folk music since the mid 1960s.⁶

Third: Belly dance music is music for erotic dancing and was for a large part produced for the Arabic and Turkish diaspora in the US (Thorne 2011). It was made by immigrants for immigrants and was a trend in music from the 1950s until the 1970s.⁷ Armenian and Lebanese musicians were also often involved in belly dance. During the 1960s, the style was adopted in the Arabo-Turkish region via US imports and kicked off many local productions. Due to the influence of developments in US-American music, new instruments joined in: next to traditional Arabo-Turkish instruments, electrified, electric, and electronic instruments, as well as drum sets, were integrated in the production of music. With the use of these instruments, we can consequently observe the emergence of hybrids of the traditional music of the Arabo-Turkish region and pop-rock music.

1.1. Examples

In the following, we will analyze three pairs of tunes to get a more thorough insight into the musical situation in Turkey at the time.

Pair 1: Orhan Gencebay—“Hor Görme Garibi” (1971)
and Erkin Koray with Ter—“Hor Görme Garibi” (1972).

Orhan Gencebay's piece is a typical *arabesk* tune: the song is slightly electrified and sounds a bit Western, but the arrangement of the violins and the vocals are still dominated by the tradition of *arabesk* music.

5 The term ‘Western music’ refers to a distinction made in Turkey between ‘alaturka’ and ‘alafranga’: “Alaturka and Alafranga refer, respectively, to Turkish and Western socio-cultural practices;” for music this means “Turkish (Alaturka) and Western (Alafranga) style” (Beken 2003).

6 The term is “not bound to Anatolians playing rock music, but used as an umbrella term for all sorts of music which combine different styles of Western pop and rock, psychedelic, funk, disco, progressive, folk, and so on with Anatolian folk music” (Lund 2026/2013: 48).

7 Of course, belly dancing and its music have a much richer history. It was not just an American nightclub entertainment invention exported to the Middle East, but a whole culture with a specific history in Turkey, a phenomenon in Egyptian films, and a dance-entertainment culture of several different regions (see Potuoğlu-Cook 2008). The focus in this text is on belly dance as a hybridized genre mixing traditional with electrified, electric, and electronic instruments.

The same tune was re-worked one year later by the Anatolian rock musician Erkin Koray and the group Ter, still under the title “Hor Görme Garibi.” Compared to Gencebay’s original, quite a few things have changed: Koray electrifies and Westernizes the sound, especially the vocals that, even if they still follow the *arabesk* melodic line, get an extra touch of scream, which is so typical for Western rock music. Koray injects a great portion of hard rock into the *arabesk* tune, thus building a hybrid between the two styles.

Pair 2: Orhan Gencebay—“Bir Araya Gelemeyiz” (1975)
and Erkin Koray—“Sevdiğim” (1976).

Another track by Gencebay, “Bir Araya Gelemeyiz,” is an *arabesk* tune with the intro played in a hard rock manner, featuring a rock synthesizer and a typical rock riff or lick. Here we have an *arabesk* musician playing a hard rocking *arabesk* tune. The next piece is again by Koray: “Sevdiğim” from 1976. This tune works in the opposite way: it is an Anatolian rock tune done in an *arabesk* manner, easily recognizable from the string section.

One might use the term *arabesk* rock to describe these kinds of hybrids presented in pair 1 and 2, to differentiate them from Anatolian rock as well as *arabesk*. Another example for this sort of *arabesk* rock would be Hakkı Bulut’s “Nedir Bende Olmayan” (1975). It has no string section but a combination of pop-rock guitar, partly straight rock beats by drums and bass, and *arabesk* singing along with saz playing.

Pair 3: John Tatasopoulos—“Bouzoukia Solo” (1975)
and Cem Karaca—“Demedim Mi” (1971).

The next two musical examples show that not only *arabesk* and Anatolian Rock are subject to hybridization, but belly dance as well. The tune “Bouzoukia Solo” by John Tatasopoulos comes from the US-released LP *Alla Turka*, alternatively named *Music for Belly Dancing—The Turkish Way with Özel* (1975). “Bouzoukia Solo” is not, as one may think, simple belly dance music: it is a belly dance-Anatolian rock hybrid, with an electric wah-wah bouzouki imitating an electric saz, an instrument developed in reaction to the electric guitar of rock music which became very popular in Anatolian rock music. The fact that the non-Turkish musician John Tatasopoulos plays the non-Turkish instrument bouzouki should be held against the fact that the title of the LP, in each version, suggests Turkish music, which indicates the typical melting-pot situation in the US, with non-Turkish people from Armenia, Greece, or Israel regularly playing Turkish music (Thorne 2011). The last example is Cem Karaca’s “Demedim Mi” from 1971. In this Anatolian rock-belly dance hybrid a rock group is playing a continuous belly dance line in the percussion and bass, which is extended and accentuated by a long belly dance break in the middle of the tune.

2. The Complexity of the Situation

These examples give a good idea of the complexity of the musical situation in Turkey. Styles that are already hybrids themselves, are combined to form multiple hybrids. The number and variety of these hybrids, the fluid and surprising combinations within them, are simply astonishing. In this aspect, by the way, the musical production of Turkey differs from that of comparable post-Ottoman countries. In the unexpected combinations of styles, the unusual instrumentations, the stunning arrangements and compositions, Turkish hybrid music shows complete autonomy (Skoog 2012: 29f., 34).

When we search for the reasons of this development, we find different contributing factors. On the one hand, there is the specific situation of Turkish culture and its historical development, which we will analyze later on. On the other hand, the particularities of the Turkish music economy have to be taken into account. Different to most other non-Western countries, the Turkish music market was neither dominated by globally acting major labels, working as hegemonial gatekeepers, nor by nationally acting state-run or state-controlled labels, dominating the national production, but instead by many smaller or bigger independent labels, some of them lead by Turkish musicians.⁸ Compared to other countries, the music production was relatively uncontrolled and unregulated. A homogenization of the market by major or state-run labels did not take place in Turkey in the first decades of pop music.⁹

Gabriel Skoog also mentions that the Turkish Republic, especially Istanbul, “never felt the direct long-term effects of European colonialism” (2012: 24). Thus, Turkey’s autonomy was unbroken by colonial power structures. The latter normally would set the cultural standards, imposing them on the colonized people, engraving in their minds which ‘developed’ standards should be adopted and which more ‘primitive’ ones should be devalORIZED and erased. This did not happen in Turkey.¹⁰

8 The number of Turkish labels was extraordinarily high in the 1960s and 1970s. To our knowledge, there exists no compendium listing them all. After years of research in vinyl record stores, one will still discover more and more labels from that period. We estimate that about 50 to 70 independent labels have existed in Turkey. Some of the old ones are still active and are located at İMÇ (İstanbul Manifaturacılar Çarşısı), Unkapanı, Blok 5 and Blok 6 in Istanbul.

9 As far as the authors know, in the same period of time only the musical panorama of Pakistan showed a similar complexity concerning combinations and unpredictable musical developments in songs—despite the fact that the music market in Pakistan was dominated by only a very few major labels. The reasons for the complexity of the situation in Pakistan, however, still have to be explored.

10 Skoog emphasizes that Turkey “was never colonized by a European power.” Therefore, Turkey is an autonomous “competing aesthetic center” to him (Skoog 2012: 151).

2.1. Arabesk vs. Anatolian Rock (?) vs. Belly Dance (?)

Most noteworthy about the complex situation in Turkey is that it really should not exist, considering the music-social frontiers valid especially in the Western world. Apparently contradictory elements were put together in musical practice, were freely combined and hybridized. But first of all, what exactly do we mean when we speak of contradictory elements?

Arabesk had, outside its audience, a very bad reputation in Turkey. This had to do with the audience itself: poor, little educated, mostly Anatolian immigrants and workers in the periphery of the big cities like Istanbul. *Arabesk* was called “minibus music” (Gencebay in Bulut/Kaya 2010: 37:31 min) or also “migration music” (ibid.: 15:44 min and 28:32 min). It was considered by the urban, well-educated middle class as uncultivated, imitative (being Arab-like), pre-modern and non-Western (see Stokes 2010; Köksal 2012). A typical audience can be seen in the film *Derdim Dünyadan Büyük* (1978), which shows *arabesk* musician and actor Gencebay with the poor people that formed his fanbase.

While we might view *arabesk* as a “domestication of an international soundscape [...] presenting it for a Turkish audience,” as Stokes (1999: 135) does, Anatolian rock on the contrary can be regarded as “internationalizing a local music, connecting it to the international counterculture” (ibid.).¹¹

Proof of this is found in photos like the one showing Koray together with John Lennon and Yoko Ono in 1971, exemplifying a certain affirmative orientation towards Western modernity (fig 1).



Fig. 1: Arda Uskan (left), Erkin Koray (right) with John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Cannes, 1971, photo from a Turkish press article by Arda Uskan, 1971.

¹¹ It is interesting to note that Skoog, in opposition to Stokes, sees it just the other way round: “Anadolu Rock can be understood as a local music scene which first grew out of a large, mass-mediated, translocal scene, but with time turned into its own local phenomenon.” His explanation: “Anadolu Pop artists combined genre cues to create a new style which would appeal to a local audience, and it was the positive response to this localized style which kick started a local Anadolu Rock scene.” Therefore, he concludes: “Anadolu Pop is a localized global genre” (Skoog 2012: 162f.). Both views may be correct. Depending on the point of view one can define Anatolian rock as the localization of an international music or as an internationalization of a local music. Skoog himself shifted his point of view: “Anadolu Pop artists such as Moğollar, Barış Manço, and Cem Karaca all attempted to have an effect on the larger global rock scene through participation in the European market. Indeed, Barış Manço went as far as to release an English language album” (Skoog 2012: 164, see also 168f.).



Fig. 2: Erkin Koray, 1970.
Photo: Sayıl Eman
(published in *Hürriyet*, June 21, 1970).

Visually, Anatolian rock stations itself either as pro-rural, such as the group Moğollar who pose in rural costumes for the cover of their single “Cığrık” (see p. 102) or it demonstrates urbanity, which could even take quite radical aspects, as in several photos of Koray naked with an electric guitar (fig. 2).

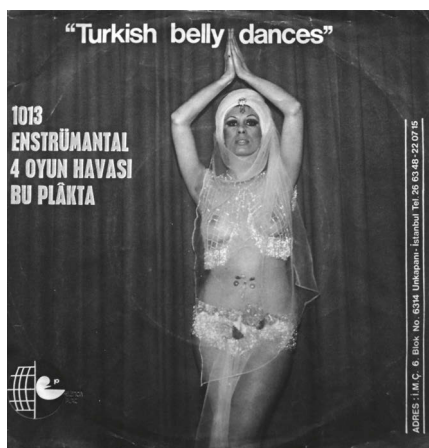
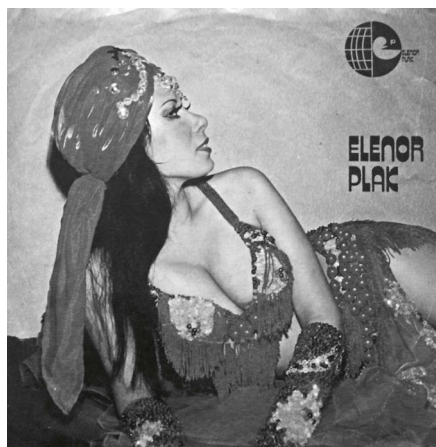
Politically, the two stylistic positions are also drifting in opposite directions: despite of some rebellious attitudes, *arabesk* music is mainly shaped by a rather conservative, fatalistic belief in a paternalist-hierarchical way of life (see Bulut/Kaya 2010), whereas Anatolian rock with two of its main agents, Selda Bağcan and Karaca, shows not only a democratic, but rather a left-wing revolutionary orientation (figs. 3 and 4). An intermingling of the two audiences, the *arabesk* and the Anatolian rock audience, should therefore never happen according to the logics of music sociology.



Fig. 3: Cem Karaca, PLO, no date.
Original source not identifiable.



Fig. 4: Cem Karaca as featured in the Turkish 1970s music and youth magazine *Hey*, no date.



Figs. 5 and 6: Cover for 4 Oyun Havası, “Turkish Belly Dances,” recto & verso (ca. 1976).

Moreover, the visuals of belly dance record covers, the explicit (semi-) nudity of the women (figs. 5 and 6), is not compatible with either the more conservative *arabesk* audience or with the democratic left-wing audience of Anatolian rock. But nevertheless, a single by 4 Oyun Havası offers a cover version of Koray’s “Fesuphanallah,” turning his *arabesk* rock into an instrumental belly dance rock. Here again we are in a realm where all things are combined and mixed, even if they—according to the common music-social point of view—should be kept separated.

The phenomenon continues visually, defeating every potential conflict: a photo from 1976 shows Gencebay and Koray during a jam session (fig. 7).

Koray presents himself as an urban Anatolian rock musician in jeans, with long hair and a cool sitar beat instrument.¹² Gencebay, however, appears as an *arabesk* musician, with mustachio, spick-and-span white trousers, and a very traditional, non-electrified saz.

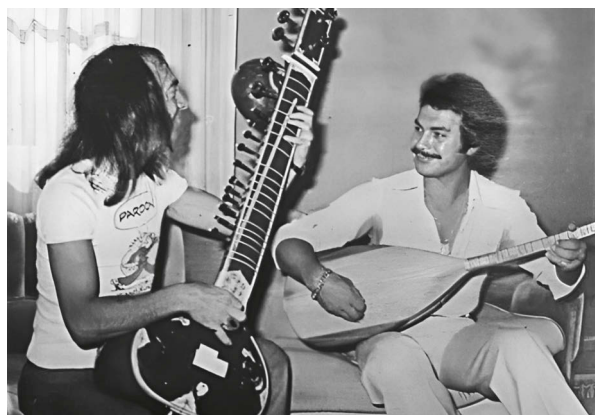


Fig. 7: Jam session with Orhan Gencebay and Erkin Koray, 1976. Original source not identifiable.

¹² The sitar, seen in its stylistic and semantic aspects, probably did not come directly to Turkey from Asia but indirectly via Great Britain (just think of the George Harrison-initiated sitar beat boom). Consequently, the sitar is in this context primarily a Western sitar beat instrument and not a classical Eastern instrument.



Fig. 8: Orhan Gencebay and Barış Manço, 1972.
Original source not identifiable.

Another photo again shows Gencebay, now with Barış Manço, in 1972. Against the correct suit of Gencebay, Manço wears a rural belt with a tied knot (fig. 8).

Some magazine photographs move another step ahead: on a cover page probably published in celebration of a musical contest in 1972, Gencebay, the *arabesk* star musician, is placed among part of the elite of Anatolian rock musicians: Manço, Bağcan, and the three Hürel brothers (fig. 9). Another, similar photo made in 1971 (fig. 10) shows Manço, Karaca, and the group Moğollar together with star singer Zeki Müren, who plays *Türk sanat müziği*, like *arabesk* a popular Eastern style (see Stokes 2003: 314). Müren appears again in an undated group portrait next to Karaca (fig. 11).

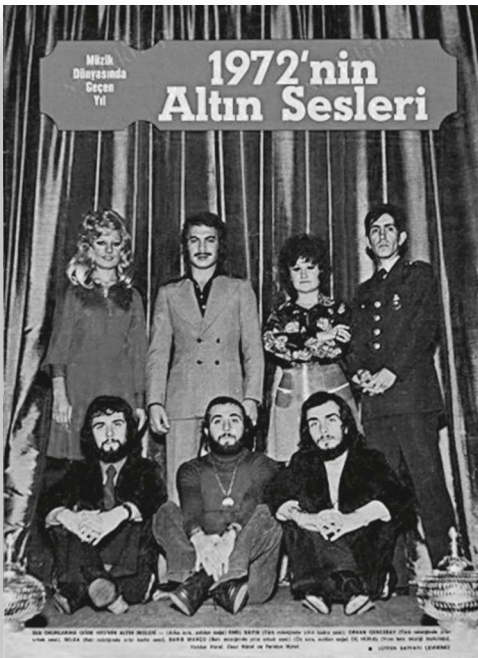


Fig. 9: Cover of a magazine with Emel Sayın, Orhan Gencebay, Selda Bağcan, Barış Manço, and the three Hürel-brothers, 1972.



Fig 10: The music group Moğollar (back row) with Barış Manço, Emel Sayın, Zeki Müren, Ajda Pekkan, and Cem Karaca, 1971 (published in *Ses*, October 1, 1972)

Given the sociological differences between the musicians, such photos are an extension of what is happening in the music itself, the paradoxical but nevertheless practiced musical hybrids or multi-hybrids.¹³

How could this happen? And did the Turkish people back in the day also regard and experience these hybrids as paradoxical? In the following, we will try to give some answers to this question.

As we have mentioned, an intermingling of these audiences would not have been possible according to Western music-sociological thinking. The main reason, as Diedrich Diederichsen explored in depth, is that from the 1950s to the 1990s pop music has been used in the Western world as a means to differentiate identity, to express different political and social attitudes. The decision to adopt a certain style (and the attitude related with it) implied always the negation, even radical negation and non-acceptance, of all other styles (and attitudes related with them) (Diederichsen 2014: passim). If such very different things come together, as in the musical and photographic examples mentioned above, there must have been some shared fundamentals as common ground.

13 Indeed, there exist musical pendants to the photos discussed above (figs. 5 to 11): Barış Manço, for example, played "Ağlama Değmez Hayat" (1969), a famous tune of *Türk sanat müziği*, which Zeki Müren recorded in the same year. Or think of the musical pairing we have analyzed in chapter 1.1.



Fig. 11: Group photo with Hakan Balamir, Tarık Akan, Zeki Müren next to Cem Karaca, Rıza Silahlıpoda, Ajda Pekkan, Türkan Şoray, Müjde Ar, no date. (published in *Kelebek ev gazetesi*, January 11, 1976)

2.2. Shared Fundaments and Where They Came From

It is useful to consider the parameters shared collectively by the three styles. All of them, *arabesk*, Anatolian rock, and belly dance, were allowed to be practiced by the state authorities, but were not supported by them at all. The national radio barely played the songs of any of these styles (see Kadir Çöpdemir, in Bulut/Kaya 2010: 6:28–7:11 min.; Stokes 1999: 123), and the Turkish Radio and Television institution TRT published only two Anatolian rock records over all the decades, *TRT Ara Müzikleri* I and II.

They were treated as outsider music, although for different reasons. All three styles were related to Anatolian folk and *türkü* and therefore had a common musical fundament. This important fundament should not be overlooked, as the use of a shared musical tradition has a strongly connecting effect (which is not easily understandable from a German perspective, for example, where the Volkslied, after being commonly abused by the Nazis, in general died, morphing into the genres of schmaltz or Schlager afterwards).

Considering the massive social differences of those involved, however, these commonalities are not strong enough to explain the photographs and musical hybrids. One may suspect that it was all about money and that musical hybrids addressed a crossover audience to widen the market. However, this would have meant committing a sort of musical hara-kiri, just as if, in those days, someone had combined German Schlager singer Heino with hard rock to enlarge the target group. Today, in our post-modern era, this works well, as the very example of Heino shows. In the much more strictly modern era of the 1960s and 1970s, when social identity was constructed with and by the use of differentiating musical styles, these kinds of hybrids were definitively unthinkable in the Western world—but were apparently possible in Turkey as the examples above show. Instead of a hara-kiri a special solution has been developed to which we will come back later on.

Another idea suggests that the elite of session musicians in Turkey was so small and so limited in its access to electric and electronic gear as well as in its competence to use it, that this small group of people had to play all styles.¹⁴ Admittedly, session musicians will be hired for any job in any style; that is how they are defined. But anywhere else these musicians do not hybridize musically and visually in public, they do it behind the scenes, in the studio, in secret. Otherwise, they would hurt their public musical identities, their image on the market. Both the schmaltz guitar player and the hard rock guitar player would mutually destroy themselves if they showed up in personal union. They have to stay separate in the public space, stay different, this is their proper function in order to build social identities and possibilities for identification for their audiences.

14 Which is indeed true and can be easily observed looking at the credits on the covers of completely different music styles: the same names appear all the time.

Another approach to the question can be found in Çağdaş Uyar's liner notes for the Bunalım re-release (Uyar 2006). He posits that some of the songs by the group Bunalım can be seen as a proof of an interest in non-hybridized rock, taking Anglo-American productions of the time as a model. What prevented them and all the other Turkish musicians from following that model was the specific music-political situation. The latter was marked by repression, and fear of repression, concerning non-Turkish music on the one side, and acceptance of, as well as support for, hybridized Anatolian rock music on the other side, starting with the big pop music contests by Hürriyet and Milliyet in the mid 1960s (see Lund 2026/2013: 49).

The tendencies to support hybridization can be traced back to the founder of the nation, Kemal Atatürk, and his chief ideologist Ziya Gökalp. They initiated and supported a new hybrid East-West music for the new Turkish republic, a kind of a modernized and Westernized version of Anatolian folk music (ibid.; see Erol 2010; Tekelioğlu 2001). Stokes calls Gökalp's concept a "nationalistic cosmopolitanism" (Stokes quoted by Burkhalter 2012: 44). He sees it as a part of the music-political strategy of the state, leading to an amalgamation of indigenous Turkish and Western music. 'Nationalistic cosmopolitanism' may sound paradox, but the term very precisely describes the national point of view from which a hybridist cosmopolitan point of view was developed. Hybridization then had become the standard, and consequently non-hybridized music was not much in favor. Therefore, non-hybridized pop-rock music was only seldom released.

Yet, we still do not know how the musical hybrids and multi-hybrids could be realized, despite the fact that they were violating the borders of social identities. The audiences themselves were keen on differentiating one from another. None of the urban, middle-class citizens would ever share the same cultural space with the poor, rural immigrants of the *gecekondu* (informal settlements in the periphery of the big cities). And vice versa, immigrants wouldn't dare to show up in an urban cultural audience, their clothing and manners would have betrayed them instantly as belonging to another social context. So, what seemed to be impossible in real life, was realized and practiced in music.

Next to the idea of a collectively shared traditional musical fundament it could be helpful to have a closer look at how one of the audiences would see the other. For the democratic, left-wing people of Anatolian rock, the immigrants listening to *arabesk* appear in a positive light, as they fit with their pro-rural tendencies (most of the immigrants coming from a strongly rural background), and the moments where lyrics of *arabesk* music expressed critical views on the circumstances of life were appreciated. Politically, *arabesk* music was not per se strictly conservative, differentiations must be made here in many directions (see Bulut/Kaya 2010; Stokes 2000; Doğtaş/Labastida 2014). Furthermore, *arabesk* music was related to the workers and (ex-)farmers, which was the part of the population that democratic politics focused on.

2.3.

The *Gazino*

Yet perhaps the most important key to the whole situation is the *gazino*. It was a very special location, existing mainly in Istanbul (Beken 2003) and Izmir, which brought different audiences, working and urban middle class people, together in one place. From the musical point of view, it was a very open



Fig. 12: Interior of an early *gazino*, Istanbul, 1931.
Original source not identifiable.

urban venue for entertainment, something between a restaurant, a show and concert hall, a dance hall, and a nightclub and cabaret. The main period of the *gazino* culture, consisting basically of East-West music performed within a Western architectural frame, started in the 1930s and ended in the 1970s (figs. 12 and 13). Clearly, the *gazino* helped to establish the aforementioned multiple musical hybrids

between the three styles. Their owners, driven by commercial interests, changed the paradigm: what elsewhere in the world of pop-rock music had been separated as (life-)styles and opposing identities, was thrown together in the *gazino*, musically and in the visual aspects related to the music.



Fig. 13: Interior of the Taksim Belediye Gazinosu, Istanbul, 1960.
Original source not identifiable.

The venue served as a point of intersection for different audiences. The *gazino* was a place where citizens, landowners, farmers, and workers came together under the sign of a collectively shared Anatolian musical fundament.¹⁵ And it did not matter that Anatolicity for each audience meant something very different: whereas Anatolia was the lost home, but still the heart of their identity for the rural and ex-rural *arabesk* audience, it was a concept promising a more natural identity for the urban Anatolian rock audience, an object of a certain turko-rural longing.

Münir Nurettin Beken explains the musical fluidity of the *gazino* as follows: the “*gazino* always reflected the taste of the paying customers. Therefore, the impact of changing demographics and aesthetics of society has always been reflected on the *gazino* show and its physical space” (Beken 2003). Depending on the owners and audiences, everything could take place in the music: *arabesk*, belly dance, Anatolian rock and pop (see *ibid.*).¹⁶ This is reflected by the fact that the *gazino* usually had different orchestras: at least one *arabesk* orchestra and one pop orchestra for the same location were the standard. Members of these orchestras could meet each other, for example in back-stage concerts.¹⁷

When programming the *gazino*, the owners were primarily focused on their audiences and their heterogeneity: “Expectations of the consumers from all the different domains are fulfilled by the management at big *gazino-s* [sic!]” (*ibid.*). This heterogeneity is worth taking a closer look at: “At the beginning of the twentieth century [...] *gazino* customers were Turkish intellectuals and non-Muslims of the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul. After the foundation of Turkish Republic, Turkish intellectuals and statesmen continued to be regular customers of *gazino*” (*ibid.*).

15 “The Turkish musical scene may be viewed in terms of three categories: *alatürka*, which refers to Turkish sociocultural practices; *alafranga*, which refers to Western ones; and *arabesk*, which denotes the culture of peripheral urban immigrants. The *gazino*, a type of nightclub, provides a common denominator for *alatürka* and *arabesk* music in an *alafranga* space” (N.N. 2011). Beken notes: “While the program indicates connections with Ottoman institutions like coffee-houses and *meyhane-s* (a restaurant type), the *gazino* space itself resembles earlier Western style establishments in Istanbul. The variety show is one of the determining aspects of the *gazino* program and it probably goes much further back in history” (Beken 2003). The main period of the *gazino* is 1930–1980: “The advent of television and economic fluctuations since the 1970s caused a steady decline for the business of *gazino*. The glamorous large *gazino-s* of the mid-twentieth century Istanbul disappeared” (*ibid.*).

Interestingly there is a parallel noticeable to developments in Brazil. When the Portuguese Royal Family took Rio de Janeiro as new capital of the empire in 1815 (fleeing Napoleon’s army), a new type of culture developed in the capital: “the urban transformations [...] allowed the emergence of new types of musical venues, such as clubs and vaudevilles, which conceptually combined drinking, eating, and dancing, thus resulting in a new type of entertainment [...]”. These venues would have been responsible not only for the introduction of new European musical genres—which would soon reinforce the repertoire of danceable songs—but would also serve as a place for lay musicians to learn and work” (Tupinambá de Ulhôa/De Marchi/Torres Borges 2024: 12).

16 See also old *gazino* programs: <http://turkiyeningazinotarihi.blogspot.de>, <http://turkiyeningazinotarihi.blogspot.de/2012/12/1976-yinda-istanbul-gazino-programlar.html>, <http://turkiyeningazinotarihi.blogspot.de/2012/12/gazino-savaslar-1976-1.html>, and <http://turkiyeningazinotarihi.blogspot.de/2012/12/gazino-savaslar-1976-2.html>.

17 According to Beken the back stage was also a place for music theory and discussion (see Beken 2003).

After WWII, two new audiences came to visit the *gazino*, rich landowners from the countryside and formerly poor farmers, which had immigrated to the big cities and made a fortune there. Beken notes: "This societal shift was reflected in the addition of the Folk Music as a fabricated urban genre into the *gazino* repertoire" (ibid.). Accordingly, folk music orchestras were established. The social climbers pushed the change to *arabesk* music: "As soon as they could afford it, former *gecekondu* inhabitants became part of the frame of *gazino* customers. Their consumption of *Arabesk* music [...] was also reflected later in the *gazino* show" (ibid.). In addition to the evening program, affordable matinees were offered for "middle-class families from a variety of backgrounds with a regular limited income" (ibid.). The crucial point was the heterogeneous programming the owners proposed:

"The music, like the food, is presented as a fixed menu. [...] An individual who comes to a *gazino* to listen to and experience the show of, say, an *Arabesk* star, by necessity ends up tolerating other genres" (ibid.).

And so, the public had to eat the whole 'menu': all the *gazino* genres like "*Fasil* [ottoman classic], Turkish Art Music, Folk Music, *Arabesk*, Turkish Pop Music, Belly Dancing and Comedy" (ibid.). Beken concludes:

"Changes in the *gazino* show are related to changes in 'the code' carried by the consumers. Political, economic and social changes superimposed radical changes in the aesthetics and resulted in aesthetic islands in the map of the Turkish society" (ibid.).

Indeed, with all variety of the genres allowed and mixed, the *gazinolar* were 'aesthetic islands' in Turkish society. A last crucial point was the social coding of the music:

"Certain parts of the *gazino* show reflect [...] two types of power. While *Arabesk* reflects economic power, traditional genres like *Fasil* or tango reflect the social prestige of *Alaturka* and *Alafranga*. An individual's economic power may buy the best seat in the *gazino*; social prestige, however, still comes with one's interest in more traditional genres, such as the Turkish Art Music. The *gazino* consumer gets educated by tolerating other genres that have historical dimensions" (ibid.).

Beken shows that the *gazino* was constructed to have a pedagogical function toward tolerance, insofar as visitors wanted to combine economic power, coded in hybrid genres with Western elements, with social prestige, coded in traditional Turkish genres. They could achieve that only by tolerating all the different genres.

The architecture also had an effect of reinforcing the tolerance of the public. Beken describes it as follows:

“The Caddebostan Maksim Gazinosu (CMG) was situated in a modern building with a parking lot. Its modern exterior architectural design was similar enough to a Western fine art gallery or institution that it could be characterized as an Alafranga space.

The cream-colored columns, moldings, niches, cornices, and other architectural ornaments were reminiscent of classical Western architecture, although the use of geometrical shapes in the exterior was closer to Art Deco. There were also a few windows, some of which had stained glass with modern-looking Art Deco designs.

Further evidence of Western influence could be found in the CMG’s interior, with its Art Nouveau-style wooden picture and mirror frames, the bronze sculptures, light fixtures, vases, stained glass, paintings, classical Greco-Roman style columns, moldings, cornices, and white-colored sculptures in illuminated niches” (ibid.).

The architecture marks a clear statement for modernity and social climbing:

“The *gazino* transports the audience [...] to a high status. The Western cultural codes conveyed through the visual arts contribute to this illusion created for them” (ibid.).

This continues in the medial and spatial context of the *gazino*, which itself has a pedagogical effect on the public:

“The newspaper advertisements, and neon lights in front of the *gazino* help foster this illusion. The audience’s preferred clothing, make-up and other behavioral changes reflect their efforts to adapt themselves to this atmosphere” (ibid.).

The atmosphere created this way could be described with Negri and Hardt’s term as “multitude” (see Hardt/Negri 2000), a multiplicity and variety of persons and styles. And exactly this character of multitude was a requirement for the *gazino* to become what it was: a place that led musicians and audiences to musical hybrids and tolerance, bridging over their differences. Of course, there was still a lot of conflict going on, mainly between the owners of the *gazinolar* as artistic directors and the musicians (see Beken 2003). The multitude was not the basis, but the result of a continuously ongoing process of negotiation between owners, the audiences, and the musicians.

In the 1970s, the Turkish music magazine *Hey* had a similar effect in combining and developing tolerance. Comparable to the German *Bravo*, to which *Hey* in the beginning saw itself as an equivalent, hit lists mixed

international pop music stars with local ones, in this case Turkish Anatolian rock musicians. Unlike *Bravo*, *Hey* had a separate hit list for *arabesk*, *Türk sanat müziği*, and *Türk halk müziği*, which mostly ran under the term *Türk müziği*. And all the musicians—regardless of their style—got reports in the magazine. Sometimes a tune like “Zühtü” appeared in both hit lists, once in the funk version by Esin Afşar (list *Hey Disko*), once in the folk version by Bedia Akatürk, and once in the *arabesk* version by Şenay Şenses, both on the list *Türk müziği* (*Hey* 4 (7), 1976: 4, 9). A singer like Neşe Karaböcek could appear, according to her different styles (pop and *arabesk*), in the same magazine in both hit lists (*Hey* 51 (3), 1973: 4–5). Or she could appear even with the same pop-*arabesk* hybrid tune “Demiyom mu” in the same magazine in both lists (*Hey* 29 (4), 1974: 4, 67).

For both Anatolian rock as well as *arabesk* or *Türk müziği* record releases, ads were placed, even directly following each other. Attitude and intentions of *Hey* would need further examination. As *Hey* belonged to the Milliyet media group, the same forces, which pushed the *Altın Mikrofon* contests in the 1960s towards Anatolian rock could have been at work (see Lund 2026/2013: 49). In any case: in the 1970s, Milliyet promoted contests like *Türkiye Liselerarası Müzik ve Halk Oyunları Yarışması*, which combined sections of rock music with sections of traditional folk music (see *Hey* 10 (4), 1974: 20). So *Hey*, like the *gazino*, functioned as a place for different musical styles and their audiences, bringing them together and promoting tolerance.

3. The Turkish Pop Logic

To sum up: apart from the Kemalist hybrid-friendly music politics, there are three main arguments to explain the building of hybrids in Turkey: a collectively shared musical fundament (Anatolian folk music), a collectively shared political fundament (rebellious left-winged), and a collectively shared space (the *gazino* in three-dimensional architecture and *Hey* in two-dimensional print). Not on their own, but connected and interacting, an exploration of these overlaps may lead to an explanation for the hybrids and multi-hybrids one can hear and see in music and the accompanying materials. The Turkish pop logic then could perhaps be described at its core as a logic of multitude, which has the power to put together what elsewhere, especially in the Western world, would seem to be a music-social paradox, a conflict of identity.

The way to this logic of multitude was opened up by two main elements: on the one hand by the Turkish Republic's version of modernity, the 'nationalistic cosmopolitanism,' which functioned as a stepping stone for stylistic combinations between East and West, and on the other hand by the *gazino* with its commercially driven programming, opening the way—and space—for audience tolerance, which was additionally supported by magazines like *Hey*. Antoine Remise recently came up with a surprising idea:

“In a way, ‘Anatolian Rock was more an easternization [sic!] of Turkish music trends than the westernization [sic!] that is usually discussed.

The bands and artists started to copy less and less their Anglo-Saxon models and developed their own genre.

The audience's response was huge; their amazing and unique melodies had a fresh energy that touched the hearts and minds of many who wanted to be a part of the bigger modern world whilst enjoying their Turkish identity” (Remise 2014).

This is a complete change of perspective—seeing Anatolian rock as an Easternization of Turkish music—, but perhaps much closer to the Turkish pop logic as a viewpoint from inside this logic. So, it was Anatolian folk music to which an already Westernized Turkish youth started to turn in its quest for identity (see *ibid.*).¹⁸ This twist in thinking is perhaps neither a contradiction of Stokes (1999: 135), who sees Anatolian rock as “internationalizing a local music, connecting it to the international counterculture,” nor of Skoog (2012: 162f.), who regards Anatolian rock as the localization of an international music. The Turkish pop logic contains several perspectives, including them all, not excluding one or the other. It is a logic of multitude, again.

¹⁸ Historically, one could see it this way: Turkish rock music started in the late 1950s with copies of anglophone songs, continued with Turkish versions of them, and then, with Tülay German's “Burçak Tarlası” (1964), which features Turkish folk music with Western instruments, Anatolian rock was invented (see also Skoog 2012: 3, 116f.).

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Cornelia Lund, Holger Lund, Banu Çiçek Tülü

TURKISH POP MUSIC IMAGES.

THE MUSIC AND ITS COMMUNICATION DESIGN:

RECORD COVERS,
PHOTOS & POSTERS & ADS
IN MAGAZINES,
CINEMA POSTERS,
MUSIC PERFORMANCES
IN FILMS & CLIPS

FROM THE 1960s
TO THE EARLY 1980s

Updated and adapted version of:

Cornelia Lund, Holger Lund, Banu Çiçek Tülü (2019).

"Turkish Pop Music Images. The Music and Its Communication Design:
Record Covers, Photos & Posters & Ads in Magazines, Cinema Posters,
Music Performances in Films & Clips 1960s—Early 1980s."

International Music and Sciences Symposium Proceedings,

ed. by İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi Türk Musikisi Devlet Konservatuvarı.
İstanbul: İstanbul Technical University Press, pp. 469–477.

This text gives a preliminary insight into a research project on Turkish pop music images, more precisely on Turkish pop music of the 1960s up to the early 1980s, also called *Anadolu pop* or Anatolian rock, and its visualization.¹

A Trouvaille and *Lisesi* Music Group Culture

We would like to introduce our topic by presenting a trouvaille that we owe to Ercan Demirel from Ironhand Records: A video version of “Fidayda” produced by TRT, the Turkish Radio and Television Company, in 1979.² The visual side is realized through dance in film by a high school band from the Kadıköy Anadolu Lisesi, presenting their version of the Turkish folk song “Fidayda.” This TV video is a multi-faceted hybrid, combining rurality and urbanity, East and West,³ folk and rock, acoustic and electric, tradition and modernity—all this by musically mixing a traditional *türkü* tune, “Fidayda,” with modern Western electric instruments and electronic sound effects like distortion, and by combining an Anatolian dance style and rural costumes with Western modern dance and an element of socialist popular dance. You will not easily find a comparable audiovisual combination in any other country at the time.

The fundament for the TV video is the *lisesi* [high school] music group culture. While Western education was still banning pop music from schools, because more conservatives claimed it will degenerate the youth, Turkey was encouraging pop music in education from scratch, including teen girl bands, children’s bands, and even baby bands. Comprehending pop music in education was supported with very popular, nationwide contests like the Hürriyet Golden Microphone contest (1965–68), aiming also at High School Bands, and the Milliyet Inter-High School Music Contest (1967–2000). An example for the integration of children into adult pop groups gives Beybonlar whose drummer was 12-year-old Sefa Ulaştır (Schnell 2022).

The fact is: Pop music in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s was different from pop music in other countries and enjoying a much better status in certain parts of society than it did in the Western world. Yet, it was also different from other non-Western hybrid pop music because of the strong Turkish

Unless stated otherwise, all online sources in this text were accessed on April 29, 2026.

1 See also <http://turkish-pop-music-images.org>.

2 Fidayda, Kadıköy Anadolu Lisesi, dir.: N.N., Turkey: TRT, 1979.

According to an interview conducted on April 18, 2019 at Istanbul ITU with one of the dancers, Mine Daldal, there have been involved as musicians: Aydın Esin (arrangement), Mithat Kiliç (piano), Önder Şahin (drums), Erhan Asker (bass), Göksel N.N. (guitar), Fatih Okan (guitar); and as dancers: Mine Tali Daldal, Arzu Ayday, Dilek Altun, Sevtap Arslan, Gaye N.N.; choreography by Rana Evcim O'Brien; costume design by Bilun Kefeli. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIbmivNTVI&t=131s>.

3 For a more thorough discussion of the concepts of ‘East’ and ‘West’ in this context, see Lund 2026/2020: 145.

element in it. Joobin Bekhrad states: “[...] on the hard rock, psych, and folk songs of the era, this strong Turkish element and flavour is also prevalent, taking the numbers beyond the simple adaptation and translation of Western music for Eastern audiences” (Bekhrad 2014).

Hence, our basic questions would be: Is there a different visual communication for this kind of music, too? If so, how does it look like and is there something special about it? And how is it related to the music? Can one get a better understanding of the music through its visual communication as part of the pop context?

Going Visual to Reach Out to the Audience

Outside of Western pop music, Turkey had one of the largest and strongest independent music industries with a stable market of its own, with more than 100 Turkish record companies in the 1970s (see Greve 2003: 77; Ergun 2018: 84), and millions of Turkish records sold. This industry also produced several music magazines, starting with *Caz* and *Swing* in the 1940s, continuing with *Caz Ekspres* in the late 1950s, *Melodi* and *Diskotek* in the 1960s, and, most prominently, in the 1970s with *Hey* as the only non-Western weekly pop music magazine.⁴ *Hey* appeared for over two decades, featuring many more Turkish than Western artists, at least in the 1970s.

Many of these artists were male, and male-dominated pop music history writing tends to overlook an essential fact: “It was women who created the sound of the era in terms of quantity and often quality,” as Binicewicz (2017) points out—with outstanding singers like Esin Afşar, Ayla Algan, Melike Demirağ, Nükheth Duru, Esmeray, Hümeýra, Neşe and her sister Gülden Karaböcek, Yasemin Kumral, Ajda and Semiramis Pekkan, Şenay, Tülay Özer, just to name a few (see Binicewicz 2018 and 2023). Hence, our focus will also be on the female side of Turkish pop music images. Moreover, current research into Turkish pop music defines the origins of *Anadolu pop* more and more as female, with *kanto* and its female singers, and especially with the 1964 song “Burçak Tarlası” by female singer Tülay German, the first pop-westernized *türkü*, which created the basic formula for *Anadolu pop* (see Karahasanoğlu/Skoog 2009: 59; Meriç 2018; Baysal 2018: 207).

Over the last few years, and with the help of many friends from Turkey, we have been able to establish a collection of original Turkish records (and their covers), a collection of original *Hey* magazines, and a collection of digital copies of Turkish films and clips.

4 It is important to note that other non-Western music magazines were in circulation at that time; for example, the *Utusan Radio Dan* TV magazine in Malaysia, which was published on a monthly basis.

According to Selçuk Artut (see Spicer 2018: 245), there is no archive culture in Turkey for pop music history. Therefore, the music is not very well known anymore, not even in Turkey. Daniel Spicer recently noted: "Whereas, in the West, rock superstars of that era had been canonized, their musical legacies kept alive by endless hyperbole and mythologizing, Turkish rock pioneers were all but forgotten" (Spicer 2018: 244). Why is that? According to Ergin Bener, the coup in "1980 was a disaster—musically, politically, culturally [...] What happened in 1980 was like cutting down all trees in the forest" (Bener quoted in Spicer 2018: 230f). So, the coup de-historicized Turkey.

Our multimedia archive serves as fundament and starting point for future research, but also for aesthetic transformation: instead of just researching and reproducing the visual and audiovisual material, we want designers and artists to reinterpret it, not with a nostalgic or retromaniac touch, but with a contemporary approach, following, as Binicewicz puts it, constant remixing as "a sort of leitmotif in Turkish culture" (Binicewicz 2016) and bearing in mind present gender and political issues. This reinterpretation will be a central part of the project and define its outcome in publications and exhibitions. First examples of such reinterpretations are the digital collages on the project website and the short cut-up video *Boş Sokak. Female Turkish Music Cinema* (2019) by Aslı Serbest and Mona Mahall, based on snippets from music clips extracted from films or from stand-alone music clips.⁵

What Kind of Music Is *Anadolu Pop*?

Let us go back one step: What kind of music is *Anadolu pop* or Anatolian rock, as it is called as well? Back in 1972, Cahit Berkay (of the Anatolian rock group Moğollar) presented a still useful definition: "Anadolu Pop is a style that combines Turkish folkloric themes, instruments and poems with the electronic capabilities and the systems of pop music" (quoted in Baysal 2018: 216): It is a hybrid and experimental music, everyone in literature agrees—yet at present under reconsideration, as the title of Ozan Baysal's recent text, "Reconsidering 'Anadolu Pop'" (2018), suggests. Under reconsideration not only regarding its female origins and dimensions, but also regarding its hybrid character that can be described from three different perspectives:

5 See <http://turkish-pop-music-images.org> and <https://vimeo.com/341231294>. Since this text was first published in 2019, the project has evolved, shifting its focus from artistic and curatorial research to lecture performances and academic writing (see e.g. Lund/Lund/Yanikkaya/Zöllner 2026/2023).

1. *The Westernization of Anatolian music by pop-rock means, resulting in Anadolu pop*

This perspective can be traced back to Ziya Gökalp, the leading thinker of Turkism, who advocated the Westernization of Anatolian folk music in the frame of the central republican project of nation-building in the early 20th century (see Lund 2026/2013).

In 1947, Marshall Plan funds were established for Turkey. In line with these economic and political measures, a cultural development took place: Westernization in an American way, which the historian Erik Zürcher sums up as follows: "The 1950s saw the emergence of a modern, American oriented lifestyle among the urban bourgeoisie. Its members embraced consumerism. The Epicenter of this new lifestyle was the hypermodern Hilton Hotel [...] which opened 1955" (Zürcher 2017: 231–232). But we should not forget: The Hilton Hotel is one thing, but the ploughing peasants that photos from the late 1950s show right in front of it, are part of the same reality. This gives evidence, that a rural-agrarian and an urban society existed side by side, creating a sort of 'rurbanism,' a mixture of rurality and urbanity.

2. *Turkification of Western pop by Anatolian music, resulting in Anadolu pop*

This perspective can also be seen as related to Ziya Gökalp, and it remained relevant until the anti-imperialistic Left-Nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s, which opposed all dependence on foreign countries, namely the U.S., and focused on the culture of Anatolia.

Antoine Remise reversed the perspective of simple Westernization when he wrote:

"In a way, 'Anatolian Rock' was more an easternization of Turkish music trends than the westernization that is usually discussed.

The bands and artists started to copy less and less their Anglo-Saxon models and developed their own genre. The audience's response was huge; their amazing and unique [Anatolian] melodies had a fresh energy that touched the hearts and minds of many who wanted to be a part of the bigger modern world whilst enjoying their Turkish identity" (Remise 2014).

He shows that Anatolian rock can be understood in a more complex way, twisting the hierarchy of adopting entity and entity adopted. Yet, when writing about Orhan Tekelioğlu's concepts of "West-East" and "East-West" syntheses, Songül Karahasanoğlu and Gabriel Skoog already observed "a conceptual shift from a model based on Western music incorporating Turkish styles to one based on Turkish styles incorporating Western music" (Karahasanoğlu/Skoog 2009: 53).

3. *The 'in-between perspective' on Anadolu pop*

This perspective is related to many of the musicians and to a central part of their audience: the Turkish middle class college youth. Baysal writes: "Many of them attended Western-oriented [...] high schools and/or universities" (Baysal 2018: 207). But they kept a double distance, "from both the Western world and from traditional Anatolia." He continues: "It was being in such an 'in-between' state [...] that made their innovative experimentations possible" (ibid.; see also Noyan 2008: 19), taking elements from both, East and West, to form something in-between: *Anadolu pop*, which, according to Baysal, was an experimental way of "harmonizing [or at least: trying to harmonize] various fields—including national ideology, local culture, international counterculture, and the modern world" (Baysal 2018: 216).

The three perspectives—Westernization, Easternization and 'in-between'—are, depending on the point of view, very present in the visualization of *Anadolu pop* and lead to a specific 'rurbanism,' which can be observed on record covers and *Hey* magazine photos quite often. Rural outfits are juxtaposed to and mixed with an urban outfit to provide hybrid *Anadolu pop* outfits.⁶ This kind of 'rurbanism' can as well be produced by the combination of a rural landscape and a rural activity with a Western urban outfit, or the rural-urban electrified saz appears as a symbol of 'rurbanism,' as it happens in many cases.

