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Lazar Barać

The Institute of Ethnography SASA
lazar.barac@ei.sanu.ac.rs
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0360-5275

The Balkans Tattooed on the Skin: The Reception of Balkan Trap/Trap-Folk through the Musical Habitus of Second-Generation Serbian Migrants in Vicenza*

Abstract: The new millennium has ushered in a new era of popular music in which the Balkans and *Balkanism* have moved to the center of musical narratives. Although often vague and internally contradictory, the image of the Balkans as a place of poverty, passion, violence, nightlife, crime, and love has proven compatible with the rise of trap music, which emerged from the "Dirty South" of the United States and came to dominate the global music scene. Over the past decade, this convergence has produced a glocalized and (self-)exoticizing phenomenon—*Balkan trap/trap-folk*—which combines trap techniques, technologies, and musical patterns with Balkan music in its broadest sense. Today, Balkan trap/trap-folk is among the most dominant formats of the local mainstream, especially among younger audiences. Its visibility has also turned it into a focal point of moral panic and a symbol of the alleged cultural decline of new generations. Against this backdrop, the paper examines the reception of this genre in migratory contexts, focusing on the second generation of the Serbian diaspora in the Vicenza region. The analytical framework is grounded in the concept of *musical habitus* and *thematic-narrative analysis*. Fieldwork is based on participant observation and semi-structured, in-depth interviews with fifteen interlocutors aged sixteen to twenty-two. The study explores (a) how the audiovisual content of this genre is perceived, interpreted, and consumed, and (b) how Balkan trap/trap-folk operates within cultural arenas and identity practices among young people of Balkan origin in the Vicenza area.

Keywords: anthropology of music and migration, Balkan trap/trap-folk, popular music, the Balkans, musical habitus, reception.

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Entering the Club – The Opening: Subject and Objectives

The subject of this paper consists of three key components: *Balkan trap/ trap-folk*, *the second generation of Serbian migrants in the Vicenza area*, and *the reception of musical content*.

Balkan trap, or *trap-folk* (hereafter *BT/TF*), is a genre of popular music that emerged after 2010 and today represents one of the most prominent musical forms in the post-Yugoslav region and its diaspora (Dumnić Vilotijević 2020). This hybrid and glocal genre developed through the intertwining of stylistic features and patterns of American trap with various Balkan hip-hop, pop, and folk forms (Barać 2025a). Its local adaptation has been enabled by several processes: the rise of *Balkanist discourse* in popular culture, digitally mediated music production shaped by a pronounced neoliberal logic, continuous transformation and commercialization, and the postmodern hybridity of elements ("the combination of the incompatible") rooted in earlier genre formations (Dumnić Vilotijević 2020; Barać 2025b). Reflecting both "modernity" and continuity, BT/TF has become a pervasive object of mass consumption and maintains strong connections with younger generations (Vukojević 2024; Mrvoš and Frey 2024) and digital media (Barać 2025b), aligning with broader patterns of contemporary cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh 2013).

The key musical features of BT/TF include trap matrices, syncopated rhythms, Auto-Tune processing, textual fragmentation, mantra-like melodies, and hybridized folk-derived elements drawing on traditional, turbo-folk, and Balkan-oriental musical idioms (Dumnić Vilotijević 2020; Barać 2025a). Thematically, as in American trap and its glocalized variants, the dominant topoi revolve around hedonism, luxury, nightlife and entertainment, money, consumption, sex, and materialism, as well as social frustration, interpersonal relations, and intimate relationships (Kaluža 2018; Adaso 2019; Conti 2020). At its core, BT/TF is structured by a "Balkanist" narrative that functions as a key marker and instrument of cultural representation within practices of *auto-Balkanism* (Dumnić Vilotijević 2020). A similar logic characterizes its aesthetics, which are multimedia and heterogeneous: individual tracks operate as a syncretism of sound, visual landscapes, and identity "branding," in which the performer's self is marketed along a spectrum ranging from commercially "trapper" to exotically Balkan, synthesizing auditory and visual elements drawn from multiple musical and cultural traditions in accordance with postmodern principles (Barać 2025a). BT/TF thus emerges as a complex phenomenon that interweaves music, media aesthetics, and the social imaginary, balancing between the traditionally exotic and the modern, the local and the global, and the authentic and the commercial.

The second generation of Serbian migrants in Vicenza refers to the descendants of a migrant community formed through post-socialist chain migration of predominantly low-skilled workers from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1990s and early 2000s (Barać 2022). It comprises the children of these migrants who were either born abroad or arrived with their parents in early childhood. These children initially grew up primarily within migrant networks, with limited contact with the host population and other migrant groups. In the private sphere, Serbian language was predominantly used at home, often at the insistence of parents, while Italian was acquired only upon entering kindergarten. Early socialization thus took place within the Serbian community; subsequently, during primary and secondary education, these young people gradually integrated into the wider social environment, forming friendships with Italians and members of other migrant communities.

At the ethno-national and religious level, second-generation migrants primarily identify as Serbs and Orthodox Christians. Their identities, however, are shaped by hybridity and transnationality (Hall 1990; Vertovec 2009), combining Serbian and Italian cultural backgrounds alongside more complex ethnic (e.g., Roma, Vlach) and regional affiliations (such as origins in Republika Srpska, central Serbia, or southern Serbia). These identity formations also reveal a strong attachment to the idea of the Balkans, reflecting the complexity of Serbian ethno-national identification in a migratory, post-socialist context. Transnationality manifests through simultaneous embeddedness in both the country of origin and the country of immigration (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), shaping identity practices, popular culture consumption, and social relations.

All interlocutors are bilingual, with stronger proficiency in Italian due to schooling, and are socially integrated, displaying educational trajectories comparable to those of their Italian peers. The Italian educational system, grounded in a liberal-universalist and intercultural framework that promotes tolerance while allowing ties to the culture of origin (Portera 2011), has significantly shaped their outlooks. Meanwhile, the first generation maintains strong transnational and intra-migrant networks, often organized through migrant associations that are commonly linked to nationally oriented or patriotic practices. In relation to these environments, the second generation develops a more distanced stance toward explicit nationalism, which tends to carry negative connotations and is largely replaced by an inclusive form of patriotism summarized by the maxim "Love your own, respect others." Consequently, second-generation identity emerges at the intersection of liberal education, parental cultural transmission, and shared migratory experience, producing a socially integrated and transnational youth population.

Musical practices constitute a central dimension of this population's cultural identity, with BT/TF emerging as a particularly prominent format. While widely

circulated across both Balkan and diasporic contexts, as evidenced by its strong presence on digital platforms, BT/TF has received relatively limited scholarly attention (Dumnić Vilotijević 2020; Mrvoš and Frey 2024; Vukojević 2024; Barać 2025a, 2025b). This study therefore focuses on the *reception* of BT/TF, understood as the ways in which listeners interpret, experience, and attribute meaning to music within specific sociocultural contexts (Hall 1980; DeNora 2000; Rimmer 2006).

The primary aim of the paper is to analyze the reception of BT/TF through the prism of musical habitus shaped in migration. Specifically, it examines: (a) how second-generation migrants engage with BT/TF and integrate it into processes of identity formation and social interaction; (b) whether BT/TF functions as a cultural marker of self-identification, symbolic boundary-making, or inter-Balkan connectivity; and (c) to what extent assumptions about the direct influence of popular music on audiences remain valid within transnational migratory contexts.

