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A history of flops and a new turn: The Turkish-German music interplay

Une histoire de flops et un nouveau tournant : le dialogue musical turco-allemand

Cornelia Lund and Holger Lund

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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)¹
And the children of these people/Are divided into two worlds/I am Ata and I ask you/Where we belong now.
In the beginning, a few Turkish people visited our concerts. Last year in Germany, for example, only about ten percent of them did. Surprisingly, fifty percent of our visitors here today have Turkish roots.
Merve Daşdemir from Altın Gün (2020)³

¹ Transposition, 10 | 2022
Introduction

1 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. 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, though highly popular] and Arabesk music. A music, which in Germany and internationally, received barely attention outside a Turkish audience for a long time.

2 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."

3 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. 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), can be located between music sociology, musicology and cultural studies and explore the individual and social functions, that music fulfills in societies; b) in the light of decolonial discussions as well as c) in a comparative perspective. The latter is focused on (non-)transfer, (non-)exchange and (non-)interplay to enlighten inter-cultural issues of connection or separation.

4 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. At the beginning, samples of Anatolian pop or Arabesk as well as Turkish language played a rather important role. These references to Turkish pop music were, however, gradually given up. German-Turkish hip-hop gained success in Germany from the 2000s on, yet the price to pay was not to transgress the borders of hip-hop in a strict and often limited sense. Cultural activist Sebastian Reier puts it like this: “[…] as a German-Turkish one seems to be able to succeed in this genre only in one role so far: as a gangster”. 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: For about ten years a wave of reissues of Anatolian pop records has been released\textsuperscript{14} and for about two years now, 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. 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.

### 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.\textsuperscript{15}

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. Musical activist Sebastian 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 [the popular German music magazine] Bravo 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.\textsuperscript{16}

Standard media and distribution channels in Germany were almost closed for Turkish pop music from the 1960s to the 1990s. 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”. Thomas Solomon sums up the status of Turkish people by describing them as being “second-class non-citizens in Germany” 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.

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 İşıl published his bilingual and musically “Germanized” beat-Schläger tune “Mini Rock” on Bambi, both hoping to reach out for a Turkish and German speaking audience. Evidently it did not work out for the German-speaking audience – no notice in German language media of the time could be found, İşıl’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 release wise. Why did the communicative power of music fail in these cases? What social and what power relations were at stake?

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, almost no musicological studies on the history of transnational German-Turkish music production, almost no musicological studies on any transnational Turkish pop music. “Significant, datable sources about Turkish music in Germany are hardly available”, “reliable figures about musical preferences or practices do not exist […]”, as ethnomusicologist Greve states – and this has not changed as there are basically no archives for migrant culture in Germany.

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
compilations by Turkish artists made in Turkey and Germany primarily for the Turkish community in Germany as well as in Turkey, selling millions of records and cassettes primarily in Germany, winning golden and platinum records. 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. 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.

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.

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. 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. 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.

Musicians singing Turkish pop music in German

Interestingly, Türkiola’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. In 1969, the latter recorded Metin Bükey’s song “Samanyolu” in German as “Oh Lady Mary”. Again, it was a flop, as Asöcal, who admittedly had his own strong distribution network of Turkish newspapers and
Turkish shops in Germany, had no access to the German record industry’s relevant distribution channels (media, stores). After a few releases, Teledisc gave up.

In 1970, a remarkable exception took place: For the first time a Turkish song reached the top ten charts in Germany and Austria for eight weeks. It was the just mentioned Turkish song “Samanyolu”, composed by Metin Bükey and Teoman Alpay and originally recorded by the singer Berkant, again called “Oh Lady Mary”, but now presented in a German Schlager version by the singer Peter Alexander and the German record company Ariola – the right person and the right record company to conquer the German market. Turkish elements and aspects of the song, however, had been eliminated: “Very few buyers of the single might have recognized in 1970 that it was a Turkish folk song. Again, the guest workers in the dormitories must have been irritated, because the Turkish lyrics were rewritten as German Schlager and also musically adapted to German ears”. 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 Öztunali, 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 name “John Tuner”, he could release a song called “Lover’s Rainbow Wonderland”, which then, after turning out to be an international commercial success, was covered by himself in German as “Regenbogenland”. Any Turkish aspects and references had gone again – the name of the artists and his native language as well.