Music and Inner-Turkish Migration: 'Rurbanism' and Identity Building in Music

Banu Çiçek Tülü analyses this situation as follows: Turkey's history is marked by migration. Starting from the 1950s, there has been massive domestic migration from rural areas to big cities, especially Istanbul.

According to the social scientist and urban planner İlhan Tekeli, the Turkish Republic's process of modernization was a "top down" process. The idea of "for the public, despite the public" characterized the authoritarian regime and policy, which aimed at homogenizing the country (Tekeli 2009).

The first problem was that people from rural areas were considered as outsiders in the city where elitism dominated the cultural scene. Consequently, the two hybrid music mixtures, *arabesk* and *Anadolu rock*, became the voice of the 'other.' The people moving to the big cities created their own living spaces, the so-called *gecekondu*, trying to hold on to their former life. While this migration drastically changed the urban topography, it also brought different cultures together. Despite of being all new to the big

6 For a quick first impression please check the pages from *Hey* magazine displayed on the project website: <http://turkish-pop-music-images.org>.

cities, the newcomers came with their heterogeneous cultures—and this made *arabesk* more than a cultural mixture in music. They turned it into a manifestation of their identity as the result of social chance. This 'identity music' tried to urbanize and centralize itself.

Kenan Behzat Sharpe points to other elements involved:

"As the politics of the Turkish left became increasingly militant after 1968, [...] activists began heavily emphasizing the [rural] culture of Anatolia. Selda and others began to move from a psychedelic-folk fusion to unambiguous folk revival. Urban activists from Istanbul and Ankara cut their long hair short, tore through the 'village novels' of socialist realist writers, and attempted to organize the peasantry. With the *bağlama* in one hand and rifle in the other, they struggled for a completely independent Turkey. Nationalism, highly selective reinterpretation of the Turkish independence movement, and investment in the historical continuity of 'the people' shaped the content and form of revolutionary art in the period" (Sharpe 2018: 174).

Daniel Spicer follows this track: Musicians "were beginning to consider themselves as much revolutionaries as artists" (Spicer 2018: 78). He remarks about Barış Manço's album *2023* that the record praises a rural Arcadian brotherhood, a semi-socialist "idealized, rural society" (*ibid.*: 158). He continues about Selda Bağcan's music: "Her interpretations of folk tunes were perceived as protest songs, using timeless resonances to cast an allusive and critical eye over the socio-political situation in modern Turkey" (*ibid.*). Here, folk music was used as a legitimized and securing tradition enabling protest. Selda said herself that "the people who said they hated my songs did listen to me, in secret, because I do my own country's folk music, the cultural music, the roots" (quoted in Spicer 2018: 160).

Meral Akkent brings another notion to the table, combining urban gender issues and rurality: "In 1970s [urban] *female* performers discovered self-confident statements of rural women in traditional songs and interpreted these songs in their albums. To what extent these wise recommendations of the older women in these songs are in place" (Akkent 2018) is demonstrated by a number of songs. One example is Neşe Karaböcek's "Demiyyom mu?" In this very old traditional song from Anatolia "an experienced woman clearly tries to encourage a younger one to shape her own life and not to waste time with unreliable men who only consume the vital energy of a woman" (*ibid.*).

Summarizing the thoughts of Tülü, Sharpe, Spicer, and Akkent, one can come to the conclusion that the rural and the urban are interwoven in a complex, even contradictory way. The outcome is a 'rurbanism' characterized by the following key elements: a rural-to-urban migration, an urban left-winged nationalism focusing on the rural, an Arcadian, anti-imperialistic, revolutionary ruralism plus female empowerment. The pop music images produced just show this complexity: they are mixing the rural with the urban, by tying the urban back to the rural as well as by urbanizing the rural.

The Flexi-Image

Like 'rurbanism,' there is another central feature of Turkish pop music images on the level of their visual structures, which we would like to call the 'flexi-image.'

Nazlı Eda Noyan has researched the Yeşilçam melodrama and its film posters and writes about the flexi-film and flexi-poster: "[...], a film and its poster differ in Turkey from region to region in terms of content and marketing techniques [...]", "the film endings and the posters would [even] differ from district to district in Istanbul [...]" (Noyan 2008: 11). Citing Ağâh Özgüç, she continues: "As Özgüç notes (1985), 'the theatre owners of Anatolian cities warned the producers that they would reject their films unless they had belly dance in them'" (ibid.). Films were also produced with different endings according to a regional male or female audience (ibid.). In music, this corresponds to a sort of flexi-music that Baysal was referring to when he said "that artists/bands would often experiment with different musical aspects in each of their recordings" (Baysal 2018: 209). It also corresponds to flexi-covers. For example, the singer Selma İstanbullu changes her style and appearance with every cover, yet the heavy electronic Anatolian funk style of the songs is not present in any of the different covers.⁷ Sometimes even one and the same song gets different record covers, as one and the same film gets different posters.

A prime example for the flexi-image is Barış Manço's album *2023*: We can discern a socialist textual message (the brotherhood) and a progressive Turko-futurism in sound here (using the latest synthesizers). Then, the record cover features a Western modernist electric guitar hero, Ottoman fashion with a nationalist touch, and a hippie style with long hair, alongside progressive rock graphics.⁸ It is, as Spicer (2018: 137) remarks, highly ambivalent and complex, containing everything: left-wing and right-wing, progressive and backward positions.

Why is that so? Maybe it serves a communication that aims at different, heterogeneous target groups, mixed like the audience in the *gazino*⁹, sending references in every direction to maximize the audience? Or is it to cover musical experiments by visual means, balancing the experiments by pointing to various directions? More research has to be done on this subject. And we would like to invite everyone to support us with material and thoughts—any kind of help is much appreciated.

7 See some of Selma İstanbullu's record covers:

<https://www.discogs.com/artist/4140098-Selma-Istanbullu>.

8 For the record cover and the artwork of Barış Manço's *2023*,

see <https://www.discogs.com/release/1758454-2023/images>.

9 Thanks for this hint to Erbatur Çavuşoğlu from Lefter Records (personal conversation, April 2017).

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ANATOLIAN POP MUSIC: 'RURBAN' IMAGES OF A PERIOD

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1.

Introduction

Anatolian pop seems like a 'local' Turkish phenomenon but has recently joined the ranks of globalizing tendencies of pop music, inspiring musicians and listeners throughout the world. Like any other form of music, it needs to be seen in a wider perspective that encompasses discourses of national identity (or even nationalism), globalization, politics, and social change. And never is pop music, like any type of music, truly 'local' as it always links various traditions: from times present and past, places near and afar, and from a variety of musical styles. Using music from the hinterlands of Turkey and subsequently becoming a mainstream form of Turkish popular music, Anatolian pop is only one of many such musical scenes that have emerged in one particular locality and historical setting but carry within them, at least partly and by adaptation, the sounds, the longings and the looks of other geographical and temporal settings. Music is always a mixture and a blending of diverse contents. Anatolian pop, for that matter, has been defined recently in the context of Turkish music (Gedik 2018), in a political context (Ramm 2020) and in a polycultural, transnational context (Lund 2026/2020), which in their combination bring together European, Mediterranean, Arabic, Balkan, and other post-Ottoman 'musicscapes' (following up on Appadurai 1996).

For this article, we would like to set out a perspective for the analysis of Anatolian pop that seeks to combine the temporal, spatial, and cultural references of this form of musical expression with an approach from the sociology of knowledge (Mannheim 1936; Bohnsack 2011). We will focus on pictorial documents that have been used to package and promote this genre of music in a particular period, mainly the 1970s. As we will show, this decade has been crucial for the development of Turkish pop music, and of Turkey, in more ways than one. What had started from the mid-1960s onward as "a time of unprecedented radicalization, artistic experimentation, internationalism, and youthful disaffection" (Sharpe 2018: 168) in Turkey and elsewhere, rubbed off on subsequent decades and still lingers on in collective memory: partly suppressed, especially after the 1980 military coup. In this way, we seek to write a "micro-history" based on materials that reflect particular spatio-temporally grounded practices (see Freist 2015).

The perspective taken by the authors refers not only to the music as such, but centrally to three sets of imagery and their inherent imaginations which are inextricably linked with Anatolian pop: a) a rural imagery; b) an urban imagery; and c) a mixed rural-urban imagery that we would like to call 'rurban.' All these imaginations are documented by way of record sleeves and in music magazines and thereby accompany the music that they package, adorn, and promote. Our objective is to analyze the habitus that is inherent, or incorporated, in these pop musical images and, in a larger context, suffused Turkish society at the time.

2. Documents of a Period: Methodological Considerations

Outside of live performances, popular music is handed down and distributed in the form of documents: records (shellac, vinyl, and compact discs), tape cassettes, data files, sheet music, or in the form of filmic recordings. All of these are packaged and promoted, in one way or another, and more often than not carry images as well: on record sleeves, promotional posters and billboards, in adverts, and by way of pictures in popular magazines. People like to listen to music, but at the same time like to look at the musicians and imagine their performances. Therefore, what is handed down as pop musical records is not just records in the conventional meaning of the word, i.e., discs that contain two or more tracks and present them in a more or less coherent and meaningful way as a marketable commodity (single or album) with a distinct title, but equally a 'record' in the sense of preserving information for posterity.

A pop record usually has a sleeve artwork that is inextricably linked with the disc or cassette. It is meant to capture the essence of the work to be marketed and consumed (see Elster 2021: 80–81; Machin 2010: 32–76). As material bundles that contain both sonic, visual, and textual content, i.e., music, pictures, and accompanying metatexts such as liner notes or lyrics, pop records can be seen as complex works of art, even if they might have been created for the purpose of generating profit by selling a multitude of copies. Pop music and its adorning imagery is not free art—it is a commercial endeavor and therefore at times underestimated. And yet, like any piece of art, pop records and their accompanying images seem to capture the mood of their contemporaneity and allow for a reimagining of possible courses of history, or contingencies. They are of the day and for the day, but at the same time, their contents being fixed for posterity, records and their sleeves transport messages to the future in which they can eventually be dug up as records of the past. The question posed by Mark Greif, "How should it really ever be possible for pop music to incarnate a particular historical situation?" (Greif 2016: 100), remains valid and will infuse this article throughout. In what ways do records, and especially their pictorial cover artworks and other related pictures, convey what was happening in a particular period in a particular place?

From the wider perspective of the sociology of knowledge, pop records may indeed be read as documents or texts of their own process of formation at a specific historic or social juncture. Following up on the general approach of Ralf Bohnsack's (2011) documentary method, which is modelled after Karl Mannheim's (1936) concept of the sociology of knowledge and art historian Erwin Panofsky's (1955) iconographical-iconological method of interpretation, it can be posited that human-made artifacts reflect the cultural moods, practices, and orders of power that had been suffusing a society at a given moment in time: ideas, ideologies, discourses, topics, design and gadgetry trends, depicted or described behaviors, fears, hopes, and utopias, or the conspicuous lack of such mentions and referencing. We find such figments

in literature, in art, in fashion, but also in music, one could surmise—a cultural phenomenon usually not regarded as overtly political in the strictest sense of the word, but easily identifiable, from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, as an embodiment of political statements. Such documents are the results of socially more or less conscious acts of constructing what is to be: “When the imagination finds no satisfaction in existing reality, it seeks refuge in wishfully constructed places and periods” (Mannheim 1936: 236).

The sociology of knowledge attempts to address and encompass the whole of ideological production in the cultural sphere together with its historical interactions and cross-pollinations, as it were, in order to derive meaning from, and to interpret, change processes in society (see Kettler/Meja 1999: 300). It is these “situationally transcendent ideas” (Mannheim 1936: 237) that this article seeks to analyze, well aware of the fact “that in certain historical periods wish-fulfilment takes place through projection into time while, in others, it proceeds through projection into space” (*ibid.*).

As the aim of this article is to point out and scrutinize documents of a period, i.e., works of pop music and their accompanying images, and how they envision the future of a society, it will be important to remind ourselves of the fact that their elements of meaning—musical properties, lyrics, storylines, pictures, sleeve artwork, etc.—are not necessarily out in the open (although they seem to be). Rather, they are woven into the documents, and we therefore need to understand them as more or less covert manifestations of “underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion [...] condensed into one work” (Panofsky 1955: 30). Panofsky calls these elements that contain such a particular essence, referencing Ernst Cassirer, “symbolical” values, that is, “as a symptom of something else which expresses itself in a countless variety of other symptoms” and “which are often unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express” (*ibid.*: 31). It is in that “something else” that a new or redefined worldview appears. From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, therefore, it is the researcher’s task to “determine when and where the world presented itself in such, and only in such a light to the subject that made the assertion, and the analysis may frequently be carried to the point where the more inclusive question may be answered, *why* the world presented itself in precisely such a manner” (Mannheim 1936: 296).

Taking up this cue, this article will analyze pop music records and their sleeve artworks as documents of the essence of the worldview of the document’s producers in the first place. A record is where the latter’s social milieu, and the ideas and constraints of the epoch in which production took place, condense into one artifact. Pop music records, as it were, seem to capture the formative context in which they were created though it is at times difficult to pin down what exactly has been captured, or how. Often this only becomes clear in retrospect by way of a reconstruction:

when revisiting these records years or even decades after their release. The order that then reveals itself in hindsight is compatible with the concept of habitus that Pierre Bourdieu elaborated in partial recourse to, *inter alia*, Mannheim and Panofsky. Habitus is to be understood as the structural and framework conditions of particular actors, and their actions, in society (Bourdieu 1989: 169–174; Bohnsack 2011: 30–33). Society inscribes itself in the habitus, and also by way of this habitus, with all its mostly unconscious and often unquestioned patterns of behavior and evaluation: habitus is a form of embodied social dispositions (Bourdieu/Wacquant 2013: 160; Bourdieu 1989: 467) which appears as both the producer and product “of a *modus operandi* that is based on atheoretical knowledge [...] of *incorporated*—so to speak: *automated*—practical action” (Bohnsack 2018: 207, original emphasis). This *modus operandi* needs to be excavated, extricated, and explicated, akin to the work of an archaeologist, but by employing reconstructive methods of the social sciences instead.

The implicit, atheoretical knowledge of a specific socio-cultural context that guided the document’s producers in their stages of producing, mostly without being aware of it, needs to be identified in the actions that are observable in the document. How exactly have things been arranged, for example, and what motivated this particular choice of arrangement? These actions are no discrete, singular, or individual happenstances, but rather steeped or embedded, as exemplars of an apparent social normalcy of ‘know-how,’ in practices based on a wider, socially agreed, and implicit knowledge that results in a typified, routinised and socially ‘comprehensible’ bundle of activities (Reckwitz 2003: 289). This is where the afore-mentioned habitus, or framework of orientation, is encapsulated. Being grounded in the sociology of knowledge allows researchers to capture and analyze the documents’ habitus and their meanings in and for society in particular historical contexts, and thereby to explicate culture’s implicit frames of orientation, for example by identifying supratemporal narrative patterns that might be contained in pop records and their sleeve artwork.

The sample for our documentary analysis consists of a number of Turkish records and their sleeves, released in the 1970s, from the authors’ personal collections and further substantiated through systematic online research on *discogs.com*, a record collectors’ forum, social networking site, and marketplace (see *discogs.com* 2021), plus articles and their photographic illustrations culled from a rather complete 1970s sample of Turkish weekly pop-culture magazine *Hey*, which existed between 1970 and 1994 and was essential for the formation of Turkish popular culture, Anatolian pop, and the musicscape linked to it (Oğuz 2013; Baysal 2018), and other archival materials available. In order to investigate the visual and discursive links between Anatolian pop music and other cultural artifacts, this sample is adorned by references to Turkish movie posters pertaining to the subgenre of the aptly named *kostüme avantür* [costumed adventure] films of the period.

Extensively collected in the book *5555 Afişle Türk Sineması* (İnanoğlu 2004), we'll use these as an historical starting point for our analysis. Findings presented in this article will by necessity be exploratory and at times sketchy; they are, however, meant to be the starting point for a larger analysis of Turkish pop culture and its political, social, and cultural implications that the authors are preparing.

3. Costumed Adventure in a 'Turkey in Turmoil'

A suitable point of departure for reconstructing Anatolian pop's embedment in Turkish culture is an analysis of its visual appearance: the way the musicians looked, how they staged themselves stylistically, and the costumes they wore—all of them striking features of this scene even in hindsight. In order to understand why the pop artists looked the way they did in the 1970s, it will be necessary first to look at the visual role models Turkish popular culture provided, most notably the country's film industry. Arguably, Anatolian pop music was a costumed adventure of sorts, and its visuals had their roots in vernacular movies, many of them now regarded as classics—quite like many of the musical acts this article focuses on. Popular cultural images of a particular period can indeed carry similar characteristics or borrow some features from one another. It may even transform some constituent elements of one cultural form into another, only then to recombine them in a seemingly new popular cultural genre or field as more or less unconsciously referenced resources of cultural knowledge. Thus, it is possible to pinpoint the traces of visual pastiche of Turkish *kostüme avantür* movies of the 1960s in the fashion preferences of Anatolian pop performers of the 1970s, which in turn relates a story about Turkish society undergoing phases of dramatic change at a key period of its recent history.

The transition from the 1960s to the 1970s has been complicated at so many interrelated levels: changing social dynamics, increasingly polarizing and radicalizing political scenes, youth movements, pressing economic growth issues, as well as unplanned urbanization leading to an increase in peripheral areas around big cities, many of them informal *gecekondu* [put up overnight] settlements, among other social developments. The reflection of this "Turkey in Turmoil" (Pekesen 2020) period has led to often conflicted but equally interwoven phenomena to be seen in popular cultural production particularly. Coincidentally, the release of the very first *kostüme avantür* movie can be traced back to 1965, a pivotal year in the development of Turkish popular culture. The movie in question is *Horasanın Üç Atlısı* [The Three Horsemen of Horasan] starring Cüneyt Arkın, literally the 'poster boy' of the genre (fig. 1), and takes over the key visual codes of the Turkish heroic comic book characters of the period (see Cantek 2012).

It was followed by the influential movie *Karaoğlan: Altay'dan Gelen Yiğit* [Karaoğlan: The Valiant from Altai], released the same year featuring lead actor Kartal Tibet, who was also known as an action film hero during this period (fig 2).

According to Özön (1990), *kostüme avantür* films, as a subgenre of historical movies, can be distinguished by their costume-focused adventurist characteristics that enable wishful reimaginings of glorified moments of Turkish history. To this day, this sentiment, as incorporated practical action (see Bohnsack 2018: 207), seems to be a modus operandi of the local film industry inclined to re-enact past events of national heroism, supremacy, and glory.

In the now classic Yeşilçam [Green Pine] era of the Turkish movie industry, a total of 63 of such costumed adventure movies have been produced between 1965 and 1982 (Özgüç 1998). One of the common features of these movies is that they are always set in rural outdoor areas (see İri 2001). Since the bulk of these movies were shot in the 1960s and 1970s, it is possible to interpret this period's focus on rurality as a reflection of the contemporary popular cultural climate. The cinematic imagery instigated in the mid-1960s would later be reflected in the visual styles of Turkish popular music, although this needs to be seen in a wider, global context as well. Similar types of rural as well as flamboyant dressing were popular across the world after the mid-1960s, at the height of psychedelia and the hippie movement, but in Turkey this flaring up of colors and garment arguably reflected a country similarly flaring up politically and socially.

What is palpable in Turkey at the time is a tension between leftist and rightist political factions and their desire to reclaim their ties with the population living in rural areas and small cities. This was accompanied by a will to reclaim nationalism either in its Kemalist, socialist, or Turanist forms—dividing forces in Turkish politics indeed. According to Hava and Yıldırım (2016), the reasons behind returning to what is believed to be 'the Turkish values' in this period are manifold. In the 1960s, the large waves of migration from rural areas to industrialized towns and cities mostly in the west of the country intensified



Fig. 1: Movie poster *Horasanın Üç Atlısı*, dir. Tunç Başaran, Turkey: Artist Film, 1965, color (source: İnanoğlu 2004: 247).



Fig. 2: Movie poster *Karaoğlan: Altay'dan Gelen Yiğit*, dir. Suat Yalaz, Turkey: Olcay Prodüksiyon, 1965, color (source: İnanoğlu 2004: 252).

competition for jobs among people, which led to unemployment and poverty. The political, economic, and social contexts of this period also had determining effects on cultural and intellectual production. Those who were employed started to seek their social rights and formed labor unions and corresponding political parties. The youth, university students in particular, demanded a more liberal and democratic environment free from any repression, and they protested against imperialism and what they felt was a too strong American influence. In much of Turkish society, the impoverished living conditions in many rural areas and the manifold problems resulting from this situation were attributed to 'the West,' especially the loss of jobs due to the industrialization of agriculture as part of the Marshall Plan policy; therefore, adhering to Turkish values and traditions was regarded as most essential, and a recourse to nationalism was thought to be the solution (ibid.: 24).

Such distinct political and ideological stances, as well as attempts to fuse them in a kind of melting pot, were most prominently reflected in the output of Turkish popular culture including the movie and music industries of the 1960s and 1970s. Their images accompanied the decisive shift in pop-musical traditions as artifacts of the political, economic, and cultural dynamics of this era of social transformation. Illustrative of this incorporated social practice is the fact that, as a unique genre of the Yeşilçam cinema, *kostüme avantür* movies emerged in the second half of the 1960s and largely lasted until the end of 1970s (Karadoğan 2001: 69). The socio-political context of that decade with all its nationalist discourses gaining ground enabled this filmic genre to become popular. The storylines of these movies relying on national-historical narratives, myths, and motifs were met by an increased public interest while populist discourse and filmic imagery were overlapping in the daily lives of the people as part of the then hegemonic culture. The physical locations of these films were dungeons, castles, palaces, city walls, and rural areas in general, i.e., 'historically' constructed and 'historical' provincial sites.

Against this background, the imagery and iconography of the *kostüme avantür* movies highlight the genre's drastic difference from earlier 'historical' Turkish film productions. The history that is visually represented in these movies is not consistent, this being most obvious in the objects, costumes, and props that reference time periods. In a similar vein, a mix of historically well recorded events and characters, but from different eras, as well as from different geographies and regions, and even from different communities and nations, form part of the storylines of these films. This kind of irrationality, i.e., elements that don't really match, is one of the essential and constituting elements of *kostüme avantür* (Karadoğan 2001: 82). Its main characters and plots can indeed be traced back to comic books of the 1950s, especially in the depiction of male heroes, such as Karaoğlan, Battal Gazi, Tarkan, Köroğlu, Malkoçoğlu, and other characters that are household names in Turkey—cartoon characters that derive from Turkic mythological figures and stories.

In this unique film genre, the main character is always a male warrior who works and fights alone, who is a skilled horse rider, who either saves women or is god's gift to women with a well-built body, always smart, morally intact, dedicated to a cause and who can thus not settle in. But at the same time, the hero is not autonomous, he just follows the orders of either the sultan or another figure of authority. That said, he is a proud man, he respects authority but keeps being bull-headed nevertheless.

Obviously, the cultural scene at the time needed a taken-for-granted common hero to reconstruct the hegemonic discourses prevalent in Turkey at the time. Needless to say, that absurd historical hero, a mixture of different characters and as such an unquestionable representative form, never existed. It may be posited here that such cartoonish characters were created to fill a gap in popular culture and imagination as the political and ideological currents were in favor of them. They were needed in order to repair the broken male ego of the period, especially in terms of the damaged post-Ottoman national identity and Turkey's diminishing role in international politics.

This is also evident in the way female characters were inserted into the narrative—indeed, more attached to the story than really included. There is an enormous difference between how 'good' and 'bad' Turkish and foreign women are represented in these movies, both via the narrative constructs and the visual imagery as well. The importance of such visual representations of these characters is that it seems to be resonating well with the popular imagery of Turkish musicians of that period, particularly the ones whose musical style was aligned with Anatolian rock, pop, or later with arabesque rock, who wore clothes looking similar to the ones used in costumed adventure movies released just a few years earlier. Therefore, one can argue that what was explicitly and implicitly staged in Turkey at the time can be called the *performative rural image*, a place of fanciful imagination and reimagination. It was to become a key element of *Anadolu pop* and its visual representation and was made possible by the fact that the vast majority of key musical performers lived in the large cities and had no rural backgrounds.

4. Analyses of Anatolian Pop Images

4.1. Anatolian Pop and the Concept of 'Rurbanity'

In order to further analyze the *performative rural image* outlined above, we would like to shed some more light on the question how Anatolian pop is connected to rurality and urbanity. As mentioned earlier, Turkey underwent tremendous social transformations from the 1950s onward and throughout the ensuing decades, not least in terms of population patterns. If we look at the statistics of that period, there was a changing balance between the density of rural and urban populations. This ratio increased dramatically between 1965 and 1970 (İşik 2005: 60). However, a larger percentage of the population was still living in the rural areas of eastern Anatolia then. Thus, most Turks at the time were a far cry away from the hotspots of cosmopolitanism and globalization, and culturally speaking, Turkey largely seemed preoccupied with cozier, glorified versions of itself.

Despite this general proneness to navel-gazing, it was still not a widespread practice for urban Turkish musicians to sing in their native language in the early 1960s, the decade so important for the development of the Turkish popular music scene. Using a foreign vernacular was *de rigueur* for urban-minded pop musicians; singing Turkish lyrics seemed like an almost exotic practice to them. According to Dilmener (2003), this negligence of the native language in much of urban pop music, and thus a form of linguistic distancing from much of the Turkish population, was counteracted by three distinct styles of musical production that were geared towards the more rural-minded parts of the population.

Firstly, it was Fecri Ebcioğlu's *aranjman* [arrangement] production style, which basically consisted of re-writing Turkish lyrics for popular songs originally in English and in French. The second style was a tradition of re-arranging selected songs from Turkish folk music and adapting them to polyphonic musical textures without disrupting the songs' melodic and rhythmic structures, which meant performing these pieces with Western instruments. Started by singer Alpay and arranger Doruk Onatkut in the early 1960s, this style became a common practice and was eventually called *Anadolu pop* [Anatolian pop] (Dilmener 2003: 43). The third style focused on composing original music with Turkish lyrics. In the process, the tunes' production features gradually started to westernize.

The 1964 song "Burçak Tarlası" [Tare Field] by female singer Tülay German created the basic formula for Anadolu Pop and marked the beginning of this musical expression as a movement (ibid.: 44). The tune pop-Westernized a *türkü* (see Karahasanoğlu/Skoog 2009: 59; Baysal 2018: 207). *Türkü* are mostly traditional rural Anatolian folk songs. They had been collected systematically since the early days of the Turkish Republic to compile a repertoire of national folk music, which the new Turkish nation was in need of to promote its new

self-image—a process that was in fact part of its nation-building after the demise of the Ottoman Empire (see Sels 2021: 1–3, 238–239; Turan/Işıktas 2016). Cultural music-politics and national identity politics were going hand in hand here (see Lund 2013; Birson 2016; Bates 2019: 151–152.), in fact to such a degree that Sels calls Turkish folk music itself “a political construction” (Sels 2021: 54, 221–33, see also Değirmenci 2006). As ever, one needs to be cautious about claims to ‘authenticity’ or ‘tradition’ whenever earlier musical forms are invoked as there is hardly any material or sonic evidence of what ‘traditional’ music sounded like in the historical past, as Machin (2010: 16–18) points out (see also Ramm 2020).

Before long, the tendency towards an electrification of *türkü* and of rural *aşık* [touring minstrel] folk songs intensified. In 1965, an immensely popular—and politically backed—music contest took place that included concert tours as well as record releases. The contest was named *Altın Mikrofon* [Golden Microphone] and was initiated and organized by the influential Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* (see Lund 2026/2013).¹ One requirement for *Altın Mikrofon* was to rearrange a traditional Turkish tune which was supposed to be performed in a Western style incorporating electric or electrified instruments. The significance of this contest should not be underestimated. It led to forms of musical expression which were no longer just copying the Beatles or Buddy Holly in language, composition, or instrumentation. This contest opened the gates for the further development of a specific Turkish hybrid, Anatolian pop, with a fundament in Turkish language, Turkish compositions, and Turkish instruments, combined with electrified rural Turkish instruments, most notably the *saz* [a long-necked lute], and modern urban electric instruments, and generally a Western-styled, modern pop-rock approach. In 1972, Cahit Berkay (of the Anatolian rock group *Moğollar*) presented a definition of Anatolian pop well in sync with the developments following the *Altın Mikrofon* contest and still useful today: “*Anadolu Pop* is a style that combines Turkish folkloric themes, instruments and poems with the electronic capabilities and the systems of pop music” (as quoted in Baysal 2018: 216).

Depending on perspective, one can perceive Anatolian pop either as a Westernization of Anatolian music by pop-rock means, or as an Easternization/Turkification of Western pop by Anatolian music, or as a hybrid incorporating elements from both Eastern and Western music, to form something in-between (see Lund/Lund/Tülü 2026/2019: 84). Anatolian pop can thus be identified as a musical style which, according to Baysal, was an experimental way of more or less “harmonizing various fields—including national ideology, local culture, international counterculture, and the modern world” (Baysal 2018: 216). These three perspectives—Westernization, Easternization, and ‘in-between-ness’—were, depending on the point of view, acutely present in the visualization

1 The contest had a predecessor in the famous newspaper-based *Türkiye Güzeli* [Miss Turkey] contest starting in 1929 and the craze it produced in Turkey (see Shissler 2004). Such beauty contests are just as common as participation in international beauty contests for so-called developing countries to show themselves as progressive and liberal to a global audience. The same impulse may have also driven the development of *Altın Mikrofon*, to promote a new progressive and liberal side of Turkish music.

of Anatolian pop and paved the way for a specific 'rurbanism' which, in that particular period, could be observed on record sleeves and in *Hey* magazine photos quite often. Rural settings, textiles and outfits were juxtaposed to, and mixed with, urban settings and outfits to produce specific 'rurban' Anatolian pop outfits. The electrified saz often appears as a symbol of that rurbanism.

The development of a specific rurbanism as outlined above may be seen as an answer to the ongoing internal migration in Turkey, especially since the 1950s, when, thanks to Marshall Plan funds, the industrialization of agriculture forced large parts of the rural population to seek their fortune in the big cities of Turkey. Alongside this considerable rural exodus—indeed whole villages moved to cities in form of chain migration (see Erman 2020: 185)—Anatolian music followed suit and subsequently got 'citified' by urban musicians now starting to play it.² This resulted in Anatolian music becoming urban and electric (and more fashionable). At the same time, young urban musicians went, often for the first time and mainly as part of their mandatory military service, to the countryside. Here, future Anatolian pop stars like Cem Karaca and Erkin Koray got in touch with rural Anatolian music, which changed their attitude and interest toward that music in a fundamentally positive way (see Spicer 2017: 59, 158–159; Baysal 2018: 216–217). Rural and urban forms thus got interwoven in a complex, even contradictory way. The outcome is, very simply put, a rurbanism with the following key elements that reflected societal change in Turkey during the 1960s and 70s:

- rural-to-urban migration
- urban nationalism focusing on the rural
- student movements and early (individual) attempts at female empowerment.

The images that were produced to accompany or advertise the pop music recordings resulting from this new cultural climate reflect this complexity of overlaps and contradictions: they are mixing the rural with the urban by tying the urban back to the rural as well as by urbanizing the rural. These social practices were of an implicit nature, were hardly ever consciously addressed in the 1960s and 70s, and thus seem to be based on incorporated social knowledge. They narrate complex stories of Turkey and its ongoing social, political, and cultural upheavals back then. The pictorial productions linked to the music that captured this period will be further scrutinized in the following paragraphs. They seek to outline first hints of a theory to be developed for understanding these images and their historic relevance.

2 However, strictly speaking, earlier forms of 'rurban' music had already developed after internal waves of migration in the 1930s. Anatolian rumba is a case in point: in many music restaurants in Istanbul, called '*gazino*,' Anatolian ballads were interpreted, female singers and dancers dressed in 'rural' dresses were singing and mixing Rumba with Konya's famous *kaşık* [spoon] folk dance" (Boratav 1981: 228–229; see also Lund 2026/2020).

Anatolian pop music images, used for record sleeves and in advertising and promotional activities, address the complex entanglement of the rural and the urban in diverse ways, sometimes in complete accordance with the music, sometimes complementing the music and adding new perspectives. In these images, three main tendencies can be observed vis-à-vis their visual appearance: Anatolian pop looks either a) rural, b) urban, or c) rurban. Based on a few examples taken from our sample of Turkish *Hey* magazine issues from the 1970s, record covers from that era, as well as a few other materials, we will analyze these three 'looks' in that order and will show that the rurban look is by far the broadest and most varied category.

a. Anatolian pop looks rural

Our example of a prototypical rural look of images linked to Anatolian pop is drawing on well-known acts Selda Bağcan, a female singer, and Moğollar, an all-male psychedelic rock band at times associated with Cem Karaca.



Fig. 3: Record sleeve (front) for Selda Bağcan, "Aldırma Gönül" (1978).



Fig. 4: Double page article about Selda Bağcan, *Hey* magazine (July 11, 1977: 30-31).

Purely rural Anatolian pop images are not the exception in our sample of *Hey* magazine issues and record covers. There are some examples of images of Selda Bağcan where the rural imagery corresponds well to the music, in the example shown here an Anatolian pop sound with a pronounced rural orientation (figs. 3 and 4). The song "Aldırma Gönül" is a prison song from the 1930s with lyrics by Sabahattin Ali and a strong political attitude of not giving in. In the *Hey* magazine issue of 1977 (July 11: 30-31), the photo on the left side shows Selda Bağcan dressed in an East Asian fighter costume (as was fashionable at the time worldwide) holding a Western acoustic guitar, while the other photos in the magazine issue as well as the record sleeve portray her as a farming person, most likely living in a village.

This rural positioning can also be read as an implicitly left-wing political statement and has indeed been understood as such. According to Daniel Spicer (2017: 38, 155–73), Selda Bağcan's interpretations of folk tunes were perceived as protest songs. The character of the strong woman so often on display in Bağcan's songs (and in her real life as well) can congenially be read in the context of popular movements of the period and as an individual early example of female empowerment. As Meral Akkent points out: "In the 1970s urban female performers discovered self-confident statements of rural women in traditional songs and interpreted these songs in their albums" (Akkent 2018). This rural stance, however, included conservative orientations (e.g., notions of anti-Western nationalism held by the left and the right) and progressive ones (e.g., women's and peasants' liberation and similar revolutionary ideas) that were overlapping in an ideological mish-mash of sorts. In hindsight, it is difficult to label some ideological leanings of that period clearly 'left-' or 'right-wing,' even though the self-descriptions of political factions in Turkey were clearly laid out back then. As Kenan Behzat Sharpe concurs:

"Selda and others began to move from a psychedelic-folk fusion to unambiguous folk revival. Urban activists from Istanbul and Ankara cut their long hair short, tore through the 'village novels' of socialist realist writers and attempted to organize the peasantry. With the *bağlama* in one hand and rifle in the other, they struggled for a completely independent Turkey. Nationalism, highly selective reinterpretation of the Turkish independence movement, and investment in the historical continuity of 'the people' shaped the content and form of revolutionary art in the period" (Sharpe 2018: 174).

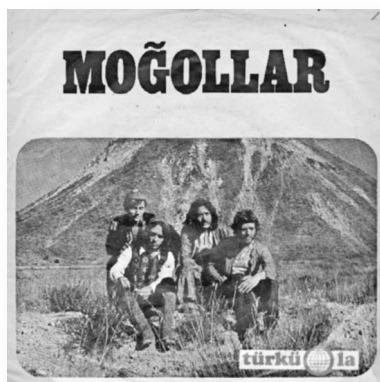


Fig. 5: Record sleeve (front) for Moğollar, "Çığrık" (1972).

Sometimes the rural imagery and the rural clothing of the musicians are in apparent opposition to the music, as in the case of Moğollar's 7-inch single "Çığrık" (fig. 5). The music leans heavily towards Western funk quite in synch with its time of production (1972). "Çığrık" is based on a traditional song, and if listening carefully, one can hear the Turkish timbal used percussively. The music has a strong urban feel to it, is Western oriented and pop by character, yet the sleeve image is ostentatiously rural, folk style, and shows a landscape of eastern Turkey. It is thus incorporating a rural Anatolian folk fundament

which is still audible in the recording, but rather hidden in the background. The sleeve image reverses these properties, putting the rural Anatolian folk fundament in the foreground. This almost seems like a cover-up operation—as if something were to be hidden—and thus like an anathema to the concept of authenticity. Given the somewhat shaky foundations of the latter, this careful staging might be a key element to understanding Anatolian pop's habitus.

b. Anatolian pop looks urban

The number of Anatolian pop images showing musicians in a completely urban setting is astonishingly small in our sample. One must search hard to find some at all.

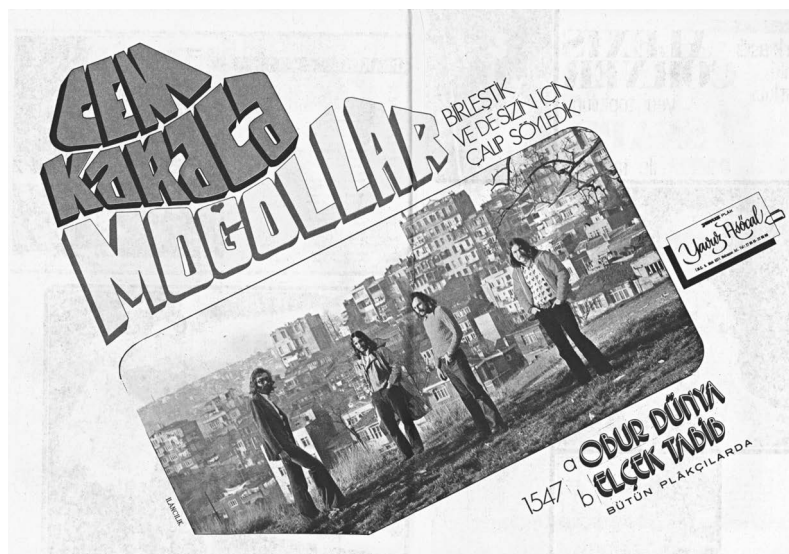


Fig. 6: Double page advertisement for Cem Karaca and Moğollar in *Hey* magazine (January 10, 1973: 22–23).

The ad for Cem Karaca and Moğollar's 7-inch single "Obur Dünya" (fig. 6) delivers one of the rare cases. The musicians stand in front of a highly urban scenery, in Western 1970s attire, thus promoting nothing but urban music. This seems to be well in line with Moğollar's general orientations as this band had "revealed their keen allegiance to the Western, paisley-clad hippie counterculture" (Spicer 2017: 43) right from the beginning of their career. However, images showing them in a pronouncedly urban setting are rare. In the example documented here, at least a few traces of rural origins remain audible in the recording, with the choice of rural instruments and lyrics belonging to the rural *aşık* [minstrel] culture.

Given the scarcity of such images in our sample, this state of a wide-reaching denial-by-imagery of the urbanization and other processes of modernization that Turkey underwent during the 1960s and 70s is remarkable. It may be pointing at an unconscious collective longing for reversing time and reclaiming more idyllic notions of everyday life and social organization—or what could vaguely be called an Arcadian-nationalist approach. It just as well needs to be seen in the context of anti-imperialistic, revolutionary elements in Turkish political discourse at the time increasingly focusing on the rural. Sharpe points out that "as the politics of the Turkish left became increasingly militant after 1968, [...] activists began heavily emphasizing the [rural] culture of Anatolia" (Sharpe 2018: 174). The political climate in Turkey was rough and adversary at the time, and many topics could not be addressed in the open.

c. Anatolian pop looks rural

In our sample of 1970s *Hey* magazine issues and record covers, we identified various ways for combining urban and rural elements in one image, and different visual strategies to construct the impression of rurbanity. We propose three different 'degrees of closeness' to be distinguished when examining rurality and urbanity in Anatolian pop imagery: juxtaposing rural and urban images side by side; conflating these motifs in one larger image; and focusing on close shots of a rurban motif.



Fig. 7: Double page article about Esin Afşar in *Hey* magazine (April 26, 1972: 12–13).

The double-page article on singer Esin Afşar in *Hey* magazine of April 26, 1972 (fig. 7) can serve as an example of the juxtaposition of urbanity and rurality alongside each other. The musician is shown twice on the double page: once as a young urban woman in an urban, Scandinavian-styled home setting, dressed up to date, and once as a peasant in a rural setting and clad in a corresponding

costume. As in the double-page article on Selda Bağcan shown above, these images are not presented as contradictory but rather as complementing each other. Again, the music under question is a mixture: both urban-funky and rural-*türkü* at the same time; the article advertises one of Afşar's major hits, "Zühtü." This kind of rural/urban interplay can be observed frequently in *Hey* magazine, tying the rural to the urban and vice versa as two co-existing entities.

A photo from a front page of the magazine *Ses* (fig. 8) of March 21, 1970 can serve as a prime example of a conflation of rural and urban stock motifs in one larger image—an intensified degree of closeness, as it were. Here, the band Moğollar shows up again, this time on stage, with the electric bass player sporting a rural outfit, but with a special emphasis on the Anatolian ornaments on his vest and his strangely prominent shepherd's socks. Standing next to him, the singer is dressed in an almost formal urban suit, chic leather shoes and a kind of op-art tie. In this image, the combination and mingling of rurality and urbanity is much more highlighted than in the examples given before. The guitar player in the back represents the rurality in his attire all together: the shoes, trousers and shirt are very much urban whereas his jacket, usually referred to as an 'Afghan' waistcoat in the West (and quite a hippie fashion statement at the time), is definitely rural, a clothing item originally worn by shepherds throughout parts of Asia. As in Anatolian pop music itself, both layers of social orientation are present in this mise-en-scène, surely by different degrees, yet fusing in one musical genre.



Fig. 8: Photo from the front page of *Ses* magazine (March 21, 1970), showing Moğollar on stage.

The most intense rurban degree of closeness is discernible in portraits or close shots. Presented on the front pages of two *Hey* issues and in a double-page ad in the same magazine in 1972 (figs. 9–11), Esin Afşar, Cem Karaca, and Fikret Kızılok can all be seen in close-ups that highlight details. The all-over rural impression, produced by the Anatolian textiles and ornaments in the images is combined with urban elements: Esin Afşar sports an up-to-date urban haircut and some hippie jewellery, Cem Karaca is wearing his stylish urban sunglasses which make all the difference, and in spite of the Anatolian ornaments on his guitar strap, Fikret Kızılok holds the acoustic guitar like a *repoussoir*, or push-back object, in quite an urban rock star manner. The choice of the instruments and their presentation play an important role in the construction of rurban images. Rural instruments, for example, are often taken as a marker of the Anatolian elements of Anatolian pop, akin to props.

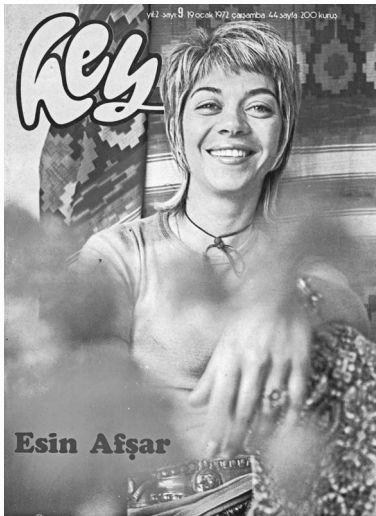


Fig. 9 (left): Esin Afşar on the front page of *Hey* magazine (January 19, 1972).



Fig. 10 (right): Cem Karaca on the front page of *Hey* magazine (June 21, 1972).

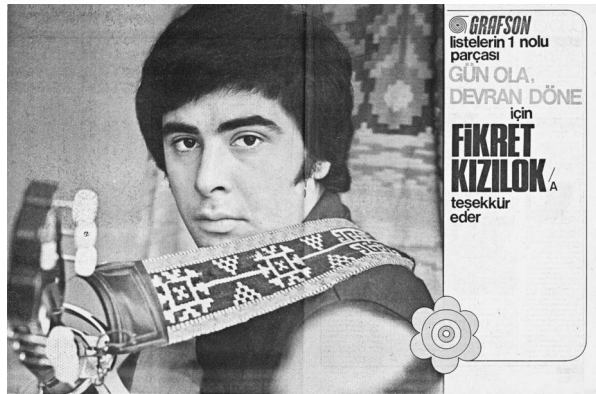


Fig. 11: Double page advertisement for Fikret Kızılok in *Hey* magazine (February 16, 1972: 22–23).



Fig. 12: Article about Barış Manço and Kurtalan Ekspres in *Hey* magazine (March 20, 1974: 26).



A concert photo of Barış Manço and his band Kurtalan Ekspres (fig. 12) shows the musicians on a stage with Marshall amplifiers, in a Western glam and hippie outfit and with some fantasy Ottoman elements adorning Manço's dress, the latter highly reminiscent of the *kostüme avantür* movie genre. Yet the musicians play an electrified saz and a Turkish timbal, thereby connecting the music to the rural Anatolian side of Anatolian pop both on an auditory and a visual level.

The examples above show that Turkish society at the time was moving back and forth between urban and rural areas, in thinking, in discourses, and in cultural production. In a period of transition, it seems that the only way to reinvigorate a political and thereby inherently cultural discourse was to reintroduce formerly neglected cultural phenomena (as rural elements were) back to the more dominant areas of popular culture. Therefore, this kind of rurban imagery became pervasive in Turkish popular culture and was not limited to pop music alone. It also manifested itself in a peculiar amalgam of comic book characters, invented mythical heroes, modes of eroticism (to a certain extent), but mostly by way of social action in ahistorical contexts and costumes. We may identify such ritualized staging of popular culture as a state of "liminality" (Turner 1969: 106). Regarding the perspectives on Anatolian

pop presented above, such a state of liminality reflects the 'in-between' perspective: both orientations—rural and urban—are represented through *mise-en-scène*, yet they are neither welded together, or merged, nor is a decision made in favor of one over the other; instead, the phenomena appear to be fluid or "betwixt and between," as Victor Turner (1969: 107) famously remarked in the context of symbolic anthropology. Urbanity and rurality appear like two sides of the same medal; hence we call it 'rurbanity.'

Such a liminal performative state—being and staging on a threshold, as it were—may pave the way for society to develop and find new ways of dealing with challenges, such as the impositions introduced by transformative processes of modernization, urbanization, and their larger contexts. Understood in such a way, a dual state of in-between-ness seems like a coping strategy and lays out possible future developments for a society in multiple ways. This openness can be identified as the *habitus* of Turkish society in the 1970s, i.e., as a formation of embodied social dispositions that so often manifest themselves in mostly unconscious and unquestioned patterns of behavior and cultural production in a society (see Bourdieu/Wacquant 2013: 160; Bourdieu 1989: 467)—observable in Turkey and elsewhere. Yet, this openness came under pressure with intensifying violent political feuds and infighting towards the end of the 1970s. The military coup in 1980 ended it the hard way. After this marked break, options for life—and music—changed.

