

# Sounding Out Municipal Housing in Vienna: Ethnographic Insights into Music and Sound in the Anton-Figl-Hof

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## Abstract

Municipal housing in Vienna, called *Wiener Gemeindebau*, is gaining new significance in research and cultural work in the discourse on affordable housing in the city and the increasing heterogeneity of urban life. However, it has also been a field imbued with the ideological projections, desires, and anxieties of various political parties. In the revival of the historical myth as a sociopolitical utopia of the so-called Red Vienna period and the simultaneous culturalization of conflicts and precarious living, municipal housing is a sensitive field within which questions of cultural coexistence are constantly negotiated. This article draws on insights gained through fieldwork in the context of the research project “*Klingender Gemeindebau*” (Sounding out municipal housing), which was conducted in the Anton-Figl-Hof, a medium-sized complex from the late 1950s in Vienna’s fourteenth district. Approaching municipal housing primary through the lens of music consumption, this study examines the potential of music for understanding neighborhood relationships and creating spaces for encounter: How does the diversity of origin, languages, age groups, and interests resonate in the musical preferences expressed by the residents? What role do sound and music play in everyday life and in the ways in which municipal housing is imagined and narrated by its residents? And how does public music consumption affect interpersonal relationships between so-called longtime and new tenants in providing space for both conflicts of non-belonging and inclusive forms of musical sociability?

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# Introduction

Me: “What does this municipal housing complex sound like to you?”

Resident 1: “For me, *Rear Window* 1954 by Alfred Hitchcock describes it pretty well: it is quarrels, domestic strife, heartbreaks, drunks, also beautiful songs and clattering dishes, of course. It is also the police, the battle between, I would say, Balkan music and then the classical Viennese comes through; they offend each other, and it is turned up louder and louder until the police come. That is how I feel about the musical municipal housing”<sup>[1]</sup>

The memory of my first fieldwork encounter is saturated with the record heat of the early summer of June 2021 and the insecurities of conducting fieldwork in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. It took me almost an hour to reach the building complex under study at Vienna’s outskirts by subway and tram, and I waited another hour for the actual interview, as the first interlocutor did not show up. I used the time to walk around and familiarize myself with the space—a medium-sized housing complex with park elements that was partly scaffolded or freshly painted in muted red and yellow tones (see figure 1). Similarly to the other 1,800 municipal housing complexes in Vienna, it reads in red lettering attached to the building façade, “Anton-Figl-Hof. Housing complex of the municipality of Vienna. Built in the years 1956–1958” (see figure 2), forming part of a legacy of more than a hundred years of social-democratic urban planning.



**Figure 1: Inside the Anton-Figl-Hof, residential blocks and green spaces; photo: Julia Fent**



**Figure 2: Façade of the Anton-Figl-Hof; photo: Julia Fent**

The middle-aged woman with whom I then sat down in the shade on a park bench has lived here for eight years—a chapter of her life that has lasted longer than expected. The recording device in our midst made her visibly nervous, but I noticed that talking about music was a welcome topic to help quickly relieve the tension. What I learned that day when asking about the sounding of her home was to be formative for the course of the whole research project: Vienna’s municipal housing (Wiener Gemeindebau) is often perceived as clamorous and noisy by its residents, who determine and claim sonic space in it; moreover, these sounds mirror the structure of the living environment. After all, as an urban neighborhood transforms with its residents, so do its sonic qualities.

Affordable housing and the coexistence of multiple social and cultural ways of life are two of the most pressing issues in urban societies. Characterized by a broad diversity of origins, age groups, and interests among the residents, municipal housing today can be seen as both a (re)source for residential conflicts and a site of community-building encounters. However, whereas current discourses on municipal housing are dominated by public debates on migration and integration,<sup>[2]</sup> little light has been shed on cultural activities such as musical practices that take place within its walls. This article thus conceptualizes municipal housing as a sounding field and asks about the potentialities and restraints that music and “musicking”<sup>[3]</sup> might have for an urban neighborhood. As will be discussed in this article, the Viennese *Gemeindebau* provides a rich field within which to study the mobility and mobilization of people, biographies, and imaginations in the context of the contemporary dilemmas of an increasingly diverse urban society. For ethnomusicology, a discipline genuinely interested in cultural diversity, municipal housing thus represents a socio-cultural field in which class, education, nationality, migration, age, gender, sexuality, and religion intersect in various ways.

This article draws on the insights gained through fieldwork within the research project “[Klingender Gemeindebau](#)” (Sounding out municipal housing, March 2021–October 2022). The general research questions were: How does the heterogeneity of the residential population resonate in the ways in which music is consumed and practiced in municipal housing? How does music consumption affect the interpersonal relationships among the residents—and, vice versa, what needs and idea(l)s related to music do residents articulate and envision for their home? As a collaboration between the [Music and Minorities Research Center \(MMRC\)](#) at the [University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna \(mdw\)](#), [wohnpartner](#), [Wiener Wohnen](#), and the [Phonogrammarchiv](#) (Austrian Academy of Sciences, ÖAW), the project was designed to be exploratory, applied, and experimental in character. Combining a variety of expertise and approaches, the project partners were generally open to learning and oriented toward a trial-and-error principle.

Theoretically, the concept of “[Klingender Gemeindebau](#)” derives from the strands of urban and applied ethnomusicology, concerned with questions of conflict, social injustice, and minorities, but also sociology, geography, gender, and migrant studies. The issues of economic vulnerability and culturalized conflict have already been studied comprehensively within the almost exclusively German-language literature focusing on municipal housing. However, the majority of work on municipal housing takes a historical perspective, paying considerable attention to the achievements and social reformist visions of “Red Vienna” as a “social emancipation project with a holistic claim.”<sup>[4]</sup> Consequently, the study of art and music in Viennese municipal housing remains primarily a topic of architectural and historical research, for example in the study of musical iconographies of the applied art in municipal housing (so-called *Kunst am Bau*)<sup>[5]</sup> or the historical workers’ choirs and symphonic concerts.<sup>[6]</sup> Up to the present, however, little attention has been paid to the production of music and cultural space in the *Gemeindebau* as well as the potential of ethnographic fieldwork for studying these aspects. This article therefore strives to contribute to the body of literature by presenting an innovative approach beneficial to the fields of applied and urban ethnomusicology, architecture, and the history of Viennese *Gemeindebau*.

The article is organized as follows: First I offer a brief discussion of the history of Viennese *Gemeindebau*, pointing out the central markings and changes that municipal housing has undergone over time. Then I sketch out the Anton-Figl-Hof as a particular research field and outline important aspects of the research process as well as my own positionality. The subsequent three sections provide insights into the empirical findings that help to make sense of

the role of music in residents' lives and in shaping neighborhood relations: from individual musical preferences and dislikes to shared music consumption as forms of both boundary making and community building. I then review the applied design of the "[Klingender Gemeindebau](#)" project as well as the challenges it entailed due to the particular time and place at which the research was conducted. To conclude, I situate the findings of this project in larger discussions surrounding municipal housing and its potential for the diverse urban society we live in today.

## Vienna and Its *Gemeindebau*: A Very Brief Introduction

Similarly to Austria as a whole, Vienna has traditionally been considered a city with a well-controlled housing system, affordable rents (for a vast majority of the population), and constrained market forces.<sup>[7]</sup> Although its housing system is currently experiencing significant changes due to neoliberal policies, the Austrian capital's long history of municipal socialism has endowed it with 220,000 municipal housing flats. These accommodate more than 500,000 city dwellers, a quarter of Vienna's population.<sup>[8]</sup> Called *Wiener Gemeindebau*, the municipal housing stock in Vienna is managed by [Wiener Wohnen](#), a company governed by public law, and [wohnpartner](#), a partner organization that focuses on community work and conflict management.

Fueled by ideological projections and the desire to create a "new man" with socialism, municipal housing dates back to the so-called Red Vienna period (1919–34). Centered around a collective workers' identity and thus a stratified milieu, the *Gemeindebau* was the territory of the Social Democratic Workers' Party.<sup>[9]</sup> The eye-catching red lettering on municipal housing façades, "Built by the municipality of Vienna with funds from the housing tax," calls to mind "Red Vienna's" greatest achievement: the implementation of policies that redistributed prosperity from the propertied to the working population.<sup>[10]</sup> Social homogeneity and cohesion were the declared political goals of this institution of workers' emancipation. The housing was equipped with communal facilities such as bathhouses, laundries, shops, libraries, and kindergartens, as well as other amenities generally oriented toward the traditional family model.

Today, the institution of municipal housing remains a politicized field, but its meanings have changed. As Christoph Reinprecht<sup>[11]</sup> and Justin Kadi<sup>[12]</sup> point out, it is questionable whether Vienna may be represented as an exceptional case and municipal housing as a prolonged experiment of "Red Vienna" without significant recommodification. Despite the romanticized historiography of the *Gemeindebau* as a "legendary" flagship project in Europe,<sup>[13]</sup> TV entertainment formats such as the ATV reality soap [Wir leben im Gemeindebau](#) (We live in municipal housing) and anti-immigration party debates have made it today into an ethnically marked place of conflict and racist and classist media depictions.<sup>[14]</sup> As a result, many residents experience not only a transformed neighborhood but also stigmatization and social decline. Recent socio-demographic, political, and administrative changes have not only altered the tenant composition of municipal housing but also affected the relationships between its residents. Therefore, relations between minority and majority groups with modest social and economic resources are negotiated between the residents themselves as well as between the privileged majority population and the municipal housing population.<sup>[15]</sup>

