

TURKISH RAP MUSIC WITHIN THE GRIP OF POPULAR CULTURE

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submitted by **İREM ELBİR** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
**Master of Science in Media and Cultural Studies, the Graduate School of Social
Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Barış ÇAKMUR
Head of Department
Department of Media and Cultural Studies

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Barış ÇAKMUR
Supervisor
Department of Media and Cultural Studies

Examining Committee Members:

Assist. Prof. Dr. Özgür AVCI (Head of the Examining Committee)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Barış ÇAKMUR (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Media and Cultural Studies

Prof. Dr. Burak ÖZÇETİN
Istanbul Bilgi University
Department of Media



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Name, Last Name: İrem ELBİR

Signature:

ABSTRACT

TURKISH RAP MUSIC WITHIN THE GRIP OF POPULAR CULTURE

Elbir, İrem

M.S., The Department of Media and Cultural Studies

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Barış ÇAKMUR

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Hip-hop has become one of the omnipresent and popular form of cultures in the present-day, which spreads across the world and the most known elements of this culture has always been rap music. This music becomes a way of expression to raise a voice against the social problems throughout its history. This study examines how the resistance in Turkish rap music has transformed within the grip of popular culture. In this context, the formation of Turkish rap music will be discussed and analyzed through the analysis of in-depth interviews. Before the analysis of the interviews, this thesis firstly attempts to focus on the history of hip-hop culture and rap music along with the link between the resistance and rap music. Then, it aims to discuss journey of rap music from Germany to Turkey. Finally, the study aims to reveal the different aspects of resistance in Turkish rap music by referring to the individual and social components of this music. This thesis also argues that resistance in Turkish rap music is ambiguous in terms of how it expresses itself.

Keywords: hip-hop, rap music, resistance, music industry, rage

ÖZ

POPÜLER KÜLTÜR KISKACINDA TÜRKÇE RAP MÜZİK

Elbir, İrem

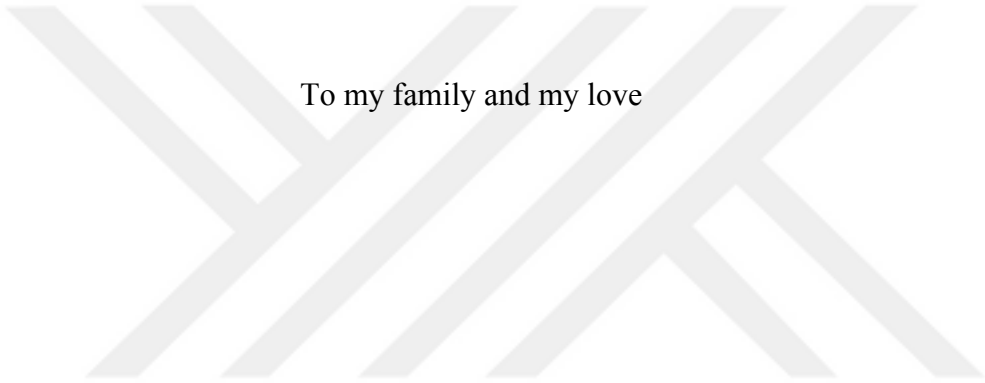
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Hip-hop, günümüzde her yerde karşılaşılabileceğimiz popüler kültürlerden biri haline geldi. Tüm dünyaya yayılan ve bu kültürün en bilinen unsuru ise her zaman rap müzik olmuştur. Bu müzik, tarihi boyunca toplumsal sorunlara karşı ses getirmenin bir ifade aracı olmuştur. Bu çalışma Türkçe rap müzikteki direnişin popüler kültür içerisinde nasıl dönüştüğünü incelemektedir. Bu bağlamda Türkçe rap müziğinin oluşumu derinlemesine görüşmeler yoluyla tartışılacak ve analiz edilecektir. Röportajların analizinden önce, bu tez öncelikle hip-hop kültürü ve rap müziğinin tarihine, direniş ve rap müzik arasındaki bağlantıya odaklanmaya çalışacaktır. Ardından, rap müziğin Almanya'dan Türkiye'ye geçiş sürecindeki yolculuğunu tartışmayı hedeflemektedir. Son olarak, bu çalışma Türkçe rap müzikteki direnişin farklı boyutlarını bu müziğin bireysel ve toplumsal bileşenlerine atıfta bulunarak ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, bu tez Türkçe rap müzikteki direnişin kendini nasıl ifade ettiği açısından belirsiz olduğunu iddia etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: hip-hop, rap müzik, direniş, müzik endüstrisi



To my family and my love

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*“Yo, hip-hop is a way of life. It ain’t a fad, it ain’t a trend.
Not for those of us who are true to it.”¹*

Hip-hop has come to one of the omnipresent and popular forms of cultures in the present day, which spreads across the world. Although it has emerged in the 1970s in the Bronx ghetto of New York and became popular among the black youth experiencing poverty, racism and violence, since its emergence, “global hip hop youth culture has become a phenomenon in the truest sense of the word and has affected nearly every country on the map.” (Osumare, 2001; 171). Hence, it has grown to become a popular cultural form which has proliferated around the world, from Japan to Senegal. The expansion of communication technologies, globalization, and immigration have contributed to the dissemination and adoption of hip-hop culture as a form of youth affiliation around the world.

Along with its elements such as rap music, graffiti, DJing and breakdancing, hip-hop culture has been seen as a way of raising a voice. Yet, rap music has become the most salient constituent of the hip-hop culture. Since rap emerged from the harsh experiences of the black youth in the US, what these people had lived through, like subordination, had an impact on expressing rage and dissent through rap music. Hence, it can be argued that social, political, and economic problems in the US paved the way for rap music associated with resistance and rebellion.

¹ Keith Edward Elam whose stage name was Guru spoke on rap music in the intro of his album named *Jazzmataz Volume II: The New Reality*.

Rap music that started with the house and street parties² had its turning point in its relationship with the music industry at the end of the 1970s. *Rapper's Delight*, released by the Sugarhill Gang, became the first song which gained commercial success by selling millions. After this commercial success, the oppositional characteristics of the rap made a splash. In 1982, Grandmaster Flash and Furious Five released the single named "The Message", which spelled out the struggles of living in poverty. The song detailed the social and economic problems which most people living in the ghetto neighborhoods would have. It was also one of the first songs presenting a perspective of living in harsh conditions without glorifying those circumstances. Although the content of some songs turned more oppositional, the rap music's entry into the mainstream kept going. For example, Run DMC's cover of *Walk This Way* which was the song of Aerosmith introduced rap music to the big music channels like MTV and pop radios. Moreover, Run DMC's song *My Adidas* attracted attention with its market success and profitable sponsorship with Adidas. It was also the first time that hip-hop culture and rap music was marketed as a lifestyle. Hence, rap music has started to shift from the underground to the mainstream. As it became a more popular form of music, the spread of this music turned up. In this spread, Turkey became one of the countries which had its share.

The roots of Turkish rap music can be traced back to Germany and the experiences of the second and third-generation migrants who came from Turkey. These migrants strived for economic and social difficulties such as unemployment, racial discrimination and social alienation. These harsh conditions in their lives brought about the young migrants stuck heart and soul hip-hop culture and rap music. Similar to African-American youth who saw hip-hop as a way to express what they lived through due to the economic, social and political problems in the 70s, Turkish migrants in Germany used hip-hop to raise their voices through the elements of the culture; graffiti, DJing, rapping and breakdance. The rise of rap music among young migrants coincided with the expanse of racist attacks in Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Hence, the rap songs became tools to strengthen unification among the migrants against xenophobia. The rage in those songs was rooted in the standing against racism

² The first known hip-hop party was organized by DJ Kool Herc on August 11th 1973.

and the problems related to it. In this respect, hip-hop as a way of communication allowed migrant youth to claim their identities against the exclusionist manners. In addition, one of the chapters in this study will also focus on the emergence of Turkish-German rap in Germany in detail and how the social, political and economic circumstances affected this music in the diaspora.

When it comes to Turkish rap music in Turkey, in the early 2000s, it was known by much more people compared to the 1990s in which Cartel, a Turkish hip-hop group from Germany, came to a head. However, the number of people who could make rap music by means of the music industry was quite a few. Most of the rappers made their music without any financial or marketing support from the industry. Hence, they had to make their own luck using necessary equipment for recording and distributing their CDs or cassettes that had no record label. Today, the advent of streaming services in the music industry has strengthened the rappers' hand since sharing the musical works to millions of people without being signed by a label is more effortless. As the access to music got easier, the diversity in the music became visible. Thus, the audiences have lots of choices to listen to what they want. Although the playlists provided by the streaming services are controversial regarding their relations with the big labels, the audiences' position in the consumption can be considered freer than in the early 2000s. It can be argued that this development in the music industry led to the rise of Turkish rap music in Turkey. Along with the spread of digital streaming, Turkey's political, economic, and social problems have also influenced the particularly young people's interest in rap music. Concerns of the young people, such as despair about the future, the rise of authoritarianism in the country and the increase in unemployment, have led the young ones to listen to rap music. In this respect, how the release of Susamam³ (I Can't Stay Silent) drew attention as a rap song and why one of the pro-government

³ Susamam is kind of a manifesto and the biggest collaboration in the history of the Turkish rap music. In the song, 19 artists, most of them are rappers except for one artist, express the social issues related to various subjects, ranging from climate change to poverty and domestic violence. It had 49M hits on Youtube. For further details see: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/nov/06/words-are-our-weapon-blistering-power-turkish-protest-rap-susamam> and to watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5K3IxINr7A>

tabloids labelled the song as a “terrorist co-production”⁴ can be kept in mind while considering Turkish rap music.

Rap music and hip-hop culture have been known to the researchers, and many studies focused on the resistance and oppositional characteristics (Lamotte, 2014; Perry, 2004; Quinn, 2005; Rose, 1994). Some examined rap music as a performance (Dimitriadis, 1996; Smitherman, 1997) or its relation with the race (Kelley, 2012). Others have analysed the production of the space through rap music (Forman, 2000; Tickner, 2008). Within the context of Turkish rap music, studies have focused on Turkish-German rap in relation to migration (Kaya, 1998; Çağlar, 1998; Arıcan, 2011, Solomon, 2009). Also, some of the studies have examined the popularization of Turkish rap music in Turkey (Kadioğlu& Sözeri-Özdağ, 2020) and the urban context of the Turkish rap (Mişe, 2018). There are also studies which discussed nationalism (Solomon, 2013) and Muslim identity (Özdemir, 2016; Solomon, 2006). However, literature on the female MCs in Turkish rap is quite insufficient; one of the studies analysing female MCs and gender in the Turkish rap was about Ayben, one of the well-known female MCs in Turkey (Solomon, 2013). The discussion about gender in Turkish-German rap can be seen in the study of Kaya (1998); however, it was still limited to one female MC, Aziza A. In conclusion, it can be said that the literature on Turkish rap music in Turkey has not been discussed in detail despite of the existence of a few studies focusing on Turkish rap music in the country.

In this thesis, an attempt will be made to examine the change in rap music's resistant characteristics during its transition of Turkish rap music from Germany to Turkey. In this context, the formation of rap music will be discussed and analyzed through the research findings in a detailed way. This study also aims to understand and find out the main determinants of this formation process. By doing that, this attempt will shed light on the resistant characteristic of Turkish rap music within the context of popular culture.

⁴ For related news see: <https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/susamam-diyenlere-seslendi-susamam-dediniz-15-temmuzda-sustunuz-diyarbakirda-pkk-devince-pustunuz-hepiniz-pstunuz-919967.html>
<https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/susamam-sarkisiyla-ilgili-flas-gelisme-934188.html>
<https://www.yenisafak.com/hayat/pkk-feto-ortak-produksiyonu-3505308>

This study is timely because of three reasons. First of all, despite of the existence of valuable contributions to hip-hop scholarship, broader issues considering the role of resistance within the context of the transition of Turkish rap music have not materialised, to the drawback of hip-hop scholarship in Turkey. This thesis aims to fill that gap. Secondly, the interest in rap music has risen in the last approximately four years. Hence, it can be vital to analyze how the MCs perceive rap music and their view on hip-hop in general. While discussing the oppositional characteristics of rap music, it is more likely to see the link between the social problems and expressing rage in the previous studies on Turkish rap music in Turkey. However, this study aims to broaden the perspective about the resistance by considering the rappers' relation with the music industry. Lastly, as mentioned above, the literature on female rappers is insufficient in Turkish hip-hop scholarship. This thesis can also give hints on the position of the female rappers in Turkish rap and their oppositional tone.

The study aims to examine the change in the oppositional characteristics of rap during its journey from Germany to Turkey. In this respect, the question of how resistance in Turkish rap music has transformed within the grip of popular culture is important. Other main questions guiding the research are:

- How did Turkish rap music emerge?
- What is the difference between Turkish rap music in Turkey and German-Turkish rap music in the diaspora?
- How do MCs express their feelings, everyday experiences or opinions through rap music?
- How to understand the rap music industry from the perspective of the MCs?
- Which problems do female MCs confront with?

By researching rap music in Turkey, the findings can also give information about the problems young people might face in Turkey and how to manage these challenges through rap music. This thesis focuses on rap music, not the other elements of hip-hop culture (DJing, graffiti, breakdance) though the relationship between the culture and the rappers will be discussed. Therefore, throughout this study, when hip-hop is referred to, it is used as a “culture”, not the other hip-hop practices or its musical side.

Hip-hop and rap are also used interchangeably; however, in this thesis, they are separated. The study's focus is on the rappers' cultural and social lives, which encompasses music but the comprehensive literature on the music (emotion, composition, aesthetics etc.) is beyond the scope of this study. There will be lyrics in some of the chapters, but they will support ideas or contribute to the related discussion.

Since the study aims to examine the resistance in Turkish rap music and understand its transformation, the rappers' experiences become vital to the analysis. Therefore, given the explanatory nature of the study, qualitative research methods will be employed. The data were collected by semi-structured interviews and participant observation; however, economic problems and the COVID-19 circumstances, both of them limited travelling, prevented face to face interaction with the participants, so some of the interviews had to be made online. Also, rap songs were included in the analysis in order to support the discussion about the field. As Patton states (1990, 13), qualitative methods help the researcher “to study selected issues in-depth and detail.” Qualitative research also allows understanding the meanings of participants’ actions or situations they are involved in. It also helps comprehend the specific context within which the participants’ actions and the impact of this context on their actions and decisions. Since qualitative researchers generally study smaller numbers of people or situations than quantitative methods, they can preserve each situation's individuality. This opportunity leads to grasping the question of how the actions and meanings are formed by the particular conditions under which they occur. Following this line of opportunities, qualitative research was employed in this study.

To serve the purpose of the study, I selected semi-structured interviews as the major data collection method. Fourteen interviews were conducted with rappers who made rap music professionally or unprofessionally and identified themselves as rappers. In addition, interviewees’ recorded songs which do not have to be studio record, were also asked. Most of the participants are solo musicians along with their collaborations with other rappers. Yet, one interviewee has also been a member of a hip-hop group. Furthermore, one of the interviewees is an actor from the music industry who was a DJ at the first hip-hop radio in Turkey. The interviewees' real names are not used; instead, their stage names are mentioned, except for two participants because one

interviewee's real and stage name are the same. Since the second interviewee is a radio DJ, his real name is stated in the interview excerpts. When particular characteristics of the participants are mentioned in the following parts of the main text, I will call them "musicians, rappers or MCs", etc.

It would also be significant to state the sampling process of the study. The non-probability sampling handled in the interviews. Fourteen semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants that make rap music professionally and unprofessionally. In order to access rappers and people from the music industry, two sampling strategies that offered convenience sample resorted. The first one is snowball sampling, which starts with one subject identifying other possible interviewees for participation in the study. In some cases, possible participants who were recommended by the gatekeeper did not want to be part of the research, or the gatekeepers suggested names, but they did not know the contact information of the potential candidate. Then, since I had limited success with this sampling method, the use of a broader sampling method, purposive or judgemental, was selected. A judgemental sample was selected depending on the researcher's knowledge of the population and the aim of the research (Babbie, 1989; 204). These sampling methods were not meant to generate a representative sample. Rather they aimed to present coverage of the diversity of the people related to rap music and hip-hop culture.

The group of fourteen people that I interviewed was not fairly representative in terms of gender because there were four female interviewees in the study. Hence, the group was predominantly male, unfortunately. However, this is also typical gender composition of the hip-hop communities. Their ages at the time of the interview ranged from 19 to 33, with the medium of 23. All participants were actively involved in rap music, although the scope and the nature of their involvement. Although the sample was not random, it included interviewees representing a wide array of age, subgenres in rap music and years of experience. This numeric explanation fails to present personal traits and their historical background in rap, so Appendix A provides the brief biographies of the interviewees.

Before conducting the interviews, an interview guide was prepared to consist of main questions and follow-up examinations. On the other hand, each face-to-face interviews were tape-recorded; videos of online interviews were also recorded. All the participants permitted these recordings. It was also ensured that they were free to give any additional information voluntarily or not to answer any question. Using this beforehand interview guide, different topics that included interactions with other rappers, family and peer relationships, entry into rap music, future plans, and gender perceptions were handled in the interview. The interview guide simply represents a list of topics and questions that were planned to address. The participants sometimes offered engaging ideas; therefore, the new questions and topics appeared, and they were also considered in the next interviewee, if possible. The place for the face to face interviews was determined, depending on the preference of the interviewee. Their preferences were generally local bars or coffee shops. The online and face to face interviews lasted from at least half an hour to approximately two hours. At the end of the interviews, it was also asked to the participants whether they had anything to add, which sometimes led to further discussions.

In addition to the interviews, I analyzed some rap songs that belonged to the interviews and renowned rappers. Consideration of the songs would be supportive while discussing the participants' arguments and rap music. The most difficult part of analysing songs was the translation of some of the slangs in Turkish, but all the translations of the songs and the interviews are mine. Especially in the field chapter, I usually tried to use the songs of the participants more because this can be important to comprehend the discursive repertoire of rap music. Although it was very limited, I tried to make a musical analysis partly by focusing on the instruments and samples that are used in the songs. However, since I am not a musicologist, a detailed musical analysis would be beyond the scope of this study.

Aside from introductory and concluding chapters, this thesis will consist of three main chapters. This chapter mainly aimed to present the objective and the significance of the study. Moreover, it has detailed the research methodology and background and key concepts of the study. In addition, the existing studies on hip-hop culture and rap music have been shortly reviewed.

The rest of the study is organized as follows. The second chapter aims to examine the emergence of hip-hop culture and rap music in the US in the 1970s. In this chapter, the historical background of the hip-hop culture and the question of what hip-hop is will also be elaborated. The relationship between rap music and social, political and economic problems will be analyzed through the detailed literature review. For this purpose, the question of how this culture and music can be linked to oppression and resistance will be discussed.

The third chapter seeks to understand the roots of Turkish rap music and its journey to Turkey. Back to Germany, the circumstances in Germany under which Turkish-German rap emerged will be investigated. Starting from the labor migration from Turkey to Germany in the 1960s, this chapter tries to answer how Turkish rap music emerged. The importance of Kreuzberg in Turkish-German rap music in terms of the link between the place and the music will also be analyzed briefly. In addition, the historical background of Turkish rap music in Turkey and the changing contexts of this music will be mapped out.

Following the previous chapter, the fourth chapter outlines the analysis of the main findings of this thesis. Firstly, the difference in the emergence of Turkish rap music from the other examples stated in the thesis, American and Turkish-German rap music, will be analyzed through the views of the participants. In this respect, the starting point of the Turkish rap music tried to be found, so the location of this music will be the focus of the chapter. Secondly, how the interviewees perceive hip-hop culture and rap music will be discussed. For this purpose, how they started to rap music and what hip-hop means to them are the questions that will be examined. Thirdly, the source of the rage and dissent in Turkish rap music will be the focus of this chapter. The participants' view on rap music's oppositional characteristics and the relation between the resistance and the struggles faced by the interviewees in their lives will be shown. Fourthly, the link between the music industry and the participants will be discussed, along with the popularization of rap music in Turkey. Also, how the participants negotiate the tensions in the industry while striving to "keep it real" or be authentic by delineating their opinions will be discussed. Lastly, the challenges of the female rappers in Turkish

rap music will be the focus. In addition, their perspectives on male domination in the industry and rap music itself will be discussed.

Following the field chapter, the fifth and last chapter will discuss the findings of the study as a whole, its limitations and the broader implications of the study which can help future research.



CHAPTER 2

Hip-Hop, Rap, and Practices of Resistance

2.1 “Hip is the knowledge, Hop is the movement.”

One of the most significant figures of the hip-hop culture, KRS-ONE says in his song Hip Hop Knowledge released in 2007:

“Hip and hop is more than music,
Hip is the knowledge,
Hop is the movement,
Hip and Hop is intelligent movement”.

In his other song Hip Hop vs Rap, KRS-ONE states: “Rap is something you do, Hip Hop is something you live.” Keeping in mind these lyrics, I would like to introduce studies whose central point is the link between hip-hop and resistance, but first, it would be better to recognize the history of hip-hop culture.

Hip-hop culture originated during the mid-1970s, and it appeared as an integrated series live of community-based practices (Dimitriadis, 1996; 179). In the 1970s, after the civil rights movement, poor African American people faced increased segregation, mostly because of the departure of the black middle classes (Lamotte, 2014; 687). These social and economic conditions that were getting worse for African Americans brought about a significant rise in street gangs. Unprecedented growth in street gangs intensified the battles among the gangs; meanwhile, big parties also known as block parties, started to be organized by these gangs. Then, they became regular events in some of the South Bronx neighborhood, and these parties were an essential part of a cultural movement that has continued to grow ever since. Therefore, the first hip-hop movement was closely related to the development of street gangs and block parties.