Framing the Study: Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Approaching the Field: Fieldwork Methodology

Fieldwork was conducted in the Italian province of Vicenza between January and June 2023 and amounted to approximately three months of research. The study builds on earlier exploratory research carried out in 2022, including interviews with first-generation Serbian labor migrants and a pilot phase involving informal conversations and immersion in everyday musical environments.

Research was conducted in the towns of Vicenza, Schio, and Thiene using semi-structured, in-depth, and biographical interviews alongside participant observation. Interviews addressed themes related to migration, identity, language, belonging, and musical practices, while participant observation included shared nightlife experiences, private gatherings, car rides, and collective celebrations.

The primary research group consisted of fifteen second-generation participants (ten women and five men), aged sixteen to twenty-two. A secondary group comprising members of the first generation was included to contextualize migratory trajectories and intergenerational musical habitus. All interlocutors are anonymized through coded identifiers indicating initials, age, gender, and generational position (e.g., B.P.54/m1 or E.S.19/f2).

Analytical Tools: Concepts and Modes of Interpretation

The analytical framework integrates the concept of *musical habitus* (Rimmer 2006) as a theoretical lens for understanding embodied musical dispositions

with *thematic-narrative analysis* (Riessman 2008) as the methodological approach used to reconstruct musical reception as the central analytical category.

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of practice, *habitus* is understood as a system of embodied dispositions shaped through socialization that structures perception, thought, and action (Bourdieu 1977). Building on this foundation, Mark Rimmer (2006) develops the notion of *musical habitus* to explain how musical preferences, meanings, and practices emerge within social contexts. His model identifies four interconnected dimensions: (a) *primary musical socialization*, (b) *musical ties*, (c) *music and education*, and (d) *musical meanings*. Emphasizing the Bourdieusian importance of primary socialization, Rimmer treats primary musical socialization as the key foundation of musical habitus, defining it as the period beginning with a child's first encounters with music and encompassing the initial acquisition of music-related habits (Rimmer 2006). Central to this process is the primary musical environment and the relations among actors within it.

After the phase of primary socialization, *musical ties*—understood as social interactions established through shared musical experience—become increasingly important (Rimmer 2006). These ties are particularly significant during adolescence, when, in the search for autonomy, young people shift their interpersonal and identificatory focus from the family to peer groups (Rimmer 2006). *Education* then emerges as a field in which actors enter sustained contact with broader social structures, encountering the material, symbolic, and cultural values of dominant groups and classes. In this sense, systems of value may be embodied in music itself, through the distinction between desirable and undesirable musical forms (Rimmer 2006). Although Rimmer terms this component "music and education," it may also be understood more broadly as encompassing upbringing and parental attitudes toward preferred musical forms. Finally, *musical meanings* refer to the meanings attributed to musical experiences and practices, encompassing both sonic elements (rhythm, melody, etc.) and textual or social dimensions (social relations, morality, gender, imagination, style, and so forth) (Rimmer 2006).

Recognizing the analytical potential of this framework, I employ a revised version of Rimmer's concept of musical habitus adapted to the practices of "non-musicians" and to the specificities of this research. In this adjusted model, *primary musical socialization* is understood in a broader sense: the general context of primary socialization is treated as more significant than the particular musical forms, motifs, sounds, instruments, or styles present within it. Accordingly, special emphasis is placed on migrant status and the initial migratory context that followed immigration and shaped the primary socialization of second-generation migrants. A further central segment concerns *musical ties* and *musical taste*. *Musical ties* are understood as relationships formed on musical

grounds, and within this framework I examine *migrants' identity strategies*[1] *as they are refracted in the musical sphere. While Rimmer conceptualizes musical ties primarily in relation to musicians and those professionally engaged in music, they are here treated as equally relevant among listeners, where key relations are structured along generational and cultural lines. Musical taste* is understood as a set of preferences emerging from the formation of habitus and illuminating its underlying structures and dispositions. By mapping the genres encompassed within taste, it becomes possible to trace the pathways through which musical practices connected to identity are constituted. In this sense, musical taste may also reveal generational gaps and divergent modes of reception.

Within this study, *reception* (*musical meanings*) is divided into three thematic domains: (a) *ideology*, (b) *art*, and (c) *behavior*. *Ideological reception* refers to the reception of topoi, lyrics, aesthetics, and messages—that is, the ideological frameworks underpinning the audiovisual content of BT/TF. This dimension is oriented toward understanding the ideational level of the genre, its moral aspects, its critical evaluation, and its reception in relation to the individual's broader worldview. Closely related is *artistic reception*, which concerns the perceived artistic value of the genre and its relation to taste, worldview, and cultural background. Finally, *behavioral reception* addresses conduct and examines the presumed direct impact of music on patterns of behavior. Here the central research questions are: *Does music have a direct influence on the behavior of individuals and groups? If so, is such a claim logically sound, or does it rest on a reductive fallacy?*

The second key methodological pillar is *thematic–narrative analysis* (Riessman 2008). This approach focuses on the content of the stories produced by interlocutors, emphasizing recurring themes, motifs, and patterns of meaning across their narratives. Unlike structural or performative approaches, it privileges what is said over how it is said, treating the narrative as a coherent unit of analysis (Riessman 2008). The analytical process involves close reading, the identification of thematic segments, comparison within and across cases, and the interpretation of themes in relation to broader social and cultural contexts (Riessman 2008). Riessman stresses that narratives are always situated and relational, and that analysis must attend to the speaker's positionality, the interactional frame, and the social discourses shaping meaning. This approach is particularly well suited to the study of experience, identity, belonging, and subjective interpretation, as it allows interlocutors' stories to be understood as complex constructions at the intersection of personal and social perspectives.

[1] *Assimilation strategies* minimize cultural markers of origin to facilitate inclusion in the host society, whereas *separation strategies* prioritize co-ethnic networks and limit interaction with the local population in order to preserve homeland identity (Berry 1997).

(Not) Far from One's Habitus: Reception through Musical Habitus

On the Foundations of a Hybrid Worldview: Primary Socialization and the Initial Migratory Context

The interlocutors' musical habitus is rooted in primary socialization shaped by the initial migratory context. Migration to the Vicenza area followed a *chain pattern* typical of Serbian labor migration, initially involving predominantly male workers who later brought their families through reunification policies (Barać 2022). Limited linguistic competence and the status of *extracomunitari*[2] *oriented migrants toward dense co-ethnic networks, which became the primary framework of everyday life. Consequently, the second generation was socialized within a "displaced homeland" embedded in Italian society yet symbolically oriented toward the country of origin (Krstić 2013; Antonijević 2013; Rašić 2022). Thus, this strong orientation toward the homeland structured children's primary socialization within the family sphere, corresponding to what has been described as strategies of separation* (Berry 1997). Since language functions as a key condition for cultural participation (Rašić and Antonijević 2023), parents prioritized Serbian in the private sphere to preserve homeland identity, while music from the country of origin emerged as a central practice of language maintenance, as emphasized by the interlocutors themselves.

Between "Here" and "There": Reconstructing the Initial Migratory Context

Second-generation interlocutors structure their earliest memories through the dichotomy of *here* and *there*. The homeland (*there*) is primarily experienced through parents' nostalgic narratives and periodic holiday visits, producing an idealized image detached from everyday realities yet deeply influential for later cultural and musical orientations (Rašić 2022).