Conclusion: Anatolian Pop Images and the Habitus of 1970s Turkey, and Beyond

To analyze the habitus of a period is not an easy task; capturing the embodied social dispositions of a particular period unfolding in a country in turmoil (as Pekesen 2020 puts it) is even harder. Yet this article, by employing the approach of the sociology of knowledge, attempted to outline a few key insights—to cover some ground, so to speak—that can be used for future research and further theory-building.

Taking into consideration what Anatolian pop looks like in the images analyzed so far, we can conclude that this musical genre and its attached social practices look rural or rurban in most cases; at times rural and urban motifs are conflated into a rurban look (to varying degrees); rarely does Anatolian pop look strictly urban. This still leaves us with the question *why* such rural and rurban elements are favored over an urban imagery. One answer points at the core principles of the music itself. Anatolian pop music was a wild, non-domesticated pop phenomenon. The usual domesticators, i.e., global major record companies, were not dominating the Turkish music market in the 1970s (see Lund/Lund 2026/2021: 180–181). Instead, and despite censorship, this market was a relatively unregulated independent music market. Many scholars attest Anatolian pop music an experimental, surprising character and describe it as a music in a continuous reach-out and try-out mode. It was an unrestrained pop music full of experimentation (see Söylemez 2022: 183, 188).

The designer Raymond Loewy once invented the so-called MAYA formula: Most Advanced Yet Acceptable (see Loewy 1951). Loewy always had the audience, the consumers in mind. Arguably, and more or less consciously, the same happened in Turkey with Anatolian pop music and its images. The rural and the rurban elements in that imagery restrained and balanced the music, at least visually, for the audience and their internal migration background in order to find calm in a society full of rifts and turmoil. The imagery rooted the music in something the audience knew—as a form of incorporated social knowledge—and could always refer to, like the *türkü* and *aşık* tunes which serve as fundaments for so many Anatolian pop songs. Thus, in a way, the imagery delivered a sort of homecoming. Yet, at the same time, the rurban imagery, like the music itself, referenced both a rural past and new styles of urbanity, in a combination of various degrees of urbanization.

The rurban imagery therefore both refers to the 'in-between' status of a large number of Turks with internal migration experiences and alludes to a then emerging urban middle-class youth (see Mumcu 2020), mostly educated in foreign high schools in the big Turkish cities. In the early 1970s, this urban youth had no first-hand migration experiences but nevertheless tried to figure out their identity in a period when a new, Americanized urbanism-as-lifestyle

served as a model (see Zürcher 2017: 231–232; Gürel 2009). At the same time, references to rural Anatolia gained importance, not only via internal migration but also connected to political messaging and political self-definition, especially when it came to Anatolian pop music as a form of protest.

At the beginning of this article, a polycultural, transnational context (see Lund 2026/2020) was mentioned, which is thought to bring together European, Mediterranean, Arabic, Balkan, and other post-Ottoman ‘musicscapes.’ A prominent function of the rurban imagery may also be seen in rooting the polycultural, transnational aspects of Anatolian pop—the non-Turkish ‘otherness’ that it partly includes—in the Anatolian core homeland, thus nationalizing (consciously or unconsciously) this kind of music. Instead of opening it up, by way of integrating non-homegrown, non-Turkic imageries and styles, in Turkey the visuals were narrowed down to a markedly Anatolian imagery. This seems to be in contrast to what sometimes happened outside of Turkey in the post-Ottoman era, when for example Greek musicians recorded an album entitled, and containing, “Turkish Hits” for an Israeli record label, or made cover versions of Barış Manço’s songs in the Greek language (see Lund 2026/2020). The urban left-wing factions of the nationalist movement in Turkey (see Ramm 2020) seem to have been more interested in re-defining Turkey by anchoring local national identity in Anatolia than in reframing Turkey in a post-national context by enlarging the country’s imagery and moving it beyond the frontiers of Anatolia. Therefore, a wider research perspective would have to take into account, and include, non-Anatolian rural, urban, and rurban imageries produced for Anatolian pop recordings outside of Turkey. In a similar vein, for further research, comparisons with nationalizing 1960s and 70s ‘musicscapes’ and their adorning imageries from outside of the post-Ottoman circle of countries would yield equally interesting comparative case studies.

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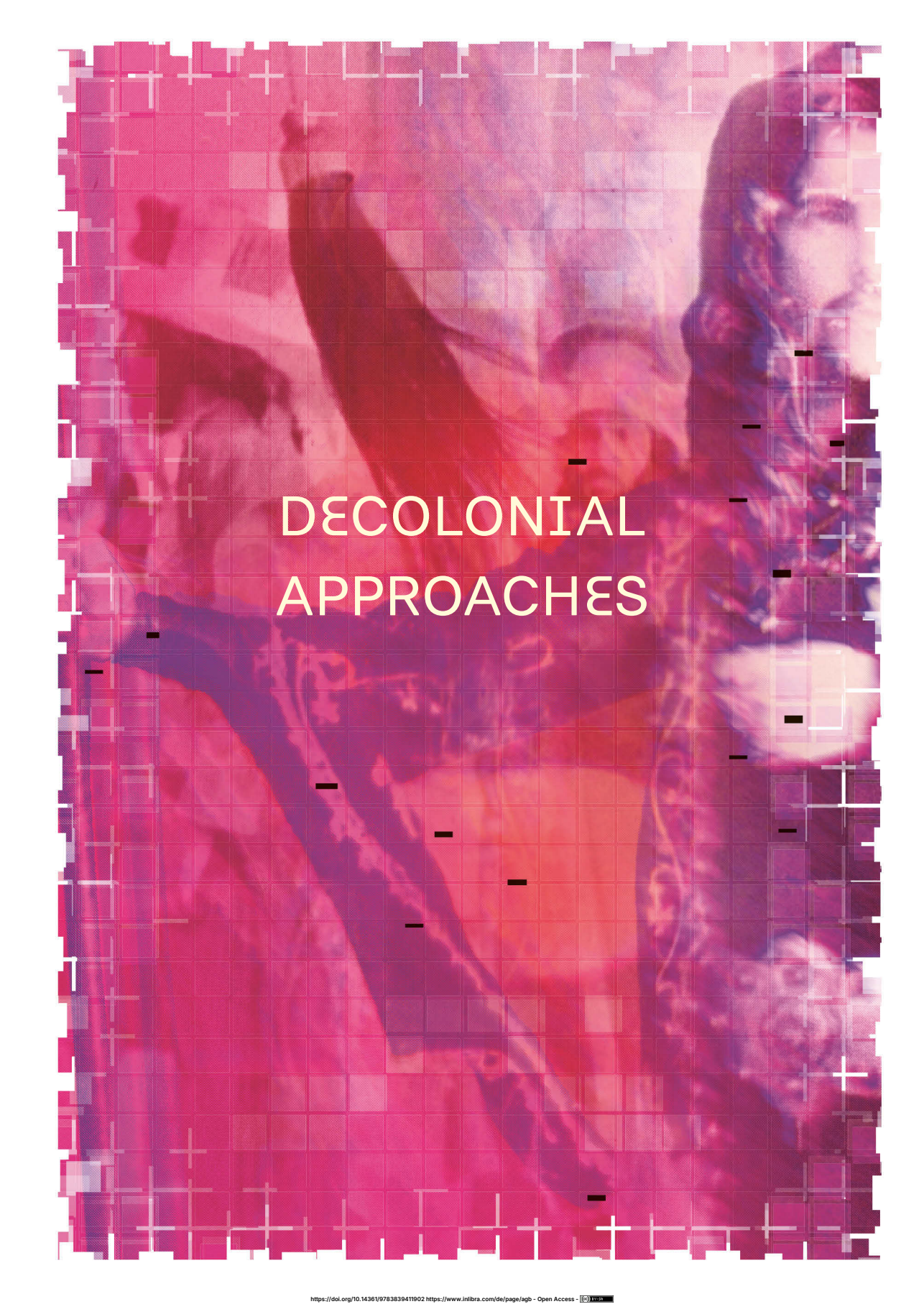
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The background of the page is a classical painting of a woman, likely a religious figure, wearing a red dress. The image is overlaid with a grid pattern and a pink-to-purple gradient. The title "DECOLONIAL APPROACHES" is centered in white, uppercase letters.

DECOLONIAL APPROACHES

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Holger Lund



DECOLONIZING POP MUSIC: FOCUSING ON TURKISH AND BRAZILIAN POP MUSIC DEVELOPMENTS

Updated and adapted version of:

Holger Lund (2019).

"Decolonizing Pop Music."

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<https://norient.com/stories/decolonizing-pop-music>.

This text is based on:

Holger Lund (2018).

"Pop und Hybrid-Pop: Überlegungen zur Dekolonisierung von
Pop-Musik und ihrer neuen globalen Geschichtsschreibung."

Archive dekolonialisieren. Mediale und epistemische Transformationen in Kunst, Design und Film,

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Bielefeld: transcript 2018, pp. 241–250.

"When you are decolonized, colonialism is not simply taken away from you. The essential subject of decolonization is a critical view on colonial patterns of thinking, colonial categories, colonial history of knowledge [...]." (Rassool 2017: 150)

"As a matter of fact, we have a problem with our history and our memory, since these have been written by the conquerors and not by the colonized people. Generations of Cameroonians were told that their ancestors had been the Gauls, although that is completely wrong." (Obolo 2017: 179)

Points of Departure

In this text, I want to take a look at some of the mechanisms for constructing global pop music history and to question them from a decolonial point of view. To achieve this, I will examine some examples and case studies, specifically in regard to Turkish and Brazilian pop music history. There are two points of departure for the following notes on decolonizing pop music and rewriting global pop music history: one is my work with the vinyl record label Global Pop First Wave, the other the observation that colonialism is not over yet.

Global Pop First Wave is a sublabel of Berlin-based Corvo Records. While Corvo Records publishes contemporary experimental music, Global Pop First Wave has a focus on music archeology with re-releases of historical non-Western, especially Turkish pop music.¹

To produce the re-releases, which are dealing with the so-called first wave of global pop music in the 1960s and 1970s in the form of compilations, I work with a worldwide network of record sellers, connoisseurs, and scholars. In addition, I am conducting research internationally in record shops and private archives, as well as using databases on the internet. To produce the compilations, the original vinyl records have to be tracked down, retrieving information from the records sleeves and record labels, which often give important first hints about the music and its production. Then the original records are digitized, restored, and newly mastered in a mastering studio in Berlin, before being cut, again on analog vinyl, to be sent to a pressing plant.

As a curator, I try to give access to music that has been neglected, overlooked, or peripheralized, and my efforts are therefore part of an attempt to rewrite and redefine the canon of pop music.

Unless stated otherwise, all online sources in this text were accessed on April 29, 2026.

1 See <https://corvorecords.de/global-pop-first-wave/>, for releases since 2022, see Seismographic Records <https://seismorecords.bandcamp.com/music>. All releases have been curated by myself, except for the compilation *Saz Beat Vol. 3*, on which I collaborated with Cornelia Lund. Thanks to Wendelin Büchler, Volga Coban, Akin Kazuk, and Emir Özer, who have been a constant and crucial help.

Depending on your perspective, the notion that colonialism is not over yet can be based either on a conviction that colonialism has never ended, or on the analysis of a neo- or para-colonial push observable today (Mbembe 2015: 229, 244–245). Of course, it also depends on what we mean by the term colonialism. If we think of land grabbing, then we will find that there is indeed a process of massive land grabbing as a form of neo-colonization going on in Africa, for example, escorted by armed police forces and initiated by multi-national agriculture organizations.

This process is described in the two documentaries *Bauer unser* (dir. Robert Schabus, Austria: Allegro Film, 2016, color) and *Dead Donkeys Fear No Hyenas* (dir. Joakim Demmer, Germany: WG Film et al., 2017, color). In the documentary *The Revolution Won't Be Televised* (dir. Rama Thiaw, Senegal: Boul Fallé Images, 2016, color) we are told about the EU using corrupt African governments, installed with the aid of the Western world, to buy fishing licenses for the west coast of Africa, especially for the Senegalese waters. The EU is then selling these licenses to multi-national fishing companies, thus threatening the existence of thousands of local fishers. Many of these people, cut from their means of subsistence, are turning into refugees, who are exploited as cheap labor forces in Europe. The film shows how this licensing policy produces the refugees.

The Politics of Entanglement

However, we can find the problem of (neo-)colonialism almost everywhere. For instance, in the kitchen of the restaurant in the House of the World's Cultures (HKW) in Berlin, an institution officially supporting a very critical discourse on colonialism, we find the classic 'first-to-third-world' hierarchy: a white male director is in charge of the whole institution, a restaurateur of Turkish descent runs the restaurant, and many low-paid kitchen assistants of African descent are doing the dirty work.² It seems to me that colonial structures are even more powerful here than the—thoroughly serious—dedication to a critical discourse on colonialism. What is the reason for this? Why does the critical discourse seem to have less power than conventional colonial structures in its own home of anti-colonial thinking? And how does that relate to my own work for the label Global Pop First Wave? I feel entangled in neo- or post-colonial paradoxes as well when it comes to Global Pop First Wave.

² This text has been updated in some regards; for example, some new sources have been added. However, the main argument remains unchanged and therefore refers to the situation around the time the article was created, i.e. roughly between 2017 and 2020. While some things may still be the same, others have changed, such as the situation at the HKW.

The concern to decolonize pop music—meant as a detachment from colonial structures of power, thought, and judgment relating to pop music—is pushed forward mainly by writers in the U.S. and Europe, where the crucial centers of power and decision-making are located, even for the post- and decolonial discourse. For an example, let us look at Peruvian psychedelic music of the 1970s. Only after the Brooklyn-based label Barbès Records had begun to re-release several records from this genre in 2004,³ Peruvians in Peru started appreciating their own psychedelic music of the past, according to the motto: if the Brooklyn hipster tags this music as cool and re-releases it, it really has to be cool. Hence this kind of music is now played again at parties and clubs in Peru by Peruvians. The defining fact is that the archeological workup and revaluation of the genre is passing through Brooklyn hipsterism.

For Turkish pop music of the 1960s and 1970s, the procedure is about the same. From the *Stones Throw Podcast #12: Turkish Funk Mix*⁴ by Egon (2006), up to the compilation series *Saz Beat Vols. 1–3* (2013–2017) on Global Pop First Wave, as well as the frisky use of Turkish samples for hip-hop beats in the U.S. (Oh No, *Dr. No's Oexperiment*) (2007) or in Sweden (Rikard Skizz Bizzi, *Ur Funktion 2*) (2016), Western engagement caused a new wave of admiration for historical Turkish pop music both inside and outside of Turkey. This admiration also led to the foundation of new Turkish music labels by Turkish people, both inside and outside the country, often doing archeological work such as Volga Coban's Arşivplak (translates as "archival records") (since 2012) and Ercan Demirel's Ironhand Records (since 2016). These labels cope with the task of working through and re-archiving Turkish pop music history, which had been deleted by the coup and the following military dictatorship in the 1980s.⁵ An important step to do so was the re-establishment of a Turkish pressing plant in Turkey with Nova in 2019. Similar models of re-archiving are offered by the Nigerian label Odion Livingstone—cheekily named after David Livingstone, the missionary and researcher of Africa and alluding to the Western record label Odeon—run by the producer and musician Odion Iruoje and dedicated to Nigerian pop music of the 1960s to the 1980s. Another example is the Ugandan label Nyege Nyege Tapes, which focuses on Ugandan pop music both contemporary and historical.

3 Later on, e.g. the Anglo-Peruvian Label Tiger's Milk Records was founded in London, which has been re-releasing Peruvian psychedelic music since 2012.

4 See <https://soundcloud.com/elzr-p/stones-throw-podcast-12-turkish-funk-mix-by-egon>.

5 In the words of the musician Ergin Bener: "1980 was a disaster—musically, politically, culturally. [...] What happened in 1980 was like cutting down all trees in the forest" (Spicer 2018: 231).

Let us take a deeper look at this process of rediscovery in the case of Brazilian pop music. DJane Mafalda from the label Melodies International recently asked the Brazilian DJ and producer Tahira how he had begun collecting Brazilian pop music. This is what he answered:

"I've been buying records since the 90s. It's funny how it all started, as it was actually because of a foreigner. I've always been a music fan but I didn't have much of an affinity with Brazilian music. I was a fan of American music, Jazz, Soul. I didn't have a connection with Brazilian music because on the radio here they played a lot of Pagode, a very Pop Samba which I didn't like much and so that was my reference of Brazilian music at the time. In the beginning of the internet, I was part of an Acid Jazz mailing list that was big in Europe, but that here in Brazil no one knew about it. They found out I was Brazilian and someone asked me:

'Ah, you're a Brazilian. I'm a fanatic, I love Brazilian music and I'm looking for some records, I'm a collector. Do you think you could help me find them?'

So I agreed:

'I don't know much about it, but I can have a look.'

He made a list with 20 titles and I started looking. At the time there wasn't really a digging culture here like there was in Europe and the U.S., I found a lot of those records and they got me curious.

'What does this guy want, what is it?'

he had asked for Banda Black Rio, Azymuth, Batudaca, Fantástica, many Jazz, Funk and Soul records. I looked for these records, found some and I listened to them. I was amazed! It was completely different from the Brazilian music I knew from the radio. [...] I felt silly about what he showed me.

That's when I thought,

'There's a whole world to discover here.'

That's when I started collecting and searching for Brazilian music. It was from this moment and it was because of a foreigner. [...] In the 90s, Brazilian radio wasn't very good. Brazil was dominated by Rock, there was only national Rock and commercial Samba (Pagode) playing. There was no way for you to know unless you were a researcher, there wasn't a way of having access [...]. Thank God someone from abroad showed me and I followed him [...]" (Mafalda 2018).⁶

With this quote in mind, we can see the barriers which hindered access to Brazilian pop music history: a restrictive and non-historical radio program as the main means of music distribution, coupled with a lack of historical pop music education. Similar developments can be noticed for Turkey due

6 The Melodies Melozine by Mafalda (2018) was published together with the re-release of the vinyl single "A Gira/Last Tango in Paris" by Trio Ternura (2018).

to the military coup in 1980 and for Iran due to the religious and military coup in 1978/79, where the new governments blocked all previously existing pop music. In Brazil, the military dictatorship ended in 1985.

Tahira's example points to the fact that some real research energy (and the methods to do research) would have been necessary to gain any knowledge. The lack of what he calls "digging culture" is also important. Digging culture is part of a countermovement against the physical vanishing of music during the course of music media history (cd, mp3, streaming). It is connected to Western 'retromania,' as described by Simon Reynolds (2009), to mainly Western audiophile listening culture, as well as to a Western beat-making culture. In many countries worldwide, non-Western music on vinyl was regarded as worthless and generally outdated.⁷

The turning point for Tahira was the European foreigner he mentions who—ironically—led him to the same styles of music, that is Jazz and Soul music, he favored already. So, the estimation and revaluation of Brazilian music that developed in Tahira—as an example for a Brazilian music lover—was triggered by someone from outside of Brazil belonging to the Western world. Tahira summarizes: "recognition came from outside" (Slater 2018). And Caio Beraldo explains it in a similar way: "[...] gringos have been interested in the 'B side' of Brazilian music, way before Brazilian people, and you have got to respect that in a way" (ibid.).

A "whole world to discover"—that is how Tahira calls it. And indeed, it still remains a "whole world to discover." Brazil was put on the music-digging map drawn by Western vinyl collectors in around 2000.⁸ For about ten years, there has been a continuous stream of re-releases of historical Brazilian pop music on vinyl, first made outside, then inside Brazil.⁹ A very important step was made in 2016 with the establishment of the pressing plant Vinil Brasil. "A factory made by musicians and music lovers for the use of musicians and music lovers," it enables Brazilians to "[stake] a claim to their own music once again" (ibid.).¹⁰

7 A similar experience is reported by the artist Naeem Mohaiemen, who worked as a DJ in Bangladesh, complaining about his "World Music" radio show, "In a half-hour slot, we had to play at least one Bangla song—and we did it grudgingly," and then critically asking himself: "I felt sad, too: why had I been so slow to listen to the songs that were being made around me?" (Mohaiemen 2018: 20).

8 This had already started in the 1980s and 1990s (see Slater 2018).

9 See for example releases by labels like Mr Bongo and Polysom.

10 Another, earlier step was made when the "Rio de Janeiro-based Polysom was bought out by the independent label Deckdisc in 2009 and started a new series, Classics in Vinyl [yet still pressed outside Brazil]. Suddenly, landmark yet hard-to-acquire albums by Jorge Ben, Secos e Molhados, Tom Zé and Chico Science e Nação Zumbi were available on vinyl again" (Slater 2018). Historically, Brazil was pioneering in the record industry. The Brazil-based entrepreneur Frederico Figner "started negotiations to build a record factory in Rio de Janeiro. In view of the imminence of what would become the First World War, European businessmen sought to protect their capital by building record factories outside Europe. Figner was selected as the business partner responsible for overseeing the construction of these facilities in Latin America. The Odeon record factory opened in 1913 and was the first of its kind in South America [...]. In 1914, the Leonetti brothers also opened their factory, A Elétrica, in Porto Alegre. [...] one should not ignore the fact that Brazil had, in the mid-1910s, two pioneer record factories in South America." (Tupinambá de Ulhôa/De Marchi/Torres Borges 2024: 14).

The Westernized Approach to Brazilian Music

Even trends are recognizable, such as the Brazilian disco boogie music of the 1980s, which has been re-released continuously for about five years, and predictions for trends can be made, e.g. for Brazilian hip-hop of the 1990s. As yet, there are just very few re-releases of the latter,¹¹ but they will come for sure since the national hip-hop scene of the time was totally under the radar globally, with labels like TNT, Kasakata, and Zimbabwe, and the dainty and dirty music of formations such as Comando D.M.C., Baseado Nas Ruas, DF Movimento, P.MC Poetas de Rua, Duck Jam e Nação Hip-Hop, and Geração Rap, to name but a few.

Still the mechanism is the same: already, collectors from outside Brazil are demanding more and more Brazilian hip-hop of the 1990s, therefore setting the focus on a genre that Brazilians themselves still tend to neglect or even regard as irrelevant. Especially as genres related to the favelas, rap and Brazilian funk were strongly associated with criminality and explicit sexuality by the media and the intellectual elite. Many rap artists favored spitting in an everyday speaking style (with little variation in pitch and at high speed), and dry beats overshadowed the melodic and harmonic instruments, which made the music appear to some as being on a low level instead of being perceived as squeezed, dejected, and monotone expressions of oppressed and marginalized neighborhoods realities. Yet, this music has specific quality characteristics which makes them attractive for a global hip-hop community. All record labels were independent and related to clubs. They released only their club-tested music, and productions were engineered by a very small number of dance party sound crews, making this music 100% peer group tested. It's a community-related and community-proofed music, as opposed to capitalistic, profit-driven productions.

With Brazilian hip-hop, everything will probably follow the usual pattern, Western collectors will draw the map and set the agenda for re-releases, the Brazilians will follow, re-thinking and revaluating their own music history and joining in with re-releasing their own historical pop music.

11 For example: Outra's *Brazil Edits* EP (2019) and August Olivani's *Street Soul Brazil, Hello Sailor Compilation* (2019) (see also McDermott 2019). See also the record label Smatória Do Barulho and its re-releases, for example of Sabotage's *Rap É Compromisso* (2016).
For information on the Brazilian hip-hop scene and its development, see Pardue 2021.

Another example for the effects of a specifically Westernized approach to Brazilian music is given to us by Rodrigo Praça. He is a young Brazilian record dealer in São Paulo, making a living out of it. What is special about him? He has no physical store of his own, instead he digs in record stores all over the country, from Salvador to Porto Alegre. One of his many working places is the huge Casarão do Vinil in São Paulo (figs. 1 and 2).

He sells his findings via the internet (e.g. on *discogs*) to customers in Brazil and all over the world. The specific point is that, according to his own story, he has trained himself to be able to listen to Brazilian music with “Western ears,” keeping in mind what Western people would like or search for in Brazilian music.¹² He is doing this so well that his “Western ears” are his business model. At the same time, he is connected to Brazilian DJs and producers like Millos Kaiser, one half of the Brazilian duo Selvagem, who recently published the compilation *Onda de Amor: Synthesized Brazilian Hits That Never Were (1984–94)* (2018) for Soundway Records in London. Thus, Rodrigo’s work feeds into Kaiser’s work, which is described in a promotional text as follows:

“The release also covers a decade that has been intentionally forgotten and brushed aside by many in the country. *Onda De Amor* is a release that is loaded with smooth grooves, bubbling bass, glistening synthesizers, funk strutting guitar lines and sheen of production that undeniably marks it of its time. For Kaiser this compilation is about reintroducing music during a period of reappraisal, catching a new wave and hoping contemporary listeners will ride it with him.

‘The idea is to do justice to these songs. Songs that combine all the right ingredients that should have put them on radio playlists when I was growing up or at least in the cases of more adventurous DJs’”

(Soundway Records 2018).

Having an ear for “hits that never were”—or, perhaps better, hits that were not allowed to become, due to the restrictive music policy of the radio—is exactly what Rodrigo’s work is about. He is re-writing music history by helping to prepare releases like *Onda de Amor*, promoting a fresh view on a part of Brazilian music history for Brazilians as well as an international audience, given the fact that Soundway Records operates from London and distributes worldwide.

12 See also Tahira when he explains: “I’ve noticed that there are lots of records that are rare here and not outside of Brazil. What people have been promoting outside of Brazil has a strong American music perspective, but this is just one part of Brazil’s musical culture. There’s lots of music in Brazil that is nearer to the origins of the Brazilian sound... more of an African and indigenous influence... and even Brazilians don’t know about it” (Slater 2018).



Fig. 1: Like a fortress—the palace of vinyl, Casarão do Vinil, São Paulo. Photo: Holger Lund (2018).

Fig. 2: Rodrigo Praça in front of the Casarão do Vinil, at the entrance the owner and his watch dog, São Paulo. Photo: Holger Lund (2018).

The complexity of import as a kind of self-colonization, de- and re-colonization can be seen in the example of *baile funk*, a dance music genre from Rio de Janeiro. According to Daniel Haaksman's brief history of the genre, *baile funk* DJs in Rio in the 1980s used instrumental versions of successful US hip-hop tracks (Haaksman 2004). Following the model of US hip-hop was challenged when DJs started to add Brazilian-Portuguese lyrics. With the development of Miami Bass in the U.S. in the mid-1980s, *baile funk* had another reference, which could be connected to the drum sounds of the Samba schools. In 1989 *D.J. Marlboro Apresenta Funk Brasil* came out, digesting the US references and using Brazilian-Portuguese for the rap lyrics. *Baile funk* emerged here as an indigenization and transformation of Western styles, now fully produced in Brazil. The style was beginning to be recognized throughout the country and even samba versions of *baile funk* were performed. Then *baile funk* began to be exported to music festivals and compilations on the global music market. Yet, at this point, in the early 2000s, according to Haaksman, the music scene in Brazil was waiting for a Dr. Dre or a Timbaland to show up in Rio to sign *baile funk* talents. The power of final recognition and economic breakthrough was given to Western music producers from the U.S.—as if Brazil could not make it alone, on its own way and on its own terms. It was then the US producer Diplo who “Took Baile Funk Out of Brazil,” as Knox Robinson entitled his article on the subject (Robinson 2015), and made it big globally.

The musical self-colonization with US hip-hop in Brazil was followed by a decolonizing approach using Brazilian-Portuguese as a language and later on a yearning for re-colonization when calling for US producers to come and exploit the genre, because they were seen as having the power. And as Diplo's example shows, they do have the power.

How to Decolonize Pop Music?

The following questions remain crucial for music history writing—and crucial as well for decolonizing pop music: where, how, and by whom is a revaluation of historical pop music undertaken? Especially of non-Western historical pop music? Who can initiate a new appreciation? Who owns and administers the archives? Who is writing the canon, who the history—and based on what? The crucial power and decision-making centers for pop music discourse are still located in the U.S. and Europe.

Let us have a closer look at an example. Despite of several Turkish publications about the pop music history of Turkey (Erkal 2014), with a first one titled *Türk Pop Müziği Sanatçıları Ansiklopedisi* published as early as 1978, the first prevalent international pop music history of Turkey in English is Daniel Spicer's *The Turkish Psychedelic Explosion: Anadolu Psych 1965–1980* (2018).

Spicer is a music journalist and editor of the well-known British music magazine *Wire*. The decisiveness of his book has to do with the discursive position of the writer, with the fact that it is written in English, commonly and globally used as an academic language due to its colonial history, and that there has been practically no book about the subject in English published until now in Turkey or from a Turkish scholar.¹³ Thus, Turkey has hardly participated in the global pop music discourse¹⁴—which is mainly held in English or in French.

According to Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung's position—developed in his Berlin-based project space Savvy Contemporary, where he recently reclaimed a genuine African physics¹⁵—a truly extensive approach to decolonizing pop music should not only deal with writing a non-Western pop music history, but with doing it in an appropriate way—for example, when writing a genuinely African pop music history one should proceed from an African perspective, working off their own musical past and evaluating it.¹⁶ Being a non-African and living in Europe, I myself can do something like this only in a very limited way, nonetheless I can support such a pathway. This text itself is hopefully a kind of support.

Coming back to questions of evaluation, which are always at the same time questions of hierarchy and power: who is writing the history of global pop music? Primarily, it is the Western world with its institutional agents such as journalists, editors, scholars, as well as label owners with their re-releases, and collectors buying original and/or re-released records. So how does Western pop music history evaluate non-Western pop music? In general, not very well—at best as exotic, if it is not ignored. Simon Reynolds in *Retromania* (2009) as well as Diedrich Diederichsen in *Über Popmusik* (2014), two seminal publications on pop music from recent years, tend to conclude that non-Western pop music has the 'right' intentions but is realizing them badly by merely copying Western pop music with doubtful equipment, doubtful recording processes, and doubtful musical quality. Later on, Simon Reynolds continued to attack the value of non-Western pop music in his article on "Xenomania" (Reynolds 2013), using a rather colonial vocabulary: "[...] what all these exotic dance genres share is impurity: they are bastard and creole children [...]" (ibid.).

13 This has changed recently with a new wave of Turkish musicology scholars writing in English, see for example: Gedik 2018.

14 An important attempt in Turkish/English was made by Murat Meriç and his audiovisual Yerli Müzik series as well as with the accompanying printed glossary (Meriç 2018). See also the biopic *Müslüm* about the arabesk pop singer Müslüm Gürses (dir. Can Ulkay Kettle: Dijital Sanatlar Production, Turkey, 2018, color), which was released outside Turkey with subtitles.

15 For a specifically African way of thinking in the frame of an Afropolitanism, see also Mbembe (2017: 25).

16 If and how this can be done using models of Western history writing should be considered in a critical way. As a premise to an African pop music history a specifically African way of (music) history writing and (music) memorial culture would have to be developed.

Unquestioned benchmarks from a Western perspective remain mainly white, male Western pop musicians like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Elvis Presley, etc.¹⁷ Non-Western pop music is compared to their music and easily dismissed: it seems far from the original regarding central aspects of pop music—such as the vocals (if in English at all), music graphics on the sleeves, fashion, etc.—in all a weak copy of Western originals. Again, Reynolds sets the agenda of putting down non-Western pop music when he calls it “heavily influenced” by Western pop music, following “the template laid down by their British and American arena-touring models as closely as possible.” As a result, non-Western pop music “provides a distorted mirror image of Western pop: in other words, a slightly askew, exotic-but-ultimately-familiar version of things we already love” (*ibid.*).

Eurocentric Devaluation

This point of view, which only registers the borrowing and copying from Western originals, serves to devalue non-Western pop music and generates a colonial way of music history writing with music divided into first-class Western pop music and second-class non-Western pop music. This division reflects, and conforms to, the greater dividing project of colonialism: classifying people into first-class Western people and second-class non-Western people. In doing so, the hierarchical and classificatory project of Christian missionary work is continued, as explained and critically outlined by Jean-Marie Teno in his documentary *Le malentendu colonial* (Cameroon, France, Germany: Les films du Raphia et al., 2004, color). As Teno shows, certain rights are demanded and claims are staked by the colonial project of classification, positions are defined and evaluations are made, which then, no wonder, always favor the superior class and disadvantage the inferior.

Another possibility is that the non-Western elements of non-Western pop music become an exotic value, to be savored like part of a special dish, just like you are willing to accept curry in a curry dish as a welcome change to the domestic cuisine. And not to forget the projecting orientalist gaze in the sense of Edward Said, with all its yearnings and fears, mystifying the non-Western elements. Yet, we should also not forget the depth of ignorance on this topic. One can devalue whole continents and their musical productions by simply ignoring them. Condor, the airline, has done so with their maps of musical styles and deeply Eurocentric non-sense

17 Ronnie Wood's Sinti ancestry and Elvis Presley's Cherokee ancestry have not been widely recognized or much debated.

comments like: "Since the 1990s, the majority of musical genres have developed in Europe" (Condor 2019). It is interesting to cast a closer look at Condor's mapping of the musical world, where the U.S. and Europe are the leading continents, full of inventions of musical styles, whereas Asia, for example, has obviously big parts with no musical invention at all, or where merely non-styles such as karaoke are mentioned.

The Turning Point

So far, we have not discussed the actual positions and intentions of non-Western musicians. In the 1960s and 1970s many of them were indeed fascinated by the electrified and electronic pop music of the Western world. The electrification of music served as a symbol of the modernity they were longing to be a part of. However, the musicians did not follow a simple borrowing or copying approach to Western music, but a hybridizing one. They combined numerous elements of their own musical culture—such as language, lyrics, composition, instruments, rhythms, harmonies, and melodies—with elements of Western pop music to forge something new, a common thread, which transcended their traditional music culture as well as Western pop music: hybrid pop. Prime examples for mixing and combining traditional indigenous musical structures with global Western musical structures are genres like Anatolian rock or Ghanaian highlife. Their hybrid pop points to a specifically non-Western modernity, a multi-local position of another modernity. Hybrid pop allows musicians as well as listeners to participate and identify with global modernity without losing their local, regional, or national identity.



Fig. 3: Record cover for
Brahim Izri, *D'Ifrax-I-N'Elia*
(*Nous sommes des oiseaux*) (1988)

As an example, look at the cover for Brahim Izri's record *D'Ifrax-I-N'Elia* (1988) (fig. 3). It announces what happens musically on the record by presenting the combination of modern urban and traditional rural clothing as well as the combination of modern synthesizer and traditional Algerian *mandole*. The record sleeve promises a kind of music that gives us both, by juxtaposition and by amalgamation: a 'tradi-modern' music, including the Algerian past and transferring it to an Algerian modernity.



Fig. 4: Record sleeve for the vinyl single "Beddua"/"Tanrı Misafiri" by Aşık Küçük Şehriban (no date, probably early 1970s).



Fig. 5: Huri Sapan, *Hey* magazine (September 18, 1974).

Modernities Can Differ

Another downright symbolic example is offered by the instrument featured on the already mentioned *Saz Beat* series on Global Pop First Wave. The saz is a traditional string instrument commonly used in Iranian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Turkish music, by optics and sound in between a sitar, a lute, and a guitar. During the 1960s, the saz was electrified by pioneering Anatolian rock musician Erkin Koray and pioneering *arabesk* musician Orhan Gencebay (Baysal 2018) and subsequently played in a more Western way, like an electric guitar, using distortion and wah-wah effects. Listen, for example, to Cengiz Coşkunur's instrumental "Samsun'un Evleri" (1973), re-released on the compilation *Bosporus Bridges Vol. 3* by the Berlin-based label Black Pearl (2019). The composition of the tune relates to a Turkish folk song, provided with drums and electric bass as well as with two electrified sazes—one for rhythm, one for lead—played with a warm distortion and using the wah-wah pedal in a rock music style. Here both are included: electrified urban modernity and Anatolian rural culture, pointing toward an electrified rural-urban, different modernity.



Fig. 6: Hür-El, still from a performance on Turkish television of the song "Sevenler Ağlarmış" (1974).



Fig. 7: Record cover for the vinyl LP *Çoban Mamos—Disco Folk* by Derdiyoklar (1984).

The electrified saz meant a lot to the musicians back in the days, even on record sleeves and promotional photography they proudly displayed this instrument, shifting it from an electrified rural modernity to an electrified urban modernity (figs. 4 and 5), and even to an electrified super-modern modernity by inventing new types of a double and a triple neck electric saz-guitar (figs. 6 and 7).

The compilation series *The Trip. Psychedelic Music from the Hippie Trail Pts. 1–4* (2015–2016), released on Global Pop First Wave, offers further examples for different concepts of hybrid pop, a different mix ratio within the hybrid constructions. The greater the distance from Europe into Asia gets on the Hippie Trail, the higher the amount of non-Western, indigenous elements in the music. This is not only because of curatorial choices, but due to changes in the mix ratio of the music itself—not all of the time, of course, exceptions do exist. There also exists another construction form of hybrid pop, though, not as an amalgamation but rather a co-existence of the starting substances, like in Niama Makalou et African Soul Band's "Kognokoura Drissa Coulibaly" (1980). Elements from Malian music are placed beside Afro-American disco-funk, like two separated layers, so you can listen to the same song as a rather traditional song from Mali or as an up-do-date piece of disco-funk.

Finally, we should note that there are forms of hybrid pop existing in the Western world itself. Listen to the Spencer Davis Group and their song medley "Det war in Schöneberg/Mädel, Ruck Ruck Ruck" (1966). Here, Anglo-American rock 'n' roll is hybridized with the German treasury of songs. Or we can go to Canadian singer Paul Anka's "Babsy, Bambina, Babette" of the same year, made with Werner Müller and his orchestra, which hybridized pop-beat in German with "La donna è mobile" from Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Rigoletto* (1851). Hybrid pop music is not exclusive to non-Western pop music, although it is much more likely to be found there.

Vanishing Point: Combining Local and Global

If we return to the title of this text, the questions of decolonizing pop music and of rewriting global pop music history are closely connected: a decolonization of non-Western pop music can only be achieved with a new presentation of global pop music history as both pop music history and hybrid pop music history. This presentation would also need local perspectives on music history, for example an African, Arabic, Turkish, Brazilian, etc. pop music history.

In doing so, specific functions of pop music should be addressed critically to understand them. During the Nigerian Biafra Civil War (1967–70), for example, pop music was encouraged by the military forces to serve recruitment purposes as well as the musical promotion of an African

modernity (see Now-Again Records 2016; Alapatt/Ikonne 2016). In this case, pop music was militant music—just not that kind of Western military marches one would expect as official music to produce discipline. Sexualized funk and soul music was used as an official music to attract and seduce young people to join the military or for soldiers to stay in it and fight. Even here, in the realm of the military, there is another modernity to be glimpsed.

While currently global pop music history is being rewritten, this is still a fragmented effort. When you look for the bigger picture, global pop music histories are mostly either oriented toward structures and general principles, avoiding the local details, like Motti Regev's *Pop-Rock Music* (2013), or publications are more oriented toward contemporary phenomena, like the Berne-based platform *norient.com*. Other major attempts are British publication series like the *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World* (Horn/Shepherd 2003), *Global Music Series: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (Campbell/Wade 2003), and *Routledge Global Popular Music Series* (Fabbri/Plastino 2013).¹⁸ Still, I am sure that rewritings of global pop music history as pop music history and hybrid pop music history will appear soon. Why? The tendency of so many non-Western pop music archeological labels to extend to a global level, supported by important archives for traditional non-Western music like the Amar Foundation for Arab Music¹⁹, as well as the approved musical qualities²⁰ of original and re-released hybrid pop music can no longer be ignored.

Who Sets Ethical Standards?

So, it comes to an ambivalent development: on the one hand, the musical qualities of historical hybrid pop music are fed into contemporary Western pop music, mostly via sampling in hip-hop and Afro house. On the other hand, there is a new interest for non-Western pop music, in its countries of origin as well as in Western countries, which gives quite a few musicians the opportunity of a second career and quite a few musical styles a refreshment and continuation. Take, for example, *The New Generation of Turkish Psychedelic* (2016). Here Ercan Demirel, born in Turkey, raised in Germany and Turkey, and living in Germany now, has compiled contemporary Turkish (post-)psychedelic music for fans of historical Turkish psychedelic music worldwide. And even an American hip-hop act like the Hispanic group Cypress Hill will go global today, as can be heard and seen in their current

18 See also planned new global pop music series such as the one by the Berlin-based record label Zellephan (IASPM 2019) or Elijah Wald's project on global rock (Wald 2025).

19 See <https://www.amar-foundation.org>. This online archive for Arabic music can serve also as a model for archiving non-Western Arabic pop music.

20 Some of the earliest approvals of these qualities were given by collectors and for collectors in Hans Pokora's book series of *1001 Record Collector Dreams* (1998) to *7001 Record Collector Dreams* (2015).

video “Band of Gypsies” (2018), which includes the Egyptian *electro chaabi* rappers Sadat and Alaa Fifty.

Most important of all, the globally approved qualities of hybrid pop music led to a new self-image, a new identity in the non-Western world and its diaspora, as its respective musical past and culture is no longer regarded as something inferior, but as something that earns and receives recognition and appreciation on a global level. This process is pushed—which shows its ambivalences—by Western and non-Western groups with different aims and intentions. Ercan Demirel’s compilation *The New Generation of Turkish Psychedelic* is made from a completely different spirit than Cypress Hill’s “Band of Gypsies,” and yet they both deliver contemporary hybrid pop.

Nonetheless, it is the mentioned aspect of revaluation that is probably most important, at least as it concerns the decolonization of (non-Western) pop music. This is relevant even for the areas of pop music that present a problematic complexity, such as the use of pop music as militant music when Nigerian pop music developed in quality within an—ethically doubtful—military context. However, such complexities and contradictions have not been unknown in Western music history, if we just think of the war-loving Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and his avant-garde circle of Futurists at the beginning of the 20th century. The Futurists would have been delighted—unfortunately—to see their music used as militant music. Anyhow, do we have the right (ethical) standards and a justified position to judge these aspects outside the Western world, when we have similar difficulties inside the Western world? Should there not be an African music ethics developed and assessed here?

The Collaborative Approach

Let us go back, once more, to Global Pop First Wave and my work for this label. At present, when it comes to decolonizing approaches, one can observe more and more collaborative working structures, including Western and non-Western partners on a preferably equal level.

I regard the collaborative approach as the model for my own future decolonizing work for Global Pop First Wave and related curatorial and scholarly efforts. At present, my partner Cornelia Lund and I collaborate with the Turkish scholar and curator Banu Çiçek Tülü on the project “Turkish Pop Music Images. The Music and Its Communication Design: Record Covers, Photos & Posters & Ads in Magazines, Cinema Posters, Music Performances in Films & Clips from the 1960s to the Early 1980s” (see Lund/Lund/Tülü 2026/2019). It is a scholarly-curatorial project, with an extended team that includes Mona Mahall and Aslı Serbest as well as a wider Turkish community network with additional input from Murat Meriç, Erbatır Çavuşoğlu, Hilmi Tezgör, and many others.

With our independent and non-commercial art, design and music platform fluctuating images, Cornelia Lund and I are planning to extend our collaboration with African partners like the Senegalese platform for cultural production Wakh'Art in Dakar, run by Ken Aïcha Sy.²¹ Currently we are working on the exhibition project "Connecting Afro Futures. Fashion x Hair x Design," for which fluctuating images is cooperating with Beatrice Angut Oola's platform Fashion Africa Now as well as the Kunstgewerbemuseum (Museum of Applied Arts and Design) Berlin and Wakh'Art in Dakar.²²

Because nothing is more important to us than mutual exchange to achieve a critical and self-reflexive decolonizing practice. Here we treasure the continuous dialog with Luiza Prado and Pedro Oliveira, two Brazilian agents of the international group Decolonizing Design (see Schultz/Abdulla et al. 2018). Their input is on a next level reflecting and criticizing decolonial discourse and the different interests involved in it. As every intellectual practice, decolonial thinking needs attentive revaluation itself.

How Does Streaming Affect the Future of Music?

One final point: when we consider that streaming is the most influential way of hearing music today, new questions are turning up:

"Will our digitally connected music world
result in a globally informed pop monoculture, created at the whim
of Western streaming companies?"

(Pelly 2018: 32)

the New York-based writer Liz Pelly asked recently. She points to the fact that music-streaming services produce a lack or even a loss of context, bringing historical and contemporary music to one and the same level, evening out the geographical differences: music from nowhere/anywhere and timeless/from any time. Music from Marc Augé's 'non-places?' Developing a historical sense becomes difficult here. But this annihilation of history concerns images as well as music, it concerns cultural production and its perception in general. Music history writing has to take this cultural practice in mind and has to deal with it—streaming history against music streaming.

21 See <https://www.fluctuating-images.de/new-partnership-with-wakhart-dakar-cornelia-and-holger-lund-interviewed-by-ken-aicha/>.

22 See <https://www.fluctuating-images.de/connecting-afro-futures-fashion-x-hair-x-design/>

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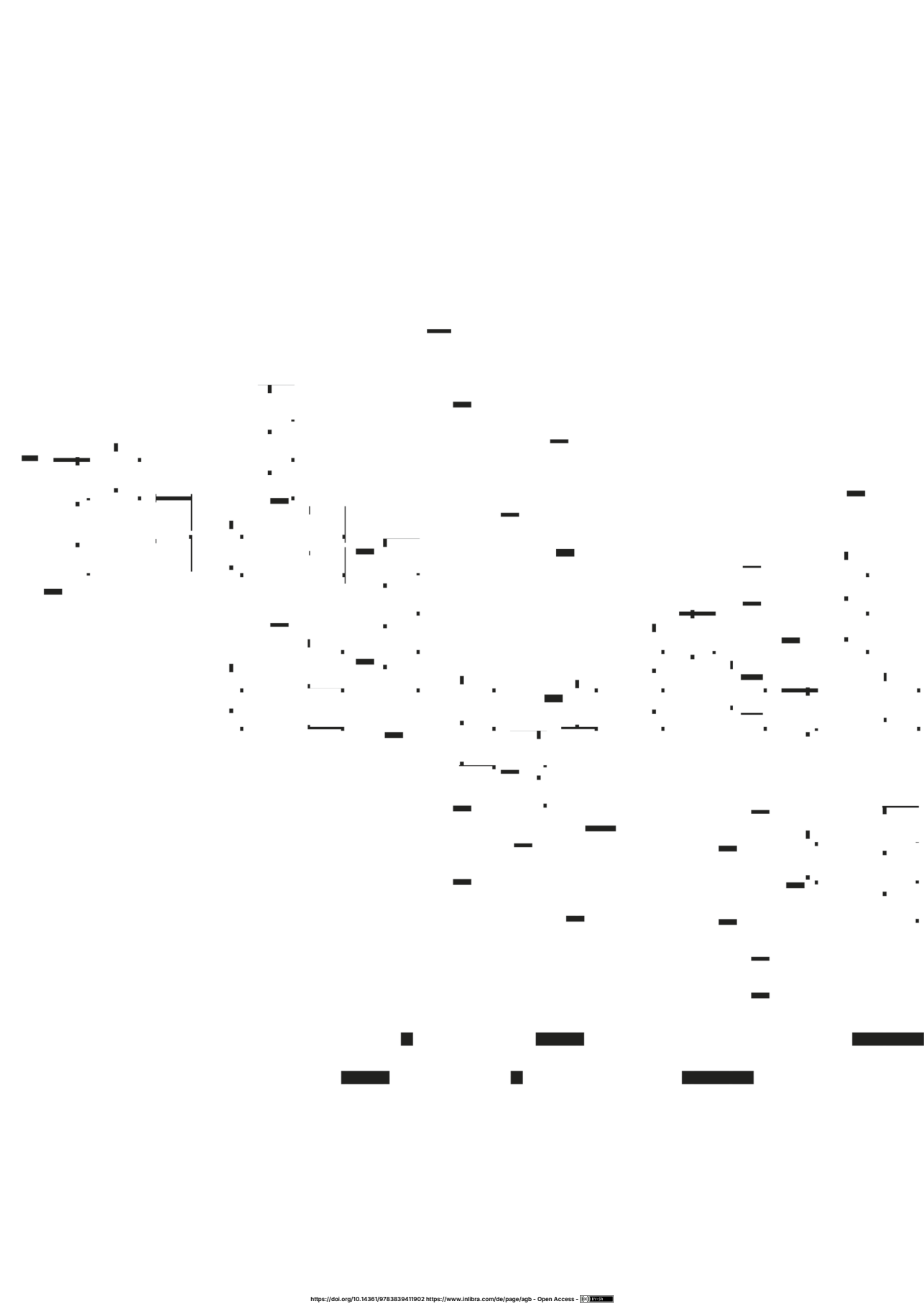
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Holger Lund

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DECOLONIZING
POP
MUSIC
HISTORIOGRAPHY.