As Alridge and Stewart assert, hip-hop has developed as a cultural and artistic phenomenon having an impact on youth culture all over the world (2005; 190). Hip-hop reveals the social, economic, political and cultural realities and conditions of youth's lives, so hip-hop should not be overlooked as a fad or just a youth movement that will soon end. Instead, it should be considered as a cultural, economic, social and political phenomenon. Although hip-hop is generally put on par with rap music, it is not merely a musical genre. Thus, it makes sense to elaborate on the difference between rap and hip-hop. This difference can also explain why hip-hop is a cultural, economic, social and political phenomenon. Rap is used to refer to a specific genre or a style of music usually composed of the two crucial elements of rapping and DJing (Arican, 2011; 103). Tricia Rose explains rap as "a black cultural expression that prioritizes black voices from the margins of urban America [...] It began in the mid-1970s in the South Bronx in New York City as a part of hip hop, an African-American and Afro-Caribbean youth culture composed of graffiti, breakdancing, and rap music" (1994; 2).

Apart from rapping, hip-hop includes "elements of speech and song, dance and display, to call into being through performance new identity" (ibid, 21), also covers visual aspects; graffiti and breakdance, that indicate bodily feeling and experience. Hip-hop music can also refer to beats and sampling besides rapping. Moreover, graffiti as a way of expression has become a significant feature of hip-hop as its primary visual aesthetic dimension. Graffiti is not simply spraying the walls of buildings, streets, public vehicles, or subways, as Arican states, it is a reinterpretation of city images. Graffiti and other hip-hop culture practices make those hip-hoppers visible in the cultural and political sphere since they are often not visible in everyday life. In short, four main practices of hip-hop culture as follows: "MCing (delivering rap lyrics over beats), DJing (creating musical accompaniment for an emcee or mixing music on two turntables), breakdancing (performing gymnastic dance moves, usually to hip-hop music), and graffiti art" (Binfield, 2009, 56).

As a part of the hip-hop culture, rap music is divided into various subgenres. In hip-hop literature, the most analyzed types of rap are usually gangsta, political/conscious/hardcore and battle. The first one is generally about fighting within

the street gangs, drugs and women, so its lyrics are aggressive, and the beats in gangsta rap songs are generally trunk-heavy. On the other hand, the second one is centred around themes of social, economic and political issues in the society or the country. Finally, battle rap is based on the lyrical superiority of the MC. Self-glorifying rhymes which are accompanied by verbal insults, aim to prove one's proficiency or success in rapping. The subgenres are not limited to these three types, but they are the most discussed and well-known types of rap music.⁵

All of these practices above-mentioned have become hidden transcripts of everyday life, which will be analyzed in this chapter in detail. Since the problems addressed in hip-hop culture touch upon most of the youth worldwide, it can be concluded that "hip-hop has the potential to bring youth together across race, gender, and socio-economic boundaries" (Arıcan, 2011; 103). DJ Kool Herc says, "Even if you didn't grow up in the Bronx in the '70s, hip-hop is there for you." and he also adds:

"People talk about the four hip-hop elements: DJing, B-Boying [popularly known as breakdancing], MCing, and Graffiti. I think that there are far more than those: the way you walk, the way you talk, the way you look, the way you communicate...Hip-hop is the voice of this generation. Even if you didn't grow up in the Bronx in the '70s, hip-hop is there for you. It has become a powerful force. Hip-hop binds all of these people, all of these nationalities, all over the world together" (Chang, 2005; xi).

It is so bright how DJ Kool Herc and KRS-ONE are close to each other in terms of their perception of hip-hop culture. As these rappers state, hip-hop culture is far more than breakdance, rap music, graffiti, and DJ because it is a way of life, in fact. Then, reminding the quotation mentioned earlier at the beginning of this chapter can be expressive, "Rap is something you do, Hip-Hop is something you live" from KRS-One, can be considered again. Apart from the distinction between hip-hop and rap music, the fifth element of hip-hop Afrika Bambaataa and Universal Zulu Nation, knowledge, becomes significant when we think of hip-hop as something lived in. Afrika Bambaataa has spent a lifetime reinventing hip-hop as a coherent ideological social movement (Gosa, 2015; 59). Bambaataa can be considered the chief person who

⁵ The examples of other subgenres can be alternative, crunk, east- west coast, hyphy, snap, southern and trap.

merged DJs, b-boys, graffiti artists, and rappers into a unified community culture (2015; 60). After the neoliberal social policies of Nixon and Reagan, the streets became the prominent social structure, so unification in the street gangs as well. Jeff Chang says:

“Gangs structured the chaos. For immigrant latchkey kids, foster children outside the system, girls running away from abusive environments, and thousands of others, the gangs provided shelter, comfort, and protection. They channeled energies and provided enemies. They warded off boredom and gave meaning to the hours. They turned the wasteland into the playground (2005; 49).”

Bambaataa thought that merging four main elements of hip-hop might provide a sense of identity and aim for a new generation. His idea to struggle the chaos in the urban ghettos with music came from the film *Zulu* shot in 1964 (Gosa, 2015; 60). In this movie, a group of Zulu warriors puts to use of beating shields and songs in order to scare and then defeat the British army in pre-colonial South Africa. Similarly, Bambaataa conceived that music and dance could defeat drug dealers and disillusionment in the South Bronx (2015; 61). Therefore, he had to first unify different street gangs into a merged “Zulu Nation.” Bambaataa’s method was the use of violence intelligently. In other words, Bambaataa developed his movement thanks to peace treaties enforcing the gangs to join: “If you resisted, sometimes peace came to you violently. We demanded peace.” (Ogbar, 2007; 4). Then, this peace allowed gangs, DJs, graffiti artists and breakdance crews to unite at the same jams and house parties where the basis of hip-hop was laid a foundation.

When hip-hop moved into the mainstream, its practices began to be questioned in terms of their resistant characteristics. Criticisms of hip-hop also came from inside of the culture. For example, Nas, one of the well-known hip-hop artists, released an album titled *Hip-Hop is Dead*. His aim to release this album is his belief in the lack of “creativity” among hip-hop artists, and he questioned authenticity or realness in rap songs. In the light of this information, it can be concluded that “[...] rap music has grown from the local performance practices of South Bronx subculture to a multi-billion-dollar industry which mediates music made and heard around the world.” (Walser, 1995; 193). Although its move into popular culture has changed rap music,

neither record companies hold all the aces nor rap music is strictly affiliated with these big companies. Yet, what was real or authentic in rap has always been a crucial question in debates about hip-hop culture.

The changes in hip-hop culture and its power to bind people from different nationalities around a musical community have made this cultural expression the subject of research in many fields like ethnomusicology, cultural studies, sociology, and urban studies (Arıcan, 2011; 104). From the beginning of the genre's development, its origins, practices and relationships with the African American community have been studied. Before focusing on the prominent studies discussing the link between resistance and hip-hop culture, it would be expressive to look at the relation between music and resistance. Hence, the following section will bring into focus this topic.

2.2. Voicing Dissent in Popular Culture

In order to understand resistance in rap music and hip-hop culture, which have become global day by day in parallel with the development of communication technologies, it is necessary to consider and evaluate the discussions on popular culture and popular music. In this context, concerning theories on popular culture, concepts such as mass culture, popular culture and subculture should be highlighted and analyzed so that conceptual analysis on the popular culture can be made in the light of different theories. Moreover, it is not possible to make such a discussion without focusing on the production, distribution and consumption of music and culture. Hence, emphasis on the characteristics of production and consumption practices can also reveal the relation between resistance and music.

The way popular culture has been identified with mass culture can be considered an indicator of its social significance. The advent of mass media and the increasing commercialisation of culture and leisure brought about issues and discussions that continue. One of the historical origins of viewpoints on popular culture is the growth of the notion of mass culture, which can be traced back to the 1920s and 1930s (Strinati, 2004; 1). Although the idea of mass culture, which arose from industrialization and urbanization processes, was first critically analyzed in a broader

sense after World War II, it had first been debated in cultural theories towards the end of the nineteenth century, and these debates grew in intensity during the interwar era (Başkı-Şahin, 2018; 10). The advent of mass media, which allowed the distribution of a large number of images, sounds, and messages to quite many people, raised interest in mass culture. This interest raised new concerns about traditional forms of culture, but most critiques focused on mass production's profit-driven characteristics and its lack of originality. Profit-oriented nature and the standardization in the production were considered to have the power to control and exploit the "homogenized" and "passive" masses. Change in the production resulted in the existence of people who had the same habits and tastes for similar products, which brought about the concept of "popular culture". Before going through the theories on popular culture, it would be expressive to state the difference between mass culture and popular culture in detail.

In order to illustrate the discussions about the nature of popular culture as mass culture, it would be allusive to go through the mass society theory. The main argument of the mass society theory points to the consequences of urbanisation and industrialisation. The emergence of large-scale industrialisation and mechanical production, as well as the expansion of vast and densely populated cities, are said to have destabilized and then diminished the societies and traditions that once kept people together. These essential changes comprised of the destruction of agricultural work based on the land, the demolition of the village community in which members had close relations, the rise of mechanised, alienating production and the emergence of densely populated cities. The emergence of mass society and mass culture is believed to be the result of these processes.

The mass society theory claims that industrialization and urbanization contribute to the process of "atomisation", which explains what is meant by mass society (Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004; 27). Hence, mass society comprised of atomized people with no meaningful or morally coherent relationships with one another. These individuals are certainly not conceived as independent atoms, but their connections are said to be strictly contractual, remote, and random rather than close, collective, and well-integrated (Strinati, 2004; 5). As a result of industrialisation and urbanisation, social

organisations' decline caused people to find themselves as "atomised individuals". The church, the village and the family can be considered these organizations that once allowed a sense of affiliation. However, the modern counterparts work differently; they can not develop conduct or fashion morality. Therefore, people are atomised both morally and socially in mass society. Therefore, the role of the mass culture takes part here in that it is deemed as one of the main sources of an alternate and inefficient morality. Because of the lack of mediatory organizations, people become open to manipulation and exploitation by the mass media or popular culture.

Since mass culture and popular culture are considered as part of the mass production and urbanisation, the popular culture is seen as "American" culture, which is operated under the term of "Americanization" (Storey, 2009; 8). Maltby clarifies why popular culture is American culture by saying: "If the popular culture in its modern form was invented in any one place, it was . . . in the great cities of the United States, and above all in New York" (1989; 11). For many young people in Britain in the 1950s, one of the main periods of Americanization, American culture embodied a force of rebellion against the grey certainty of British daily life. Moreover, the distrust of the rise of popular culture is related to the fear of Americanization. This fear is linked with either high culture's traditional ideals or the traditional way of life of a "tempted" working class, so both are under attack. Hence, it can be argued that popular culture is seen as a "collective dream world" (Storey, 2009; 9). Maltby also describes this dream world as escapism, an escape from utopian selves (1989; 14). In this respect, if it is the fault of popular culture to have packed and sold dreams back to people, it is also popular culture's success to have given them more and more diverse dreams than they might have learned otherwise.

Before going through the different theories on mass culture and popular culture, the differences between high or elite culture folk or popular culture and mass culture need to be clarified. Strinati explains this division as a "division between the past and present" (Strinati, 2004; 8). Having organic and communal characteristics, the pre-mass society shared and agreed on a set of values that effectively control their integration into the community. However, with the impact of urbanisation and mass-production, communal breakdowns and isolated individuals engaged in the social

relationships which are financial and contractual. In such a society, mass culture keeps down folk culture and impairs the virtue of art. Macdonald summarises the differences between the three types of culture by stating:

“Folk art grew from below. It was a spontaneous, autochthonous expression of the people, shaped by themselves, pretty much without the benefit of high culture, to suit their own needs. Mass culture is imposed from above. It is fabricated by technicians hired by businessmen; its audiences are passive consumers, their participation limited to the choice between buying and not buying.... Folk art was the people’s own institution, their private little garden walled off from the great formal park of their master’s high culture. But mass culture breaks down the wall, integrating the masses into a debased form of high culture and thus becoming an instrument of political domination.” (1957; 60).

While there is a difference between these types of cultures, it is difficult to find a unified or overarching theory on the debates about the mass culture which scholars comes to a consensus upon. Bennet explains the dissolution in the theory as follows:

“The mass society tradition, then, by no means constitutes a unified and tightly integrated body of theory. It should rather be viewed as a loosely defined ‘outlook’ consisting of a number of intersecting themes such as the decline of the ‘organic community’, the rise of mass culture, and the social atomization of ‘mass man’.” (Bennett, 1982, 32).

As Bennett claims, to discuss an inclusive theory on the culture would be lacking, so it will be more expressive to direct main themes and points on this subject linked with the concepts of “mass culture” and “popular culture”. As a starting point for the definitions of popular culture, it can be revealing to go through the meaning of the term “popular”. Raymond Williams (1983) states four meanings: “well-liked by many people”, “inferior kinds of work”, “work deliberately setting out to win favour with the people and “culture made by the people for themselves” (237). Therefore, any meanings of popular culture will pick up on a mixture of the distinctive definitions of the concept of “culture” with different meanings of the concept of “popular” (Storey, 2009; 5). The term “popular” has got changed until today and it is generally used in the same sense as “well-liked by many people” (Güngör, 1999; 23).

The argument of Williams about the concept of mass should also be considered while elaborating the popular culture. He suggests that there are no masses, but there are

ways to see people as masses (culture and society). Hence, the studies which theorized mass society and mass culture were the results of these ways of seeing. The following discussion aims to examine the theories of mass culture in relation to popular culture.

2.2.1 Frankfurt School and Critical Cultural Theory

During the interwar period, alternative ideas that had begun addressing popular cultural structures began to appear, though discussions on the degenerative nature of mainstream culture were still prominent in the literature. From the Marxist perspective, Frankfurt School scholars can be considered the first to denote alternative theories on the mass and popular culture. The Frankfurt School has established the parameters of debate and interpretation for subsequent popular culture research, alongside mass culture theory. Even if it is now critical to Adorno's claims, modern popular music research occasionally traces its roots back to his theory (Strinati, 2004; 47). Furthermore, it would be hard to comprehend the theoretical discussions on popular culture without apprehending Frankfurt School's work. In this part of the section, the context of the School will only be discussed to the extent that as it is relevant to its analysis of popular culture.

The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, i.e., The Frankfurt School, was established in 1923. Its founders tended to be Jewish intellectuals from Germany's upper and middle classes who were left-wing. The rise to power of the Nazi Party in the 1930s, as well as its racist persecutions of Jewish people, its totalitarian oppression of the left, caused members of the School to move to other parts of Europe and North America. As a result, the institute moved to New York, having affiliation with the University of Columbia, but it moved back to Germany in 1949. Hence, when examining the origins of the Frankfurt School, it can be argued that the School's studies were closely related to the rise of the Nazi party in the 1930s. The fascism in Nazi Germany, totalitarianism and American monopoly, along with consumerism, were all important factors in the formation and development of the Frankfurt School's approaches to popular culture and mass culture. In the eyes of the School, between the twin cudgels of concentration camps and mass television, it appeared as if the chance of radical social change had been crushed (Craib, 1984; 184).

For a starting point, it can be useful to understand what the School was responding to when developing its own viewpoint. The theories of the Frankfurt School were closely related to the critique of the Enlightenment. It was argued that the Enlightenment's promise of expanding human freedom by rational and scientific progress had returned to a nightmare since they were instead destroyed human freedom (Strinati, 2004; 48). Adorno sees scientific and rational progress as mass deception, and he explains: "the total effect of the culture industry is one of anti-enlightenment, in which enlightenment, progressive technical domination, becomes mass deception and is turned into a means of fettering consciousness" (1991; 92). Therefore, this view claims that Enlightenment obstructs the growth of autonomous individuals who can decide on their own.

The theory of culture industry and modern capitalism which were developed in the 1930s and 1940s is closely linked with the critique of the Enlightenment. This theory not only rejects the Enlightenment's promise of rational emancipation but also includes a criticism of Marxism. Although the Frankfurt School's views are forms of Marxism, it disengages its perspective from orthodox Marxism in terms of the stance on the economy. The Frankfurt School attempts to escape from orthodox Marxism's emphasis on the economy as the main explanation of how societies work. For this very reason, the concept of "culture industry" seizes the commitment to Marxism which denotes the industry as the major power of capitalism and the original contribution of the School, claiming that culture is a causal constituent. This emphasis on the position of the culture can be considered as an attempt to fill the gap in the analysis of capitalism that Marx did not deal with. However, in doing so, the School also became pessimistic about the working-class revolution in the West. Hence, a significant aim of their analysis was to clarify why this revolution had not occurred.

Adorno and Horkheimer's work named *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) is one of the earliest and well-known examples of the Marxist view of mass culture and mass society. The concept of the culture industry stated above can be considered as the cornerstone of this work. Adorno and Horkheimer argued that all forms of popular culture were delineated in order to meet the needs of mass consumers for their leisure time. Adorno clarifies what the culture industry means:

“In all its branches, products which are tailored for consumption by masses, and which to a great extent determine the nature of that consumption, are manufactured more or less according to plan... This is made possible by contemporary technical capabilities as well as by economic and administrative concentration...The culture industry intentionally integrates its consumers from above. The customer is not king, as the culture industry would have us believe, not its subject but its object.” (1991; 85)

The culture industry deters the masses from thinking beyond the limits of the present. Herbert Marcuse states this discouragement of the culture industry in *One Dimensional Man* (1968):

“...The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood . . . it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life – much better than before – and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behaviour in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe.” (26-27)

What Marcuse says is the explanation of the fact that capitalism is able to avoid the formation of more basic desires by providing the means to satisfy certain needs. According to early perspectives on the high culture, it was thought to be working differently, and it realized ideals disclaimed by capitalism (Leavis, 1932; Arnold, 1932). In this sense, the work of art had a unique and authentic character, but it turned into a mass-produced and standardized commodity. Art or high culture also provided a critique of capitalist society and alternative vision (Storey, 2015; 67). Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) asserted that authentic art could show inequality and irrationality of the status quo, yet what was seen or heard in the mass media had become a repetition and confirmation of the socially constructed truth that served the prevailing ideologies. As a result, since they had been reduced to passive subjects of coercion, people could not take critical responsibility for their own acts. This passiveness in the individuals is also central to the theory of the Frankfurt School and their analysis of popular culture.

The argument of the passiveness also connects to the Enlightenment criticism in that rational domination in the contemporary capitalist societies is the domination of the people. Therefore, it can be argued that people living in the capitalist society think they are free; however, they are actually deceiving themselves (Strinati, 2004; 55). Since their freedom is limited to the freedom to choose between different goods or various

brands of similar goods, the consumers' false needs repress the real needs. The position of the culture industry is intertwined with the cultivation of false needs. To be more precise, the Frankfurt School sees the culture industry as insurance of the production and satisfaction of the false needs. It is so effective that the working class can no longer be a threat to the strength of capitalism.

According to the critique of capitalism stated by the Frankfurt School, the nature of the work ensures the impacts of the culture industry; in other words, the role of the culture industry is to organize free time in the same way as production regulates the work time. In the words of Adorno and Horkheimer: “The escape from everyday drudgery which the whole culture industry promises ... (is a) paradise ... (of) the same old drudgery... escape... (is) predesigned to lead back to the starting point. Pleasure promotes the resignation which it ought to help to forget” (1979; 142). In short, work results in mass culture, vice versa. Likewise, the culture industry circulates art or “authentic” culture in the same way. Only “authentic” culture that exists outside of the culture industry has the potential to break the cycle. To explain this circulation more precisely and examine the Frankfurt School's approach to popular culture, Adorno's essay on popular music will be explored latterly.

The Frankfurt School's comprehensive discussions and theories on the culture, especially the concept of “culture industry”, allowed the successor cultural theorists to widen their perspective. In particular, the concept of ideology became more critical in the cultural analysis after the pathways opened by the Frankfurt School. Using this concept in the analysis provided interpretation of popular cultural forms in their political and social context (Başkıř Şahin, 2018; 14). In this sense, it would be meaningful to elaborate ideology in broad terms and its importance in the emergence of British Cultural Studies.

2.2.2 “The Rediscovery of the Ideology”: The British Cultural Studies

Antiwar protests, social and political transformations, and civil rights movements all offered new fields and approaches in the cultural analysis during the 1970s. In particular, the emergence of critical cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and ethnic studies have led to criticism of traditional methods in the organization of knowledge.

The concept of culture industry articulated significant roles of media and culture and offered a model of a highly technologically advanced and commercial culture playing a significant role in the ideological reproduction and articulation of the individuals into the dominant system of needs (Kellner, 2004). British Cultural Studies moved ahead of the former cultural analyses. Specifically, The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) was the most substantial research centre in the development of the critical cultural theory based on the Marxist and neo-Marxist theory.

The Birmingham School (The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS)) examined youth cultures as expressions of societal changes, particularly changes in the class structure and working-class identity. The historical context in which the Birmingham School emerged was closely linked to the industrial society experiencing major changes. In *Resistance Through Rituals* (1976) which will be discussed in detail, it becomes clear how the scholars of the Birmingham School see youth culture as a means to express a significant historical shift in the production system and symbol formation (Johansson & Lalander, 2012; 1079). In this study, the aim is to demonstrate that youth culture and styles are more than just a market enterprise or a way of being deviant, but that they can and should be considered as symbolic and ritual ways of resisting.

Hall (1996; 31) states that two books can be seen as initiators of the new terrain in the critical cultural analysis; *Uses of Literacy* (1957) by Hoggart and *Culture and Society* (1958) by Williams. While Hoggart's book drew inspiration from a long-running cultural debate centred on the concept of mass society, the latter rebuilt the long tradition that Williams specified as comprising of "a record of some important and continuing reactions to these changes in our social, economic and political life and offering a special map by means of which the nature of the changes can be explored" (1960; xv). Hall also refers to the study of E.P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* (1963) which made a decisive break in its questions of culture, experience, consciousness and emphasis on agency through including a certain kind of technological evolutionism, reductive economism, and an organizational determinism (1996; 32).