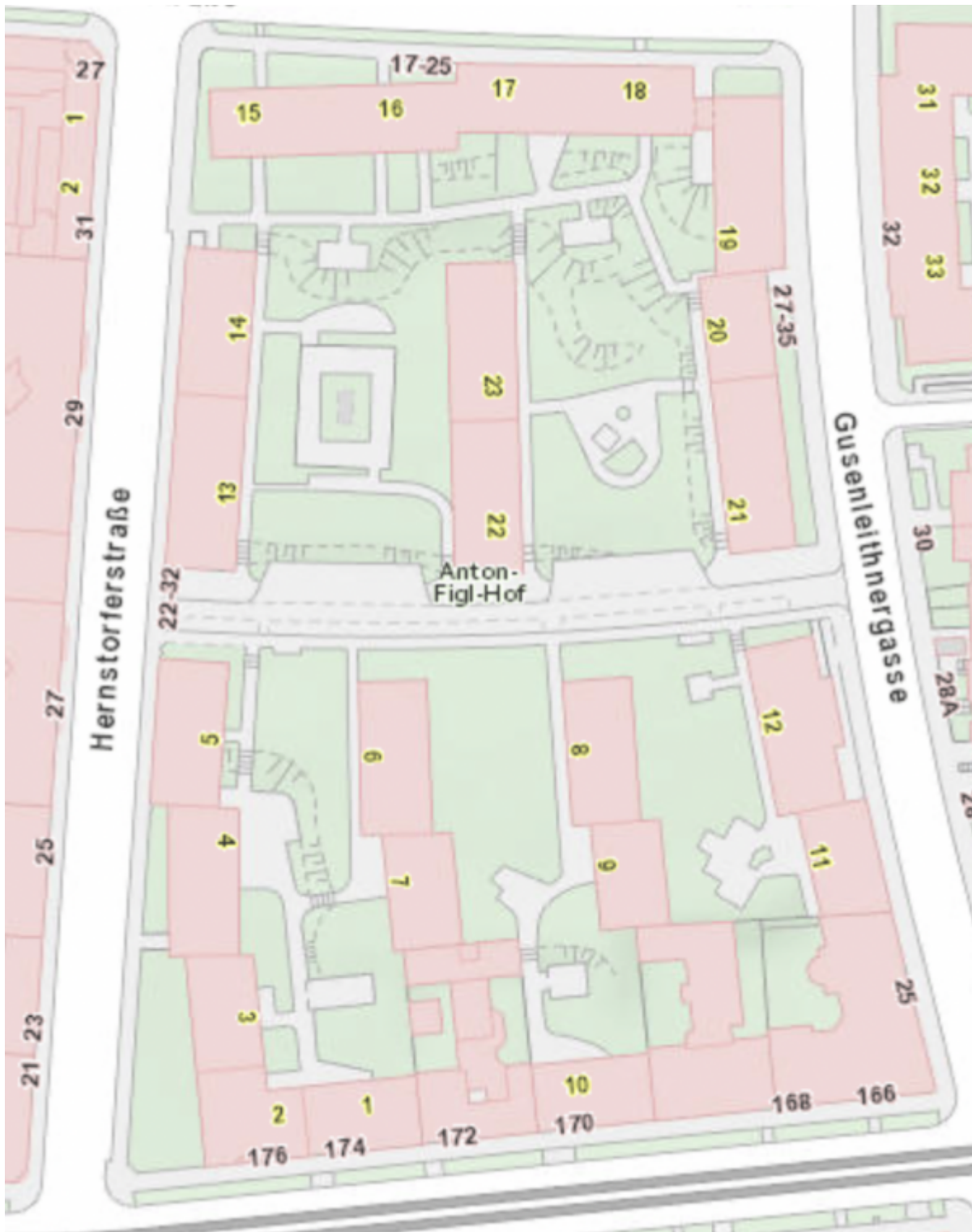
Until the late 1980s, municipal housing was attractive for Austrian citizens due to population decline, the expansion of high-quality municipal housing stock, and a relatively high income

ceiling for access to the public housing sector, among other factors. As foreign residents were formally excluded, municipal housing consisted at that time of a rather socially and ethnically homogenous population.<sup>[16]</sup> This has changed drastically since the early 1990s. Rapid population growth, changes in rental laws, and real estate commodification led to enhanced competition, longer waiting times, and higher eviction rates. With Austria's EU accession, municipal housing was finally opened to EU citizens in 1995 and to all foreign citizens with permanent resident cards in 2006.<sup>[17]</sup> Today, municipal housing provides housing with a focus on more vulnerable livelihoods, the poorer and less educated segments of society. As a result, the percentage of immigrants, single mothers, and seniors is generally higher than in the private sector. As discussed in the literature,<sup>[18]</sup> these rapid changes experienced by neighborhoods are oftentimes confronted with feelings of insecurity, anxiety, or open conflict by elderly residents. Narrated almost exclusively along ethnic lines, they are also easily exploited by rising populist parties (such as the Freedom Party of Austria, FPÖ). Changes in access criteria for social welfare services such as municipal housing and the rapid increase in foreign nationals over the last twenty years have drawn attention to the challenges that arise when people with different backgrounds, lifestyles, and needs come to live together. Against this backdrop, this article explores the role music plays in municipal housing, which is considered a "hotspot" for cultural(ized) conflict.

## The Anton-Figl-Hof: Conducting Fieldwork in Municipal Housing

Despite being colloquially referred to as "der Gemeindebau" ("the municipal housing"), municipal housing in Vienna is by no means a homogeneous entity; it varies greatly in architecture, size, location, and rent levels. As a result of the transformations described in the previous section, municipal housing today is an exposed and vulnerable field. Its hybrid and sometimes conflicting narrative merges with historiography, city branding strategies, quotidian experiences, party campaigns, and predominantly negative headlines in media coverage. In an effort to name the particularities of the field and avoid generalized assumptions, the research project "[Klingender Gemeindebau](#)" focuses on one municipal housing complex as a case study.

The Anton-Figl-Hof, where research was conducted from spring 2020 to fall 2022, comprises 380 dwellings. At the time of the fieldwork, the residential block from the late 1950s was undergoing renovation. Apart from the omnipresent construction noise, the soundscape was rather low and turned down as it was also the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, when people stayed mostly indoors and social gatherings were widely restricted. Divided by an access road, the estate consists of five-story blocks that enclose five green spaces featuring park elements such as trees, benches, or playgrounds. In total, the 380 flats of the Anton-Figl-Hof are distributed over a total of 23 staircases (*Stiege*,<sup>[19]</sup> see figure 3).

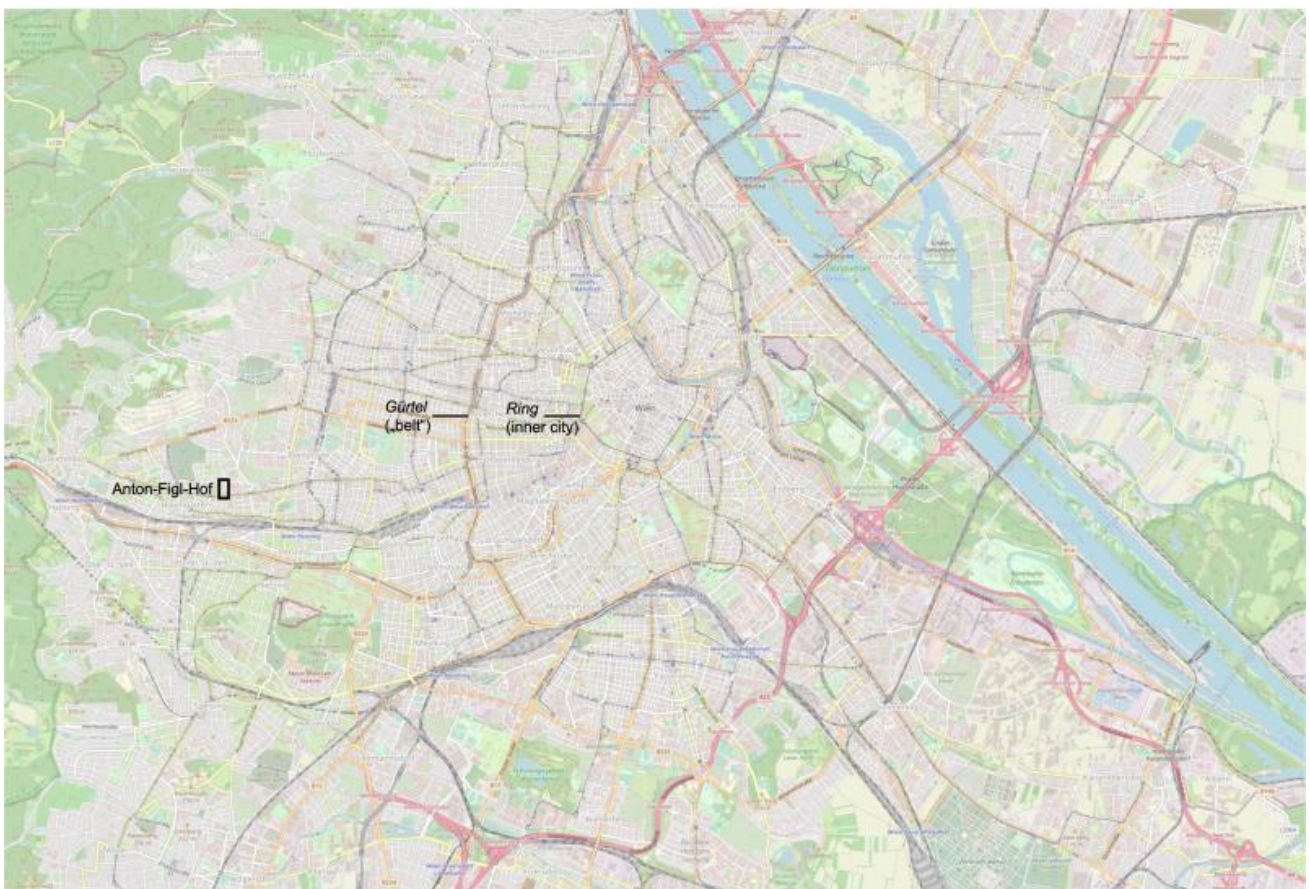


**Figure 3: Ground plan of the Anton-Figl-Hof; map source: ViennaGIS<sup>(R)</sup>, <https://www.wien.gv.at/stadtplan/>**

As the fieldwork has shown, the use of the open spaces is strongly constrained by house rules and social traditions. For example, families with young children could often be found in the semi-circular courtyard located on the main street, whereas the playground in another courtyard was mainly occupied by teenagers. As is typical of the functionalist architecture of the post-war period, the building complex lacks so-called the communal spaces and social infrastructures inherent to the architecture of the preceding generation of municipal housing estates. Well-known examples are the Karl-Marx-Hof or the Sandleitenhof, two of the largest municipal housing complexes in Vienna in terms of both size and ideological markings. The Anton-Figl-Hof, named after a member of the Social Democratic Workers' Party,<sup>[20]</sup> is located in the fourteenth Viennese



district, Penzing, which is traditionally considered a working-class neighborhood (see figure 4): far from the inner historical center of the first district and beyond the so-called *Gürtel* (“belt”), a U-shaped series of streets that all include the word *Gürtel* in their names. The *Gürtel* is a demarcation line between the city’s center and periphery, which—in reference to Vienna’s imperial inner-city *Ringstraße*, lined with representative buildings—was termed the *Ringstraße des Proletariats* (ring road of the proletariat) during the “Red Vienna” period.<sup>[21]</sup> However, the choice of the Anton-Figl-Hof as a research field provided me with an opportunity to sound out a building complex that is marginal both in terms of public attention and resources designed for social encounter. As the sounding field was primarily defined in geographical terms by the housing complex itself and not by a musical genre or scene, the project opened up the possibility of developing a deeper understanding of municipal housing as a socio-cultural and spatial process that corresponds to notions of both *Nachbarschaft* (neighborhood) and *Gemeinschaft* (community).



**Figure 4: Peripheral location of the Anton-Figl-Hof; map source: OpenStreetMap contributors, Open Database License, <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>**

The impetus for the research project was provided by one of the project partners, wohnpartner’s [Kulturlabor Gemeindebau](#), with the intention of better understanding, capturing, and engaging with municipal housing as a sonic field. In practical terms, this collaboration was inspired by the variety of expertise and experiences possessed by the project team (ethnomusicologists, social workers, sociologists), using observation, semi-structured interviews, informal group discussions, and participative music activities. Alongside in-depth interviews with tenants focusing mainly on their musical consumption and preferences, experimental methods of field research became increasingly vital during the course of the project. This applies mainly to the seven events organized on site (see also the last section), but also to different forms of approaching and promoting the project via printed materials such as flyers and posters (see figure 5), a Facebook group, or networking with associated individuals or nearby social initiatives (social workers and

youth centers, restaurants, musicians living or performing in *Gemeindebau* contexts, etc.). However, as is typical of ethnographic fieldwork, regular presence on site over an extended period was fundamental for acquiring contacts through snowball sampling and for understanding how the (sounding) space is shaped, occupied, or negotiated as everyday practice.



