

“SONGS FROM THE HOMETLAND” – POPULAR MUSIC PERFORMANCE AMONG DESCENDANTS OF SLOVENIAN REFUGEES IN ARGENTINA: THE CASE OF “SLOVENSKI INSTRUMENTALNI ANSAMBEL”

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ABSTRACT

“Songs from the homeland” – popular music performance among descendants of Slovenian refugees in Argentina: The case of “Slovenski Instrumentalni Ansambel”

The article presents an anthropological perspective on the selection, transformation and invention of Slovenian popular musical forms among the Slovenian expatriate community in Argentina. Among many descendants, the wish to continue their ancestors’ cultural practices created a “homeland-oriented” community in which their members felt committed to preserving their roots and social memories, and thus to “musically” enacting their Slovenianness. To illustrate this, I will particularly explore the case of the Slovenian Alpine ethno-pop band “Slovenski Instrumentalni Ansambel”, analysing how the migration and memory processes of their antecessors influenced the life of these ethno-pop artists, and how these experiences were appropriated in their music and lyrics.

KEY WORDS: Alpine ethno-pop and popular music, appropriation, diaspora, identity, social memory, Argentina

IZVLEČEK

»Pesmi iz domovine« – Izvedba popularne glasbe med potomci slovenskih beguncev v Argentini:

Primer »Slovenskega Instrumentalnega Ansambla«

Članek z antropološkega stališča obravnava izbor, preobrazbo in odkrivanje slovenskega popularnega glasbenega žanra v skupnosti slovenskih beguncev v Argentini. V želji po nadaljevanju kulturnega udejstvovanja svojih prednikov in iz odgovornosti za ohranjanje korenin in socialnega spomina so potomci ustvarili »zamišljeno skupnost«. Avtorica glasbo analizira kot način sodobnih narodnih praks, s katerimi potomci ohranjajo slovenstvo, s predstavitvijo narodno-zabavnega »Slovenski Instrumentalni Ansambel« pa analizira vpliv migracijskih in spominskih procesov na njihovo življenje in glasbeno ustvarjalnost, zanima pa jo tudi način prisvojitve glasbe in besedila, ki izvirata iz domovine njihovih prednikov.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: popularna in narodno-zabavna glasba, prisvojitve, diaspora, identiteta, socialni spomin, Argentina

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INTRODUCTION

Popular music¹ cannot be separated from the building of diasporic identifications that helps to link the intergenerational members of migrant communities through specific sounds, styles, lyrics and language. From a general point of view, music can be defined as the artificial creation of sounds (Cook 1998: 14). Nevertheless, the elements involved in music production and music consumption are socially constructed and have an inherent meaning (Cook 2001: 178–179). Campos (2006) points out that music is socially listened to and its meanings are shared only within the borders of an interpretive community. In this sense, music is a valuable tool in the analysis of culture and society (Merriam 1980: 13) and also plays a role in the construction of identities (Cook 1998). Because music also reinforces worldviews, it reflects the societal norms and values of those who create and share it.

Cook (1998: 14–15) thinks that music can be a symbol of national or regional identifications among migrant communities, who sometimes strongly cling to their “traditional music”² in order to retain their identity abroad. In a case study, Marty (2015: 90) demonstrates that in the process of migration of Slovenes to Switzerland, a series of triadic relationships between the immigrant communities and the host and source countries. In the migration context, the country of origin remains associated with the destination country through a complex network of sounds and related events (Slobin 1994: 243). On the other hand, as Vovk (2004) showed, music also plays an important role in integration by connecting different Slovenian communities in Argentina. Finally, van Dijck also points out the interrelation between music and memory. In his view, social practices and cultural forms like music are inseparable from the construction of memory and cultural heritage (cf. Baumgartner 1992; van Dijck 2006).