In 1982, Werner Müller, the versatile head of the WDR radio orchestra who was also responsible for some porn film music productions, released, under the name The Bosporus Sound Orchestra and the pseudonym Ferdy Klein, the album Laila’s Dream on United Artists for the German market. It was produced by Asöcal’s Teledisc. In the 1970s Werner Müller backed several Turkish artists under the name Ferdy Klein with his orchestra, including the famous Turkish singers Cem Karaca and Yüksel Özkasap. Werner Müller decided to take some of Cem Karaca’s successful songs for his own production, 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.

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”. 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.

Who’s first? 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 Yarnistan’s “Ali Rap” (1990), which sampled by the way Nilüfer’s “Ali” (1975/76), a song which 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 Yabancının Hayatı” (1991) or with Fresh Familee’s “Ahmet Gündüz” (1990-92) – 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”.

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 […]”.

Looking at Turkish-German hip-hop in Germany, one gets a divergent and ambivalent impression: Media coverage was enormous yet commercial success could be neglected. Greve noted: “The German media immediately jumped on the supposedly new topic: from Spiegel to Zeit to Spex, hardly any magazine missed the story of the new ‘Oriental Hiphop,’ even Viva-TV and MTV presented [the rap group] Cartel in great detail. Nevertheless, Cartel was almost a commercial flop in Germany [...]”. 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”.

Around the same time, in 1994, the CD compilation “Turkish Gold Vol. 1” was released on the German label Eurostar for the German market. It was the first attempt – outside of Turkey and on an international scale – to publish a compilation of Anadolu pop. According to journalist Daniel Bax, the motives were somehow dubious: After the attacks in Mölln and Solingen, the publishing house “Eurostar” released a CD with “Turkish Gold” for the first time, a compilation of newer and older pieces by Turkish performers. The sympathy effect: a somewhat dubious occasion to promote Turkish pop music. The publisher folded, the disc became a flop.

A flop – although the very prominent German musician Udo Lindenberg was engaged to write the liner notes. Therefore, a Vol. 2 never made it to the market.

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 and probably also to a few collaborations of Turkish and German star musicians. The latter, remarkably and exceptionally, are singing in Turkish as the cooler language. Collaborations, such as Sezen Aksu feat. Udo Lindenberg on “Belalim” (1989/1994) and Udo Lindenberg’s duet with Sezen Aksu “Seni Kimler Aldi/Messer in mein Herz” (1993) could be named here, as well as Cartel & Peter Maffay’s “Maffay La Cartel” (1998). The releases were rather hidden as last and therefore less prominent track on the B-sides of maxi-records in the case of Aksu/Lindenberg. 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 Aldi/Messer in mein Herz” was canceled right before its start, probably in fear of xenophobic attacks.
Herbert Grönemeyer’s collaboration with BRKN on the bilingual song “Doppelherz/Iki Gönlüm” (2018) is a late example of this kind of attempt to profit from a cool Turkish effect. One should keep in mind that Schlager-rock musicians Maffay and Grönemeyer have never been much affiliated with hip-hop, but may have been in need of a refreshment of their exhausted star images in a cool Turkish way.

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 for a changed attitude is the edition of Cologne’s socially committed city magazine StadtRevue entitled Kölsch Kültür (2019), dealing extensively with the history of Turkish music in Cologne and Germany. 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. Back in the times 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”. He then states and analyses 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:

- 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. 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’”. Thus, Turkish people are rendered much more distant and non-European than they actually are, by means of geography and religion.
- 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.
- 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, gazinos, which are a sort of music show restaurant, and video rentals, have been closing down due to the new satellite TV which transforms the way how film and music are consumed.
- 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”. And 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". Greve observes “an exclusion from musical institutions” in general.

- 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 so hermetically, it should come as no surprise that Germans do not know anything about this flourishing culture”. 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”.

