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

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"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/>.

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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 "Samanolu" 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 "Samanolu," 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 Gönüm" (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 *Musikszen* (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 interplay

a) 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’ “Gastarbayter 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.html>. 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-Üçlen-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, 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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