In this sense, my aim is to discuss, from an anthropological perspective, the selection, transformation and invention of Slovenian musical forms in Buenos Aires, particularly among the group “Slovenski Inštrumentalni Ansambel”, exploring how the migration process and processes of communalization (Brow 1990) and identification influenced the life of these Alpine ethno-pop artists, their music and lyrics.³ To show this, I will provide historical contextualization of the band’s songs and lyrics, that is, I will describe the migration process of Slovenian refugees to Argentina after the Second World War. Finally, I will analyse the case using methods of interpretative anthropology together with the tools of Slovenian ethnomusicology and the personal narratives of the actors involved. The main hypothesis stresses that many of the descendants wish to continue their ancestors’ cultural

1 “Popular music” has been a subject of study and heterogeneous definitions in the related disciplines of cultural and media studies, sociology, anthropology, history and women’s studies (cf. Adorno 1941; Frith 1998; Middleton 1990; Bennet 2001; Muršič 1998). Some arguments associate “popular culture” with “mass” and “commercial” (Adorno 1941; Shuker 1994). Other theses link the “popular” with “folk” (Middleton 1990; Firth 1998). Goialde Palacios (2013: 12) also points out the connection of popular music to industry and new technologies.

2 Although the term “traditional music” is ambiguous and has been very widely discussed, is used here to refer to both folk and popular music. It expresses the connection between an ethnic group, in this case study Slovenes, and its musical art form, created and passed down orally through time (Shetuni 2011: 4).

3 This paper is part of a wider research project, started in 2009, which consists of an anthropological approach to migration and identity processes among Slovenian migrants and their descendants in Argentina.

practices and "homeland-orientated" community commitment to the preservation of the roots and social memory. Popular music will be seen as a cultural resource in the construction of a diasporic identity that will help link the intergenerational members of the community to the new environment.⁴

The research method used was mainly qualitative research among the "post-war" Slovenian community in Argentina. The main source of information, insiders' representations or practices that appear repeatedly in the speech or musical activities among the observed group, were collected in ethnographical fieldwork through participant observation at various cultural and musical events and unstructured interviews. However, some information was also gathered through research on Slovenian online communities, due to the importance that these sites have as social communicators and as larger social contexts in which individuals construct collective memory (van Dijck 2006: 358).

CONTEXTUALIZING THE CASE STUDY: THE PROCESS OF THE MIGRATION OF SLOVENIAN REFUGEES TO ARGENTINA

In the context of international overseas immigration policies in Argentina, the first groups of Slovenes migrated during the last quarter of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century due to socioeconomic problems, when Slovenia was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Mislej 1994; Molek 2016a).

A large wave of migrants (25,000) arrived between the two World Wars, attracted by the economic prosperity of Argentina, when Slovenia was part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It involved labourers and peasants from different regions. The decision to migrate was closely connected with the economic problems and to the loss of and reconfiguration of the Slovenian territory after the First World War (Mislej 1994; Kalc 1995). In the case of migrants from the littoral, they were pushed into migration when the border established by the 1920 Rapallo Treaty separated their territory from Slovenia (Kalc 1995). In line with its denationalization policy, the Fascist Italian government denied them their basic ethnic, political and social rights (Genorio 1986). Their mass exile influenced the forms of their ties and the way in which their own institutional network was built up. They remained bastions of "Slovenianness" and were politically committed to the development of Slovenian nationalism in the homeland, especially in the years prior to the Second World War. This particular form of political engagement led them into confrontation with the last flow of Slovenian migrants and their descendants into Argentina: the anti-communist exiles.

This group arrived after the end of the Second World War. About 6,500 Slovenian refugees opposed to the new communist government⁵ came to Argentina and started a

4 In this paper, the concept of the "new environment" refers to the destination countries of Slovenian refugees, in this case Argentina.

5 They included many soldiers who had taken an active part in the Second World War as members of the Slovenian Domobranci (Home Guard) who fought against the Slovenian partisans and their families; many civilians who were afraid of communism or shared anti-communist political and religious sentiments; those who were detractors of the new regime; and people who had been members of the anti-communist collaborationist force and their families.

complex community called “new Slovenes” or “political Slovenes”,⁶ which was formed as a group that was independent from all the previous Slovenian assemblies in Argentina. In the immediate aftermath of the war, most of them moved to neighbouring countries and settled temporarily in Red Cross refugee camps in Austria and Italy, before later migrating to Argentina, Canada and several European countries. However, many of them were imprisoned, executed and buried in unmarked mass graves. Narratives and researchers’ analyses agree that these events were traumatic for the anti-communist fighters and anti-communist civilians (Žigon 2001; Repič 2006). They might have escaped from or been forced to leave their places physically, but perhaps not psychologically (Basu 2001: 332). This forced uprooting initiated the diaspora and deepened the need for group solidarity, identity and cultural preservation, and the constitution of a collective memory would allow them to work through the shock (Mera 2005).