**Figure 5: Informational material on the project distributed at the beginning of the fieldwork in June 2021; photo: Wohnservice Wien/E. Sodin**

By the end of the project, twenty-two residents were involved as interview partners,<sup>[22]</sup> representing different age groups and ethnicities, with significantly more women (17) than men (5). With one exception of an Iraqi woman, who had only been living in the Anton-Figl-Hof for a

few months, interviews were conducted in German (local dialects) and translated into English by the author. Like other municipal housing complexes, the Anton-Figl-Hof is home to many residents whose biographies entail experiences of (forced) migration and struggles with poverty. Most of the twenty-two interviewees were Austrian citizens, and eight had a migration background (first or second generation). Countries of the former Yugoslavia or Turkey predominate in the Anton-Figl-Hof, but India, Kuwait/Iraq, and Somalia were also present among those interviewed. About a third of the interviewees were either employed or enrolled in school or an educational program, another third were retired, and almost all of those depending on social benefits were responsible for reproductive work or the caretaking of children or ill partners.

With a background in ethnomusicology and as a predoctoral research fellow at the MMRC, my role was to conceptualize and conduct the fieldwork as well as to report to our research partners about the knowledge gained in order to design events on site (see the last section). The fact that I was not a local (which was easily recognized by the interviewees) and grew up in Germany with Iranian heritage allowed me to enter the field rather unbiased, without any assumptions or deeper knowledge of municipal housing. The opportunity to ask rather impartial questions as a perceived outsider may therefore have benefitted the research process. Undoubtedly, however, my positionality strongly influenced my interactions with the interviewees in other ways by providing certain points of reference, moments of either connection or distinction—for example when migration stories were rendered by the tenants as a shared experience or when the inherently asymmetrical relation between myself and people in precarious circumstances such as unemployment was brought to the fore. I therefore want to acknowledge the partiality of experience and knowledge production grounded in my cisgender female, Western European, middle-class, higher educated, post-migrant researcher identity.

## **Music Preferences and the Idea of Home: The Importance of Music in Residents' Lives**

The idea of this section is to provide insight into aspects of musical preferences articulated by different individuals and residential groups in the interviews. Against the background of an increasing diversification of municipal housing residents, the following discussion is particularly concerned with multiple identity constructions: senses of “home” in municipal housing with and through music. In order to better situate the findings in the discourses, I will also deal with two topics relevant to the idea of “home.” The first has to do with (non-)belonging, which, according to the influential work of migration scholar Nira Yuval-Davis,<sup>[23]</sup> can be analyzed both as a personal, intimate feeling of being “at home” and as a discursive resource that claims, justifies, or resists forms of inclusion/exclusion in social space. This interpretative distinction proves helpful in preparation for the next section, which will focus on the politics of (non-)belonging as practices of boundary making and one residential group exercising power over the other. However, in the fieldwork data presented in this section, the question of musical practices refers first to individual feelings of belonging—whether to a place (of origin), musical genre networks, or residential groups. As I will discuss in this section, musical practices can contribute to these feelings of belonging and create a notion of “home.” The second topic is concerned with the intersectionality of systemic inequalities and relative poverty. Whereas municipal housing is traditionally considered working-class territory and a site of class-centered construction of belonging (see sections above), today’s composition of heterogeneous biographies gives texture

to various, and often conflicting, living experiences. All interviewees expressed issues of lack and deprivation, but their experiences of scarcity and exclusion were diverse. However, through the study of “music—a multidimensional social expression involving at once sound, performance, sociality, culture, and economics—it becomes possible to study...issues that are engaged in ‘poverty,’” ethnomusicologist Klisala Harrison writes in the *Yearbook for Traditional Music’s* special issue on “Music and Poverty.”<sup>[24]</sup> As suggested, “poverty” represents a richness of meanings and extends beyond the material dimensions of income and consumption to include forms of social and cultural exclusions, for which poor housing, well-being, entitlements, or exclusions from participation in cultural life are indicators.<sup>[25]</sup>

The story of the tenants’ representative is one of the stories that gives the Anton-Figl-Hof a face. She was one of the residents involved in the research project at the earliest stage and oscillated between the role of interlocutor as an individual resident and facilitator and gatekeeper in her social function. As one of my fieldnotes recounts:

I am meeting with the tenants’ representative in the so-called *Gemeinschaftsraum* community room, the only indoor space available for the tenants’ activities and a room full of colors and things: furniture and boxes, board games, paintings, crafting utensils, and CDs are piled up. When I meet her, hundreds of puzzle pieces are spread out in front of her. She counts them to make sure that the games that have been borrowed and returned by tenants are complete, she explains. Where once a pensioners’ club and Kiddy&Co social workers addressing kids from the neighborhood were active, the *Gemeinschaftsraum* is now partly occupied by the renovation management, and tenants’ boxes are stored here in the meantime. At the moment, it is quite chaotic here, the tenants’ representative states, expressing discomfort when I asked her whether I could take a picture for documentation. The woman I meet is 62 years old and has lived in the Anton-Figl-Hof since she was three months old. One of her sisters has never moved out of the complex either, nor has her daughter, who is married to her literal “sandbox love.” One can quickly notice how much she identifies with this place; her tone is dominant and often has a prideful veneer. At the beginning of our conversation, she depicts her childhood spent together with her five siblings and a single mother who had to work around the clock as a newspaper deliverer, waitress, and cleaning lady to make ends meet: “We had to become independent. Each of us had our household tasks, not to say that it was too much for us. We still had enough free time to play with our friends, but we had to work, which I don’t think did us any harm because that’s how we learned in adulthood that first comes work and then comes leisure time...Municipal housing was different back then. Imagine, when I was six or seven years old, they were all young families and lots of children. If something happened, a neighbor or someone from the other staircase *Stiege*, would say, ‘Bring your kids here’...But the ‘team spirit’ was very different back then. Point one, where probably the criterion is: we all spoke the same language. Now it is hard with the different languages. The—how do you say it—non-Austrian citizens that live with us are not a problem in themselves. I got my way so far in trying to do it through the children, and then I got the parents,” the tenants’ representative explains and concludes later in the interview: “But I won’t move out! No chance! Too many memories, childhood memories. We experienced so much here in the housing complex, and it often comes up when I meet former schoolmates: ‘Are they still alive?’ ‘Do they still live there?’ I can tell them that. But it is optimal here. Despite the changes and if you get angry at times...and we still have a lot of green around here, which there no longer is in other municipal buildings.” In the almost 80 minutes of our interview, it is not easy to draw attention away from the issue of social transformation and toward the music. When she gives me deep insights into the social dynamics of the Anton-Figl-Hof as her sphere of action, I understand that she sees herself more as an advisor and facilitator for the project than an interlocutor herself. When I come to ask about her musical preferences, she reveals that she pursues her hobby with the same accuracy as other tasks: She has “about 600 CDs at home,” organized in labeled shelves and Excel tables. “We [she, her husband, and her daughter] have been collecting them for 40 years. When a new song comes on the market and I like the lyrics, I buy the CD. That’s *Schlager* in general, starting with Semino Rossi, Helene Fischer, Andy Borg, Hansi Hinterseer, folk music—across the board and all in German, so that I understand what they’re singing.”<sup>[26]</sup>

For those who have lived in the Anton-Figl-Hof for decades or even since childhood, the *Gemeindebau* is a space shaped by both intergenerational family and working-class biographies. These longtime tenants (so-called *Alteingesessene*), with deep roots in municipal housing, feel a

strong sense of belonging to the place to this day. Due to their family relations within the building complex, strong networks are cultivated, and leisure time is spent together in the *Gemeinschaftsraum*, which is perceived as an exclusive gatekeeping practice by out-group interviewees. Accordingly, music consumption is associated with a physical space where extensive CD collections are exchanged and music TV shows such as *Die Helene Fischer Show* and *Die Schlagernacht des Jahres* are watched together.<sup>[27]</sup> This is especially true of the long-term Austrian tenants, who favor the Schlager and Austropop musical genres they grew up with, naming artists like Wolfgang Ambros, Rainhard Fendrich, and Hansi Hinterseer. When asked why they enjoy listening to these styles, all of the residents highlighted the use of German language, which enables them to understand the lyrics, whereas they do not feel comfortable listening to Anglo-American pop music, rap, or bass-heavy youth music, which is “without any rhythm and just loud.”<sup>[28]</sup> For some, instrumental music and classical (contemporary) music, which is “confusing and squealing,”<sup>[29]</sup> and the “screaming”<sup>[30]</sup> of opera were particularly disliked and perceived as not comprehensible. These results are generally consistent with the findings of quantitative preference research in Austria, according to which pop (24%) and Schlager (22%) are among the most listened-to music styles among the Austrian population over the age of 15, while a preference for Schlager and folk music is overrepresented in the middle and older age cohorts.<sup>[31]</sup> Furthermore, the correlations between preference and cultural capital as a means of social distinction are significant in that the aversion to classical, jazz, and contemporary art music increases with a lower level of education and vice versa.<sup>[32]</sup>

Due to the high fluctuation in the Anton-Figl-Hof, feelings of being scattered, segregated, and isolated are frequently expressed among tenants who perceive the *Gemeindebau* of the past as a functioning neighborhood community. Whereas social structures and relations were once established and taken for granted, municipal housing today is experienced as a place of constant transformation due to increasing cultural and ethnic diversification. For the devoted Schlager and Austropop fan community, points of reference to an idyllic world of nature, love, and homeland (*Heimat*) may be thus found in music. Conservative values and sentimentality in lyrics are not only key elements that the Schlager genre maintains; it also conveys to its listeners a certain sense of belonging that corresponds to the desire for familiarity in uncertain and changing times.<sup>[33]</sup> Within the diverse housing context, however, individuals with and without a migration experience have also shown “omnivore” potential<sup>[34]</sup> and a greater openness toward different musical styles, which raises questions for further research on the *Gemeindebau* and intersectional identities.

It is also true of other interviewees that music is of great importance in their lives. When asked about their musical preferences and choice of music, most tenants answered that they like to listen to music that is familiar to them, that comforts them and lifts their mood:

When I wake up in the morning, I already have my different playlists, depending on my mood. How do I feel today and how do I want to feel? Do I need rest, do I need motivation? For me, it is a very active form of listening. For example, I don't listen to the radio at all—these constant commercials...it already annoyed me as a child when recording on tape, on a cassette, and the moderator chatted in between and then the end wasn't on tape.<sup>[35]</sup>

Resident 1 describes herself as an “outsider” in musical terms, as she has always liked music that her peers would not listen to. Having grown up in the Austrian countryside and moved to Vienna at the age of four and a half, she describes herself as a “newcomer” (*Zugezogene*). Referring to her own experiences, for example how she was pigeonholed because of her visible

tattoos, she distances herself from the bigotry of a “Viennese mentality” and the closed-mindedness that she finds among the long-term tenants (see also the next chapter). In the way she talks about life in municipal housing, she represents an exception to the other longtime tenants with Austrian citizenship and repeatedly expresses that she stands up for the causes of newer and migrant residents and observes her surroundings in a quasi-ethnographic mode. At the time of research, she was long-term unemployed, dependent on social benefits, and eager to find new work. The nostalgic and affectionate tone in which she talks about her musical socialization and unfulfilled ambitions also reveals the complex configurations music forms together with economic and cultural aspects of poverty. During adolescence, she dreamed about pursuing a musical career of her own—a futile future in the eyes of her parents, who could not afford a musical education and urged their daughter to become an IT specialist. “It was very grueling to experience as a child that some things in life just weren’t there.”<sup>[36]</sup> She loves 1920s and 1930s jazz, but also new wave and the music of the 1980s. She also owns a few musical instruments, a gramophone, and a collection of shellac records—a delicate hobby that flea market vendors sometimes would not trust her with because of her “tough” visual appearance, she explains.