Early memories of here unfold between co-ethnic migrant networks and a multicultural public sphere. Interlocutors were socialized within dense circles of relatives and compatriots while simultaneously interacting with children of diverse ethno-national backgrounds in shared public spaces. Although multicul-

[2] The *extracomunitari* status refers to migrants marked by informal employment, insecure legal position, limited language competence, and strong reliance on co-ethnic networks, usually accompanied by reduced interaction with the host society (Mendoza 2006; Bello 2015; Barać 2022). With integration, this condition gradually declines through formalization, language acquisition, and expanded social participation (Barać 2022).

tural encounters were present, accounts consistently indicate that the private familial environment remained the primary site of socialization. In both contexts, early upbringing was strongly marked by the culture of the country of origin, shaping subsequent identity orientations and value frameworks. Within this environment, music was a constant yet largely implicit element of everyday life. Although it did not function as convertible economic or cultural capital in migratory terms (Bourdieu 1986), music held strong emotional significance within the migration experience (Bohlman 2011; Sorce Keller and Barwick 2012). The initial migration period can be understood as *a rite of passage* marked by uncertainty, hope, and nostalgia (Antonijević 2013). Under such conditions, music condensed memories, experiences, and symbolic ties to the homeland, functioning simultaneously as an evocative "object," an emotional catalyst, and a motivational resource: "Music is there to remind you of what is yours, in a place where you have nothing of your own" (Ž.M.50/m1).

Music from the homeland dominated the private sphere, circulating through domestic media technologies—from cassette players and satellite television to later online platforms. The prevailing soundscape combined folk, pop, and ex-Yugoslav rock repertoires, with *narodnjaci*[3] occupying a central position both in everyday listening practices and in diaspora celebrations. This dominance reflects the broader social profile of Serbian labor migrants, largely originating from rural areas and small towns, for whom folk music constituted a familiar cultural framework. Through diaspora performances, specialized television channels, and digital platforms, migrant audiences have formed an important transnational constituency that actively sustains and shapes the Serbian music industry (see Radović 2010; Dumnić Vilotijević 2020; Rašić and Antonijević 2023). Despite the prominence of folk music, both generations display elements of *cultural omnivorousness*, reflecting diverse musical socializations and hybrid cultural positioning. Within the migrant minority context, genre and ideological distinctions characteristic of the homeland often collapsed into a broader category of "our music": "Let anything play, as long as it's ours" (B.P.54/m1). As a result, stylistic boundaries that remain meaningful in the country of origin became less rigid in diaspora settings, where shared symbolic belonging took precedence over genre differentiation.

The initial musical environment during primary socialization can be characterized by three interconnected features: (a) the symbolic recreation of the homeland through music, (b) an inclusive understanding of "our music," shaped by displacement, nostalgia, and migrant status, and (c) the implicit acquisition of sonic patterns. Within the private sphere, music from the homeland predom-

[3] The term *narodnjaci* is one of the most commonly used colloquial designations for contemporary folk music, primarily encompassing neofolk and turbofolk, but also including pop-folk formats that lean more strongly toward a folk orientation.

inated, recreating a symbolic framework of the country of origin while encompassing a plural set of styles collectively understood as homeland music.

Absorbed pre-reflexively through everyday practice, sonic patterns became incorporated into musical habitus and guided later preferences. In Bourdieusian terms, the primary musical environment provided the material through which habitus—and consequently taste—was formed over the long term. Music thus functioned as a link to the country of origin at both collective and individual levels, remaining largely taken for granted within family life while becoming especially salient during shared gatherings and celebrations. Acquired associatively through connections between sounds, places, people, and emotions, music often became synonymous with the homeland itself and with a sense of belonging.

A decisive shift occurs during secondary socialization, particularly in adolescence, when authority gradually moves from the family toward peer groups (Rimmer 2006; ter Bogt et al. 2011). This stage consolidates a hybrid and transnational identity characteristic of the second generation, alongside a pattern of *cultural omnivorousness* reflected in musical taste and habitus.

"You Can't Sit with Us": Musical Taste and Musical Ties

In Bourdieu's theory of social distinction, taste constitutes a primary mechanism of differentiation and classification among social groups, encompassing material, immaterial, and practical dimensions of life, while marking the conditions of existence of a given class and its specific habitus (Bourdieu 1984). Accordingly, class differences and practices associated with particular musical styles are most clearly manifested through musical taste, which operates as a means of social orientation—a "sense of one's (class) place" (Rimmer 2006, 43).

Bourdieu's conceptual model of taste, despite its considerable influence, reflects a certain rigidity and calls for adaptation within a contemporary context marked by globalization, the mobility of ideas and cultural content, and diverse practices of interculturality, hybridity, bricolage, and eclecticism (Goodwin 1991; Đorđević 2009). Accordingly, musical tastes are increasingly understood as open and plural, and this reconceptualization is further intensified by technological transformations that reshape modes of musical distribution and consumption, thereby reconfiguring taste (Pinch and Bijsterveld 2004). The contemporary moment may thus be conceived as an era of *cultural omnivores*, bricolaged concepts, and hybrid forms, directly challenging Bourdieu's logic of distinction by suggesting that regimes of taste have moved beyond the elite–mass culture dichotomy (Prior 2013). Yet this perspective points less to the disappearance of class differences than to the evolution and growing complexity of taste (Atkinson 2011), indicating that "eclectic dispositions have replaced snobbish preferences" (Brisson 2019, 1). Its main limitation lies in the difficulty

of distinguishing "genuine" tastes (if such a notion is even tenable) from cultural tolerance or social desirability (Brisson 2019), as well as in the fact that empirical practice more often reveals only a limited degree of hybridity and a restricted range of preferences, rather than truly expansive inclusiveness.

In the case of the second generation, we can clearly speak of a certain degree of cultural omnivorousness. Their taste is shaped across multiple languages and musical traditions and involves the simultaneous engagement with stylistically distant genres: "On my way here I listened to traditional music, *narodnjaci*, trap, reggae, and pop (in Italian, Serbian, English, and Bulgarian)" (N.M.20/f2). Within this broad repertoire, several genres emerge as particularly dominant: (a) BT/TF, as a generational marker; (b) neofolk, perceived as the most valued form of folk; and (c) turbo-folk, regarded as the most "functional" genre due to its combination of club energy and emotional intensity. Pop (*zabavna muzika*) and ex-Yu rock also remain present within what is understood as "our" music.

Interlocutors frequently emphasized mood-dependent listening and genre fluidity. As D.S. 21/m2 explains: "When I'm exhausted I'll put on Ludovico Einaudi. When I want energy, Nucci and Voyage. If I'm sad, then Aca Lukas. I can listen to everything—I take what I need at that moment."

Particularly telling is the fact that, when asked which musical genre they "hate," all interlocutors rejected the very premise of the question. Rather than expressing aversion, they framed their preferences in terms of personal fit: certain genres simply "do not suit" them. Metal, punk, and techno were mentioned most frequently as the least preferred:

> I don't hate any kind of music... metal or punk feel too chaotic for me. I like it when things are somehow orderly... Everything else is fine. I can even listen to classical music" (M.M.22/m2); "I can't hate a genre. I respect everything... but techno is too much for me... Classical music is mostly boring to me, even though it's beautiful. I associate metal with all that screaming, so that doesn't really suit me either. (K.S.19/f2).