The idea of the *skupnost* (community) had its origin during this period. The refugees began the process of communalization (Brow 1990: 1) in the refugee camps in Austria and Italy (Repič 2006; Molek 2013), where they initiated patterns of action that promoted a sense of shared belonging to the diasporic community. Many of the exiles thought that they would return to their “only and true home” (Fernandez, Repič 2016) after a while. The communal relationships and the cultural performances that promoted the conservation and consolidation of Slovenianness that we can observe nowadays among this study group are socially constructed, as well as culturally and historically determined (Brow 1990: 2) around a shared experience of traumatic displacement and an emphasis on the “myth of return” (Clifford 1997).

Once in Argentina, the majority of these post-war migrants were concentrated principally in greater Buenos Aires, and in Capital Federal, Mendoza and Río Negro.⁷ They organized themselves into national cultural centres, called *domovi* (homes). These Slovene associations were not associated with the Yugoslavian State (1945–1991). However, this situation changed after Slovenia gained independence. After the first stage of “integration” was past, they used the associations as places to build and reinforce their feeling of belonging to a community, and to maintain the collective memories and their identity, which was based on roots metaphors, the relationship with the homeland, strong patriotism, Catholic faith and ideological anti-communism (Molek 2013). They held Slovene mass, school programs, Slovene press and cultural activities (*Zbornik* 1998), such as musical and singing performances, which represented this idea of continuity with the real or imagined homeland. In this context, the language became an identity “treasure to be preserved” and as an inclusion/exclusion symbol: “The preservation of the language means a lot to us, it means the survival of Slovenianness, the bond to our homeland, and the preservation of our community.”

This would allow them to return to their homeland when the revolution had passed. There were various strategies for the preservation of “Slovenianness”, and the descendants feel a duty to work for their ancestors’ homeland. For instance, the group celebrates many anniversaries including the annual commemoration for the victims of the Second World

6 When they arrived in Argentina, the previous Slovene migrant inflow between the two World Wars were categorized in this interactional relationship as “old”, whereas the “new” assumed this mantle as part of their identity.

7 The refugees gathered following migration and family networks which began to develop in Slovenia or in the refugee camps.

War, as well as various cultural activities from concerts, theatre performances, music festivals, art exhibitions and conferences, to parties like Carnival, celebrations, fairs, etc. The activities serve as moments for relaxation and entertainment and usually bring together the different generations. Today, whenever there is such an event, music is always present, especially Slovenian Alpine ethno-pop.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

One February night in 2016, during the *Pustna veselica* (Carnival) in *Slovenski Dom Carapachay*, I happened upon the fortieth-anniversary celebration of *Slovenski Instrumentalni Ansambel*, the most famous band in the community. That day, I realized that in all the materials I had read on Slovenians in Argentina, the topic of music, specifically popular music, had not received sufficient attention. In contrast, it is common to find references to Slovenian music among Slovenian migrants and their descendants as an important diacritic of national belonging. In my ethnographic experience, many of the interviewed descendants emphasized that music is an important part of their cultural life and tradition which they consider crucial to share with the new generations.

Vovk (2004: 43), who studied serious art music performances among the "old" and "new" Slovenes in Argentina, asserts that in the post-war community, the Slovenian Catholic Church, Slovenian Saturday School, Slovenian Cultural Campaign, Slovenian media and their *domovi* or associations were places and institutions where Slovenian musical practices were reproduced (Vovk 2004: 43). I was able to verify this during my participant observation at concerts, social events and commemorations at the *Slovenska hiša* and *Naš dom* associations in San Justo and at *Slovenski Dom Carapachay*. Moreover, during fieldwork in Catholic religious services at the *Slovenska Hiša* in San Carlos de Bariloche – Río Negro and *Slovenski dom v Mendoza* (Mendoza Province), I also noticed that the priests and parishioners sang religious songs in Slovene.