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. The official distribution networks for non-Turkish music like record stores or department stores were basically not accessible to Turkish record labels. 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”. Indeed, so-called commercially driven world music starting in the late 1980s and so-called 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.

Another interesting phenomenon is that Turkish people were not driven to share Turkish music with their personal German friends. Sebastian Reier and 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 Alla Turca music styles like Ottoman music and its descendants including Şarka (urban art song), Fasil (urban suite of instrumentals and songs), Gazel (improvised art song), Türk Sanat Müziği (Turkish art music), Arabesk and many others.

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. 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.

When DJing with Anatolian pop records some years ago, co-author Holger Lund was asked by younger 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.

Another history of flops: Turkish pop music and the Eurovision Song Contest

The international attitude toward Turkish pop music, which was presented – a rare opportunity – once a year to a huge international audience at the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC), 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. Sahin 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 […]

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 […]

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.

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. After a non-successful follow-up-album in Turkish language the band quickly dissolved.

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. Whereas – 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, German-speaking musicians waited
until 1980 to sing a first German song in Turkish language (Bel Ami, “Gece Berlin’də”). 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. According to music blogger Andreas Michalke the Berlin formation Bel Ami had a local hit with “Berlin bei Nacht” (Berlin at night) 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. 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. 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”. A more or less ironic way to induce more communication between non-Turkish people and people of Turkish descent.

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”, in the mid 1980s, followed about ten years ago by the German-Italian singer Mario Rispo. Both received media coverage in Germany and Turkey, but neither of them could make it to a proper record release.

**International pop music affairs**

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 için”. 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, Sacha Distel, Anne-Marie David, Juanito, Adamo, Mina, as the music journalist Murat Meriç shows.

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 “Sis 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 or Ajda Pekkan started to sing songs in French already in the 1960s. Manço also made a whole LP in English entitled Nick the Chopper in 1977. France was relatively open to Turkish pop music, 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 by media representatives, to switch to French, but then she was accepted in the world of international chanson and its audience singing in Turkish.

The Turkish-German music interplay

Musicians singing Turkish pop music in German and musicians singing German pop music in Turkish

Turkish singers in Turkey like Ajda Pekkan, Nilüfer, Lale Akat, Neşe Karaböcek 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 Işıl’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 ‘Maestro,’ appears in his songs, whom he likes to lead up the garden path”. And Işıl makes fun of the fashion trend of the mini-rock, warning young women that the mini-rock provides automatically legs similar to the ones of famous actor Elke Sommer. Ten years later, 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.”

Still, in most of the rare times, the bilingual approaches were somewhat hidden. Such is the case for example with Hüsnü Işık’s LP bende bir insanim – ich bin auch ein mensch, released probably around 1980. Although the title suggests openly a bilingual LP, there is only one out of eleven songs bilingual in Turkish and German, the title track itself. And even this one contains only two lines in German at the end of the song, sadly claiming the humanity of the Turkish singer: “I am human too, I have a heart too”.

Another case of a hidden bilingual approach is the parodistic “Orientträume” by Die Neue Weltmacht. On the record sleeve, the title is – in much smaller letters – translated into Turkish (“Oriyantal Rüyalar”) and the name of the featured singer
Mustafa Atmaca, who sings his part in Turkish, is just added. The information on the sleeve does not point prominently to the bilingual approach used in the song, which alternates between German and Turkish parts.

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, and with Ata Canani singing “Deutsche Freunde” in German TV. Canani’s song did not get a release at first but received a TV platform twice and finally appeared again, newly recorded, on the compilation Songs of Gastarbeiter in 2014. On his LP, Cem Karaca sings mostly in German, while Canani’s song is in the ethnolect migrant German.

The booklet for Songs of Gastarbeiter calls Karaca’s LP Die Kanaken a “milestone of German-Turkish music production”. 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, Karaca represents the voice of the Turkish intellectual. Reier states:

And often in the coming years it will be exiles like Karaca who will try to build a bridge between the Turkish community and the German ’majority society’. So, in 1984 Cem Karaca released an album in German language. And the actor, musician and radio presenter Nedim Hazar (the father of the rapper Eko Fresh) founded the German-Turkish band Yarınistan, Morgenland in 1983.