I look at flea markets to see if I can find something, but it’s very difficult to find jazz, because folk music and polka and things from Russia were modern here, but I just don’t like them. There’s an abundance of that. For me, it is also this collecting, that I have something more valuable. That’s more in the background...Precisely because the shellac records are so fragile, you really cut your way through the flea market as if you had the most valuable piece of porcelain...The genesis of my love for jazz reminds me a lot of my grandfather. I was allowed to put on my patent leather shoes, and grandpa rolled away the carpet, and I practiced tap dancing on the parquet floor. Of course, I couldn’t do that, but my grandfather was always fascinated by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, and that is how this passion for old-time music and jazz music came about. Back then there was the Blue Danube Radio, the predecessor of FM4,<sup>[37]</sup> and they played a lot of jazz. That is how I grew up. As soon as I was at my grandparents’ house, I always listened to that, and it kind of stuck with me, as did the old movies. It is just comfort time. When it gets cold and autumn comes outside, I also love listening to jazz, because that’s always the cozy idea of home, with an open fireplace. That’s feel-good music for me: when it’s raining outside, and you have a cup of tea and listen to jazz, and everything is fine.<sup>[38]</sup>

The life story of Resident 1 makes the relationship between music and poverty apparent. A question to ask is therefore whether the act of listening to comforting jazz today may serve to ameliorate the experience of precarity due to denied opportunities and life choices.<sup>[39]</sup>

The idea of home as a feel-good place and a longing for it is conveyed through music, as many residents expressed in interviews. For diasporic groups in particular, music can be highly relevant for articulating and reminiscing on diffused and multilocal belongings. As other studies on music and migration in Vienna have shown,<sup>[40]</sup> music plays a vital role in the process of “relocating”<sup>[41]</sup> oneself and in identity-building that creates ties between homelands and places of residence. In the interviews with residents belonging to diasporic groups, it is often the mundane act of putting a cassette or CD into the player that evokes past experiences of place in the present. “Traditional folk songs” such as *sevdalinka* and “Serbian music”<sup>[42]</sup> remain the music of choice for members of the ex-Yugoslavian community who migrated to Vienna as guest workers in the 1970s. Among the younger residents whose parents were guest workers, the family musical histories live on through musical community events, collective dances at weddings, or the soundtrack of the parental home. Instrumental skills on the accordion, percussion, or violin are also passed on as a form of transmitting cultural heritage to younger generations, and the music of artists like Šaban Šaulić, Marija Šerifović, Tanja Savić, and Jelena Tomašević is declared their musical preference. In

this sense, music becomes a unique vehicle for remembering and preserving culture and transmitting it to the next generations,<sup>[43]</sup> it is also capable of promoting a sense of belonging and inspiring “imagined communities”<sup>[44]</sup> that transcend national borders but also reinforce boundaries between social groups. As an ethnomusicologist and the principal investigator of this project, Ursula Hemetek draws from her minority research in Austria. Musicking in diaspora may thus help minority members to stress markers of difference that are already imposed by the group in power (see also next chapter).<sup>[45]</sup> However, the adolescents also indicated a number of “generational breakings” common to diasporic musicking with their musical preferences:<sup>[46]</sup> they blend traditions of their parents and the preferences of their local peer-groups, such as sentimental “classics” of their parents’ house, with Serbian-language rap and German hip hop, as well as Justin Bieber, and they named TikTok as their favorite music platform.

Nonetheless, the notion of (be)longing may also be associated with the current place of residence, as the story of an Iraqi woman shows. In our conversation, the single parent, who had only been living in the Anton-Figl-Hof for a few months and who was pregnant with her second child, described the challenges of Austrian bureaucracy and the hurdles that language and foreign culture pose for her. But when asked about her music consumption, she commented on her perception of Vienna, the so-called music city, with great curiosity and openness:

I go there on the opera house one time, but outside, not inside, because I don’t understand what is happening inside, the words and everything. But there was a big TV outside the opera, and I sit, and I was surprised. It was really nice. I feel this music. I don’t understand but I feel. I feel when the singer gets *hiiiigh* or she gets *loooow*...Really, I love this country because they love the music and arts, and they respect. I see the people when some person plays, they—the Österreich [Austrian] people, not the foreign people like my country, but Österreich and old people also, they just listen with respect and enjoy. I love this.<sup>[47]</sup>

Experiences of the past and present, memories of the individual and the collective intermingle in music as an embodied social and cultural practice. As discussed in this section, music is a means of recognizing and identifying (with) places and drawing boundaries or bridging gaps between them. The (emotional) “place-belongingness”<sup>[48]</sup> to a musical community or musical place of origin or residence may be thus a prescient dimension that we can emphasize when studying music(s) in municipal housing contexts. The residents feel certain things as “home” and as “safe,” as a symbolic space of familiarity and comfort.<sup>[49]</sup> Hence, musical practices can contribute to these feelings of belonging and create an idea of a social space that residents feel at home in, or at least more at home with.

## Music and the Politics of Non-Belonging: The Perspectives of Longtime Tenants

Picking up on the already outlined heterogeneity of residents, this section deals with resulting conflicts and boundary-making processes through the lens of power relations. As indicated above, it is characteristic of the residential structure of the Anton-Figl-Hof that two groups can be distinguished overall: the *Alteingesessenen*, “longtime” tenants, who are “native” to both the building complex and the country, and the *Zugezogenen*, “new” tenants, such as immigrants, who are labeled as such by the former group. However, it is important to say that this division simplifies the complexity and fluidity of neighborhood relations and the ways in which individuals

position themselves within it. Whereas Austria, as a remnant of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and with a location close to the borders of former communist states, has in fact always been a country of immigration, xenophobia and discrimination are deeply embedded in the labor market, housing, law, and everyday aggressions.<sup>[50]</sup> These experiences may result in different reactions and survival strategies situated along the axis between assimilation and withdrawal, perceived as threatening *Parallelgesellschaften* (parallel societies). This is in line with the remarks of members of the Austrian majority society, who may often react with rejection rather than adjustment.<sup>[51]</sup> As one of my fieldnotes narrates:

After a few informal conversations in the courtyard, when the elderly couple was walking their dogs, they eventually agreed to an interview and invited me for coffee and cake. I had brought a balcony plant with me, as I had already noticed that the pensioner was an enthusiastic gardener and had used wohnpartner's contact requests to express her wish for a flower and vegetable bed in the courtyard. (It was not uncommon for tenants to express their wishes or complaints around the housing situation when we approached them for the "Klingender Gemeindebau" project, often quickly digressing from the topic of investigation.) When I am let into the spacious flat, the TV is switched off, and their three small dogs bark and whirl around my legs. The living room is dominated by a beechwood wall unit with a television, music system, and comprehensive CD collection. We sit down at the set coffee table, the dogs calm down, and I ask the couple about their musical preferences. "*Quer durch den Gemüsegarten*" ("across the board," literally, "right through the vegetable garden"), is Resident 3's answer, and he presents me with their favorite CDs: "From rock, Bruce Springsteen, etc., as well as a good German Schlager, even folk music once in a while or classical. Whatever the mood, you put on a CD...The radio is on all day...and the TV." His wife adds: "The only thing we don't like to listen to is this *umtata umtata*. It's nice for a bit when you're at a folk festival or something, but not really so much...I always liked listening to classical music, but I also liked listening to ABBA...or chansons or things like that. It depends. Sometimes I also like *this other* music, the Spanish music or this gypsy folk music. But not all the time. There are a few that I like, but not all of them...For me, music has to be calming or a movement or something like that." When being asked about the sounds of the Anton-Figl-Hof, resident 3 says: "Because we already have a lot of neo-Austrians in the building, you hear their music everywhere, but so loud out of the window..., whether it's Turkish or Serbian. And when it's so loud, it's unpleasant...and for hours and at two or three o'clock in the morning...You almost don't hear any German records in the building anymore...That has changed a lot." "What I've also noticed is that the children have absolutely no idea about the folk songs, absolutely not," Resident 2 adds. "When a flat becomes empty," Resident 3 continues, "90% of the time some family with a migration background comes and they bring their music and everything with them. They just don't want our culture. That's the big problem when I'm in a foreign country." Resident 2 concludes on a sharper tone: "I wish people would respect us more. Not that we have to change. Not that we have to change, but they come to our country, and we have to change. We are no longer allowed to do *that* and are no longer allowed to do *that*, and we always have to be considerate."<sup>[52]</sup>

When the research perspective is shifted from the individual musical preferences to the sounds of the Anton-Figl-Hof, the atmosphere of the interviews often receives a different angle, with an emphasis on the territorial dimension of (semi-)public music consumption. In municipal housing, music transcends the private sphere of one's own "four walls" through open windows and becomes a powerful occupant of sonic space. It is thus often not just a question of "what music" is listened to but also "whose music" is heard—and perceived as too loud or unpleasant by other tenants as co-listeners.<sup>[53]</sup> As Resident 1 states, "It is also about taking up space and representing culture, I would say, which I find quite sad. You can tell that racism is strong here, unfortunately, and it is also acted out through music."<sup>[54]</sup>

The visibility of perceived "otherness" is articulated in the sonic realm. During the fieldwork, it became clear that music was often rendered as a cause for argument and quarrel and, together with language barriers, as a crucial factor in drawing boundaries between "us" and "them," the "normal" and the "deviant." When I asked about the sounds of the Anton-Figl-Hof, loudness and noise complaints often become a symbol of an increasingly diverse neighborhood and, moreover,



a projection of xenophobia and intolerance towards ethnic, racial, and religious minorities who move in when a flat is vacant due to the death or eviction of the previous tenants. Music and sounds should therefore be understood not only as central to people's lives; they can also serve as a political practice of boundary-making—although it tends to become more apparent which sounds do *not* belong than which *do* belong. However, when cultural aspects such as music consumption, language/accent, or religion are used to define and defend in- and out-groups, boundaries are drawn on the basis of perceived differences and assumptions. As some conversations with long-term tenants revealed, these boundaries are expressed in a populist vernacular through classifications such as “Austrians” versus “foreigners,” “neo-Austrians,” or “Yugoslavians,” assuming their coherent and bound character as units. It is also significant that these attributions are less linked to the actual status of national citizenship or duration of tenancy than to an essentialist notion of ethnicity.<sup>[55]</sup> This is especially evident when most of the tenants do not want to express open prejudice and instead express their perceptions by saying “I have nothing against foreigners, but...”—what follows this opening is usually statements about a perceived unwillingness to integrate, the high unemployment rate, noise, a “southern mentality” of unsupervised children and their footballs, or even the nuisance of the smell of “foreign cooking.”