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ANATOLIAN
POP
STUDIES
AS
AN EXAMPLE

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Anatolian Rock Studies as an Example."

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[Decolonizing_Turkish_Pop_Music_Historiography_Anatolian_Rock_Studies_as_an_Example](#).

“Music history is proof of a power struggle.”

Kornelia Binicewicz/Ladies on Records (2020)

Introduction: Decolonial Perspectives

Ever since I first came across Anatolian pop in 2006, I have wondered how this kind of music could have existed in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s. What were the conditions for the development of this kind of hybrid pop music? The question led me to do some research over the years, involving many collaborations, also with people from Turkey. In this text, I try to push this research one step further using discourse analysis combined with decolonial thinking.¹

Recently, things have changed. Inside and outside Turkey, there has been an ‘English turn’ in Turkish music studies. Over the past few years, and especially since 2018, a new wave of Turkish musicologists has started to publish their research in English (see Gedik/Ergun 2019: passim, 99). They are participating for the first time in a global, English-dominated discourse about music and music history.² Ali C. Gedik even writes about his own seminal book *Made in Turkey* “that such a comprehensive collection [of articles dealing with music from Byzantine times until today] does not even exist in Turkish” (Gedik 2018: XV). Richard C. Jankowsky identifies the same problem regarding the articles in his volume of *Bloomsbury’s Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World Vol. 10: Middle East and North Africa*, which includes various entries on Turkish music styles: “many of the entries are pioneering essays on under-represented musical practices” (Jankowsky 2015: VIII). Still, things are changing in a way that one might call ‘decolonial’ when, for example, “Global Popular Music Studies” project leaders Goffredo Plastino and Franco Fabbri, as series editors, “insisted on the contribution of native scholars for each volume dedicated to popular music of their country or region” (Gedik/Ergun 2019: 99), thus enabling Gedik’s volume, *Made in Turkey*, to be written mostly from Turkish perspectives.

1 My work on this text was inspired, supported, and supervised by many people, including bi’bak Berlin, Kornelia Binicewicz, Erbatır Çavuşoğlu, Volga Coban, Ercan Demirel, Bade Kaya, Bilge Kosebalaban, Cornelia Lund, Shane McMahon, Emir Özer, Cevdet Yıldırım, and Simon Wetzel. My thanks go to all of them for enabling this text.

2 The predominance of the English language and the Anglophone publishing system in academia is, of course, a colonial legacy with a neo-colonial character that must be discussed. However, this would go far beyond the scope of this text.

Scholars from Turkey participating in the global music discourse today allow the discourse itself to take new perspectives on Turkish music history. A lot of information that was previously not well-known outside Turkey is entering the discourse, being debated and developed further, also opening new—decolonial—perspectives on Turkish music history and historiography. Martin Stokes identifies in the “research agendas currently at play in Turkish studies” an “interest in the global and transnational circulations of culture, the critique and historicizing of national culture formation” (Stokes 2012: 102). This includes “attempts to think about Turkish music making outside the boundaries of the modern state” (ibid.: 103). He proposes to understand Turkey’s major population centers as “sites of hybridity and translation” (ibid.; see also Woodall 2015; Miller/Shahriari 2012: 54–55) and to research the “historical relations between Turkey’s minority and majority cultures” (Stokes 2012: 103). Looking for example at the demographic balance of Istanbul, there was a remarkable stability over the centuries until the establishment of the Republic in 1923, with about half the population being Muslim and half being non-Muslim, and about 40 languages spoken in the second half of the 19th century (Erdoğan 2010: 140). Around the time of the foundation of the Republic, half of the urban population in Turkey came from the Balkans (as did Kemal Atatürk) or the Caucasus (Stone 1999: 39). Without adopting as radical a view as social anthropologist Yael Navaro-Yashin, who “denied that there was indeed any coherent thing called ‘Turkish culture’ at all” (quoted in: Bates 2019: 149), it makes sense to keep in mind the plurality of ethnic groups having lived on or having been connected to Ottoman or Turkish territories as well as their often “multiethnic identities [sic] configurations” (Bates 2019: 150).

Looking at Turkish historiography in general, “perhaps the most central theme that continues to define revisionist studies of Turkish history is the degree to which the republic’s development is informed by its imperial past” (Gingeras 2014: 4). In conclusion to his overview of Turkish historiography, Ryan Gingeras, while dating the Republic back to the Young Turks revolution of 1908 (ibid.: 5), advises to take Ottoman structures and legacies much more into consideration than the assumed republican disruptions, or rather to see the latter as rooted and pre-developed in the Ottoman past (ibid.: 5–6). Therefore, within the domain of Turkish historiography, a distinct “Re-Ottomanizing” perspective has emerged in academic discourse, particularly since the 2000s (ibid.).

Hybridism as a Form of Resistance against Self-Colonization

In his article about “Music in Turkey,” Stokes categorizes Ottoman and Turkish musical styles whilst also expressing doubts about doing so. His concerns about “somewhat arbitrary categorizations (folk, art, popular)” that are “driven by ideas about what should be rather than what is” (Stokes 2012: 102), can be understood as a critique of the Western model of thinking, of building categories and of separating things, which do not match the Ottoman and later Turkish musical phenomena. Rather than using isolating categories, preference should be given to co-existence, collaboration, combination, and hybridism in the examination of Ottoman and Turkish music.

A decolonial approach should take this into account, and it should also recognize that the music of the Ottoman period was already “an amalgam of Turkish influences and musical influences from minorities and neighboring cultures” (Karahasanoğlu 2018: 200), all of which had musical cultures of their own. Furthermore, a decolonial approach should consider the aspect of a Turkish ‘self-colonization’ by the Republican project of Westernization and Modernization that tried to erase the Ottoman and the Eastern past, and with it ‘*alaturka*’ (music in Turkish/Eastern style). This ‘self-colonization’ has blocked, as Stokes quite rightly observes, other, non-Western-dominated ways of looking at musical phenomena, both inside and outside Turkey. The Republican nationalism, which links Westernization and Modernism and connects them to de-Ottomanization, could be regarded as a top-down self-colonization. Indeed, many characteristics similar to the process of colonization can be observed in the Republican period: the devaluation of Ottoman language and writing, Islamic religion and law, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state, as well as the devaluation of Ottoman elements in culture (music, clothing, especially the *fez*, veil, and turban), and schooling etc. A new elite, largely drawn from the military, set new standards and new preferences, enforcing them in public through the power of the state. “The reforms [...] initiated a state of ‘historical amnesia’” (Woodall 2015: 26), as main traditions and musical practices, such as Ottoman classical music and religious music of the dervish lodges, were banned from public performance.

How did that feel for the people in the new Turkish Republic? The people were not as radical as the new elite, who were themselves ambivalent. In private, the Republican leader Kemal Atatürk, for example, preferred to listen to Ottoman-Turkish music (see Ayas 2018: 101)—which his official music politics put out of favor.

Most of the people tried to stick to their old Ottoman habits. Yet, with the new Republican elite in power, this was not an easy task. The state even paid musicians to make songs aimed at influencing the people through music, exposing them to certain new musical forms and contents like Anatolian folk opera (Coban 2019). As early as in the late 1920s, *The Jazz Singer* was shown in

Istanbul in cinemas (Stokes 2000: 220) and Black jazz was broadcast regularly by Radyo Stanboul, both nationally and internationally (Woodall 2014: 273). This was an effect of the Allied occupation period (1918–1923) and the docking of a U.S. Navy fleet in Istanbul in 1919/1920, which led to the development of a relevant jazz culture in Istanbul (see Woodall: 2014). Therefore, many people, musicians and audiences, developed a complex “in-between” position (see Baysal 2018: 209) or just “muddled through” (Stokes 2000: 221), mixing and hybridizing Ottoman and (Western) Republican elements.

This musical hybridism that spreads from the Ottoman into the Republican era is also visible in photographs: Fig. 1 shows female members of the Sultan’s family engaged in palace music. Note the Western style in interior design and fashion as well as the mixture of Ottoman and Western instruments. Dressed in fashionable Western-style attire, the singers in fig. 2 represent *kanto*, one of the hybrid styles developed in the Ottoman era. The photo of the Bergama Caz Band from 1932 (fig. 3) gives a visual impression of the combination of rural and urban styles, modern Westernized and traditional elements, and jazz music and Anatolian folk dance. One could imagine a sort of Anatolian rumba here (see Aytaç 2018: 30). This is the earliest visual depiction of this kind of hybridism I could find so far. It is like a template for so many later Anatolian pop images (see Lund/Lund/Yanikkaya/Zöllner 2026/2023).



Fig. 1: Palace music included female members of the Sultan’s family as musicians and composers, probably early 20th century. Source: Beşiroğlu no date.



Fig. 2: *Kanto* singers, probably late 1920s. Source: Beşiroğlu no date.



Fig. 3: Bergama Caz Band, 1932. Source: Erkal 2014: 30.

Many “in-between” styles had already been developed in the Ottoman period, for example, ‘*alafranga*’ (music in French/Western style), polkas in the Ottoman musical mode *makam* (see Pennanen 2004: 11), and *kanto* (cabaret song). Later in the Republican period, other “in-between” styles followed, such as *fantezi* (cabaret song), *oryantal tango*, *oryantal fokstrot* (Tekelioğlu 2002: 101), and Anatolian rumba (Aytar 2018: 30). In the Democratic period from the 1950s to the 1970s, they were followed by *aranjman* (arrangement of Western pop songs in Turkish language), *Anadolu pop*, *Roman oyun havası* (Belly Dance by Roma people, also called *oriyantal*) (see Stokes 2012: 100), *arabesk*, *Anadolu arabesk rock* (mixing *Anadolu rock* and *arabesk*), *disco fasıl*, *disco kanto*, and *disco folk*.

Even Ottoman musical forms and genres got hybridized during or after the Republican period, such as *şarkı* (urban art song), *fasıl* (urban suite of instrumentals and songs) (Bates 2011: 41f), *gazel* (improvised art song) (see O’Connell 2015: 35–37), as well as *Türk sanat müziği* (Turkish art music). A prominent example is Zeki Müren, who hybridized *Türk sanat müziği* by using Ottoman, Arabic, and Western elements (see Bates 2011: 34, 75–76; Hawkins 2016: 1, 6).

Taking on a decolonial and poly-cultural perspective, one can see for example how “the use of arrangements and traditional motifs from other cultures and languages in Turkish popular songs are examples of the hidden cultural wealth within Turkish music. One need only [to] explore the songs released on 45s in the 1960s and 1970s [...] to witness the cultural diversity of the country” (Yıldız 2018: 137). Antoine Remise comes to another, rather surprising conclusion at first sight: “In a way, ‘Anatolian Rock’ was more an easternization of Turkish music trends than the westernization that is usually discussed” (Remise 2014). He shows that Anatolian pop can be understood in a more complex way, twisting the hierarchy of adopting entity and entity adopted: instead of a Westernization of Turkish music, he sees an Easternization of Western pop music. Yet, when reflecting on Orhan Tekelioğlu’s concepts of “West-East” and “East-West” syntheses, Songül Karahasanoğlu and Gabriel Skoog already observed “a conceptual shift from a model based on Western music incorporating Turkish styles to one based on Turkish styles incorporating Western music” (Karahasanoğlu/Skoog 2009: 53).³

3 It is in reference to these musicological approaches, which try to widen the perspectives on Turkish music history in a decolonial way, that the concepts of ‘Westernization’ and ‘Easternization,’ resp. ‘West’ and ‘East’ are used in this article. This is not to be mistaken as a continuity of the historical opposition of ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident,’ the colonial constructedness of which has already been dismantled by Edward Said in 1978.

From Ottoman to Jazz Times: Processes of Hybridization

The process of hybridization linked to the process of Westernization had already started earlier in the Ottoman era, most significantly with the military music reform and the establishment of *Muzika-i Humâyun* (1828), a musical institution for the military and later the palace, directed by Gaetano Donizetti (Feyzi 2016: 19). In the *Tanzimât* reform period (1839–76) many consciously Westernizing reforms took place in the Ottoman Empire, concerning also music, connected, for example, to the rise and use of terms like ‘Turkish’ music (Karaelma 2016: 1) or ‘alafranga’ as opposed to ‘alaturka’ (Ayas 2018: 100). But most importantly, even in the late Ottoman period, a spirit of mixing and hybridity was a key feature of music, a “policy of synthesis” (Gedik 2018: 22) where “musical fusions were common” (Pennanen 2004: 9), in particular since the second half of the 19th century. This “policy of synthesis” is rooted in both, the old poly-cultural Ottoman Empire itself and the Westernizing reforms it undertook in the *Tanzimât* period during the 19th century (see Bates 2011: 49–50; Ayas 2018: passim). This even affects oppositions, as “studies also remind us of the fact that *Alaturka* and *Alafranga* patterns did not necessarily signify binary opposites, and especially as they were experienced, allowed a lot of fluidity and contingency” (Aytar/Keskin 2007: 147). Regarding Istanbul’s music history, Volkan Aytar and Azer Keskin state: “Seemingly separate and even conflicting music styles and spaces of music continuously scuffle and inter-mingle in Istanbul, learn from and transform each other” (Aytar/Keskin 2007: 154).

A decolonial approach to Turkish music history could start from here, from an ‘Ottomanization’⁴ of the research perspective, which considers all three periods, the Ottoman period (ca. 1299–1918/1923), the Republican period (1923–1945/1950), and the Democratic period (1950–present) up to the respective afterlife of the Ottoman heritage. “Ottoman studies are no longer marginalized in modern Turkey” (Stokes 2012: 103), but maybe they should be extended even further to better understand the many Ottoman and Turkish hybrid musical forms that have been developed especially since the second half of the 19th century.

Historically speaking, the situation reached another level of complexity with the Allied occupation and the early Republican period (1918–late 1920s). “The arrival of General Wrangel’s fleet from Odessa in 1920 dramatically changed the face of Constantinople” (Roueché 2014: 68) in a way that “in the twilight years of the Ottoman Empire, Beyoğlu-Pera was simultaneously the heart of the city and not part of the city at all [...]” (Matthews 2014: 82). The city, especially the Beyoğlu-Pera district, heated up in an intoxicating modern way. The city was drug-addled, flooded with opium, heroin, and cocaine,

4 This broadening of the research perspective should not be confused with Neo-Ottomanism, a political stance strongly supported by the current Turkish government.

and “everyone seem[ed] intoxicated” (Mufti-Zada Kemal Ziya Bey, quoted in: Roueché 2014: 69; see also Gingeras 2014: 65–81; King 2014: 144–145; Woodall 2015). This could only happen because Turkey was economically massively involved in drug traffic, while staying out of any national or international agreement: “No law or government body regulated the production, processing, or export of opiates in Turkey before 1930” (Gingeras 2014: 71). An estimated 40,000 prostitutes, mostly Russian refugees, were on the streets (Woodall 2015: 21), which were already crowded with urban strollers. Parties with “pornographic art” (Roueché 2014: 70) took place. In the 1920s, the public, who was already familiar with the sometimes obscene Turkish shadow play *Karagöz*, was not shocked at all about the fact that there was “no censorship of films except political and military. Some of the films [were] very suggestive and would not [have] been allowed in America or England” (Erdoğan 2010: 135). In 1922, the young Ernest Hemingway stayed in Istanbul as a reporter and summarized much of the feeling of the times: “All of Constantinople was in a feverish sort of wildness.” He painted Constantinople as “doing a sort of dance of death” (Hemingway quoted in Maksudyan 2023: 239–240)—with jazz beginning to be the soundtrack for this dance.

In 1921, the famous nightclub *Maksim Gazinosu* opened at Taksim, run by the Mississippi-born African-American Frederick Thomas, who set a “black American influence on the nightlife of the city” (Maksudyan: 69); a nightlife established around 1900 and otherwise dominated by Greek, Armenian, Jewish, and Russian entertainment (see Erdoğan 2010: 131). Progressive Turkish flappers, with bobbed *alagarson* [styled like a boy] hairstyles and chic dresses, attended the cinemas, appeared in the streets (see Erdoğan 2010: 133; Roueché 2014: 70), and “danced the Charleston on the fringes of social acceptability” (ibid.: 71). At the heart of it all, as the main soundtrack to and symbol of this lifestyle, was jazz (figs. 4–5)—particularly European and Black American jazz, the latter played by soldiers and also diffused to local musicians through teaching and shellack records.



Fig. 4: Istanbul jazz 1920s.
Source: King 2016: 145.



Fig. 5: Dance to a jazz band (to the right) at the Garden Bar in Tepebaşı, 1920s. Source: Roueché 2014: 68.



Fig. 6: Nilüfer with İsmet Sıral Orkestrası (including singer Özdemir Erdoğan on the right bottom side) at İstanbul Hilton, 1961. Step by step Turkish musicians and groups were replacing American musicians at the Hilton. Source: Altun 2015: 54.

Prominent parts of Turkish society had their doubts about this kind of modernity. A harsh critique of decadence and the ruinous influence on Turkish men and women arose, formulated for example by Turkish women in the "Petition of the Ladies of Istanbul" (ibid.: 69). But, with Kemal Atatürk taking power, "the expected clampdown on nightlife did not happen" (ibid.: 70; see Karahasanoğlu/Uyar 2016: 136): "Mustafa Kemal exhorted his people to adopt modern, *alafranga* habits of dancing, drinking and entertaining, yet jazz, as performed by African-Americans, occupied a grey area on a spectrum of East vs West" (Roueché 2014: 70). This was probably due to "jazz's ambiguous relationship to modernity" (ibid.), being of old African heritage as well as being the new popular sound of Western modern life. Roueché infers: "Still, these



Fig. 7: Ajda Pekkan, concert at Istanbul Hilton, 1970s. Source: Permanent exhibition at the Hilton Istanbul Bosphorus Lobby (April 2019).

wild years of gay abandon laid the foundations of a long relationship between Istanbul and jazz, which would return to the city in full force in the 1950s" (ibid.: 71). A return was propelled by Turkey being on the map of U.S. state promoted jazz tours shaping the American image world-wide (Karahasanoğlu/Uyar 2016: 134). But propelled also by a US-American oriented lifestyle emerging in the 1950s (Zürcher 2017: 231f). This lifestyle equally paved the way for rock 'n' roll and pop music in Turkey in the late 1950s, which first appeared in Turkish cinemas through US-American imports; then Turkish musicians quickly adopted these new styles. The new Hilton Hotel in Istanbul (1955) was established as a model for nightlife (Altun 2015; Lund/Lund/Tülü 2026/2019: 83) and, later in 1971, it included Istanbul's first discotheque (Altun 2015: 73) (figs. 6 and 7).

There is still room for development in Turkish jazz studies. Currently, they mainly focus on American jazz in Turkey (see Woodall 2014; Woodall 2015). Or they focus on musicians from other ethnic groups like Armenians or Roma, as well as on European musicians (Karahasanoğlu/Uyar 2016), as Turkish musicians were not playing a key role in the jazz scene before 1938, when they finally entered jazz orchestras (ibid.: 132). Nevertheless, jazz was a vital part of the music scene in Turkey and, in the 1950s, Turkish musicians jumped in enthusiastically.

Yet, perhaps even more underdeveloped are studies on the music scene of Dileklerarası (running between Beyazıt and Fatih), the Muslim counterpart to Christian-dominated Beyoğlu-Pera. “From the turn of the century until the 1930s and the coming of cinema, an emerging Muslim bourgeoisie in Istanbul sought its musical and erotic pleasures” (Stokes 2000: 220) in Dileklerarası, where mostly Armenian, Greek, but even Muslim Turkish women were “performing bawdy music hall routines” and took on the roles of “Greek male dancers called *köçek*” (ibid.). This area rivaled the district of Beyoğlu, and its main style was *kanto*. This popular Ottoman style was named after the classical Italian singing style *canto*. The *kanto* of the second half of the 19th century “illustrates the ‘hybridity’ between alaturka and alafranga forms. [...] *kanto* should be seen as a crossover between the two” (Aytar 2018: 27). It also includes, to a quite significant extent, Roman music and later on jazz elements (Beşiroğlu/Girgin 2018: 49; Seeman 2015: 93). Thus, the jazz frenzy was a sort of underlying common ground, invading and permeating two main entertainment sections of Istanbul in the first half of the 20th century.

A New Framework Is Needed

In conclusion, the research outline for Ottoman/Turkish music studies could be described as follows: the nationalization of music during the Republican period brought Anatolization (Anatolian folk music archiving) and Westernization (opera, jazz), connected to de-Ottomanization and an East-West or ‘alaturka’-‘alafranga’ polarization. Recent research hints, on the one hand, at de-nationalization (Gedik, 2019: 94–97) through the decolonial transnationalization of Ottoman/Turkish music (e.g. Stokes 2012; Gedik 2018). This stands in contrast to a somewhat neo-colonial Westernization on the other hand, as exemplified by the Anglo-Americanization of Turkish pop music history, as presented most prominently by Daniel Spicer in his book *The Turkish Psychedelic Explosion: Anadolu Psych 1965–1980* (2018/1). Spicer even emphasizes the Britishness of Anatolian pop, psychedelizing Anatolian pop (esp. in his radio interview on NTS Radio, 2018/2). Against this backdrop, the Easternization of Anatolian pop was discussed (e.g. Karahasanoğlu/Skoog 2009; Remise 2014; Lund/Lund/Tülü 2026/2019). That a decolonial Ottomanization of research could be useful is the topic of Ayas’ position: “The theoretical framework built in the West to classify popular music reflects the socio-historical characteristics of the Western societies.” He argues that

“this framework is not suitable to understand the music debates in Turkey.

[...] Due to lack of a Western-type aristocracy, land owner ruling class and clergy, Ottoman classical music has developed as a kind of urban music open to all classes of society, exceeding the limits of class-based musical genres and styles” (Ayas, 2018: 91).

A new framework is needed based on a non-polar, hybrid-oriented thinking, respecting the open structures of Ottoman and also of Turkish social and cultural life that resulted in many combinations of styles, forms, and cultural spaces, as well as in many hybrids of the urban and rural, the East and West, 'alaturka' and 'alafranga,' the secular and religious, the traditional and modern as well as art music, folk music, and popular music, and many more (see Ayas 2016: 9–12; Bates 2011: 49–50). Although the politics of the Republican period introduced or enforced these polarities, they have either remained ignored or neglected by many, especially musicians and their audiences, or have led to modifications of existing musical styles and to hybridizations resulting in new musical styles. Musical needs (and pleasures) ruled out polarizing Republican music ideology.

Six Developments: Preparing and Establishing Anatolian Pop

Coming back to the introduction and to Anatolian pop, six developments of high relevance could be identified as influential in preparing and establishing Anatolian pop:

- 1) an Ottoman non-polar 'policy of synthesis,'
- 2) a Republican polar East–West construction that sought to avoid the 'Ottoman East' and to merge urban Westernization and Modernization with rural Anatolian folk, and
- 3) processes of nationalization through Turkification, executed in music by the preservation and unification of Anatolian folk music through the elimination of improvisation, and the introduction of "Western notation and chase away other ethnic influences"

(Gregory 2018: 76).

These three developments led, in an entangled and complex manner, to the predecessors of Anatolian pop such as *kanto/fantezi*, *oryantal fokstrot*, Anatolian rumba, and *aranjman*, as well as to Anatolian pop itself and to the intersections of Anatolian pop with parallel styles such as *arabesk* and *Roman oyun havası*. *Aranjman* can particularly be seen as a primary reference in both directions: Anatolian pop could be regarded as a spin-off of *aranjman*, taking up Western pop, as well as a counter-development to *aranjman*, pitting Anatolian folk against Western pop or imitations of Western pop. The musical culture of *aranjman* itself is regarded as key to understanding Turkish music by several scholars (Markoff 1990: 73; Stokes 2002: 73; Pennanen 2004: 11) because the Western "concepts of 'composition' and 'authority' are problematic" since "improvisation and the way a performance [is] executed [are] more highly esteemed than the original compositions" (Pennanen 2004: 11). This approach to 'version music' easily paves the way to all kinds of hybrids.

The three developments mentioned above are completed by three following main developments of Easternization of Turkish music as a counterpart to the official Republican Westernization:

- 4) The Egyptian Easternization, which began in the first half of the 20th century (Özbek 1997: 14; Stokes 2012: 100) and gained much strength after the state had banned Turkish music ('*alaturka*') on private radio (1934–35), and then took control of the radio (1936) and nationalized it (1937). Stokes summarizes: "Seen with the most dispassionate eye in the world, it is impossible not to conclude that the state's musical policies failed to engage with the musical tastes of urbanites or peasants: by the 1940s the habit of tuning radio sets to Egyptian radio was well entrenched" (Stokes 2000: 221). After the success of Egyptian films in the late 1930s, the state had also banned foreign language films. But "this ban backfired disastrously, since it unintentionally initiated a large [Turkish] industry entirely dedicated to the plundering of Egyptian films and singers" (ibid.: 220). So, in reaction to the state's cultural policies, people (and musicians) turned to Arabic radio stations as well as to Egyptian and even Indian films, along with their Turkish imitations, including 'Easternized' music. Since then, Egyptian songs have been continuously translated and covered in Turkey (ibid.: 221).
- 5) The influence of Roma musicians, who in the 1960s "predominated as the power and influence of other minorities decreased" and who "introduced Balkan, Mediterranean, and, later, north Indian elements to Turkish audiences" (Stokes 2012: 100). As a result, a "cosmopolitanism from below" took shape in *meyhaneler* and *gazinolar* [nightclub music hall restaurants] during the 1960s and 1970s, made by "singers, professional dancers, instrumentalists, and mass media entrepreneurs, [a cosmopolitanism] that embraced [...] 'Eastern' associations" (ibid.).

And last but not least,

- 6) the Easternization which was included in *arabesk* from the late 1960s onward. In brief, *arabesk* is a mix of Turkish folk, art, a wide range of Western popular, as well as Arabic and Egyptian musical elements, put together—mixed or juxtaposed—similar to highly eclectic Pakistani or Indian Bollywood film music. The *arabesk* composer and musician Orhan Gencebay, for example, recorded songs like "Nereden Bileceksin" (1980), making extensive use of the sitar and the tabla.

These three developments of Easternization and Ottomanization regarding the spirit of hybridism, the inherited structures of Ottoman-era craft guilds in studio recording production and workflow (Bates, 2019:159, 161), and the references to Ottoman-era poets and *aşık*lar (minstrels) should be taken into account for further decolonial research on Anatolian pop. They could make this music understandable in a way, that is not Western but Eastern and Ottoman, as Remise advocated. For example, the most prominent figure of Anatolian pop, Barış Manço, liked to dress in Ottoman style

for performances and promotional photos (fig. 8), and he included Egyptian-*arabesk* sounding string sections in his Anatolian pop.



Fig. 8: Promotional photo of Barış Manço and his group. *Hey* magazine (April 3, 1974: 25).

Cem Karaca, another major figure of Anatolian pop and the son of the Armenian İrma Felegyan (artist name: Toto Karaca) and of the Azerbaijani Mehmet İbrahim Karaca, was informed by a transnational musical heritage. He arranged songs by poets and *aşık*lar like Karacaoğlu and Dadaloğlu (Skoog 2012: 51), two rebellious *aşık*lar from the Ottoman period. Many other Anatolian pop singers, such as Selda Bağcan, Zerrin Zeren, Tülay German, or Ersen and Erkin Koray, also drew on these two *aşık*lar for their music deliberately.

Anatolian pop musicians and the Turkish music industry more broadly have been operating in a complex field defined by various developments and processes, as well as the demands of the audiences from around 50 different ethnic groups (see Bates 2019: 149) and experiences of internal migration. The musicians tried to position themselves between these developments and demands, essentially applying Raymond Loewy's famous MAYA principle (Most Advanced Yet Acceptable). They experienced that, for example, songs that were too Westernized did not have the same success as those with a more Eastern sound, "so they probably channeled their tunes into an Eastern style for reaching the crowd" (Kosebalaban 2019). The 'Easternness' of the audience and its feedback into the music should therefore be another key element of further research.

Eliminating National Borders: Transnational Approaches

Yet, there are still more connections to be made, linking Turkish music to other geographic regions. There is, for example, the idea of a Mediterraneanization (Sharpe 2018) or the idea of a Balkanization of Turkish music (Pennanen 2004). Nationalist perspectives have hindered such a view, as Pennanen states for the Balkans: "Although many historical, cultural, aesthetic, and structural factors unite music and dance in the Balkans, nationally oriented authorities, journalists, scholars, composers and choreographers have rather tended to stress the differences, thus creating situations where musical styles declared as national are seen as increasingly separate from each other. Ethnic characteristics have been underlined, even invented [...]" (Pennanen 2004: 1)—as with the designation of the saz or the bouzouki as national instruments.

A rare early historical example of the Balkanization of Anatolian pop is the former Yugoslavian record mini-series *Prva Muzička Balkanijada 1&2* (1964), which includes early Anatolian pop singers Erol Büyükburç and Tanju Okan. The Ottoman Greek café music *smyrneika* (of or pertaining to Smyrna/Izmir) of the first half of the 20th century (Pennanen 2004) could be seen as a basis for later Greek and Armenian adaptations of Turkish Anatolian pop music. These adaptations include, for example, songs by Barış Manço recorded by Αντώνης Λορέντζος (Antonis Lorentzos) on his album *Πω! Πω! Φωτιές* (1980) or Harout Pamboukjian, who covered Barış Manço's "Yaz Dostum" under the title "Kyahripar" (1985) thus broadening Anatolian pop music and turning it into a transnational phenomenon.

From the beginning of Turkish pop music, it was a common practice to release transnational songs. In 1964, Tülay German released the blueprint for Anatolian pop with "Burçak Tarlası," a transnational folk song played in Turkey, Greece, and Macedonia, which was already released in 1960 in a version by the Syrian singer Maha Abdel Wahab, titled "Doktor" in Lebanon.

In 1965, Ayla Dikmen recorded two songs: "Niksarın Fidanları," a version of the popular Turkish-Greek-Arabic song "Şinanay," and "Ay Kız Adın Yamandır," based on an Azerbaijani folk song as indicated on the record label.

The transnational musical practice of circulating (post-)Ottoman music, especially through song networks, has been portrayed for example by Pennanen with his research on the *İzmir Marşı* (2004: 15f) and more recently in some documentaries. Haig Aivazian, for instance, focuses on the legacy of Turkish-Armenian oud master Udi Hrant Kenkulian in his film *Not Every Day Is Spring* (2016). Adela Peeva's *Whose Is the Song* (2003) is a documentary about the famous tune "Üsküdar," its origins, and circulation in post-Ottoman countries. In addition, documentary films like Jumana Manna's *A Magical Substance Flows into Me* (2015) follow the same transnational perspective, in this case focusing on Levantine music from Morocco to Palestine including Kurdish music by Kurdish Jews.

As early as the 1960s and 1970s, the New York-based record label Monitor Records dedicated itself to a transnational approach to Mediterranean, Near Eastern, and Middle Eastern music with its *Music of the World* series reaching out to an audience combining listeners of 'exotic' music, music ethnologists, and a post-Ottoman diaspora in the U.S. and worldwide. Many of the series' records featured musicians and instruments from different post-Ottoman countries, playing transnationally known tunes or developing transnational versions of local tunes. *Belly Dancing for Everyone* (1975) by Chris Kalogerson & The Ensemble Sharqi, for example, incorporates a variety of Greek, Egyptian, Turkish, Roma, and Arab melodies as well as a variety of instruments from India (tabla) to Europe (violin).

Other record labels, such as Prestige's sub-label Near East, early on explicitly addressed Anatolian music as transnational. On their record *Anatolian Feast* (1962), Spero Spyros and his modern Anatolian ensemble claim in the liner notes: Spero Spyros makes music "not from any one particular group or nationality; but from the result of inter-marriage of the old cultures of Asia Minor, which is mainly Armenian, with those of Greece, Turkey, Syria and the outlying Mediterranean sector, a *mélange* of traditions which is Anatolian." Indeed, one can hear exactly this: a very enriched, transnational Anatolian style, oscillating between many musical references of Mediterranean countries, with Anatolia at its center.

The same group's *Anatolian Introduction* (1962) pushes it a bit further when addressing the question of what 'Anatolian' means in the liner notes on the sleeve: "It's a state of mind [...]"—described as a "world taking in, and paying homage to the ethnic cultures that are Lebanese, Arabic, Hellenic, Armenian and Turkish, embracing particularly [...] the Sephardic." The abandonment of a specific geographic concept in favor of a mental concept—"a state of mind"—offers a truly transnational perspective that transcends history, the changing nations, and their borders throughout the late Ottoman and post-Ottoman periods.

The recordings of Spero Spyros and his modern Anatolian ensemble refer to a non-Turkified, non-nationalized Anatolia, an Anatolia that is still pluri-ethnic or transnational, thereby negating the process of Turkification and nationalization of Anatolian music as implemented by the musical ideology of the Turkish Republic, particularly with the construction of a national repertoire of Turkish folk songs called *türkü* (see Ramm 2020: 263). Spero Spyros and his modern Anatolian ensemble reclaim a Levantine musical perspective for Anatolian music—and the result is very convincing on record.

Similarly, artists from a transnational migrant background create transnational music that incorporates Turkish music styles, thereby making it part of a transnational music. One example is Jacques Kodjian, who is of Armenian-Lebanese descent. He left Lebanon for the U.S. due to the civil war but toured worldwide. Kodjian developed a transnational music that seamlessly incorporates European classical music (with references

to Rachmaninoff and Chopin), jazz, Latin music (esp. bossa), as well as Arabic and Turkish music. His *Mélodies Arméniennes* (ca. mid-1970s) offer a representative selection of transnationally rendered Armenian music.

Another example is Ahmad Djamal ve Büyük Arabesk Orkestrası's *Arabesk 3* (1978), released by S&S/the Ezgi Plâkları label in Turkey. The record cover already visually hints to its transnational nature, showing a beach and a caravan in the desert on the front and Egyptian pyramids on the back, thus constructing a sort of imaginary 'Arabia' (fig. 9). The music brings *arabesk* to this 'Arabia,' with Ahmad Djamal playing arabesk melody lines on the guitar, decidedly in the style and sound of famous Egyptian electric guitar player Omar Khorshid. The *arabesk* melody lines pay homage to Orhan Gencebay's idea of *arabesk* as *serbest çalışma* (fantasia or freestyle) (see Tohumcu/Tohumcu/Küçükaksoy 2012: 326), combined with belly dance percussion and space age synthesizer sounds. *Arabesk* is even brought to space here. Especially "Arabî" pushes the transnational lines as far as Germany, delivering Kraftwerk-like proto-electro synthesizer sounds.



Fig. 9: Record cover (front and back) for Ahmad Djamal ve Büyük Arabesk Orkestrası, *Arabesk 3* (1978).

Yet to this day, non-Turkish people in the Mediterranean region continue to adapt Turkish folk songs. Badiâa Bouhrizi recorded her version of “Muhabatt” called داب تركي (“Dub à la Turquie”). It features on the album *KahruMusiqa* (2024), on which the queer-feminist Tunisian singer connects the song to female poets she admires and whose poems she uses as song lyrics, such as Palestinian authors Fadwa Tuqan or Salma Al Jayusi, or the Tunisian poet Nouredine Werghi. Drawing connections like these shows the potential that non-Turkish people in the Mediterranean region can see in and give music from Turkey.

The transnational perspectives, as advocated by Stokes, Gedik, or Pennanen, could be linked to the current decolonial discourse as shaped for example by Achille Mbembe. He advises for an Africa without nations and national borders, and points to nationalism as something which separates people instead of uniting them:

“Identity politics, as we know them today, is a terrible poison.
We have to speak much more about what
we have in common and less about the differences between us.
When catastrophe is taking place,
it will not make distinctions between identities”

(Häntzschel 2020).

Therefore, a transnational perspective on music historiography includes a political dimension in order to gain a better understanding of both politics and music, and their entanglement.

Perhaps it is best to conclude with a striking example of post-Ottoman, transnational music practice. *Tavernada Aşk* is the title of a LP released 1974 in Turkey by Zerrin Zeren, Rışar ve Kupa Dörtlüsü. This LP contains traditional songs from both Greece and Turkey, played by a Greek-Turkish orchestra based in Istanbul in a Balkanized, especially Romanized, style, also informed by greek *laïko* and Anatolian pop. The singer Rışar constantly changes the language in his songs, with parts sung in Turkish and others in Greek. This bilingual, border-crossing approach is extraordinary, considering the complex and problematic history of the Turkish-Greek relationship in the 20th century, with all its political tensions, marked by the 1923 so-called Turkish-Greek ‘population exchange,’ the Istanbul pogrom against Greeks in 1955, and other events in the following decades (see Sharpe 2020: 130). Despite this history, the group catered to both Greek minority and Turkish audiences in Istanbul in the early 1970s. However, by 1974, when the Cyprus crisis occurred, the band had dissolved. Thus, the record is both a document of an ongoing post-Ottoman transnational music practice and a testament to it.

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GERMAN-TURKISH RELATIONS

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study and the objectives of the research. It highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and the role of the researcher in this process. The second part of the paper presents the methodology used in the study, including the data collection methods and the analysis techniques. The third part of the paper discusses the results of the study and the conclusions drawn from the findings. The fourth part of the paper discusses the implications of the study and the future research directions.

The study was conducted in a systematic and rigorous manner, following the principles of scientific research. The data was collected from a representative sample of the population and analyzed using advanced statistical techniques. The results of the study indicate that there is a significant relationship between the variables studied, and the findings have important implications for the field of study.

The study was limited by several factors, including the sample size and the scope of the research. However, the findings provide a solid foundation for further research in this area. The study also highlights the need for more research on the topic and the importance of continued exploration in this field.

In conclusion, the study has provided valuable insights into the subject matter and has contributed to the body of knowledge in the field. The findings have important implications for the field and provide a basis for further research. The study also highlights the need for more research on the topic and the importance of continued exploration in this field.

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THE
HIDDEN HISTORY
OF
TURKISH INDEPENDENT LABELS
IN
GERMANY

FROM THE 1960s
TO THE 1980s

This text is based on:

Holger Lund (2021).

"The hidden history of Turkish independent labels in Germany from the 1960s to the 1980s."

Conference paper for

"Colloquium Independents, Independent Music Labels: Histories, Practices and Values"

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354451392_The_hidden_history_of_Turkish_independent_labels_in_Germany_from_the_1960s_to_the_1980s.

"We were never allowed to write the history books."

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*.
Justice against Epistemicide (2014)

Introduction

The first independent labels to be acknowledged in the history of the German music industry after WWII are usually German music labels of the early 1970s. In truth, however, the first, largest, and most commercially successful independent record company in Germany was Türküola. Founded by Yılmaz Asöcal in Cologne in 1964, Türküola made more than a thousand releases, selling millions of records and cassettes, primarily to Turkish communities in Germany and other European countries. Türküola was only one of a much larger number of independent Turkish record companies in Germany, numbering over 20 by the 1980s. Despite their extremely successful work, these labels remain largely unknown to the wider German public beyond Turkish communities and have been mostly ignored in the histories of independent record companies and pop music in Germany. The aim of this text is to shed light on this gap in knowledge by discussing its socio-historical conditions. Key questions are: Why have these labels remained hidden in music historiography to this day? And what is so special about them?¹

The discussion of these questions touches on a number of different disciplines—as is common in cultural studies. This text therefore follows a comparative and pluri-disciplinary approach (Chappatte/Freitag/Lafi 2017), combining perspectives from music, film, media, migration, cultural, and political studies, as well as from musicology. Thomas Weber's media milieu theory, which contextualizes media and their connections within cultural production, seems especially fruitful in this context (Weber 2013), as well as Kyle Devine's concepts of political ecology and hidden material histories of music (Devine 2019). These frameworks provide useful inspiration for the undertaking of analyzing the hidden history of Turkish independent labels in Germany not only as a market-related phenomenon but also as a socio-political and media-based one. These approaches will be further combined with the analysis of the discourse (or lack thereof) around these labels and the music and people associated with them.

Unless stated otherwise, all online sources in this text were accessed on April 29, 2026.

¹ We would like to thank Özgür Çiçek, Ercan Demirel, Cem Kaya, and Can Sungu for their support and inspiration during the course of this research.

In the first section, the theoretical basis for this research will be developed by discussing different concepts of independent labels, as well as the current state of research on Turkish music and its industry, particularly in Germany.

In the second section, the socio-historical conditions for Turkish labels in Germany will be explored. The focus here will be on the reasons why Turkish labels were not granted access to the relevant official promotion and distribution channels of the German record industry (such as hit charts, media, and stores).

Due to this lack of access, these labels had to invent their own promotion and distribution channels. What helped them succeed was the concept of 'doing independent.' The investigation of this concept and its origins will be the focus of the third section.

Independent Labels

In short, there are three different concepts for the definition of independent labels. They can be categorized as either media- and technology-related (shellack, vinyl, cassette; production facilities etc.), based on access to the market (promotion and distribution channels), or related to a specific mindset or attitude (DYI culture, punk ideology).

For this context—Turkish independent labels in Germany from the 1960s to the 1980s—the most pertinent question concerns market access, though the specific mindset involved here will also be examined.

At the beginning of the vinyl record era in the 1950s, so-called major-labels controlled the production, manufacturing, and distribution of vinyl.² If a vinyl record label did not control this process entirely, it was recognized as an independent label. In the 1960s, the idea of highly successful chart music began to be associated with the idea of major labels. Labels selling less popular non-mainstream music were more on the side of independent labels.

2 For the period prior to WWII and before the advent of vinyl records, as well as for the evolution of major and independent labels in the rise of pre-electrical and electrical recorded music, see Denning 2015: *passim*. For the developments after WWII related to new media (tape, vinyl record), new definitions of recording (the studio as an instrument), and a new kind of people involved (producer), see Osborne 2023: *passim*, esp. 80–90. Osborne provides a particularly solid, contextualized explanation of the rise of independent labels in the U.S. after WWII. Concerning the period prior to WWII, Osborne points to the fact that "the patent rights of the big three companies elapsed in the early 1920s, leading to a proliferation of record labels" (*ibid.*: 45), which, by 1942, had already resulted in "more than 100 independent labels" in the U.S. (*ibid.*: 58). By 1948, 19% of the hit records were already being produced by independent labels, and by the end of the 1950s, this figure had increased to 64% (*ibid.*: 82). In the UK, the situation was different: "By the end of the 1950s, there were four principal labels in operation," about 25 small labels shared only 2% of the retail trade in records (*ibid.*: 85). It was only with the advent of punk music that independent labels began to flourish in the UK, growing from 12 in 1976 to nearly 500 by the end of the 1970s (Hockenbrink 2024: 70). Compared to the U.S. and the UK, the German market was less developed for small or independent labels.

In general, major labels and independent labels were not in opposition. Independent labels used access to the market, especially the established promotion and distribution channels of the much larger multinational major labels. However, the term 'independent' points to a legal and, to a large extent, economic independence from the major media corporations. According to Charlie Gillett, one key criterion for separating major and independent labels is access to the market via promotion and distribution channels. Owning one or several such channels could make you a major label (Gillett 1970; Göbel 2004: 27–28; Elster 2021: 83).

Music-wise, the lower economic pressure on musicians associated with independent labels, particularly artist-run ones, can encourage experimentation and creative autonomy in music-making. However, music production with major labels is much more commercially driven, typically within a smaller, more conservative range of aesthetic possibilities (Göbel 2004: 28). To put it bluntly: For major labels, musical content is completely irrelevant as long as they can make a profit from it. This also explains why capitalist major labels have not hesitated to release anti-colonial, communist, or even anti-capitalist music (Denning 2015: 31–32, 148, 154). In contrast, independent labels care about the music and their—often minoritarian—audiences (N.N. no date).

Yet, the separation between major and independent labels remains somewhat artificial. There even exists an intermediate category, so-called 'major-independent labels,' depending on access to and ownership of promotion and distribution channels. This point will subsequently be relevant to the argument presented.

Since the late 1970s, the idea of independent labels has generally been closely connected to punk music and its DIY-spirit, enabling music production, promotion, and distribution alongside the established major-owned channels. However, the subject of this text—Turkish (major-) independent labels operating in Germany—calls this idea into question: There has been a significant amount of DIY-spirit and non-hegemonic underground practice within Turkish (major-)independent labels more than ten years before punk entered the scene. To a certain extent, the Turkish (major-)independent labels in Germany developed a prototype for punk music's independent label thinking—with punk music barely knowing of or referring to this prototype (see Gutmair 2023).

The Turkish (major-)independent labels kept their concept and practice of 'doing independent' out of sight, had to keep it out of sight, or were kept out of sight, as will be analyzed later.

Starting with the so-called 'guest workers' in the early 1960s, the largest Turkish migrant community outside Turkey was established in Germany, growing to a population of over three million people today. In fact, there is not *one* 'Turkish community' but several diverse ones, which can be identified along different ethnic, religious, and linguistic lines (which can also intersect in various ways). The concept of being 'Turkish' is complex, given that it is based on a very young republican nation that tried to build something new out of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. Attempting to use European concepts of nation-state building could not suppress or eliminate the ethnic, religious, and linguistic plurality, differences, and conflicts in the long term. This also impacts artistic production (see Bozdoğan/Akcan 2012: passim, 70–82, 101; Bartsch 2011: passim, 38–40).