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 a local audience”. 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 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 BIZ from Hamburg. The exiles were the first to musically address and phrase an intellectual Turkish perspective on Turkish life in Germany.

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: “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”. 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”.

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”. 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 Varmis 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.

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” by Udo Jürgens is one rare example, Ajda Pekkan’s “Boş Sokak” and “Kim-Derdi-Ki”, both also originally written by Udo Jürgens are two other examples.

Another, very hidden example, is Fatoş Balkir’s Aranjman of the beat song “Fantastic”, recorded by Ricky Shane. Balkir’s version is called “Hey Taksi...”. 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.

Play it loud – toward a new appreciation of Turkish pop music in Germany

Trying to answer Yıldırım’s question “why so many people have suddenly 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 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 upcoming 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.

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. 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. As film director Cem Kaya puts it: ‘‘It’s fair to say that the 2010s were definitely the decade of German hip-hop dominated by migrant children and grandchildren.’ By the end of the decade, the charts will be dominated by rappers like Mero, Eno, Xatar, Ufo361 and Summer Cem’.

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”.

**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:

a) Reissues of Turkish of Anatolian pop of the 1970s: They started from 1995 on, 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.

b) 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.

c) 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 mid to late 2000s and is still continuing, for example with the recent Big Turks album (*2019/2020* or influential US rap star Action Bronson’s “Mongolia” (*2020*). Interestingly the US-based beat-makers do the same as the German-Turkish ones in the early 1990s, yet without any reference to them.

d) 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., Koçmonot, İpek İpekçioğlu or Cem Yıldız.

e) 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.

f) 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.

g) (Re-)Writing of migration history and cultures in Germany in different media, like 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 migrant culture. The release of *Songs of Gastarbeiter* (2014) also belongs into this context, as well as academic texts like Gesa zur Nieden’s “From Sons of Gastarbeita to Songs of Gastarbeiter. Migrant and Post-Migrant Integration through Music and German Musical Diplomacy from the 1990s to the Present” and Cem Kaya’s documentary film *Aşk, Mark Ve Ölüm (Liebe, D-Mark und Tod; 2022)* on the development of Turkish music in Germany.
h) 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. 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 up to high 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.

i) The new image of Turkey and especially of “Cool Istanbul”. This image started to be built up in the 2000s, for example with Fatih Akın’s international 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. 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.

j) 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, and activist media like Renk Magazin or Maviblau. These activists 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 Maviblau 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.

Concluding remarks

As this overview shows, the whole process is not only about a rising interest in Anatolian pop, but about a complete re-evaluation of it: this music enters the cultural sphere of Germany as part of global pop music history, as part of German music history and as part of a current pop music scene and its releases, music videos and concerts. This re-evaluation sets the path for the acceptance of Turkish pop music in Turkish language, for the first time in Germany and outside the Turkish communities.

Journalist Daniel Bax stated already in 2008:
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.

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 remains true: “The language is still not completely unimportant. But it is no longer decisive”. You can make it with Turkish pop music and singing in Turkish in Germany today, addressing a non-Turkish audience, and it has not to be necessarily hip-hop. Other styles work as well.

The next one, after Anatolian pop, could be Arabesk. It has its own history of re-evaluation, starting with musicological texts in the early 1990s for example by Meral Özbek and Martin Stokes. Today, Arabesk is about to be re-evaluated by the 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 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 released on Kolophone or Ibrahim Tatlıses Kara Zindan (1989) can offer a way for a new appreciation of Arabesk by non-Turkish people.

In 1995, Daniel 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 this was introduced, they didn’t add a sausage to every kebab to make it more palatable.

Today musician and cultural activist Tuncay Acar wishes for a nonwestern widening of the auditory canals:

And I also think it’s good that the “Western charts” are finally being broken. I hope that this will also develop in the direction of a further specification, so that we, if we speak from the rest of the world, don’t just talk about world music and that the Europeans stop seeing their sound as the non-plus ultra. So, the auditory canals have to be widened a bit.

