Music, Migration and Minorities: Perspectives and Reflections

Glasba, migracije in manjšine: perspektive in refleksije

**Ključne besede:** glasba, migracije, manjšine, etnomuzikologija, teoretični okviri

**Keywords:** music, migration, minorities, ethnomusicology, theoretical frameworks

**IZVLEČEK**

Članek ponuja kratko predstavitev glavnih tokov etnomuzikoloških raziskav, ki se navezujejo na glasbe, migracije in manjšine ter podaja razmišljanja o njihovem teoretičnem in metodološkem okviru. Posebno pozornost namenja presečišču z drugimi etnomuzikološkimi področji preučevanja in vlogi raziskav, osredotočenih na migracije pri izzivanju metodološkega nacionalizma in zahodnocentričnih pogledov.

**ABSTRACT**

The article offers a brief presentation of the main streams of ethnomusicological research on music, migration and minorities while reflecting on their theoretical and methodological frameworks. It pays particular attention to the intersection with other ethnomusicological sub-fields and its role in challenging the methodological nationalism and Western-centric views.

This thematic issue traces the points of intersection among music, migration and minorities in various geographical areas and socio-political contexts and in regard to contemporary forms of mobility, transnational migration and political, social and

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1 The terms “minorities” and “migrants” are closely intertwined and loosely defined within the public, official and scholarly discourse, especially when considering people with ethnic backgrounds from other countries and cultures (and from the second or third generation or those even further back). In this issue, therefore, we have decided to remain within the terminology and conceptual frameworks used by the authors of the articles, which also reflects a plurality of different understandings and uses of these categories.
economic transformations at the global level. It strives to offer a multifaceted model for thinking about migration, power, control and resistance as well as minorities and their music-making. This issue derives from the project “Music and Minorities: (Trans) cultural Dynamics in Slovenia After the Year 1991” and is a result of the recognition accorded the scholarly treatment of music, migration and minorities, a field of study which has taken tremendous strides over the past two decades. One of the reasons for this development has been the research and personality of Professor Svanibor Pettan, whose pioneering work has helped the field gain institutional and scholarly recognition. This thematic issue is devoted to Professor Pettan and opens with five texts written by his colleagues, collaborators and friends.

Articles in this issue combine various ethnomusicological approaches and perspectives in order to embrace and rethink the music practices of marginalized individuals and communities. In this article we will first outline the dominant research perspectives on music, migration and minorities by discussing their important links between the fields of urban and applied ethnomusicology. We will also shed light on the approaches which aim to challenge racialized and essentialized approaches to understanding the categories of minority and migrant. By this we mean a particular methodological nationalism that derives from the strong division between us/them, home/host, dominant/minority cultures in specific nation-state political settings. In the last section we provide insight into the main themes covered in this issue as well as articles’ short summaries.

1. Research on Music, Migration and Minorities

Ethnomusicological research focusing on migrant communities, refugee groups, and urban transformations emerged in the early 1980s. These works challenged the dominant canon of ethnomusicological fieldwork as relating to the context of isolated rural communities and other remote areas. Their focus instead was on more dynamic social settings and migrant or minority communities within the urban environment, including rural-urban migrations or refugee groups. This is why the study of minorities and migrations has been closely related to development of the field of urban ethnomusicology, which gradually gained legitimacy starting in the 1980s. From the late 1980s onward the music “of” the city emerged as an important field of study for ethnomusicologists.

2 The project was funded by the Slovenian Research Agency under the number J6-8261.
particularly as related to the question of migration. In his reflection on ethnomusicologists working in the cities they live in, Araújo points out the importance of “bringing home ethnomusicology to the urban context” and as a kind of ethical question which recognizes the political dimension of academic research. The newly emergent fields of sound studies have fostered novel approaches to research on music and sound in relation to migration. The theme of urban sound practices calls for the application of approaches from architecture, urban planning and space representation as well as the discourses of urban soundscapes and visual arts, the aesthetic of noise and new media. These new approaches shifted focus from the musical practices of migrants or minorities to the role of listening and sonic environments in their everyday negotiations of power and control.