Mass culture began to be criticized in the context of the capitalist form of society, false consciousness, commodification, and hegemonic ideology, thanks to the rise of more radical critical theory expressed in the works of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and Stuart Hall (McQuail, 2005; 115-117). The Birmingham School came to concentrate on the interplay of representations and ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality in cultural texts, including media culture, after a series of internal debates and in response to social struggles and protests in the 1960s and 1970s. The scholars in the Centre can be considered as the first to examine the influence of mainstream cultural sources such as newspapers, radio, television, film, and other media on audiences. They also looked at how different audiences perceived and used media culture in various ways and contexts, studying the factors that caused audiences to respond to media texts in different ways. From the early 1960s to the early 1980s, British cultural studies continued to take a Marxist approach to study culture, influenced especially by Althusser and Gramsci⁶. Similar to the views of the Frankfurt School, the working class and its fall in revolutionary consciousness were observed in British Cultural Studies, and the conditions of this catastrophe for the Marxian project of the revolution were investigated. Like the Frankfurt school, the British Cultural Studies concluded that mass culture was important in incorporating the working class into established capitalist societies and that a new consumer and media culture was creating a new mode of capitalist hegemony.

With the publication of the seminal study *Resistance Through Rituals* (1976), the perspective on the class where youth cultures were related as significant indicators of the ongoing class struggle (Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004; 5). This book also provided a clear explanation of how British Cultural Studies conceive the concept of “culture”.

⁶ The studies on popular culture and youth cultures conducted by the CCCS were closely linked with the concept of “hegemony” and “ideology”. Hall et. al. (1994; 38) explained that in order to locate the youth subcultures, firstly, youth should be situated in the dialectic between “hegemonic dominant culture” and “subordinate working-class parent culture”. To understand this argument of the Centre, it would be useful to go through the concepts of hegemony and ideology. The first concept was stated by Gramsci (1971) to describe the moment when a ruling class is able to exert “hegemony” or “total social authority” over subordinate classes, rather than merely coerce them to adhere to its interests. This includes a specific power to win and form consent so the grant of legitimacy to the ruling classes appears to be not only “random,” but also “natural” and “normal”. At this point, what Althusser (1971) and Poulantzas (1973) stated “ideological state apparatuses” can be considered. Hall et. al. (1994; 39) claimed Conflicts of interest occur primarily as a result of differences in the structural role of the groups in the productive realm; however, they also have an impact on social and political life.

In the introduction of the book, it was argued that smaller communities or class fragments contribute to culture by developing their own “distinct patterns of life,” giving “expressive expression to their social and material life-experience.” (Hall & Jefferson, 1991; 10). Each of these groups is defined by its distinct way of life, which is expressed in institutions (such as a motorbike club), social relations (their particular position within the domain of work or the family), values and customs, and “uses of objects and material life”. (Turner, 2003; 90). All of these “maps of meaning” formed the subculture and helped its members to understand it (Hall & Jefferson, 1991; 10-11). Many subcultural studies explored how these maps of meaning were formed and what meanings were attributed to the subcultural group’s activities, structures, and artefacts. Hall and Jefferson argue that subcultural studies are more than just a sociological examination of the form and shape of social relationships; it becomes involved in the “the way these structures and shapes are experienced, understood and interpreted” (1991; 11). The Birmingham School was highly political, concentrating on the potential for resistance in rebellious subcultures, first valorizing the potential of working-class communities, then youth subcultures⁷ to oppose hegemonic forms of capitalist supremacy (Kellner, 2004). Contrary to the general argument of the Frankfurt School, youth cultures have been identified as a possible source of new forms of resistance and social change in British Cultural Studies.

Unlike the Frankfurt school, British Cultural Studies has not sufficiently engaged modernist and avant-garde aesthetic trends, focusing instead on products of media culture and ‘the popular,’ which has become a major focus of its efforts. Hall (1981; 228) asserted that the study of popular culture should start with what he called “the double movement of containment and resistance” in his seminal essay *Notes on the Deconstructing the Popular*. Hall reminds us that there was a constant fight over the languages, customs, and ways of the laboring classes, the uneducated, and the poor,

⁷ British Cultural Studies examined the oppositional capacity of different youth, demonstrating how culture came to constitute various types of identity and group membership (Hall & Jefferson, 1991). Therefore, it can be argued that cultural studies began to concentrate on how subcultural communities created their own style and identities in response to dominant types of culture and identity. Individuals who adhere to dominant dress and fashion codes, as well as attitudes and political agendas, establish their identities as representatives of particular social classes within mainstream groups. Individuals who are members of the subcultures like punk or skinheads look and behave differently from those in the mainstream, resulting in oppositional identities.

the so-called popular classes, during the long transition from agrarian to industrial capitalism (Litzinger, 2001; 253). Hall, like Gramsci before him, urged us to see the popular as a place of both affirmation and resistance to capitalist power. He saw the common as the primary site of struggle, an “arena” of both agreement and opposition, a disputed region of sense, feeling, emotion, and signification, not as an afterthought or a byproduct of economic transition. Hall defines that the popular “is partly where hegemony arises and where it is secured. It is not a sphere where socialism, a socialist culture already fully formed might be simply expressed. But it is one of those places where socialism might be constituted.” (1981; 239).

In this essay, Hall’s definition of popular insisted on establishing (even if subtle) links between cultural expressions, social formations, and politics (Harsin & Hayward, 2013; 202). Hall addresses the problematic meaning of the word “popular” in “popular culture” in the main part of the text. Then, he examines two common definitions of this concept. The first definition of “popular” is “widely circulated and commercialized.” Subscribers to this viewpoint often associate popular culture with manipulative consumerism, seeing it as falsification, if not outright destruction, of genuine working-class cultural material and tradition. Hall partly accepts this definition, but he opts for the description of popular culture and forms in a more complex way. The second definition of popular culture discussed by Hall is one that considers popular culture as all of “the people’s” cultural practices. This viewpoint is also criticized by Hall for being essentialist and focused on a binary distinction between “the people” and “the elite.” Stuart Hall provides another description of popular culture towards the end of the essay, emphasizing its complex existence, constant conflict, and struggle. Similar to Gramsci’s idea of hegemony, in which power and subordination are continually changing, and some cultural structures gain and lose institutional support, Hall sees popular culture as an “ongoing process”.

In “Notes on Deconstructing The Popular”, Stuart Hall basically provides a neo-Gramscian view of the power relationship between high and popular culture, with a more mutual viewpoint of the assimilatory take originally provided by Gramsci, who claimed that high hegemonic culture assimilates and sterilizes popular culture (Harsin & Hayward, 2013; 203). Hence, it can be argued that Hall criticizes any attempt at an

essentialist view of culture in general and popular culture in particular, as well as any consistent correlation of content and cultural products with a specific social class, thus pointing to the power relations that define both high culture and popular culture as opposing concepts. Hall's main argument is to think of the cultural sphere as a battleground for the struggle. Regarding this, he also sees struggle within the popular culture as a field where hegemony also operates. Hence, popular culture is a field that inevitably includes and can develop within the influences of the dominant culture.

While examining the popular culture, it would be useful to go through another concept, articulation. In order to indicate the link between symbolic practice and social formation, Hall mentions this concept. Hall's argument on the articulation can be seen as alternative theorizing to reductionist conceptions of ideology; to be more precise, Althusser helps us to see X but does not allow us to see Y or Foucault provides a way of thinking knowledge and power, yet does not reveal Gramsci's common sense (Clarke, 2015; 276). Understanding of Hall indicated the significance of "no necessary correspondence" between the constituents. He defines articulation as follows:

"By the term 'articulation', I mean a connection or link which is not necessarily given in all cases, as a law or a fact of life, but which requires particular conditions of existence to appear at all, which has to be positively sustained by specific processes, which is not 'eternal' but has to be constantly renewed, which can under some circumstances disappear or be overthrown, leading to the old linkages being dissolved and new connections – rearticulations – being forged. It is also important that an articulation between different practices does not mean that they become identical or that one is dissolved into the other. Each retains its distinct determinations and conditions of existence. However, once an articulation is made, the two practices can function together, not as an 'immediate identity' (in the language of Marx's '1857 Introduction') but as distinctions within a 'unity'." (Hall, 1985; 113-114 footnote 2).

Characteristics of the articulation formulation can be seen in the words Hall. The opinion that relations or links are not "necessarily given" as a fact of life or by law is also indicated. The concept of articulation has seized on widely in cultural studies. In the sociocultural consideration of music, it has mostly been taken up in the study of Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (1990). He uses the concept in order to debate complicated links between musical practices and social structure (9). Similarly, Toynbee (2000) echoed the basis of Middleton, and he argues that "the fit between

community and style is less direct, or genres can encompass huge areas of social and geographical space which can hardly be described as communities at all” (114). All of the arguments above can indicate the fact that the concept articulation captures some of the ambiguity and uncertainty needed to comprehend the relationship between music and culture. The following section aims to go deep into this link and will focus on the music within popular culture.

2.2.3. Music and Popular Culture

From simple daily activities to entertainment, popular culture encompasses different parts of life. Popular culture emerges even while walking, going to a concert, and eating so in every moment of daily life. Music from past to present has been a part of people’s lives, but probably in no time it has not been used and consumed this intense. However, music is not just an artistic activity, but it is also a product of culture. Cook explains how music is embedded in the culture in these words:

“To talk about music, in general, is to talk about what music means – and more basically, how it is (how it can be) that music operates as an agent of meaning. For music isn’t just something nice to listen to. On the contrary, it’s deeply embedded in human culture (just as there isn’t a culture that doesn’t have language, so there isn’t one that doesn’t have music) ... People think through music, decide who they are through it, express themselves through it.” (2000; 8-9).

As part of the routines in everyday life, “music is now the soundtrack of everyday life” (Frith, 2003, 97). Music is not just a thing that people can carry it along with their phones or music players, but it has been a component of everyday life experiences like Frith stated. The point where music affects everyday life is not only about listening to it because music-making and participating in the production process of music strengthen the link between everyday life and music. According to Bennett, music allows audiences to make sense of everyday life and position themselves in everyday contexts (2005, 192). Hence, it can be argued that people can engage with everyday life, the conventions of play and protest through the appropriation and use of music. Supporting Bennett’s argument above-mentioned, Grossberg claims that comprehension of music “requires asking what it gives to its fans, how it empowers them and how they empower it. What possibilities does it enable them to appropriate in their everyday lives?” (1986, 52).

Listening to music may seem that this practice is undoubtedly insignificant since while commuting, studying or working, the individuals can easily listen to the music, thanks to the gadgets in their pockets. However, De Nora shows the effect of music in everyday life in her study and assert how music affects individuals:

“At the level of daily life, music has power... Music may influence how people compose their bodies, how they conduct themselves, how they experience the passage of time, how they feel – in terms of energy and emotion – about themselves and others, and about situations.” (2000, 16-17).

As the above quotation from De Nora denotes, the importance of music in everyday life is beyond the issues of music-making and creativity of the musicians (Bennett, 2005, 117). Therefore, participation in music can be affected through consumption as well as the production process (Bennett, 2000, 60). This quality of musical life is closely associated with the stylistic responses to music, which has been investigated especially in relation to the young ones. Different music genres, from punk to rock, have inspired various styles through which the fans have revealed their attachment to specific music and positioned themselves in that fan groups (Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1978; Chambers, 1985; Hall&Jefferson, 1993). Music can allow the audiences to make sense of everyday life. As De Nora states, “Music is a device or resource to which people turn in order to regulate themselves as aesthetic agents, as feeling, thinking and acting beings in their day-to-day lives.” (2000, 62).

Along with the mass media, the popularization of music has seriously increased. Within the context of popular culture, the commodification of music is not unusual. This commodification can come with standardization, as Adorno stated in *On Popular Music* (1941). He argues that the whole structure of popular music has become standard, even it repeated itself even where standardization was attempted to be achieved (1998, 201). In order to disguise the standardization, the music industry undertakes what Adorno calls “pseudo-individualization”: “(s)tandardization of song hits keeps the customers in line by doing their listening for them, as it were. Pseudo-individualization, for its part, keeps them in line by making them forget that what they listen to is already listened to for them, or “pre-digested” (1998, 203). In this respect, listening to these standardized music means that consumption of popular music has passive characteristics. Storey explains Adorno’s argument in popular music

consumption as follows: “popular music operates in a kind of tired dialectic: to consume it demands inattention and distraction, while its consumption produces in the consumer inattention and distraction.” (2010, 120). Although the criticism made by Adorno is prevalent while considering popular music, it should also be noted that despite of commercial sense, the music industry may be able to regulate and decide the production, but it cannot control or determine how the music is used or, more importantly, the meaning(s) that those who use it assign to it (Frith, 1983, 270).

Music, dance or language may help people to mock those in power and bring up subversion (Beighey&Unnithan, 2006, 134). Listening to music or making it can be used as a means of resistance or dissent in everyday life. Having an ability to reflect social power, hip-hop culture and rap music “forever changed the popular culture (in that) it replaced rhythm and blues as the dominant listening choice of African Americans, especially, inner-city Generation Xers.” (Watkins, 2005, 55). As stated before, the racial, economic and social inequalities experienced by the African Americans in the US paved the way for his cultural form, hip-hop. Since the popular culture has contradiction which indicates the existence of acceptance and resistance at the same time, the next section of the chapter will focus on whether there is any relation between hip-hop and resistance?

2.3. The Link Between Hip-Hop and Resistance

2.3.1 Hip-Hop as a Resistance Tool

As mentioned before, the emergence of hip-hop is closely connected to the segregation of black ghettos and the rise in street gangs. Along with the isolation, the economic and social conditions of black people brought about disillusionment which played a role in the increase in street gangs. Some of the studies in the literature discuss the requirements under which hip-hop culture emerged. However, one of the salient studies is Black Noise that pushes hip-hop towards in-depth analysis. Her research focuses on the link between race, gender and culture in rap music. It can be argued that Black Noise relates hip-hop culture to these concepts and Black experience (Okine, 2012; 21). The study is significant since Rose makes a connection between resistance practices in everyday life and hip-hop culture.

Seminal study *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (1994), written by Tricia Rose, points out several dimensions of hip-hop culture that can be considered as practices of resistance. In her work, Rose analyses hip-hop culture and rap music by examining the lyrics as a hidden transcript conceptualized by James Scott. In his work, Scott discusses “hidden transcripts” and “public transcripts” of dominated populations. He explains the link between power relations and what people say to socially distinct audiences. The significance of Scott’s work in *Black Noise*, the hidden transcript comprises the background debate of the dominated. What makes the transcript hidden is its exemption from the dominant’s sight and control, so the hidden transcript of the subordinated is a response to the practice of domination (Lamotte, 2014; 4). The hidden transcripts allow the subordinated means to express emotions and construct a collective identity (Gal, 1995; 4). Within the context of hip-hop, the hidden transcript is elaborated by the population of the South Bronx in the 1980s. According to Scott, in this disguised resistance, tactics, jokes, songs and other means of communication can be considered as hidden transcripts acting as the critiques of the powerful, and Rose explains these transcripts as “cultural glue” (Martinez, 1997; 5).

Under social conditions in which sustained frontal attacks on powerful groups are strategically unwise or successfully contained, oppressed people, use language, dance, and music to mock those in power, express rage, and produce fantasies of subversion ... [that] quite often serves as the cultural glue that fosters communal resistance. (Rose, 1994; 100)

Tricia Rose further asserts that rap was the result of African American oral tradition based on a highly technological urban landscape that could be found in controversial public performance space (Martinez, 1997; 10). Likewise, Stapleton also draws a comparison between African American oral tradition and rap music. She asserts that “hip-hop’s use of spoken or sung word to tell stories and teach “life-lessons” is also part of a tradition among African peoples that goes back to the *griots*, African storytellers who played the important role of oral historians.” (1998; 220). A similar analysis is made by Ayhan Kaya. I will also discuss whether there is a correspondence between rap music and being a storyteller when examining his study.

If you come to think about *Black Noise*, Rose also argues that rap music was considered as an internal threat to American cultural development and social order due

to its vocal critique of hegemonic structures. This loud vocalization of resistance explains why rap was perceived as loud and violent by the dominant group, and Rose says the reason was fear of black resistance and defiance. She discusses one of the music critics that defined rap's rhythms as "monotonous" since they provoked the black youth (1991; 286). For Rose, rap appeared as a means for the African American youth to express themselves in the era of crisis. "The drawing power of rap is precisely its musical and narrative commitment to black youth and cultural resistance, and nothing in rap's commercial position and cross-cultural appeal contradicts this fact" (Rose, 1994; 19).

As it acquired, rap began to address social, economic, and political issues, and it has become capable of merging social protest, musical and cultural expression. Hence, it can be argued that rap artists look into grammatical creativity, verbal power and linguistic innovation in improving the art of oral communication (Dyson, 2004; 62). Through sampling and technological improvements, rap music can bring back the significant ideas, movements and figures in the black culture, so that black youth gets the potential to struggle against the racial "blackout." Sampling and turntables are essential in rap music not only because they allow artists to produce songs quickly but also because they are part of the "breaking", which is one of the main principles of the hip-hop culture. Sampling is a kind of method that can provide interruption of the narrative flow. Similarly, turntables break the tones/beats of the song. Russel Potter establishes a connection between this fragmentation and the term "postmodernity," which is the centre of hip-hop for him.

Russel A. Potter (1995) reveals the idea of rap's postmodern play as resistance in *Spectacular Vernaculars: Hip-Hop and The Politics of Postmodernism*. Potter sees hip-hop as representative of postmodernism since it can "break" or signify on time. For that reason, the author evaluates Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of chronotope⁸ and

⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin argues that time and space are not separable so chronotope refers to the unity of time and space intrinsic to narrative in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981). They are correlated to a chronology and he explains the link between them as an "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships." The chronotope is defined by intersections of spatial and temporal indicators which constitute a "concrete whole." See Bakhtin's *Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives* (2010, pp. 3-16) and *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981, pp. 84-90).

Henry Louis Gates' conceptualization of signifyin(g)⁹. Potter links the previous cultural forms of African-American history, so he suggests that hip-hop is the successor of blues and jazz. In relation to the connection between the cultural forms, he also claims that the central chronotope in hip-hop is the turntable, which emphasizes the ability to "turn the tables" on previous black traditions, and this ability makes a future out of the pieces from the past (Keyes, 1999; 180). Although he admits that black cultural production has been exposed to commodification by white culture, Potter asserts that hip-hop is keeping with being a spectacle, so hip-hop culture is the embodiment of this cultural exchange (Potter, 1995; 9). As a result, rappers use signifying as a way of resistance and sampling appears as a means to re-read previous black styles, hence creating music out of "remembered fragments" (Potter, 1995; 7). Sampling is resistant because of its very characteristics that turn consumption into production. MCs and DJs are using beats from bought records, and they reform those beats in the new creations and songs, which makes these samples revolutionary.

In *Spectacular Vernaculars*, Potter tries to close the cultural distance or the gap between the postmodern theorists of academy and rappers of hip-hop subculture (Bondi, 1996; 303). He also links this characteristic of hip-hop to its ability to transmit "mythic history" at the heart of African American experience. Potter discusses history by referencing songs rather than narrating it chronologically, and he does not address hip-hop within the context of the political culture of the past; he clarifies the debate by using the political and social ideas of the rappers. Despite of expanding the horizon, his study has some deficiencies. Potter neglects the sound of hip-hop; in other words, there is too much emphasis on the text. He also fails to understand the extent to which economic factors affect or shape the music industry and entertainment industry in general. Yet, the impact of Potter's book can be seen in other studies. For instance, Tony Mitchell (2000) in *Doin' Damage In My Native Language: The Use of*

⁹ According to Gates, signifyin(g) is a way of representing an idea indirectly through a comment usually humorous, provocative or insulting. In his book *The Signifying Monkey* (1988), Gates examines the relationship between black vernacular tradition and African American literary tradition. For him, signifyin(g) revises and criticizes the standard usage of English and structuralist conception of sign, as stated by Ferdinand de Saussure. Like Bakhtin states that interplay of social languages produce "double-voiced" utterances, Gates indicates that "The black tradition is double-voiced... Signifyin(g) is the figure of double-voiced, epitomized by Esu's (divine trickster in black tradition) depictions in sculpture as possessing two mouths." (1988, xxv).

“Resistance Vernaculars” in Hip-Hop in France, Italy, and Aotearoa/New Zealand examines the use of local languages in rap music as examples of “resistance vernaculars” which re-territorializes standard language rules. Mitchell indicates that the use of resistance vernaculars is an act of cultural resistance, and “it is a choice that overrides any global or commercial concerns” (53).

Discussion on authenticity is one of the most forefront subjects in hip-hop studies. As rap music improved, rap artists have begun to challenge the act of making money from rap music and marketing their music to an expanding audience. The performance of authenticity is vital since it appreciates lived experiences and allows rap artists to establish credibility within hip-hop (Hess, 2005; 297). Smith also suggests that rap artists will to “keep it real” indicates a way of engagement with American commercial culture where they attempt to balance the cultural flows streaming from the ghetto to the other side of the world and the other way around (1997; 348). Destroying the commercial presentation of rappers is one of the ways that rappers have used to regulate these cultural flows, and Mickey Hess focuses on two examples in his article.

Hess (2005) studies hip-hop identity and resistance theories by employing Rose’s concept of rap music as a hidden transcript and Potter’s notion of rap’s postmodern play as resistance in *Metal Faces, Rap Masks: Identity and Resistance in Hip-Hop’s Persona Artist*. Hess focuses on two examples of the rap artist persona as a resistance strategy (97). He examines Digital Underground and MF DOOM, and the author selects these rap artists since they obscure their performer identity by using identity play. He asserts that “through hidden transcripts of play as resistance, they subvert commercial presentation of the hip-hop artist and the standards by which his or her marketability and authenticity are judged.” (301). In his study, Hess links these two concepts to the authenticity debate, which is critical in rap music. According to him, the idea of selling one’s identity as an artist is the reason for a hip-hop persona (303). Rap music, as a hidden transcript, emphasizes the persona construction in the hip-hop reality. The persona is placed to subvert the commercial and cultural view by which the rapper is judged. Hess believes that persona construction is a strategy for rap artists to indicate their position concerning the music industry. Ultimately, the author concludes by reminding Potter’s argument that “hip hop is not merely a critique of

capitalism, it is a counter-formation that takes up capitalism's gaps and contradictions and creates a whole new mode, whole new economics'' (111). Hess reveals the significance of identity construction in hip-hop culture but the way he explains the relation between the persona artist and commercialization of rap music is not clear enough. The question of how these rappers become resistant by using different performer identities is not answered. Yet, the author connects the conceptualization of Rose and Potter to his explicitly.