With the success of Turkish pop music in Germany as well as internationally this widening has finally started.


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NOTES


5. Yıldırım’s question came up shortly after he was interviewed for the Cologne magazine StadtRevue and its issue Kölsch Kultur, dealing with the history of Turkish music in Cologne. See StadtRevue: Kultur Politik Stadtleben in Köln: Kölsch Kultur, n°. 3, 2019, p. 31-37.

6. 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.


10. 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 Holger, “Anatolian Rock: Phenomena of Hybridization”, in norient, 2013, https://norient.com/academic/anatolian-rock/ and see also LUND, “Decolonizing Turkish Pop Music”.

11. Supposedly due to their interest in gaining a wider audience by addressing people in Germany in German, a strategy that worked out well later on. In the beginnings, even before multilingual Turkish hip-hop in Germany became usual with T.C.A Microphone Mafia or DJ Mahmut and Murat G. in the 1990s, for example, early 1980s Turkish bands in Germany had released music in two languages, due to the members’ mixed cultural backgrounds. On Samanyolu’s record *Aşk Azabi* (1983) two out of the six tunes are in Italian, thanks to the guitar player Mimo Tolomeo, the other ones are in Turkish.


14. See LUND, “Decolonizing pop music”.


17. See the TRT documentary film Yeryüzü Göçerleri (dir. Gülseven Güven, TR, 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.


19. 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.

20. 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 the fundamental text by RAUER Reinhold, Gescheiterte Innovationen: Fehlschläge und technologischer Wandel, Frankfurt/Main, Campus, 2006.

Greve’s interest is mainly focused on styles connected to the 1980s up to 2000 and on CD and MC as media, which limits his otherwise highly valuable study.


24. “Aussagekräftige, datierbare Quellen über türkische Musik in Deutschland sind kaum vorhanden”. GREVE, Musik der imaginären Türkei, p. 23.


26. 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/ – accessed 30 April 2021.

27. For the catalogue see www.diskotek.info/RecordLabel/Details/269 – accessed 30 April 2021. See also for a discography GREVE, Musik der imaginären Türkei, Appendix, p. 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, see for the vinyl record scene PHILIPPS Helmut, “Dahoam hört sich’s am schönsten”, in Mint: Magazin für Vinylvultur, n°. 8, 2020, p. 34. See on this topic also LUND Holger, “The hidden history of Turkish independent labels in Germany from the 1960s to the 1980s”, conference paper for “Colloquium Independents, Independent Music Labels: Histories, Practices and Values”, Lisbon, NOVA FCSH, 22.-25.06.2021, published September 2021, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354451392_The_hidden_history_of_Turkish_independent_labels_in_Germany_from_the_1960s_to_the_1980s – accessed 24 September 2021.

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

29. See GREVE, Musik der imaginären Türkei, p. 78.

30. On the question of invisibility and inaudibility of Turkish people in Germany as well as Turkish migrant identity see GÜNEY Serhat, PEKMAN Cem and BÜLENT KABAŞ, “Diasporic Music in Transition: Turkish Immigrant Performers on the Stage of ‘Multikulti’ Berlin”, in Popular Music and Society, vol. 37, n°. 2, 2014, p. 132, DOI:
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 music (and not as European or Mediterranean or Balkan music) like 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 Middle-Easternization and Islamization of Turkish people see Stokes Martin, “Globalization and the Politics of World Music”, in Clayton Martin, Herbert Trevor and Richard Middleton (eds), *Cultural Study of Music: A critical introduction*, New York, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 303.

31. Except short TV programs for migrants (in their languages) like “Ihre Heimat, unsere Heimat”, “Nachbarn in Europa” and “Babylon”. For decades, the issue of rendering Turkish music invisible and inaudible is not addressed in German media itself.