Even when distancing themselves from metal, such judgments are often tentative and weakly grounded: "I don't like metal... but honestly, I don't know if I've even heard two metal songs in my life" (D.S.21/m2). This reluctance to articulate exclusion reinforces the broader pattern of musical omnivorousness, rooted in a hybrid cultural identity.

While musical "phases" are common in contemporary contexts, in the case of my interlocutors these trajectories are closely tied to their migratory background. Primary socialization was marked by immersion in homeland music within a recreated domestic framework of origin. With the onset of secondary socialization, peer interaction facilitated the incorporation of elements of the host society into their habitus. During late childhood and early adolescence, mu-

sical affiliations became a particularly salient marker of identity and a key medium of integration and self-affirmation within peer groups (ter Bogt et al. 2011).

It is precisely at this stage that *musical ties*—relationships established through music – acquire particular significance. As adolescents navigate different integration strategies (Berry 1997), musical preferences may signal orientations toward integration into the host society or toward one's own community. Alongside language and peer relations, music becomes a key mechanism through which attachment to the homeland is either temporarily suppressed or actively cultivated. All interlocutors describe periods in which music functioned as a strategy of peer integration, most often through listening to Italian popular music or globally dominant genres valued within their "Italian circles":

> There was a period when, because I felt different from my classmates, I forced myself not to listen to our music and to listen only to Italian trap, which I didn't even like, but I did it to feel closer to them" (D.Z.19/f2); "At the beginning of high school, I tried to fit in, so I listened to American pop so I could say, 'Hey, I know that song,' and be able to talk about it with others" (K.S.19/f2); "You listen so that later it's not like we go out somewhere and I have no idea what's going on... But as soon as I started hanging out with our people, I immediately dropped it. (A.M.19/f2).

In these excerpts, alongside music as a strategy of integration, musical taste also appears as a performative practice shaped by group imperatives. Several interlocutors describe this period as a "liminal phase" in adolescence, followed by a return to the (essentialized) cultural self of the homeland. A decisive moment in this process is the formation of friendships with compatriots during secondary school, which they tend to perceive as a "natural" progression. If their habitus is taken into account, this alignment is not surprising, since they share similar cultural patterns, models of upbringing, values, customs, and everyday practices (Rašić and Antonijević 2023). At this stage, not only their habitus but also their preferences and aspirations—including leisure, socializing, and going out—become more closely aligned.

> I always had a mixed group of friends... but it always worked better with those from Serbia. I felt more comfortable, especially when we matched in music... It's important that we align" (T.M.21/m2); "For a while I mostly hung out with Italians, and then I connected with K.S.19/f2, and since then I've been socializing only with our people, and it's much better for me... I prefer going out with our people because I feel more relaxed. I've been to Italian clubs several times and I've definitely seen that it's not my environment" (A.M.19/f2); "I'm more oriented toward Serbs... I choose the company of Serbians more, especially for going out to Serbian clubs. When they go to Italian clubs, I don't go, because that's not my environment. (E.S.18/f2).

In this sense, the nightclub is crucial not only for musical ties but also for musical taste, since its repertoire directly shapes a significant portion of the musical formats interlocutors consume. Fieldwork conducted through regular outings with five interlocutors to the most frequented local club showed that the nightclub exemplifies the hybridity of musical styles par excellence. Its soundscape typically moves from electronic dance music, through American mainstream pop and Latin music, to BT/TF and turbo-folk, with occasional shifts toward neofolk and ex-Yu rock. As such, it represents a convergence point of diverse sounds that mirror the Balkans as a hybrid cultural space. A similar, though less pronounced, hybridity appears at collective celebrations among Serbian migrants. This hybridity is largely implicit and naturalized, given early exposure to hybrid soundscapes; however, with ageing—especially among those more strongly oriented toward the country of origin—the nightclub becomes a key site of value-based identification.

Within this context, musical ties can be understood as generational, intergenerational, and cultural-genealogical. Even interlocutors who do not express a personal affinity for BT/TF prefer it in collective settings: "Some people listen because they really like it, some listen for the energy... but mostly, when we get together, that's what we listen to" (S.L.17/f2). The bond with homeland music is thus organized within the migrant peer group, where it functions as connective tissue in the domain of generational belonging.

While the first generation does not view BT/TF favorably, they recognize it as a generational marker in the country of origin, already crystallized as a symbol of *Generation Z*. In this way, a transnational and generational identification is maintained between young people in the diaspora and those in the homeland. Interlocutors also emphasize that they understand trap differently from their parents, particularly at the linguistic level: "Swearing isn't a problem for us as a generation, because it expresses things more directly, but our parents see it as bad manners and take it literally" (N.M.20/f2).

It is precisely in the "freer" language of BT/TF that its subversive potential and youthful rebellion against the "puritanical" and "moralistic" outlook of the first generation become visible. For this reason, a certain discomfort arises when BT/TF tracks are played outside the generational circle within which this genre is experienced as *gas* and as *hype*.[4]

A key site of (intra)generational encounter is constituted by Balkan nightclubs as migrant spaces and nodal points of musical ties. *Balkan House* (a pseu-

[4] In youth slang, *gas* and *hype* function as (affective) markers of what is perceived as good, "cool," and contemporary, with *gas* referring to an immediate (bodily) sense of energy and "drive," and *hype* to socially produced collective excitement and symbolic importance surrounding particular content.

donym for the club in which the research was conducted) represents a Balkan space par excellence, functioning as a material framework for meaning-making, action, memory, and the ongoing construction of identity. Through sound, atmosphere, aesthetics, and patterns of behavior, it recreates the context of the homeland.

> Turbo-folk is blasting, everyone's arms are raised, people are dancing, singing, celebrating, and everything is on fire" (Đ.S.17/m2); "When we went to a club with our Italian friends... through the music and everything else, it felt to them as if they were no longer in Italy, as if we had gone somewhere else altogether" (D.S.21/m2).

Although physically located in Italy, within this space "Balkan rules" and "Balkan patterns of behavior" prevail, which explains why it attracts large numbers of people from the region. The venue's metanarrative points toward *(auto-) Balkanism* (see Dumnić Vilotijević 2020): representations of Balkan identity among this generation increasingly take the form of a "new" Yugoslavism (*Balkan-ness)* grounded in solidarity among those of Balkan origin. It is here that the integrative function of Balkan popular music in the diaspora becomes most visible. *Balkan House* thus stands as a key site of Balkan cultural intimacy (see Herzfeld 1997), functioning as a marker of Balkan identity that brings together those from the region and those who identify as such:

> "When we go out to the club, there are Macedonians and Albanians as well..." (A.M.19/f2); "...there we're all equal. On the street we might be killing each other" (K.S.19/f2); "In the club there's no difference... Everyone's goal is to have a good evening... there aren't fights because of nationality" (M.M.22/m2); "All Balkan peoples are present, even Albanians, despite the political situation" (S.L.17/f2).

When asked whether music brings together people from the Balkans in Italy, all interlocutors responded affirmatively. This was followed by the question: *Is this music Balkan or Serbian?*

> "This is Balkan music, because it is listened to by people from the Balkans, and not only by Serbs" (S.B.16/f2); "My view is that it is Serbian music, but now it is framed as Balkan in order to create a broader market. Still, the temperament of people from the Balkans is similar" (D.D.22/m2); "To me, it is Balkan music, because we are similar in mentality, customs, and traditions... music conveys our mentality" (D.S.21/m2).