Hip-hop has become a way of escaping rough urban life, and it has helped black African-American youth to reduce the pressure they have. Neighborhood crews and posses play a significant role in forming a hip-hop community since they allow the youth to develop family-like bonds that are close to gang ties. Moreover, it has provided youth with creating their own cultural space, so hip-hop was seen as an alternative path to fight against poverty, discrimination and inequality. Rap music draws the attention of people who listen to it for aesthetic reasons and those who want to understand the genre due to its deeper meaning. When the song has a deeper meaning, it is highly likely that MC states a political view related to a social or economic problem. Some of the authors discuss this kind of music within the scope of political action.

In her article *From The Margins To The Mainstream: The Political Power of Hip-Hop* (1998), Kate Stapleton aims to examine how hip-hop culture and rap music are placed among black youth as a means of political action. Stapleton's arguments are mainly based on the works of Tricia Rose and Mark Mattern. In *Cajun Music, Cultural Revival: Theorizing Political Action In Popular Music* (1998) Mattern presents a political action framework that contains music and culture. He defines three categories of political action that are confrontational, deliberative and pragmatic. These categories also form Stapleton's analysis, and she combines the arguments of Rose and Mattern. As Mattern states, Stapleton contends that music supporting protest is a clear example of confrontational political action. Emphasizing the lyrics as confrontational, Mattern explains the political protest action: "Typically, protest musicians intend to oppose the exploitation and oppression exercised by dominant elites and members of dominant groups" (1998; 2).

According to Stapleton, hip-hop has the ability to provide a kind of forum that represents what it means to be black African American. She also adds, “ while those from dominant cultural groups have public transcripts, those from marginalized groups often must create their forum which they can communicate with each other and transmit messages to the dominant culture” (222). Moreover, the author gives details about deliberative political action with the question of whether “hip-hop has gone too far” and of whether “hip-hop has sold its soul to commercial success” (227). Finally, she claims pragmatic political action appears when a group of people uses music in order to develop an awareness of common interests and act collaboratively.

The way she combines different studies to the resistance discussion is very smooth, but Stapleton is about to forget elaborating deliberative and pragmatic political actions, so her analyses on these categories are not precise. In addition, her ideas tend to imply that hip-hop is equal to the civil rights movement, which is a huge argument. There are lots of rap songs making contributions to social change, but as Rose states in an interview, “But being an MC who is political is not the same thing as a social movement that is determined by hip-hop as a structure.” (2012); on the other hand, it does not mean that hip-hop is nothing to do with political issues. What I mean is it can not be equal to the civil rights movement or any social movement. Yet, hip-hop can be a cultural and musical force for a social movement.

Hip-hop is one of the most global subcultures that have various representations depending on each cultures’ characteristics. Likewise, American rapper Talib Kweli comments at the end of the song called “Hip-Hop Is...”: “You know... hip-hop is a reality that transcends the boundaries of the world of music and exists as itself on this planet.” While crossing the borders, race, religion and region, hip-hop culture has become an essential contributor to the resistance of the voiceless. It is clear that globalization has a significant role in the expansion of hip-hop culture. Yet, it is a specific factor to challenge neo-liberal globalization (Hibbard, 2003) and gives voice to the voiceless.

One of the studies that examine hip-hop and globalization through the lenses of Gramsci, Polanyi and Scott is *Popular Public Resistance: Hip-Hop Culture’s*

Instrumental Role in Challenging Neoliberal Hegemony and Globalization (2003). According to Noah Hibbard, hip-hop culture has four main characteristics; transcendental cultural space, “nation,” its inherent contradictions, “paradox perpetrators,” its representation of the marginalized, “black youth”, and its resistance to mainstream, “industry” representations of the culture (1). These characteristics are related to neoliberalism and globalization. Therefore, Hibbard argues that hip-hop culture can be a source of resistance from below, which is a significant aspect of challenging globalisation. In order to discuss hip-hop as resistance, he enhances three theories of resistance; countermovements, counter-hegemony, and infrapolitics. The author states that, on the one hand, countermovements will explain why/what people resist; on the other hand, counter-hegemony and infrapolitics help to understand the question of how people resist. Hibbard believes that the lenses of Gramsci, Polanyi and Scott can unfold the instrumental role of hip-hop to challenge neoliberal hegemony and globalization. These three theorists seem to Hibbard offering a different level of analysis, and he elaborates Polanyi’s focus on free-market ideology, war of manoeuvre and position stated by Gramsci and Scott’s notion of the hidden transcript within the context of the resistant characteristic of hip-hop culture. Eventually, he concludes by using a quotation from MC MURS “What is it called when the earth goes round? What is it called when consciousness is found? Revolution.” and by arguing that hip-hop can be resistant to globalism and neoliberal hegemony.

Martinelli’s study, *Popular Music, Social Protest, and Their Semiotic Implications* (2013), discusses how popular music is associated with social protest. As its name shows, Martinelli chooses semiotic analysis of the songs from popular music, and he uses a description, songs of social protest. His review is problematic for some reasons. First of all, there is no genre limitation, so the scope of the study is too general. Secondly, he makes lots of categorizations but how he constitutes them is not explicit.

Although it is commercialized and has become mainstream, rap music has always included political messages. It can be argued that independent hip-hop is needed to escape from corporatization. Then, the question arises: is there any difference between independent hip-hop and mainstream hip-hop in terms of their content. By using hermeneutic methods, Christopher Vito surveys the lyrics of Immortal Technique, who

is an independent hip-hop artist in *Who Said Hip-Hop Was Dead? The Politics of Hip-Hop Culture in Immortal Technique's Lyrics* (2015).

His study describes three main themes in Immortal Technique's lyrics, which shows "how he expresses resistance to class dominations" (1). These themes are creative control of independent hip-hop, addressing the problem of hegemony and its ability to present messages resisting hegemony. Vito argues that Immortal Technique's lyrics indicate independent hip-hop culture's potential to become resistant to class domination through critical thinking. The author believes that his study proves the limitation of Adorno and Horkheimer's (1944) theory of mass culture for examining the context of popular culture.

While Vito criticizes the mass culture theory, he supports Gramsci's notion of "organic intellectuals" in helping the formation of critical thought and social consciousness to struggle against class domination. The author justifies his artist selection by arguing that Immortal Technique has remained independent for over a decade, and his songs are upholding the importance of being independent in hip-hop. In order to analyze the lyrics, the author uses a program Nvivo that a qualitative program that stores and codes the data. At the end of his analysis, he resolves that "Immortal Technique expresses resistance to ruling-class control over the mass media in general and hip-hop in particular." (13) and emphasizes that hip-hop is not dead.

Vito's article is essential to understand how the music industry plays a crucial role in forming the hip-hop culture. The author underlines the significance of independent hip-hop, and to some extent, he is right. However, he overlooks hip-hop artists who are affiliated with corporate labels and make music mentioning political, social or economic issues. If the label censors an MC making such music, s/he will probably not work with that label. Furthermore, independent and mainstream have become intertwined in the music industry today. Thanks to digital transformation in the music industry, it is easier to release any songs, so most of the artists do not have to be subjected to the big labels. However, there are some successful artists independent yet almost mainstream.

As can be understood from the mentioned studies, hip-hop provides black youth and rappers with telling their struggles in everyday life. It is not based on reflecting on their lives since they also express themselves through different hip-hop culture practices (e.g., graffiti, MCing, DJing and breakdance). Likewise, Kitwana (2002) sees hip-hop as a cultural movement mirroring the complications of black youth. His main question about hip-hop's political power is whether "Black art plays a role as a place of sustenance for an oppressed people's spirit, as a site of resistance" (2). His answer is both yes and no. He argues that incontrovertibly, there is a commercial aspect of hip-hop culture, so it is acceptable to say "yes." However, Kitwana also adds outside of the popular culture, hip-hop plays a vital role in growing political activism among American hip-hop generations. Related to this question, he claims that the link between black popular culture and hip-hop is not clear-cut. That is to say, hip-hop can be seen as a carbon copy of black popular culture, but in fact, black popular culture belongs to the commercial side of hip-hop, so it can not explain the cultural ideas of hip-hop directly.

Another author arguing that rap music is a tool for resistance is Theresa A. Martinez. In her study, she examines the lyrics of Public Enemy, and she finds there is an emphasis on themes like racism, fascism, corruption and disillusionment (1997). She explains the oppositional characteristics of rap music:

"Rap music, a popular cultural form in the African American community, is a valid and strident form of oppositional cultural expression. As this analysis suggests, the voices in political and gangsta rap lyrics narrate a biting distrust, disillusionment with, and critique of major societal institutions and government." (279)

In 1983, Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five released the epic rap song "The Message," which shows distrust and disillusionment among black youth. This revolutionary song became almost a symbol of despair and tension of living in the ghetto, and it was time to question the "American Dream." Black youth realized that they were surrounded by apartheid, so there was no dream at all. They felt that they were not citizens of the US. Then, it can be argued that rap has paved the way for calling into question social, political or economic problems.

Lawson (2003) addresses the relationship between American blacks and the United States as articulated in rap music. For Lawson, rap music questions the nature of the political relationship between the dark and the state (429). He also argues that rap music can be challenging deeper, which challenges liberal political ideology. The author builds his arguments on the concept of the social contract stated by John Locke in the *Second Treatise of Government* (1952). In this book, Locke claims that governments play a vital role in protecting the property rights of individuals, incorporating their well-being. Therefore, one of the most significant tasks of the state is protection, either be from the outside enemies or the offensive characteristics within the state (Lawson, 2003; 430). Individuals may be live peaceful and secure lives since they know their properties are protected.

Lawson connects his discussion point with the question related to social contract theory: “When many young blacks review their social history, can they be sure that the state will protect them or values them?” then adds, “Blacks realize that the state has been slow to protect their constitutionally guaranteed rights. How can they be expected to believe that the government will protect them not only from crime but the police?” (433). His answer to these questions is the contract between the blacks and the state is broken, so there is no responsibility on the parts of blacks to support the United States. Then, he exemplifies this broken social contract with the quotation from Ice-Cube, “I want to kill Sam.” While he is asserting that rap music is a way of keeping the struggle alive, he also reminds it should not be romanticized. On the one hand, he is admitting that not all rap songs have political contents; on the other hand, there is a political aspect, so it should be considered as post-civil rights music.

Several studies have examined the relationship between resistance and rap music in hip-hop literature. The historical background and how hip-hop culture appeared can be crucial to realize the connection between resistance and rap music. However, it should also be noted that the combination of orality and technology takes place in what makes rap music “revolutionary”. Hence, its resistive force is embedded in the form of rap music, i.e., sampling. Rap not only inherits African-American oral tradition, but it also shows the significance of technological developments. Even though there is no need to have a skill in playing instruments so as to make rap songs, manipulation

of records and knowledge of audio technology should peak in rap. Breaking the beats have paved the way for sampling, which has ruined the music industry at that time.

Shusterman (2003) starts to discuss the importance of the sampling method in rap music, and he finds a kind of resisting part of this music. He argues that the way rappers produce their songs is challenging the traditional ideal of originality that enslaves art. Through the sampling method, rap indicates that borrowing from other works and creating a new one composed of different songs are not incompatible with each other (420). He also claims that rap challenges old ideals of artistic unity because rap's sampling and cutting provide the pluralistic pleasures of dismantling previous works to create new ones that may achieve unity (421). All in all, he is much more focused on the sampling method within the "art" debate.

Hip-hop culture is more than an art form. It has allowed people to speak of their terrible living conditions and call out to change. In its early times, especially for black Americans, it became a collective experience that unites those people who suffered from discrimination, poverty and inequality. All experiences of black people- crime, drug issue and violence- started to talk through rap music and other elements of hip-hop culture. What the songs told were their lives. However, hip-hop cuts across all boundaries, and it can be defined as one of the most pervasive cultures today.

Examining the use of rap music and hip-hop culture in El Alto, Bolivia, Librado (2010) argues hip-hop culture and rap music can be considered as a tool for resistance within the context of El Alto. He also claims that hip-hop culture and rap music have contributed in three different ways in El Alto; the revalorization of identity, the preservation of traditional culture, and the vocalization and articulation and participation of the youth (7). Librado states that youth in Bolivia feel frustrated and intimidated because of the neoliberal state policies, and these negative feelings are reflected through rap music. Then, most of the rappers issue the state policies they disagree with. Librado's study is crucial to understand using rap music as a tool for resistance is not valid only in the United States, so it can be prevalent in distinct contexts. Therefore, it would be illuminating to examine the significance of the place

in the discussions about hip-hop culture and rap music, and the next section of this chapter will focus on this point.

2.3.2 Importance of Place in Hip-Hop Culture and Rap Music

Hip-hop culture was born in the Fordist production and arose in the 1970s street culture of young African Americana and Latinos. Hence, it can be claimed that hip-hop as a cultural form has shaped and been shaped by the city or urban life. As the documentary series of National Geographic- World Music- notes that “From the favelas of Sao Paulo to the slums of Dar Es Salaam to the suburbs of Marseille to the high rises of Tokyo, hip hop is truly a global urban culture.” (qt in Black, 2014, 700). Due to the significance of the connection between hip-hop and place, some of the studies examined this relation.

Lamotte’s study that gets inspired by Tricia Rose’s proposition “hip-hop as hidden transcripts” is *Rebels Without a Pause: Hip-hop and Resistance in the City* (2014) are among the studies exploring hip-hop through the lenses of the city. Emphasizing the resistance paradigm and using the notion of cultural democracy, the article asks the question of whether hip-hop culture challenges American democracy in producing a free space to put citizens into practice (686). He argues that hip-hop can be considered an unconventional way of activism, and it should be analyzed as a social-political movement. This essay emphasises the relation between the hip-hop culture and urban landscape compared to Potter and Hess. Lamotte underscores the significance of studying hip-hop to have an idea of the social links and the forms of appropriating space in the city. His arguments mainly are built on Rose’s point of view that underlines the struggle for space within the hip-hop movement (Rose, 1994). The author concludes by contending that hip-hop with places of exclusion is a hidden transcript, and its dissemination is recorded in struggles for space in the city. He reminds one of the arguments of Tricia Rose again that “rappers’ emphasis on ‘posse,’ crew and neighborhood has ‘brought the ghetto back into the public consciousness’ (qt in Forman, 2000; 71). Lamotte associates hip-hop with the urban debate; however, his discussion on cultural democracy is almost missing. He could not examine the connection between cultural democracy and hip-hop culture.

Considering hip-hop music as a “form of urban and regional research”, Beer (2014) argues that hip-hop can be an indicator of ethnographic understanding into urban life. In his study, Beer draws his analysis on the basis of the book written by a well-known rapper, Jay-Z. In the book called “Jay-Z Decoded”, Jay-Z translates and decodes the content of his songs so as to shed light on their meanings and observations. Beer argues that the result of this book is the explanation of everyday urban street life (677). As a result, he takes into rappers as “insiders of the ghetto”, and the insights provided by rappers can be utilized by researchers studying urban. He also notes that “It is not my intention to suggest that hip-hop is a better form of urban research than that offered by academics, nor is it a replacement; rather what I would like to suggest is that it provides an alternative voice from which we might gain insider perspectives.” (683). Hence, it is suggested that rappers who experience urban life can easily attribute the meanings to everyday routines.

Closely related to the studies of Lamotte and Beer, Simon Black (2014) asserts that despite having the capacity to constitute resources for urban research, rap music is firstly an art form. According to Black, the close relationship between rap music and the music industry may affect the inner city depiction in rap music because of the market requirements. Black argues that as black expressive culture, hip-hop is linked with the social, political and spatial organization of urban America (702). His claim about the idea of “rap as urban ethnography” is critical to what Beer argues. Hence, Black asserts that this argument misunderstands the narratives of everyday life since it interprets these narratives as personal experiences rather than a revised version of older traditions of black vernaculars, so he agrees with Kelley’s notion contending that rap may “reflect and speak to the political and social world of inner-city communities, expressive cultures are not simply mirrors of social life or expressions of conflicts, pathos, and anxieties” (2012, 147).

Another study that examines the importance of place in hip-hop is *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space, Place in Rap Music and Hip-Hop* (1997) by Murray Forman. His research sets out to examine the link between hip-hop practices and the spaces and places, as well as spatial dimensions. Forman forms his analysis in terms of the social construction of space since he believes that the role of space which has always played

in this music and culture. While exploring the spatial elements of the genre and the evolution of a spatial discourse within it, Forman accounts for the sociopolitical concerns in rap songs and the connotations of “space myths” ascribed to “ghettocentric” sensibility. For this purpose, he examines the “inner city”, “ghetto”, and “hood” in terms of their potential to represent “authenticity” in the counter discourse of rappers. As Forman suggests, in order to comprehend hip-hop practices, the urban spaces - identified by Forman as a continuity from the inner city, to the ghetto, to the hood- should be considered (Templeton, 2003, 242). While examining the urban city, Forman criticizes the previous studies because of their failure in showing the relationship between the hip-hop culture and urban space. Hence, he implies that hip-hop’s link with the ghetto and the hood as the spatial elements of rap narratives function as “metaphors” (59). Moreover, Forman is particularly interested in the role of the urban spaces in the formation of black identities. Although Forman analyses an impressive body of material related to the hip-hop media like radio broadcasts, rap music videos and rap press, what missing in this study is the voices of the hip-hop members.

I tried to analyze the relation between resistance and hip-hop culture along with rap music. This theoretical account is essential not only to comprehend the cultural context of Turkish rap music imported from Germany but also the complex relations between the counter and dominant practices of music. The link between music and dissent is also important since youth cultural practices like hip-hop intertwine with being oppositional. When hip-hop is taken into account, its emergence was closely related to the social, economic and political problems that African-American people experienced in the US. Rap music emerged in the context where there were economic deprivation, racial discrimination and exclusion. In this sense, it became a tool for voicing dissent and resistance. With the passing of time, hip-hop has become global as well as its cultural practices, and it covered a greater extent of requests for justice and equality. In addition to resistance, hip-hop and rap are in relation with the place since the practices are produced within a particular place and aspire to look into the issues of this place along with resolving them. Moreover, social, economic and political conditions special to the place can also have an impact on the transformation of rap music. Hence, the questions of how rap music is articulated into the popular culture

and how its oppositional characteristics are affected can be considered within the context of particular circumstances of the place. Considering all of these points, in order to examine the change in the resistance in Turkish rap music, it would be necessary to explore the journey of rap music from Kreuzberg to Turkey. In the next chapter, I will discuss the emergence of Turkish rap music in Germany within the context of difficulties that migrants from Turkey experienced and how they ended up these migrants' meeting with hip-hop culture and rap music.



CHAPTER 3

A Journey From Kreuzberg to Turkey

3.1 Turkish Rap in Germany

The basis of the Turkish rap goes back to the migration of workers from Turkey to Germany. To build up Germany after the Second World War, large numbers of Turkish labor responded to Germany's labor call. They came to Berlin and settled in districts like Kreuzberg that was one of the most damaged areas because of the war. Gastarbeiter, i.e. guest Turkish migrant workers who came to Berlin in the 1960s and 1970s, brought their families and became perpetual immigrants since the late 1970s¹⁰, the foreigner (Diessel, 2001). As a result of this immigration, Turkish guestworker (Gastarbeiter) practised certain diasporic reflexes such as homesickness and homeland idealism (Güney et al., 2014, 134). These reflexes became crucial in the musical practices of migrant workers. In the early years of homesickness, Anatolian/Turkish folk music was one of the most popular music among immigrant workers. By the end of the 1960s, some of the songs with themes about immigrants' working conditions began to come out (135). In the 1970s, arabesque music boomed in Turkey, and it became one of the most popular genres among Turkish migrants living in Germany. However, when it comes to the 1980s, political songs produced by asylum seekers moving to Germany after the military coup in 1980 almost challenged the popularity of arabesque. In the 1990s, pop music from Turkey had an impact on the second generation of immigrants, and the music market in Turkey provided some career

¹⁰ The Labor Recruitment Agreement signed in 1964 allowed migrant workers release about unit of family and residence permission. In the early 1970s, although the labor movement from Turkey ceased, migration continued by taking other forms such as family reunion, secret labour movement and refugee movement. Another important change occurred in 2000. The reform to the nationality law in Germany facilitated the residing of foreigners on a long-term basis and their children who were born in and had education in Germany could acquire citizenship. For detailed information on the history of The Labour Recruitment Agreement, see (Ünver, 2012) and (İçduygu, 2012).

opportunities for some immigrant musicians in the diaspora. This period was also important in terms of the relation between young immigrant and hip-hop because this culture and rap music really represented the 1990s (ibid, 135). In order to understand why hip-hop had such significance, I will discuss the background of the tough experiences of Turkish immigrants in their lives briefly. Experiences of racism and social exclusion constituted the social context of Turkish hip-hop (Çağlar,1995; Arıcan, 2011). In the early years of Turkish migration, there was an immigrant community that was homogeneous and invisible in the public sphere (Güney, Pekman, & Kabaş, 2014; 253). They thought that their stay in the host country was temporary; however, it wasn't. Starting from the 1980s and rising in the 1990s, racism, xenophobia and arson attacks became apparent in Germany. Events described in the following news report began to become widespread:

“On November 23, 1992, two Skinheads, aged 19 and 25, firebombed two houses in Mölln, Schleswig-Holstein, killing a Turkish woman, her 10-year-old granddaughter, and 14-year-old niece. Several others were severely injured. The perpetrators telephoned the police station and announced, "There's a fire in the Ratzeburger Strasse. Heil Hitler!" They made an identical call to the fire brigade regarding the second address. Michael Peters and Lars Christiansen were tried and convicted in December 1993 and sentenced to life imprisonment, and 10 years, respectively.” (Solomon, 2006; 60 qt from ADL Report).