Volk explains that choral singing has been, and is still, one of the most popular cultural activities in Slovenia, and that it also accompanied the refugees to the new land. Historically, group singing has been a deep-rooted practice of the Slovenes (Kumer 2002: 12). In the context of the "national awakening" at the end of the 19th century, the process of national construction mainly involved folk music, which were performed nationally in the form of choirs (Kovačič 2015: 16). Folk songs were established as one of the key elements of Slovenian musical heritage (Kumer 2002: 7).⁸

Nevertheless, Volk's research and other studies left out popular Slovenian genres – Alpine ethno-pop, polkas, waltzes, pop and rock and roll – that became cultural diacritics⁹ adopted by the actors in the new environment. In informal conversations, many of the people interviewed admitted to liking Slovenian popular music genres, listening to some records and dancing to them. Many of them claimed that they liked listening to Čuki, Andrej

8 Folk songs are a significant source of information about Slovenian material culture, customs and reactions to historical events (Kumer 1975: 134).

9 I am using the term "diacritic" to describe a cultural feature used by the group to determine dynamic boundaries on an interactive background. Identities are historically contextualized categories, in other words, dynamic, flexible, and changeable in specific social interactions (Cucho 2007; Hall 2013).

Šifrer, Oto Pestner, Aleksander Mežek, Modriani, Adi Smolar or Vlado Kreslin, among the most commonly named. Others stated that they listened to Slovenian choirs like Perpetuum Jazzile. *Narodno-zabavna glasba* (Alpine ethno-pop) was the most frequently mentioned genre by interviewees in the category of “political Slovenes”.¹⁰ Many interlocutors emphasized a taste for “ensembles” (a label that usually denotes an ethno-pop band), such as Ansambel bratov Avsenik, Ansambel Lojzeta Slaka, Igor in zlati zvoki or Alpski Kvintet. I also found it at commemorative events, at certain music festivals, in other social and sports events held at the *domovi* (cultural centres), as well as at community parties where ensembles or rock bands perform to entertain the public, who show their excitement by clapping their hands rhythmically.

Historically, this Slovenian musical genre emerged in the early 1950s (Muršič 1998; Kovačič 2015). After being initially popularized by the Avsenik brothers and receiving radio airplay, musicians quickly appropriated it and began to perform this genre on festive occasions. It included various pre-existing musical expressions of the wider region surrounding Slovenia, as well as influences from jazz and the polkas played by the Slovenian diaspora in the USA (Zorman 2016). The genre finally mixed in traditional folk music (Muršič, Kovačič 2015: 93), combining folk instrumental musical practices with singing (Kovačič 2015: 96). It established a specific constellation of signifiers such as lyrics, clothing and attitudes, as well as a complex system of musical structures, embellishments and instrumentation (Zorman 2016), where the accordion stood out and became the central instrument of the genre (Kovačič 2015). Although it is principally based on the musical style of just one Slovenian region (Gorenjska), over time it has become highly popular and rose to the status of an “authentic Slovenian tradition”. Its popularity spread rapidly throughout Alpine Europe and around the world (Zorman 2016).

As the current case of *Slovenski Inštrumentalni Ansambel* highlights, for the Slovenian political migrants in Argentina, Slovenian Alpine ethno-pop¹¹ is an important part of their long-lasting nationalism practices. The genre is a cultural resource that helps link the intergenerational members of the community through specific sounds and lyrics in order to preserve the idea of *skupnost* (community), communal relationships and belonging.¹² This musical identity requires the organization of musical events that promote the creative participation of the young members, even if this implies shifting towards new musical hybrids, implying what Muršič (1998: 285) refers as the “autochthonisation process”, i.e. local musicians ceasing to copy musical styles and starting to transform and adapt them.

10 This does not mean that the actors linked to the other Slovenian migration flows don't identify the musical genre as “authentically” Slovenian or that they don't listen to it, but in this paper I only want to concentrate on the case study at hand, as I am researching how actors can appropriate a genre and compose a song to express national feelings and loyalties.

11 Other terms that refer to this music are national entertainment music (Muršič 1998), national-fun music, Oberkrainer music, Slovenian polka, Slovenian folk music, Alpine folk music, Alpine-style music, folk-entertainment music, ethno-pop and ethnic popular music.

12 Kunej and Kunej (2016: 57) describe a similar process among the Slovenians and their descendants in the USA. In their case study, dance and music also play a role in the persistence of Slovenianness, especially among the younger generations, among whom the ability to speak the language has already declined.