This brings us to the question of Balkan identity or, more pertinently within the Italian migratory context, to the question of *slavi* identity.

Slavi is a term used in Italy to designate people from the former Yugoslav republics. In itself, it is not necessarily negative; its meaning depends on context and intonation (Barać 2022). Until the 1990s, it did not carry a pejorative

connotation. However, the wars, intensified migration, and especially media representations of the Balkans (above all of Serbs) produced a negative image of "Slavs" as migrants (Barać 2022). War reporting, combined with individual instances of violent or criminal behavior that were generalized in the public sphere, contributed to the formation of an image of Balkan people as problematic, aggressive, wild, and "backward." Media discourse played a decisive role in this process of semantization, durably shaping both the meaning of the term *slavi* and the cultural representations attached to it.

> "Italians are afraid of us; they see us as rough, as savages, as people from whom anything can be expected—especially in a club" (M.M.22/m2); "I have friends who don't dare go to our club because they think they'll be discriminated against or beaten up, which makes no sense at all, because everyone is welcome there" (D.D.22/m2); "Serbs have hot blood. Balkans in general...we're somehow different" (D.S.21/m2); "They think we're problematic, mostly because of the media... I've seen more fights when I go home to Serbia than here" (M.I.19/f2).

"Hot blood," that is, "Balkan mentality and temperament," are understood in essentialist terms from the perspective of both generations, who often state that "we are simply the way we are." These notions appear to be conceived as enduring dispositions, almost reduced to a "genetic" level, though to some extent also shaped by culture. "Mentality" and temperament are most vividly expressed during celebrations – on occasions and in spaces marked by music, food, alcohol, and collectivity. In this sense, the *narodnjački dernek* ("folk-style bash") emerges as a synthesis of these elements and constitutes both a site and a moment of cultural intimacy (Đorđević 2010), that is, a node in which different aspects of Balkan "mentality" and temperament are condensed.

> "Honestly, our weddings aren't 'normal', unlike, say, Italian ones, with some soft pop songs, all calm and fine. Our weddings are really something special, because you don't find that anywhere except among people from the Balkans, and music plays a huge role in that" (M.M.22/m2); "What are Italian weddings like? What do Italians do at weddings? They eat pasta and dance. With us, there's drinking, wildness, gunshots, and all of that somehow goes with turbo-folk and folk music in general... The kind of music we have, that's what we're like" (N.M.20/f2); "They are calm, and their coming-of-age celebrations are different from ours. With us, everyone jumps, dances, sings, the music is loud, there's plenty of food, and at that Italian girl's party I went to there was a buffet—panini, chips, things like that—basically nothing" (D.N.17/f2); "I once went to an Italian wedding...spaghetti with some walnuts and honey, then light music, and finally a little violin. I mean, really? With us it's more like—everything has to be on fire" (K.S.19/f2).

In the statements of both generations, it is evident that enduring dispositions and characteristics are almost always defined in relation to the overarching

identity dichotomy of us: *Others*, where the *Others* are primarily imagined as Italians from the North, perceived as representatives of the West and "Western culture." In this process of identification, alignment with the Balkans (that is, with an assumed Balkan "mentality") becomes crucial. The image of the Balkans is implicit and difficult to articulate in its entirety, yet it can be said to rest on premises such as collectivism, "hot blood," a pronounced temperament, high-energy music and dance, pompous and frequent celebrations, and numerous paradoxes, such as emotionally expressive yet "tough" people, singing songs "when you feel like crying," spending even when there is nothing to spend, and so forth. Accordingly, the key oppositions are framed as: Balkans:West, collective:individual, "warm"/sociable:"cold"/unsociable, traditional:modern, conservative:liberal, hard:soft, wild/hot-blooded/hedonistic:calm/moderate, rule-breaking:rule-abiding, generous:stingy, stubborn:adaptable.

It is particularly revealing that, when asked which groups in the area are most similar to Serbs, none of the interlocutors mentioned other Balkan populations. Instead, many pointed to Southern Italians as the closest to themselves, while simultaneously assuming that all "Balkan people" share a broadly similar temperament and mentality. This, I would argue, illustrates how their cognitive framework perceives "Balkan-ness" and Balkan identity, despite national borders and divisions. Moreover, the second generation makes far more frequent use of the terms "Balkan" and "Balkan-ness," whereas their parents predominantly speak of "Serbia/Republika Srpska," "ours," or "our people," or employ the term "former Yugoslavia." One could even argue that among the second generation there exists an idea of Balkanism as a new version of Yugoslavism under a different name—*Balkan-ness.* As one interlocutor put it: "It's nice when you walk into a club and see how many of us Balkan people there are, and everyone feels like one big family" (M.K.16/f2).

Impression, Connotation, Imagination: The Reception of BT/TF Content

Ars Longa, Vita Brevis: Ideological and Artistic Reception

As discussed earlier, ideological reception refers to the reception of messages, constructed ideals, values, and imperatives (Hall 1980; Abercrombie 1990; Morris 2013) articulated within the discursive dimension of BT/TF. It is inseparable from artistic reception, since ideological content decisively shapes the genre's aesthetic form and its legitimacy within particular social arenas (see Frith 1996; Bourdieu 1984). These dimensions are examined through both lyrical-poetic and musical analysis, guided by three questions: *What does trap sing about? Which themes prevail?* and *What does it communicate?*

Interlocutors synthesize the dominant topoi of BT/TF around several recurring motifs: *gas* as an ethos of intensity and momentum; the triad "whores–money–drugs" as a lifestyle formula; and status symbols as practices of self-branding and ego affirmation. As they note:

> "The message of trap? Let's go – *gas*, and that's it" (A.M.19/f2); "It's basically bragging... about money and being the best" (S.L.17/f2); "Money, whores, drugs... it's all kind of basic" (N.M.20/f2); "These songs don't really have real messages. They're made to hype you up... most mainstream music is about sex, drugs and alcohol" (M.M.22/m2).

Thus, interlocutors primarily interpret BT/TF through songs in which the aforementioned motifs dominate, even though the genre also includes numerous tracks in which these elements are less pronounced. By "message," they generally refer to explicit meaning, typically moral or emotional content, which explains the view expressed by D.S.21/m2: "Songs that have more meaning are the more emotional ones." The notion of "message" is therefore understood in a moral and didactic sense and associated with emotionally resonant material, whereas BT/TF is more often experienced as entertainment, that is, music intended to "drive" and produce a particular vibe. Within such a framework, ideological content is recognized mainly when overtly articulated, while implicit patterns, such as the normalization of hedonism, consumerist aspiration (Mrvoš and Frey 2024), and neoliberal self-branding (Barać 2025a), remain naturalized as aesthetic conventions.

A related issue concerns identification with BT/TF lyrics. Interlocutors either reject identification altogether or describe it as selective and fragmentary. As D.N.17/f2 notes, "I can find myself in maybe two lines. How am I supposed to identify with that kind of text? Almost every song is the same." Similarly, D.D.22/m2 states, "I don't live that life, so I have nothing to connect to." Others shift the evaluative criterion from meaning to affect, as Đ.S.17/m2 explains: "What matters is whether it 'works on me.' I don't expect poetry in trap." Even when certain aspirations, such as wealth, are acknowledged, broader thematic constellations ("whores, money, drugs") are explicitly rejected (M.I.19/f2). Identification is thus reserved for lyrics perceived as more meaningful or emotionally engaging, while BT/TF is predominantly received as "just *gas* and hype" (D.S.21/m2).