Although there was an increase in the racist attacks, they had a crucial impact on the spread of hip-hop culture among Turkish migrants. The reason for this attention to hip-hop is not just these attacks; the societal conditions in Berlin set the tone for Turkish-German hip-hop. In these societal conditions, the 36 Boys gangsta group became a cornerstone in the emergence of Turkish-German hip-hop. In order to realize the significance of 36 Boys, it would be beneficial to regard the origin of the group.

3.1.1 Appropriation of Turkish-German Rap Music in the Diaspora

The streets of Kreuzberg¹¹ played a crucial role in the children of the first-generation Turkish migrants' everyday lives. For the young immigrants, these places were not only safe shelters but also the starting point for the struggles and conflicts. Since their

¹¹ The importance of Kreuzberg in hip-hop in Germany will be discussed in detail in the second section of the chapter.

parents worked for a long time, these young immigrants spent their time on the streets. The conflict of generations between the first generation migrant workers and their children was determinant in the youth's view on the streets. Some of the parents could get their children's over Germany after many years. Since they alienated from their parents, these children saw the streets as a way of adapting to social life (Kabaş, 2012, 173).

In the 1980s, the rise in conservative right-wing policies and xenophobia triggered the attacks on migrants. As a result, the tension between the migrants and racist Germans became intensified. In that time, the streets of Berlin had almost 30 different Turkish gangs like "Fighters", "Black Panthers", "Şimşekler", "Belalılar", "Warriors", "Vulkanlar" and "36rs".¹² In 1987, these various gangs were gathered under a single roof, 36 Boys. While Turkish migrant youth in Germany was fighting in the street, they also strengthen their physical capacities through sports like football and kickbox. Some of these young migrants chose to go behind the hip-hop culture. The spread of hip-hop culture among Turkish migrant youth created a new area for competition without the destroying effect of the fight (Güney, 2015, 104). However, it did not mean that meeting with hip-hop culture ended the fight in the streets, yet it had an impact on the demise of these bloody and violent fights. And as for that, the discovery of hip-hop culture, the American discos in Berlin were quite crucial.

The presence of the American military -and many African American soldiers- located in West Germany and West Berlin during the late 1980s and early 1990s and post-war labor shortages in Germany which led to enlisting of Turkish guest workers starting in 1961, created the conditions for the emergence of hip-hop culture in Germany. However, the first contact with hip-hop in Germany was made through the imported films such as "Wild Style" (1982) and "Beat Street" (1984) (Cheesman, 1988, 196). These films had the elements of hip-hop culture, including Djing, graffiti and break-dance. They also showed migrant youth that hip-hop was more than rap music since it was intertwined with "a vivid street culture of marginalized Afro- and Hispanic-

¹² For the detailed story of the birth of the 36 Boys, you can also see the documentary by Al Jazeera Turk. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZHas0x1Hy8>

American youth” (Elflein, 1998, 256). In addition to these films, a high number of the second generation Turks took a fancy to discotheques run by and for American soldiers since Turkish migrants were unwelcomed by those operated by German nightclubs. At these American discotheques, Turkish migrants started to become friends with American soldiers. As a result of this friendship, they heard and learned rap music. Subject to social marginalization in Germany because of the state’s restrictive “right of blood” naturalization policies (Kaya, 2001; 132) and racist attacks that Turkish migrants experienced, lots of Turkish youths found hip-hop and rap music as a tool to express their perceptions of themselves (Solomon, 2009; 308). Rap allowed new areas of identification for Turkish youth, and it had the potential for empowering them (Çağlar, 1998; 244).

According to Ickstadt (1999), Turkish rappers in Berlin specialized black cultural pretensions of protest and of difference in order to enunciate their variation from a dominant German culture (572). That is to say, they applied American cultural expression - hip-hop - to their own need for articulating themselves, and Ickstadt argues that it is “appropriating difference.” Since hip-hop was seen as a tool to give a voice to marginalized youth or societies, early Turkish hip-hop groups in Germany made connections between the history of the US minorities and their conditions in Germany (Böttcher et al., 2009, 3). The basis of showing empathy towards hip-hop lies in its relation with the street, fighting spirit and revolt against discrimination. These aspects of hip-hop culture resembled the struggles of Turkish-German hip-hop. As a result, the Turkish migrant youth appropriated differences through hip-hop in Germany. Furthermore, through the appropriation, they found a chance to make fun of the fantasies about Turkish migrants Germans had.

The word “Kanake,” which was used by some Germans when they wanted to insult Turks, was adopted by them as a title of pride and self-identification (Cheesman, 2002; 181). Hence, the group named initially “Islamic Force”¹³ changed its name to “KanAk” and Kanak Sprak, the title of a book written by Feridun Zaimoğlu, denotes a peculiar

¹³ Islamic Force, a hip-hop group founded in 1986, was chosen to be a name for the group so as to provoke the Germans who had Islamophobia. Otherwise, the group had nothing to do with radical Islam (Kaya, 1997, 236).

underground jargon that Turkish rappers in Germany used a word of the third language (neither Turkish nor German). It can be useful to expand the discussion on the Kanake and Kanak Sprak to clearly understand how Turkish youths in Germany expressed their feelings of marginalization through hip-hop culture.

Kanake is a term that was originated in the late 80s in hip-hop ciphers. It is close to “niggah” used by US rappers, so Kanake is persuasive hate speech. In 1995, Feridun Zaimoğlu¹⁴ introduced Kanak Sprak as an ethnolect, and it became part of German popular culture (Loentz, 2006; 34). Cheesman argues that the strategy of Zaimoğlu is the invention of alternative ethnicity, “Kanak,” having a language, “Kanak Sprak”, that interrupts dialogue between Germans and Turkish immigrants almost sanctioned by the state (2004; 83). Kanak Sprak, written by Zaimoğlu, is also a book consisting of interviews with Turkish immigrants, unemployed, or illegal jobs. The main question in that book is, “What is life like as a Kanake in Germany?” (Cheesman, 2002; 183). Kanake can also be seen as the naturalization of hip-hop in Germany (Loentz, 2006; 36). It can not be considered without thinking of importation of hip-hop culture to Germany; Zaimoğlu made a comparison between Kanake and free-style discourse in rap, and he asserted that hip-hop allowed the soundtrack for the Kanak Attack, a network against racism in which Zaimoğlu has been a crucial ally (Zaimoğlu, 1995; 13; cited in Loentz, 2006; 50).

It was also no coincidence that Turkish rappers in Germany, similarities between Black Americans and Turkish rappers. These parallels indicated associations of rap with the dispossessed generations, Black Americans and the ghettos (Caglar, 1998; 248). For instance, Cartel as one of the lead groups of Turkish rap, which was composed of Islamic Force (Berlin), Da Crime Posse (Kiel), Karakan (Nuremberg), Mosh It Up (Berlin), Mic Force (Wiesbaden), was called White Nigger Posse (*ibid*, 249). The motivation for founding this group was that “Music in Germany is too white.” (Greve, 1997; 25; cited in *ibid*, 248). It can be said that these Turkish rappers saw themselves

¹⁴ Feridun Zaimoğlu who is a Turkish born German writer and performer appeared in 1995 as a spokesperson of particularly second and third generations of Turkish and other discriminated migrants in Germany. In Kanak Sprak, Zaimoğlu stresses the authenticity of the texts and the language where they are interpreted, indicating the texts in his anthology “protocols” which are the “product of detective investigations” (Loentz, 2006, 39).

as “the niggers of Germany,” and such remarks were quite common in rap concerts among Turkish rap fans in Berlin (Çağlar, 1998; 249). Derezon, one of the most prominent DJs in the Turkish hip-hop scene, had spent some time in Brooklyn DJing before joining Islamic Force, and he drew parallels between Kreuzberg and Brooklyn.

3.1.2 Government Sponsored Hip-Hop: The Youth Centres

Before examining why Kreuzberg is so crucial to the Turkish hip-hop scene, I would like to focus on how hip-hop has found a base among Turkish youth in Germany. While Turkish rappers saw themselves as the “voice of the people and the street,”¹⁵ intermediary institutions in Berlin played an essential role in mediating hip-hop culture to Turkish youth in Berlin. Ayşe Çağlar (1998) elaborates on the roles of these local institutions in *Popular Culture, Marginality and Institutional Incorporation: German-Turkish Rap and Turkish Pop in Berlin*. Exploring hip-hop as an expression tool did not come about in isolation from the surrounding German state institutions; in other words, the local Berlin government played a crucial role in making hip-hop popular among Turkish migrant youth (249). Similarly, Kosnick states hip-hop has been promoted to migrant youth in Berlin as a way of expression and activity considered appropriate and useful by social workers and youth centre institutions with public funds to create performance spaces, workshops, and public contests (2004; 3).

From the beginning of the 1990s, these youth centres initiated and organized hip-hop performances for the youngsters associated with their centres. Hip-hop was fostered together with breakdance and graffiti in order to allow different ways of communication. As Grave narrates (1997; 25), “ ‘For many years there have been breakdance courses in nearly all of the youth centres where Turkish youths go. The walls of the buildings in Kreuzberg have already been covered with Turkish graffiti.’ ” The breakdance, hip-hop courses, and performances were regular activities of these youth centres that the local Berlin government finances.

These centres influenced Turkish diaspora youth to use global music and expressive forms to mix them with other types of their expressive aims (Çağlar, 1998; 249). In

¹⁵ From an Islamic Force song named Mesaj: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfNN_89-ziw, Retrieved on 22 September 2018

addition to hip-hop courses, there were different activities related to Turkish culture, including playing saz and folk dance, yet they were encouraged to participate in hip-hop courses more. Although Turkish immigrant youth expressed their cultural differences through the youth centres, the framework of the expression was determined by the youth centres so local Berlin government. Schiffauer (1997) emphasizes this regulation by the government specifies the German model of the relationship between the individual and the society (cited in Çağlar, 1998; 250). The task of integrating immigrants turn into systemic coordination, regulation, and modification of cultural diversity in the public domain in order not to endanger civil society (Caglar, 1995; 313). In Germany, social workers, teachers, and pedagogues were included in adjusting the threatening cultural diversity; thus, ghettos became the main concern for such pedagogical work since they were considered a “cultural enclave beyond state control” (Çağlar, 2001; 604). Kreuzberger Jugendtreff, Naunyn Ritze and Jugen-und Kulturzentrum Schlessische 27 (SO 36) were the most active youth centres in organizing breakdance, graffiti, and hip-hop workshops as a part of the integration policy. In fact, Islamic Force, one of the well-known hip-hop groups, was based in Naunyn Ritze from the beginning.

As Çağlar (1998) claims, the Berlin government had a part in managing leisure activities and encouraging popular music forms among ethnic minority youth in Berlin since the 1980s (250). Hence, the Office of the Commissioner of Foreigners’ Affairs of the Berlin Senate had a crucial role in this task, which was the sponsor of organizations and initiatives. Vertovec argues this office and the activities sponsored by the office indicate the representative politics of the Berlin government (1996; 382). The practices of the Berlin government was in line with the emphasis on diversity in Berlin’s hip-hop scene (Soysal, 2001; 8). It can be argued that the oppositional and resistant character of Turkish hip-hop obtained a more complicated nature. Especially in Berlin, positioning the Turkish hip-hop was not an easy task since its positioning against the power structures of the centre was not straightforward (Çağlar, 1998; 247).

While state-sponsored institutions play a crucial role in mediating hip-hop as a creative, hybrid, and authentic way of cultural expression of Turkish minority youth in Germany, discourses of Turkish rappers were in step with these youth centres and

institutions. The words of a well-known rapper from Islamic Force, Boe B., can be an example to understand the discourses of Turkish rappers in Germany:

“In fact, what we (the rappers) are doing is not different from what the youth centers try to do: to keep the kids away from the street and to attract them to the youth centers to make music and engage themselves with art. Kids need orientation figures.” (Grave, 1997; qt in Çağlar, 1998)

It can be argued that these rappers see themselves as providing such role models to the diasporic youth so as to urge them to develop a positive sense of identity. As Kaya (1997; 221) asserted, hip-hop reminds the “communicability of experience.” In this sense, it becomes a critique of the modern way of life, which interrupts the “communicability of experience.” In his article named *Aesthetics of Diaspora: Contemporary Minstrels in Turkey* (2002), Kaya also associates Walter Benjamin’s storyteller with the rappers, but is this argument valid for all the rappers?

3.1.3 The “Storytellers” Dilemma

In his study, Kaya draws a comparison between the concept of storyteller and the rappers. Kaya’s argument is based on his belief in rappers’ wish to mobilise their local community against the coercive group (2002, 45). However, before discussing Kaya’s arguments, it should be beneficial to focus on “The Storyteller.”¹⁶

Benjamin attributes the decline of storytelling to rapid changes in modernity like war, industrialization and urban growth; as a result, the inability of authentic communication depending on experience has become a characteristic of modern life (White, 2017; 3). He asserts that storytelling comes about a collective context in earlier times because the collective experience is passed on from one generation to the other through storytelling. The emergence of a new form of communication, the information, is also critical for Benjamin since he argues that in this age of information, communication includes the transmission of facts having their clarifications (1968,

¹⁶ For Benjamin, a storyteller is “is a man [sic] who has counsel for his readers. The storyteller takes what he tells from experience his own or that reported by others. And he, in turn, makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale” (Benjamin 1968: 86). When Benjamin speaks of decline of storytelling and shared experience, he claims that fall of storytelling is not “a symptom of decay” yet he adds: “It is, rather, only a concomitant symptom of the secular productive forces of history, a concomitant that has quite gradually removed narrative from the realm of living speech and at the same time is making it possible to see a new beauty in what is vanishing.” (*ibid.* 87).

88). He says, "... by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything then affects information" (*ibid.* 89). Here is the key to understanding why people are losing the ability to exchange their experience.

If the words from Boe B. on the previous page are reminded how those rappers in Germany undertake to become orientation figures, Kaya argues that the rapper is an intellectual storyteller who guides his/her audiences and who wants to mobilize his/her local community against the power of the hegemonic and coercive power (Kaya, 2002). Some of the studies denote that Erci E from the Cartel, Killa Hakan and Boe B. underscored the social, creative, empowering and progressive character of the rap they make (Kaya, 2010; Çağlar, 1998). It is crystal clear that their songs touch upon social problems like racism, social exclusion, drug abuse, and violence, so are they really "storytellers" of their time?

It is hard to say that MCs completely fit into the storyteller conceptualization of Benjamin. Kaya's argument on the relation between the storytellers and MCs is limited because of its descriptive dimension. In other words, he did not discuss the concept sufficiently, so his claim remains limited. Ultimately, the debate on making the storyteller go with the MCs can be possible. Hence, it may not be wrong. Although this concept can not be used for all the MCs, it may be valid for a considerable amount of MCs. From this point on, I will use the MC to be deemed under the flag of this considerable amount.

When Benjamin delineated the erosion of collective experience, his starting point was the decrease in experience's communicability. The storyteller was involved in the situation at this point. The storyteller appeared as a person who narrated lived or witnessed experiences. Likewise, the MCs as subjects narrate their experiences to another subject, i.e., audiences, through various expression techniques. These stories told by the MCs sometimes come about as just transferring experience. Moreover, in these types of stories, the audiences are expected to point to a moral. However, sometimes counsel goes with the story. Both types of these narratives may not be seen in other music genres because the MC is interested in "reality" rather than fiction, and s/he focuses on the individual or collective experience based on the social problems.

Collectivity is prominent because even if the MCs tell stories about themselves, there is a collective or social narrative that can be issued through reasons on diaspora, class, or youth. The role of the MC is the involvement of the audiences in the collective experience. In that sense, the MC fulfils the mission of the storyteller, as Benjamin attributed.

The main reason for discussing the MCs as storytellers may be the sharing experiences, at least they claim it. Furthermore, one of the mottos of hip-hop culture is “keep it real”, can be considered a reference to this reason. “Keep it real” means telling what you have been living, and the MCs not only express themselves through sharing experiences, but they also guide the audiences. Therefore, their narratives or songs can be candidates for being a bridge between the past and present. Hip-hop reminds us that the collective characteristics of the sorrows, crisis, and society's problems are actually pretty much. Hip-hop also indicates “your story is what is told.” and it emphasizes this story is social/collective. As a result, hip-hop brings back the relationship between the subjects since the link between the components of this culture is dependent on collective experience, which aims to share it with one another.

Benjamin's account of storytelling indicates the collective depth of cultural life rather than individual awareness of isolated moments (White, 2017; 6). Therefore, sharing the experiences through hip-hop practices can be linked with the “collective depth of cultural life”. We can also say that Turkish rappers in Germany constituted a community, and the songs, break-dance, and graffiti were parts of the struggle that they tackled with. Hip-hop practices that Turkish migrant youth in Germany got involved in allowed these migrants to keep the story real. Sharing the experiences through hip-hop practices revealed the collectiveness of the problems. The collective experience in hip-hop practices was distinct from other musical practices in the foreign land, e.g. folk songs sung by the migrants. These folk songs have shown how dreary or grieved was the experience of the migrants. They came together at houses or hometown associations, which invigorated the sense of “us”. Hence, when considered from this point of view, folk songs were products of the collective experience. However, the collective experience in these activities was limited to a specific group in which members had the same characteristics. Group members can be from the same

village or hold the same religious view, so they consisted of almost unvaried individuals. In that sense, they were nearly isolated groups.

Compared to this kind of group performances, hip-hop prioritizes open collective performances. Hip-hop culture includes a range of ethnicities, religions, and ideologies, and its practices are also open to diversity. For example, there can be a black B-boy, a Kurdish beatmaker who migrated from Turkey and a Turkish MC who is a child of a Turkish Gastarbeiter in the same environment. Hence, hip-hop group dynamics are different from coming together to sing folk songs, which provides a “multi-kulti” community and diversification of the narrative and performances. The enrichment that came from the assortment can be linked to the hip-hop practices spread over the streets. In other words, a breakdancer at the street corner, street parties, jam sessions, and graffiti are all the signs of the variation in the limitless spatiality of hip-hop culture.

Although there is a similarity between the folk songs and rap subjects, such as grievances (yakınma) and prayer (yakarış), rap varies from folk songs because of the characteristics of the experience narrated. In rap songs, what is told is based more on individual experiences than thematic and generalized narratives like in folk songs. In addition, rap is not limited to the narrative of what happened to rappers' lives since it claims to be the potential to change what has gone wrong in their lives. From this aspect, the rap's fatalist character is diminished, so it is also a call to turn upside-down life that has gone wrong. Another critical point is that hip-hop sometimes becomes a way of tackling problems or difficulties, and it can also be assigned such a duty in the songs.

Ayhan Kaya also claims that some of the Turkish rappers are also “contemporary minstrels” (1997; 223). The idea of minstrel also has its equivalent within the context of Anatolian culture. Halk ozanı, as the equivalent of the minstrel, was the traveller who sorted out the people with their lyrics accompanied by the sound of a bağlama, a stringed musical instrument. In the 16th and 17th centuries, some of these minstrels wrote and sang poems against the domination of the Ottoman dynasty over the peasantry. Therefore, it can be said that they were the voices of the debased Turkish

popular culture against the Ottoman high culture. Having been raised in a working-class and Turkish culture in which Anatolian minstrels' music and myths are crucial, some of the Turkish youngsters in Germany might be attracted by the educative nature of rap (Kaya, 2002; 46). In addition to taking inspiration from the Anatolian minstrels' instructive side, these youngsters also tend to state their names in the last part of the lyrics is quite widespread in most of the Turkish rappers in Germany as Turkish minstrels used to. Thus, Turkish rappers take this cultural tradition, and they contextualize themselves through local culture within the global hip-hop culture. Yet, it should be noted that African-American rappers also state their names in the songs since they have inspiration from griots so African oral tradition. Hence, telling the names in the song is not unique to Turkish rappers because rap is close to oral tradition in general.

The similarity between Turkish rap and Turkish folk music in the diaspora context was also recognized by the study of ethnomusicologist Martin Greve. He states that the Turkish youngsters' rap songs and folk songs have similarities and see the Turkish folk musicians living in the diaspora as “transnational minstrels” (quoted in Kaya, 2002; 46; Greve, 2006). Greve's point is significant since he indicates the areas where the established culture and the immigrant culture come together. Furthermore, Greve discusses the interactions between these cultures and the role of globalization in the interactions. His emphasis on transnationality quite rightly points out the acculturation, so it can be said that Greve's claim on the relation between the minstrels and the rappers is more consistent than Kaya's argument.

In short, it can be said that hip-hop practices' collectivity may indicate the relation between the storyteller and the MC. However, Kaya's discussion on the link between them is close to being reductive because he generalizes the similarities between the storyteller and the MC. There is also parallelism between the minstrels and the MCs in terms of lyrical structure, but it is difficult to paint the MCs with the minstrels completely. Therefore, Kaya's two debates have the risk of being far-fetched. Although the link between storytellers and rappers is indistinct, it does not mean that rap music has never voiced the social, economic and political issues. Two Turkish German rap groups are examples of how rap music can voice the problems of people

and the street. In this context, the following part of this chapter will focus on how Cartel and Islamic Force became the “voice of the people and the street”.

3.1.4 “Voice of The People and The Street”: Cartel and Islamic Force

As a host of other cultures, migrants who are living in metropolitan culture create their living space, meanwhile they become perfect candidates for being “other” of the dominant culture (Özgün, 1995, 48). German-Turkish youth expressed themselves through breakdance and graffiti that are under consumerist popular culture. These kinds of statements enable the emergence of resistant identities. Turkish youngsters improve these identities within the “areas of conversation” (Bottomley, 1992; 131), with others having prejudices and make a plan on exclusionary acts towards them. As stated earlier, there were severe racist attacks on the Turkish community members in Mölln and Solingen in 1992 and 1993, which received a harsh reaction from the Turkish diaspora throughout Europe. Then, Turkish rap groups immediately thoroughly responded to these attacks. They played an essential role in developing the anti-racist struggle through disseminating information and forming a community. In this struggle, one of the most salient rap group was Cartel. In 1995, a gangsta rap group called Cartel exploded on the Berlin scene.¹⁷ A group of eight young men stepped to the top of the music charts in Germany and Turkey with them what Diessel (2001) called “oriental hip-hop project.” For him, what oriental hip-hop requires is fusion since lyrics, its melodies, its stimulative label, and the media covering it brought discussions about music, identity, and power to the surface (166).