THE ROLE OF "SLOVENSKI INSTRUMENTALNI ANSAMBEL" IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Popular music is becoming a field of study of the individual need of the social actors to interact with social and personal memory structures in order to obtain a surer sense of their personal and social identity. Identities and memory constitute active processes that belong to both the future and the past. While cultural identities are a matter of "becoming" and "being" (Hall 2013: 351), social memory is a symbolic construct originated in the present and produced within social relationships (Aceves 2000: 8). On one hand, cultural identities are points of identification constructed through memory, narratives and myth (Hall 2013), built in senses of territorial and social rootedness, which continue to give people ontological security in a world of perceived movement (Basu 2001: 335). Memories are not stored randomly, but are organized from personal, emotional, rational, social and cultural principles that select what to remember and what to forget (Benadiba, Plotinsky 2007: 17).

In this sense, the study of the creation of musical forms in the diasporic context can be very productive. Music is heard socially and its meanings are shared within the borders of an interpretive community. Songs and lyrics make use of a reservoir of dynamic "cultural resources" that the actors dialectically internalize and externalize (Bourdieu 2012) in a dynamic process of "appropriation" (Schneider 2006) and "autochthonisation" (Muršič 1998).

The performance of Slovenian Alpine ethno-pop music among migrant groups in their new environments is not a new phenomenon. Slovenian Alpine ethno-pop also had a special significance for Slovenian migrants and their descendants in the United States of America (see Kunej, Kunej 2016). Nevertheless, the study of this issue in the Argentinean context can shed new light on the topic.

At one of the gatherings of the *skupnost* in the 1970s, the brothers Janez and Franci Žnidar, sons of Slovenian refugees who settled in Carapachay, Buenos Aires, were inspired to found an Alpine ethno-pop band that would honour the community, after noticing the absence of Slovenian music at festivals and parties. In the interview, Franci recalled the creation of *Slovenski Instrumentalni Ansambel*:

When I was very young [...] I saw that our parents organized events that lasted all day [...] and they put in a lot of effort on the preparation, they spent the whole day cooking, cleaning, serving the guests ... All this was a huge amount of work, and when night came, they hired an outsider orchestra, which they had to pay. The band started with maybe two Slovenian songs ... maybe Avsenik, Na Golici and Večer na Roblek, these sounded Slovenian, but after the fourth song they switched to German music or dance music that was currently popular [...]

And ... there was a spirit of sadness within the community ... because what happened to the community was pretty serious, right? So, many people weren't having fun [...] So I realized ... how nice it would be to do something where the bulk of the program would be in Slovene [...] So ... my brother played the accordion, and I had to choose an instrument ... and well, I liked the trumpet. And then, we convinced the others, and here we are.

The Žnidar brothers invited other descendants and formed the group as a quartet.¹³ They made their debut at the *Pevski Glasbeni Večer* (Night of Singing and Music) at the *Slovenska Hiša* (Slovenian Cultural Centre) in August 1974. The ensemble became famous in the community. “We like to play for our people, and people enjoy listening to us, to their music,” said Franci. About the repertoire, Franci stressed that “60% of the repertoire was Alpine ethno-pop ... such as for instance Avsenik’s or Miha Dovžan’s ... (Lojze) Slak’s Ansambel ... the other 40% was international”. In this sense, another member, Rok Fink, pointed out that they also included international music like Latin American music, German Alpine music, tangos, and country rhythms in many languages, that allowed them to entertain the audience better. Some members of the band translated their specific emotions and interpretations of family narratives and their homeland-oriented loyalties into the creation of melodies and lyrics following these sounds. In some cases, they set “Slovenian rhythms” – usually polkas or waltzes – to poetry or lyrics in Slovene that they found very meaningful, turning them into a song. Franci mentioned, for example, the song *Vnuč poje* (Grandson Sings). He composed music in a waltz rhythm for a poem by the exiled Slovenian poet Mirko Kunčič (1899–1984), a refugee in Argentina since 1945. The poem describes a grandson’s longing for his grandfather’s homeland. During the interview, Franci sang part of the song:

Zemlja slovenska, zemljica draga,
daleč si daleč, odстран morja.
Kakor kraljična, zakleta iz pravljič
mavrica pisana, vrhu neba

Slovenian land, dear land
you are far, far away, across the sea.
Like a princess under a spell in a fairy tale
a colourful rainbow at the top of the sky.