These statements suggest a broad consensus among interlocutors that trap lyrics are of low quality, with the text perceived as the weakest element of BT/TF as a genre. At the same time, they emphasize its musical qualities, describing trap as high-quality in terms of production and sound design.

> "For me, rhythm is what matters most, that's what I listen for, because if I paid attention to the lyrics, I wouldn't listen to trap at all" (D.N.17/f2); "Trap is

> high-quality music, mainly in terms of sound. The music, vocals, and beat are all clean. It's high-quality in a production sense, in every respect except the lyrics. The videos are technically expensive, but very few leave a real impression" (M.M.22/m2); "Sometimes the lyrics don't matter when the rhythm carries you, and here the rhythm is good" (I.M.18/f2).

Both in formal interviews and in informal fieldwork conversations, lyrics were described as a necessary component of a song, yet rarely as a source of identification or reflection. Because they depict lifestyles largely perceived as unattainable, interlocutors tend not to internalize them, but rather reproduce them as ready-made phrases. By contrast, musical elements hold clear primacy. Reception is therefore predominantly sensorial and affective rather than semantic, which appears to be the primary reason for the genre's consumption. Trap is thus listened to despite the lyrics rather than because of them, and reception shifts from meaning to feeling, from message to "vibe."

When asked about the artistic reception of BT/TF, that is, whether music is necessarily art, interlocutors expressed divergent views:

> "How could that be art? Those older folk songs were, but these new ones are not" (D.N.17/f2); "Our old music is high-quality. Those older songs followed emotions more than fashion" (D.Z.19/f2); "Music in general is art, but I don't know whether trappers are artists" (N.M.20/f2); "Absolutely, yes, it is art. Both painting and making trap songs are art. Everyone says anyone can make a song, but that's not true. You have to be creative, know music and technique, and know how to put it all together. Maybe it's easier than thirty years ago, but not just anyone can do it" (M.M.22/m2); "I don't have to see something as art for it to work on me. If a song hits me or is just *gas*, it doesn't matter whether someone considers it art. I don't even think about that" (E.S.17/f2).

Notably, interlocutors spontaneously compared BT/TF with neofolk and turbo-folk, understood as "older" music, although this parallel was not prompted. This suggests both an associative continuity between these genres and the deep integration of neo– and turbo-folk into collective memory and musical experience. At the same time, their statements indicate that "art" is defined less by form or production than by authenticity, emotional depth, and historical continuity. "Old" music is recognized as art because it is perceived as emotionally grounded and not fashion-driven, whereas BT/TF is often viewed as shaped by trends, market logic, and repetition. Art thus appears to be implicitly defined as that which transcends momentary taste and consumption.[5]

[5] This is particularly striking given that both neofolk and turbo-folk were highly commercial and fashion-driven genres whose artistic legitimacy was widely contested. While neofolk has gradually gained a degree of recognition, especially in contrast to turbo=folk, the latter continues to be perceived—among its critics and those for whom it is not a preferred genre—as a cultural "source of all evils."

Against this background, a generational divide emerges between normative and sensory-affective criteria of evaluation. Although most interlocutors treat "art" as a relatively clear category, it remains largely irrelevant to their listening practices, which are justified in functional terms, that is, by whether the music "works," resonates, or produces *gas*. In this sense, BT/TF shifts from the sphere of art toward mood-oriented practices, where aesthetic value gives way to functionality.

Another issue concerns the durability of trap, that is, whether it represents a passing trend or a genre that will mark future generations. Interlocutors are divided. Some expect that nostalgia will form around this music and that it will remain tied to the memories of *Generation Z*, while others view trap as "fast music" with a short life span. This debate also highlights the generational character of the genre, which is associated with youth, romantic relationships, sexual activity, nightlife, alcohol (and drug) consumption and intense sociality.

> "Of course, Ceca will last longer than Crni Cerak. You can't sing about drugs until you're sixty. It's music for young people and for that stage of their lives" (K.S.19/f2); "I think there's no chance these hits will become 'evergreens.' Turbo-folk is a different story. It's somehow more unique than what's being produced now. In trap everything is just gas, while turbo-folk has everything—you can celebrate, cry, and dance to those songs" (M.M.22/m2); "The songs are fast, they don't last long, they sing about a fast life, and hits replace one another quickly. The times are like that, and so is the music, and I don't see anything wrong with that" (M.I.19/f2); "Some songs bore you in a day, some in a week or two, and some still hold you after two or three months" (E.S.17/f2); "All these songs will be dead in five years and nobody will listen to them" (D.S.21/m2); "If we have our music now, in twenty years it will still be good music for us, or at least it will remind us of that period. Something will always tie us to those songs, especially because we're young. Everything has its time" (D.D.22/m2).

Finally, one of the key aspects of the interlocutors' musical habitus and their reception of this genre is precisely a functional and situational approach to music. They use music in accordance with different contexts and states, and do not experience music for afternoon rest, clubbing, driving, or collective celebrations in the same way. Most state that they possess more or less established repertoires adapted to specific musical situations. Although such boundaries cannot be drawn rigidly, it can be said that they distinguish between music intended for everyday listening and that associated with nightlife, driving, socializing, and similar contexts. In parallel, a division is established between "emotional music" (ballad-like, "meaningful," and marked by explicit messages) and music whose primary function is to "drive," that is, to generate energy and *gas*.

> "Ballads and those older songs are something else, because they often match your current situation, so you find yourself in them, maybe cry a little, and then you put on a song where she curses him and you sort of turn the situation around

(laughs)" (A.M.19/f2); "If I'm in a really messed-up period, I cry along with a ballad and it makes me feel better, but it doesn't give me a message like, 'Aha, now I'm going to take revenge on him like that'" (K.S.19/f2); "For me, high-quality music is classical music, and I do listen to that sometimes, but when I need to clean the house, of course I'm not going to put on opera. I'll put on *Plitak potok* to drive me" (S.L.17/f2).

Between Ideology and Practice: Ideological–Behavioral Reception

Since the emergence of BT/TF as mainstream popular music, the genre has become a frequent subject of public debate and criticism. Its critics are no longer limited to proponents of "Western" music; a considerable portion of turbo-folk audiences has also developed a negative reception of trap, while parts of the hip-hop scene view it as a commercialized and diluted version of earlier (t)rap. For instance, videos of trappers on TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube attract enthusiastic responses from young fans but also numerous critical comments that label this generation as "degenerate" or frame it in similar terms (see Vukojević 2024).

Much of this criticism focuses on the alleged harmful influence of trap on young people, with packed venues at trap performances often cited as evidence of youth "decadence." Hostility intensifies when children of early primary-school age attend concerts or post TikTok videos featuring trap songs. It was precisely in response to such claims that this research sought to examine whether the thesis of youth "degeneration" is empirically grounded, whether it reflects a logical fallacy, and whether members of *Generation Z* themselves perceive their generation as "degenerate."

Interlocutors largely reject the idea that trap music has a direct behavioral influence on listeners. Most stress that they are able to distinguish between music and real life and that listening does not translate into imitation. As S.B.17/f2 explains, "Trap can't influence me, because I grew up with a different kind of music and I think differently. I know it's just a song and that it can't affect me. Maybe it can influence younger generations." Similarly, K.S.19/f2 emphasizes personal autonomy: "It's not like if I listen to 'whores, money, drugs,' I'm suddenly going to do that... "I'm against drugs. I'm a student, I was raised well, I behave normally, and that doesn't stop me from listening to Crni Cerak."