The Cartel songs were played repeatedly on the radio and MTV and took place in the media discussions. One of the Cartel's hits songs, also named Cartel, was giving messages to the Turkish youth in Germany to unite against the increasing racist attacks and killings. In the video clip of this song, they invited everyone to go with Cartel, as the lyrics stated:” Gel gel Cartel’e gel, Carteldekiler kankardeşler.”¹⁸ Especially this song and the summer of 1995 were critical for Turkish hip-hop because, after this song, the impact of the Cartel changed the course of the hip-hop scene in Turkey and

¹⁷ Cartel is a collaboration of Da Crime Posse, Karakan and Erci-E and this music project is initiated by producer Ozan Sinan. The group is comprised of Turkish, German and Afro-Cuban members.

¹⁸ “Come to Cartel, The ones with Cartel are blood brothers”.

Germany. In 1995, their album sold 30.000 copies in Germany and 180.000 copies in Turkey within a month of its release (Çınar, 1999; 43). Ickstadt (1999; 575) states that the achievement of the Cartel shows that the ambition of the Turkish rappers went beyond social work and its local venues. Because of the success of the album, many Turkish newspapers wanted to do interviews with the group that captivating the Turkish society with its aggressive style, its skilled music which used rap with components of Turkish musical genres and its lyrics (Çınar, 1999; 44).

What was unique in Cartel's music was the Turkishness they included to rap (Çağlar, 1998; 253). They mixed instruments, melodies and languages, and this crossover was used by other Turkish rappers in Germany, which paved the way for oriental hip-hop. The prominence of Turkishness was not only seen in their songs but also in their style. For instance, group members generally dress in black with Turkish motifs on the T-shirts. The design of the CD and cassette look like the Turkish flag on the red ground and the initial letter of the "C" Cartel that copies the crescent on the Turkish flag. The time of the release of the group and their other products like t-shirts is significant since, at that time, popular nationalism was prevailing in Turkey (Kaya, 1997; 227). Hence, the group faced a paramount welcome from most of the audiences in Turkey. Indeed, Cartel drew substantial attention from people from the right-wing nationalist party. Although they did not have such a purpose, songs of the Cartel became one of the significant backbones of nationalist discourse. Later, MC of the Cartel, Erci-E, explained that ultra-nationalist people misunderstood the songs. However, the result in terms of economic success was satisfactory because the number of sold albums was more than 300.000 in 1995.

Music of Cartel was a composition of Turkish, German, and Spanish lyrics and Turkish folk music with the impact of hip-hop culture. Their lyrical structure and samples were from Turkish folk music and oral tradition. On the one hand, they felt connected to their own culture and ethnicity; on the other hand, they demonstrated internalization into the mainstream and global culture – industry. Rap was a practice to create diasporic identities, and it provided them with an understanding of their sense of place in Germany and their connection with the homeland Turkey (Solomon, 2013; 876).

Therefore, Turkish migrant youth was in the sense of talking, negotiating and performing change (Soysal, 1999; 13).

Another major hip-hop group within Turkish hip-hop is Islamic Force, founded in Germany in 1986. Despite of the industrial success of the Cartel, Islamic Force is the first rap group. Its members were Killa Hakan, DJ Derezon and Nelie, and they brought forth the first products of Turkish hip-hop, so-called oriental rap. The name of the group evokes something radical Islam, but it was just a provocation towards Germans having prejudices about the image of Islam. When they decided to release their albums in Turkey, the Islamic Force would change its name to Kan-Ak. Then, they prohibited possible misunderstandings by the Turkish audience. This change in the name indicates the gangsta characteristics of the group because Kan-Ak means “running blood” in Turkish (Kaya, 1997; 235). Kan-Ak comes from the word Kanake which is used by Germans to insult Turkish migrants. It is similar to why black Americans use nigger instead of nigga; the former has a racist connotation. Peter McLaren puts forward an explanation for this revision of the word nigger:

“When gangsta rappers revise the spelling of the racist version of the word nigger to the vernacular nigga they are using it as a defiant idiom of a resistive mode of African American cultural expression which distinguishes it from the way that, for instance, white racists in Alabama might employ the term.” (McLaren, 1999; 46)

Using the term Kanak is also a way of distinguishing the working-class youth from the middle-class Turkish youth. In addition to developing in the struggle against the hegemony of the German state, Turkish hip-hop has challenged well-integrated middle-class young Turkish migrants. Hence, these Turkish rappers are not only in opposition to white German society but also to the other people yearning for integrating themselves into the popular German culture (Kaya, 1997; 237). Moreover, Islamic Force was the first hip-hop group to mix drum rhythm in Afro-American music with samples from arabesk and pop¹⁹. They explained how different traditions shaped their music:

¹⁹ In 1991, King Size Terror which was also known as Karakan of Cartel released the first Turkish rap song named “Bir Yabancınn Hayatı”. Music in this song was inspired by Afro-American hip-hop.

“Boe B.: 'We do it in Germany, originating from Turkey and using an American black style of music and Turkish melodies.'

Derezone: 'It was a deliberate decision not to produce music that would storm the charts.'

Cut Mtee: 'The new hype: oriental hip hop or so.'

Boe B.: 'The boy comes home and listens to hip hop. The his father comes along saying: "Come on boy, we go shopping," enters the car and listens to Turkish music. And then he acquires our record and gets both styles in one.” (Elflein, 1998; 263)

There are two significant points in the interview. First of all, although their music was named “oriental hip-hop,” they were distancing themselves from it. They thought it was a “new hype”, so just a marketing term. Secondly, these immigrant youngsters were torn between their parents’ culture and the everyday life of the country they were living in. Elflein (1998; 263) musically defines oriental hip-hop as “ a combination of hip hop beats enriched by reminiscences of ragamuffin, samples of Turkish folk or Pop Muzik and mostly Turkish raps.” Kaya also states that “in oriental rap, the global rhythm and beat of rap infuse into local Turkish folk music, pop music and arabesk music” (1997; 238). Yet, the question of why this music was called oriental hip-hop and not Turkish hip-hop remains unanswered (Diessel, 2001; 171).

It is clear that these immigrants prioritized using samples from the musical system of the Middle East. Both Cartel and Islamic Force mixed Turkish musical instruments like saz, bağlama, zurna, and darbuka with hip-hop beats; besides, Turkish pop music samples were used in these songs²⁰. Diessel claims that the music that Turkish hip-hop sampled was “oriental” to them. This name, oriental, was not given to this music by the Turkish hip-hop community, and it indicates racial discrimination. What these youngsters produced was just hip-hop. Proposing different ethnical labels or names based on the origin of samples signifies the musical production, and that kind of action may divide the unification done by the music. If someone tries to gather up all musicians under a racially described umbrella, there is a will of becoming dominant

²⁰ Yağma Sofrası (Yiyin Efendiler Yiyin) by Islamic Force can be an example to understand how the group used Turkish popular music in their songs. In order to see mixture of traditional Turkish musical instruments and hip-hop rhythms, Cartel’s song Cartel, also known as Kan Kardeşler, can be prominent example.

musical and commercial power in a scene (Elflein, 1998; 264). While the music made was named diversely like oriental hip-hop and Turkish-German hip-hop, the origin of their music was also Kreuzberg, which was “a place between the worlds; neither fully Turkish nor fully German” (Brown, 2006, 137). Hence, examining the significance of Kreuzberg in Turkish hip-hop would be substantive.

3.2 Impact of the Place in Hip-Hop Culture: Case of Kreuzberg

Operating as a way of cultural resistance, hip-hop culture establishes ethnic and geographic identities while forming “spaces of freedom” (Whiteley, Bennett & Hawkins, 2004; 8). Tensions and disappointments can be channelled into active expression. It allows the groups to find a voice that can be heard from the margins. Hip-hop substantiates not only fight the power²¹ but also reclaim the public space. The city and the variety of areas are taken as a foundation in cultural production by rap music. Therefore, hip-hop lets the youth define their collective identities based on fictional or real places (Forman, 1997; 5).

As stated earlier, some scholars have studied the relation between the place in the hip-hop culture. This debate appears in the emergence of Turkish rap in Germany- specifically Kreuzberg- as well. In one of his articles, Levent Soysal narrates the stories of hip-hop culture and rap from Kreuzberg in relation to market connections and global hip-hop (2004, 63). Soysal claims that Turkish youth culture in Germany becomes creolized so that it becomes convenient to mixed cultural expressions like Turkish rap in Germany, which reflects the feeling of foreignness. He also adds that “this only explains away migrant youths' engagement with rap, confining their activity to second-hand adaptations and hybrid reproductions” (*ibid.* 63). Hip-hop is accessible for everyone with its music, style and declarations. It forms a shared space and offers a vernacular to joint projects that youths join from different countries (Soysal, 2004;

²¹ Public Enemy's song, Fight The Power, calls the hip-hop community to take action for their struggle for recognition:

“Got to give us what we want
Gotta give us what we need
Our freedom of speech is freedom or death
We got to fight the powers that be
Let me hear you say
Fight the power.”

64). The productions from rappers bestowed the global imaginary of hip-hop since many of the immigrant rappers from the distinct regions of Europe used this imaginary of hip-hop as a way of interaction, bringing to fore transnational connectivity.

Kreuzberg is crucial to understand the discourse of “home” in the diaspora. Turkish immigrant youngsters call Kreuzberg as Little Istanbul. Most of the symbols and images in Kreuzberg have contributed to the mystification of Istanbul and Turkey, which is a quest for homing (Kaya, 1997; 172). It was an enclave providing Turkish migrants with a network of solidarity, confinement and security. Kreuzberg was not just a district because it made the migrants feel secure so that they did not feel alienated there. Hence, the streets of Kreuzberg turned into something protective like a wall. Besides feeling safe, Turkish migrants could socially control the place; however, there was a struggle between different gangs for their own living spaces or districts.

NaunynRitze, a youth centre operated by Kreuzberg’s municipal government, can be seen as the headquarters of hip-hop. *To Stay Is My Right*, supervised by NaunynRitze, was one of the most successful hip-hop poses in Kreuzberg between 1992 and 1994 (Soysal, 1999; 150). Most of the young immigrants in Kreuzberg were active participants of this youth centre (Güney, Kabaş, & Çömlekçi, 2019; 371). Sessions and practices about breakdance, graffiti and rap and hip-hop parties constitute to cultural agenda of the ghetto youth. NaunynRitze was not the only youth centre in the development of hip-hop among the second generation Turkish immigrants. There was a café having a hip-hop concept in Schöneberg, an annual rap competition for women MCs and Dschungel Info 95, a publication of state-sponsored agency, listed the addresses of studios, workshops and alternative clubs and cafés (Soysal, 2004a; 69). Ayşe Çağlar points out that German-Turkish rap could be described as a “prescribed rebellion” (cited in Kosnick, 2004; 3; Çağlar, 1998). Hip-hop was promoted to young migrants in Berlin as a way of expression and activity considered useful to get them out of the trouble. As a result, German-Turkish rap artists were shaped by the cultural policy in Berlin. In the context of youth centres, culture was associated with sociocultural aims, so the reason why policymakers praised German-Turkish rap was not to support new artists but instead to integrate the migrants. If there was no such cultural policy and institutional promotion, hip-hop might not be so widespread among the young Turkish immigrants. The brutal battle between the gangs underpinned the

emergence of hip-hop culture in Kreuzberg. The cultural, economic and political conditions of the neighborhood significantly formed the attitude towards hip-hop. This point explains why Kreuzberg is a prominent example of realizing the relationship between music and the place in the context of hip-hop and the “hood.”

3.3 Historical Background of the Turkish Rap Music

As is discussed in the previous part of the chapter, cultural and political roots of Turkish rap music can be traced back to Turkish-German rap which was mostly about the struggles of the second generation of Turkish migrants (Su Kadioğlu & Sözeri Özdal, 2020). In Turkish-German rap music, the significance of Cartel was obsolete. Cartel’s songs were welcomed warmly, although they were also appealed to ultra-nationalist youth more in Turkey. In their *Express* interview, group members conveyed their shock at this vigorous reception, and they emphasized their audiences’ diversity in terms of ethnicity and religious affiliations (Robins & Morley, 1996, 252). Eventually, this reception costed the market success of Cartel, their record company lose its confidence then the concerts were cancelled (Stokes, 2003, 303). Therefore, it can be argued that Cartel has an important place in the Turkish hip-hop scene, yet their success did not take so long.

After the impact of Cartel on Turkish rap music, some rappers and groups such as Silahsız Kuvvet, a.k.a Sagopa Kajmer, Fresh B and Cash Flow continued making rap music as underground. In 1996, Hedef 12, the first rap group in Turkey, released an album named Tam İsabet. In 1999, the underground rappers began to be brought forth through the compilation album *Yeraltı Operasyonu* which was released under the leadership of graffiti artist Tunç Dindaş a.k.a Turbo. That album conducted to the recognition of these underground MCs²² and groups. In 2002, Sagopa Kajmer and Ceza, who would be renowned MCs, later released their first solo albums. Rap music was also used in the very popular Turkish films as a soundtrack, e.g. Sagopa Kajmer produced the soundtrack for G.O.R.A in 2004. In the same year, Ceza released Rapstar album, which became the most selling album after Cartel’s success with 150.000 copies. Particularly, the triumph of Sagopa Kajmer and Ceza drew the attention of the

²² Rhyming words in accordance with the tempo of the music is called MC, abbreviation for “Master of Ceremonies”. The term is generally is used for rappers.

pop music industry. As a result of this attraction, rappers began to perform duets with pop singers like Candan Erçetin and Sezen Aksu. In 2005, Ceza gave a concert at Rock'n Coke, one of the important music festivals of its time. This concert got a reaction from especially the underground rappers who thought these kinds of rap music actions would damage it due to the articulation to popular culture. In addition, although some of the well-known rappers had been integrated into the music industry through pop music, the majority of the MCs remained underground, so they circulated the songs through uploading on websites or selling their albums at the hip-hop parties (Su Kadioğlu & Sözeri Özdal, 2020).

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, the lack of mainstream coverage and of the support of labels in Turkish rap music continued. This situation changed when it comes to 2017, which is the year Ezhel released his album named Müptezhel. Trap²³ sounds were dominant in the album, which was almost new for Turkish rap music. The musical production was not only the speciality of Müptezhel because it also brought into view the daily problems of the middle class. Especially the emphasis on the anxiety about the future was significant in this album. In 2018, he became the most streamed male artist in Turkey, according to Spotify²⁴. The rise of streaming can also be considered within the context of the success of Müptezhel. According to IFPI, in 2017, Turkey had the biggest percentage rise in streaming revenue in all of Europe (cited in Musically Report, 2019). Digital transformation in the music industry has resulted in a change in listening practices, particularly in young ones, and it has also enabled easy access to musical works. The songs of Ezhel that appeal to youth who are desperate about their future in the country have been streamed enormously and the content of the songs had influence the rise in the youth's attention. After the release of Müptezhel, rap was discovered again, especially by the television industry. Some

²³ Trap music emerged in the late 1990s in the U.S. It can be identified as the harmonization of trance, techno and rap music. In the early 2010s, producers and DJs of electronic dance music began to use trap sounds in their songs, which paved the way for trap music being mainstream.

²⁴ For detailed news about Turkey's Spotify streaming in 2018: <https://t24.com.tr/haber/2018in-zirvesine-rap-muzik-oturdu-turkiye-ezhel-dinliyor.764429>

of the rappers started to produce soundtracks for one of the most-watched Turkish TV series, such as *Çukur*, in which songs of Gazapizm were used mostly.

In this section of the chapter, the historical background of Turkish rap is given in order to further recent developments in this music. It can be argued that after the Cartel's debut and its import to Turkey, two periods, beginning of the 2000s and after 2017, became significant turns in rap music in Turkey. The following section will examine specific characteristics of Turkish rap music and musical productions of this music in Turkey.

3.4 Turkish Rap Music in Turkey

Rap music, which has risen in popularity today, has been stripped of the US, and it synthesized certain social and cultural features from places where rap reached. In this synthesis the question of where global and local factors are located, if it has any global or local elements. In his study examining the significance of local and global items in İstanbul based Turkish rap, Solomon (2005a) claims that rap music is a hybrid genre that includes local and global factors. This synthesis also allows new meanings to rap music, so the place where it reaches make all the difference. While he analyzes the hybrid form of rap music through the rap group Nefret, he also focuses on the relationship between place and rap music. Nefret was not only a proper example of the synthesis, but they were also significant in Turkish rap due to their achievement in their time.

In 2001, with their successful album, Nefret²⁵ showed that they had a say in the Turkish rap scene. Their songs indicate the importance of place in hip-hop like in the case of Kreuzberg. Solomon (2005a) examines the songs of Nefret to realize how İstanbul is imagined and introduced by Nefret. In fact, their first album's front cover shows two rappers in front of the Bosphorus bridge. Nefret can be seen as an exception in the way how they use samples because many of the Turkish rap groups had used pre-existing recordings for their musical productions. Many Turkish rap groups in Turkey had used

²⁵ Nefret consisted of two members, Ceza and Dr. Fuchs. Dr. Fuchs was born in Germany and his family moved back to Turkey when he was eight years old. He has lived in Bakırköy since then. Ceza was born in Üsküdar and has lived there most of the time of his life.

Turkish folk music, pop music and arabesk music²⁶ as samples in Turkey. The use of that kind of samples was also widespread among Turkish- German rap. However, the type of samples that Nefret used brought novelty in terms of the diversity of the samples. Nefret tended to create their beats and samples while making songs. They also recorded some instruments live in their studios so that they could add these sounds to the essential tracks produced on the computer (ibid, 54). This capacity to create beats and samples which were different from the earlier examples referred to a new turn in Turkish rap music in Turkey. Hence, it can be claimed that the way Nefret produced their songs was a rupture from using the traditional beats and samples.

Although they did not use pre-existing records, making references to other texts like proverbs was noteworthy characteristics of Nefret. In the musical production, they tried to include new types of samples and beats, yet the impact of local culture was still at the forefront. As a result, words from arabesk culture, *çile* (suffering), *acımasız* (merciless), *yara* (wound) and *yalan* (lie) was quite prevalent in their songs (ibid, 58). The intertextuality of Nefret's songs positioned their rap within a specific place, Istanbul²⁷. Especially in their song *İstanbul*, Nefret gave specific intertextual references. For example, in one of the verses in the song, they used a direct quotation from a well-known poem "*İstanbul'u Dinliyorum*" by Orhan Veli Kanık. Nefret used one of the lines in the poem, "*İstanbul'u dinliyorum gözlerim kapalı* / "I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed." In the following lines of the song, they also conceded their debt to Orhan Veli by saying "*Anlatmış zamanında neyi istediğimi, Kapalı gözleriyle Orhan Veli* / "He explained what I wanted in his time, With his eyes closed, Orhan Veli." Further more, in the line, "*Hatırlamışsındır benim kara toprağım*" / "You remember my black earth.", they referred to the well-known song "*Kara Toprak*" by Aşık Veysel. This line invokes the folk song's praise to an ethereal life, in contrast to alienated city life (59). The comparison between the rural and urban life is also widespread in the arabesk songs like "*Fadime'nin Düğünü*"²⁸ by Ferdi Tayfur.

²⁶ Samples emphasizing arabesque music were also called "oriental samples" (Diesel, 2001, 178).

²⁷ They have also a song whose name is *İstanbul*. The group points out the disappointment of migrants in making a life in Istanbul so Nefret expresses the question of "where that golden ground is".

²⁸ There was a yearning for rural life in this song and Tayfur expresses his feelings with the line "*Hadi gel köyümüze geri dönelim*." / "Come! Let's go back to our village."

However, the view of Nefret stated, in the case of İstanbul, there is no return to the life mentioned in Kara Toprak because it was lost in the past. It can be claimed that Turkish rap as a part of global culture has been a way of expressing local issues, and Nefret's rap illustrates how rappers can use texts and sounds in order to imagine their local places.

“Keeping it real” is one of the prominent discussions in hip-hop studies, and it is connected to the authenticity debate. Rap is getting more popular day by day, but there is still an underground characteristic of this music. Another study of Solomon (2005b) is about this issue, locality and authenticity in the İstanbul rap scene. Especially in the early 2000s, the place for rap music was too narrow in the Turkish music industry. There were some labels specialized in small-market niche markets, such as Hammer Müzik and Zihni Müzik Merkezi (ibid, 7). Hence, the term underground comes from being excluded in the market. However, Solomon argues that this exclusion and being underground does not refer to the ethnic or class background of the participants of the Turkish hip-hop community:

“One thing that yeralti/underground does not seem to apply to is the ethnic and class background of the participants in the Turkish hip-hop community. Discourses of authenticity in the İstanbul hip-hop community do not focus on the 'street credibility' of people in terms of their socio-economic background. The rappers and DJs in this community are generally not poor people or members of socially marginalized minority groups such as Kurds, Roma, or Muslim refugees from the Balkan wars of the 1990s, but are largely middle-class ethnic Turks, university-educated, often with good jobs.” (ibid, 8)

It is hard to say that rap appeared as ghetto music in Turkey. As Solomon stated, hip-hop communities in İstanbul- most of the members are from Bakırköy or Kadıköy- preceded in the rap music. However, it is also not possible to say the origination of Turkish rap music was İstanbul. For the US example, Bronx draws attention; similarly, Kreuzberg stands out while considering Turkish-German rap music. Although İstanbul has been a suitable environment to touch the music industry, it was not the origin of Turkish rap music in Turkey. Fernandes (2011) argues that despite finding moments of unity, there are also disjunctures between hip-hop communities worldwide. She explains these differences by exemplifying from KRS-One: “KRS may have been called Kris in every “hood” around the world. But Kris was pronounced differently in

the truncations of a Cuban accent, the laidback slang of a blackfulla, and a midwestern inflection. The hoods around the world were not identical either. “(ibid, p.163). The significance of the experiences and circumstances under which rap music arises become clear with this quotation. Examples from the US and Kreuzberg underline the significance of racial discrimination along with class inequality in the emergence of rap music. On the contrary, within the context of Turkey, ethnicity was not at the forefront in the beginning.