Rodni dom dedov, tam pod Triglavom
videl morda, ne bom te nikdar.
Pa te v spominu sem svesto ohranil
kakor svetilo na srcu vsekdar.

Grandfathers’ birthplace, under Triglav
I will probably never see you
But I faithfully kept you in my memories
like an ever-shining light in my heart.

Zemlja slovenska, zemljica draga,
daleč za morje, odстран planjav.
Oj da sem lastovka k tebi zletel bi
in ti poneseš dedov pozdrav.

Slovenian land, dear land
you are far over the sea, across the plains.
If I were a swallow, I would fly to you.
And I would bring you greetings
from my grandfathers.

This song can be seen as a reminder of their ancestors’ origin and a way of expressing their literary heritage to the new generations. The song is a symbolic construct originated in the present and produced within social relationships within the borders of specific “cultural resources” and an interpretative community. The lyrics function as a reminder of the land the refugees were forced to leave behind and the way, through the creative process of the configuration of the homeland seen as the “princess beyond the sea”, in which the lyrics

13 The first members were Janez Žnidar (accordion) Franci Žnidar (trumpet), Martin Dobovšek (bass and vocals) and Rok Fink (guitar and vocals). Frido Klemen (drums) joined the group in 1974. Jože Rožanec (guitar and vocals) joined the next year. Singer Maruška Batagelj joined the group in 1979. Frido Klemen left the band in 1999 and was replaced by Pavel Erjavec. When Erjavec left, he was replaced on drums by Nejko Skubič.

nourish the symbolic efficacy (Levi-Strauss 1968) of the "myth of the homeland". The grandparents' birthplace, as a sacred faraway land that becomes a place of the past, but also a place of the present and future (Basu 2001: 332), remains vivid in the grandchildren's memories and hearts within the diasporic context. The attachment to the homeland and its distinctive landscape and story combines a sense of loss, hope, and resilience. Passages of nostalgia and subtle patriotism give shape to a message that the "youngest" have to learn in order to become part of the group's social memory. This is also achieved in the studio version through the performance of the singer,¹⁴ who highlights the nostalgia with an expressive emphasis.

MUSIC AS A CHANNEL OF SYMBOLIC AND REAL PILGRIMAGES TO THE HOMELAND

As Basu (2001) points out, the search for the self among the sources of identity may be considered a sacred act that can remind us of pilgrimages, that in the case of my study also corresponds with real "roots-pilgrimages" through relatives and community considered "memory sites". The song *Trnovo* is an example of how descendants internalize family memories and externalize them creatively. The lyric and music by Rok Fink portray the story of someone who lived in the Trnovo district of Ljubljana, but who abandoned it. "As if he were a migrant", Rok explained. This makes the character very unhappy forever after, and consequently Trnovo becomes a symbolic place to long for, where the character wants to come back "because it's the place where he could be happy again". Let's take a look at the lyrics:¹⁵

Prešernov kraj, nesrečnega imena
zapustil sem nekdanj in šel sem proč.
Je iskati sreče je bilo brez pomena
so tuji kraji bli kot temna noč.

Zato pa zdaj se vračam proti domu
zagledal kmalu bom potoček most
prisluhnil bom zvonečemu se zvonu
zapel me bo sprejel odkot nekoč

Preseren's place, with an unfortunate name¹⁵
that I left once and went away.
There was not much sense in pursuing
happiness
foreign places were like dark night.

Therefore I am on my way home
I will soon see the creek bridge
and listen to the tolling bell
it's singing will welcome me as it once did.

14 See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=Efo-MuE-Qzo.

15 This passage remains as a tribute to the famous Slovenian national poet France Prešeren, who wrote a sonnet (Je od veselja časa teklo leto, ...) [A year passed after the joyous time, ...] to his beloved Julia, where Trnovo is mentioned as "Trnovo! Kraj nesrečnega imena" [Trnovo! An unfortunately named place] (translator's note: "Trnovo" can be roughly translated as "thorny place"). Rok explained to me that "in Slovenia people used to refer to Trnovo poetically in this way, like we would refer to Buenos Aires as the queen of silver, indicating that it lies next to the Rio de la Plata".

Refren: Trnovo, mi srce
hrepenelo je ves čas
me vlekli so spomini tja nazaj
In zdaj sem tu, in bom ostal
doma za Vekomaj.

Chorus: Trnovo, my heart
has always longed for you
my memories dragged me back.
And now I am here, and I will stay
home forever.