Several interlocutors frame such claims as naive. As D.D.22/m2 puts it, "The idea that you'll start taking drugs just because songs talk about it seems naive. It's like saying that if you play Counter-Strike, you'll go out and start shooting people." Others stress that lyrical content does not determine personal behavior: "If Nucci sings something rude about girls, that doesn't mean I'll start treating girls badly. I behave the way I was raised" (T.M.21/m2).

At the same time, interlocutors acknowledge that some individuals may imitate such lifestyles, but they consider this a minority: "Of course there are people who actually live like in those songs, but that's a small number. If everyone behaved like that, it would be chaos" (M.M.22/m2). Explanations are instead sought in upbringing and broader social contexts. D.Z.19/f2 argues that music alone cannot fundamentally shape behavior: "It's not really for children to listen to Nucci and Voyage, but if you raise them in a certain way, that music can't change them that much."

More generally, interlocutors emphasize individual responsibility and socialization. As D.S.21/m2 explains, themes such as partying, cars, money, and alcohol reflect realities of youth culture, but "you have to understand for yourself what's good and what's not." Although some fear that younger listeners may be more susceptible, most stress that the music has not turned them or their peers into "criminals or delinquents."

Responsibility is therefore located primarily outside the music itself. According to M.I.19/f2, "It's silly to blame singers for influencing children, because they don't make music for kids but for young people who go out to clubs." In a similar vein, D.Z.19/f2 stresses the role of upbringing and media literacy: "Everything you see in films, on TikTok, or in songs isn't reality. It's all part of entertainment and profit. The biggest responsibility lies with parents, but it's easier to blame someone else."

These statements indicate that interlocutors maintain a reflexive distance toward BT/TF and reject the idea of a direct influence of popular culture in which music automatically produces behavior. They present themselves as autonomous listeners capable of distinguishing fiction from reality and *gas* from life choices, emphasizing upbringing, socialization, and personal moral frameworks as the primary filters of reception. Listening to trap is therefore not experienced as the internalization of its content but as a controlled engagement with symbolic material, comparable to playing video games or watching films, where enjoyment is separated from imitation.

An ambivalent figure of the "other" emerges, namely younger generations or "children," imagined as more susceptible to influence. While perceiving themselves as immune, interlocutors shift potential vulnerability onto future audiences, thus reproducing a broader discourse about the dangers of popular culture for youth. In these narratives, responsibility for the meaning and effects of music is located not in the medium itself but in the listener's capacity to interpret it. Music is therefore understood less as an educative force than as an affective stimulus whose impact depends on the listener's habitus. Thus, BT/TF appears not as a cause of deviance but as a reflection of existing desires, frustrations, and the broader conditions of contemporary society.

Interlocutors also stress that trap performers themselves are rarely authentic in relation to the lifestyles they describe, interpreting lyrical themes primarily as products of marketing and trends. As K.S.19/f2 remarks, "What they sing about doesn't mean they live like that. Maybe he has a girlfriend he's been with for seven years and doesn't drink or take drugs," while M.M.22/m2 adds that in songs the same performer may sing "about sleeping with two girls a day and coke being all around him." Similarly, D.Z.19/f2 argues that artists sing about "whatever will be watched and listened to. It's marketing and profit." As M.I.19/f2 observes, "At school we analyze poetry and metaphors, but when someone sings something in a song, people take it literally. They probably write about what works, not about their own lives."

These narratives suggest that interlocutors do not perceive BT/TF as a confessional or autobiographical form but rather as a performative discourse shaped by the music industry. Performers are viewed less as authentic "voices of reality" than as professionals who play roles within a market-oriented system. Lyrics are therefore interpreted primarily as products of strategy, trends, and profit rather than as reflections of personal experience.

Such reception has a double implication. First, it further undermines the assumption that music directly shapes behavior. If performers themselves are not expected to live the lifestyles they describe, lyrics are more easily read as fiction or as genre conventions. Second, interlocutors display a notable degree of media literacy, distinguishing artistic discourse from literal meaning, music from life, and marketing from biographical reality. Trap is thus not experienced as a truthful account of the world, but as a stylized narrative adapted to the logics of visibility and consumption. What is ultimately questioned is not only the moral value of its content, but also its ontological status: BT/TF appears less as a representation of social reality than as a simulation of lifestyle shaped by trends.

This raises the question of the models on which such narratives are based. A key reference point is American mainstream trap, which emerged from the context of the U.S. "Dirty South," where crack cocaine became a pervasive element of everyday life and a central lyrical topos. As trap entered the global mainstream, these themes underwent processes of glocalization. In the contemporary context, psychoactive substances have also become a visible component of certain social settings, particularly nightlife, parties, and club culture. At the same time, the early post-socialist period of the 1990s, when crime was partly normalized through media representations, cultivated value patterns that persist today in transformed form, often reframed as fashion, *gas*, or trend. These symbolic frameworks were subsequently transposed into trap, which can be understood as a further stage in the evolution of turbo-folk (Dumnić-Vilotijević 2020; Barać 2025b). Certain semantic patterns characteristic of turbo-folk thus reappear in trap as its cultural "offspring" (Barać 2025a).

Breaking the Club – Closing: Conclusion

This article examines Balkan trap/trap-folk (BT/TF) as a socio-musical phenomenon within a specific sociocultural context. It focuses on the second generation of Serbian migrants in the Vicenza area, whose identities and cultural practices are shaped by transnational embeddedness between the country of origin and the country of immigration. Within this framework, BT/TF is approached as a complex musical and media formation in which trap sound matrices intertwine with diverse Balkan musical traditions, while audiovisual aesthetics and thematic topoi stabilize an imaginary of the Balkans as a space of passion, nightlife, violence, poverty, crime, and "hot blood."

The empirical basis of the study rests on ethnographic research conducted between January and June 2023, complemented by earlier interviews with the first generation and a pilot study in 2022. Fieldwork included semi-structured in-depth and biographical interviews with fifteen second-generation interlocutors aged 16 to 22, as well as participant observation in musical settings such as clubbing, private gatherings, celebrations, and car rides. The analytical framework combines a revised concept of musical habitus, adapted for non-musicians and migratory contexts, with thematic-narrative analysis. Reception is understood as the cognitive, emotional, reflexive and cultural processing of musical content and is analytically differentiated into ideological, artistic, and behavioral dimensions in order to avoid reductionist assumptions about the inevitable influence of popular music on behavior.

The analysis shows that the musical habitus of the second generation is initially formed within the private sphere of a "displaced homeland," where the first generation recreates symbolic frameworks of the country of origin through migrant networks and identity-preservation practices. In this context, music functions as an emotional and mnemonic element of migration, recalling previous life and reinforcing belonging. In the diaspora, "domestic" music is therefore perceived inclusively, while genre and ideological divisions from the homeland are relativized in favor of a broader category of "ours." Through this pre-reflexive adoption of sonic patterns, music becomes embedded in habitus and shapes later musical preferences and identity practices.