Yet, representation and acknowledgement of these large Turkish communities in the cultural life of German society has been and still is weak. German music history, for example, is mainly written by non-Turkish people. This may already be one of the reasons why it is written without considering Turkish music in and from Germany. When it comes to Turkish record labels in Germany, they are almost completely overlooked.

Things seemed to change for the better with the book *Made in Germany. Studies in Popular Music* (Seibt/Ringsmut/Wickström 2021), which at least contains a chapter on Turkish hip-hop and an interview conducted with a Turkish rap artist. Nevertheless, any Turkish music made in Germany prior and alongside hip-hop is not considered here at all, despite the impressive output by numerous artists and labels. Unfortunately, more recent publications on German pop music history by Jan Reetze (2022) or Dietmar Elflein (2022), for example, fall short of *Made in Germany*, excluding any Turkish music made in Germany. Other texts continue to ignore the innovation and groundbreaking contribution of migrants, especially Turkish ones, to the naissance of hip-hop in Germany (e.g. Lüthe 2024: 239; Wagner 2025). Murat Güngör, Hannes Loh, and Uh-Young Kim offer a critique of this approach to nationalizing German hip-hop history, which excludes (post-)migrants and their contributions, in their book *Remix Almanya: Eine Postmigrantische Hiphop-Geschichte* (2024: 61).

As part of a countermovement to this marginalization, *Songs of Gastarbeiter Vol. 2* (2022), conceived by İmran Ayata and Bülent Kullukcu, was not only a compilation of forgotten or ignored Turkish pop music made in Germany, but also of forgotten or ignored music by other migrant communities like Spanish, Greek, or Vietnamese communities. *Songs of Gastarbeiter Vol. 2* marks the beginning of a new historiography of (migrant) music made in Germany. Furthermore, Cem Kaya's documentary film *Aşk, Mark ve Ölüm. Liebe, D-Mark und Tod. Love, Deutschmarks and Death* (2022) is worth mentioning. The film not only promotes Turkish music made in Germany by tracing its history and focusing on its specific musical developments, but

also reflects on its hiddenness and exclusion from the German music market and the German media. In 2020, Christopher Ramm summed up the state of research on Turkish pop music in general: “It is striking how little attention academic research gave to Turkish pop and rock music of the 1960s and 1970s until very recently,” and he detected a general “lack of interest” (Ramm 2020: 273). This has changed significantly since about 2018, not least due to a new wave of English writing Turkish scholars (see Lund 2026/2020: 140–141). Yet current research falls short of providing a deeper understanding of the Turkish music market in general and of its specificities within Germany.

The history of Turkish migrant music culture that has emerged in Germany since the mid-1960s is, in general, almost completely absent from public perception. The literature published to date is very limited and archives are lacking.³ The music and culture of Turkish migrants has apparently not yet been considered relevant enough to be documented, archived, and protected.⁴ After about 60 years of Turkish music made and produced in Germany, there still exists no comprehensive history of Turkish music in and from Germany (see Lund/Lund 2026/2022)⁵—let alone a history of its music labels. A fact that has to be questioned and discussed.

In the following, we aim to elucidate the mechanism behind this ‘hidden’ history by analyzing the discourse (or lack thereof) about these labels and the music and people linked to them, in order to understand why these independent labels were blocked from the official distribution channels and why they have been written out of cultural and music history to this day.

Regarding hidden histories, journalist Adama Juldeh Munu states that “it suffices to say ‘hidden histories’ are either due to willful design to keep them hidden or the lack of reliable sources that makes proper enquiry possible” (Munu 2020). In our case, both explanations apply. In 2010, Martin Stokes observed that “the topic [of the Turkish music market] has been neglected, and facts and figures are hard to come by” (Stokes 2010: 16, see also Greve 2003: 82)—and things have not substantially changed since then. A reason for figures being hard to come by is that various interest groups have been manipulating them—upwards or downwards—for decades (Greve 2003: 112, 158). Therefore, non-transparency already begins within the Turkish music market itself.

3 For a useful introduction to Turkish migrant culture in Germany, along with Turkish music made in Germany, see Hazar 2021.

4 The same goes for Turkish migrant film and video culture (Sungu 2019: 6).

For a rare and very important archive documenting migrant culture in Germany, see DOMiD. Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland, <https://domid.org/> and the related Museum Selma (in planning), <https://www.museum-selma.de/en/>.

5 Martin Greves extensive and groundbreaking book *Musik der imaginären Türkei*:

Musik und Musikleben im Kontext der Migration aus der Türkei in Deutschland (2003)

especially covers the decades of the 1980s and the 1990s, while overlooking earlier decades.

Yet larger structures are at stake in Germany, as researcher Vanessa E. Thompson states: "In Germany, there is a systematic failure to recognize racism as a structural and institutional problem" (Thompson 2021: 52).⁶

One element of racism as a structural and institutional issue is the exclusion or disregard of Turkish music history in Germany by the country's historiography of music. But it goes even deeper: the "willful design" to suppress a certain history is linked to the fundamental structure that kept the life of Turkish music in Germany hidden—'access denied.' The independent Turkish labels in Germany and their special distribution system were created specifically because of an experienced 'access denied' to the existing structures for musical life. And this attitude of 'access denied' reappears when it comes to the historiography of German music. It is generally neither officially stated nor explicitly verbalized or reflected. 'Access denied' just happens. This is what Thompson means when speaking about "a systematic failure to recognize racism as a structural and institutional problem" (*ibid.*). What are the reasons for this structural denial of access and which larger "willful design" is shaping it?

'Access Denied'— Racism and Turkish Independent Labels in Germany

For the purposes of this article, the situation can be summarized as follows: the first German independent labels to be acknowledged in the history of the German record industry post-WWII usually are the following: Kuckuck, releasing records from 1970 onward (Peltsch 2021: 50); David Volksmund Produktion, founded in 1971 by the music group Ton Steine Scherben (Philipps 2020: 34); and Trikont, releasing records from 1970 onward (*ibid.*).

Interestingly, all three labels were also (music) publishing houses that started sidelines as labels—like Pläne, another early independent label in Germany. Early independent labels in Germany appear to have developed more from the realms of literature and political activism than from the music scene itself, with the aim of turning leftist activist literature into music,—which all of them did. At least in the beginning, the independent publishing houses were mainly releasing texts and only occasionally records. That may be one of the reasons why Pläne, perhaps the most literature-related of these labels, is usually not taken into account when it comes to independent music labels, despite releasing records at a very low rate since 1963.

6 For a structural analysis of exclusion based on a framework of migration politics and different models of 'integration,' see Abadan-Unat 2005: 338–345, esp. 342–343. Nermin Abadan-Unat shows that the economic 'integration' in Germany is not necessarily paired with a societal integration. On the contrary, exclusion reigns.



Fig. 1: Nuri Sesigüzel and Yüksel Özkasap receive golden records for extraordinary high selling rates, early 1970s. Photo: Selahattin Kaya. Source: Eryılmaz/Jamin 1998: 290.

However, this part of German music history, which favors the aforementioned German independent labels, does not tell the whole truth. In fact, the first, largest, and most commercially successful independent record company ever in Germany was Türküola. Founded in 1964, the company released more than a thousand singles, albums, and compilations by Turkish artists.⁷ The recordings were made in Turkey and Germany, primarily for Turkish communities in Germany and other European countries (Sels 2021: 24), but also for export to Turkey. The company sold millions of records, CDs, and cassettes across Germany, Europe, and Turkey, winning golden and platinum records (fig. 1).

Türküola was only one of a much larger number of (major-)independent Turkish record companies in Germany, including Minareci, founded in Munich in 1969, and Uzelli, founded in Frankfurt am Main in 1971.⁸

The first record by a Turkish-German label is not easy to track down. It probably was Metin Türköz' *Almanya'da Neler Var/Altmışlık Oma*, released on Areg Ses⁹ in 1965, or one of the other early Metin Türköz or Yüksel Özkasap records released in 1966 on Türküola's sub-label Türkofon.¹⁰

Many Turkish independent record labels were founded—both smaller and larger ones—with infrastructural backing by “Turkish studios which existed in many European cities” (Greve 2017: 44; Sels 2021: 17). Greve lists about two dozen independent Turkish record labels in Germany, about seven of which were major-independents, and one of which even represented up to 180 Turkish record companies for the German and the European market (Greve 2003: 78f and 81f). Teresa Vena as well as Esther Buss note about 500 to 600 artists, related only to Türküola, who have experienced a remarkable career from the 1960s on (Vena 2022; Buss 2022).

7 For a catalog, see <https://web.archive.org/web/20220701091240/www.diskotek.info/RecordLabel/Details/269>. See also Greve 2003: 515–534.

8 Like Türküola, these two other labels started not by releasing records but by trying to sell (Turkish) goods to the Turkish communities in Germany. It seems that Türküola entered the record market with releases around 1966, Minareci in 1974, and Uzelli in 1976. Thanks to Ercan Demirel for pointing this out to us.

9 See <https://www.discogs.com/de/release/12890503-Kayserili-Metin-Türköz-Almanya'da-Neler-Var-Altmışlık-Oma/>.

10 See <https://www.discogs.com/de/artist/4310048-Metin-Türköz> and <http://ykslozkasap.atspace.com/disko.htm>.

Of course, over time, these labels sold more than just vinyl records. Vinyl faded out in the 1980s; instead, cassettes began appearing on the shelves from the mid-1970s onward, followed by CDs from the 1980s onward.

Although we still do not have a clear picture of the Turkish music market and its volume in Germany, the outlines of an extraordinary and powerful release and distribution system can already be detected. If we consider that Turkish labels from Germany also sold to Europe and Turkey, like Türküola, the widely circulated anecdote of sacks of cash being dropped off each evening at the main Türküola store in Cologne begins to seem believable.

With his sub-label Teledisc, founded in 1968, Türküola's founder Asöcal even tried several times to enter the German record industry's system. However, this sub-label was a failure, with only half a dozen releases, including German Schlager and English versions of *Anadolu rock* songs. Consequently, Asöcal gave up in 1980.¹¹ What remains is a stunning discrepancy between an extraordinarily successful label manager—Asöcal with Türküola and its Turkish music sub-labels—and a completely unsuccessful label manager—Asöcal with Teledisc and its Turkish and non-Turkish music for the German music market.

Since the Turkish labels in Germany had no access to the German record industry's relevant official promotion and distribution channels (such as hit charts, media, and stores),¹² they had to invent their own, primarily with grocery stores and general stores¹³ as main sales outlets and Turkish newspapers as promotional media (for the Austrian context, see Gebesmair 2009: 108–115).

In addition, the labels could rely on their customers' unusually good media setup. Mathilde Jamin states: "Even with otherwise very frugal lifestyles, many migrants [...] bought radio sets for their own use early on, which received Radio Ankara and 'Köln Radio' (the Turkish program of the WDR), record players to listen to Turkish music, cassette recorders that could also be used for 'spoken letters' and video recorders with which Turkish films could be watched [...]. These were the indispensable 'contact media' that formed a bridge to the homeland" (Jamin 1998: 217).

11 See the small label discography: https://www.discogs.com/label/225384-Teledisc-2?sort=year&sort_order=asc.

12 See Cem Kaya: "[...] these musicians were simply not invited to 'Wetten, dass ...?', to 'Dalli Dalli' or to the other big West German entertainment shows of the time. They weren't present, and accordingly one always felt very underrepresented oneself" (Quote in: Brake 2022). And in the same vein: "From the eighties on, the most famous Turkish singers played in the biggest German halls. Sold-out concerts. But nothing came of it on German television" (Krieger 2022). In contrast to Germany, Baris Manço could release an EP with songs in France as early as 1964 (see <https://www.discogs.com/release/2066350-Baris-Manço-Baby-Sitter>). The French record label Rigolo, founded by the Caribbean singer and entertainer Henri Gabriel Salvador, had no reservations signing a Turkish musician—something which could not happen in Germany before some sporadic attempts by major labels in the mid-1970s (see Lund/Lund 2026/2022: 214).

13 The combination of food and non-food articles, including vinyl records, in grocery and general stores was also used for the distribution of other non-Western music in other European countries. For example, an Indian vinyl record from 1971 sold in Rotterdam bears a record sticker declaring the seller as "Tropisch-Winkel 'TiBiTi', Rotterdam, Voor al uw Surinaamse, Indiase en Indonesische produkten en grammofoonplaten." For an example from Austria/Vienna, see Gebesmair 2009: 106–107. However, more research on the subject of independent distribution of other non-Western music in Germany and other Western countries is needed.

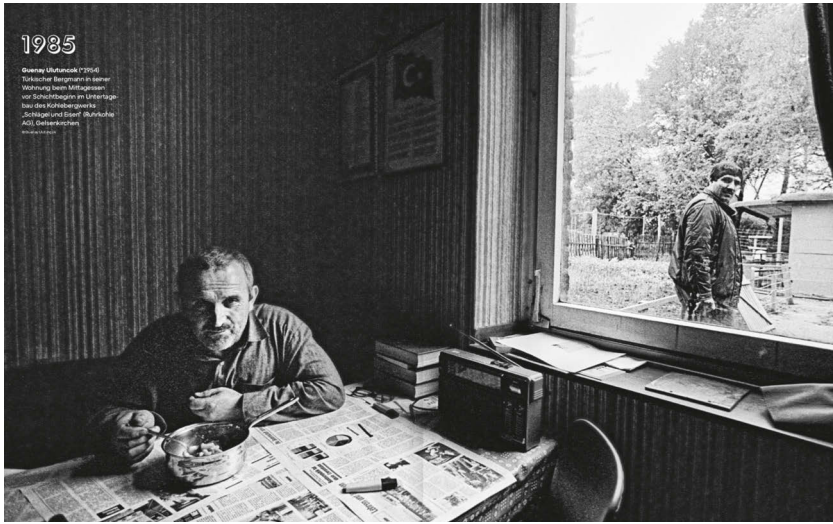


Fig. 2: Miner, 1985. Photo: Guenay Ulutuncok.
Source: Nocke 2021: 1.



Fig. 3: Worker in a multi-bed room. Film still.
Source: Willkop 2022.

Fig. 2 shows the interior of a miner's quarters. Among the few objects in the room, the radio on the table stands out. Fig. 3 shows a worker in a multi-bed room with a turntable on a reserved chair.

According to Abadan-Unat's case study, 80% of the Turkish migrants in the early 1960s bought a radio immediately after arriving in Germany (Abadan-Unat 2005: 140). And according to John Berger and Jean Mohr in their case study, in the early 1970s approximately every fourth migrant worker, lodged in multi-bed rooms, had a portable record player to play records (Berger/Mohr 2016: 177).

Why did Turkish labels experience an ‘access denied’ when it came to the German record industry’s relevant official promotion and distribution channels? To answer this, we must return to our observation concerning structural racism. Which structure profits, one may ask? A capitalist structure built on cheap labor forces that requires justification for ultra-low and unequal payment. Could there be a more effective justification than convincing people that they are of little worth—and that their cultural identity, including their music, is equally worthless or insignificant? The logic of racism is a logic of devaluation—and profit (see Mbembe 2015).

In her documentary film *Yeryüzü Göçerleri* (1979), Gülseven Güven openly compares and parallels Turkish migrant people with Black people as slaves. The film even presents Turkish migrants as slaves within a slave trade organized by the Turkish state, which sells its people as labor force to work abroad in order to bring in valuable foreign currency, which the state desperately needs to compensate for the immense trade deficit. The status of Turkish migrants in the social hierarchy of German society is made clear in the film: “They are at the end of the list,” as the narrator puts it toward the end of the film. And in fact, Turkish people have often been colloquially referred to as “the N* of Europe,” to maximize their othering and devaluation (see Klee 1971); and their situation in Germany was judged as “a modern form of slavery” even by members of German political parties like the social democrats (SPD) (N.N. 1973).

Hence, Turkish migrant people perceived themselves as being treated like slaves by the Turkish state. In the lyrics of a migrant song, one singer complains openly about the Turkish state: “You have disgraced us before the world. You have sold us to Germany” (Anhegger 1982: 23).

Thomas Solomon sums up the status of Turkish people by describing them as “second-class non-citizens in Germany” (Solomon 2021: 112). And Hakkı Keskin points in a similar direction by stating that “undeniably, in the minds of most Germans, Germany’s Turks remain the country’s pariahs” (Keskin 1998: 19).¹⁴

If one takes Pınar Öğrenci’s video work *Glück auf in Deutschland* (2024) into consideration, confirmation of the visual invisibility of migrants, especially Turkish migrants, becomes evident.

Öğrenci’s video work addresses the photographic absence of so-called ‘guest workers’ in the depiction of the mining industrialization as it was undertaken by the German side, for example by the mining companies. According to her, the first images of ‘guest workers’ by German photographers to be found in the archives of the Ruhr Museum only date back to 1982—more than 20 years after Turkish migrant workers had entered the mines. Before that, they were simply not recognized and photographed because, despite their work in the mines, they were not seen as a relevant part of mining work and culture.

14 This problem continues, among other reasons because Turkey is still not part of the EU (see Prümm 2003). In “Meister İşçi Kavgası” (no date, prob. 1970s), the singer Metin Türköz introduced the character of a German foreman as a counterpart to the character of the Turkish migrant worker in the same song. The foreman hurls aggressive, harassing, and racist remarks in German at the migrant worker, humiliating him. The migrant worker in return sings in Turkish a sort of lament but also makes fun of the foreman.

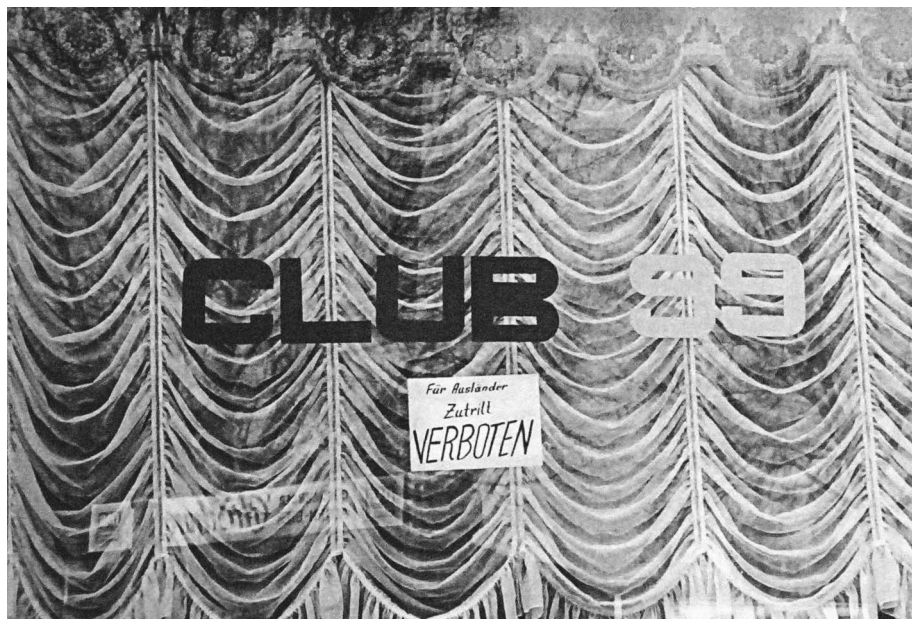


Fig. 4: Disco Club in Gelsenkirchen, 1974. Photo: Manfred Vollmer.
Source: Eryilmaz/Jamin 1998: 311. Sign reads: "No entry for foreigners."

An examination of the Ruhr Museum's archival database actually shows that there are only about a dozen hits for the term 'Gastarbeiter' ('migrant worker') for photographs spanning decades, and not a single one for the terms 'Gastarbeiterin' ('female migrant worker'), or simply 'migrant.' Only at the beginning of the 1980s do photos begin to appear under the terms 'Türke'/'Türkin' ('Turk'/'Turkish woman').¹⁵ Before that, Turkish people remained invisible.

In his text for Öğrenci's exhibition at Galerie Tanja Wagner in Berlin, Alexander Koch notes:

"Öğrenci searched the photographic archive of the Ruhr Museum in Essen to look for visual traces of the first generation of guest workers and found—almost nothing. The Fördergemeinschaft für Bergmannstradition—Linker Niederrhein, an organization dedicated to preserving the traditions of mining communities, at least had a few photographs. In the decades between 1955 [...] and 1982, the mining industry and mining culture were captured in numerous sometimes lavish photo documentaries—but those exclusively show white German faces and bodies, staged as symbolic ideals for the purposes of Krupp & Co.'s lobbying and propaganda campaigns. In fact, the documentaries were bankrolled by the industry. Guest workers were literally edited out" (Koch 2024).

¹⁵ See <https://ruhrmuseum.de/digital/fotoarchiv>.

Here, a “willful design” comes in again, a “willful design” that may be linked to Boaventura de Sousa Santos theory of “abyssal thinking” (de Sousa Santos 2014: esp. chapt. 4), which here is turned into an abyssal practice of exclusion and denial.

Being structurally and socially marginalized, it is perhaps not surprising that ‘access denied’ is, in many ways, a fundamental experience for Turkish people living in Germany. They could not—and still often—cannot enter many cultural, educational, and recreational facilities (Sungu 2019: 7, 64–65). Their lives were shaped by a more or less unspoken separationist racism and classism (see Gutmair 2023: 277–280; N.N. 1973; fig. 4).

Although Germany is a capitalist society, the potential revenue that Turkish people could bring to cultural, educational, and recreational institutions was not welcomed.¹⁶ Doors were closed for Turkish people (Abadan-Unat 2005: 237), even as consumers or clients, because they were regarded as a disturbance and devaluation for the consumption process for, and by, many other people in Germany.¹⁷ Racist and classist thinking overshadowed even commercial interests (see fig. 4). This might also help explain the almost complete absence of Turkish products, music, film, and culture in the general public life—whether in German media (television, radio, newspaper), in stores (also music stores), or cultural venues (such as cinemas, art and design museums etc.).

To survive culturally and resist this exclusion, Turkish people had to establish independent structures for their everyday lives, including their musical lives.¹⁸ They had to think and use ‘doing independent.’ What began with halal butcher shops soon expanded: other food such as bread, pastries, and cheese, as well as objects of everyday Turkish life, were made available for Turkish people by the many independent Turkish grocery and general stores all over Germany (Abadan-Unat 2005: 246–247). They did not—and still do not—belong to any of the few big German food chains that have taken over the market over time.

16 Even brothels denied access to Turkish people (Üstün 1998: 185).

17 Several factors may have contributed to the perception of Turkish people as a disturbance in the consumption process: More than half of the Turkish migrants had only a rural education and training, without proper schooling. Therefore, illiteracy was a huge problem. They came from the Anatolian hinterlands and were regarded as bringing with them the smell of poverty (about the smell of poverty, see Abou 2020/2021: 53), as well as the look of rurality combined with unbridled manners of Anatolian peasants, who had only briefly been ‘washed’ urban—and that merely through living in ‘rurban’ *gecekondu*, peripheral informal settlements where whole rural villages relocated and lived a more or less ‘rurban’ life. Moreover, the smell of poverty was also connected to the kind of work many of the Turkish migrants practiced in Germany: work related to dirt, like mining, slaughter, fish processing, garbage collecting, or cleaning. For more information about how German people and other non-Turkish people in Germany perceived Turkish people in the early 1970s, see N.N. 1973. Here, one can also draw a parallel to the so-called *Ugly Laws* of the 19th century in the U.S. and in Europe, which structurally separated public space and its institutions into a bourgeois part and a non-bourgeois part for all the rest, such as poor people, sick people, people of color, migrants etc. (Hilal 2024: 202–203). And of course, the bourgeois section had an exclusive door policy preventing people perceived as non-bourgeois from entering.

18 According to Abadan-Unat, Turkish migrants in Germany had established a relatively high number of 22,000 small business enterprises by 1985, primarily dedicated to the needs of their Turkish fellow citizens (see Abadan-Unat 2005: 86–87).

Driven by a basic need for musical life, Turkish people approached music much like food and daily necessities: they built an independent structure for the promotion and distribution of their music, often linked to already existing independent grocery and general stores. Because of this independence, non-Turkish people living in Germany—who never interacted with Turkish shops—often remained unaware of the Turkish music life. This led to a structure of co-existence with few points of contact, as musical activist Sebastian Reier observed in 2020:

“Millions of Turkish sound media are sold in the Federal Republic of Germany from the late sixties on. There are no reviews in [German] music magazines, nor are there any pop-cultural considerations in the feature pages. The star cuts in *Bravo* [the most popular German music magazine] are reserved for Western pop stars, and supra-regional television appearances by Turkish musicians can be counted on two hands. Companies like *Türküola* are also not taken into account when determining the charts. Turkish music remains in its parallel universe; very few Germans come into contact with it” (Reier 2020).

Earlier, in 1998, Nedim Hazar, author and member of the rock music group *Yarınistan*, made a similar observation: “Our presence of more than 35 years did not and does not find—with a few exceptions—any reflection in the music [of German society]. The music produced by Turks in Germany does not find its way into the general market. Yes, one must even speak of a second, parallel existing market” (Hazar 1998: 287).

Daniel Bax was probably the first to address the invisibility of Turkish music in Germany in the German press, in an article from 1995. According to him, the lack of success of Turkish music among non-Turkish people in Germany had less to do with aesthetic reasons than with structural ones:

“Turkish music appears almost exclusively on domestic labels, and production is nationally limited. Although large quantities of Turkish CDs are pressed for the European market in southern Germany—at the *Destan Müzik* company in Esslingen, for example—they are sold exclusively in local Turkish stores. There, a CD typically costs only 10 Marks. Neither major music department stores like *WOM* nor special stores supporting world music like *Canzone* at Berlin’s *Savignyplatz* carry them” (Bax 1995: 15–16).¹⁹

¹⁹ It seems that, until the singer *Muhabbet*’s success with his CD *R’n’Besk* (2006), CDs by Turkish singers had seldom been offered for sale in mainstream music stores in Germany. *Muhabbet* reflects on the problem of Turkish media distribution and the distribution of his own music, which—confusingly for his Turkish audience—was, for the first time, being sold in German media stores like *Saturn* and *Media Markt* instead of the usual Turkish co-shops (*Muhabbet* in *Kaya* 2022).

Coming back to Munu, the hiddenness of Turkish music in the public consciousness of non-Turkish people in Germany could indicate either the lack of a relevant body of music, the lack of knowledge about an existing body of music, or the lack of a will to engage with an existing and known body of music. The situation is undoubtedly complex, as indicated by the fact that Türküola was only one of a larger number of Turkish record companies in Germany. More than 20 new record companies were founded in the 1970s and 1980s following Türküola (Greve 2003: 78–79). Therefore, the absence of a relevant body of music in terms of quantity and success cannot have been the problem. Yet could this vast body have existed without non-Turkish people in Germany knowing anything about it? Yes, it could, because Turkish music in Germany had been rendered invisible and inaudible. As described already, this was due to German media structures, due to Turkish and non-Turkish people living in a more or less distant co-existence, and due to a combination of ignorance and a lack of interest in any kind of Turkish music on the part of non-Turkish people.²⁰ Or, in the more diplomatic words of Hazar: “But in my opinion, the reasons for the lack of mutual influence, and not only in the field of music, but also in other cultural fields, are to be found in the process of processing the phenomenon of migration by the Turks, but especially by the Germans” (Hazar 1998: 287). He points to the media structure as an example of this development:

“In this way, the German public was then also relieved, which until then had no further interest in questions of the culture and art of Turkish migrants anyway. This was the beginning of cultural ghettoization, which was later reinforced by the emergence of the television channel TRT-International and other Turkish television programs that could be received via satellite antenna. In this way, two million [Turkish] fee payers voluntarily gave up rights that should have been granted to them by the German radio and television broadcasters” (ibid.: 292).

Turkish people and German-Turkish people could experience one remarkable exception to the usual ‘access denied’ when it comes to the second half of the 1980s. This exception has to do with U.S. soldier’s bars and clubs in Germany. ‘No entry for foreigners’ was not the slogan here; on the contrary: Solomon explains that it was Black U.S. soldiers who brought hip-hop to clubs for U.S. soldiers in Germany, and these clubs and discos were open to non-Germans, unlike the other ones in the cities. Turkish people and German-Turkish people, as well as other migrants, immediately profited from this accessibility. As early as 1992, meetings were organized for American, German, and Turkish youth, where Turkish rap musicians were invited on stage and celebrated (Loeb 1992: front page).

20 On the question of the invisibility of Turkish people in Germany as well as of Turkish migrant identity, see Güney/Pekman/Kabaş 2014: 132–134.

As a result, hip-hop could reach Turkish communities faster than German ones. In sync with the U.S. rap rebellion against discrimination and marginalization, Turkish youth in Germany began to develop their own version of hip-hop in the late 1980s, featuring Turkish lyrics and incorporating *Anadolu pop* music samples (Solomon 2021: 112; see also Odabaşı 2016). Once the doors are open, things could start to develop.

The History of 'Doing Independent' as a Concept and Practice

But as doors were closed most of the time, this brings us back to 'doing independent' and its history. As a practice and attitude in dealing with media and markets, 'doing independent' in our context has been developed in three main systems, which are partly interconnected: the 'bond system' of Yeşilçam cinema²¹ in Turkey, starting at the end of the 1950s (Refiğ 2017/ 1971: 68), the 'İMÇ system' of independent Turkish vinyl record labels in Turkey, starting in the early 1960s,²² and the 'co-shop system' in Germany and throughout Europe for independent video cassette and music distribution of independent labels, expanding in the early 1980s (Sungu, 2019: 11). Comparable systems in which 'doing independent' was also developed are the *gecekondu* system for architecture and housing, the later *Düğün TV* media system for broadcasting, and the cassette vending machine system for restaurants and cafés.²³

21 Named after the Yeşilçam street in Istanbul, where the film companies were located. In short, Yeşilçam cinema can be characterized as a kind of parallel to Bollywood cinema, which it actually followed through its connections with Egyptian cinema (Gürata 2004: 55–82).

22 Denomination related to the İstanbul Manifaturacılar Çarşısı building at Unkapanı (1960), Istanbul, an international modern style trading center.

23 In architecture, the *gecekondu* system refers to the specific system of self-constructed squatter settlements built overnight (which the law allowed for) by rural-to-urban migrants in Turkish cities. Sibel Bozdoğan and Esra Akcan state: "Gecekondus have been perceived either as urban wounds or the outcome of a popular solution to the housing crises, as [...] niches of self-help" (Bozdoğan/Akcan 2012: 169). The *gecekondu* system constituted an independent, informal, and mostly illegal market for construction and housing, connected to the semi-legal market for anonymous contractor apartments, both of which dominated the urban landscape in Turkish cities—without any architect or any urban planning being involved. Regulatory state or municipal authorities rarely intervened, instead neglecting or ignoring these markets and their developments since their beginnings in the 1940s (see *ibid.*: 164–169). Maurus Reinkowski interprets the *gecekondu* system as a form of occupation of land mainly based on solidarity networks (*hemşehrilik*) and the idea of social upward mobility. The settlers were not necessarily poor but often left the countryside with property and capital to invest in housing and new businesses in the city (see Reinkowski 2022: 195, 197). *Düğün TV* and its media system, established by Mehmet Çoban, is an example for 'doing independent' broadcasting. The independent conglomerate developed from a satellite broadcasted wedding TV in the nighties. It included not only broadcasting but also the sale of products via a shopping TV channel (Hazar 2021: 58–61). The cassette vending machine system was developed by Yilmaz Aras who founded the KATEK (Kassetten-Technologie) Vertriebs-GmbH in Berlin. Designed similarly to cigarette machines, the cassette machines offered a curated selection of Turkish music cassettes based on the location and the expected audience. With over 60 machines, the system had grown considerably in Berlin in the mid-1990s—yet the rise of the internet halted further expansion (Hendrich 1996).

1. *The 'bond system' of Yeşilçam cinema*

In short, this unique system operated between 1960 and 1980 as follows: "Theatre owners in Turkey in the 1960s pre-sold the tickets and then financed the making of the films" (Akser/Durak-Akser 2017: 59; see also Erdoğan/Göztürk 2001: 535 and 538). Due to a lack of capital on the part of the producers, the Turkish film industry invented an independent system of film financing and film producing. Murat Akser and Didem Durak-Akser explain it the following way:

"The financial investment originated from an advance-on-receipts system, which depended on Anatolian theatre owners.

Indeed, the so-called 'bond system' was named after the bonds signed by the producers, who borrowed money from the theatre owners by pre-selling the screening rights of the films.

In return, the theatre owners could dictate what kind of films were made and which star should be assigned to a particular project" (ibid.).

The roots of the system date back to the 1940s, when the Turkish government prohibited the import of popular Egyptian films (to prevent the Turkish people from becoming 'Arabic') and set up a decree on taxation that reduced the tax on Turkish films significantly compared to the tax on foreign films. This led to the establishment of a profitable domestic film industry in Turkey at the end of the 1940s (ibid.: 59–60).

Filmmaker Halit Refiğ already reflects on this system, its special economic mode of production and its independence in 1968:

"Since Turkish cinema was not founded by foreign capital, it is not the cinema of imperialism. It is neither the cinema of the bourgeoisie, since it was not founded by national capitalism, nor the cinema of the state, since it was not founded by the government.

Turkish cinema is a 'people's cinema' since it is based on labour rather than capital and was born out of Turkish people's need to watching [sic!] films" (Refiğ 2017/1968: 66).

Two years later, he concludes by pointing to the fact that Turkish cinema depends solely on the audience, stating that "this bond system [...] was based on the agreement that a film's expenses would be reimbursed only after the film was made and the tickets sold. As the real bond owners were the audiences, these films were supposed to be made according to the taste of the Turkish audience" (Refiğ 2017/1970: 68). In another text, he notes: "Today [in 1967], what makes the production of more than 250 movies a year in Turkey possible is not the presence of a certain capital but the bonds calculated according to the number of people who will pay to watch the film. From this perspective, Turkish cinema is a cinema of the people" (Refiğ 2017/1967: 66).

The 'bond system' of the Yeşilçam cinema allowed for a worldwide-unique, economically independent production and distribution mode. From today's point of view, one could call it a sort of crowd funding *avant la lettre*. It served as a model and paved the way for the parallel development of an independent music market in Turkey and Germany, with so many independent music labels.

2. *The 'İMÇ system' of independent Turkish vinyl record labels*

As early as around 1900, 78rpm shellac records entered the Ottoman empire. The field was dominated almost exclusively by multinational, European-based record companies like Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft, Lindström, Odeon, Beka, Lyrofon, Favorite, Gramophone Co/His Master's Voice, Columbia, Pathé, and many more (see Greve 2003: 25; Greve 2017: 36; Ergun 2018: 84).²⁴ These companies produced records of Ottoman music but also of Eastern and Western music and hybrid entertainment music styles, like Turkish tango²⁵, for the Turkish music market.

Turkish record labels did not show up on a larger scale until the late 1950s, after vinyl as a medium and 45rpm technology had become available. It appears that the Turkish label Grafson, founded in 1958, began releasing vinyl 45rpm records by the singer Zeki Müren in 1959 (see Greve 2017: 37).²⁶

After its opening in 1960, the huge modern architecture block of the İstanbul Manifaturacılar Çarşısı at Unkapanı was becoming the center of the Turkish vinyl record industry and its record labels followed in the early 1970s. With the record releases of the very successful *Altın Mikrofon* [Golden Microphone] song contest from 1965 onward (Ergun 2018), numerous local, often musician-owned²⁷ Turkish record labels began to flourish and "were

24 An exception to the dominance of Western record companies was Baidaphon, a Lebanese label based in both Berlin and Beirut.

25 Turkish tango emerged in the 1920s as a hybrid between local popular styles like *longa*, *şarkı* and *türkü*, and tango, which came to İstanbul via Eastern Europe (see Bartsch 2011: 143).

26 See also <https://www.discogs.com/artist/1230186-Zeki-Müren?year=1959>.

27 Stars, but also lesser known musicians, had their own labels, including, for example, Orhan Gencebay, the co-owner of İstanbul Plak and later the owner of Kervan Plak (releasing records from top ranking artists like Bedîa Akartürk, Erkin Koray, Ajda Pekkan, Kamuran Akkor, Neşe Karaböcek, Ferdi Öztekin); Zeki Müren, the owner of Müren Plak; Neşet Ertaş, the owner of Ertaş; İbrahim Tatlıses, the owner of Tatlıses; Mehmet Pekün, the owner of Pekün Plakçılık; Mıhrıcan Bahar, the owner of Bahar; etc. In Germany, even very small artist-run labels emerged, like Coşkun Ada with Ada Fon, Basri Tankaya with Tankaya Müzik, or İbrahim Işıl with Bambi. And with Yüksel Özkasap, the most prominent diasporic singer and wife of Asöcal, a singer's hand and mind were involved in Türküola as well. According to Peter Manuel, musician-owned record labels already developed in the 1920s in Egypt: "In order to gain greater control over the recording process and profits than was usually available from contracts, a few artists [...] bought interests in recording firms or established their own companies. For popular artists who successfully negotiated recording contracts, the business was extremely lucrative—much more so than any other performing opportunity" (Manuel 1988: 146).

providing an avenue of creative expression” (Özbek 1997: 174), something that global major corporations most likely could not have provided in the same way.

There is something special about the Turkish music market compared to other countries participating in the world's first wave of hybrid pop music, which combines global pop with local popular music elements. The Turkish music market was almost completely independent, with some important domestic major-independent companies as well as a substantial number of smaller domestic independent players releasing music to a highly dynamic market (Votel 2013). The main reasons multinational major-labels were cautious, backed out, or stayed away from the Turkish music market included a constantly unclear legal copyright situation,²⁸ which called licensing and local pressing in Turkey into question, as well as high import taxes on foreign goods, making imported foreign records expensive.²⁹

The infrastructural backbones for Turkish music have been domestic recording studios as well as domestic pressing plants, two of which were operating in 1963, increasing to eleven by 1969 (Ergun 2018: 84). Ali C. Gedik sums it up: “[...] the introduction of 45rpm manufacturing technology in the 1960s [...] enabled a domestic music industry and massive local consumption of music for the first time” (Gedik 2018: 94).

The effects on the development of Turkish pop music were outstanding. Independence from multinational major labels provided the above-mentioned “avenue of creative expression,” with music made according to the imagination, tastes, and needs of the musicians and the audiences. The magnitude, diversity, and variety of hybrid pop music styles and sub-styles in Turkey, which grew dynamically from the 1960s until the military coup in 1980, is probably unique compared to other non-Western countries of the same period. Perhaps no other non-Western country—except Brazil—can offer such a creative pop music development based on an independent music market (see Tupinambá de Ulhôa/De Marchi/Torres Borges 2024: 44, 48, and 50). Brazil indeed offers a comparable range of styles and sub-styles, based, especially in the 1970s, on another structure dominated by foreign as well as strong domestic major labels, but also including independent and artist-run labels (see *ibid.*).³⁰

28 It seems ignoring legal issues and pirating have been part of the Turkish music business, as well as part of the film and video business. Here, the characteristics of the business drift into mafia-like structures, including the use of violence and crime (see Yıldırım in bi'bâk 2019: 51–53; Greve 2003: 435f).

29 Still, the Turkish music market—as regular adds from foreign major-labels during the 1970s and 1980s in the leading music magazine *Hey* show—was not isolated from Anglo-American, French and Italian pop music. Western pop music was present all the time, though not dominating the market. Instead, there was a balanced co-existence of foreign and Turkish pop music, with a tendency favoring Turkish pop music, as the charts in the *Hey* magazine demonstrate over the years. According to these charts, this changed in the late 1980s and 1990s in favor of Western, Anglophone pop, paralleling neo-liberal, globalizing politics.

30 Many artists realized that they could produce their works independently, financing the recordings and distributions themselves. *Boca Livre* (1979), the first album released by the quartet *Boca Livre*, demonstrated the commercial potential of independent label productions: the album managed to sell over 100,000 copies the year it was released.

Michael Denning sees the early worldwide emergence of independent labels and markets in the 1920s and 1930s as the “beginning of an industrial decolonization” (Denning 2015: 115) through import substitution. Quoting Brian McCann, he argues that “the Brazilian recording industry was one of the most successful Latin American cases of import-substituting industrialization in the 1930s”

(McCann in *ibid*; see also Tupinambá de Ulhôa/De Marchi/Torres Borges 2024: 13, 43).

The Turkish and Brazilian independent pop music labels and markets can be seen as—consciously or unconsciously—driven by a decolonial agenda, which, on the basis of import-substitution, allows them to create and control their own markets and their own music.

Regarding Turkey and the vinyl record period, Greve describes “an avalanche-like opening of the market: in 1966 there were 20–30 record companies in Turkey, in 1987 there were 120, and in 1995 there were almost 500” (Greve 2003: 77; see Pesen 2024: 91).³¹ Many of them were—and some still are—located in the İMÇ building, a symbol of the density and richness of the Turkish record industry. The ‘İMÇ system’ stands for a highly dense, interconnected, and powerful independent music market in Turkey.

So, with Turkish people migrating to Germany from 1961 onward, it was no surprise that they brought with them their practice of ‘doing independent,’ based on their experiences of the Yeşilçam cinema ‘bond system’ and the ‘İMÇ system’ of independent Turkish vinyl record labels. One of these people was Yılmaz Asöcal, the founder of Türküola.

3. *The ‘co-shop system’ for the independent distribution of Turkish independent labels in Germany*

Since German-Turkish record labels did not have access to the relevant official promotion and distribution channels of the German record industry, they teamed up with grocery stores and general stores as their main points of sale in a kind of co-shop system, and with Turkish newspapers as media displays (see Greve 2003: 81; Sels 2021: 17). Only a few stand-alone Turkish record shops existed in some larger German cities like Cologne, Munich, or Berlin. Yet over time, about several hundred co-shops emerged across Germany, with an estimate of up to 400 by the late 1980s (see Greve 2003: 83). Fig. 5 shows such a co-shop with a lot of cassettes displayed in the shelves.

31 In 1970s Brazil, the economic opportunities offered by the state motivated a new wave of multinational record labels. WEA signed the main MPB stars and became one of the biggest record sellers in the market. Gradually, large multinational record companies took over the market share of small and medium-sized Brazilian record companies, which specialized in market niches. This resulted in a new market structure split between multinationals and Brazilian record companies (see Tupinambá de Ulhôa/De Marchi/Torres Borges 2024: 44).



Fig. 5: From the series "Türken in Deutschland" ("Turkish people in Germany"). Behind the counter, numerous music cassettes are on display. Photo: Candida Höfer, 1978/1979, © Candida Höfer/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Source: Nocke 2021: 18.

According to Metin Uzelli, his father, Muammar Uzelli, the founder of Uzelli, established "a distribution channel with eight big busses. These busses were selling [...] cassettes in every corner of Germany, to [...] Turkish grocery stores" (Uzelli in Rigney 2020). Additionally, a mail order system was established: "[...] my father was putting out full-page ads in Turkish newspapers almost every day. And people had the chance to order via post. They could choose the cassettes from these ads" (ibid.). In addition to being a distributor, Muammar Uzelli also became a manufacturer of cassettes at the end of the 1970s in order to strengthen his independence.

The development of Turkish independent record labels based in Germany should be understood in connection with another medium: film. At first, film on celluloid, then film on videocassette. Of course, Turkish films received the usual 'access denied' for regular programming and screening in all German cinemas.³² But as early as the 1960s, the idea of temporarily taking over German cinemas emerged from the Turkish practice of 'doing independent' combined with mercantile agility. Some enterprising film people had the idea of renting existing train station cinemas for certain time frames to show Turkish films to a Turkish audience. The cinemas and the cinema halls were mostly rented completely on weekends for early screenings, with

32 This changed only in the 2000s, when Cineplex cinemas in Germany began programming and screening Turkish films for Turkish communities as part of their strategy to expand the cinema audience.



Fig. 6: Turkish film screening on a Saturday at lunchtime in a German cinema, mid-1970s. Photo: Selahattin Kaya. Source: Eryılmaz/Jamin 1998: 240.

Turkish staff also placed at the box office (see Sungu 2019: 7). Therefore, without owning a cinema infrastructure, Turkish films could be shown to a Turkish audience in Germany (see fig. 6).

The whole game changed significantly with the advent of film on video cassette. Video cassettes became a mass medium in Germany by the end of the 1970s. According to a research study conducted in 1982, there were already twelve big Turkish manufacturing companies and another twenty smaller video labels in business at the time, and the trend was upward, mushrooming rapidly (*ibid.*: 12). Towards the end of the 1980s, around a hundred branches in Berlin alone sold video cassettes (*ibid.*: 12, 55). Many of these branches were not stand-alone video

rental stores but co-shops registered under other branches like travel agencies, hairdressers, banks, or rag shops. These shops had marked sections for video rental and sales, as well as point of sales for music, both often as a complement to their main assortment (*ibid.*: 11–12). In general, all kind of Turkish shops in Germany frequently had a video and a music section. Some of the labels even released both video and music, like the major-independent Destan Müzik from Esslingen, that produced, manufactured and distributed video cassettes as well as music cassettes and CDs. In the co-shops, several things came together: food, objects for everyday life, Turkish press, Turkish film and music media, and other aspects of Turkish musical life, like concert promotion and ticketing. This kind of independent distribution of Turkish film and music media was unique to Germany; no other migrant group had established anything comparable—and they did not have to do so. For example, Italian, Greek, Portuguese, or Spanish films and music were not confronted with an 'access denied' at the doors of the official promotion and distribution channels. They could freely enter the market in Germany.

Conclusion

Born out of exclusion and necessity within the context of structural and institutional racism, Turkish and German-Turkish musicians, who would never be signed by a German or international record company for the German market, called for Turkish independent record labels as well as

independent promotion and distribution channels. These labels evolved alongside the first wave of Turkish labor migrants in the 1960s, nearly a decade earlier than German music history typically acknowledges as the beginning of independent record labels in Germany. However, it is not only German music historiography that needs updating but also the mindset that accompanies it. A mindset that should finally confront racism as a structural and institutional problem.

And last but not least: one should not forget that essential parts of Turkish music were produced and distributed exclusively and entirely through Turkish labels in Germany—music that had a hard time in Turkey itself.

Greve notes that “before the beginning of the rise of religious Islamic music in Turkey in the 1990s, recordings of *ilahi* and *Mevlevi* music were produced almost exclusively in Europe” (Greve 2017: 44). But those were not the only types of music concerned, because “in the 1980s most Kurdish and Zaza music cassettes [additionally to vinyl records and CDs] were produced in Europe and secretly distributed in Turkey” (ibid.: 46). Hazar further explains that “Kurdish music and literature from 1980 to the noughties developed primarily in Germany and other EU countries—precisely where it was able to develop freely. For the Kurds, this was a rare opportunity to record songs in their language, which was then banned in Turkey” (Hazar 2021: 45). Güngör, Loh, and Kim even describe the years from 2010 to the present as a “Kurdish turn” (Güngör/Loh/Kim 2024: 275, 282) for hip-hop in Germany, as many rap artists of Kurdish descent have emerged in the charts, promoting their Kurdish heritage (ibid.: 276–278, 280–288.). And in 2024, Rose Campion’s and Sheyda Ghavami’s publication *Kurdische Musikerinnen in Deutschland: Ein Song- und Storybook* marks the start of an academic reflection on Kurdish music and (female) Kurdish musicians in Germany (Campion/Ghavami 2024).