If the omnipresent national discourse in Turkey is considered, Solomon’s argument (2005b) can show the avoidance of emphasizing the ethnic identity in the early 2000s. There could be rappers at that time, but they probably would not choose to rap about being exposed to ethnic discrimination since they were already excluded because of their ethnicity. As time goes on, some ethnic groups have started to rap about exclusion caused by their ethnicity, like Tahribad-ı İsyân²⁹.

Tahribad-ı İsyân can be an example of the link between the hood and hip-hop. In the urban renewal process of Sulukule in Istanbul, Tahribad-ı İsyân gives voices to the people living in the neighborhood. Most of the people living there were forced to leave their houses. Then, Sulukule was reconstructed with expensive houses which no real dwellers of Sulukule could afford to buy. What triggered the urban and Roma activism in that region. In his study, Umut Mişe (2018) examines how rap music becomes an instrument to show protest and resistance to inequality, discrimination and exclusion in İstanbul. He focuses on two specific places in İstanbul, Sulukule and Bağcılar to understand how rappers from these neighborhoods raise their voices through hip-hop. He asserts that on the one hand, as they get more professionalized, Sulukule rappers preserved their critical standpoint because of the urban renewal process and Roma activism; on the other hand, rappers living in Bağcılar became much moderate as their main aim is to make money on Youtube. In other words, Mişe states that the integration to the market of these rappers results in different turnouts in the career of Sulukule and Bağcılar rappers. It is no doubt that the urban renewal process in Sulukule raises the oppositional views among the youth living in that region, and this may allow them to

²⁹ See also Rebel Music I Turkey: Flowers of Gezi Park (Part 2) by MTV. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCRpVjZ-rwI> on 12 February 2020.

maintain this critical perspective in their songs. However, in Bağcılar's case, the reason may be different than what Mişe argues. In his study, the mentioned songs from Bağcılar rappers generally focus on discrimination, poverty, crime and exclusion. However, the resistance in their songs is not as dissentient as Sulukule rappers' song. Rap in Bağcılar is close to the cry of arabesk. In other words, their work both affirmed and denied the main reasons for poverty and exclusion³⁰.

Up to now, oppositional characteristics of rap music and the difference of Turkish rap music from other examples are examined, but there are also examples of rap songs that dissent from a different perspective and especially Islamic rap in Turkey is one of them. The tendency of being resistant through Turkish Islamic rap differs based on whether it is from the Turkish diaspora in Germany or Turkey. Solomon (2006) examines how Turkish rappers have imagined Islam in rap music. For this aim, he compares Islamic themes in Turkish rap by rappers living in both in Turkey and the Turkish diaspora in Germany and focuses on two cases in order to understand how Turkish rappers can use the idiom of rap music to create and investigate distinct types of subjectivities that can be called Muslim (72). On the one hand, there is Sert Müslümanlar from the Turkish diaspora in Germany, which cultivates a specific Muslim identity; on the other hand, R.A.K Sabotaj from Turkey which expresses interest in the problems of Muslims in places like Sudan and criticizes secularism of the state. Solomon concludes that the idea behind their music is entirely different. "In the case of groups that do rap about Muslims and Islam, the meaning of Islam and the way it is rhetorically deployed in actual songs can be quite different and specific to the localities and experiences of those making the songs." (73). That is to say, there is no single Islamic discourse in Turkish rap.

In order to discuss the oppositional characteristics of Islamic rap in Turkey, Turkey's political atmosphere in the late 1990s and the mid-2000s should be considered. In 1994, the Welfare Party won crucial advancements in the local elections, including the mayorships of İstanbul and Ankara. During the 1990s, the Welfare Party propaganda condemned "the oppressive rule of the corrupt and unjust society that exploits and

³⁰ On the discussion of arabesk culture and music see study of Meral Özbek (1991) *Popüler Kültür ve Orhan Gencebay Arabeski*.

humiliates the poor Muslim” (Ayata, 1996, 54). In the late 1990s, on the one hand, Islamic rap songs were close to criticizing the secular basis of the state; on the other hand, some of the songs were parallel with Nakshibendi Sufi teaching, which echoed in the position of the Welfare Party (Solomon, 2006, 72). Then, the Islamic rap became part of the process of development of Islamic popular youth culture involving "the deployment of cultural symbols as the principle weapons in the battle between Islamic and secular forces in society" (Saktanber, 2002, 267). When it comes to the second half of the 2000s, things have changed. Islamic themes in rap music and other popular cultural products started to be seen (Özdemir, 2016, 235).

Despite popular cultural products having Islamic themes during the 1990s, they did not find their way into the dominant popular culture. However, following the success of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in the national elections of 2002, the party came to power again in 2007. Hence, the rap songs' religious elements were included more because of the social and political changes that provided a space for Islamic references. Therefore, 2008 as the year of incorporating religious elements into rap music becomes essential due to the recurring electoral success of the AKP (Özdemir, 2016, 240). As discussed in Solomon's study, how Islam is deployed in Turkish rap songs differs on whether they are made in the diaspora or Turkey. The transformation in Islamic rap in Turkey varies based on the social and political changes in the country. Namely, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Turkish Islamic rap songs had opposed the secular forces in Turkey; however, after the electoral success of the AKP, the oppositional character of the Islamic rap songs in the country replaced by affirmative one. Therefore, it can be said that the case of Turkish Islamic rap is an example of how rap music is in relation to the social and political conditions in society.

Although it has become part of popular culture, hip-hop has always been linked to social, economic, and cultural circumstances. Kool Herc, one of the most special DJs in rap, describes hip-hop in Can't Stop Won't Stop:

“ Hip-hop is a family, so everybody has got to pitch in. East, west, north, or south—we come from one coast, and that coast was Africa. This culture was born in the ghetto. We were born here to die. We're surviving now, but we're not yet rising up. If we've got a problem, we've got to correct it. We can't be hypocrites. That's what I hope the hip-hop generation can do, to take us all to

the next level by always reminding us: It ain't about keeping real, it's about keeping it right." (Chang, 2005; 8).

Showing respect to other people and avoiding discrimination is inherent in hip-hop culture because its pioneers were excluded and not respected due to being blacks. As Lüküslü states, hip-hop is associated with "respect" (Lüküslü, 2011; 214) and rap is a musical form of this cry for respect. Aiming to elaborate mainly on the question of how resistance in Turkish rap music has transformed within the grip of popular culture, the following chapters will try to find the traces of resistance in Turkish rap music.

CHAPTER 4

Turkish Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture: Rage Has No Limits!

Hip-hop culture originated during the mid-1970s as a source of alternative identity formation and social status in youth communities. Through main elements or means of the culture- graffiti, break-dancing- DJing and MCing, hip-hop has become a way for the youth to express themselves and sometimes their frustrations in everyday life. Hence, it can be said that hip-hop is composed of an integrated series of live community-based practices. As dependent on a whole series of cultural activities, hip-hop involved many interconnected practices, and the integrity between them is crucial for being a lived practice (Dimitriadis, 1996; 182). Rose also notes the stylistic continuities as “cross-fertilization” since there was a mixture in hip-hop that encourages continuity among the practices (1994; 35). Therefore, hip-hop has remained a function of live practice and performance for years, especially for those who gathered together along with Bronx blocks in parks and selected clubs. Early MCs, graffiti artists, DJs and, breakdancers shaped a scene dependent on face to face interaction and social contact. The opportunity of a limitless combination of the hip-hop elements can be clarified in the words of Grandmaster Flash:

“Hip hop is the only genre of music that allows us to talk about almost anything. Musically, it allows us to sample and play and create poetry to the beat of the music. It’s highly controversial, but that’s the way the game is.” (Light, 1999; vii)

Osumare (2007) suggests the term “collective marginalities” that bind culture, class, and oppression among youth around the world. Hip-hop communities outside America combine both the culture presented in the U.S. with their cultural norms and everyday lives. Therefore, despite the globalization of hip-hop culture, locality and particular circumstances related to the region may become prominent for the hip-hop communities outside the U.S (Motley& Henderson, 2008; 246).

“Hip-hop music and culture, once considered an American phenomenon, exists throughout the world today. In each cultural area, hip-hop artists filter American and other foreign hip-hop styles through their own local musical, social, and linguistic practices, creating unique musical forms.” (Fenn & Perullo, 2000; 73)

As stated by Fenn and Perullo, hip-hop has become widespread in time. Although hip-hop has turned into a global culture, hip-hop artists from different areas have interpreted hip-hop with their cultural practices. Thus, while becoming part of globalization, hip-hop preserved its uniqueness wherever it arrived. This characteristic of uniqueness points out the social, cultural, economic, and political conditions under which hip-hop appears. Moreover, Blanchard (1999) states that, like other musical genres, rap music cannot be understood without being considered in a historical and social framework. In the previous chapter, the journey of Turkish rap music from Kreuzberg to Turkey has been explored along with its historical and social background. The analysis below will focus more on the different aspects of resistance and resistance in Turkish rap music by referring to the individual and societal components of Turkish rap music.

4.1 Locating Turkish Rap Music

Hip-hop has become prevalent among young people as a way of telling their stories, and it has turned into be a sort of linguistic tool or medium. The “African-American” version of hip-hop or Bronx type hip-hop gave a draft that youngers around the world could shape it with their experiences. Hip-hop may not be a global movement; however, hip-hop can be an answer to a search for belonging or to build a home through the communities. In addition, while evaluating the hip-hop culture and rap music, it becomes critical to account for social, economic, and political conditions that formalize hip-hop culture. In this context, Turkish rap music is one of the interesting examples of hip-hop scenes.

As mentioned in the literature review, it is so interesting that Turkish rap did not originate in Turkey. Since Turkish rap music was imported from Kreuzberg/ Germany, the conditions that led to the emergence of this music were quite linked with the social, economic, and cultural situations of the Turkish migrant youth in Germany. Similar to the discrimination faced by black people in the U.S, Turkish people living in Germany exposed to harsh circumstances, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In order to

cope with these difficulties, young people formed communities and unity within their hoods. Then, these communities would turn into hip-hop groups. In this vein, it can be argued that the challenges in the everyday lives of young Turkish migrants were the cornerstones of the rise in Turkish rap music. In short, the origin of Turkish rap is differentiated from its precursor started in the Bronx streets in the 1970s.

Since the social, economic, and political conditions have been vital to the origination of hip-hop, such questions as who makes rap music and why they choose rap as a way of expression. Considering the Bronx as mostly African-American black people were interested in hip-hop culture may be varied from country to country. Initially, it is clear that rap music allowed the Black people to criticize any kind of discriminative practices against them in relation to their status. Furthermore, it was a kind of rebel against the traditional collectives in the U.S. Early examples of rap singles were the main part of the block parties organized by black people in the Bronx. Rap music was criticized in terms of dissentient characteristics because of these parties. However, what this criticism misses is the feeling of emancipation is related to the parties. As black people could not find lots of places where they had fun or hung out, they come up with this problem through the block and street parties.

It can be argued that rap music offers new directions of “being” in the city, creation of a sense of community through the experiences of diversion (Tickner, 2008; 123). In the early examples of the recorded rap music, the ghetto was constructed as a symbolic centre that grounded the narrative images depicted (Forman, 1997; 104). Within the context of the link between the place and rap music, critical questions of where the location of Turkish rap is or whether there is any specific place of it has arisen. Ghettos remained at the forefront in the origination of American rap music and Turkish-German one. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the emergence of Turkish rap music was different from the other examples. Therefore, in order to understand the link between the place and rap music, I will try to examine how MCs in Turkey locate rap music and whether there is an option for the ghettos.

Kayra, who is a Turkish MC, claims that the way of rapping is different in Turkey since hip-hop came to the country via Germany, i.e., indirectly. In Turkey, rap music

did not appear in one neighborhood, like in the Bronx or Kreuzberg. Hence, it can not be circumscribed with the specific place. It can be said that there is a natural flow of rap music in Turkey. As Kayra says, rap music did not improve intentionally. When I asked him why rap music developed in Turkey more differently than in the U.S., he linked this variation to another important discussion point:

“Well the first thing is about its emergence. It did not boom in any place. For example, it did not appear in neither Kadıköy-Moda or Caddebostan nor in one of the ghetto neighborhoods of Esenyurt. Therefore, it did not belong to any specific place. Everyone admired this music, no matter s/he resides in Kadıköy or Alibeyköy. Like me who lives in Harem. Everybody found something touching. For instance, Islamic Force which is from Germany had messages full of kindness in whirls. It did not belong to any society; the album was overarching and had lots of worlds. The main base was humanity. It was like a school, that can add something to yourself. Moreover, when we check up on the album *Yeraltı Operasyonu* I, similarly, there are different topics, and everybody found something common for all. Cartel is also from Germany, but when we were children, everybody was singing Cartel. As a result, rap music has a natural flow. It did not progress consciously. Everybody has followed their feelings, so there appeared a classlessness.” (Interview with Kayra, 13.06.2019)³¹

From the beginning, hip-hop was closely linked with the urban environment. Space having lots of functions in hip-hop has allowed expressing group identity (Kniaż, 2017; 115). As a determinant of hip-hop culture, the place can also contribute to the formation of the MC’s identity. The inclusion of space indicates some spatial identity marker referencing in rap music (French, 2012; 134). The above quotation does not mean that place is not essential in Turkish rap. On the contrary, there is a strong connection between the songs of Kayra, who is one of the well-known MC, and the

³¹ Çünkü buraya gelişi dolaylı yoldan olmuş. Herhangi bir mahallede yerde patlamadı. Örnek veriyorum mesela bu sadece Kadıköy Moda’da peydah olmadı ya da Caddebostan’da falan çıkmadı bir anda. Ya da tam tersi söyleyeyim Esenyurt’un bir getto mahallesinde çıkmadı. Herhangi bir yere ait olmadı o yüzden. İstanbul’da Kadıköy’deki kişi de dinledi, ondan sonra Alibeyköy’deki de dinledi. Harem’deki ben de dinledim. Herkes kendinden bir şey buldu çünkü örnek veriyorum Islamic Force Almanya’dan çıktı buram buram insanlık kokan mesajlar vardı. Herhangi bir topluma ait değildi çok dünyalı çok kapsayıcı bir albümdü. İnsan sevgisi temelde vardı. Okul gibi bir albümdü yani kendine bir şeyler katabileceğin. Ardından mesela Yeraltı Operasyonu 1 albümüne baktığımız zaman da aynı şekilde çok farklı konulardan bahsedilen bir durum vardı ve herkes kendinden bir şey buluyordu. Cartel de mesela Almanya meşeli bir grup ama çocukken parkta herkes Cartel söylerdi. Yani o yüzden böyle bir doğal akışı vardı. Bilinçli bir akışla ilerlemedi. Herkes kendi duygusunun peşinden gitti o yüzden de bir sınıfsızlık durumu oluştu. (Kayra ile görüşme, 13.06.2019)

place where he lives. Particularly, his album named *Mucizeye Bir Hafta* ³² is closely related to his home town, Karabük. Yet, it does not refer to any specific hood to be considered as the emergence of Turkish rap in Turkey. Another point in Kayra's words is the discussion on the ghetto.

Most of the American hip-hop studies scholars draw a line between the ghetto/hood and hip-hop (McLaren, 1999; Rose, 1994; Forman, 1997; Black, 2014). Hip-hop yields narratives of place and region, allowing us to notice worlds that are not in our sight (Beer, 2014; 677). Block parties could be examples of accounts of places. Lamotte (2014; 690) claims that these parties were not only places of enjoyment but also ways of marking a particular territory. In this narration, ghettos are at the forefront. When examining the rise of rap music in the Bronx and Kreuzberg, ghettos-hoods come up as significant veins. Yet, Kayra handles the discussion differently; there is no specific place that can be noted as Turkish rap's birthplace in Turkey. Then, the question arises why there is a general opinion that argues the Turkish rap originated in the ghettos. It requires a detailed discussion.

To comprehend the situation in a detailed way, the participants were asked to discuss the issue questioning this general opinion is whether a marketing strategy or confusion by the hip-hop communities. Çağıl, who is one of the DJs in Flow Radyo, ³³ had similar ideas with what Kayra said:

“If we take the case of Turkey, I think it has been related to the cultural practices of the middle class. Indeed, many came from the ghettos like Yener Çevik; however, the majority- particularly in the first years- was the well-endowed individuals, who are multilingual and able to buy CDs. Turbo, Hedef 12, Barikat, and Ceza can be exemplified for these profiles. Nowadays, a small number of

³² This album takes audiences a week to the days when a local football team, Karabükspor, left its chance to stay in the league in the 1993-94 season. This match was very crucial to the people of Karabük because the iron-steel factory was closed in those years, so dwellers of Karabük were integrated and decided to continue their wars on the field. *Mucizeye Bir Hafta* involves a spatial discourse showing the social and cultural issues with an emphasis on local spaces and places. The five songs in this album prove that space has a crucial impact on rappers' identities and lyrics. Kayra exposes which problems people living in Karabük confront within the context of reimagining the urban life experiences. This album builds the story of a city on a football team through rap music. Therefore, it elucidates hip-hop's “powerful ties to place” and its connection to the local experience.

³³ Flow Radyo is the first hip-hop radio that broadcasts online. It has also “Hip-Hop Peace Declaration (Hip-Hop Barış Bildirisi) published on their web page. For further information about the radio, see: <http://flowradyo.com/>

musicians use ghetto as a marketing tactic. This tactic is being used to promote their opponent stances rather than seeking profit. In fact, the main aim is the street. So, I really think nobody supposes Kadıköy-Moda as ghettos.” (Interview with Çağıl, 20.11.2019)³⁴

The thoughts of Çağıl reminds us of Solomon’s claims on the analysis of identities of MCs in terms, their educational skills and their economic well being. According to Solomon (2005b; 4), the majority of the hip-hop communities are located in one of the middle-class suburbs of Istanbul, like Bakırköy. Due to the dense population of the communities in this region, Bakırköy is being linked with hip-hop based on cultural elements. The case of Bakırköy also points to the relationship between the place and hip-hop, as hip-hoppers described the music as an aural representation of the Batı Istanbul style (West Istanbul style) (ibid; 5). Another important point that Çağıl stated is his emphasis on the street. He claims that using ghetto in the rap can be actually a marketing strategy and he adds that what ghetto means is street or kind of a “world-view”. Another emphasis on the street came from Hasat. When the relationship between ghetto and rap music was asked, he asserted the comprehensiveness of the street.

“I did not grow up in a ghetto. I grew up in the village. Conditions in ghettos are really tough. But how meaningful it is to confine rap music to the ghetto is questionable. You can write what you feel on the street in the village, or words can flow through you while watching the sky by the sea. The street is everywhere; it is the ghetto, the centre of the city, the train station, the street lamp. Hence, my answer is street. (Interview with Hasat, 09.03.2020)³⁵

In the words of Hasat, apart from the suggestion to think of the street instead of the ghetto, it can be revealed that the homeland or the place where they live influences their musical identities Forman (2004; 156). As mentioned above, ghetto can be used

³⁴ Türkiye’den bahsediyorsak eğer, bence de daha çok orta sınıfa ait bir kültür oldu. Gerçekten gettoda gelen, Yener Çevik gibi pek çok isim var ama çoğunluk, özellikle de ilk yıllarda, daha hali vakti yerinde, dil bilen, CD alabilen insanlar gibi görünüyor. Turbo da, Hedef 12 de, Barikat da, Ceza vesaire de böyle profiller. Günümüzde ama, az sayıda müzisyen gettoyu gerçekten bir pazarlama unsuru olarak kullanıyor. Bu pazarlama maddi çıkar sağlamaktan ziyade, hayat karşısında duruşlarını desteklemek için kullanılıyor ve kastedilen şey de aslında sokak. Yani kimsenin Kadıköy/Moda’yı gerçekten getto sandığını düşünmüyorum. (Çağıl ile görüşme, 20.11.2019)

³⁵ Ben gettoda büyümедim. Köyde büyüdüm. Gettolarda şartlar gerçekten çok zor. Ama rap müziği gettoya hapsetmek ne kadar doğru bu tartışılır. Köyde sokakta hissettiklerin de sana yazdırabilir ya da deniz kıyısında gökyüzünü izlerken içinden kelimeler akabilir. Sokak her yerdir, gettodur, şehrin göbeğidir, tren garıdır, sokak lambasıdır. Bu yüzden cevabım sokak. (Hasat ile görüşme, 09.03.2020)

as a marketing strategy in Turkish rap, which is closely related to the articulation of rap music into popular culture. There is also an oversimplification of the ghetto; in other words, it started to lose its meaning when everyone began to use it. Therefore, the tough conditions of living in the ghetto became invisible.