It is important to state that the negative perceptions (such as the violation of “house rules”) are generally problematized with the increasing presence of people with a migration background and are less associated with the different residential needs and living situations of, for example, young families and children in contrast to pensioners. The narrative drawn along the conflict line of ethnicity therefore simplifies and obscures the multitude of tensions that may arise when different housing needs collide within a dense space. Statements about the non-belonging of certain groups or music to the Anton-Figl-Hof therefore serve as a means with which to draw borders between others that affect their personal feelings of “being at home.” As a discursive resource, however, these politics of non-belonging foreground the means to justify claims to space: the question of who belongs is therefore not a personal matter but a social one, depending on the rejecting or welcoming practices of the group in power.<sup>[56]</sup> It is also striking in this context that these everyday conflicts are mainly interpreted from the perspective of the majority society, while the *othered* target group expresses a high level of satisfaction with the Anton-Figl-Hof, as will be discussed in the following section. The result is a one-sided narrative that dominates discourses about the relationship between residential groups, which in this logic belong to either majority or minority positions—and not, as is much more likely today, to the various points in between due to manifold constellations of poverty, ethnicity, age, or gender. What is implicit to varying degrees in the remarks of the long-term tenants is the perception of social devaluation and status loss. In line with the findings of other studies,<sup>[57]</sup> some residents of the Anton-Figl-Hof suffer from the bad reputation of municipal housing and its change of image to a “hotspot of conflict.” This is mirrored, for example, in the shameful discomfort expressed by Resident 1, who had to leave the private rented housing sector for municipal housing after a “bad breakup,” or in the many cases in which tenants articulated that “they would move if they could.”

However, hostility and the defense of traditional values as reflected in the perspectives of elderly tenants form part of a wider cultural backlash against social change and the rise of populist views. As Essletzbichler and Forcher point out, arguments are often found in recent cultural and economic developments—such as “globalization,” the so-called refugee crises, the experience of insecurity, and work instability—which have generated groups of people who have been “left behind” or are under pressure due to competition and existential fears.<sup>[58]</sup> However, while those

phenomena may be global, the tensions affect the lived experiences on a local and quotidian level—and are particularly virulent in dense social spaces such as those represented by the *Gemeindebau*.<sup>[59]</sup> These conflicts ultimately point to the fact that the established stratification systems (of class and milieu) in municipal housing have become complicated by social mobility, migration, or the neoliberal promise of advancement.<sup>[60]</sup> Yet by defending boundaries and establishing hierarchies, the longtime tenants may reclaim a form of self-governance, perhaps alleviating what is beyond their reach. Where traditional forms of membership and identities have become fragile or threatened, these exclusive politics of belonging—such as to a building complex—present the struggle for scarce resources: claims to space, social benefits, acceptance, and recognition.<sup>[61]</sup> Noise complaints are thus not only intentional acts of locating the “not me/us” in the “other” in order to exercise power, but these practices are linked to distributional competitions of livability that shape life in municipal housing. In this sense, quietude and the self-determined choice of the sounds and music one hears should, after all, be understood as part of a complex struggle over one’s own place in the world.

## Alternative Forms of Cultivating Music Community: The Perspectives of New(er) Tenants

This section deals with the perspectives of the so-called new tenants. In contrast to the discussions above, the shared music consumption of this group holds the potential of community-building and intercultural mediation. I documented the following on an afternoon in August 2021:

“In private apartments you don’t really get to know the people,” says Resident 5, who has been living here for about nine years. After her first son was born, the woman, who says she is from Serbia but grew up in Vienna, applied for municipal housing in order to be able to afford a larger flat. “For example, there is no courtyard where you can sit down and chat. That’s different. Here, you only have advantages if you have good neighbors. We help each other out,” she explains, pointing towards the group of women around her, whom I have seen already spending time together. One of the other young mothers comes closer to engage in our conversation. “For example, today she [pointing to the approaching neighbor] was somewhere, had an appointment, and I was watching the kids. No matter what it is. We talk to each other on the phone when I need that.” Our interview had been arranged an hour before, but as she explains, she could not come earlier because she had to watch the two children. When Resident 6, a Romani mother in her early twenties, returned from her appointment, the families came down to the courtyard with Bobby Cars and bags packed with numerous stuffed animals, chalk, snacks, and drinks. “It’s pretty crazy here! It’s loud; sometimes I play hide-and-seek with the kids and do silly things,” she continues the conversation, which is repeatedly interrupted by the children and other neighbors joining. “I like to listen to music, but I don’t make anything out of it myself. I have no talent for it...But she [proudly pointing to her friend]—she sings, it’s really amazing! Yesterday she sang Indian, Arabic.” Resident 6 adds: “The app is called Smule. You can sing and record it. It is really cool...You can just sing for yourself or in a group or duets and stuff like that.”—“You also meet people who live all over the world, for example,” Resident 5 interjects. “Yes, for example, I sing here, and he sings there on the other side. Next time I’ll ask, ‘hey, how’s the Covid situation with you?’” Resident 6 laughs and continues: “You can also do duets with famous singers.” “Yesterday she sang with a guy from Berlin,” Resident 5 adds, “he was so enthused with her. She sang something in English and they both sang in Indian.” “That was so funny! Next time I’ll try Chinese,” Resident 6 says, and mimics sounds. Resident 5’s youngest daughter comes over, asking to unlock the mother’s mobile phone to show me her favorite song: “Bole Chudiyān,” a song from the Hindi-language family drama film *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (Sometimes Happiness, Sometimes Sadness, 2021), and the group of residents begins to sing and dance along. “That’s how we do it,” Resident 6 says. “We sit, play music, then they sing...We exchange about music...I have no problem with whatever music. If you love music...you can find something good in any song, I think. Whether it’s Schlager, heavy metal, techno, rave, whatever.”<sup>[62]</sup>

Even if only loosely, these neighborhood meetings exhibit signs of a group identity. The Anton-Figl-Hof is perceived by this residential group as a vibrant place to live, with good connections among the neighbors and a healthy support network. Interestingly, however, this group of people is anything but coherent in terms of origin, age, or educational background. In contrast to the longtime tenants, the biographies of many residents referred to as “new” are interspersed with experiences of (post-)migration, breaks and turns related to mobility, asylum, and diaspora. The group is also rather concentrated around families and women “staying at home” and undertaking reproductive work and thus is strongly gendered. It is also due to their immediate neighborhood that the loose group meets up in the shared courtyard, where a common language often becomes secondary and “hands and feet” are used, if necessary.

Music, as the introductory fieldnote indicates, also plays an active role in these matters. The common courtyard as a meeting point is a place of sociability where musical preferences, practices, and knowledge are shared and cultivated. These networks were evident, for example, whenever tenants answered that they liked “Indian music” introduced to them by a former neighbor who moved out of the Anton-Figl-Hof at the beginning of the project. But even in their absence and more than a year later, hanging out together often involved playing Bollywood songs on YouTube and mimicking dances. When we announced karaoke as our fourth event on site as a response to Resident 6’s great enthusiasm for it (see figure 6), the residential group met in advance to rehearse Fugees’ “Killing Me Softly,” accompanied by the acoustic guitar played by Resident 1. As the event progressed, music also transformed and the usual karaoke songbook was soon replaced by YouTube playbacks, allowing the residents to play and sing along to their chosen music or just hang out together (see figure 7).



**Figure 6: Residents interpreting “Killing Me Softly” at the karaoke event on June 1,**

**2022. Recording devices and the karaoke songbook provided by Karaoke Club Austria in the foreground; photo: Jasemin Khaleli**



**Figure 7: Residents hanging out together in the shared courtyard and enjoying the karaoke afternoon on June 1, 2022; photo: Jasemin Khaleli**

In the shared afternoon moments, however, the group repeats sounds and musical actions, generating collective memories that ultimately influence the ways all of the in-group members perceive the sounding space of their home. As this case study shows, diasporic music is, unlike what is perceived by longtime tenants, not simply “‘carried’ from one place to another but created anew in different locations and under new circumstances.”<sup>[63]</sup> The musical community is thus co-constructed by tenants both inside and outside the Indian, ex-Yugoslav, or Iraqi diaspora; it relates to voluntary and egalitarian practices of making oneself and one’s kin known through mutual support in everyday affairs. What can be ultimately asked is whether musical experiences can serve to mobilize (non-)belongings and to elasticize the boundaries of those included and excluded in an (imagined) Anton-Figl-Hof community.

Moreover, upon closer look, the purportedly established distinction between “new” and “longtime” tenants is also fringed and blurred. This can be seen, for example, when the neighboring children affectionately call Resident 8, an Austrian tenant in her late fifties, “auntie,” who supervises the children when needed. Resident 1, an autochthonous tenant without children of her own, also joins forces in helping the families “if a mobile phone is broken, then of course, or a computer. But even if it’s ‘my lamp doesn’t work.’”<sup>[64]</sup> Overall, the group’s strong support networks can be read as an indication of how little importance is attached to ethnicity as a category of difference. Even more, when speaking with Resident 1, I got the impression that the dominant narratives of disintegration were intentionally de-ethnicized.<sup>[65]</sup>

We have a community room down there, but there have been quite long arguments, and hopefully something will change soon with wohnpartner. There are things—people say, “we’ve rented the room now, it’s ours and the rest of us aren’t allowed in.” I had a pretty rough argument the other day, because we were playing cards and there was nothing against it, even though it was the pandemic. And we have a girl there who is Muslim, and she wanted to celebrate her birthday. She wasn’t allowed in. Then I said, “sorry, guys, but what is this shit?” That was just pure racism...I can’t help it...I have to do this; I hate injustice.<sup>[66]</sup>

In order to resist racist attitudes thriving in the building complex, Resident 1 emphasizes taking solidary actions. In these moments of “deviation” of chosen belongings, the ambiguous relations between self-identification and external ascription may become apparent: In this regard, “new tenants” may feel a sense of belonging to the space they reside in but may not be accepted as full members. Or they may be included in the dominant narratives of municipal housing, as in the case of Resident 1, but may not fully identify with them, which may disturb their feelings of belonging. This shifts the perspective to the emancipatory dimension of belonging politics, as Nira Yuval-Davis points out: In contrast to reducing the politics of (non-)belonging to practices of exercising and maintaining power (e.g., over who is allowed in the community room), they also hold the potential to challenge hegemonic relations and to shift boundaries in favor of inclusivity and emancipatory change.<sup>[67]</sup>

The experience of exclusion may ultimately affect the ways in which the residential group presented here claims space outside in the courtyard. Whenever I spoke to this residential group, their flexibility with regard to in-group membership came to the fore. They invited passing neighbors to sit, distributing drinks and snacks to all present. It may not come as a surprise that the attitude of this group towards me as a “newcomer” as well was generally more open and cordial than that of others, who were willing to be interviewed but were not interested in active participation in events. These lived practices of togetherness in everyday life are ultimately what constitute alternative forms of community-building under the condition of ethnocultural diversity. This differs fundamentally from the neighborly community that was experienced by the elderly tenants in the past, in the sense of a collective predefined by social and ethnic homogeneity and socialist ideology: communitization (*Vergemeinschaftung*) was treated as a core principle and political goal of “Red Vienna,” and its legacy is often considered “lost” due to the ethnocultural diversity of municipal housing today. However, as argued in this section, alternative forms of social and cultural bonds can be observed precisely within the diverse group of “new” tenants joined by long-residing individuals. These social alliances are oriented around shared realities of life, womanhood, and poverty that allow *Gemeindebau* residents to “find a place within.” These practices may also ask whether musicking in togetherness is or can be “resistant” in some way, not only to individual expositions to discrimination and vulnerability due to war, refuge, or unemployment<sup>[68]</sup> but also to the essentialist discourses of “integration” and “assimilation” that can be heard inside and outside the Anton-Figl-Hof. Shared music consumption as a situational and serendipitous practice of sonic space-making can thus be seen as one fundamental aspect of creating a sense of group belonging.