Considering the development of *arabesk*, Ralph J. Poole writes about Bülent Ersoy after her gender affirming surgery:

“Being forced to leave the country due to persecution, she,
however, successfully continued to perform
in West Germany until her return in 1988,
initiating yet another development of Arabesk culture:
the rising translocation of Arabesk musical production to
Western European countries like Germany
and the—at times illegal—re-import and distribution of those
very products through the channels
of a vast black market in music-cassettes” (Poole 2022: 247).

Therefore, the history of Turkish pop music in and from Germany—which still needs to be written—should also address the racisms and various forms of discrimination in Turkey and their entanglement with the racist structure in Germany, as these had a decisive influence on the development of Turkish pop music and its context in Germany.

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Cornelia Lund, Holger Lund

A
HISTORY
OF
FLOPS
AND
A
NEW
TURN
:
THE
TURKISH-GERMAN
MUSIC
INTERPLAY

Updated and adapted version of:
Cornelia Lund, Holger Lund (2022).
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Transposition. Musique et sciences sociales 10,
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<https://doi.org/10.4000/transposition.7038>.

"They needed our manpower/
The power to make things happen on the assembly line/
We humans were not interesting/So we remained unknown to you."

Cem Karaca, "Es kamen Menschen an" (1984).

"And the children of these people/Are divided into two worlds/
I am Ata and I ask you/ Where we belong now."

Ata Canani, "Deutsche Freunde" (1984).

"In the beginning, only a few Turkish people visited our concerts.
Last year in Germany, for example, it was only about ten percent.
Surprisingly, fifty percent of our visitors here today have Turkish roots."

Merve Daşdemir from Altın Gün (in Kaya 2020).

In spring 2019, Cevdet Yıldırım, a sort of executor for the Türküola record company today and a collaborator for our Turkish pop music reissues, asked co-author Holger Lund a simple question.¹ The question was based on the many inquiries he had received from media, museums, and music business that made it clear to him that the perception of Turkish pop music had changed: “I really wonder why so many people have suddenly such an interest in Turkish music?” Of course, he did not only mean people of Turkish descent but primarily non-Turkish ones. And of course, Turkish music for him was not the globalized mainstream pop of Tarkan or German-Turkish hip-hop. Turkish pop music for him was first and foremost the Turkish music Türküola had been releasing in Germany from the 1960s to the 1980s. This music comprises mainly all kinds of Anatolian pop, Anatolian folk, *Türk sanat müziği* [Turkish art music] and *arabesk* music. A music, which in Germany and internationally, received barely attention outside a Turkish audience for a long time.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Turkish-German music interplay this article outlines a—necessarily shortened and incomplete—history of reception of Turkish pop music in Germany. To this effect, the main focus is set on a special case of interplay serving as an example: Musicians singing Turkish pop music in German and musicians singing German pop music in Turkish as part of a mostly unsuccessful effort to establish a communication between Turkish-speaking and German-speaking people in the period from the 1960s to the 1980s.²

In a first step, the article examines why these attempts to establish a Turkish-German music interplay flopped, how the cultural framework of reception and distribution of music was built in Germany for both audiences, and which social, cultural, and musical conflicts were touched.

Unless stated otherwise, all online sources in this text were accessed on April 29, 2026.

1 See the vinyl record releases of Holger Lund's label Global Pop First Wave <https://corvorecords.de/global-pop-first-wave/> and, since 2022, of Seismographic Records, run in collaboration with Martin Georgi and Cornelia Lund <https://seismorecords.bandcamp.com/>.

A big thank you goes to Ercan Demirel for his enormous archival support and to Cem Kaya for our insightful discussions. Thanks for hints and support go to Erbatur Çavuşoğlu, Volga Coban, Edita Noth, and Cevdet Yıldırım, as well as to the anonymous peers and their careful, useful, and thoughtful work on our text's first edition.

2 The rather imprecise adjectives 'Turkish' and 'German' are mainly used for the purpose of maintaining the text readable. They are, of course, highly problematic, as they comprise different kinds of national, cultural, and linguistic affiliations and self-definitions. They are the result of complex nation-building processes in the 19th and 20th century and biased in many ways. For our purpose, they reflect the encounter of the cultures when the Turkish 'guest workers' first arrived in Germany: it was experienced by many as a duality of two distinct cultures, Turkish and German, with not much room for careful differentiation.

To do so, the topic will be viewed

- a) in the light of popular music studies, which, according to Elster's *Pop-Musik sammeln* (2021: 11), can be located between music sociology, musicology, and cultural studies and explore the individual and social functions, that music fulfills in societies;³
- b) in the light of decolonial discussions⁴ as well as
- c) in a comparative perspective (see Nettl 1973). The latter is focused on (non-)transfer, (non-)exchange and (non-)interplay to enlighten inter-cultural issues of connection or separation.

Whereas the reception of Turkish pop music in Germany was almost non-existent for a non-Turkish audience from the 1960s to the 1980s, the situation seemed to change in the early 1990s. German-Turkish musicians started to do hip-hop in Germany, even before German musicians got into hip-hop (Güngör/Loh 2002: 91–92). At the beginning, samples of Anatolian pop or *arabesk*⁵ as well as Turkish language played a rather important role.⁶ These references to Turkish pop music were, however, gradually given up.⁷ German-Turkish hip-hop gained success in Germany from the 2000s on (see Bax 2006), yet the price to pay was not to transgress the borders of hip-hop

3 For an overview of the sociology of music concerning relationships between music and collective identities, see Roy/Dowd 2010.

4 For our decolonial approach informed by Achille Mbembes writings, see Lund 2026/2020; 2026/2019. For the reception of Mbembe in musicology, see also Fourie 2020.

5 Anatolian pop is an umbrella term, covering a range of styles in the 1970s, which have basically in common that they build a musical hybrid between Anatolian folk music and different styles of Western pop music. *Arabesk* is a hybrid music born in the 1970s and 1980s out of Turkish folk, art, Western popular as well as Arabic and Egyptian musical elements, assembled like in highly eclectic Pakistani or Indian Bollywood film music. The line between Anatolian pop and *arabesk* is blurred, sometimes they are even blended to form hybrids (see Lund 2026/2019; 2026/2013).

6 The use of Anatolian pop or *arabesk* samples had two main functions in the beginning: relating to their musical roots (or that of the parent's generation) as well as creating a difference and peculiarity in sound (see Güngör/Loh 2002: 110).

7 Supposedly also due to their interest in gaining a wider audience by addressing people in Germany in German, a strategy that worked out well later on. For the complexity of language use in migrant hip-hop in detail, see *ibid.*: *passim*; Ağabeyoğlu 2014: *passim*. In the beginnings, even before multilingual Turkish hip-hop in Germany became common with TCA Microphone Mafia or DJ Mahmut and Murat G. in the 1990s, Turkish bands in Germany had released music in two languages in the early 1980s, due to the members' mixed cultural backgrounds. On Samanyolu's record *Aşk Azabı* (1983) two out of the six tunes are in Italian, thanks to the guitar player Mimo Tolomeo, the other ones are in Turkish. The vanishing of Anatolian pop or *arabesk* samples may have also to do with an attempt, not to be othered or exoticized and ending up in a category like 'oriental hip-hop' (see Güngör/Loh 2002: 111). The vanishing of Turkish and other non-German migrant languages in favor of German language in the 2000s has also an important political and decolonial aspect: migrants take over the language of their suppressors and fire back at them in their own language, that is German (see *ibid.*: 135, 172). At the same time, in the early 1990s, Microphone Mafia's music video for their multilingual and non-German song "No" was rejected by the music video TV channel VIVA, with the argument no German lyrics were included (see *ibid.*: 179), thus setting migrant music production under pressure to implement German lyrics. Yet, as Nazlı Yener Ağabeyoğlu points out, German-Turkish musicians raised in Germany often did not have the opportunity to learn Turkish as their mother tongue in a proper way, therefore they did not speak Turkish very well, another reason to go for German language which they master in general much better (Ağabeyoğlu 2014: 9).

in a strict and often limited sense. Cultural activist Sebastian Reier puts it like this: “[...] as a German-Turkish person, it seems that one can only succeed in this genre in one role so far: that of a gangster” (Reier 2020/1).⁸ Of course, Reier’s remark excludes the movement of Turkish-German conscious rap and its success, which reached far beyond Turkish-speaking people. Yet, Turkish pop music was still happening mainly in the realm of hip-hop, and there in general with less and less references to Turkish pop music of previous decades and less and less use of Turkish language.

The real change in the appreciation of both current and historical Turkish pop music happened only lately: Since the early 2010s a wave of reissues of Anatolian pop records has been released (see Lund 2026/2019: 120) and since the late 2010s, the reception of neo-Anatolian pop has been a massive success in Germany as well as on an international scale, led for example by Altın Gün, Baba Zula, Gaye Su Akyol, and Derya Yıldırım.⁹ This success could be observed directly when neo-Anatolian pop groups unexpectedly had to move their concerts to always larger venues due to the demand of the ticket sales, as it happened almost constantly over the last years in Berlin, for example. When the multi-ethnic formation Altın Gün received a Grammy Award in 2019, neo-Anatolian pop reached an international peak of attention. After decades of flops in Turkish-German music interplay and after decades of German-Turkish hip-hop, it now works even the more complicated way: that is with vocals in Turkish and Turkish elements in the musical structure and instrumentation. The latter have been an obstacle for gaining non-Turkish people’s musical appreciation in Germany for a long time. But what has been an obstacle in the past, now turns out to be an asset, as for the first time a considerable non-Turkish speaking audience in Germany is enjoying (neo-) Anatolian pop in clubs and concerts, on the radio and on vinyl. This leads to the second step of the analysis, which will address the question of how this could happen by investigating the elements that induced this change.

For both steps, our analysis is based on a variety of sources, academic ones, as well as nonacademic ones. As academic sources on our subject are very limited—as will be explained in detail in the next section—, we are also relying on many nonacademic sources, ranging from music journalism, activist publications to para texts such as liner notes, as well as oral sources and hints from the Turkish pop music community in Germany. If applicable, our use of these sources will try to consider their cultural contextualization and positionality.

8 Cem Kaya states in a similar vein: “In the euphoria of reunification, everything had to be German at first. It was called ‘German rhyming culture,’ and people tried to somehow tie in with the great poets and thinkers. There was no room for migrants, especially when they became too political. That only changed when the migrants took on the role that had been assigned to them—and that was the gangster. It was only with gangster rap that they found a niche and started getting major deals” (in Brake 2022).

9 Looking back, it can be said that the first attempts to develop a new version of Anatolian pop came from German-Turkish hip-hop, with rap songs by İslamic Force such as “Canlardır,” “Gurbet,” and “Anaları Ağlatan” from their album *Mesai* (1997). It is remarkable how much these rap songs sound like prefigurations of neo-Anatolian pop today.

2. Rendering Turkish Music Inaudible

Starting with the so-called migrant 'guest workers' in the early 1960s, the largest Turkish community outside Turkey formed in Germany. Today this community has grown up to about three million people with about half of them being Turkish citizens and half of them being German citizens (see Schührer 2018: 5).

Knowing almost nothing about Germany and German language, Turkish people coming to Germany in the 1960s met people who did not speak any Turkish and were in general not interested in Turkish music and culture. This led to a structure of co-existence without many points of contact, also in the field of music. Reier observes:

"Millions of Turkish sound media are sold in the Federal Republic of Germany from the late sixties on. There are no reviews in [German] music magazines, nor are there any pop-cultural considerations in the feature pages. The star cuts in *Bravo* [the most popular German music magazine] are reserved for Western pop stars, and supra-regional television appearances by Turkish musicians can be counted on two hands. Companies like Türküola are also not taken into account when determining the charts. Turkish music remains in its parallel universe; very few Germans come into contact with it" (Reier 2020/1).¹⁰

Standard media and distribution channels in Germany were almost closed for Turkish pop music from the 1960s to the 1990s.¹¹ This was felt as a separation and exclusion, especially by Turkish people, who were devaluated by large parts of the society in Germany with racist expressions like 'N* of Europe'.¹² Thomas Solomon sums up the status of Turkish people by describing them as being "second-class non-citizens in Germany" (Solomon 2021: 112)¹³ for a long period of time. Officially declared as temporary 'guest workers' and used for low-skilled non-prestigious work, access to and communication with the rest of society in Germany was difficult for Turkish people.

10 See also Krieger 2022: "Record companies produced music in Germany for guest workers and the market in Turkey in editions of millions. Giant hits made in Germany, very present for people from Turkey but unknown to Germans."

11 See *ibid.*: "From the eighties onwards, the most famous Turkish singers played in the largest German venues. Sold-out concerts. But none of this was shown on German television."

12 See the TRT documentary film *Yeryüzü Göçerleri* (dir. Gülseven Güven, Turkey: TRT, 1979). Gülseven Güven's narrator reflects this racism by comparing migrant Turkish people in Europe to and paralleling them with Black people as slaves in a critical way; see also Klee 1971.

13 The problem continues as Turkey is still not part of the EU (see Prümm 2003).

Music is generally attributed the power of bridging cultures and fostering an understanding between them. Yet, for three decades, every attempt to make a step toward the other musical culture, either by Turkish musicians singing in German or by German musicians singing in Turkish, failed as the respective audiences—German-speaking and Turkish-speaking—did not follow.

Interestingly, from the very beginning Turkish music production in Germany embraced the German language. Already the first Turkish *aşık* [minstrel] in Germany, Metin Türköz, published with “Meister Rock” a bilingual tune on Türkofon in 1967, and in the same year İbrahim Işıl published his bilingual and musically ‘Germanized’ beat-Schlager tune “Mini Rock” on Bambi, both hoping to reach out for a Turkish and German speaking audience.¹⁴ Evidently it did not work out for the German-speaking audience—no notice in German language media of the time could be found, Işıl’s song cannot even be found on the internet until today.

A bit later, some German groups started to sing in Turkish, but these attempts were also doomed to failure, like Bel Ami’s Turkish version of their rock-reggae “Berlin bei Nacht,” called “Gece Berlin’de” (1980), or Ideal’s new wave song in Turkish, “Aşk Mark Ve Ölüm” (1982). These songs could not reach a notable Turkish-speaking audience in Germany. We will come back to these four examples below.

Musicians from both musical cultures tried to communicate by choosing the respective language—but every time it was a flop, financially and/or concerning the reached audience, and sometimes already re-release-wise.¹⁵ Why did the communicative power of music fail in these cases? What social and what power relations were at stake?

14 Metin Türköz in a personal conversation with the co-author Holger Lund, Cologne, summer 2019, and Ercan Demirel in an email-conversation with the co-authors in spring 2021.

15 We set up three criteria for a success—and, reversely, a flop:

a) a piece of music gets a release (or not);
b) a release sells so well its cost are at least covered or a profit is made so the releasing institution can make it on the market and is not damaged financially (or not). An indicator for b) next to sales figures (if available) and chart positions could be that the label continues to make releases with the respective artist; and

c) a piece of music reaches the (intended) audience and gets appreciation from it (or not).

The last two criteria are usually interrelated, especially before Internet times.

Yet the question of a piece of music being both a commercial flop and a relevant musical success at the same time or with an undefined latency shows, that flop and success are complex and hard to define, depending on the aspects taken into consideration. For failures/successes and their history of (different) receptions, see Reinhold Bauer’s fundamental text (2006).

3.

State of Research

We will get a better understanding of the specific situation of Turkish (pop) music in Germany by doing some stocktaking of missing things: There are almost no musicological studies on Turkish music made in Germany, except for example by Martin Greve, whose interest is mainly focused on styles connected to the 1980s up to 2000 and on CD and MC as media (e.g. Greve 2003), or by Nedim Hazar's recently published book *Deutschlandlieder. Almanya Türküleri*, in which he uses songs made by Turkish migrants in Germany as a point of departure to reflect on the life of Turkish people in Germany from the 1960s up to the present day (Hazar 2021).¹⁶ There are also almost no musicological studies on the history of transnational German-Turkish music production, except for German-Turkish hip-hop in Germany (Seliger/Dietrich 2017; 2012; Güngör/Loh 2002; Verlan/Loh 2015/2000); and almost no musicological studies on any transnational Turkish pop music, except for "French Pop Music Remakes in Turkey" (Güneş 2017) and some remarks in Turkish pop music research (for instance in Dilmener 2003: 222–228). "Significant, datable sources about Turkish music in Germany are hardly available" (Greve 2003: 23) and "reliable figures about musical preferences or practices do not exist [...]" (Greve 2009: 116), as ethnomusicologist Greve states—and this has not changed as there are basically no official archives for migrant culture in Germany.¹⁷

This absence could indicate either the lack of a relevant body of music, the lack of knowledge about an existing body of music, or the lack of a will to deal with an existing and known body of music. The situation is undoubtedly complex, as indicated by the fact alone, that Türküola has been the first, largest and commercially most successful independent record company in whole Germany up to now. Founded by Yılmaz Asöcal in Cologne in 1964, Türküola released more than a thousand singles, albums, and compilations¹⁸ by Turkish artists made in Turkey and Germany primarily for the Turkish community in Germany as well as in Turkey, selling millions of records

16 With the celebration of the 60 years anniversary of the workforce agreement between Turkey and Germany some efforts were made also from the Turkish side to kick off the still missing writing of Turkish migrant cultural history including its music. See for example the online project: Yunus Emre Enstitüsü (Sedef İlgiç and Nazlı Sağdıç Pilcz; eds.) (2021), *#60JAHREMUSIK*, <https://www.istanbulberlin.com/en-de/category/60jahremusik/>. For the German side, see for example the exhibition of photographs by Ergun Çağatay and the extended program coming with it including a magazine, <https://www.smb.museum/ausstellungen/detail/wir-sind-von-hier-tuerkisch-deutsches-leben-1990/> and https://smart.smb.museum/media/exhibition/74649/MAGAZIN_Wir_sind_hier.pdf.

17 For a rare and very important archive documenting migrant culture in Germany, see DOMiD. Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland <https://domid.org/>, as well as the planned Museum Selma (in planning) <https://www.museum-selma.de/>.

18 For the label catalog, see <https://www.discogs.com/label/109853-T%C3%BCrk%C3%BCola>; for the discography, see also Greve 2003: 515–534. We shall point out, that in the German history of the German record industry the first independent label acknowledged is usually not the Turkish company Türküola but the German David Volksmund Produktion (founded in 1971 by the group Ton Steine Scherben) or the German company Trikont (founded in 1972), not releasing records before the early 1970s. The myth of Trikont as first independent label is still surviving (e.g. Helmut: 2020: 34). See on this topic also Lund/Lund 2026/2021.

and cassettes primarily in Germany, winning golden and platinum records.¹⁹ And Türküola was only one of a greater number of Turkish record companies in Germany with Minareci, founded in Munich in 1969, and Uzelli in Frankfurt on the Main in 1971. They were joined by about 20 newly founded record companies in the 1970s and 1980s (Greve 2003: 78). How could this happen without non-Turkish speaking people in Germany knowing anything about it? It seems Turkish pop music in Germany had been rendered inaudible for a long time, mostly due to a combination of ignorance and lack of interest in any kind of Turkish music combined with an enforced othering of Turkish people. This othering was driven by framing Turkish people as Middle-Eastern and Muslim, which placed Turkish people and their music at the edge of society in Germany.²⁰

We will have a closer look at what had happened here before discussing the relevant bodies of music, that are

- a) musicians singing Turkish pop music in German
and musicians singing German pop music in Turkish,
- b) German-Turkish hip-hop and
- c) (neo-)Anatolian pop.

Recent literature on German punk and *ndw* music gives a different approach to Turkish people by non-Turkish ones, mainly by German and European migrants in Germany. Ulrich Gutmair develops in his book *Wir sind die Türken von Morgen. Neue Welle, neues Deutschland* (2023) how punk and *ndw* musicians, in the beginnings marginalized the same as the Turkish people in Germany (ibid.: 40), perceived and adopted Turkish culture in Germany as a theme. Gutmair shows the presence and reflection of Turkish people and culture in Germany, as displayed in the punk and *ndw* music of the late 1970s and 1980s. It was for the first time that German and other European migrants took notice of Turkish people living in Germany.

19 Thanks for the information to Türküola label successor Cevdet Yıldırım, who showed us one of the golden records Yüksel Özkasap received (the LP, by the way, is not even listed on *discogs.com* until now).

20 On the question of invisibility and inaudibility of Turkish people in Germany as well as Turkish migrant identity, see Güney/Pekman/Kabaş 2014: 132. In the frame of the usual 'multikulti' events, happening especially since the 1980s, Turkish music was again othered mainly through folklorization (which places Turkish music within another, foreign culture). Remarkably, Turkish popular music studies are framing Turkish music as Middle Eastern (and not as European, Mediterranean, or Balkan music) by placing it in the respective volume, as the large Western musicological series show, e.g. *Bloomsbury's Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*, and *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*. The same happens to Turkish cinema, e.g. in the *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film*. On the Middle-Easternization and Islamization of Turkish people, see Stokes 2003: 303.

4.

Where Are They? Turkish People and Their Culture in Germany from the 1960s to the 1980s

As stated before, there is still an absence of academic discourse about Turkish (pop) music in Germany. Thus, knowing about the massive output of Turkish record companies in Germany, we have to ask why there has been and still is almost no discourse available. This discursive blank is caused by several factors, out of whom we would like to discuss mainly those related to our topic. Firstly, Turkish people, their culture as well as their music, were rendered invisible by placing them in certain forms of housing (dormitories) and neighborhoods (so-called ghettos). Secondly, Ottoman-Turkish culture and history was rendered invisible by excluding it from history lessons at schools in Germany, despite the long-term impact of the Ottoman Empire and the increasing proportion of Turkish immigrants. Thirdly, Turkish music was rendered invisible and inaudible by German radio and TV media, music distribution, music venues, and pop music festivals.²¹ Even people addicted to capitalism did not see, or better, did not want to see the potential. Racism seems to have overshadowed capitalist interest. German record companies like Ariola, Polydor, Phonogram, or Bellaphon ignored any kind of Turkish music and its markets almost completely (Güngör/Loh 2019: 31, 33; see also Reier 2020/1).

This reveals the strict segmentation of the music market in Germany and its inherent cultural racism: German music industry could see Turkish people only as labor forces (which they were also in record pressing plants), but never as clients.

21 Except for short TV programs for migrants (in their languages) like "Ihre Heimat, unsere Heimat," "Nachbarn in Europa," and "Babylon" (see Brake 2022). For decades, the issue of rendering Turkish music invisible and inaudible was not addressed in German media itself. A stunning exception is chapter 2 "Türkische Musik in Deutschland" (Turkish music in Germany) of the program *Musikszene* (Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Nov 28, 1982), in which the journalist Barry Graves from RIAS Berlin stated with no reserve concerning the presentation of Turkish music in German media: "The media have failed very badly. Nothing has been done in all these years, [...]" (Möller 2022: ca. 2:20).

5. Musicians Singing Turkish Pop Music in German

Interestingly, Türküola's founder Yılmaz Asöcal created a sublabel called Teledisc, mainly as an attempt to conquer the German Schlager market with artists like Jessy, Adam & Eve, or Chris Christiansen.²² In 1969, the latter recorded Metin Bükey's song "Samanyolu" in German as "Oh Lady Mary." Again, it was a flop, as Asöcal, who admittedly had his own strong distribution network of Turkish newspapers and Turkish shops in Germany, had no access to the German record industry's relevant distribution channels (media, stores). After a few releases, Teledisc gave up.²³

In 1970, a remarkable exception took place: For the first time a Turkish song reached the top ten charts in Germany and Austria for eight weeks. It was the just mentioned Turkish song "Samanyolu," composed by Metin Bükey and Teoman Alpay and originally recorded by the singer Berkant, again called "Oh Lady Mary," but now presented in a German Schlager version by the singer Peter Alexander and the German record company Ariola—the right person and the right record company to conquer the German market. Turkish elements and aspects of the song, however, had been eliminated: "Very few buyers of the single in 1970 would have recognized that it was a Turkish folk song. Again, the guest workers in the dormitories must have been puzzled, because the Turkish lyrics had been rewritten as German Schlager and also musically adapted to German ears" (Güngör/Loh 2019: 32). Thus, although it is the example of a commercial success, it also is an example of how Turkish pop music, if diffused at all, was de-Turkified therefore rendered invisible and inaudible.

Another example is the singer Necdet Öztunalı, a sort of a Turkish hippie, who came to Germany as a street musician in 1972. The record industry noticed him. And, under the new English artist's name 'John Tuner,' he could release a song called "Lover's Rainbow Wonderland" (1972), which then, after turning out to be an international commercial success, was covered by himself in German as "Regenbogenland" (1972). Any Turkish aspects and references had gone again—the name of the artist and his native language as well.

22 See <https://www.discogs.com/label/225384-Teledisc-2>.

23 What Asöcal tried in parallel was a Schlager-ization of Turkish pop music to make it more digestible for the German pop market. Sayra Orkan's "Gel Seninle Kaçalım" (1970) is a sort of Schlager-bubblegum-pop released on Asöcal's Türkofon. Yet, none of these attempts made it into the German market. In parallel, a German record label took a Turkish musician in its portfolio for the first time, after several former Yugoslavian musicians. The case is Hayri Yılmaz who released a cassette album on the German label Topsound around 1980, that was visually and in layout design very close to Türküola or Uzelli (see <https://www.discogs.com/release/27321621-Hayri-Y%C4%B1lmaz-st>). It seems it was a one-time only attempt to enter the Turkish cassette market. A reason for the failure could be the different distribution systems, so that Topsound could not reach the Turkish audience (see Lund/Lund 2026/2021: 171). After this cassette, Topsound stopped releasing music from Turkish artists.

In 1982, Werner Müller, the versatile head of the WDR state radio orchestra who was also responsible for some porn film music productions, released the album *Laila's Dream* (1968) on United Artists for the German market under the name The Bosphorus Sound Orchestra, with musician manager Ferdy Klein as coordinator. It was produced by Asöcal's Teledisc. In the 1970s Werner Müller gave his backing to several Turkish artists with his orchestra, working in cooperation with Ferdy Klein as musician manager and with Werner Dies as arranger (see Demirel 2022), and this included the famous Turkish singers Yüksel Özkasap (1969) and Cem Karaca (1974). Werner Müller decided to take some of Cem Karaca's successful songs, which he had been involved in producing as an orchestra leader, for his own production *Laila's Dream*, such as "Resimdeki Gözyaşları" (now "Laila's Dream") and "Emrah" (now "Memories of Marmara"). He changed the original titles and the lyrics, kicked out the reference to the composers Mehmet Soyarslan and Cem Karaca (Asöcal smuggled himself in as composer instead), thus again eliminating Turkish aspects and references in favor of a more general oriental-exotic approach.²⁴

These are not only some anecdotal occurrences. The incidents are part of a rather systematic inaudibilization of Turkish (pop) music in Germany and not only there. Greve states in 2017: "Until recently only European music academies remained institutions which completely blocked the integration of traditional Turkish music" (Greve 2017: 51). And up until now, several histories of German hip-hop struggle with the fact that hip-hop in Germany started with German-Turkish artists instead of German ones (see Andersen 2015, referring to Jakob 1992 and Templeton 2007).

24 Orientalization as well as self-Orientalization have been for a long time the only accepted ways to success: "Most Europeans' encounters with Anatolian or Ottoman music are at least initially influenced by the still-existing expectation of an impassionate, irrational and mysterious 'Orient.' The best prospects for success in Europe lie in the hands of those Turkish musicians who meet these orientalist expectations" (Greve 2009: 126). Greve also notes some examples and concludes: "Concerts of Sufi music raise much more interest among European audiences than even the most famous Turkish folk music singers" (ibid.). For our case, that is Turkish pop music, the success of Sufi music is not relevant as this is not pop music, but genuinely religious music transformed into 'world music.'

The Participation of German-Turkish People in the Rise of Hip-Hop in Germany

One could begin the history of hip-hop in Germany with Yarinistan's "Ali Rap" (1990). In contrast to early rap attempts in German like Falco's "Der Kommissar" (1981) or Marion Sprawe's "Das Essen ist viel zu heiß" (1986), Yarinistan's "Ali Rap" used sampling which is so characteristic of hip-hop. Yarinistan sampled Nilüfer's "Ali" (1975/76), a song that could not reach the German-speaking audience and had been a commercial flop when released in a German version by herself. Or one could begin the history of the genre with King Size Terror's "Bir Yabancı'nın Hayatı" (1991), Fresh Familee's "Ahmet Gündüz" (1990–92),²⁵ or Grup Mickey Mause's album *Vitamin E Rap* (1991)²⁶—all released before the German formation Die Fantastischen Vier came out with their commercially highly successful releases in 1991.

And the history of commercial success continues to blend out the initial Turkish participation when it comes to the rise of hip-hop in Germany: "In the early 90s, when the commercial rise of German hip-hop began with the 'Fantastischen Vier,' many rappers of Turkish origin were initially left out" (Bax 2008). The complaint is justified:

"Rap crews from post-migrant backgrounds begin to perform in German, paving the way for Die Fantastischen Vier and other German hip-hop groups. In the chronology of German hip-hop, this important contribution by people of Turkish origin is regularly ignored. 'If we're honest, it was the migrant kids who started hip-hop here,' commented rapper 'Segnore' Rossi Pennino from the German-Turkish-Italian rap group TCA the Microphone Mafia from Cologne. 'There is no such thing as 'German rap,' there is only German-language rap. I'm sorry, but rap comes from America.' In their song 'Kein Platz im deutschen Format,' 'the Mafia' becomes even clearer: 'Without us blackheads, you'd just be shit!'" (Kilic 2024).

But one should not forget about positive aspects of this development:

"At the end of the eighties, when rap and hip-hop came up, the cooperation between musicians of Turkish and German origin became more and more usual. Groups [...] quite naturally mix Turkish, German and English. They perform in front of a mixed audience [...]" (Reier 2020/1).

25 For the release date of Fresh Familee's "Ahmet Gündüz" being earlier than Die Fantastischen Vier, see Ağabeyoğlu 2014: 150; Kaya 2015: 79.

26 The album was only released on cassette in Germany through Türküola. It was produced by Murat Ertuğrul, who also arranged for Grup Vitamin. Both groups were dedicated to parody songs using rap style as vocal expression. Interestingly, the sound, instrument use, and composition remind of Brazilian *montagem* from the same period, a Miami bass funk-rap derivative, and even quote the same musical motifs from Western children's songs that were also sampled in Brazilian *montagem*.

Looking at German-Turkish hip-hop in Germany, one gets a divergent and ambivalent impression: Media coverage was enormous yet commercial success could be neglected. Greve notes: "The German media immediately jumped on the supposedly new topic: from *Der Spiegel* to *Zeit* to *Spex*, hardly any magazine missed the story of the new 'oriental hip-hop,' even Viva-TV and MTV presented [the rap group] Cartel in great detail. Nevertheless, Cartel was almost a commercial flop in Germany [...]" (Greve 2003: 445).²⁷ Music journalist Daniel Bax comes to the same conclusion: "It is true that the Turkish-speaking rap scene in Germany was noticed by the media and extensively covered. But surprisingly, this public attention had no effect on the career of most Turkish rap artists" (Bax 2006).

Around the same time, in 1994, the CD compilations *Türkisch [sic!] Pop-Music* and *Turkish Gold Vol. 1* were released on the German-Turkish and German labels Akbaş Müzik and Eurostar for the German market. The latter was the first attempt—outside of Turkey and on an international scale—to publish a compilation of Anatolian pop. According to Bax, the motives were somehow dubious: "After the attacks in Mölln and Solingen, the Eurostar publishing house released its first CD with 'Turkish Gold,' a compilation of newer and older pieces by Turkish artists. The sympathy effect: a somewhat dubious occasion to promote Turkish pop music. The publisher went bankrupt, the disc became a flop" (Bax 1995: 15). And this, even though the very prominent German musician Udo Lindenberg was engaged to write the liner notes. Therefore, a vol. 2 never made it to the market.

27 Cartel's LP release on the Mercury label sold only 20,000 copies through the official German distribution channels (see Greve 2003: 445). Of course, pirated versions on CD and cassette with lower prices were sold in much higher quantities in Germany and abroad through the semi-official Turkish distribution channels (see *ibid.*). According to Oliver von Felbert, the official number (without bootlegs) for Turkey is 312,000 units with 85% on cassette (Felbert 1995: 33).

7. Collaborations of Turkish and German Star Musicians

The influence of media was not all bad, it led to the establishment of a sort of 'migrant chic' in the mid 1990s (Stokes 2003) and probably also to a few collaborations of Turkish and German star musicians.²⁸ The latter, remarkably and exceptionally, are singing in Turkish as the cooler language (Özkan 2014). Collaborations, such as Sezen Aksu feat. Udo Lindenberg on "Belalım" (1989/1994) and "Seni Kimler Aldı/Messer in mein Herz" (1993), Udo Lindenberg's duet with Sezen Aksu, could be named here, as well as Cartel & Peter Maffay's "Maffay La Cartel" (1998). In the case of Aksu/Lindenberg, the releases were rather hidden as last and therefore less prominent tracks on the B-sides of maxi-records (on Lindenberg's EP *Reeperbahn*, 1989, and Aksu's EP *Sude*, 1994). Although these collaborations feature well known stars, they were not successful commercially—at least the concept did not sell overwhelmingly well as it was not widely imitated. And a planned joint tour of Aksu and Lindenberg following the recording of "Seni Kimler Aldı/Messer in mein Herz" was canceled right before its start (Bax 1995: 16), probably in fear of xenophobic attacks.

Herbert Grönemeyer's collaboration with BRKN on the bilingual song "Doppelherz/Iki Gönlüm" (2018) is a late example of this kind of attempt to profit from a cool Turkish effect. One should keep in mind that Schlager-rock musicians Maffay and Grönemeyer have never been much affiliated with hip-hop, but may have been in need of a refreshment of their exhausted star images in a cool Turkish way.²⁹

28 In 1986, a new type of collaboration emerged. The Liedermacher [special German version of political singer/songwriter] Frank Baier and his counterpart Mesut Çobancoğlu released the album *Warum seufzt Du, Wasserrad?.. / Dolap, Niçin İnilersin?.. türkisch-deutsche Lieder* (1986). Collaborations between German and Turkish musicians did happen before, but not on a textual/vocal level. And the textual/vocal level is one that intertwines German and Turkish lyrics here, sung by a German and a Turkish singer in alternation. This seems to be the blueprint for the collaborations on a star level just a few years later.

29 See the reportage "erci e ft peter maffay—reportaj (by kv-t-p)" on Maffay and Cartel in Istanbul: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE8G8gxtI4>.

8. Turkish (Pop) Music and Its Life in Germany from the 1960s to the 1990s

Apart from hip-hop, Turkish music and its culture has not been a preferred subject of German media—until recently. A good example of a changed attitude is the edition of Cologne's socially committed city magazine *StadtRevue*, entitled *Kölsch Kùltür* (2019), which already mixes German dialect and Turkish language in the title and deals extensively with the history of Turkish music in Cologne and Germany in its content. A very rare earlier attempt was made by Berlin's at that time activist city magazine *ZITTY* in 1994. One edition was entitled *Berlin'de Türk Müziği. Eine Szene öffnet sich*, the first and only Turkish title ever. Yet, this edition is much more difficult to find, it is not preserved in any official archive except for the *ZITTY* archive itself.³⁰ Back in the day, *ZITTY* was a well-known and well-distributed German city magazine, reflecting urban life and promoting cultural events with an anarcho-leftist agenda.

In the main article of this edition, ethnomusicologist Martin Greve gives an unusually deep insight into the Turkish music scene in Berlin. He begins the text by stating the visibility of Turkish people in West-Berlin—140,000 at the time—and at the same time the invisibility of Turkish music in Berlin: "[...] where this Turkish scene takes place in Berlin, hardly any German gets to see" (Greve 1994: 11). He then states and analyzes the reasons, based on an assumed duality of Turkish and German people. His arguments, referring to the year 1994 and before, can be summed up as follows (see *ibid.*: 10–17):

—— Turkish people keep distance to German people because the latter would lack customs and dress in a negligent way. German people keep distance to foreign people, regarding them as being of low value.³¹ This devaluation is complemented by, as Stokes puts it, "the very forces that marginalize Turks in German society. These too are inclined to frame German-Turkish experience as a unitary category, labeled 'Middle Eastern/Muslim'" (Stokes 2003: 303). Thus, Turkish people are rendered much more distant and non-European than they actually are, by means of geography and religion.

30 Thanks to Editra Noth from GCM Go City Media GmbH tip Berlin & ZITTY who was so kind to provide a copy of the magazine for research purpose.

31 Most of the Turkish migrants had a very rural background, a poor education, and very little respected jobs. Consequently, their lack of discursive power led to exclusion. For example: "In general, performances of Turkish compositions—whether the composers live in Turkey or elsewhere—are extremely rare in the general concert life of Germany. Berkan Karpaz: 'My projects are hardly ever attended by Turks: Nâzım Hikmet [a production with a sound collage of voice recordings and synthetic sounds] had 1,500 visitors, of whom a maximum of 20 were Turks. The community of Turkish intellectuals in Munich is incredibly small.'" (Greve 2003: 328).

- Turkish music business and music culture produce barriers and seem to be a closed circle. One needs to have a Turkish friend to enter the music scene.³²
- Germans have problems to distinguish ethnic groups, religions, and musical styles connected to them.
- In the 1990s, the only publicly accessible Turkish institutions in cultural life, *gazinolar*, a sort of music show restaurants, and video rentals, have been closing down due to the new satellite TV that transformed the way how film and music are consumed (Greve 2003: 124).
- Turkish music concerts are usually not announced in German media, not even in Turkish TV programs.
- Concerning the activities of the Turkish state for its diaspora, Greve notes in another article: “In musical affairs [...] the Turkish state remains almost inactive” (Greve 2009: 121). The German state as well: “There is no public institutional support of any kind for these types of music in European countries. [...] Only a few German and Dutch municipal schools offer bağlama lessons and even fewer offer Turkish percussion lessons” (ibid.: 123).³³ Greve observes “an exclusion from musical institutions” in general (ibid.).³⁴
- There are no professional Turkish music promotion agencies. Concerts are organized by business people owning travel agencies, photo studios, or import-export-businesses. If posters are made at all, they are in Turkish and “usually lack any German reference to the event.” Therefore: “If the scenes present themselves in such a hermetic way, it should come as no surprise that Germans know nothing about this flourishing culture” (Greve 1994: 16). Even Turkish people come to the same conclusions. Ünal Yüksel from the record company Ypsilon Musix criticizes his own community: “In Germany, no minority has yet managed to bring out their music well” (in ibid.: 17).³⁵

32 Liselotte Sels observed during her research: “Turkish musicians in Ghent aim for translocal and transnational reach more often than for transcultural reach (be it on a local or translocal level). Only a minority of the Turkish folk musicians in Ghent has entered the ‘general’ Belgian folk or world music circuit. This points to the aforementioned ‘ethnic boundary’ between the Turkish and mainstream populations” (Sels 2021: 234).

33 According to Sels, this has not changed until today: “[...] except for Codarts in Rotterdam, Hochschule für Musik Freiburg, and Popakademie Baden-Württemberg in Mannheim, no other officially recognized conservatoire in Europe offers Turkish music or bağlama courses, [...]” (ibid.: 36).

34 In contrast, today institutional support is rising with initiatives like “Jugend musiziert” or “Jedem Kind ein Instrument,” which are now much more open to non-classical instruments.

35 For this problem and the many difficulties to realize a release (which fails at the end), see the reportage on Kanak and Killa Hakan by Michael Richter, *Menschen Hautnah. Türkische Rapper in Berlin-Kreuzberg* (1997; for information about this film, see Rieple/van der Walle 2013: entry 196, no pages).

For record labels and their politics of excluding migrant hip-hop in the 1990s under the pretext of German youth being unable to identify with it, see Güngör/Loh 2002: 113.

This had a lot to do with the different distribution channels for Turkish music as opposed to non-Turkish music. The Turkish record companies in Germany distributed their music by using their existing networks of distribution for goods: grocery shops, small supermarkets, import-export shops for products of Turkish lifestyle. This is where the records, cassettes, and later on compact discs were displayed and sold. More or less invisible and inaudible for a German-speaking audience, which in general did not enter Turkish shops up to the 2000s. The official distribution networks for non-Turkish music like record stores or department stores were basically not accessible to Turkish record labels (see Lund/Lund 2026/2021). Turkish music was not easy to find in Germany—if at all—for non-Turkish people, especially as “Turkish and Kurdish music has so far been unable to profit from the great ethno wave [world music] any more than it has benefited from thirty years of close proximity” (Greve 1994: 16). Indeed, commercially driven world music starting in the late 1980s and left-winged festivals of encounter starting a bit earlier are primarily constructed around Latin-American and African music styles, Turkish music could not find a place in this framework.³⁶

Another interesting phenomenon is that Turkish people were not driven to share Turkish music with their personal German friends. Sebastian Reier (2020/2), co-author Holger Lund, as well as their comrades made the same experience: Their Turkish teenager friends and fellow musicians did not show them any Turkish music. When asked later why, they answered that they thought their music would be of no interest, as they themselves regarded it as being of little value. This may be linked to the fact that for migrants of a second generation blending in a new society is connected to casting aside (sometimes being forced to) their parents’ culture. The devaluation is also linked to official Turkish music politics which had its effects not only in Turkey. These politics had devaluated a lot of styles, starting with the Republican devaluation of all kinds of Eastern ‘*alaturca*’ music styles like Ottoman music and its descendants including *şarkı* (urban art song), *fasıl* (urban suite of instrumentals and songs), *gazel* (improvised art song), *Türk sanat müziği*, *arabesk*, and many others (see Lund 2026/2019: 128–129; Ergin 2005). After the military coup in 1980, Anatolian pop of the 1970s was disregarded as connected to the political events and the cultural life of the 1970s, which the coup tried to suppress, even extinguish, thereby causing a certain cultural amnesia (Lund 2026/2019: 120). Therefore, no support by Turkish music politics was in sight. Officially, these musical styles were not a part of Turkish national identity and not anything you could imagine to be proud of anywhere.

36 This changed a bit later on when in 1998 the globally oriented Turkish record company Doublemoon jumped in with music in oriental fusion style. Hence, this process was discussed “in the context of globalization saying that world music helped the rediscovery of Turkish music” (Gedik 2018: 169). A few festivals of encounter included Turkish music, which made it also on the releases, for example the two live compilations made by the Kemnade festival, *Kemnade Live* (1979) and *Kemnade Live II* (1981). For Turkish music and its (non-)place in the context of so-called world music, see Greve 2003: 415–416, 433, 437.

When DJing with Anatolian pop records some years ago, co-author Holger Lund was asked by younger German-Turkish friends why he had put on wedding music. This misunderstanding leads back to the aforementioned amnesia: as these Turkish and German-Turkish people grew up without any (historical) appreciation of Anatolian pop, knowing this music only from wedding events where it survived, they linked it only to their wedding experiences—as music of no great interest and value otherwise. So, they did not promote this music or engage with it. Let alone talk about it with German friends.

The first time, migrant music had a momentum in Germany, was migrant rap in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Ünal Yüksel's remark from above, that "in Germany, no minority has yet managed to bring out their music well" (in Greve 1994: 17), should get more attention in this context. According to Linguist from Advanced Chemistry, classism and racism had a lot to do with migrant rap losing against German rap. Linguist says that migrant rap was unsuccessful,

"in so far as none of us managed to get into the Top Ten.

That wasn't a conscious strategy on the part
of any record companies.

There is this concept of structural violence.

Certain institutions, certain forms of organization in society
ensure that some stay at the bottom and others rise to the top.

We all started elementary school, but only those who had
top-ten qualifications got into high school,

those who spoke the language of the record companies,

the nonchalant and self-confident German kids

who spoke the language of the A&R managers.

Those were the ones who could casually flop in their armchairs,

because they knew they'd get there and want something,

and if they didn't get it, their daddy would pay for it.

Those who had mastered the German language

in a way that allowed them to hold business talks with managers.

Those who were not stigmatized because of their origin,

who were not pressed into certain pigeonholes,

but who were given a chance.

The way the transformation from hip-hop to pop music
has taken place in Germany has to do with structural violence. [...]

In Germany, it went down the drain at an insane speed.

Within a year or two, suddenly not a single new record
by a migrant or Afro-German was available.

We did a big tour with Advanced Chemistry in 1994,

and by 1995, there was nothing left.

After that I only heard about 'Deutschrap'"

(Güngör/Loh 2005: 446).

9. Another History of Flops: Turkish Pop Music and the Eurovision Song Contest

The international attitude toward Turkish pop music, which was presented once a year to a huge international audience at the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC)—a rare opportunity—was equally discouraging. From 1975 on, Turkey took part in this contest and for most of the non-Turkish audience in Germany it was the only occasion to come into contact with Turkish pop music. But for the Turkish and German-Turkish people in Germany it was a constant source of shame, as the history of the Turkish participation in the ESC is mainly a history of flops. Nevin Şahin reports:

“Similar to the preparations for an international soccer match, Turkey prepared for the ESC with nationalistic enthusiasm and an updated strategy as a response to the failure of the previous years.

But still there came another failure.

In 1983, Çetin Alp's 'Opera' would stand for another episode of failure as it became the second Turkish contribution to the ESC to place last in the contest, and the first ever to receive zero points [...]” (Şahin 2018: 71).

What was going wrong? Perhaps the one and only Turkish success shows it: “The long-awaited victory came only in 2003 with Sertab Erener's contribution [“Everyway that I Can”] to the ESC, but this success was followed by criticism [in Turkey]. Critics claimed that Turkey was allowed to win only because it had given up its linguistic sovereignty by embracing a Western European language [...]” (ibid.).

As Erener's contribution should aim to represent Turkish national culture, it had failed in the eyes of the Turkish critics. Namely, because it had given in to the global neo-colonial regime of singing in English, losing therefore the important national element of Turkish language. Still, the anecdote also shows what had hindered a Turkish victory all the years before: Turkish could never be the language of a winner of the ESC.³⁷

The case of Sürpriz and their song “Reise nach Jerusalem—Kudüs'e Seyahat” as German contribution for the ESC 1999 is another proof for this observation. Casted by the German composer and producer Ralph Siegel, the band consisted completely of German-Turkish people and won the third place in the ESC with its multilingual song in German, English, Hebrew, and Turkish. This was still a success, but they did not make it into the charts (Greve 2003: 54, 185). After a non-successful follow-up album in Turkish language the band quickly dissolved.