The second important stream of thought within the research on music in relation to migration and minorities has been informed by the approach of applied ethnomusicology. For scholars working with marginalized individuals and communities, a focus on the socio-political relevance and practice-oriented nature of the research is particularly important. A number of scholars (Timothy Rice, Jonathan Stock, Jeff Todd Titon, Anthony Seeger, Gregory Barz and Timothy Cooley, Samuel Araújo, Ursula Hemetek, Klisala Harison, Elizabeth Mackinlay and Svanibor Pettan) advocate collaboration not only as a method of field research but as an epistemological concept which recognizes the essential relationship between fieldwork and theory. They challenge the purity, neutrality and detachment associated with academic research and the idea of knowledge produced by intellectual communities, and call for knowledge produced in collaboration with the communities or research partners in general. They aim to stimulate discussion about the most efficient ethical and methodological solutions for the benefit of everyone involved in the research process. As one of the fruitful approaches that is grounded in a collaborative, action-related methodology is Participatory Action Research (PAR) – an approach also taken in articles in this issue (see those by Caruso and Sağlam). Engendered by the work of Latin American theorists such as Paulo Freire, Orlando Fals Borda and Guillermo Vasco, this methodology assumes collaboration to be a fundamental epistemological and political process as well as a collective transformative praxis. It leads to a different kind of knowledge produced “by” and most importantly “with” the people and communities.

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under study, in addition to taking into consideration its emancipatory potential. This approach appears to be particularly fruitful in research situated at the intersection of music-making, forced migration, violence and conflict, and which would also appear to be a particularly strong line of inquiry in ethnomusicological scholarship.

The ethnomusical streams of inquiry presented above also tend to problematize the dominant approaches of methodological nationalism and cultural essentialism. Particularly in the European context, the discourse of identity has been heavily emphasized when researching the musical activity of migrants or minorities. Often following the nation-state logic, the underlying assumption of this approach is that migrants’ activities are linked to ethnic or national identities, while neglecting the many “non-ethnic” identifications or senses of belonging connected to religion, work, family and social contacts.

In the 1990s a significant shift took place whereby culture and identity were understood as a constantly changing process and field of negotiation. Negotiated identities, especially when relating to migrants or minorities, are often the subject of ethnic categorization, group identifications or labeling by “others”. Scholars take a critical stance in understanding collective cultural identity as necessarily or even exclusively defined by ethnic, social and generational homogeneity. Approaches in the field of minority and migration studies, especially those connected to music, largely reject a view of minority groups as bearers of an exclusively national identity from their country of
origin, and so they spurn the concept of methodological nationalism.\textsuperscript{18} They take a critical stance on the practices of racialization,\textsuperscript{19} through which construction of “difference” or the “other” are essentialized and reduced. Instead they insist that practices of identification supersede the dualism of us/them and the dominant culture vs. migrant/ minority culture, and call for a fuller awareness of cultural complexities and those dynamics which coincide with ongoing globalization processes.\textsuperscript{20} These works further emphasize that when research is conceptualized around the discourses of ethnic identity, it can fall prey to not just a perpetuation of the national/istic view but also to First World (i.e. Global North) epistemologies and liberal views.\textsuperscript{21}

An understanding of migrant and minority communities as bounded entities has been the target of criticism along with suggestions that they should rather be understood as the idiom, position and claim\textsuperscript{22} upon which communities build identifications. The process of defining migrant identity “in a space that encourages hybridity” led Espinoza to suggest that we should understand migrants as “hybrid identities in the third space”.\textsuperscript{23} This third space may be a musically reconstructed past, but full of meanings and current identifications that characterize their present habitus. Furthermore, migration discourse cannot be understood in isolation from other intersecting social relations such as gender, race, class, language, economic and social status, disability, age and sexuality. This intersectional view is examined by Svanibor Pettan’s opening article, which calls for a necessary expansion of the still dominant ethnic approach in understanding minorities and minority-majority relations. In this regard the new approaches also encourage an understanding of music-making within the context of globalizing currents as well as transnational and transcultural networks. In their plea for a transnational approach in the study of music and migration, Nadia Kiwan and Ulrike Hanna Meinhof make the case that from the transcultural perspective the issue of belonging and origin is irrelevant when people interact with others.\textsuperscript{24} Martiniello also suggests that in being faced with a growing post-racial urban generation which engages in “artistic collaboration that is both locally rooted and transnationally connected,”\textsuperscript{25} it is imperative that we practice more nuanced thinking about the categorizations of migrants and their music. In a similar vein, Wimmer suggests we should take a broader perspective and know “when