## Reviewing “Klingender Gemeindebau”: Applied

# Fieldwork Design

With the aim of adopting a community-based perspective and facilitating moments of shared music consumption in the *Gemeindebau*, the project was inherently driven by the potential to increase intercultural understandings through ethnomusicological research.<sup>[69]</sup> In a definition proposed by the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology, applied ethnomusicology “is the approach guided by principles of social responsibility, which extends the usual academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding toward solving concrete problems and toward working inside and beyond typical academic contexts.”<sup>[70]</sup> Furthermore, the study group understands its practice as “advocating the use of ethnomusicological knowledge in influencing social interaction and course of cultural change,”<sup>[71]</sup> for example in situations of conflict. For the “*Klingender Gemeindebau*” project, this meant moving beyond the mere study of the sonic phenomena of municipal housing toward a “sense of purpose,”<sup>[72]</sup> particularly found in conscious intervention in the field through on-site events. The project design was therefore not so much defined by a predefined topic and research question as open to the interlocutors’ suggestions. In direct response to the wishes and ideas expressed in interviews, a total of seven events were eventually realized, presenting a range of musical practices and styles: a participatory singalong together with the 1. Wiener Gemeindebauchor (see figure 8),<sup>[73]</sup> concerts by Guru’s Šrâmĭ Kvařet, Mořa řiřic & Band (see figure 9), and der Nino aus Wien, and more interactive formats, such as a karaoke session moderated by Karaoke Club Austria, an instrumental workshop by the local musical school Musikschule Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus, and a jam-session organized by [Kulturlabor Gemeindebau](#).



**Figure 8: Residents participating at the sing-along of the 1. Wiener Gemeindebauchor**

on September 15, 2021; photo: Jasemin Khaleli



**Figure 9: Spontaneous participation of a resident interpreting a Romani song together with Moša Šišić & Band on April 1, 2022; photo: Jasemin Khaleli**

As it was insightful to see who attended over time, the fieldwork allowed me to observe the concrete actions of shared music consumption and to capture the narratives, values, and desires surrounding the field. Whereas some tenants joined our activities regularly and expressed interest in participating, because “something was now happening after 25 years living here,”<sup>[74]</sup> others felt addressed only by certain musical genres and/or activities and offensively declined others. The concert by Moša Šišić, who performed at the Anton-Figl-Hof on April 1, 2022, for instance, undoubtedly attracted the most visitors and neighbors. The violinist of Roma and “gypsy” music, who has lived in Austria since childhood, generated great enthusiasm among members of the ex-Yugoslav community. Tenants afterwards described the “music as a real magnet,” with the “power to bring even estranged neighbors back together” for a circle dance (see video 1).<sup>[75]</sup>

**Video 1: Residents joining for a circle dance at the end of the concert; video: Jasemin Khaleli**



However, the joyful music consumption of some was just as important as the non-consumption of others. When I subsequently called other interviewees to invite them to our next event and ask for feedback, longtime tenants justified their absence by having “turned on their heels” when they realized that what was being played was the “kind of music that was already annoying”<sup>[76]</sup> them in daily life. Moreover, they also argued against the research project being aimed at this target group of “new tenants.” More than once, the research process has shown that forming and organizing a group of participants around musical events was a creative effort that demanded the constant negotiation of values, goals, and (racial) preconceptions. These tensions can also be seen as productive, as they offer the opportunity to acknowledge different and complex positionalities that are resistant to the topos of “music as universal language.” After all, musical practices are a meaningful lens through which power dynamics within the *Gemeindebau* become transparent, and furthermore analyzable and thematizable, without encouraging stereotypes to prevail.

In addition to the seven musical activities, research in an under-acknowledged field such as the *Gemeindebau* also shows another potential: giving individuals space to talk about the pleasurable subject music often represents. As Resident 7 once expressed with gratitude:

You know, you made me talk about something I forget to talk about...When I meet people, I don't talk about the music. I just talk about my situation, my life, my friends, how life is going on, my daughter, kindergarten, my pregnancy. So, you know, I don't find anyone to talk about the music. You just let me talk today—about what I love.<sup>[77]</sup>

However, other conversations showed that the idea of an applied research design that was open with regard to the proposals of interlocutors and the outcome of the project also caused confusion. As I learned, it was generally a challenge to talk to people who were not used to being asked about their musical lives and who may have had little access to the cultural, social, and economic capital to feel worthy of articulating their perspectives on this matter. It was difficult to ask the residents about music-related ideas and needs they could envision implementing in their housing complex, because they often lacked the necessary resources (such as time) and agency and were unaware of alternatives. Due to this lack of the necessary self-esteem and sense of entitlement to proactively make suggestions, as well as the social exclusion experienced by residents in different constellations of poverty, the project design proved at times to be naïve and sometimes met with insecurities or disinterest. However, the biggest challenges to the research process were the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, changing contact restrictions, and the sense of discomfort expressed by the residents (e.g., access to private living spaces or interest in social gatherings). As a consequence of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the generally restrictive housing regulations, it was thus possible to “find” and document few to no events or festivities in the field.

## Conclusion

Music in municipal housing in Vienna is an understudied research field, but as this article has shown, it has considerable potential. Within the “*Klingender Gemeindebau*” project, musical practices proved to be a powerful instrument for both conveying and constructing different identities. Municipal housing in general, as well as the Anton-Figl-Hof in particular, represents an

increasingly diverse field of different biographies, living situations, and values. The common denominator of the twenty-two individuals interviewed was that they all suffered some kind of devaluation, relative poverty, and discrimination on different levels: Like other poorer and less educated segments of society, *Gemeindebau* residents experience stigmatization by the Austrian majority population. But even within the microcosm of municipal housing itself, minority members such as immigrants, refugees, and those from other vulnerable groups face a dominant group of “long-term” residents. This is reflected in the remarks of residents who foregrounded the emotional dimensions of music at their home—whether it was the moods and memories evoked by the preferred music for better coping with everyday life or the neighbor’s loud music that some tenants perceived as disturbing. Music, as discussed in the previous sections, is thus one insightful level where distinctions and boundaries are made and new forms of community-building and neighborly collectivity are possible. The applied research design of this project opened up room for experimentation and conscious intervention that, despite being ambivalently received by the interlocutors, was beneficial for at least some residents and new(er) neighbors.

The focus on musical practices expands upon the existing research on municipal housing, which has always been concerned with questions of sociocultural co-existence and communization throughout its more than one hundred-year history. The vision of a utopian society without class divisions and the emancipation of the working class was formulated at the beginning of the history of “Red Vienna.” Today, however, the social-democratic working-class clientele has largely disappeared in municipal housing, and new social insecurities and fragmentations that address new demands on housing policies and urban organizations have emerged.<sup>[78]</sup> The debates around municipal housing and the ongoing emphasis on inclusion and social cohesion can therefore be seen as a form of assimilationism that is in discord with the realities found in this study.<sup>[79]</sup> But should we demand from “others” that they conform to regressive cultural value systems, or could we rather ask how municipal housing can “keep step” with the plurality of living situations today? The sociologist Christoph Reinprecht, for example, argues that we should learn from the history of municipal housing in order to actualize its utopian potential as an alternative form of housing beyond the private market. Opening up the formal criteria for access to municipal housing and validating differences and normalizing “strangeness” could thus help us to envision a future that makes the *Gemeindebau* viable and capable of responding to the conditions of time.<sup>[80]</sup> It will also be necessary to conduct further research that analyzes the experiences of tenants and identifies the agents and alliances that could carry this social project forward in a way that avoids ideologically charged representations and divisive discourse. After all, research on municipal housing invites us to occupy a perspective that is sensitive to the multiplicity of living conditions. (Applied) musical research should thus be considered in interdisciplinary processes of urban planning and intercultural mediation with the aim of making use of its potential for advancing knowledge, understanding, and connection.

## References

1. Resident 1, interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, June 15, 2021. Original wording in German: Author: “Wie klingt dieser Gemeindebau für dich?” Resident 1: “Es beschreibt für mich ziemlich *Das Fenster zum Hof* von Alfred Hitchcock. Es ist Streit, Ehekrach, Liebeskummer, Betrunkene, auch natürlich schöne Lieder, Geschirrkloppern kommt natürlich genauso vor. Es ist auch die Polizei, der Kampf zwischen, ich würde mal sagen, Balkanmusik und dann kommt der klassische Wiener durch, die

beschimpfen sich und es wird immer lauter gedreht, bis die Polizei kommt. So würde ich den musikalischen Gemeindebau empfinden." ↑

2. See, for instance, [Birgit Haller et al., "Hot spots" sozialer Konflikte und Gebietsbetreuung in Wiener Wohnhausanlagen \(final project report IKF/TrendCom, 2008\)](#), accessed August 12, 2023; and Rosmarie Nigg, *Soziale Körper in Transformation: Eine empirische Untersuchung über Integration von ZuwanderInnen und Nachbarschaft in Wiener Gemeindebauten* (Saarbrücken: Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008). ↑
3. Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Means of Performing and Listening*, Music/Culture (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998). ↑
4. Christoph Reinprecht, "Die Zukunft des Wiener Gemeindebaus und die Transformation des Sozialen," in *living rooms: Politik der Zugehörigkeit im Wiener Gemeindebau*, ed. Florian Bettel, Julia Mourão Permoser, and Sieglinde Rosenberger, Edition Angewandte (Vienna: Springer, 2012), 209. ↑
5. Björn R. Tammen, "'Glückliche Menschen in neuen Häusern': Variationen über Musikbild und Menschenbild in den Gemeindebauten der Stadt Wien," in *Die Künste der Nachkriegszeit: Musik, Literatur und bildende Kunst in Österreich*, ed. Stefan Schmidl, Wiener musikwissenschaftliche Beiträge (Vienna: Böhlau, 2013), 137-66. ↑
6. Irene Suchy, "'Soweit politisch tragbar': Eine Marginalia zur ArbeiterInnen-Gesangskultur bis 1933/34," in *Rote Tränen: Die Zerstörung der Arbeiterkultur durch Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus; Ergebnisse der gleichnamigen Internationalen Tagung in memoriam Herbert Exenberger, 14.-15. November 2014*, ed. Konstantin Kaiser, Jan Kreisky, and Sabine Lichtenberger, Zwischenwelt 14 (Klagenfurt: Drava, 2017), 152-57; and Derek Weber, "Symphonie Proletaire: Die Arbeiter-Sinfonie-Konzerte in Wien zwischen Tradition, Aufbruch und gewaltsamer Zerstörung 1905-1934," in *ibid.*, 135-51. ↑
7. [Christoph Reinprecht, "Social Housing in Austria," in \*Social Housing in Europe\*, ed. Kathleen Scanlon, Christine Whitehead, and Melissa Fernández Arrigoitia, Real Estate Issues \(Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014\), 61.](#) ↑
8. "Der Wiener Gemeindebau heute," *Wiener Wohnen*, accessed May 1, 2023. ↑
9. [Stefan Kalnoky, "Ringstraße des Proletariats? Zum Wandel der Sozialstruktur der BewohnerInnen fünf ausgewählter Gemeindebauten im Kontext der Wiener Stadtentwicklung des 20. Jahrhunderts" \(diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 2010\).](#) ↑
10. Sieglinde Rosenberger and Julia Mourão Permoser, "Zugehörigkeit mobilisieren, politisieren, de-politisieren: Analysen aus dem Wiener Gemeindebau," in Bettel, Mourão Permoser, and Rosenberger, *living rooms*, 42. ↑
11. Reinprecht, "Zukunft des Wiener Gemeindebaus." ↑
12. [Justin Kadi, "Recommodifying Housing in Formerly 'Red' Vienna?" \*Housing, Theory and Society\* 32, no. 3 \(2015\): 247-65.](#) ↑
13. Christoph Reinprecht, "Kommunale Strategien für bezahlbaren Wohnraum: Das Wiener Modell oder die Entzauberung einer Legende," in *Wohnraum für alle?! Perspektiven auf Planung, Politik und Architektur*, ed. Barabara Schöning, Justin Kadi, and Sebastian Schipper, Urban Studies (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017), 213-30. ↑