During secondary socialization, particularly in adolescence, musical taste and musical ties become key mechanisms of integration and differentiation. Interlocutors display a degree of cultural and musical omnivorousness stemming from their bicultural position and access to diverse repertoires. Movement across styles is often situational and strategic. Some describe phases of listening to Italian or global music as a performative way of fitting into peer groups, followed by a return to "our" repertoire once stronger ties with compatriots are established. In this sense, taste functions as an adaptive practice mediating

between integration and orientation toward one's ethno-national community, while musical ties emerge as markers of generational intimacy and shared migratory experience.

The nightclub space emerges as a central site of musical ties and identity articulation. It functions as a hybrid sonic arena where global and local flows intersect, from EDM and global pop to turbo-folk and BT/TF, while recreating affective and behavioral codes associated with the homeland. Within this "Balkan" microcosm, ethno-national tensions are relativized and Balkanness appears as an integrative form of belonging, a kind of "new Yugoslavism" grounded in shared understandings of temperament, collectivism, and ritualized nightlife. At the same time, terms such as *slavi* and media representations of the Balkans as "wild" or "problematic" operate as ambivalent yet often positively reinterpreted reference points in processes of self-identification.

In the dimension of ideological and artistic reception, interlocutors synthesize BT/TF primarily through the motifs of *gas*, "whores–money–drugs," and status symbols associated with performative self-display. However, "message" is usually understood in a moral or emotional sense, while BT/TF itself is experienced mainly as entertainment intended to produce vibe and energy. Implicit ideological patterns, such as the normalization of hedonism, consumerist aspiration, and neoliberal self-branding, remain largely naturalized as genre conventions. Identification with lyrics therefore occurs selectively and fragmentarily.

Most interlocutors consider lyrics the weakest element of trap, whereas musical and production qualities are highly valued. Rhythm, beat, and the perceived "cleanliness" of sound and vocals are cited as primary reasons for listening, confirming a shift from semantic toward sensory-affective reception. BT/TF is thus consumed primarily for its functional capacity to organize mood and produce energy rather than as poetic text. Its artistic status is evaluated ambivalently and often measured through criteria of authenticity, emotional depth, and historical continuity, which leads interlocutors to compare it with neofolk and turbo-folk. Yet the category of art itself proves largely irrelevant for listening practices, as functional effectiveness tends to override aesthetic judgment.

Within ideological-behavioral reception, interlocutors consistently reject the idea of a direct influence of trap on behavior. Instead, they emphasize upbringing, socialization, and the ability to distinguish fiction from reality. Analogies with video games and films illustrate that the consumption of cultural content does not necessarily entail imitation. At the same time, vulnerability is often projected onto younger audiences, reflecting broader public discourses of moral concern. Responsibility for potential effects of music is therefore located not in the genre itself but in the social conditions of reception, particularly family, education, and the wider media environment.

Narratives about the inauthenticity of performers further destabilize literal readings of BT/TF. Trappers are perceived as actors within a market-driven industry whose lyrics follow trends and marketing strategies rather than autobiographical experience. This perception reinforces interlocutors' media literacy and frames the genre as a stylized fantasy of lifestyle rather than a representation of social reality.

Nevertheless, precisely through this symbolic dimension, BT/TF functions as a significant marker of cultural and generational identity. Although often perceived as thematically repetitive or artistically limited, it distinguishes this generation both from their parents and from peers unfamiliar with Balkan cultural codes. At the same time, the genre connects them with generational peers in the homeland and with other young people of Balkan origin in Vicenza who share similar cultural references and forms of sociality. The reception of BT/TF thus emerges as a complex assemblage of habitus, affect, situational uses of music, and transnational identity negotiations, in which ideology is rarely recognized as explicit message but is instead lived as atmosphere, identity marker, and the shared "energy" of cultural intimacy.

Declaration on the Use of AI Tools

The author confirms that this manuscript is the result of original academic work. ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used as a language assistance tool for translation from Serbian into English and for editing to improve grammar and readability. All outputs were reviewed and revised by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the final content of the manuscript.

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Lazar Barać
Etnografski institut SANU
lazar.barac@ei.sanu.ac.rs

„Na koži Balkan istetoviran": recepcija balkanskog trepa/trep-folka kroz muzičke habituse druge generacije srpskih migranata u Vićenci

Rad ispituje recepciju balkanskog trepa/trep-folka (BT/TF) među drugom generacijom srpskih migranata u oblasti Vićence, polazeći od pretpostavke da se ovaj žanr najadekvatnije može razumeti u specifičnom sociokulturnom kontekstu. Osnovni cilj rada jeste da se analiza recepcije i interpretacije BT/TF-a postavi kroz prizmu muzičkog habitusa oblikovanog u migratornim i transnacionalnim uslovima. U tom okviru se razmatra: (a) kako pripadnici druge generacije konzumiraju ovaj žanr, koja mu značenja pripisuju i na koji način on utiče na njihove identitetske prakse i socijalne odnose; (b) da li BT/TF funkcioniše kao kulturni marker u procesima samoidentifikacije, kao sredstvo simboličkog razgraničavanja ili, naprotiv, kao instrument povezivanja sa drugim migrantskim, pre svega „balkanskim", zajednicama; i (c) u kojoj meri su opravdane redukcionističke pretpostavke o direktnom uticaju popularne muzike na ponašanje mladih u kontekstu migratornog habitusa i transnacionalnih identiteta.

Metodološki okvir rada zasniva se na: a) konceptu muzičkog habitusa koji obuhvata primarnu muzičku socijalizaciju, muzičke veze, muzička značenja i odnos muzike i vaspitanja, prilagođene kontekstu „ne-muzičara" i migracije i na b) tematsko-narativnoj analizi koja se fokusira na sadržaj iskaza sagovornika, ponavljajuće teme i obrasce značenja u njihovim narativima. Etnografska građa prikupljena je putem polustrukturisanih intervjua sa petnaest sagovornika I sagovornica starosne dobi od 16 do 22 godine i putem posmatranja sa učestovanjem u raznim muzičkim kontekstima (druženja, proslave, vožnje automobilom i noćni provod).

Krovni zaključci rada pokazuju da se muzički habitus druge generacije formira u okviru „dislocirane domovine", gde muzika iz zemlje porekla ima centralnu ulogu u emotivnom i identitetskom oblikovanju. Tokom adolescencije, muzički ukus i muzičke veze postaju mehanizmi integracije i diferencijacije, pri čemu se razvija oblik kulturne i muzičke „omnivornosti" tj. "svaštojeđa". BT/TF funkcioniše kao snažan generacijski i transnacionalni marker: povezuje

mlade balkanskog porekla, suspenduje etno-nacionalne razlike u migrantskom kontekstu i proizvodi osećaj „balkanstva“ kao nove forme pripadnosti. Recepcija ovog žanra pretežno je senzorno-afektivna i funkcionalna – usmerena ka „gasu“, energiji i atmosferi – dok se tekstovi doživljavaju kao slabo relevantni i često kao fikcija. Sagovornici odbacuju tezu o direktnom uticaju muzike na ponašanje, ističući ulogu vaspitanja, moralnog okvira i medijske pismenosti. BT/TF se stoga ne doživljava kao uzrok devijacije, već kao simulacija životnog stila i kao simbolički prostor u kojem se prelamaju kulturni identitet, generacijska pripadnost i transnacionalno iskustvo.

Ključne reči: antropologija muzike i migracija, balkanski trep/trep-folk, popularna muzika, Balkan, muzički habitus, recepcija

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