37. See https://www.discogs.com/Cem-Karaca-Apa%C5%9Flar-Karda%C5%9Flar-Mo%C4%9Follar-Ferdy-Klein-Orkestras%C4%B1-Cem-Karacan%C4%B1n-Apa%C5%9Flar-Karda%C5%9Flar-/master/628832 and https://www.discogs.com/release/5780051-Y%C3%9Cksap-%C3%96zkasap-Londra-Sokaklar%C4%B1nda-A%C4%9Flar-Gezerim-Zindan-Oldu-Sensiz-Ge%C3%A7en-G%C3%B6nlerim – accessed 30 April 2021.

38. 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, “Music in the European-Turkish Diaspora”, p. 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’.


41. For the release date of Fresh Familee’s “Ahmet Gündüz” being before Die Fantastischen Vier see KAYA Verda, HipHop zwischen Istanbul und Berlin. Eine (deutsch-)türkische Jugendkultur im lokalen und transnationalen Beziehungsgeflecht, Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015, p. 79.


44. “Die deutschen Medien sprangen unmittelbar auf das vermeintlich neue Thema an: Vom Spiegel über die Zeit bis Spex ließ sich kaum eine Zeitschrift die Geschichte vom neuen 'Oriental Hiphop' entgehen, auch Viva-TV und MTV präsentierten Cartel in aller Ausführlichkeit. Trotzdem wurde Cartel in Deutschland kommerziell gesehen beinahe zum Flop […].” GREVE, Musik der imaginären Türkei, p. 445. Cartel’s LP release on the Mercury label sold only 20.000 copies through the official German distribution channels (see Ibid.). 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.).


47. See STOKES “Globalization”.

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50. See BAX, “Istanbul Calling”, p. 16.

51. See the reportage “erci e ft peter maffay - reportaj (by kvt-tp)” on Maffay and Cartel in Istanbul: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE8G8xTI4 – accessed 30 April 2021.


53. Thanks to Edita Noth from GCM Go City Media GmbH tip Berlin & ZITTY who was so kind to provide a copy of the magazine for research purpose.


55. Ibid. p. 11.

56. For the following arguments see Ibid., p. 10-17.

57. 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 Karpat: ‘My projects are hardly ever visited by Turks: Nazim Hikmet [a production with a sound collage of voice recordings and synthetic sounds] had 1,500 visitors, of which a maximum of 20 were Turks. The layer of Turkish intellectuals in Munich is insanely thin.’” – “Überhaupt sind Aufführungen türkischer Werke – gleich ob die Komponisten in der Türkei leben oder anderswo – im allgemeinen Konzertleben Deutschlands außerordentlich selten. Berkan Karpat: ‘Meine Projekte werden von Türken kaum besucht: Nazim Hikmet [eine Inszenierung mit einer Klangcollage aus Sprachaufnahmen und synthetischen Klängen] hatte 1.500 Besucher, davon maximal 20 Türken. Die Schicht der türkischen Intellektuellen in München ist wahnsinnig dünn’”, in GREVE, Musik der imaginären Türkei, p. 328.


59. GREVE, Musik der imaginären Türkei, p. 124.

60. GREVE, “Music in the European-Turkish Diaspora”, p. 121.

61. Ibid. p. 123.

62. Ibid. 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.


70. See LUND, “Decolonizing Pop Music”.

71. See LUND, “Decolonizing Turkish Pop Music”, p. 3.


73. Ibid.

74. 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


76. See GREVE, Musik der imaginären Türkei, p. 54 and 185.

77. See https://www.discogs.com/S%C3%BCrpriz-S%C3%BCrpriz/release/14080240 – accessed 30 April 2021.

78. Whereas Bel Ami was more of a local Berlin group, Ideal released the song as b-side of the single “Keine Heimat”, which made it just in the top 50, position 47 as peak. A comparable weak result for the former top ten hit group Ideal. It seems, fans did not like “Keine Heimat” as well as “Aşk Mark Ve Ölüm”, see https://hitparade.ch/song/Ideal/Keine-Heimat-34925 – accessed 30 April 2021.