(not) to think about ethnicity” in terms of institutional influences, social relations and classifications, territorialization and random events.

2. Description of the Main Themes and Structure of the Issue

Except for the case study focusing on Sri Lanka, the articles in this issue address music, migration and minorities in the context of contemporary Europe yet with a strong emphasis on transnational music-making and applied research.

The opening article by Svanibor Pettan is a methodological contribution to the study of music and minorities in both the political and scholarly realm. Taking a critical view of the still predominant ethnic criteria in the research on music and minorities, the author proposes a more refined approach that transcends the fixed positions of minority and majority by placing their interrelationship and mutual encounters at the center of his analysis. With a special emphasis on the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) and previous and current definitions of minority, Pettan distinguishes ten key factors that define the majority/minority relationship: ethnicity, race, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, social or economic deprivation. On the basis of these key-concepts he further develops ten thematically profiled research models that are intended as a methodological toolkit for ongoing and future research into music and minorities. Each model is supplemented by a selection of references and accompanied by the author’s own reflection of their usage in given research contexts.

The first block of articles focuses on choir movements in Germany and Slovenia. They deal with the role of amateur and professional choral singing in building transcultural connections among migrants and minorities and their musical life-worlds. Through an analysis of the processes of public representations of Africanness, Mojca Kovačič reveals that these connections have shattered the apparent ethnic homogeneity of the African community in Slovenia, since non-African musicians play important roles as choir leaders and creators of the musical repertoire. Emphasizing the importance of culturally distinctive spaces to them and their children, members of the Sankofa choir support the need for social differentiation while also creating musical content in both a unique and pragmatic way. Their need for aesthetic satisfaction goes beyond the desire for ethnic ties and thus “opening the door” to non-Africans and taking the heterogeneity of identities to a new level. Further examination of the social positions and actions of individuals in the African diaspora reveals the “second-generation advantage” which allows them to draw on cultural resources from both the society they live in and the culture of their parents. They are not compelled to fight for their economic, social and educational opportunities.

legal place in the new country (in contrast to their parents) and they are a position to apply their creative activities to challenge dominant discourses of racial, ethnic or social belongings in the Slovenian society.

Transcultural music-making is also present within the “migrant choirs” featured in Dorit Klebe’s article. She compares the organization, repertoire, representation strategies and memberships of two Berlin-based choirs. Both of them gather together migrants, refugees and the (self-)defined “majority” population. The first choir functioned as a working-class signing collective of Turkish migrants in the 1970s and 1980s and maintained its cultural homogeneity through Turkish singers, repertoire and language, while also collaborating with non-Turkish instrumentalists. By contrast, the second choir maintains links between refugees and “locals” in a very structured way: membership is based on the condition that a refugee must be brought into the choir by a Berlin resident. As a result the choir members are mostly volunteers from refugee organizations as well as refugees themselves. Their public engagement is structurally maintained through public performances, sing-alongs in different contexts as well as a heterogeneous repertoire in terms of genres and geographical areas. Klebe further emplaces the membership structure and activities of the two choirs within the framework of two different principles. The first choir functioned within a “self-help principle” because it served as a network of mutual assistance that helped the community of migrant workers maintain ties with Turkey, to integrate into new society or even return to their home country. The second choir is an example of the “tandem partner principle” characterized by cooperation between Berlin residents and refugees.