14. Irmtraud Voglmayr, "Klassismus in der Populärkultur: Schauplatz Gemeindebau," in *Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Gender Studies: Zur Aktualität kritischer Gesellschaftsanalyse*, ed. Ricarda Drüeke, Elisabeth Klaus, Martina Thiele, and Julia Elena Goldmann, *Critical Studies in Media and Communication* 17 (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 275–90. ↑
15. Rosenberger and Mourão Permoser, "Zugehörigkeit mobilisieren," 40. ↑
16. Juergen Essletzbichler and Johannes Forcher, "'Red Vienna' and the Rise of the Populist Right," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 29, no. 1 (2022): 130. ↑
17. Rosenberger and Mourão Permoser, "Zugehörigkeit mobilisieren," 41. ↑
18. See, for instance, Bettel, Mourão Permoser, and Rosenberger, *living rooms*; or Essletzbichler and Forcher, "'Red Vienna,'" 126–41. ↑
19. In the Austrian context, the term *Stiege* ("staircase") refers to residential units with separate entrances within a single building complex. ↑
20. Born into a Viennese working-class family, Anton Figl (1895–1963) worked as a tram driver and had been a member of the Austrian Social Democratic Workers' Party (*Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei* SDAP, later SPÖ) since the age of 23. As a member of the Republican Protection League (*Österreichischer Schutzbund*), a paramilitary organization founded by the SDAP in the course of the political radicalization after the First World War and banned by the Austrofascist government, he was arrested in 1934 for distributing leaflets and dismissed from the service. After the Second World War, he was elected district leader of Vienna's fourteenth district, Penzing (1946–62). During this time, the newly built housing complex was named after him (see "Anton Figl," *dasrotewien.at: Weblexikon der Wiener Sozialdemokratie*, accessed March 12, 2024). ↑
21. Kalnoky, "Ringstraße des Proletariats?," 54. ↑
22. The data collected in the research includes personal information as well as statements about residential conflicts and individual political attitudes. For ethical and data protection reasons, residents are thus anonymized. ↑
23. Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging," *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 3 (2006): 197–214. ↑
24. Klisala Harrison, "The Relationship of Poverty to Music," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 45 (2013), 4. ↑
25. *Ibid.* ↑
26. Resident 4, fieldnotes and interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, July 26, 2021. Original wording of the quotes in German: "Wir mussten selbstständig werden. Da hat jeder seine Aufgabe gehabt im Haushalt, ohne, dass wir gesagt haben, das ist uns zu viel...Wir haben noch genug Freizeit gehabt zum Spielen, mit Freunden fortgehen, aber unsere Arbeit haben wir trotzdem erledigen müssen, was meiner Meinung nach nicht geschadet hat, weil dadurch haben wir gelernt, im Erwachsenenalter dann noch, dass wir als erster unsere Arbeit haben erledigen müssen und dann haben wir Freizeit...Damals war es aber noch anders im Gemeindebau. Sie müssen sich vorstellen, wie ich war sechs, sieben Jahre, das waren alles junge Familien, alle viele Kinder. Und wenn irgendwas war, da hat dann die Nachbarin gesagt oder von der anderen Stiege die, 'bring mir die Kinder rüber'...Aber da war der Zusammenhalt noch ganz anders. Punkt 1, wo wahrscheinlich das Kriterium ist: Wir haben alle die gleiche Sprache gesprochen. Jetzt ist es schwer mit den verschiedenen Sprachen. Die—wie sagt

man—nicht-österreichischen Bürger, was bei uns wohnen, ist an für sich kein Problem. Ich habe mich so weit durchgesetzt, dass ich es versucht habe über die Kinder und dann hab ich mir die Eltern geholt”—“Aber ausziehen tue ich nicht! Keine Chance! Zu viele Erinnerungen, Kindheitserinnerungen. Wir haben so viel erlebt da im Gemeindebau und es kommt oft, wenn ich ehemalige Schulkolleginnen treffe: Lebt der noch? Wohnt der noch da? Das kann ich ihnen dann sagen. Aber es ist optimal da. Trotz den Veränderungen, wenn man sich ärgern muss zeitweise...und wir haben trotz alledem noch viel Grün, was ich in anderen Gemeindebauten nicht mehr habe.”—“Ich habe zuhause ca. 600 CDs. Seit 40 Jahren sammeln wir die. Wenn jetzt ein neues Lied auf den Markt kommt und da gefällt mir der Text, kauf ich mir die CD...Das ist allgemein Schlager, angefangen von Semino Rossi, Helene Fischer, Andy Borg, Hansi Hinterseer. Volksmusik—also quer durchs Beet, alles auf Deutsch. Da verstehe ich, was sie singen.” ↑

27. The *Helene Fischer Show* (2011–19) was a television program broadcasted annually on Christmas in which Schlager star Helene Fischer provided musical and acrobatic entertainment together with guest musicians. The *Schlagernacht des Jahres* (Schlager night of the year) is an annual concert series featuring prominent Schlager stars since 1990, broadcast since 2017 by rbb (Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg). ↑
28. Resident 2, interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, July 7, 2021. Original wording in German: “Wo kein Rhythmus dabei ist und das nur laut ist.” ↑
29. Ibid. Original wording in German: “diese ganz krasse Klassik, die so *miauuuuuu*...das, was da so verwirrend ist...und nur so ein Quietschen ist.” ↑
30. Resident 8, joint interview with the author and Ursula Hemetek, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, October 7, 2021. Original wording in German: “Oper gefällt mir nicht so gut. Das verstehe ich irgendwie nicht, wenn die so schreien.” ↑
31. Michael Huber, *Musikhören im Zeitalter Web 2.0: Theoretische Grundlagen und empirische Befunde*, Musik und Gesellschaft 36 (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018), 158–59. ↑
32. Ibid., 164–65. ↑
33. Julio Mendivil, “Rocking Granny’s Living Room? The New Voices of German Schlager,” in *Perspectives on German Popular Music*, ed. Michael Ahlers and Christoph Jacke, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (London: Routledge, 2017), 100–107. ↑
34. Richard A. Peterson and Albert Simkus, “How Musical Tastes Mark Occupational Status Groups,” in *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*, ed. Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 152–86. ↑
35. Resident 1, interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, June 15, 2021. Original wording in German: “Morgens schon zum Aufwachen habe ich meine diversen Playlists nach Lust und Laune: Wie fühle ich mich heute und wie will ich mich heute fühlen? Brauche ich Ruhe, brauche ich Motivation? Bei mir ist es sehr aktives Hören. Radio läuft bei mir zum Beispiel gar nicht. Die ständigen Werbeeinschaltungen...das hat mich als Kind schon genervt, wenn du auf Tonband, also eine Kassette aufgenommen hast und der quatscht dazwischen und der Schluss ist nicht drauf.” ↑
36. Resident 1, interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, June 15, 2021. Original wording in German: “Als Kind zu erleben, dass es manche Dinge im Leben nicht einfach gibt, war schon sehr zermürend.” ↑
37. From 1979 on, Blue Danube Radio was a national radio station operated by ORF (Österreichischer Rundfunk, the Austrian public broadcasting corporation), targeting the English-speaking audience that

had settled in Vienna in the course of the completion of UNO-City (Vienna International Center). The station merged with FM4, another ORF radio station, in 2000, which has since offered multilingual formats in German, English, and French. The station targets youth audiences with rock, pop, and electronic music with an alternative, subcultural slant. See, for instance, [Anna Woldrich, "Radio als Marke: Strategien zur Hörerbindung; Fallbeispiel FM4" \(master's thesis, University of Vienna, 2016\), 41-43.](#) ↑

38. Resident 1, interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, June 15, 2021. Original wording in German: "Auf Flohmärkten schaue ich, ob ich etwas finde, aber gerade aus dem Jazzbereich ist es sehr sehr schwer. Was bei uns eher Volksmusik und Polka und Sachen aus Russland modern waren, aber die gefallen mir halt einfach nicht. Das gibt's im Überfluss. Für mich ist es dann auch dieses Sammeln, ich habe etwas Wertvolleres. Das ist dann mehr im Hintergrund...Und vor allen Dingen, weil die Schellackplatten so zerbrechlich sind, dann geht man wirklich über den Flohmarkt, als hätte man das wertvollste Stück Porzellan...Die Entstehung meiner Liebe zum Jazz erinnert mich stark an meinen Opa. Ich habe dann meine Lackschuhe anziehen dürfen und der Opa hat den Teppichboden weggerollt und ich habe auf dem Parkettboden Stepptanz geübt. Das konnte ich natürlich nicht, aber mein Opa war immer fasziniert von Fred Astaire und Ginger Rogers und dadurch ist diese Leidenschaft entstanden zu alter Musik und Jazzmusik. Es gab damals noch das *Blue Danube Radio*, das war der Vorgänger von FM4, und die haben irrsinnig viel Jazz gespielt und damit bin ich eigentlich groß geworden. Sobald ich bei den Großeltern war, habe ich immer das gehört und das ist dann irgendwie hängen geblieben, durch die alten Filme dann auch. Und das ist Wohlfühlzeit. Wenn es kalt wird und draußen der Herbst kommt, höre ich auch irrsinnig gerne Jazz, weil das ist immer die heimelige Vorstellung von zuhause, mit offenem Kamin und Feuer. Das ist für mich Wohlfühlmusik. Wenn es draußen regnet und eine Tasse Tee und Jazz hören und alles ist gut." ↑
39. [Harrison, "Relationship," 2.](#) ↑
40. See, for instance, Hande Sağlam and Ursula Hemetek, "Transformationsprozesse in und durch Einwanderer-Musikkulturen: Transkulturation und Rekontextualisierung am Beispiel von Musik aus der Türkei in Wien," in *Randzonen der Kreativwirtschaft: Türkische, chinesische und südasiatische Kulturunternehmungen in Wien*, ed. Andreas Gebesmair, Kreativwirtschaft in Wien 4 (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2009), 209-21; Hande Sağlam, "Musical Practice of Immigrants from the Former Yugoslavia and Turkey in Vienna II: Musical Identification and Transcultural Process among Turkish Immigrants in Vienna," in *Cultural Diversity in the Urban Area: Explorations in Urban Ethnomusicology*, ed. Ursula Hemetek and Adelaida Reyes, Klanglese 4 (Vienna: Institut für Volksmusikforschung und Ethnomusikologie, 2007), 63-75; and Ursula Hemetek, "Applied Ethnomusicology as an Intercultural Tool: Some Experiences from the Last 25 Years of Minority Research in Austria," in *An Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology*, vol. 2, *De-Colonization, Heritage, and Advocacy*, ed. Svanibor Pettan and Jeff Todd Titon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 99-147. ↑
41. Martin Stokes, introduction to *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes, Berg Ethnic Identities Series (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 3. ↑
42. There is a general tendency among non-members and Austrian tenants to describe the music of the BCS (Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian)-speaking community in the Anton-Figl-Hof as "Yugoslavian," whereas the tenants mentioned here, who have family connections to Serbia, refer to it as "Serbian music." A legitimate further question to ask is therefore to what extent "Yugoslavia" serves as a simplifying and homogenizing projection for the purposes of the tenants belonging to the majority society. ↑
43. Pinar Güran-Aydin and Tia DeNora, "Remembering through Music: Turkish Diasporic Identities in Berlin," in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, ed. Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen, Routledge International Handbooks (London: Routledge, 2016), 233-46. ↑

44. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006). ↑
45. Hemetek, "Applied Ethnomusicology," 128–29. ↑
46. Güran-Aydin and DeNora, "Remembering through Music," 237. ↑
47. Resident 7, interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, September 28, 2021. Original wording in English as quoted. ↑
48. Marco Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging: An Analytical Framework," in *Geography Compass* 4, no. 6 (2010): 644–59. ↑
49. *Ibid.*, 646. ↑
50. Hemetek, "Applied Ethnomusicology," 104–5. ↑
51. *Ibid.*, 106–7. ↑
52. Residents 2 and 3, fieldnote and interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, July 7, 2021. Original wording of the quotes in German: "Von Rock, Bruce Springsteen etc., genauso wie einen deutschen Schlager, auch einmal eine Volksmusik sogar, dann mal eine Klassik. Wie man in der Laune ist, dann lege ich eine CD auf...Der Radio rennt den ganzen Tag...und der Fernseher"—"Das einzige, was wir nicht so gerne hören, ist dieses *umtata umtata*. Es ist mal ein Stück schön, wenn man auf einem Volksfest ist oder so..., aber so richtig eher weniger...Ich hab immer gern Klassik gehört, hab aber auch gerne ABBA gehört...oder Chansons oder solche Sachen. Es kommt drauf an. Manchmal gefällt mir auch *diese andere* Musik, die spanische Musik eher oder diese Volksmusik von den Zigeunern. Aber nicht ununterbrochen. Es gibt ein paar, was mir gefallen, aber nicht alle."—"Für mich muss Musik beruhigen oder Bewegung oder so etwas sein"—"Durch das, dass wir schon sehr viele Neo-Österreicher im Bau haben, hört man überall die Musik von ihnen, aber so laut aus dem Fenster..., ob es jetzt Türkisch ist oder Serbisch. Und wenn es so laut ist, ist es schon unangenehm...und stundenlang und um zwei, drei Uhr in der Früh geht"—"Man hört in dem Sinne im Bau fast keine deutschen Platten mehr...Das hat sich stark verändert."—"Was ich auch bemerkt habe, die Kinder haben absolut keine Ahnung mehr von den Volksliedern, absolut nichts mehr."—"Wenn jetzt eine Wohnung leer wird, zu 90% kommt irgendeine Familie mit Migrationshintergrund und die bringen halt ihre Musik und alles mit. Die wollen halt unsere Kultur nicht. Das ist das große Problem, wenn ich in einem fremden Land bin"—"Ich würde mir wünschen, dass die Leute uns mehr respektieren. Nicht, dass *wir* uns ändern müssen. Nicht, dass wir uns ändern, sondern sie kommen in unser Land und wir müssen uns ändern, wir dürfen *das* nicht mehr, dürfen *das* nicht mehr, müssen immer Rücksicht nehmen." ↑
53. The mishearing and devaluation of non-Western music by Western people is, of course, nothing new. It recalls, for example, the long history of settlers' misconceptions of indigenous musicking as "noise" as an act of dominance. See, for instance, Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020); and Gary Tomlinson, *The Singing of the New World: Indigenous Voice in the Era of European Contact*, New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). ↑
54. Resident 1, interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, June 15, 2021. Original wording of the quotes in German: "Es geht auch um Raum einnehmen und Kultur vertreten, würde ich sagen, was ich eher traurig finde. Man merkt, dass Rassismus stark vertreten ist, leider, und das wird dann auch über die Musik ausgekämpft." ↑

55. Rosenberger and Mourão Permoser, "Zugehörigkeit mobilisieren," 34. ↑
56. Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging," 649; and Nira Yuval-Davis, "Politics of Belonging," 204–5. ↑
57. Bettel, Mourão Permoser, and Rosenberger, *living rooms*; and Haller et al., "'Hot spots.'" ↑
58. Essletzbichler and Forcher, "'Red Vienna,'" 127. ↑
59. Rosenberger and Mourão Permoser, "Zugehörigkeit mobilisieren," 19. ↑
60. Bettel, Mourão Permoser, and Rosenberger, preface to *living rooms*, 8. ↑
61. Rosenberger and Mourão Permoser, "Zugehörigkeit mobilisieren," 24. ↑
62. Residents 5 and 6, fieldnote and interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, August 3, 2021. Original wording of the quotes in German: "In privaten Wohnungen lernst du die Leute nicht so richtig kennen. Da gibt es auch keinen Hof zum Beispiel, wo man sich hinsetzen und plaudern kann. Das ist schon anders. Hier haben wir nur Vorteile, wenn man gute Nachbarn hat. Wir helfen uns gegenseitig. Heute war sie irgendwo, hatte einen Termin, und da habe ich auf die Kinder aufgepasst. Egal, was es ist. Wir telefonieren miteinander, ich brauche das"—"Bei uns geht's ziemlich ab. Es ist laut, ich spiele manchmal mit den Kindern selber Verstecken, mache Blödsinn. Schöne Musik halt, laute Musik."—"Ich höre schon gerne Musik, aber mache nichts selber draus. Ich habe da kein Talent dazu....Aber sie singt, das ist ein Wahnsinn. Gestern hat sie indisch, arabisch"—"Smule heißt die App. Da kannst du singen und Aufnahmen machen, das ist wirklich ur cool...Du kannst auch nur für dich singen oder in einer Gruppe oder Duetts und so."—"Ja, da lernst du auch Leute kennen, die weltweit wohnen zum Beispiel"—"Ja, zum Beispiel ich singe hier und er auf der anderen Seite. Das nächste Mal frage ich, 'hey, wie ist der Corona-Stand bei euch?'...Du kannst auch mit den berühmten Sängern Duetts machen"—"Gestern hat sie mit einem aus Berlin gesungen, der war begeistert von ihr. Auf Englisch hat sie etwas gesungen und auf Indisch haben sie beide. Er ist ein Türke, singt aber auch auf Indisch."—"Das macht ur Spaß. Das nächste Mal werde ich Chinesisch ausprobieren."—"So läuft das bei uns. Wir sitzen, lassen Musik laufen, dann tun sie singen...Wir tauschen uns gegenseitig aus über Musik...Ich habe kein Problem mit egal welcher Musik. Wenn man Musik liebt...kann man in jedem etwas Gutes finden, finde ich. Ob es ein Schlager ist, Heavy Metal, Techno, Rave, was auch immer." ↑
63. Magdalena Waligórska-Huhle, introduction to *Music, Longing and Belonging: Articulations of the Self and the Other in the Musical Realm*, ed. Magdalena Waligórska (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 4. ↑
64. Resident 1, interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, June 15, 2021. Original wording in German: "Wenn mal ein Handy kaputt ist, dann sowieso, oder ein Computer, aber auch so 'Meine Lampe funktioniert nicht.'" ↑
65. Rosenberger and Mourão Permoser, "Zugehörigkeit mobilisieren," 65–68. ↑
66. Resident 1, interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, June 15, 2021. Original wording in German: "Wir haben hier unten den Gemeinschaftsraum. Da gab es aber ziemlich lange Streitereien und da wird sich hoffentlich mit wohnpartner bald was tun. Das sind Sachen—da sagen die Leute, 'wir haben uns jetzt eingemietet, das gehört uns und wir anderen dürfen nicht rein.' Ich habe letztens eine ziemlich grobe Streiterei gehabt, weil wir haben Karten gespielt, wo nichts dagegen spricht, auch wenn Pandemie war. Und wir haben ein Mädels da, die ist Muslimin und die wollte Geburtstag feiern. Die durfte dann nicht rein. Dann hab ich gesagt, 'sorry, Leute, aber was soll die Scheiße?' Das war dann einfach nur purer Rassismus...Da kann ich nicht anders...Ich muss das tun, ich hasse Ungerechtigkeit." ↑



67. Yuval-Davis, "Politics of Belonging," 205. ↑
68. Harrison, "Relationship," 4. ↑
69. Hemetek, "Applied Ethnomusicology," 99. ↑
70. Klisala Harrison and Svanibor Pettan, introduction to *Applied Ethnomusicology: Historical and Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Klisala Harrison, Elizabeth Mackinlay, and Svanibor Pettan (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 1. ↑
71. *Ibid.*, 2. ↑
72. Svanibor Pettan, "Applied Ethnomusicology in the Global Arena," in Pettan and Titon, *De-Colonization, Heritage, and Advocacy*, 32. ↑
73. The 1. Wiener Gemeindebauchor (1st Viennese municipal housing choir) was founded in 2008. Consisting of about 80 amateur musicians and with a high proportion of retired women, the choir rehearses at three different [wohnpartner](#) facilities located within municipal housing estates in the districts of Favoriten, Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus, and Donaustadt. Although most of the singers have personal connections to Viennese municipal housing, they are not required to be residents. An interview with the choir director, Martin Strommer, was conducted by the author at the Karl-Wrba-Hof in Vienna, October 6, 2021. ↑
74. Informal conversation with a resident, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, April 21, 2021. ↑
75. Resident 1, informal conversation with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, June 1, 2022. ↑
76. Resident 2, telephone conversation with the author, May 23, 2022. ↑
77. Resident 7, interview with the author, Vienna, Anton-Figl-Hof, September 28, 2021. Original wording in English as quoted. ↑
78. Reinprecht, "Zukunft des Wiener Gemeindebaus," 217. ↑
79. Floya Anthias, "Belongings in a Globalising and Unequal World: Rethinking Translocations," in *The Situated Politics of Belonging*, ed. Nira Yuval-Davis, Kalpana Kannabiran, and Ulrike Vieten, Sage Studies in International Sociology 55 (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), 20. ↑
80. Reinprecht, "Zukunft des Wiener Gemeindebaus," 216-19. ↑

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