80. See Musikszenе, Chapter 2 “Türkische Musik in Deutschland”, 28 November 1982, Westdeutscher Rundfunk.


88. There are some rare later cases of Germans singing in Turkish to be mentioned like the Turkish-German-Swiss band The Trial see https://www.discogs.com/artist/142931-The-Trial – accessed 30 April 2021, or Relle Büst’s cover version of “Üska Dara”, see https://www.discogs.com/Various-Infant-Munich-Hits-Rock-Bottom/release/2316087 – accessed 30 April 2021.


98. See the documentary by PEKUN Didem and Baris DOGRUSOZ, Tülay German: Years of Fire and Cinders/Kor ve Ateş Yılları, Turkey/France, 2010, https://vimeo.com/channels/1321145/93774697 – accessed 30 April 2021. In the documentary German explains her reasons for continuing to sing in Turkish.


102. See https://www.discogs.com/H%C3%BCsn%C3%9FC-I%C5%9F%C4%B1k-Bende-Bir-Insanim-Ich-Bin-Auch-Ein-Mensch/release/1439849 – accessed 30 April 2021.


104. “Auch ich bin ein Mensch. Auch ich habe ein Herz”.

Apart from hip-hop, only few examples of decidedly bilingual songs made by Turkish or German-Turkish musicians can be found later on. Examples are Nekropsi’s “Die neue
Papa” in 2006, a satirical song about the new German pope, see https://www.discogs.com/artist/1395061-Nekropsi – accessed 30 April 2021, or the comedian Yunus Bülbül’s song “Dankeşon Sevgilim”, which mixes constantly German and Turkish words to make fun of the migrant habit of alternating the language while making a sentence, see https://www.discogs.com/Yunus-B%C3%BClb%C3%BCl-Ke%C5%9Fke-%C3%87ocuk-Kalsayd%C4%B1k/release/13630279 – accessed 30 April 2021.


110. See Aktuelle Stunde, 14 September 1984, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, and later on with Cem Karaca’s formation Die Kanaken at Bio’s Bahnhof, ARD/Westdeutscher Rundfunk, late 1980s. The song itself dates back to the late 1970s.

111. By the way: ”Ata Canani wrote a whole cycle of German-language songs in 1977. But neither Turks nor Germans, he says, would have wanted to hear them. They have remained unpublished to this day”. – “Ata Canani verfasste 1977 einen ganzen Zyklus deutschsprachiger Lieder. Doch weder Türken noch Deutsche, sagt er, hätten sie hören wollen. Sie sind bis heute unveröffentlicht geblieben”. REIER, “Türkei” – finally, in May 2021 Canani could release his LP Warte mein Land, warte.

112. “Meilenstein der deutsch-türkischen Musikproduktion”, booklet Songs of Gastarbeiter, no page [p. 3].


116. See https://www.discogs.com/release/7654473-Biz-Deniz-%C3%9Cst%C3%BC-K%C3%B6p%C3%B6r%E%C4%9Flen-Sunam – accessed 30 April 2021. 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 the Turkish culture beyond flatbread and doner kebab” (“[…], etwas von der türkischen Kultur jenseits von Fladenbrot und Döner Kebap rüberzubringen”).


118. “[…] die erste Generation hat mich nur ausgelacht, denen waren die Lieder zu problematisch, die haben mich gar nicht verstanden. […] Aber die Leute der zweiten

119. GÜNEŞ, French pop music remakes, p. 15.

120. ibid., p. 9.

121. See https://www.discogs.com/Y%C3%BCksel-%C3%A7%C3%BCh%C3%BCh-G%C3%B6zl%C3%Bcm/release/10138601 – accessed 30 April 2021.

122. See https://www.discogs.com/Ajda-Pekkan-Bo%C5%9F-Sokak-%C3%87apk%C4%B1n/release/4863358 and https://www.discogs.com/Ajda-Pekkan-M%C3%A9diterran%C3%A9e/release/3792801 – accessed 30 April 2021.