37 In contrast, singing in German would not prevent a singer from winning: in 1980 singer Katja Ebstein started a chain of German singers in top 3 positions in the ESC. For an overview, see <https://www.eurovision.de/zahlspele/Alle-Ergebnisse-fuer-Deutschland-beim-ESC.deutschland744.html>.

Musicians Singing German Pop Music in Turkish

If we stay in the realm of the international history of reception of pop music affairs and compare it to the situation and developments in Germany, we can detect remarkable differences in musical and cultural transfers. As we will see later, other European countries and their musicians recognized Turkey as early as in the mid 1960s as a relevant pop music market to take care of, mainly by singing in Turkish to adapt non-Turkish pop songs for a Turkish audience. However, German-speaking musicians did wait until 1980 to sing their first song in Turkish language, with Bel Ami's "Gece Berlin'de."³⁸ Together with Ideal's "Aşk Mark Ve Ölüm" (1982) these are the complete efforts on released records made from non-Turkish-speaking musicians to transfer German pop music into Turkish language. Not a long list. And both songs were commercially not successful.³⁹ According to music blogger Andreas Michalke the Berlin band Bel Ami had a local hit with "Berlin bei Nacht" and re-recorded the song in Turkish as a sign of friendship towards the Turkish people living in Berlin after the national Turkish football team had lost against the German team (Michalke 2008). According to a TV interview, Ideal's "Aşk Mark Ve Ölüm" was made as a protest against the pressure to sing in German as part of the Neue Deutsche Welle [New German Wave], a style, Ideal had originally helped to coin.⁴⁰ In an interview with the news magazine *Der Spiegel*, another motivation was introduced by Ideal's singer Annette Humpe: "If you want to know what it's about, you have to ask a Turk" (N.N. 1982; Gutmair 2023: 78–80). A more or less ironic way to induce more communication between non-Turkish people and people of Turkish descent.

Released around the same time, in 1980, Freddy Quinn's "Istanbul ist weit" is another remarkable case. Sung mainly in German, the refrain is translated in Turkish toward the end of the song. Produced by Leo Leandros with a rather Greek touch in the arrangement making use of a bouzouki, the song is still the only German example of taking up two Turkish genres for a German Schlager: the genre of *gurbet türküleri* [longing for the homeland] respectively the genre of *Almanya türküleri* [Turkish songs from Germany] (Kraushaar 2011: no pages). Even if the song is a smarmy, socio-pedagogical approach to Turkish migrant workers and their experiences of foreignness (Kunz 2013), it paid back: placed at number 46, it reached the top 50 of the

38 One year before, in 1979, David Bowie addressed the Turkish migrant community—living himself in Berlin at the time—with his song "Yassassin (Yaşasın)." The lyrics are in English, but the title and central word of the refrain refers to the Turkish word "Yaşasın" (meaning "long live"). So, a foreigner, David Bowie, took notice of the Turkish migrants by singing, at least partly, in Turkish one year earlier than any German pop group.

39 Whereas Bel Ami was more of a local Berlin group, Ideal released the song as B-side of the single "Keine Heimat," which only made it to number 47 in top 50. A comparatively weak result for the former top ten hit group Ideal. It seems, fans did not like "Keine Heimat" or "Aşk Mark Ve Ölüm" (see <https://hitparade.ch/song/ideal/Keine-Heimat-34925>).

40 See chapter 2 of the program *Musikszene* (Westdeutscher Rundfunk, November 28, 1982).

German music market charts, and it reportedly also reached the hearts of Turkish migrant workers (Özkan 2014). Visibly, addressing Turkish people in Germany could work out not too badly for a German singer. Still, it did not provoke a lot of successors. Perhaps position 46 in Germany may be a decent result for a song containing Turkish lyrics, yet for a top ten hit singer like Freddy Quinn it was more of a disappointing result.

There have been other attempts from German-speaking singers to sing Turkish songs in Turkish, first by the German singer Elisabeth Mengel, called "Alman Emine,"⁴¹ in the mid-1980s, followed about ten years ago by the German-Italian singer Mario Rispo.⁴² Both received media coverage in Germany and Turkey, but neither of them could make it to a proper record release.⁴³

The same happened to Berlin-based post-rock singer and songwriter Masha Qrella's project "Woanders" in 2021/2022. Although a special case, it was a flop even before reaching the public. Qrella has set to music a number of texts by the GDR poet and dramatist Thomas Brasch, who died at an early age. The German release came out in 2021. In the context of a grant at Tarabya/Istanbul she planned a Turkish version of her songs. Efe Duyan translated Brasch's lyrics into Turkish. This version, called "Başka Bir Yerde," never happened to be released due to a couple of negative circumstances, as she explains on her website: "Unfortunately, our Turkish version of 'Woanders,' last planned for the end of November 2022, has fallen victim to the massive cuts in the cultural budget, which are also affecting the Goethe Institute [...]." She continues with a sense of hopelessness: "Our last guest performance planned for November had to be postponed several times due to the Coronavirus pandemic and has now been cancelled altogether due to budget cuts at the Goethe Institute in Istanbul" (Qrella 2022). In early 2026, "Başka Bir Yerde" had not yet made it on stage nor on a release.

One may think that the story of Qrella's project is an exception, yet there are so few attempts to transfer music with German lyrics into Turkish by German musicians, that every case counts—and every flop counts.

41 See https://archive.org/stream/GermanTribune1986GermanyEnglish/Aug%2003%201986%2C%20German%20Tribune%20Supplement%2C%20%231237%2C%20Germany%20%28en%29_djvu.txt; Kulturszene (Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Dec 11, 1986).

42 See <http://www.mariorispo.com/>.

43 There are some rare later cases of Germans singing in Turkish to be mentioned, such as the Turkish-German-Swiss band The Trial, or Relle Büst's cover version of "Üska Dara" as part of the compilation *Infant Munich Hits Rock Bottom* (2010).

Whereas in Germany no attempts of German-speaking musicians singing in Turkish could be detected before 1980, in France, on the opposite, the parallel case started already much earlier with a top pop star singing in Turkish and thus transferring his music to the Turkish music market: in 1966 Johnny Hallyday released “Altın Yüzük” backed with “Yeşil Gözlerin İçin.” And around the same time or a bit later, other prominent names of the French and Italian music business followed, sometimes producing even whole LPs in Turkish for the Turkish music market, amongst them Marc Aryan with “Nasıl Evlenirsin Bu Lisanla” (1969), Sacha Distel with “Kime Derler, Sana Derler...” (1967), Anne-Marie David with her album *Anne-Marie David* (1975), Juanito with “Para İle Saadet Olmaz / Kanma Arkadaş” (1969), Adamo with “Her Yerde Kar Var” (1964), and Mina with “Mevsim Bahar” (1967), as the music journalist Murat Meriç shows (Meriç 2017; 2016).

A sort of kick off moment has been for sure Eartha Kitt’s bilingual “Uska Dara—A Turkish Tale” (1953). Kitt explains at the beginning in English what the song is about and then sings it in Turkish. This has led to a very small body of Turkish, or somehow ‘oriental’ labeled, rather transnational songs, including next to “Üsküdar” songs like “Shisheler,” “Mustapha,” and “Şiş Kebab” in a lot of instrumental and vocal versions, basically as part of the exotica genre and its descendants.

What about the reverse transfer, Turkish-speaking musicians singing in foreign languages? Again, French is leading compared with other languages. Most prominent Turkish singers like Barış Manço with the EP *Baby Sitter* (1964) or Ajda Pekkan with the LP *Ajda Pekkan* (1968) started to sing songs in French already in the 1960s. In 1977, Manço also made a whole LP in English entitled *Nick the Chopper*. France was relatively open to Turkish pop music (see Greve 2009: 118), so that Tülay German could even make her career in France singing in Turkish. She was very well able to sing in French but preferred to continue singing in Turkish as the language that fits best to her songs. At first, she received some pressure, namely from media representatives, to switch to French, but her singing in Turkish was eventually accepted in the world of international chanson and its audience (see Pekün/Doğrusöz 2010).

12. The Turkish-German
music interplaya) Musicians Singing
Turkish Pop Music in German

and

Musicians Singing
German Pop Music in Turkish

Turkish singers in Turkey, for example Ajda Pekkan with “Z* müssen singen” (1972), Nilüfer as ‘Miss Nilüfer’ with “Bau mir ein Paradies” (1975), Lale Akat with “Ich grüss Dich Istanbul (Yuva)” (no year), Neşe Karaböcek with “Geiger” (no year) and others recorded a few titles in German, most of the times in the 1970s, in a vain attempt to reach out for the German Schlager market. This small corpus comprises a dozen of songs in total, all of them commercial flops in Germany, every time without any placement in the charts and seemingly any reaction of German media.

Turkish singers in Germany started earlier to sing in German. We remember the first bilingual songs, Türköz’ “Meister Rock” and İbrahim İşıl’s “Mini Rock” (both 1967). Here, the motivation was not purely commercial but as well satirical: “Türkoz cleverly plays with irony, multilingualism and neologisms in his songs in order to undermine power relations in the companies: Often the figure of the German foreman, the ‘Maestero,’ appears in his songs, whom he likes to lead up the garden path” (Güngör/Loh 2019: 32). İşıl makes fun of the fashion trend of the “Minirock,” the miniskirt, warning young women that the miniskirt provides automatically legs similar to the ones of famous German actor Elke Sommer. About ten years later, in 1976, İşıl released the album *Ayşem* on cassette. It included several German-language songs, such as “Ulla” and “Komm Zurück,” which were written in a pre-*ndw* style and dealt with German-Turkish love partnerships in a very satirical way. Yusuf Çavak takes up the same direction with “Türkisch Mann” (1977). In an ironic use of the ethnolect migrant German “the singer Yusuf pulls out all the stops about Turkish men in his songs, thus mocking himself and the clichés circulating in the majority society” (Gürler 2016).

Still, if they ever happened, the bilingual approaches were somewhat hidden. Such is the case for example with Hüsnü İşık’s LP *bende bir insanım—ich bin auch ein mensch*, released probably around 1980. Although the title suggests a bilingual LP, there is only one out of eleven songs that is bilingual in Turkish and German, the title track itself. And even this one only contains two lines in German at the end of the song, sadly claiming the humanity of the Turkish singer: “Auch ich bin ein Mensch. Auch ich habe

ein Herz” [“I am human too, I have a heart too”].⁴⁴ A similar reduced bilingual approach is shown in Metin Türköz’ “Gastarbayer Raus” (1976) with the single bilingual chorus line “Gastarbeiter raus dedi. Alamanlar ne bok yedi” [“Guest workers out. What the hell did the Germans do?”]. The line cites the political right-winged slogan against migrants in Germany and leads to Turkish people wondering about this slogan.

Another case of a hidden bilingual approach is the parodistic “Orientträume” (1982) by Die Neue Weltmacht. On the record sleeve, the title is—in much smaller letters—translated into Turkish (“Oriyantal Rüya lar”) and the name of the featured singer, Mustafa Atmaca, who sings his part in Turkish, is added. The information on the sleeve does not prominently highlight the bilingual approach used in the song, which alternates between German and Turkish parts.

A formerly hidden bilingual song—yet developing prominence over time by several re-releases respectively re-interpretations—has been Derdiyoklar’s cassette released “Liebe Gabi” (1981, on *Disco Folk 2*; re-released e.g. on Elektro-Dschungel’s *Kebabträume*, 1987). The song deals with two topics, the difficult relationship between a Turkish man and a German woman, and the xenophobic German politics of the time, referring to Helmut Kohl (chancellor) and Franz-Josef Strauss (prime minister of Bavaria), and citing the famous right-wing slogan “Foreigners out!” The ironic political critique in the song and its bilingual structure make it easy for Turkish as well as German speaking audiences to connect to it. Interestingly, the last two re-releases were made by Staatsakt/Pudel Produkte, a German label (on *Altın Kaniş Klübü*, 2016), and on the Trikont compilation *Songs of Gastarbeiter Vol. 2* (2022), made by the Turkish compilers İmran Ayata and Bülent Kullukcu. “Liebe Gabi” seems to have the capacity of growing to be the first bilingual Turkish-German music hit, slowly but steadily appealing to both Turkish and German audiences.

When it comes to Turkish singers in Germany singing entire songs in German, up to the late 1970s, nearly no releases can be found. Demirel points to the case of Basri Tankaya, who almost released a couple of his songs in German, such as “Monika,” “Wo Bist Du?,” “Du Lässt Mich Allein,” and “Warum?” as early as 1972. Vinyl releases of these songs were already announced in the *Hey* magazine, but in the end, they did not come out for reasons unknown, probably both a lack of possibilities as well as a lack of trust in entering the German music market (see Demirel 2021).

44 Apart from hip-hop, only few examples of decidedly bilingual songs made by Turkish or German-Turkish musicians can be found later on. Examples include Nekropsi’s “Die neue Papa” in 2006, a satirical song about the new German pope, or the comedian Yunus Bülbül’s song “Dankeşon Sevgilim” (no date), which constantly mixes German and Turkish words to make fun of the migrant habit of alternating the language while making a sentence.

b)

1984—A Year of Changes

In 1984 things changed as German language got pushed by native Turkish-speaking musicians with Cem Karaca's LP *Die Kanaken*, which was released by the German record company Pläne,⁴⁵ and with Ata Canani singing "Deutsche Freunde" in German TV.⁴⁶ Canani's song got a release on cassette around 1980, but reached a wider audience first by being broadcasted on German TV twice, and finally appeared again, newly recorded, on the compilation *Songs of Gastarbeiter* in 2014.⁴⁷ On his LP, Cem Karaca mostly sings in German, while Canani's song is in the ethnolect migrant German. In between the two one can place Tümay Koyuncuoğlu, the 17-year-old winner of the first contest of *Schüler machen Lieder* [Schoolchildren Make Songs] in 1984.⁴⁸

The booklet for *Songs of Gastarbeiter* calls Karaca's LP *Die Kanaken* a "milestone of German-Turkish music production" (N.N. 2014: no pages). Karaca recorded his songs in German in order to create a bridge of understanding between Turkish migrant workers and German people, to introduce the latter to Turkish mentality, culture, and problems, thus performing an important shift. While Canani still represents the voice of Turkish migrant workers, trying to communicate in German with the German-speaking society in Germany (Reier 2021), Karaca represents the voice of the Turkish intellectual. Reier states:

"In the coming years, it was often exiles like Karaca who attempted to build bridges between the Turkish community and the German 'majority society.'

So, in 1984, Cem Karaca released an album in German language.

And in 1983, the actor, musician, and radio presenter Nedim Hazar (father of rapper Eko Fresh) founded the German-Turkish band Yarinistan, Morgenland" (Reier 2020/1).

Güngör and Loh add: "The artists of *Türküola* addressed the first generation of labor migrants with their songs. When the political exiles from Turkey arrived, they made the problems of guest worker families in Germany visible to the local audience" (Güngör/Loh 2019: 34), providing "a voice to the voiceless" (Krieger 2022). Perhaps it would be better to speak of an attempt to do so, as their record productions stayed out of the charts and never entered the

45 See <https://www.discogs.com/Cem-Karaca-Die-Kanaken/release/2488924>.

46 A first TV performance took place in the framework of *Aktuelle Stunde*, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, September 14, 1984; later on, he performed the song with Cem Karaca's group Die Kanaken at *Bio's Bahnhof*, ARD/Westdeutscher Rundfunk, late 1980s. The song itself dates back to the late 1970s, 1978 according to Gutmair (2023: 71), first released probably around 1980 on cassette under the title "Doyçe Froyndi." For the lyrics and further interpretation, see *ibid.*: 68–72.

47 By the way: "Ata Canani wrote a whole cycle of German-language songs in 1977. But neither Turks nor Germans, he says, wanted to hear them. They have remained unpublished to this day" (Reier 2020/1). It was only in May 2021, that Canani could finally release his debut LP *Warte mein Land, warte*.

48 See <http://de.ferhatguneyli.com.tr/archiv-bundeswettbewerb.htm>. Accessed September 30, 2022.

mainstream. Nevertheless, they have been very influential and encouraging for certain groups of people of Turkish and non-Turkish descent in Germany like, for example, the Turcology student formation BIZ⁴⁹ from Hamburg. The exiles were the first to musically address and phrase an intellectual Turkish perspective on Turkish life in Germany.⁵⁰

Especially German-Turkish hip-hop addressed the perspectives and problems of German-Turkish life in Germany a few years later—as did Ata Canani before. It was Canani, who already condensed the central second-generation experience in his lyrics of “Deutsche Freunde” (1984): “And the children of these people/Are divided into two worlds/I am Ata and I ask you/Where we belong now.” And he observed: “[...] the first generation only laughed at me, the songs were too problematic for them, they didn’t understand me at all. [...] But the second generation, they listened” (in Winkler 2018).

Later on, in 2014, the aforementioned compilation *Songs of Gastarbeiter* assembled a small collection of Turkish music dealing with the experiences of Turkish migrant workers in Germany, both in German and Turkish.

So far, our research has not produced a larger corpus and basically no additional examples of Turkish-speaking musicians singing Turkish music in German than the ones mentioned above and the ones collected on the compilation *Songs of Gastarbeiter*.

Maybe the reception of Canani’s music shows a dead end of sorts. Later on, Canani reflects on his own music representing a double dead end: The Turkish audience liked his music but could not understand his German lyrics, the German audience liked his German lyrics but had difficulties with the music which seemed too ‘oriental’ to them. Therefore, after a couple of performances on radio and television, nothing happened any more (Hazar 2021: 134f). Still, in 2021, after decades of no performances at all, he released his first proper album *Warte mein Land, warte*. Again, a sign of a change, or better a double change: Most people of Turkish descent are speaking German now and can understand his play on words, while non-Turkish people are more and more willing to listen to ‘oriental’ respectively Turkish music.

49 See <https://www.discogs.com/de/release/7654473-Biz-Deniz-Üstü-Körpür-Üçgen-Sunam>.

The second-generation formation BIZ followed the path of Anatolian pop and recorded a 45rpm single in Turkish but addressed its audience with an information sheet only in German. The sheet announced a whole LP which never made it to a proper release. According to the sheet the musical aim was “to convey something of Turkish culture beyond flatbread and döner kebab.”

50 Typical examples include Fuat Saka with his albums *Sehnsuchtslied—Ayrılık Türküsü* (1983) and *Nebengleis. Kenardaki Ray* (1988/1989). Although all the songs are in Turkish, the albums come with liner notes in German and a sheet containing the lyrics and explanations in both Turkish and German. The texts recount the (problematic) experiences of Turkish migrant life in Germany and attempt to convey them to Turkish and German audiences. Consequently, he worked with German as well as Turkish musicians and did not choose one of the Turkish record labels in Germany but left-wing German publishing houses and intellectual associations to release his music, to ensure he reached the German audience. Yet, these publishing houses did not distribute to music stores but rather to (left-wing) bookshops, a reason why these releases remained somewhat unnoticed.

Another change occurred in 1984: Tümay Koyuncuoğlu presented her song “Oh Germany” at a school song contest and did win. Her song was broadcasted only once on TV in 1984 at the end of a special format in Turkish for Turkish migrant workers.⁵¹ Tümay Koyuncuoğlu presented a song of her own with her own lyrics in German, which reflect very openly on her situation as a child of the second generation, being insecure and desperate.

Oh Germany

Oh Germany, oh Germany,
Are you a home,
Or a foreign country?
Are you international,
or national?
One does not know what you are.

Oh Germany, oh Germany,
Can I rely on you?
Do you want to provide legitimacy for me?
One does not know what you want.

Oh Germany, oh Germany,
You hurt me sometimes,
It is very difficult to understand you,
I have no more hope.
Are you a home,
Or a foreign country?⁵²

In contrast to Canani, who uses the ethnolect migrant German, Koyuncuoğlu sings in German without any accent. For the first time, a German-Turkish artist articulated problems of the Turkish community in Germany in German—to a migrant public, watching the mixture of news and entertainment provided for them by German television. The song was not released afterwards and was therefore presumably unheard by a non-Turkish-speaking German public.

51 See her performance included in Cem Kaya's documentary *Aşk, Mark ve Ölüm*.

Liebe, D-Mark und Tod. Love, Deutschmarks and Death, Germany: Filmfaust, 2022: ca. 01:10:00.

52 The original lyrics read: Oh Germany: Oh Germany,/Bist Du eine Heimat,/Oder ein fremdes Land?/Bist Du international,/oder national?/Man weiß nicht, was Du bist.//Oh Germany, oh Germany./Kann ich mich auf Dich verlassen?/Willst Du mir eine Berechtigung erlassen?/Man weiß nicht, was Du willst.//Oh Germany, oh Germany,/Du tust mir manchmal weh,/Man begreift Dich ganz schwer,/Ich habe keine Hoffnung mehr./Bist Du eine Heimat,/Oder ein fremdes Land?/Oh Germany, oh Germany, oh Germany

c) Musical Interplay
by Exchanges—the *Aranjman*

In the period from the 1960s to the end of the 1980s, there seems to have been only one larger body of works in the field of musical exchanges. This body is called *aranjman* [arrangement], meaning “versions of non-Turkish songs (usually European or American) with Turkish words” (Güneş 2017: 15). In 1961, İlham Gencer recorded Bob Azzam’s “C’est écrit dans le ciel,” but he recorded the tune in Turkish, now entitled “Bak Bir Varmıs Bir Yokmuş.” It was a considerable hit in Turkey and set in motion a respectable wave of *aranjman*:

“According to the digital archive presented at www.birzamanlar.net—a website dedicated to the history of popular music in Turkey—550 Turkish songs are remakes of songs originally produced and performed in other languages than Turkish [1961–1991]. According to this archive
ca. 170 Turkish songs are remakes of songs originally performed in French;
ca. 160 Turkish songs are remakes of songs originally performed in English;
ca. 60 songs are remakes of songs originally performed in Italian;
ca. 40 are remakes of songs originally performed in Spanish;
ca. 40 are remakes of songs originally performed in Greek, etc.
Accordingly, the largest group of imported and remade songs in Turkey have originally been performed and distributed in French” (ibid.: 9).

Again, and for sure due to historical-cultural ties, the connection to France is the strongest one. Interestingly, the quantity of German songs being a basis for an *aranjman* is not even mentioned. It is too small. Yüksel Özkasap’s *aranjman* of the German Schlager “Merci, Chérie” (1967) by Udo Jürgens is one rare example, Ajda Pekkan’s “Boş Sokak” (1968) and “Kim-Derdi-Ki” (1976), both also originally written by Udo Jürgens are two other examples.

Another, very hidden example, is Fatoş Balkır’s *aranjman* of the beat song “Fantastic,” originally recorded by Ricky Shane in 1970. Balkır’s version is called “Hey Taksi...” (1974). The example is such a hidden one, because the Turkish credits only name a mysterious and otherwise unknown “İbrahim Yüce,” making it look like an original Turkish composition, instead of naming the real German-Austrian composer duo Zimmermann and Jay. This *aranjman* is on the surface barely recognizable as *aranjman* and its German-Austrian elements are obscured. Yet, musically it is very easy to hear the relation by comparison.

Here again, we could not come up with more examples from our research. So, it seems that the transfer of German pop music by *aranjman* into the Turkish market was as sad a business as the transfer of Turkish pop music into the German market discussed above.

13. Play It Loud: Towards a New Appreciation of Turkish Pop Music in Germany

Trying to answer Yıldırım's question—why so many people suddenly have such an interest in Turkish music—is not an easy task, as a variety of factors and developments are involved. It took us some time and some help to arrive at an attempt for a solid explanation.

a) A First Wave of Attention for Turkish Pop Music in Germany: German-Turkish Hip-Hop

As outlined above, the pop music of the Turkish neighbors in Germany was never of much (if any) interest for the rest of the society in Germany, right from the start of Turkish migration in the early 1960s on. The first wave of attention for Turkish pop music in Germany could be detected with the emergence of hip-hop in Germany from the 1990s onward. German-Turkish formations were leading in adapting US hip-hop music developments. Unlike US hip-hop at the time, German-Turkish formations sampled Turkish music from the beginning on, mostly Anatolian pop and *arabesk* of the 1970s. The beats were US style hip-hop, but the content of them was now and again Turkish pop music. In a way, Turkish hip-hop beats of the 1990s included the first wave of a new engagement with Anatolian pop and *arabesk* of the 1970s after the military coup in Turkey in 1980. However, the audience mostly consisted of German-Turkish people of the second generation like the hip-hop musicians themselves.

Racism and discrimination swelled massively after the German reunification. The 1990s have been the years of several severe and lethal attacks on Turkish people in Germany. The experienced discrimination was a key motivation to make hip-hop music and became also its subject. Lyrics were made in different languages, including Turkish and German, as a good part of the early formations were multi-ethnic, like TCA Microphone Mafia or Advanced Chemistry.

Then, step by step, things began to change. Turkish musicians started to rap more and more in German (or used the ethnolect migrant German in a playful way) and collaborations between German-Turkish and non-Turkish people entered the mainstream (Reier 2020/1). At the same time, musicians eliminated Turkish samples and Turkish language. This development started with the record company Aggro Berlin's rap in the 2000s, it continued with Azzlackz in the 2010s and ultimately led to the conquest and even dominance of the charts. Thus, "it's fair to say that the 2010s were definitely the decade of German hip-hop dominated by migrant children and grandchildren," says [film director Cem] Kaya.

'By the end of the decade, the charts will be dominated by rappers like Mero, Eno, Xatar, Ufo361 and Summer Cem'" (Anwar 2019).

Almost completely renouncing sampled Turkish music and Turkish language, German-Turkish rap artists made their way. For a good part of them, the ghetto way was the only viable one, with gangsta rap as marker of exclusion and marginalization (which, however, does not prevent selling this music successfully, on the contrary). But sometimes, a complete change of the perceived identity took place, like in the case of the German-Turkish rapper Kool Savas: "Rapping in German, he is generally not perceived as a Turk by the German mainstream, but is considered merely as a pop star from Germany" (Greve 2009: 128).

b) A Second Wave of Attention for Turkish Pop Music in Germany: (Neo-)Anatolian Pop

What Cevdet Yıldırım was wondering about was the fact, that Turkish pop music and Turkish language were entering the music scene in Germany in the form of reissued Anatolian pop of the 1960s and 1970s and in the form of contemporary neo-Anatolian pop. This second wave of attention is not related to German-Turkish hip-hop anymore. The key development is the worldwide extension of the audience for Turkish pop music, including now also non-Turkish people, in Germany as well. The ten—often connected—main factors behind the comeback and renewal of Anatolian pop are:⁵³

- Reissues of Anatolian pop of the 1970s: They started from 1995 on,⁵⁴ and by now they allow to reconstruct the period's entire history. There has been a considerable number of reissues made inside and outside of Turkey since the 2010s. Reissues are still continuing to appear as the period was so rich in music productions. *Songs of Gastarbeiter* (2014) was the first compilation that reissued Turkish pop music in Germany and promoted it also with a series of events to a Turkish-speaking and non-Turkish-speaking audience as well. Today, Ercan Demirel's label Ironhand Records for example is partly dedicated to reissue early Anatolian pop music from Germany.

53 The following listing owes thanks to Yaprak Uyar and her BEAM lecture on June 13, 2019 at Humboldt University Berlin (see <https://berlinethnomusicology.wordpress.com/2019/06/03/13-june-2019-martin-greve-and-yaprak-melike-uyar/>).

54 The first reissues of Anatolian pop of the 1970s seem to be the LP compilations *Cemaz Ül-Evvel* with songs by Cem Karaca by the Turkish label Kalan Müzik from 1994 and *Electric Türk* with songs by Erkin Koray by the Swedish psychedelic label Xotic Mind Productions from 1995. Earlier compilations of Anatolian pop have been released on cassette, mostly made by Turkish labels in Germany like, for example, Minareci's *Pop Dinamit* or *Hit Trix* (both no date, probably 1980s).

- A new wave of global pop music history writing: This wave started around 2000, publications include Routledge's *Global Popular Music Series*, Oxford University Press's *Global Music Series* or Bloomsbury's *Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*. After its being almost exclusively known in circles of psychedelic music collectors until the end of the 2000s, these series present, often for the first time in English language, a history of Turkish pop music including Anatolian pop of the 1970s (see Lund 2026/2020: 140).
- The use of samples of Turkish pop music: International hip-hop, though mostly US-based, using samples of Turkish pop music of the 1970s got a lot of attention worldwide. The process started in the early 2000s⁵⁵ and is still continuing, for example with the recent album *Big Turks* (2019) by Big Turks, influential US rap star Action Bronson's "Mongolia" (2020) or Ahkatari's *Blood: Act 1* (2025). Interestingly the US-based beat-makers do the same as the German-Turkish ones in the early 1990s, yet without any reference to them.
- Club music with remixes and edits of Anatolian pop of the 1970s, starting in large in the 2010s, including mainly Turkish artists like Barış K., Kozmonot, İpek İpekçioğlu, or Cem Yıldız.⁵⁶
- Neo-Anatolian pop sung in Turkish from formations inside and outside Turkey, including highly acclaimed artists like Altın Gün, Derya Yıldırım & Grup Şimşek, Baba Zula, Ayyuka, and Gaye Su Akyol (Cornils 2020/1; 2020/2). Yet also a number of newly formed bands join the trail, like the Turkish group Lalalar, the Israeli group Şatellites, the Danish-Turkish groups Tuhaf and Kalaha, the British-Turkish duo Kit Sebastian, the German-Turkish groups Engin and SINEM, or groups from different countries are playing neo-Anatolian pop, for example on the London-based label Batov Records.
- International second careers of Anatolian pop music stars from the 1970s like Selda Bağcan, Mustafa Özkent, Taner Öngür, and Moğollar, releasing new music and playing concerts internationally (Cornils 2020/2).
- (Re-)Writing of migration history and cultures in Germany in different media, such as radio and TV features, documentaries, exhibitions, academic texts, etc. This rewriting is coming from both perspectives, people of Turkish descent and people of non-Turkish descent, sometimes in joint effort. In this context, Turkish music in Germany gets attention and is constantly mentioned as part of the (post-)migrant culture. The release of *Songs of Gastarbeiter* (2014) also belongs into this context, as well

55 See for example J Dilla's opener for his album *Welcome 2 Detroit* (2001), called "Welcome 2 Detroit," which sampled Moğollar's "Haliç'te Güneşin Batışı" (1972) (see <https://www.whosampled.com/sample/49580/Jay-Dee-Welcome-2-Detroit-Les-Mogol-Sunset-in-Golden-Horn/>).

56 The first edit seems to be Beyond the Wizards Sleeve's edit of Üç Hürel's "Ağlarsa Anam Ağlar" in 2005.

as academic texts like Gesa zur Nieden's "From Sons of Gastarbeiters to Songs of Gastarbeiter. Migrant and Post-Migrant Integration through Music and German Musical Diplomacy from the 1990s to the Present" (2019), and documentaries such as Mirza Odabaşı's *Leidenschaft* (2016) and *Sounds aus der Seele—Musik zwischen Almanya und Deutschland* (2022), or Cem Kaya's *Aşk, Mark ve Ölüm. Liebe, D-Mark und Tod. Love, Deutschmarks and Death* (2022) on the development of Turkish music in Germany.

— The arrival of the so-called 'Turkish New Wave.' In the second half of the 2010s, the population of Turkish descent in Germany gained a considerable addition: young, highly educated, and culturally visible academics. They left Turkey due to Erdoğan's presidency and the changes he and his family brought over Turkey. This brain drain went along with a cultural drain (Anwar 2019). With Istanbul's Arkaoda opening another venue in Berlin (2018), even an entire club came to Berlin, acting as a platform for Turkish pop music, Turkish club music edits and (neo-)Anatolian pop in the cultural life of Berlin. With the people of the Turkish New Wave, a substantial middle to upper class Turkish migration took place for the first time, actively reshaping the former image of Turkish people in Germany as cheap migrant labor force coming out of the rural hinterland. A new Turkish culture started to appear in the midst of Germany, urban, proud, and visible, and musically referring to a lot of styles including (neo-)Anatolian pop. Its representatives act as ambassadors of Turkish pop music in a completely other way than the first migrant generations and their hip-hop descendants, thereby often ignoring or excluding the children and grandchildren of the so-called 'guest workers,' marginalizing and devaluating them.

Concurrent with this period was a shift in the perception of Anatolian folk and pop music, folk dance (e.g. *halay*), and *arabesk* music among Turkish middle- and upper-class youth. This shift is exemplified by Setenay Gültekin's report on Anatolian (neo-) psychedelic concerts at the renowned Istanbul venue Babylon, titled "Halaying Babylon: Worlds and Worldings in Turkish Psychedelia" (Gültekin 2025). Gültekin states: "This music often serves as a means of reclaiming and taking pride in aspects of cultural heritage that were previously undervalued or overlooked, [...]" (ibid.: 467). And she summarizes: "It reveals that Turkish Psychedelia may serve as a sonic bridge between conflicting cultural identities in Türkiye, [...] music emerges as more than a genre; it becomes a space of shared cultural memory and expression" (ibid.: 471).

So, (neo-)Anatolian pop received a kind of status upgrade in both Turkish youth communities, in Turkey as well as in Germany.

- The new image of Turkey and especially of 'Cool Istanbul'.⁵⁷ This image started to be built up in the 2000s, for example with Fatih Akin's internationally successful documentary film *Crossing the Bridge—The Sound of Istanbul* (2005) and its related soundtrack. The film brought a considerable non-Turkish audience for the first time in contact with the variety of Turkish pop music and promoted Istanbul as a place to be (see Greve 2009: 127). The same could be said for Turkey entering finally the so-called world music market around 2000 with Turkish record companies like Doublemoon. The 'Cool Istanbul' branding attracted not only people from all over the world, it pathed also the way for a general interest in Turkish culture and especially Turkish (pop) music.
- Activists bringing in Turkish pop music as part and element of their political struggle for migrant rights in Germany. Activities include the Kanak Attak movement, centers promoting activist events, concerts and parties including Turkish pop music like Südblock or Ballhaus Naunynstraße in Berlin or Import-Export in Munich. These activists have encouraged the engagement with Turkish pop music at least since the late 1990s; this movement grew even stronger with the establishment of activist media such as *renk* or *Maviblaui* in the 2010s. Nowadays, they are also connected to the Turkish New Wave. A part of this activism are new Turkish-owned record stores dedicated to Turkish music, like Erbatur Çavuşoğlu's Lefter Records in Berlin. The store presents events and established a record company for Turkish music, Rumi Sounds.

As this overview shows, the process involves more than a growing interest in Anatolian pop; it represents a complete re-evaluation of Turkish pop music: this music is entering the cultural sphere of Germany as part of global and German pop music history (see Cornils 2020/1; 2020/2; Seibt/Ringsmut/Wickström 2021⁵⁸) and as part of the current pop music scene, its releases, music videos, and concerts. This re-evaluation sets the path for the acceptance of Turkish pop music in the Turkish language, for the first time in Germany and outside the Turkish community. Visible signs for this re-evaluation are new concert series like jazzhane in Zurich or new festivals like İÇ İÇE. Festival for New Anatolian Music in Berlin. Bax stated already in 2008 that

“[...] the language barrier is no longer an insurmountable obstacle
for Turkish-speaking artists to make a career in Germany.
This is why more and more artists are trying to survive in both markets,
Turkey and Germany—whether they sing in Turkish like Basstürk
or choose German like Muhabbet.
The language is still not completely unimportant.
But it is no longer decisive” (Bax 2008).

When Bax wrote these words, it was perhaps more of a wish, as artists singing in Turkish did not really make it in Germany in the end, as discussed above. Nevertheless, his statement that the language, while “not completely unimportant,” is no “longer decisive” remains true. You can make it with Turkish pop music and singing in Turkish in Germany today, addressing a non-Turkish audience, and it does not necessarily have to be hip-hop.⁵⁹ Other genres work as well.

The next genre, after Anatolian pop, could be *arabesk*. It has its own history of re-evaluation, beginning with musicological texts in the early 1990s, such as those by Meral Özbek (1991) and Martin Stokes (1992). Today, *arabesk* is about to be re-evaluated by Turkish New Wave exiles as a kind of music reflecting migration experiences, although originally primarily inner-Turkish ones. *Arabesk* has many intersections with pop, rock, folk, and other popular styles, therefore it might be the next Turkish music to be heard in Germany by non-Turkish people. Although *arabesk* often contains more Eastern elements than (neo-)Anatolian pop, both are rooted in Anatolian folk. And there are many tunes which are hybrids between Anatolian pop and *arabesk*, like Neşe Karaböcek’s *arabesk*-rock

58 This book contains at least a chapter on Turkish hip-hop and an interview conducted with a Turkish rap artist. Still any Turkish (pop) music made in Germany prior to hip-hop is not considered at all.

59 But even in German hip-hop, there is a growing and well-received movement back to multilingualism, with Cheffet, for example, rapping in German and Turkish, 7JRA mainly rapping in German and Arabic, Albi X rapping in German, Lingala, and French, and Hava rapping in German and Bosnian.

version of Orhan Gencebay's "Batsın Bu Dünya" (1976) or Yüksel Özkasap's *arabesk*-rock LP *Yüksel Özkasap* (1977). This could serve as an anchor point from which *arabesk* could take off. Maybe stylistically very open *arabesk* albums, like Orhan Gencebay's *No. 1* from the early 1970s or İbrahim Tatlıses' *Kara Zindan* (1989), can encourage a new appreciation of *arabesk* among non-Turkish people. The Turkish group Lalalar demonstrate how neo-*arabesk* could sound on their debut album *Bi Cinnete Bakar* (2022) with songs like "Depresyondan Çıktım Boşluktayım" or "Hata Benim Göbek Adım." Elektro Hafız does the same with his song "Sensiz Aşk" (2021) while Melike Şahin offers with *Merhem* (2021) and *Akkor* (2025) another, more pop-infused neo-*arabesk* sound. Berlin-based queer artist Anthony Hüseyin explores the intersection of *arabesk*, *taverna*, *Türk sanat müziği*, and disco folk on their album *Bir Sevgi İstiyorum* (2022). Experiments still continue. A recent and unexpected one is delivered by 4am Kru & Sir Hiss with their drum & bass track "Earshots" (2023), which makes heavy use of an *arabesk* sample.

At the same time, as journalist Paula Schöber states, the music made by Turkish (post-)migrants in Germany is gaining more and more visibility, mainly due to archival work and its presentation on records and in documentary films, as well as the enormous popularity of chart-leading Turkish-German rap artists, who tend to use also their Turkish language (Schöber 2023: 111). She points to the fact of a slow but steady change in public perception of music made by Turkish (post-)migrants among non-Turkish people in Germany (ibid.).

In 1995, Bax made a prognosis concerning Turkish pop music in Germany: "But who knows, maybe Turkish pop music will one day become as popular in this country as kebab. When it was first introduced, they didn't add a sausage to every kebab to make it more palatable" (Bax 1995: 16). Today, musician and cultural activist Tuncay Acar is calling for a non-Western widening of the auditory canals:

"And I also think it's good that
the 'Western charts' are finally being broken into.
I hope that this will also develop in the direction
of further specification, so that, with regard to the rest of the world,
we don't just talk about world music and that the Europeans
stop seeing their sound as the non-plus ultra.
So, the auditory canals need to be widened a bit"

(in Hacker 2021).

With the success of Turkish pop music in Germany as well as internationally this widening has finally started.



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Cornelia Lund, Holger Lund

DRAWING
BOUNDARIES
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ON
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"Grenzziehungen—zum Umgang mit türkischer Popmusik
in Deutschland von den 1960er-Jahren bis heute."

'Parallelgesellschaften' in populärer Musik? Abgrenzungen—Annäherungen—Perspektiven,
ed. by Sarah Chaker, Michael Huber, Sean Prieske, and Ralf von Appen.

Bielefeld: transcript, pp. 89–116.

Translation: Sophie McCuen-Koytek

"Migration is not some kind
of temporary marginal phenomenon,
but a constitutive element of our society,
so it is very formative, very important."

İmran Ayata and Bülent Kullukcu,
compilers of the series "Songs of Gastarbeiter"
(in Ruhland/Wilczek 2022)

"When I see all the stores here now
where I have to pay nine euros for a loaf of bread
and I can only order in English, I think to myself:
that's actually the real parallel society."

PTK, rapper from Berlin-Kreuzberg
(in Kendler 2023: 114)

"Do the rich live in a parallel society?
Yes, many wealthy people have described this to me.
In the past, children of very wealthy parents
were more often sent to normal schools.
Today, it's common for children to go to private schools.
The rich go to the same places, you often travel in such a way
that you don't come into contact with normal people in the queue,
but are taken directly to the airport by the driver.
This isolation characterizes the lives of many rich people."

Julia Friedrichs, author of the book *Crazy Rich*,
interviewed by Robin Schmidt
(in Schmidt 2024)

Phenomena of Social and Cultural Demarcation in Society

The treatment of Turkish music, and Turkish pop music in particular, has been characterized by various mechanisms of demarcation in the Federal Republic of Germany since the 1960s, i.e. since the strong Turkish presence due to the recruitment agreement. In this article, we will explore the questions of where these mechanisms are applied, by whom and how they are argued, but also how they change over time, for the period from the 1960s to the present day. As musical demarcations are not purely musical phenomena, but also involve social aspects, we will first look at social and cultural demarcation phenomena in German society, with particular reference to migrant communities. We will then pursue a series of core questions concerning Turkish music and its audience, music features, and the music market. In particular, we will focus on the respective evaluations of Turkish music in Germany. The discussion of these questions will be accompanied by an examination of mainly music-related aspects of German migration policy.

The presence of Turkish communities in Germany is part of the continuous increase in migrant presence in Germany since the late 1950s. In 2021, 83 million people lived in Germany. Of these, 22.3 million people, i.e. more than a quarter of the total population, had a "migration background" (Statistisches Bundesamt 2022). This data disproves all those who denied migration movements to Germany for decades. "We do not want to be and cannot be a country of immigration," declared Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of the SPD in 1979 (Schmidt in BR24, in Kodýdková 2018: 19). In 1996, the conservative coalition government of the CDU/CSU and FDP answered the question of whether Germany saw itself as a country of immigration with a clear "no" (BR 2010). It was not until 2015 that a head of government, the then-Chancellor Angela Merkel of the CDU, recognized Germany as a country of immigration, following the position of the Greens rather belatedly (dpa 2015). However, SPD politician Andrea Nahles, head of the Federal Employment Agency, remarked in 2022 in view of the annual onward migration of two-thirds of the people who immigrate to Germany due to unfavorable legal conditions and a problematic German bureaucracy: "We obviously still do not see ourselves as an immigration country in the final analysis" (in Specht 2022: 8). The current debates on this topic do not yet appear to have been concluded. The statement of the federally funded German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM), which describes Germany as a partly post-migrant society, points to a source of conflicts: "It is no longer a question of whether the country describes itself as a country of immigration, but rather how and by whom this country of immigration can, may, and will be changed and shaped" (DeZIM 2023).

Based on this, we would like to start by making various observations on phenomena of social and cultural demarcation. The term 'phenomena of demarcation' sometimes seems more suitable for our argument than the highly politicized term 'parallel society,' which usually comes with negative connotations from the outset and is one-sided because it is often discursively associated with blood feuds, honor killings, forced marriages, or compulsory headscarves for girls and women (see Rat für Migration 2014). This type of argument was put forward by the conservative SPD politician Thilo Sarrazin, for example, in his (in)famous conversation with Frank Berberich in *Lettre Internationale* (Berberich/Sarrazin 2009). It subsequently served as the foundation for the discourse on the notion of a 'parallel society,' a concept that was further fed by Sarrazin's books and corresponding counter-writings (see Kaube/Kieserling 2022).

The discourse on the concept of 'parallel society' is still very much alive. Falko Liecke, CDU district counsellor for social affairs in Berlin, recently stated in the *Berliner Zeitung*, for example, that a "complete parallel society" has "arisen that has nothing to do with our state organs, the police, or our education system" (in Hauenstein 2023). However, he was not referring to ultra-right so-called Reichsbürger [German Citizens of the Reich] but to the immigrant-dominated Berlin district of Neukölln.

Urban researcher Stephan Lanz aptly summarizes that terms such as 'parallel society' serve to "blame the causes of segregation from the majority society on migrants. The alleged inability to integrate is made the subject, but not the unwillingness of the majority society to integrate" (in Arin et al. 2005: 643). In fact, hardly anyone associates the term 'parallel society' with those parts of the population who—like the 'German Citizens of the Reich'—consciously and discriminatorily separate themselves from migrants as part of society (see Kaube/Kieserling 2022: 216–239). In addition, there are far more complex phenomena of demarcation such as external demarcation and self-demarcation on both sides—the dominant communities and the migrant communities—thereby increasing the complexity of the conceptual field.

Nevertheless, where necessary, we will return to the term 'parallel society,' which refers to the conference and subsequent publication in which this text first appeared. In other cases, we will rather speak of phenomena of demarcation or exclusion. Sometimes, however, it makes sense to adopt the term 'parallel society,' as it can also be used critically, as Jürgen Kaube and André Kieserling provocatively show in the blurb of their book: "If the Islamic-dominated district of Berlin-Neukölln is a parallel society, shouldn't the villa district in Grunewald also be described as such?" (Kaube/Kieserling 2022). CDU politician Armin Laschet recently made a similarly provocative turn of phrase that was well-received across all parties and directed at the ultra-right AfD: "You talked about parallel societies, and indeed, you are right, that was a parallel society: the NSU [National Socialist Underground], which murdered across the country for ten years!" (in Matteoni 2023).

Musical milieus also show signs of efforts to distance themselves from migrants. For a long time, “No foreigners” was not only a fixed addition to housing offers (Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 2023: 48) but also a rejection formula for migrant people in music venues. In 1974, for example, Manfred Vollmer photographed the façade of the Club 99 discotheque in Gelsenkirchen, on which a sign was clearly emblazoned with the inscription: “No entry for foreigners” (see Lund/Lund 2026/2021: p. 174, fig. 4). However, in light of phenomena such as the ban on foreigners applying for housing and access to localities, as well as the decades-long persistent political declaration of Germany as a supposedly non-immigration country, one could also argue that the German dominant society positioned itself as a separate entity from migrant communities. This was achieved by excluding as well as denying social access and participation to people who were ‘non-immigrants’ in terms of status, but who nevertheless came from abroad, worked, and lived in Germany—i.e., the so-called ‘guest workers.’

The German dominant society expected nothing less from the so-called guest workers from Turkey than their complete existential exclusion: They were expected to do the unpleasant and hard jobs no one else would do, for minimal pay and with hardly any legal protection, and then disappear into separate residential areas during the evenings and weekends (see Gutmaier 2023: 27–33). The desire for the invisibility of migrant workers can already be found in a *Spiegel* lead story from 1973: “Every second Berliner wishes to have nothing to do with Turks, every seventh wishes them to live in a separate residential area” (Spiegel 1973). According to an opinion poll in 1982—about ten years before the post-reunification wave of hate against Turkish migrants—already 50% of the population in West Germany wished that migrants should return back to their home countries (Abadan-Unat 2005: 90). This overt rejection was bound to result in a certain phenomenon of demarcation that excluded the needs, rights, and ultimately the recognition of migrant workers’ existence.