Sem menjal izbe, ljubice, prijat'lje
sem bil vesel, a srečen le nikdar
Ko ni bilo nikjer ljubezni sladke
za južno sonce mi bilo ni mar

I have changed rooms, lovers and friends
I had joy, but I was never happy
When sweet love was nowhere to be found
I no longer cared for the southern sun

Refren

Chorus

When I asked Rok about the meaning of this song, he explained:

I have always felt attached to this place. My mother's family came from Trnovo. My great-grandfather had a sauerkraut factory there, which supplied a significant part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire ... My grandfather's house is still there, about 150 metres from the Trnovo church ... I always noticed that they ... they had something special with this place, they felt proud to be from Trnovo.

The composition of this song can be interpreted as a form of oral history, retelling the stories of a family, generations and communities (McKeever 2015). In some way, the song is transmitting part of the author's personal story, but it also condenses the force that places and landscape acquire as "sacred places" in the narratives of migrants or their descendants. This poetic decision is not accidental. In general terms, the themes in the lyrics of Slovenian Alpine ethno-pop appeal to the emotions of the listener. This aim is achieved by incorporating the imaginaries of Slovenian patriotism and appealing to recurrent images like "the family home", looking back with nostalgia on the "home village" and conservative values (Kovačič 2015: 96).

Although this piece was never played by the whole ensemble, it allowed Rok to "return to the homeland" and perform it "in Škofja Loka and at Križanke in Ljubljana for the 50th anniversary of the Slovenian Emigrant Association", representing this as an "interaction between actual spatial experiences and socially constructed spatial concepts conveyed by social memory, mythology and aspirations" (Repič 2016: 121). This brings us to another important issue of the diaspora: the experiences of the descendants of refugees who are facing a "return to the homeland" and, in turn, the differentiation of "us" (Slovenes who live in Argentina) from "them" (Slovenes who live in Slovenia). As mentioned above, the recollected sources and stories constantly emphasized that after leaving Slovenia in 1945 the exiles became political adversaries who were forbidden to return for the following forty years (Repič 2016). In consequence, the narratives about "the return" were always loaded with contradictory emotions of sadness, expectation and joy. In consequence, representations of the problem were also internalized by the individuals and expressed in songs. For example, *Zavriskali smo in zapeli* (We shouted with joy and sang) (lyrics and music by Franci Žnidar) portrays this descendant's feelings about "returning" which arise after the ensemble received a formal invitation in 1992 to participate in a folk

music festival in Slovenia.¹⁶ As the bands were required to perform two new original songs, Franci composed the following lyric:

Ko prihajamo prvič zdaj med vas,
mi čutimo vrnitev v domačo vas,
zapeti z vami si želimo tu doma,
slovensko ljubo pesem iz srca.

Now, when we arrive for the first time among you,
we feel like we are returning to a known place.
We want to sing with you, here at home,
this Slovenian song that comes from heart.

Domača pesem res nima meja
razlega se prek širnega morja,
pri andskih gorah in v mestnih cestah
ob Srebrni reki kjer smo mi doma.

A song from the homeland is truly boundless,
it resounds across the wide sea.
By the Andes and the city streets,
by the silver river where we live.

Refren: Zavriskali bomo in zapeli
s toplo melodijo vse objeli,
za vedno ohranili si spomin goreč
potem ko se bo slišal čau doneč.

Chorus: We will shout with joy and sing,
we will embrace you in a sweet melody
We are going to keep this fervent remembrance
after saying goodbye.

Slovenija v svetu že cvete,
razpreda korenine preko vse zemlje.
resnično mi vemo, viharja ni na svet,
da bi preprečil nam Slovencem pet.

Slovenia is already blooming in the world
it spreads roots through whole land
We know for sure that there is no storm on Earth
that could stop us Slovenes from singing.