125. See for example T.C.A Microphone Mafia or Advanced Chemistry.

126. See REIER, “Türkei”.


130. The first reissue of Anatolian pop of the 1970s seems to be the LP compilation “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), see https://www.discogs.com/release/8399143-Various-Pops-Dinamit-Aranjmanlar-15 and https://www.discogs.com/release/21408409-Various-Hit-Trix-Aranjmanlar-17 – accessed 30 April 2021.

131. Who writes this history and releases the reissues? Mostly non-Turkish people started to do so, but more and more both, reissues and history writing are made a) by Turkish people or b) in collaborations with Turkish people. See LUND, 2020.

132. See LUND, 2019.


139. Ibid.


141. See ANWAR, “Deutsch-Türkisches”.

142. For ‘Cool Istanbul’ and a critique of the brand concept see ÖZKAN, Cool Istanbul.


151. See recently: CORNILS, “A Journey into Turkish Music: Gastarbeiter*innen Musik”, and CORNILS, “A Journey into Turkish Music: Anadolu Pop”, as well as SEIBT Oliver, RINGSMUT Martin and David-Emil WICKSTRÖM (eds), Made in Germany. Studies in Popular Music, Routlegde Global Popular Music Series, New York, London, Routlede, 2021. 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 previous to hip-hop is not considered at all.

152. BAX, “Deutsch-Türkische Popszene”.

153. Even in Germany there is a growing and well received movement back to multilingualism in hip-hop, including Turkish and Arab languages, see for example the rap artist Yonii with “Anonym”, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWDasOxbbF0 – accessed 30 April 2021. Thanks to Cem Kaya for this observation.


ABSTRACTS

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Turkish-German music interplay the article outlines a history of the reception of Turkish music in Germany. What remained the story of a rather unsuccessful effort to connect Turkish-speaking and German-speaking people in the period from the 1960s to the 1980s, has changed with German-Turkish hip-hop since the 1990s and more significantly over the last few years with (neo-)Anatolian pop – with vocals in Turkish – now being well received in Germany and internationally.

In a first step, the article examines why the earlier 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 in play. 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.

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 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. 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.

The analysis of the described topic will draw on Popular Music Studies, decolonial discussions as well as a comparative perspective. The latter is focused on (non-)transfer, (non-)exchange and (non-)interplay to enlighten inter-ethnic and inter-cultural issues of connection or separation.
Dans l’histoire de la réception de la musique turque en Allemagne, les années 1960 à 1980 sont celles d’un effort infructueux pour établir le dialogue entre turcophones et germanophones. La situation a cependant évolué dans les années 1990, avec l’émergence du hip-hop germano-turc, et plus significativement ces dernières années avec la pop (néo-)anatolienne – chantée en turc –, aujourd’hui bien reçue en Allemagne et dans le monde. En premier lieu, cet article examine les raisons de l’échec des premières tentatives d’établir un dialogue musical turco-allemand. En prenant pour exemple le cas des musiciens qui chantent de la musique pop turque en allemand et des musiciens qui chantent de la musique pop allemande en turc, nous analysons comment le cadre culturel de la réception et de la distribution de la musique a été construit en Allemagne pour les deux publics séparément, et quels conflits sociaux, culturels et musicaux étaient alors en jeu. Paradoxalement, c’est un hip-hop chanté en turc et comprenant des idiomes musicaux turcs qui rencontre aujourd’hui du succès, après des décennies de flops dans le dialogue musical germano-turc et des décennies de hip-hop germano-turc. Longtemps considérée comme un obstacle à la réception de la musique par les non-Turcs en Allemagne, la présence de ces idiomes s’avère aujourd’hui être un atout, car pour la première fois un public allemand non turcophone apprécie la pop (néo-)anatolienne. Pour comprendre comment s’est produit ce changement, cet article analyse des conditions expliquant le (non-)transfert, le (non-)échange et le (non-)dialogue dans les questions interethniques et interculturelles de connexion ou de séparation, en s’appuyant, dans une perspective comparative, sur les Popular Music Studies et les théories décoloniales.

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Keywords: Turkish pop music; Anadolu pop; Arabesk; cultural transfer; German-Turkish community; music market, musical structures and media in Germany; German and Turkish pop music historiography

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