While the visibility and acceptance of migrant culture in general has certainly evolved, the contextual framework for dealing with non-Christian (post-)migrant life remains politically highly charged. After the German federal election in early 2025, the building of a government of conservative CDU and social-democratic SPD resulted in a coalition agreement that included a political strategy for the following years. The Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland [Central Council of Muslims in Germany] assessed the political performance outlined in the agreement as follows:

“It is particularly concerning that Muslim life is neither acknowledged nor positively recognized throughout the entire coalition agreement. The contributions of Muslim communities to education, social affairs, culture, and cohesion are not mentioned [...]. Instead, the term ‘Islam’ appears exclusively in the context of combating Islamism and security threats. This one-sided presentation conveys a distorted image—and sends the wrong political signal” (Witte 2025).

If, against this background, we now turn our attention specifically to the demarcation and delimitation of Turkish (pop) music in the Federal Republic of Germany from the 1960s to the present day, a number of questions arise which this article explores:

1. Who listens to which Turkish music in Germany, where and for what purpose?
2. What role do devaluation and exclusion of Turkish music play in Germany?
3. How do 'parallel society' and the parallel music market relate to each other?
4. To what extent is Turkish music being devalued in the context of self-exclusion?

The example of the German music journalist Oliver von Felbert, who admits to "a complete lack of knowledge about Turkish society and the Turkish music scene" when writing an article about the Cartel group for the renowned music magazine *Spex* (Felbert 1995: 33), despite the fact that so many Turkish people live in Germany, illustrates the degree to which foreignness and demarcation have been the standard in society, affecting both the Turkish and German sides.

Academic publications on Turkish music in Germany, and especially on Turkish pop music, are still rare. Christoph Ramm (2020) and two texts by the editors of this book (Lund/Lund 2026/2022; 2026/2021) provide an overview of the research situation regarding Turkish (pop) music from Turkey and Germany. Historiographical analyses of German-Turkish cinema and literature (see Neubauer 2011; Alkin 2017; Sievers 2024), as well as German-Turkish theater (see Boran 2023) are comparatively more advanced. The only comprehensive study of Turkish music in and from Germany, published by Martin Greve in 2003, focuses on the 1980s and especially the 1990s (see Greve 2003). The 1960s and 1970s, as well as the period from the 2000s onward, are not covered. Greve's book has been complemented by Güngör, Loh, and Kim's *Remix Almanya: Eine Postmigrantische HipHop-Geschichte* (Güngör/Loh/Kim 2024), which focuses on music culture in Germany from the late 1980s to the present, particularly regarding the genre and history of hip-hop in Germany and the developments from the 2000s to the present.

In comparison to other forms of cultural expression by Turkish people, the academic and curatorial treatment of Turkish music in and from Germany is conspicuously inadequate. For example, the extensive, periodically published catalog projects on the history of migration, which have repeatedly been issued on the occasion of anniversaries of the German-Turkish recruitment agreement of 1961 (Eryılmaz/Lissner 2011; Kölnischer Kunstverein 2005; Eryılmaz/Jamin 1998), contain hardly any discussion of Turkish music in comparison to other forms of cultural expression. In the most comprehensive of these catalogs (Kölnischer Kunstverein 2005), one of the most prominent

German pop music theorists and connoisseurs, Diedrich Diederichsen, wrote an article on the representation of Turkish people in German film but not on Turkish music. Here, the gap is particularly noticeable. Remembrance culture, if it exists at all, takes place without reference to Turkish music. Both Ramm's and our texts shed light on the reasons for this, although further research on the historiographical neglect of migrant music in Germany seems necessary (see Ayata/Kullukcu 2022). Due to the lack of music historiographical work on migrant music in Germany, we primarily rely on a broad discourse-analytical approach derived from Foucault (see Jäger 2012), which critically evaluates statements from politics, academia, journalism, and musical practice in various (mass) media formats in order to address the questions posed above.

This approach is supplemented by an experimental, qualitative-reactive listening survey (Brennen 2021) designed to test the acceptance of Turkish pop music among a non-Turkish audience in Germany. Additionally, a museological observation (see Janelli/Hammacher 2008) of the first museum exhibition on Turkish music in Germany is included, as public exhibitions can also be understood as institutional discursive contributions.

2. Who Listens to Which Turkish Music in Germany, Where and for What Purpose?

The cultural anthropologist and Islamic scholar Maria Wurm states:

“Turkish music in Germany is met with great scepticism. Rita Süßmuth [sic] (CDU), former president of the Bundestag and chairwoman of the immigration commission set up by the federal government in 2000, said in an interview with the *Tageszeitung* that the emergence of ethnically oriented [...] discotheques should be avoided. This must come as a surprise, as virtually nothing is known about Turkish discotheques in Germany, and nothing is known about what a preference for Turkish music says about attitudes toward life in Germany or even toward the German state. A preference for Turkish music is often seen as an adherence to the culture of origin and a relic of tradition and as such it is seen as an obstacle to integration” (Wurm 2006: 10).

In a similar vein, the theologian Handan Aksünger-Kizil observes that the teaching of values from the society of origin is said to have an inhibiting—and at times backward—effect on integration (Aksünger 2013: 43).

From 2000 to 2001, Rita Süßmuth served as chairwoman of the Independent Commission on Immigration appointed by the German government. She was criticized, particularly within her own conservative party

ranks, for taking positions that were too pro-migrant. After all, in the aforementioned interview, she countered the concept of a social “load limit” in relation to migration with the concept of “enrichment.” However, even under her chairmanship, it remained clear that the “emergence of parallel societies” had to be prevented (Süssmuth in Gaus 2000: 3). With the dreaded emergence of ‘parallel societies,’ which implied a division of German society, she also saw the “integration limit” reached (*ibid.*). She combined these considerations with musical concerns, advocating that interfaces between places, migrant communities, and their music be avoided: “Purely ethnically oriented discotheques” were to be avoided (*ibid.*).

Remarkably, however, this directive did not apply equally to all migrant communities and their music: it did not apply to the actually ethnically oriented discotheques of the U.S. Armed Forces, such as the Black Soldiers Clubs, and Italian-influenced discos. On the contrary, the Italo disco music style was one of the most popular disco sounds of the 1980s in all discotheques, regardless of whether they were Italian or not.

But for how long have Turkish discotheques—about which “virtually nothing” is known—existed in Germany? In fact, there was a brief wave of Turkish discotheques in Germany in the 1990s. The Black Soldiers Clubs served as a model, developed for and by Black soldiers in response to being denied access to discotheques on their military base or in German clubs. These soldiers wanted the opportunity to play their own music that was not otherwise played on their bases or in German discotheques. This included funk, soul, and especially the then-new hip-hop music (see Güngör/Loh/Kim 2024: 50–51; 250). In general, these Black Soldiers Clubs were open to everyone, including migrants. In conjunction with the Turkish *gazino* tradition, they served as a blueprint for Turkish discotheques in Germany (see *ibid.*: 249–251). The ethnomusicologist Martin Greve writes on the brief wave of Turkish discotheques in Germany:

“Semih Yıldırım, for example, who is actually a trained welder, has been running ‘Efendi,’ probably the best-known wedding salon in Duisburg, for several years.

When Turkish *pop müzik* came into fashion shortly afterwards [around 1993], he organized the first Turkish pop parties in the city at his wedding salon and eventually renamed the establishment ‘Disko Andromeda.’

When the wave died down, the ‘Efendi’ became a wedding salon again, hosting concerts and women’s matinees, as well as individual disco evenings. The list of guest musicians ranges from the German-Turkish rap group Cartel to *arabesk* singers such as Müslüm Gürses, the Kurdish singer-songwriter Ivan Perwer, Alevi singers such as Arif Sağ or Musa Eroğlu, and the pop star Burak Kut”

(Greve 2003: 130).

The wave was so strong that it even led to an attempt to prominently place a Turkish *gazino*, a kind of music restaurant or *café chantant*, in the center of West Berlin. However, this idea proved unsuccessful. Greve writes that

“the bold attempt to run a large [...] restaurant (‘Kudambah’) directly on the expensive Kurfürstendamm in Berlin in October 1994, featuring a permanent ensemble of seven accompanying musicians and three singers from Turkey every month, failed after just two months”

(Greve 2003: 124; see also Lorenz 2021: 24).

According to Gonca Mucuk, the emergence of the Turkish disco scene in the Ruhr area in the 1990s was more successful. Mucuk also links this emergence to the increasingly “westernized” Turkish *pop müzik*, combined “with the fact that as a ‘Kanake’ [pejorative expression for global southerners] you could hardly ever get into a ‘German’ disco anyway. This [...] led to the establishment of a new party culture in Germany—and from here in Europe—at the beginning of the 1990s. The era of Turkish discotheques [...] was ushered in” (Mucuk 2011: 232).¹ Mucuk also points out that “[...] in the course of the 1990s, not only German-Turks but also more and more Germans became regular customers” (ibid.: 234). She explains the emergence of the Turkish disco scene also and above all as a reaction to experiences of exclusion in German discos (something that Süssmuth, see above, does not mention).

A twist that Süssmuth seems to have completely missed is that the Turkish discotheques, for their part, apparently acted inclusively towards the German audience, which in turn was attracted by the music of global pop stars of Turkish origin such as Tarkan. The avoidance of ethnically oriented discotheques envisaged by Süssmuth would therefore virtually prevent and counteract what the German government was striving for at the time: integration. The fact that people of non-Turkish origin in Germany might be interested in diverse cultural experiences was not taken into account in Süssmuth’s statements.

However, it should be noted that the few publicly accessible institutions of Turkish cultural life in Germany, such as the *gazinolar*, discotheques, and video rental shops, closed in the course of the 1990s. This can be explained in particular by the emergence and spread of the then-new satellite television, which changed the accessibility and consumption of film and music. Essentially, it led to the privatization and individualization of music and film consumption in the home. At the time of Süssmuth’s interview, around the year 2000, there was no longer a significant number of Turkish discotheques in Germany.

Unless stated otherwise, all online sources in this text were accessed on April 29, 2026.

1 For the individual localities and their scope in North Rhine-Westphalia, see Mucuk 2011: 232–233.

What was the media's discourse like at the beginning of the 2000s?

Maria Wurm summarizes the situation:

"The extent to which young people could be influenced by 'undesirable' content or role models takes up a lot of space here.

This is probably one of the 'German majority public's' greatest fears and contributes significantly to the mistrust of Turkish music in Germany" (Wurm 2006: 11).

Thus, music seems to be held politically and educationally liable, as a negative catalyst for socialization. Wurm does not pursue this idea historically, although conventional stereotypes from the allegedly youth-spoiling demonization of rock 'n' roll resonate here (see Mattern 2023). Rather, she raises a criticism about not allowing any turn towards the positive:

"No consideration is given to the possibility that selected aspects of a culture of origin can be retained or that they can be taken up anew, perhaps even modified, and that this is an active and constructive form of localization in the migration context and of integration and harmonious participation in German life" (Wurm 2006: 10).

Furthermore, following Achille Mbembe, one can argue that the devaluation of migrant cultures, accompanied by mistrust and fear, clearly exhibits traits of (intra-)colonial politics. In this context, the systematic devaluation of the colonized culture serves on the one hand to legitimize the domination and exploitation of the colonized, and, on the other hand, to devalue the colonized, making them acknowledge their inferiority and lack of rights (see Mbembe 2015).

Let us revisit the "'undesirable' content or role models" that Turkish music is said to convey, as suggested by Wurm. What exactly is this Turkish music, which is largely undifferentiated in Germany? It is a very diverse, poly-cultural phenomenon that historically, stylistically, and in terms of musical practice grew out of the Ottoman Empire and its tendencies towards Westernization. These tendencies were expanded, strengthened, and Turkified during Atatürk's cultural revolution (see Bartsch 2011). The resulting music has a hybrid character. From a long-term perspective, the hybrid character includes 'Eastern' elements—in particular Anatolian, Arabic, Persian, Central Asian, and Indian elements—as well as 'Western' elements from the Balkans, the Mediterranean, and the Anglo-American region (see Lund 2026/2020)—leading to very different and diverse hybrid styles, which are characteristic of music from Turkey (see Greve 2017).

Anadolu pop from the 1960s to 1980s and Turkish hip-hop from the 1990s are examples of hybrid musical practices that are sometimes very close to the conventions of Western pop music. Mazhar ve Fuat's tune "Nerde Hani"

from 1973 provides a clear example of *Anadolu pop*. It exemplifies the top ten mainstream Turkish pop music of the 1970s—a gentle, melodious folk-pop music, easily catchy for Western ears. We used this tune as test music in a private setting around 2006, well before the (neo-) *Anadolu pop* revival of the late 2010s—with very positive acceptance feedback from people of non-Turkish origin in Germany. The decisive factor here was that the music was played for test subjects who had no prior knowledge of Turkish music. The music was played anonymously as a file, without any paratexts, so that no preconceptions or expectations would influence the listening experience.

However, the fact that Turkish pop music is sometimes very close to ‘Western’ pop is often ignored by non-Turkish people due to a conscious or unconscious othering of Turkish music. This othering prejudicially equates all Turkish pop music with microtonal *makam* music, which is fundamentally different from Western music in terms of tone and composition, even though, as Greve has shown very clearly in his book *Makamsız* [literally: “without *makam*”], the development of popular Turkish music has been moving away from *makam*-based music for decades (see Greve 2017), also by incorporating “scales like *Rast*, *Segah*, *Hüseyni* and *Kürdi* into major, minor, and Phrygian modalities” (Güner 2024: 167). Mazhar ve Fuat’s “*Nerde Hani*,” like most *Anadolu pop*, is already *makam*-free.

Who listened to which forms of Turkish music in Germany between the 1960s and 1980s? First-generation Turkish migrant workers began listening to *Almanya türküleri*, so-called ‘songs about Germany,’ in the 1960s. These are songs written by migrants in the *aşık* tradition of wandering singers in Germany. In terms of content, this parallels the development of the *chanson immigrée* or *chanson-banlieue* in France. These began in the 1950s as *chanson de là-bas*, origin-oriented migrant songs, and their content reflected the problems of migrant life (see Daadouch 2018).

An audio example of the aforementioned German songs comes from the probably first migrant *aşık* in Germany, Metin Türköz, and is entitled “*Meister İşçi Kavgası*” (undated, probably early 1970s). Sung in two languages, German and Turkish, it deals with a racist everyday work conflict between a German foreman who uses abusive language and a Turkish worker who makes fun of the foreman in Turkish. In this way, Türköz reflects the specific situation of migrant workers in Germany in the typical manner of *Almanya türküleri* (see Gutmair 2023: 80–82).

The Turkologist Robert Anhegger explains that Turkish music is listened to particularly by those sections of the immigrant Turkish population “who continue to lead their traditional lives among the ‘infidels’” (Anhegger 1982: 18). One song, for example, is about “the homeland, the villages [that] have been transplanted here.” Accordingly, a poem by Orkan M. Ariburnu reads: “In the middle of Germany an Anatolia” (ibid.). Turkish music thus serves as a demarcation from the foreign environment, as a return home, as protection, and as an anchor.

In addition to *aşık* music and vernacular regional styles, *arabesk* music and the very popular Turkish art music, *Türk sanat müziği*, as well as, in the 1980s, *disco folk* were also used for this purpose. These genres all tend to musically address and represent the Anatolian, Arabic, or post-Ottoman aspects of the identity of the migrant Turkish (rural) population. However, the mentioned music concerns only one section of a much more socially differentiated Turkish society—namely a rural population characterized by a rural economy and otherwise mostly unskilled. It only represents one part of an otherwise musically more differentiated Turkish music, namely the *aşık* tradition, vernacular regional styles, *arabesk*, *Türk sanat müziği*, and *disco folk*. Urban music styles, such as the *Anadolu pop* of Mazhar ve Fuat or *Roman oyun havası* by Roma musicians, were practically non-existent in the aforementioned migrant section of Turkish society.

Why have we, as part of the dominant German society—apart from folkloristic encounter festivals or activist approaches (see Lund/Lund 2026/2022: 208) and Turkish-German hip-hop—learned almost nothing about the musically diverse landscape of Turkish music for decades? This question leads to the evaluation of Turkish music in German mass media and to phenomena of exclusion as a form of demarcation.

3. What Role Do Devaluation and Exclusion of Turkish Music Play in Germany?

Radio journalist Barry Graves from RIAS Berlin summarized his observations on the situation of Turkish music in Germany in 1982 in an excerpt from “Berlinale Meets” on Cem Kaya’s film *Aşk, Mark ve Ölüm* (2022) as follows: “Turkish music, whether folk, classical, or pop, is limited to Turkish programs on the radio, of which there are not very many. Local disk jockeys and programmers like to complain about the allegedly low quality of productions in the pop music sector and the rapid fatigue of the audience with classical music” (in Möller 2022: min. 1:47–02:51). Graves continues by pointing out the inclusive potential that remains untapped:

“It would be no problem at all to have Turkish ensembles and Turkish soloists perform in so-called ‘colorful evenings,’ quiz shows, events of all kinds, in order to bring Germans and Turks a little closer via the detour of culture. So that people simply say:

‘Wow, that’s interesting, they’re no longer foreign to us.

And the Ajda Pekkan that you play all day in your apartment next door, I saw her on TV the other day. She looks great and she can sing really well.’

Unfortunately, that doesn’t happen” (ibid.).

Graves' key conclusion is: "The media have failed badly. Nothing has been done in all these years [...]" (ibid.) to present Turkish music in general, or to showcase its stylistic diversity, in the media. This sentence remains valid, at least until the incipient popularity of (neo-) *Anadolu pop* in the late 2010s (Lund/Lund 2026/2022). However, some, like film director Cem Kaya, see Grave's observations confirmed even in 2022:

"Two years ago, I was in Cologne and Tarkan, who is a superstar in the Turkish community and worldwide, performed there. The huge Lanxess Arena was full to the brim; there were long queues outside the door. But not one German was there, and certainly no German press. Since my film [*Aşk, Mark ve Ölüm*], I've been asked again and again: Why were these great Turkish musicians never invited to a German TV show back then? Not much has changed in that respect. Why wasn't there a single journalist at the Tarkan concert in Cologne? The media's lack of interest is still huge" (in Bax 2022).

Indeed, Turkish music has been ignored, rendered virtually invisible and inaudible by the German radio and TV media, music distribution, music venues, and pop music festivals for decades (Lund/Lund 2026/2022; Lund 2026/2021). With the exception of short TV programs for migrants (in their respective languages) such as "Ihre Heimat, unsere Heimat" [Your home, Our home], "Nachbarn in Europa" [Neighbors in Europe], and "Babylon" (Brake 2022) or reports on intercultural encounter festivals, the German media rarely covered the musical or other cultural activities of Turkish migrants in the period before German-Turkish hip-hop—that is all the decades previous to the 1990s. Even German-Turkish hip-hop was only able to successfully fight its way into the charts in the 2010s.

The reasons for excluding Turkish music given by those responsible seem downright absurd. The musician and author Nedim Hazar notes: "The German radio producers claim that Turkish music sounds unpleasant to German ears and that the strange sounds could lead to concentration problems when driving, for example" (Hazar 1998: 287). Hazar also cites the aforementioned emergence of satellite television at the end of the 1990s as another reason for the invisibility of Turkish music in the media:

"This also relieved the German public, which until then had not been interested in issues relating to the culture and art of Turkish migrants anyway. This was the beginning of a cultural ghettoization, which was later reinforced by the emergence of the television channel TRT-International and other Turkish television channels that could be received via satellite antenna. In this way, two million fee-payers voluntarily gave up rights that should have been granted to them by the German radio and television broadcasters" (ibid.: 292; see also Brake 2022).

Jörg Becker addresses the latter aspect even more clearly. According to him, the GEZ fee collection center collected around 4.8 billion euros in broadcasting fees from migrants between 1960 and 2007: "Measured against the [...] 4.8 billion euros, migrant broadcasting recipients hardly received anything in return in the form of specific program offers (specific topics, broadcasting formats, broadcasting times, special-interest channels, music, films and/or native-language offerings)" (Becker 2011: 11).² The same applies to Austria, according to Gebesmair: "Migrants and their culture are clearly underrepresented in the major Austrian media institutions such as the public broadcaster ORF, but also in the major newspaper publishers" (Gebesmair 2009: 108).

The mechanisms of exclusion can also be observed in other segments of the German music market. Even players in the commercial music market did not or did not want to see the potential of Turkish music for a very long time. Racism seems to have overshadowed capitalist interest (see Lund 2026/2021; Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 2023: 54). German record companies such as Ariola, Polydor, Phonogram, or Bellaphon, but also media music formats such as radio and television charts, which were supposedly dedicated to the best-selling and therefore most popular music, almost completely ignored any kind of Turkish music in Germany, as well as its audience and markets, for decades (Güngör/Loh 2019: 31; 33; see also Reier 2020; Lund 2026/2021). This occurred despite the fact that Turkish music labels such as Türküola, Uzelli, and Minareci, which were based in Cologne, Frankfurt, or Munich, generated millions in sales with their music. Sometimes, their record releases generated even higher sales figures than the top ten hit parade music published concurrently (see İlgiç/Pilcz 2021; Genzken 2021; Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 2023: 54). Therefore, if the best-selling music was actually represented in TV and radio charts, as claimed, Turkish music should have been included. "Özkasap was awarded twelve gold records and sold hundreds of thousands of records, surpassing the sales figures of stars such as Vicky Leandros or Katja Ebstein. Leandros' 1974 hit 'Theo, wir fahr'n nach Lodz,' for example, sold 400,000 copies, while Yüksel Özkasap's album 'Beyaz Atlı,'

2 The Turkish state also did not make any effort to (re)present Turkish culture or the Turkish communities in Germany, as Çiçek Bacik states: "In an interview with TRT in Ankara [2006], the coordinator for foreign programs, Arslan Küçükıldız, admitted that the Turkish state had neglected to address the problems of Turks in Germany in a timely manner. Turkey has failed to set up advice centers in Germany, which is why a large proportion of migrants continue to face social problems. One reason for this was the indifference of the Turkish government. In contrast to other countries, which also sent workers to Germany but also dealt with their concerns, Turkey had completely neglected its compatriots abroad: 'When the Greeks went to Germany, churches were set up for them there. They brought their counseling centers with them. When the Turks emigrated to Germany, no provision was made for schools, mosques, or counseling centers. The Turks fell on German soil out of the blue and were left alone. Today, there are still no counselling centers, no family or youth centers, or a Turkish cultural center'" (Bacik 2014: 123). In fact, a comparison with cultural institutes of other countries of origin of so-called 'guest workers' reveals a clear difference: the first Italian cultural institutes were opened in Hamburg and Cologne in 1953/1954, while the comparable Turkish Yunus Emre cultural institutes were not opened until 2009. Bacik concludes: "Küçükıldız has openly stated that the Turkish government is neglecting the Turkish population in Germany and that the Turkish state has no interest in changing these circumstances" (ibid.: 132).

which was released just one year later, achieved sales figures twice as high. Nevertheless, it was not played on the radio and she was not invited to the ZDF hit parade [the most popular German TV charts format]" (Genzken 2021). At this point, the deliberate, discriminatory exclusion of Turkish music from music industry structures and thus also from the public sphere becomes very clear.

The same applies for the concert market and the exclusion of Turkish concert music from concert halls. Jan Paersch investigates in 2025 how Turkish orchestras are represented at one of the main music venues in Germany, the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg. He states: "Hundreds of different orchestras have played in the Elbphilharmonie since the beginning of 2017. But the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra [...] will be the first Turkish orchestra ever to perform in the Great Hall of the Konzerthaus in September. How can that be?" (Paersch 2025).

Exclusion has also persisted in Germany's musical education landscape for decades. Turkish music is rarely represented at European music universities, colleges, or academies, and Turkish musical instruments are just as rarely taught there as they are at public music schools, as Greve recently concluded: "Until recently only European music academies remained institutions which completely blocked the integration of [...] Turkish music" (Greve 2017: 51). This was probably mainly because Turkish music was not classified as 'European,' despite the Europeanization and musical hybridization that the sultans initiated in the 19th century with the appointment of Gaetano Donizetti to the court to conduct the palace orchestra (see *ibid.*: 192).

For its part, the Turkish state hardly supported Turkish music. The Kemalist promotion of Turkish opera went hand in hand with mechanisms to devalue and exclude Ottoman and post-Ottoman music. This ranged from the decades-long ban on religious music, the temporary ban on Ottoman-Arab music on the radio, to the ban on Kurdish music, or the political banishment of *Anadolu pop* musicians by the military in the wake of the 1980 coup. Time and again, Turkish music was discredited by the state in Turkey, which made positive, state-supported identification with musical styles that were popular among the population more difficult (see *ibid.*).

Institutions with an educational mission in Germany include not only academic institutions, radio, and TV, but also museums. Has Turkish music been represented by German museum institutions, and if so, how?

Our research did not yield any exhibitions on Turkish music, particularly Turkish pop music, in Germany prior to 2021. Occasionally, exhibitions on other topics included sections on Turkish music in and from Germany, such as the photo exhibition "Bizim Berlin 89/90. Fotografien von Ergun Çağatay" [Bizim Berlin 89/90. Photographs by Ergun Çağatay], shown at the Märkisches Museum Berlin in 2018. It included a well-developed section on Turkish-German hip-hop from Berlin. However, this was not mentioned in the title of the exhibition or in the promotional information (see Märkisches Museum Berlin 2018).

The same holds true for the photo exhibition “Deutschland um 1980. Fotografien aus einem fernen Land” [Germany around 1980. Photographs from a Distant Country] presented at the Altonaer Museum Hamburg in 2024/2025. It also featured a well-developed section on Turkish music in Germany, based on material, music, and information by Ercan Demirel, for which he received no curatorial credit and was listed only as a lender. Once again, the Turkish music section was not mentioned in the title of the exhibition or in the promotional information (see Altonaer Museum Hamburg 2024/2025).

The situation was similar with the survey exhibition “Hits & Hymnen. Klang der Zeitgeschichte” [Hits & Hymns. Sound of Contemporary History] on the relationship between music and politics. It took place in 2021 at the Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bonn. The sections on migrant music included the emergence of hip-hop as migrant music, highlighting Turkish participation in a small section (see Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bonn 2021). Nedim Hazar summarizes: “In the Bonn exhibition ‘Hits und Hymnen’ [...] Yüksel Özkasap and Metin Türköz are exhibited for the first time alongside [very popular German musicians] Udo Lindenberg and Nena” (in Genzken 2021).

The first and so-far only specific exhibition presented “Gurbet Şarkıları. Lieder aus der Fremde. Musik und Zugehörigkeit zwischen der Türkei und Deutschland (1961–2021)” [Gurbet Şarkıları. Songs from Abroad. Music and Belonging between Turkey and Germany (1961–2021)] (see Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz 2021). It was dedicated to the aforementioned *Almanya türküleri*, songs by Turkish migrants that were written in Germany and deal with life in Germany.

The exhibition was organized by the Museum of Islamic Art—State Museums in Berlin at the Pergamon Museum, which is part of Germany’s largest and most powerful cultural institution, the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation. By taking place at the Pergamon Museum, one of the most prestigious German museums, the exhibition took on a particularly important and representative character per se. The short entry on the website and the digital presence of the exhibition, however, contain hardly any information about the cooperation partners, nor is there any information about the curatorial team (see *ibid.*).

This lack of information throughout the exhibition is apparent on various levels: Not only can no reverberations be found in the form of press reviews, but the specific exhibition location in the ramified building complex on Berlin’s Museum Island was not communicated either online or on site. There was no guidance system for the exhibition, which does not meet the basic exhibition standards (see Uebele 2006)—and would have been all the more important as the exhibition was located in a small, rather remote lab space. The museum store did not offer any publications or merchandise related to the exhibition, which does not meet the basic standards of museum marketing and museum store management (see Museum Store Association 2015).

The music exhibition was presented as a special exhibition by the Museum of Islamic Art. Classifying Turkish music as part of Islamic art can be read as othering the music, especially since the State Museums in Berlin complex would also have allowed it to be classified under a different museum umbrella. The music in the exhibition tends to be de-Europeanized, orientalized, and Islamized through this framing—thus making it appear foreign from a European-German perspective, which corresponds to the concept of othering (see Siouti et al. 2022: 7–30).

However, this runs counter to developments in music history. After all, Turkish music has clearly been predominantly secular since the founding of the republic in 1923, especially due to the Kemalist, deliberately anti-religious music policy (Tas 2014). Nevertheless, it is exhibited in the Museum of Islamic Art, i.e., under religious auspices. Moreover, the exhibition itself does not offer a single example of Islamic Turkish pop music—despite the fact that German-Turkish rap produced a successful Islamic variant as early as the 1990s, for example with the formation Sert Müslümanlar. Visitors also learn nothing about the popular *Yeşil pop* [Green Pop] genre, i.e., Islamic pop music in general, as neither the genre nor Turkish participation in it is mentioned anywhere.

The official claim of this exhibition on the 60th anniversary of the migration agreement between Turkey and Germany reads as follows: “The exhibition makes different perspectives of the so-called guest workers and subsequent generations visible by addressing the relationship between music, individual biographies, and social localization” (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz 2021). However, this promise is thwarted by the final presentation and its institutional framing, which in turn excludes, marginalizes, and renders Turkish (pop) music invisible, thus conveying information about its social location and the value attributed to it by the State Museums in Berlin/Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation.

It is not clear from the context of the exhibition which entity is ultimately responsible for this framing. Given that the institutional context of large and powerful entities such as the State Museums in Berlin/Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation can develop its own dynamics (see Wissenschaftsrat 2020/1; 2020/2), it cannot be ruled out that the curators, whose names are not mentioned on the exhibition website, may have had other ideas for framing the exhibition. This possibility is supported by the fact that the exhibition podcasts and the central exhibition video by Mirza Odabaşı, *Sounds aus der Seele—Musik zwischen Almanya und Deutschland* (2021) [Sounds from the Soul—Music between Almanya and Germany], for example, lay out other discursive tracks by sensitively exploring the history of German-Turkish music, its reception, and value on the basis of interviews with contemporary witnesses.

4. How Do 'Parallel Society' and the Parallel Music Market Relate to Each Other?

How did the Turkish music scene in Germany react to its decades-long devaluation and exclusion from the media and music market? It was precisely these processes that led to the establishment of a parallel musical market. Nedim Hazar wrote in 1998: "Our presence of more than 35 years was and is—with a few exceptions—not reflected in the music [of the so-called dominant society in Germany]. The music produced by Turkish people in Germany does not find its way into the general market. Indeed, one must even speak of a second, parallel market" (Hazar 1998: 287).

Turkish labels in Germany produced and sold millions of recordings of Turkish music from Germany and Turkey. Since the labels had no access to the relevant official distribution channels of the German music industry—such as charts, media, music stores—due to structural and institutional racism (see Lund 2026/2021), they had to invent their own independent distribution channels. This was achieved with grocery stores and general stores as the main outlets and through Turkish newspapers promoting the music.³ What emerges from this phenomenon is, in the words of Teresa Vena, "that these literally millions of cassettes sold to Turks living in Germany completely bypassed the rest of the German population. The size of this industry was not reflected in the political or social consciousness" (Vena 2022). As Hazar puts it: "[...] in my opinion, the reasons for the lack of mutual influence, not only in the field of music but also in other cultural areas, are to be found in the way of processing the phenomenon of migration by the Turks, but especially also by the Germans" (Hazar 1998: 287). After a 15-year absence, Hazar makes the following diagnosis upon his return to Germany in 2017: "[We] found [...] parallel worlds in which migrants and locals now lived. All of it was almost peaceful but existed side by side. Parallel worlds had also emerged among people of Turkish origin. It felt as if the Turks, the Kurds, the Alevis, the secularists, and so on were still one here when I went to Istanbul in 2003" (Hazar 2021: 20).

Where does this come from and why? In her foreword to Hazar's 2021 book, SPD politician Lale Akgün writes:

"[...] [I]t's about different cultures that [supposedly] cannot or can hardly be brought together. This feeds the idea that even after sixty years, migrants still live in their bubble and have little or no contact with the majority culture. An idea that is simultaneously an insult to migrants and to the majority culture: some live in their closed-off world and others have such a weak culture that it is unable to influence immigrants" (ibid.: 11–12).

3 On the Turkish music market as a parallel and independent music market in Germany, see Lund 2026/2021 and Lund/Lund 2026/2022: 180–182.

However, Akgün also notes, in comparison with Spanish migrants:

"[...] [M]any intellectuals left their country because of the Franco regime.

In Germany, they were seriously concerned about the education of all Spanish children. They founded parents' associations and prepared working-class families for teacher interviews. I don't know if the Turkish military junta knew about this in the 1980s. But they knew that the intellectuals who had fled to Germany should never be given sovereignty of opinion over the guest workers. That's why so many Islamic associations were founded here—well financed from Turkey, to offer an alternative, to Islamize the people, and to ensure that they didn't wake up politically.

And they have succeeded. A successful initiative" (ibid.: 140).

The demarcation through Islamic education mentioned here is accompanied by a religiously motivated devaluation of Turkish music. Especially in conservative Sunni Islam, music is hardly valued or even forbidden, since, according to certain interpretations of the Koran, it is per se linked to dance, alcohol, and eroticism and is therefore reprehensible from a religious point of view (Abandan-Unat 2005: 271–272; Tas 2014: 381). This, in turn, encourages musical self-exclusion, as will be shown in the following chapter.

5. To What Extent Is Turkish Music Being Devalued in the Context of Self-Exclusion?

Gunda Bartels recently noted the following about the phenomenon of self-segregation:

"It is dismaying that the post-migrant generation represented by the singer Muhabbet or the rapper Aziza A is hardly familiar with its own artistic heritage. With people like Yüksel Özkazap, the nightingale of Cologne, who sang about the homesickness and isolation of men and women from Turkey in wistful arabesques in her 'Songs from Exile'" (Bartels 2022).

"This is not reported, the transmission does not take place," adds movie director Cem Kaya (ibid.). This break in transmission comes from three sides: first, as described above, from Sunni Islam, which generally rejects music; second, from the repressive music policy of the military junta following the coup in 1980, which rejected the immediate musical past (see Greve 2017: 192); and third, from prevailing Westernization tendencies from the 1990s onwards, which led to a devaluation of Anatolian-based music. Yaprak Melike Uyar, academic and musician, speaks of "the particularly complex nature of Westernization in Turkish society." She explains:

“As a DJ performing in my early 20s [around the 2000s], I recall hiding my Balkan and Anatolian folk music knowledge inherited from my family among my peers, because those weren’t appreciated as ‘hip’ back in those times. Before the age of internet, performance and a taste of Anatolian folk music were attributed to working-class and rural populations in Turkey” (Uyar 2021: 11).

Setenay Gültekin summarizes this perception even for youth of the 2010s: “I have observed that there is common sense that both Arabesk and Anatolian Rock are seen as ‘uncool’ or ‘a laughing matter’” (Gültekin 2025: 469).

The non-Western hybrid part—i.e., the Anatolian part of *Anadolu pop*—had a negative effect on the ultimate Westernization desire among a then-young Turkish generation, both socially and musically. As a result, it was suppressed. The perception “that people in Germany didn’t like Turkish music,” as the musician Derya Yıldırım, who grew up in Germany, summarized (in Rigney 2021), could not heal the break with tradition—on the contrary. Inferiorization became the program, as Cem Kaya puts it: “The Germans always clearly conveyed to us, through ignorance or sniffing, that our own culture was worth nothing. So, we were implanted with an inferiority complex even as children” (in Bax 2022).

In his filmic work of artistic research, entitled *FremdeTueren Archive—A Story of (Un)expected Counters* (2024), Ulaş Yener quotes an excerpt from *Kingodisco* (2010), a very popular Turkish TV talk show (Yener 2024: min. 19:19–24:34), in which Kabus Kerim of the renowned German-Turkish rap group Cartel performed a live DJ set. Kerim played *Anadolu pop* prior to the whole (neo-) *Anadolu pop* revival. The audience’s response was characterized by a complex array of emotions, including sadness, adoration, bewilderment, and a strong sense of estrangement. The music was at once familiar and strange to the audience. The moderator, visibly affected, articulated this explicitly, and it was evident that he was struggling to cope with the music for several minutes—especially as Kerim edited parts of a song by left-wing singer Selda Bağcan. In the lyrics she reflects on the Turkish state and how the so-called ‘guest workers’ were treated as migrant labor forces: “You dishonored us in front of the world. You sold us to Germany” (in *ibid.*: *passim*, for example min. 21:45). This open criticism was unexpected in a TV talk show and left the audience puzzled. Yet Kerim took it a step further by saying:

“We are mostly discriminated against in Turkey because our families went to Germany to work. We are the Turks who were sold to Germany” (in *ibid.*: min. 24:22–24:27).⁴

4 As the academic and artistic discourse shows, labor export was indeed part of the state planning, especially in the early 1960s (Abadan-Unat 2011: XXVI, 1–38; Yener 2021: 31, 44–47).

The alienated, almost forgotten, yet somehow familiar *Anadolu pop* music, together with its criticism against state and society in Turkey, created a highly emotional moment on TV, in which Kerim was on the verge of tears. The music resonated with him on a personal level, evoking memories of his own experiences and challenging him to confront his destiny. Consequently, Kerim's DJ set on television demonstrated the intricate and challenging reception of Anatolian pop music, particularly in the period preceding its resurgence, which was largely spearheaded by external forces (see Lund/Lund 2026/2022: 221–224). The TV talk captured a pivotal moment of a nascent rediscovery and reevaluation of Anatolian pop music by a new generation, overcoming its self-exclusion, yet not without painful aspects.

6. Concluding Remarks and Outlook

The phenomena of demarcation and the treatment of Turkish pop music in Germany from the 1960s to the present day outlined in this text show how diverse and complex these processes are, particularly self-demarcation and demarcation by others—and not only along the so-called “integration limit” (Süssmuth). Our observations provide only a small, incomplete insight. The attempt to answer our core questions about music and audience, music features, and the music market led to a critique of music-related aspects of German migration policy. But it also resulted in a critique of the institutional treatment of Turkish music in Germany, exemplified by the analysis of the Turkish music exhibition by the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin. From our point of view, one important problem—very clearly demonstrated by the phenomenon of self-exclusion—is the lack of discourse, historiographical transmission, and structured accessibility to migrant cultural expressions. There is a fundamental lack of archives (Yener 2021: 88). At this point, however, reference should be made to the positive, discourse-shaping change that has taken place through comprehensive exhibitions such as “Wer wir sind. Fragen an ein Einwanderungsland” [Who We Are. Questions for an Immigration Country] (2023) at the Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn, or the comprehensive museum of migration planned in Cologne for DOMiD (Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany), entitled Museum Selma⁵ (in planning).

At the same time, a discourse from a post-migrant, cross-ethnic perspective is currently gaining momentum, which we would like to briefly address in conclusion. As a counterargument to the public discourse on integration—as attempted, for example, by Süssmuth—we would like to respond with the “new desire for disintegration” identified by journalist

5 See <https://www.museum-selma.de>.

Julia Lorenz in the Berlin city magazine *tipBerlin* on the occasion of “60 Years of Almanya” (Lorenz 2021: 25). She links this desire to the question: “What if we don’t want to belong [to Germany]?” (ibid.). *Eure Heimat ist unser Alptraum* [Your Home Is Our Nightmare] is the title of an anthology published by Fatma Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah in 2019. Earlier, antisemitism researcher and author Max Czollek had already initiated a focused discourse on disintegration with the festival *Desintegration* (2016) at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin—funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation—the publication *Desintegration. Ein Kongress zeitgenössischer jüdischer Positionen* [Disintegration. A Congress of Contemporary Jewish Positions] (Czollek/Salzmann 2017), and his book *Desintegriert Euch!* [Disintegrate!] (2018).⁶ Disintegration means here: Who would want to belong to a Germany that treats migrants in the ways demonstrated in this article, using the example of Turkish (pop) music? Yet, according to the writer Çiçek Bacik, the starting point of the differentiating and provocative (post-)migrant desire for disintegration is an already existing attachment to Germany as the country to which one considers oneself to belong. It is precisely for this country that one now fights in a new, disintegrative, and emancipatory way (Lorenz 2021: 25) by withdrawing from the dominant practices of external attributions imposed by the dominant society and instead looking for commonalities, overlaps, and alliances among different population groups affected by discrimination and exclusion.

However, the “new desire for disintegration” can not only be read but also heard, for example in the more recent productions of the high-profile rappers Ebow, EsRap and NASHI44.⁷ And it is perhaps no coincidence that almost exclusively women’s names appear in this last chapter of our article—because this resistance is also a (queer-)feminist, gender-critical one. It is one that transcends ethnic communities. It is a resistance that Melissa Kolukisagil, director of IÇ IÇE. Festival for new Anatolian Music in Berlin, which has been taking place since 2021, summarizes as follows: “We are also the generation that no longer asks for space, but simply takes it” (in Cam 2022: min. 8:49–8:54).

6 See <https://www.gorki.de/de/themenseite-festival-desintegration>.

7 In particular Ebow/Yaghoobifarah’s “Hengameh Skit” (2019), Ebow’s “Giesing81” (2022), and EsRap’s “Der Tschusch ist da” (2019), but also NASHI44’s “Suck on My Spring Roll” (2022), “Nails Lashes Bubble Tea” (2022), and “Butterfly” (2021).

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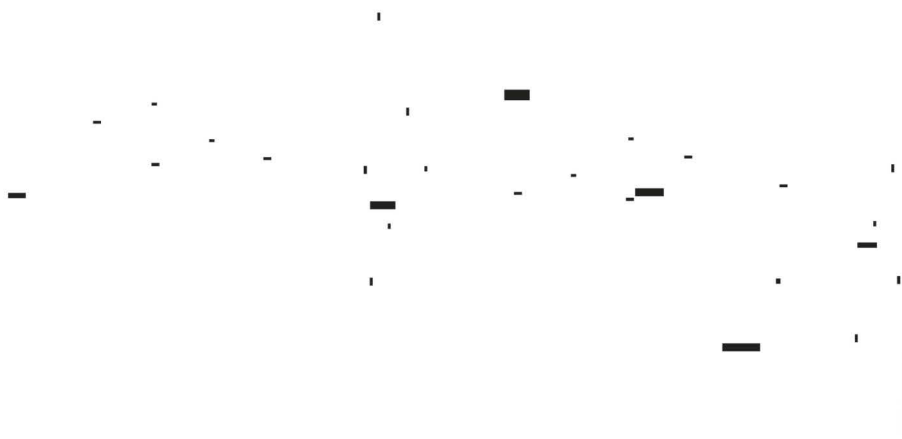
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Cornelia Lund is an art and media scholar and curator based in Berlin. She has worked in research and teaching for years, mainly on documentary practices, audiovisual artistic practices, design theory, and de- and postcolonial theories (e.g. Universität Hamburg, FH Salzburg, HU Berlin, HTW Berlin). She has also received numerous invitations as a guest professor and research fellow (e.g. USP São Paulo, PUC São Paulo, University of Windsor (ON), HfK Bremen). Since 2004 she has been co-director of *fluctuating images*, an independent and non-commercial platform for media art, design, and music; since 2022, she runs *Seismographic Records* in collaboration with Holger Lund and Martin Georgi. She has curated and collaborated on numerous screenings and exhibitions; recent examples include *Connecting Afro Futures. Fashion x Hair x Design* (Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin, 2019), *Laboratoire Kontempo Kinshasa–Berlin* (2021/2022) and *Conversation Room for John Akomfrah: The Unfinished Conversation* (Kunstmuseum Ravensburg, 2025).

<https://www.fluctuating-images.de/cornelia-lund-en/>

Holger Lund works as an art, design, and music researcher and as a curator and DJ. He deputized the position of chair of design theory at the University of Pforzheim from 2008 to 2011. In 2011 he began his duties as professor of media design, applied art, and design studies at the Baden-Wuerttemberg University of Cooperative Education Ravensburg. He collaborates with Cornelia Lund to lead the independent and non-commercial platform *fluctuating images* (since 2004) and together with her and Martin Georgi to lead *Seismographic Records* (since 2022). His research focuses on post-digital media environments, the visualization of music, and the history of pop music. In addition, he runs the music label *Global Pop First Wave*, dedicated especially to Turkish pop music of the 1960s and 1970s.

<https://www.fluctuating-images.de/holger-lund-en/>

Banu Çiçek Tülü finds herself between music, sound art installations, and research, using music production and DJing as an artistic tool for activism. She has been invited to share her installations and exhibitions all over Europe, the US, and Africa. Her work uses multi-channel video, analog synthesis, light, field recordings, sculpture, large textile installations, and weaving to explore feminist and queer sonic methodologies. She believes in the political possibility of sound and music, which she utilizes as an empowerment tool for minority groups with an emphasis on BIPOC and LGBTQI+ communities. She holds a PhD from University of Fine Arts Hamburg (HFBK). Between 2018 and 2021, she was a lecturer at the Humboldt University in Berlin, and also taught at the Sound Studies and Sonic Acts MA program at Berlin University of the Arts and had a guest lecturer position in College of the Arts, Music Department in Windhoek, Namibia. Recent fellowships include *IdeasCity* New Orleans/USA (2019), *Sound of Our Cities* Roeselare/Belgium (2020), Ankara Queer Art Residency (2021), Namibia Initiative by Akademie Schloss Solitude (2022), Praksis Oslo (2024), Musicboard Berlin (2024), and Bergen Centre for Electronic Arts (2026).

<https://www.banucicektulu.com/>

Berrin Yanikkaya is a Professor of Communication Studies. The areas of her academic interest lie in the crossroads of Women's Studies, Cultural Studies, and Media Studies. From the very beginning of her academic career, her focus has been on the construction of female agency through cultural and media production and meaning-making processes. The main themes underlining her academic publications can be summarised in four interrelated 'tensions'; presence—absence / unity—difference / appearance—essence / 'west'—'east' (as metaphors for the categories of power relations, rather than geographical places). She has taken part in various international steering committees and served on editorial boards for different matters. Berrin Yanikkaya is a full professor at the Yeditepe University in Istanbul.

<https://yeditepe.edu.tr/en/academic-staff/1402>

Oliver Zöllner is a professor of media sociology, digital ethics, and international communication at Stuttgart Media University. He also teaches as an honorary professor at the University of Düsseldorf. Oliver Zöllner is an expert on questions of digitization, digital transformation and related aspects of reflexive media literacy. Zöllner's academic roots lie in researching the role of communication in large-scale organizations as well as in the analysis of cultural artifacts (images, sounds, everyday objects, art) and the mediated practices associated with them.

<https://hdm-stuttgart.de/person/zoellner>