Refren

Chorus

The song reveals the expectations of these "Slovenes" "that live by the silver river", i.e. in Buenos Aires, of "arriving in Slovenia for the first time", once socialist Yugoslavia was a thing of the past – "We know for sure that there is no storm on Earth that could prevent us Slovenes from singing". The double belonging of the members is highlighted by the fact that the piece is an appropriation of various cultural practices (Schneider 2006). It consists of three verses accompanied by music that mixes a polka beat with a strong regular march tempo. The last verse melts into a Chamamé beat, a folk genre from the Argentine North-east, the Argentinian Mesopotamia region and the south of Brazil.¹⁷

The song also focuses on the independence of Slovenia context – "Slovenia is already blooming in the world" – and the possibility of "return(ing) to a known place". Although the group finally had to cancel the tour due to work obligations, the song was ready and the group added it to their repertoire, depicting subjectivities and representations of Slovenia and the arrival of the descendants among the Slovenes. The possibility to return allowed the descendants, who have never been in Slovenia before, a metaphoric pilgrimage to their

16 It is important to remember that the refugees and their descendants regained a formal relationship with Slovenia after it gained its independence. Consequently, the writers of song lyrics expressed their desire to go home or "return" to the country of their parents.

17 The Chamamé is a hybrid of dance music brought by the Volga German migrants, with Guaraní influence, mixed with the Spanish guitar and the European accordion from those migrants that arrived in the area at the beginning of the 20th century.

place of origin. Even though Slovenia is a real place, for the migrants and their descendants, until that moment, it had only been a symbolically “near” meaningful place. In this sense, the music allowed the refugees and their descendants to work out these meanings far away, in the Argentinean context.

CONCLUSION

This paper explores the history of the Slovenian political descendants’ band “Slovenski Instrumentalni Ansambel”. The case study serves as a good example for observing that music is not only an individual everyday practice, but also a collective one. In this case, popular music works as a cultural and political construction of an “imagined community” (Anderson 1997) in a transnational dynamic context and in the integration and connection of migrant communities, that mixes and merges the “old” and “new” worlds. Specifically, the performance of Slovenian Alpine ethno-pop music serves the *skupnost* (community) by establishing a stereotyped form of otherness in Argentina. These musical identities are constituted within a relationship with the past and politics, through memory, narrative, the myth of the homeland, and the collective commitment to its preservation, restoration, safety and prosperity (Brubaker 2005; Hall 2013). The descendants became involved in music consumption and production, and consequently appropriated their ancestors’ cultural practices, through actualizing music’s mnemonic and identity functions. It combines a “roots allegory” with symbolic/real pilgrimages to “beautiful and beloved” cultural landscapes. It not only inscribes and invokes the real or imagined “homeland”, but also specific events, memories, emotions, images, pictures and return mobilities.

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POVZETEK

**»PESMI IZ DOMOVINE« – IZVEDBA POPULARNE GLASBE MED
POTOMCI SLOVENSКИH BEGUNCEV V ARGENTINI: PRIMER
»SLOVENSKEGA INŠTRUMENTALNEGA ANSAMBLA«
Nadia MOLEK**

Članek predstavi primer narodno-zabavne skupine »Slovenski Instrumentalni Ansambel«, s pomočjo katerega ponazori, kako so migracijski in spominski procesi vplivali na življenje in glasbeno ustvarjalnost glasbenikov, pa tudi na celotno skupnost slovenskih beguncev in njihovih potomcev v Argentini. Skozi antropološko perspektivo analizira izbor, preobrazbo in odkrivanje slovenskih popularnih glasbenih oblik v izseljenski skupnosti. V tej skupnosti so mnogi želeli nadaljevati kulturne prakse svojih prednikov in ohraniti socialni spomin, da bi lahko »glasbeno« uprizarjali svojo slovenskost. Ta proces je v članku ilustriran s pomočjo primera narodno-zabavne glasbene skupine »Slovenski Instrumentalni Ansambel«. Analiza primera izbrane glasbene skupine pokaže, da glasba ni samo vsakodnevna praksa posameznikov, pač pa tudi skupnosti. Popularna glasba je sestavni del kulturne in politične konstrukcije »zamišljene skupnosti« v transnacionalnem dinamičnem kontekstu povezanosti in vključenosti migrantskih skupnosti, ki združujejo »stare« in »nove« svetove. Izvajanje slovenske narodno-zabavne glasbe je za skupnost pomembno zato, ker ustvarja stereotipizirano obliko drugačnosti znotraj argentinske družbe. Glasbene identitete so v odnosu do preteklosti in politike konstruirane preko spominov, pripovedi, mitologije domovine in skupinske zavezanosti ohranjanju ter razvijanju slovenske izseljenske skupnosti v Argentini.