The second bloc of articles discusses institutional approaches to and official representations of the music and culture of migrant and minority communities in Slovenia. The articles by Urša Šivic and Drago and Rebeka Kunej thus complement each other in their top-down perspective and interest in cultural politics. The first article explores the official discourse of institutional policies that finance and guide the cultural activities of migrant and minority communities, while the second article deals with the emergence and functioning of minority ethnic groups that formed in Slovenia after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. These two articles are primarily based on desk research, including official policy guidelines and other documents, but also on digital-media analysis and interviews with leading representatives of cultural policy and minority folklore groups.

Kunej’s article focuses on the public representation and (self)image projected by ex-Yugoslav minority associations in Slovenia. Not surprisingly, in ethnically defined minority associations, folklore music and dance are identity markers by which individuals create an emotional connection with the “homeland” through the discourse of an imagined past, tradition and authenticity, thereby reinforcing their position of difference in Slovenian society. The authors claim that the purpose of minority folklore groups is “the desire to enrich the cultural space in the new country and to integrate into the society in which they live,” yet more detailed ethnographic research would certainly reveal more complex practices behind the official discourse and cultural formations.

The article by Urša Šivic examines the funding of minority and migrant cultural programs by Slovenian state institutions since 1991. By analyzing the transformation of public calls for the financing of cultural projects, she reveals to whom such documents
related and what cultural representations were expected of minorities and migrants. The article analyzes the official policy discourse that created the dominant rhetoric and attitudes toward migrants and minorities while also contributing to their self-perception and self-positioning within Slovenian society. Šivic asserts that the public call for the funding of cultural projects enabled new minorities and migrants to have rights which more closely approximated those of formally recognized autochthonous minorities. Yet she simultaneously emphasizes that institutional procedures still marginalize the cultural expressions of minorities and migrants. Although public calls for funding have become relatively flexible in recent years, one might question whether they are in fact addressing the transcultural and global dynamics and hybrid cultural expressions of minority and migrant musicians. As a result, despite the fact that the public call does not demand this, in their project applications the cultural associations which represent migrants and minorities will often equate minority with ethnicity, especially in the realm of music and dance. Moreover, although public-financing policies do not clearly define the categories of migrant and minority, members of these communities tend to perpetuate a stereotypical image of the minority and migrant cultures in order to meet the expectations of Slovenian society and obtain the necessary institutional support.

The last article in this second bloc also addresses the issue of migrational flow after the dissolution of Yugoslavia - but this time from the perspective of Bosnian refugees in Slovenia in the 1990s. Bartulović and Kozorog examine the genre of sevdalinka and its role in the complex struggles involved in the process of home-making following Yugoslavia’s social and cultural disintegration. The authors seek to challenge dominant understandings of “refugee music-making” by emphasizing its neglected aspects in the context of transit or temporary migrations. They want to shift our attention from the divisions between refugees and local music-making to those hybrid musical forms created in the dialogue between local communities and temporary migrants/refugees, particularly at moments of political and social uncertainty. In exploring the position of the exile musician(s) and their active usage of sevdalinka’s affective capacities, the authors argue that the collective performance of and listening to sevdalinka in the 1990s helped create new solidarities and musical cooperation between locals and refugees in Slovenia.

The last thematic bloc consists of articles that took approach on music-making (with) in indigenous communities and those of migrants and refugees in relationship to applied ethnomusicology and the collaborative fieldwork. Fulvia Caruso’s article reports on the long-term music and migration project undertaken by her, her students and former students in the city of Cremona, Italy, situated between the regions of Lombardy and Emilia Romagna. The starting point for their project was an assumption that music is a significant medium which not only shapes a new understanding of transnational cultural identity but helps in forming public opinion with respect to city cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Methodologically speaking, the project undertook participatory

28 For the definition and further explanation of the formal categories of “autochthonous” and “new” minorities, see Šivic’s article.
action research and addressed the foreign residents and asylum seekers by establishing three main activities: transcultural musical workshops in schools, musical workshops in reception centers, and the creation of an audio-visual archive of public events. Caruso extensively describes the planned project activities and affords insight into the complexities of collaborative work by writing candidly about the limits and challenges of the chosen approach. She pays particular attention to the process of building an audio-visual archive so as to gain insight into just how foreign residents in Cremona engage with their own national heritage and the role of cultural associations in this process. Furthermore, she addresses the intangible heritage and the project *Culture in dialogo* (dialogue between cultures) aimed at disclosing the coexistence of heritages and cultures of different origins in Cremona. The main idea was to involve foreign residents, migrants and refugees in three museums – Archaeological Museum, Museum of Natural History, and Museum of Rural Civilization – where they would present their music and culture. Because Caruso’s article was being written in the course of this project, more conclusive findings are to be expected.

Hande Sağlam’s article makes the case for biculturalism as well as multiculturalism in diverse cultural spaces in Vienna. The project unfolded in so-called “problem schools” (as defined by the experts and school staff) where some 95 percent of pupils have migrant backgrounds. In collaboration with students at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna and through participatory research methods, music is employed as a two-way communication and way of suspending hierarchical power relations. Sağlam also emphasizes the project’s role in improving interaction between “classical” music pedagogy and ethnomusicology so that pupils might transcend their Eurocentric attitudes toward what is seen as “different” music. She further claims that the project succeeded in heightening the university students’ awareness of a diversity of musical expressions, which was also verified through interviews with students and justified by the interest of schools and universities in continuing the project into the future. The project proved to be applicable to different European educational contexts and might help to improve the university curricula for music students who will later be teaching in diverse cultural environments as well as helping to revise primary-school curricula. The author concludes that the project demonstrates how ethnomusicology can aid in overcoming the nationalist and racist discourses and power relations created by teachers, school systems and their pupils.

The article by Lasanthi Manaranjanie Kalinga Dona is based on research into Sri Lanka’s indigenous Vedda population. It critically points to the Euroamerican-centred idea of modernity and its “developmentalist” narratives, which are built on the assumption of indigenous communities as “pre-modern” subjects who do not interact with the modern world or its technologies. The author’s research was conducted with her students, whereby she sought to stimulate their interest and sensibility to the (musical) culture of indigenous communities. At the same time, through dialogue with the Vedda community leader about worldwide examples of applied ethnomusicological practices in the case of indigenous peoples, she raised awareness among community members about ongoing opportunities for the governmental support of indigenous communities in Sri Lanka. In conclusion the author uses the Vedda’s distinctive musical world as a
model of sustainability and resilience within Catherine Grant’s “Twelve Factors in the Music Vitality and Endangerment Framework” and considers how applied ethnomusicology can empower the members of indigenous communities.

Bibliography

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POVZETEK

Tematski zbornik prikazuje presečišča med glasbo, migracijami in manjšinami v različnih geografskih območjih in družbeno-političnih kontekstih. Na globalni ravni preizprašuje njihova razmerja do sodobnih oblik mobilnosti, transnacionalnih migracij ter političnih, socialnih in gospodarskih transformacij. Prizadeva si ponuditi večplasten model razmišljanja o migracijah, o moči, nadzoru in odporu, ter o manjšinah in njihovem ustvarjanju glasbe. V uvodnem članku so sprva orisani prevladoči raziskovalni pristopi do glasbe, migracij in manjšin, ki so povezani s pomembnimi razpravami s področj urbane in aplikativne etnomuzikologije.

Nato je z zgodovinske perspektive predstavljen zgoščen pregled literature glavnih raziskovalcev in njihovih pristopov na tem področju. Posebej so osvetljena tista dela, katerih cilj je izvzati rasistične in esencializirane pristope k razumevanju kategorij manjšin in migrantov. S tem je kritično zavržen metodološki nacionalizem, ki izhaja iz močne delitve med nami/njimi, domom/gostiteljem, prevladujočimi/manjšinskimi kulturami v specifičnih državnih političnih okoljih. V zadnjem razdelku je ponujen vpogled v glavne teme, ki jih pokrivajo članki v zborniku, pri čemer so izpostavljeni različni sodobni etnomuzikološki pristopi in perspektive pri obravnavi glasbenih praks marginaliziranih posameznikov in skupnosti.