The effect of the place on the hip-hop culture can not be denied; however, the relationship between ghetto and rap differs from the U.S example. Kayra explains this situation as follows:

“Rap music in the Turkish market was not originated in the ghetto. Music critics, who are mostly interested in foreign music and not having any idea about this music, tried to commercialize it. Because it would be easier to sell in that way. Turkish rap was affected by Germany, and it came here and popularized by various MCs like Ceza, Sagopa, Fuchs. None of them was living in the ghettos. They were quite urbanites. One of them was a university student; the other was working, or there was Hedef 12, in Gemlik-Bursa, who were not living in the ghettos. When examining İzmir, Yener seems like that, but there is also Susturucu. They were talking about nightlife. Hence, it can not be said that this genre is originated from the ghettos. In Turkey, hip-hop has never been related to the class. Hip-hop never has a connection with any classes in Turkey. For instance, there were collective concerts, when you went to them, you saw lots of people coming from all sorts of places. I have never seen concerts full of ghetto people. As I said, it is easier to sell. To tell the truth, it indicates the fantasy world created by middle and upper-class people; it is not more than this. It is just “Look! Juvies from the ghetto are rapping.” Teenagers from the ghetto are almost done in life unless someone helps. The youngsters coming from the ghetto can make just arabesque rap.” (Interview with Kayra, 13.06.2019)³⁶

The relationship between the ghetto and commercialization that Kayra emphasizes is one of the essential subjects in hip-hop culture. This culture has been closely associated

³⁶ Türkiye piyasasındaki rap müzik hiçbir zaman gettoda çıkmadı. Yurt dışındaki müzikleri takip etmeye çalışan bu müziğe dair çok da fikri olmayan müzik yazarları bunu pazarlamaya çalıştı çünkü bunu böyle satmak daha kolay olacaktı. Türkçe sözlü rap Almanya’dan etkilenip buraya gelmiş bir rap ve burada bunları yapmaya başlayan insanlar işte Cezalar, Sagopalar, Fuchslar. Bunların hiçbir tanesi gettoda falan filan yaşamıyorlardı yani. Gayet şehirli insanlardı. Biri üniversite öğrencisi, diğeri çalışıyor falan. Ya da Bursa’da Gemlik’te Hedef 12 vardı mesela o dönem, onlar da hiçbir şekilde gettoda yaşayan falan insanlar değildi. Ya da İzmir’e falan baktığımızda tamam Yener öyle duruyor ama bir yandan da Susturucu vardı mesela. Onlar gece hayatından falan filan da bahsediyordu. Yani bu tür gettoda çıktı falan filan gibi şeyler söylenemez. Türkiye’de hip-hop hiçbir zaman sınıfa dair bir şey olmadı. Herhangi bir sınıfı kabul etmedi hip-hop hiçbir zaman Türkiye’de. Toplu konserler olurdu mesela onlara gittiğinizde binbir türlü yerden insan görürdünüz orada. Hiçbir zaman full getto insanı falan görmedim. Dediğim gibi bu satılması daha kolay bir şey. Açıkçası orta üst sınıfın kendi kendine yarattığı bir fantezi alemine işaret ediyor başka bir şey değil. İşte “Ooo gettoda çıkan çocuklar rap yapıyor” falan filan. Gettoda çıkan çocukların dermanı yok neredeyse, ellerinden biri tutmadığı sürece. Gettoda çıkan çocuklar işte varsa arabesk rap yapar. (Kayra ile görüşme, 13.06.2019)

with the fashion and music industry. However, the overwhelming popularity of rap has spread into various film genres, from comedy to horror in Black cinema. Hence, there is a new cinematic subgenre, *Rapsploitation*, which provides “an aura of so-called authentic Black street culture” (Harkness, 2015; 231). Similar to the impact of hip-hop on the Black cinema, some of the Turkish TV dramas like *Çukur* and *Sıfır Bir* used the idea of “gangster” and rap music as the soundtrack. The common point of these dramas is addressing the neighborhoods, where they are stigmatized with the crime and called ghettos. These TV series had contributed to the popularity of rap music as well. They also supported the idea that the origin of Turkish rap is sprung from the ghettos. On the other hand, those TV series have also paved the way for an increase in the rap music videos visualized with gang warfares and violence. This situation brings their credibility in relation to the ghettos under suspicion.

The attraction of the music, television and film industry to not only rap music but also to the hip-hop culture, in general, makes the ghetto narratives in these music and culture obscure. Hence, it can be said that the ghettoes have turned into commodities to be used as a part of the industry. Both Çağıl and Kayra emphasizes the fact that the emergence of Turkish rap was not the ghettoes because most of the so-called pioneers of Turkish rap, like Ceza and Fuchs, did not come from subaltern classes or they were not exposed to social and economic inequalities. Today, there are MCs who have lived in the ghettoes who make rap music professionally or unprofessionally, but the idea claiming the origin of Turkish rap music was the ghettoes seems the “illusion” of the industry. As Kayra stated, using ghettoes in that way can be considered as a marketing strategy. For Emresto, who has been living in Altındağ, one of the districts of Ankara where the number of ghetto settlements is high, the use of gang regarding ghetto is a component of the hip-hop culture but the answer for the question of whether there is a gang in Turkey, apart from the mafia, is a complicated issue:

“Becoming a gang is part of this culture, but if you are not a real gang, which is so difficult to be considering that we live in Turkey, and in 2019. If two persons walk together, the police will stop and even will interrogate them. So, I think these kinds of videos exaggerates. We do not live in the USA of the 1995s. The West and the East do not compete with each other. Yet, the music video of Gazapizm, *Ölümler Dirilerden Çalacak*, was not judged because the video explains the truths of Turkey. One does not say, “he is a communist, why

do you listen to him?” since he knows that one of the waiters in the video is him. Hence, these kinds of videos do not cause eyebrows to raise.” (Interview with Emresto, 07.07.2019)³⁷

Emresto thinks that the credibility of the videos emphasizing gangsters is a controversial issue because he believes that the political conditions in the country never permit any group formation. Then, the possibility of the existence of gangs in Turkey is quite low. Yet, his view about the location of the ghettos in the Turkish rap is different from what Çağıl and Kayra argue. He argues that:

“Most of the rappers do not accept that this music started with Eko Fresh, Cartel. They started by telling the oppression which they exposed to. Therefore, I think it started in the ghettos in Turkey.”³⁸ (Interview with Emresto, 07.07.2019).

As can be seen in his response, Emresto links Turkish rap in Germany with Turkish rap in Turkey. What he means by the ghetto is German hoods like Kreuzberg because he talks about migrant rappers in Germany and establishes a connection between them and the location. Then, he points to the emergence of rap music in the ghettos. Yet, what he defines as ghetto is the place where Turkish migrant lived in Germany for so long. Since he has been living in the ghetto neighbourhood, as distinct from the arguments of Kayra and Çağıl, Emresto establishes a connection between his living space and the music he makes. It seems that his experiences in the ghetto resulted in disagreement with other arguments. As to discussion about the effect of the place, he indicates similarities in Turkish-German rap and Turkish rap in Turkey. For Emresto, if the resistant characteristic of the music is protected, it will probably come from the ghettos.

The other participant İmpala, who is a rapper for 10 years, thinks differently about the ghetto discussion and the conditions which affected the rise of Turkish rap in Turkey.

³⁷ “Çeteleşmek kültürün içinde olan bir şey ama gerçekten çete değilsen ki 2019 Türkiye’inde yaşıyoruz bırak çeteyi 2 kişi yan yana yürüse polis durdurur. O yüzden biraz onların abartıya kaçtığını düşünüyorum. 1995 Amerika’ında yaşamıyoruz. West ile East kapışmıyor. Ama Gazapizm’in Ölüler Dirilerden Çalacak klipi mesela yadırganmadı çünkü Türkiye gerçeklerini anlatan bir videoydu o. İşte bu adam komünist niye bunu dinliyorsunuz demiyor çünkü adam biliyor ki o klipteki garsonlardan biri de kendisi. O yüzden pek tepki almıyor o tarz şeyler.” (Emresto ile görüşme, 07.07.2019)

³⁸ “Çoğu rapçi kabul etmez ama bu müzik Eko Fresh, Cartel ile başladı. Onlar orada yaşadıkları zulümleri anlatarak başladılar. O yüzden bence Türkiye’de de doğma süreci varoştan.” (Emresto ile görüşme, 07.07.2019)

His view is close to what Kayra and Çağıl states; however, he develops a new understanding:

“It is possible to say, in the U.S., it started with uttering of the complaints by a group of Black people who were through psychological, sociologic, and economic difficulties due to negative attitudes against them. In doing so, they use African-origin musical instruments. But, we can not totally say only these difficulties or ghetto conditions created it. Actually, it can be said that people made this music in order to get out of a jam, entertain themselves, and fiddle around in some way. However, later, the protest stance becomes much more effective for its development. Social problems or discrimination like the one against blacks did not affect the appearance of Turkish rap in Turkey.” (Interview with İmpala, 15.12.2019)³⁹

According to İmpala, in its early period, rap was not only a tool for opposite views. As stated before, block and street parties were almost the backbones of rap music, even hip-hop culture entirely. Moreover, experiencing segregation played a meaningful role in the organization of these parties. On the one hand, these parties aimed to have fun; however, the underlying logic was related to the experienced segregation. İmpala almost agrees with Kayra and Çağıl in terms of the issue of the ghetto in Turkish rap music; however, he also states that the ghetto conditions are attributed too much importance while considering the emergence of rap music. While regarding the link between the place and rap music, the ghettos should be critical for the debate. However, implicit circumstances about the origination of this music in a country or a region should also be noted and what İmpala puts forward is an emphasis on these conditions. In particular, he makes a distinction between rap in the U.S and Turkish rap in Turkey. Contrary to the cases of the U.S and of the Turkish-German rap, the social or economic problems that they had to cope with were not at the forefront for pioneer Turkish MCs. Their passion was related to the music itself much more. Undoubtedly, the novelty in hip-hop excited these young ones. Particularly, Cartel

³⁹ “Amerika’da özellikle siyahilere karşı olan tutumun sonucunda ve birtakım psikolojik, sosyolojik ve ekonomik sorunlar yaşayan bir grup, artık şikayetlerini bir şekilde dile getirmek istedikleri zaman diliminde bunu kısmen eğlenceli kısmen de Afrika menşeli enstrümanlarla yapmaya başladıklarını söylemek mümkün ama işin tamamen sıkıntılardan ya da gettodan çıktığını söyleyemeyiz. Aslında insanlar bunu sıkıntılardan kaçmak ve bir şekilde kendilerini eğlendirmek ve oyalamak için yapıyorlardı diyebiliriz ama daha sonrasında gelişim sürecinde protest tavrı kesinlikle daha ağır bastığını söyleyebiliriz. Türkiye’ye gelişi de müthiş bir toplumsal sıkıntıyla ya da işte siyahilere yapılan ayrımcılık gibi sosyal bir durumla olmadı.” (İmpala ile görüşme, 15.12.2019)

caught fire in the 1990s. Nevertheless, most of these pioneers did not run into difficulties as Cartel, and other Turkish migrants came through.

The aim of this section is to find a place or places for locating Turkish rap music. The assumption about the fact that the place of origin of Turkish rap was the ghettos was criticized by a majority of the MCs that I interviewed. They based their reasons on the circumstances leading to the emergence of hip-hop culture and rap music in general. Therefore, locating Turkish rap music should be different from how American or Turkish German ones placed in the ghetto neighbourhoods. In addition, the use of these neighbourhoods by the music or television industry seemed a marketing strategy to sell out. As a result, it is hard to say that the original location of the Turkish rap is the ghettos. The “streets” can be considered as the starting point to locate Turkish rap music. When the streets become the focus in terms of the location of the Turkish rap music, there can be the possibility of including both the streets of the city centre and of the ghetto neighborhoods. In other words, neither the centre of the city nor the suburban area is ignored.

During this section of the chapter, what I want to argue is while analyzing rap music, special characteristics of this music that may change based on society should be in our minds. When we think of the history of rap music, it is clear that its process of origination was not the same in each region or country. The development of American and Turkish rap is different from each other in terms of structural and conceptual aspects. The Turkish rap in Germany and Turkish rap in Turkey differ from each other too. While the social and economic conditions have such an impact on the emergence of rap, there should be a difference between Turkish-German rappers and Turkish rappers within the context of what rap music means to them, why they are rapping and how they conceive hip-hop. In order to find the answers to the questions, the next section will focus on how young people groove on hip-hop and what their definitions of rap music are.

4.2 Hip-Hop That Leads Life

While I was studying on my research, a documentary series was uploaded on Youtube. At that time, I was doing my interviews and searching for new interviewees. The video

that drew my attention was the first autobiographic rap documentary series in Turkey, called “*Geldiğim Yer*”. The time to publish this video series was not surprising because, especially after 2017, when Ezhel’s album named Müptezhel was released, the number of people interested in rap music has been grown. Two months before watching one of the videos from this documentary, I interviewed Kayra- he was also one of the MCs who was interviewed in the series- and his answer to how he was acquainted with the hip-hop culture and started to rap music impressed me. Surprisingly, two months later, I heard almost the same answer from another young MC in one of the videos of *Geldiğim Yer*. Baneva told how rap influenced his life in these words⁴⁰:

“Rap music did not bring anything to my personality; rap music created my personality (...) If my way did not cross with rap, I would lose my bearings.”⁴¹
(From *Geldiğim Yer* video series)

Baneva’s statements show how music affects individuals in every part of their lives. It is evident that no matter which genre it is, music is a medium of communication and expression, but it is more than being a medium. DeNora argues that music can affect the physical appearance and behaviours of people, their feelings, and the way how they experience time (2004; 17). Moreover, supporting the arguments of DeNora, Bennett claims music affects people’s daily lives on various levels, music sharing is influenced not only by consumption habits but also by active participation in the production process (2000; 60). Therefore, it can be meaningful to comprehend how people interested in rap music deem hip-hop and rap in order to live through challenges in their everyday lives. To this end, in this section of the chapter will focus on their starting point of rap music and the motive to be involved in this music and hip-hop culture.

What makes music unique is that it seems to give a new kind of self-confidence and free us from daily life and expectations interfering with our social identity (Frith, 1987; 144). People can symbolically engage with the everyday in their appropriation and use

⁴⁰ To watch full video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZ2jqR69vhE>

⁴¹ “Rap müzik kişiliğime bir şey katmadı, rap müzik kişiliğimi oluşturdu (...) Yolum rap ile kesişmeseydi yolumu şaşırırdım.”

of music since there are aspects of protest and pleasure with collective participation in the music (Bennett, 2005; 118). Music can also be considered as a creation of a place for a mental escape in daily life through organizing thoughts and feelings. Such kind of tactics makes struggles in everyday life more tolerable. Then, the question arises: is rap seen as a way to escape from everyday life struggles? Before focusing on how MCs deal with the problems they have through rap music, there seems to be a definite need for a discussion on how they were acquainted with rap and hip-hop culture.

Most of the young people captivated by rap music met the genre through the songs of Ceza. Alpar, who would like to make rap music professionally, is one of them. One day, his mother made Alpar listen to Ceza, and his rap journey began. The first Turkish rap album that he listened to is *Yerli Plaka* from Ceza. He explains what attracts him in this album:

“At that time, I did not understand things like hidden meanings, so it was the sound that drew my attention. First, I listened to names having legal albums. When I was at secondary school, I started to listen to underground names. If I did not listen to them, I would put away rap music. Then, I realized that these people talked about very different subjects, and I loved how they were doing it. Of course, culture and sound have changed much. After 2010, the trap appeared. Nowadays, the lyrics are not crucial. It is more critical to being listened to by more people. I do not fall for the current trend, but if it appeals to me in the future, I will try.” (Interview with Alpar, 05.07.2019)⁴²

Since he was a child when Alpar first listened to rap, it is quite predictable what attracts him to rap was the sound. The underlying reasons why he continues listening to rap are his meeting with the underground side of rap and how the people from the underground scene tell their stories. He makes a clear distinction between the underground and the current trend in rap music. In addition, Alpar emphasizes the significance of the lyrics in the music. It can be said that although he had been on the

⁴² “O dönem alt metin denen şeyleri hiç anlamadığımdan ötürü soundu dikkatimi çekmişti. İlk, bandrollü albüm çıkaran isimleri dinliyordum. Ortaokul döneminde yeraltı dediğimiz isimleri dinlemeye başladım. O dönem olmasaydı muhtemelen bırakmıştım ben çoktan. Sonra fark ettim ki bu adamlar çok başka şeylerden bahsediyorlar ve yollarını çok beğenmiştim. Tabi ki sound, kültür çok değişti. Bu 2010 döneminden sonra trap çıktı. Şu anda sözlerde ne anlatıldığı çok önemli değil. Biraz daha kendini dinletmesi önemli. Şu anki akıma ben çok kapılmadım ama ileride çok hoşuma giderse de deneyebilirim. (Alpar ile görüşme, 05.07.2019)”

watch rhythmic characteristics of rap. Yet, later, he comprehended the lyrics so what the MCs were saying, i.e. the stories told.

Even though Alpar's journey started thanks to his mother, not everyone had similar conditions in this journey. Unlike what Alpar experienced, Şiirbaz had to go through some troubles in order to meet rap. Şiirbaz tells his starting point as follows:

“Since we did not have an internet connection and at that period access to music was gruelling- in fact, access to rap was more difficult-, what we found is the first one that I listened to. What these were Ceza and Sagopa because their CDs were the ones you can find in the suburbs and take their copies from your friends. My interest in this music started with them. What attracted me was that it was based on the lyrics and expression. I admired that it was more than what I saw on the TVs, and they talked about paying rent, bills. It was enough to see how wide its range of subject. As I explored, went beyond the limits of the hood and learned English, I met great names like Nas, Rakim, and KRS-One. Then, I said I wanted to do something like their songs. Later, since the internet came into our life, reaching the underground Turkish names got easier. I have listened to everyone who has something to say and who is honest about herself/himself, and respectable.” (Interview with Şiirbaz, 13.10.2019)⁴³

The words of Şiirbaz can remind us of the discussion on the early MC's social and economic backgrounds. In the previous chapter, the social and economic conditions of the pioneer Turkish MCs in Turkey show that they were highly educated and had good economic conditions. Being an MC, especially in the late 1990s and the early 200s, was not straightforward because there was a need for economic self-sufficiency. The instruments that one should have to make rap music were not easy to get. In addition, it was still tough to have some rap CDs or albums, particularly in the late 90s and early

⁴³ “Tabi ki o dönem elimizin altında internet diye bir şey olmadığı için ve zaten o dönem müziğe ulaşmak çok zor olduğu için ki rap müziğe ulaşmak çok çok daha zor olduğu için elimize geçen neyse onla başladım. O da nedir klasik Ceza'dır Sagopa'dır çünkü kenar mahallede bulabileceğin tek CDler bir şekilde arkadaşından ulaşabileceğin kopyasını alabileceğin tek insanlar onlardı. Onlarla birlikte müzik formuna ilgi duydum. Çok daha fazla söze ve kendini ifade etmeye dayalı oluşuna çok ilgi duydum. Konu yelpazesinin televizyondan gördüğümden çok daha fazla oluşuna, kira fatura ödemekten bu insanların bahsediyor oluşuna çok büyük hayran olmuştum. Yelpazesi o kadar geniş ki bu beni hayran etmeye yetmişti. Sonra araştırdıkça biraz daha mahallenin dışına çıkabilecek kadar büyüdükçe vs Nas gibi Rakim gibi biraz da tabi İngilizce öğrendikçe kendi kendimize KRS-One gibi bu işin çok çok daha inanılmaz örnekleriyle tanıştım. Ondan sonra dedim ki ben buna benzer bir şey yapmak istiyorum. Sonra internet vs hayatımıza girince Türkiye'deki yeraltı örneklerine de ulaşımımız daha da kolaylaştı. Tabi ben o zaman başladım Kayralara sarmaya, işte Şehinşahlar Saianlar, Haykiler, Karaçahılar... Indigolar, Sansar Salvolar, Ethnique Punchlar, Ağaçkakanlar. İşte söyleyebilecek bir sözü olan kendisi hakkında dürüst olduğunu düşündüğüm saygıdeğer olduğunu düşündüğüm aşağı yukarı herkesi dinlemişimdir. (Şiirbaz ile görüşme, 13.10.2019)”

2000s. Today, there is an opinion that rap is music that everybody can make with a computer, a microphone and a sound card. Yet, this idea can be valid these days since the situation was not the same in the early period of Turkish rap in Turkey. As Şiirbaz states, as long as young people have a chance to look beyond the place they live, their possibility to explore new kinds of music could increase. The albums that could be bought or got depended on the young people's opportunity to discover outside. When we remember how Turkish migrant youth found out about hip-hop culture and rap music, the situation was almost the same. Since they exposed to segregation, they had to search for places where these young people could spend their time. Then, the clubs where the American soldiers went turned into places that Turkish migrant youth learned the hip-hop culture. These discos were one of the few places they could enter. If these discos did not walk into migrants' lives, the story of Turkish rap would probably be distinct. It can be argued that if these young ones did not come across the American discos, the gang culture would remain the same, so the fight between the gangs would also continue damaging the solidarity between migrant youths. Hence, in the transition from Turkish-German rap to Turkish rap in Turkey, the first meeting with rap music remains almost the same. In other words, there should be a chance to hear this music through TV videos or from entourage, so if the conditions that you have been living does not provide that chance, it will be hard to know new music or cultures. Today, grabbing this chance can be easier thanks to technological improvements. However, in the late 1990s or early 2000s, there is a need for struggle to have this chance.

Similar to what Şiirbaz experienced at the beginning of his hip-hop journey, İmpala's meeting with hip-hop came about through one of his friends who could get rap albums from the U.S. Here is the starting point of İmpala's story:

“First, we loved the music itself. I was really affected by the music that my father was listening to. That music had an effect on my ideas. Later, what directed me to rap music was, of course, my entourage. Kuşadası is a seaside place. We had a friend at the place we were living in. That friend could go to the U.S and abroad every year. He was the child of a wealthy family. We always learned from him. He made me listen to what he listened to. At that time, in the U.S, 50 Cent had

just released the singles. So, we started to love the sound and continued in that way.” (Interview with İmpala, 26.07.2019)⁴⁴

The experiences of Şiirbaz and İmpala indicate that their economic limitations inhibited access to rap. As long as you knew someone who informed you about rap or hip-hop, it would be difficult to hear about this music and culture. At the beginning of rap in Turkey, it was not easy to find albums of MCs from abroad. In addition, getting to know Turkish rappers usually could be possible through the music videos on the TV. In the mid-2000s, the rise of illegal music downloading and illegal CD and cassette releases changed this situation a little bit. İmpala, whose parents were janitors of a housing estate, met rap music and hip-hop culture through his friend’s CDs. Hence, it can be seen that in the early years of Turkish rap, in order to listen to rap music, there was a need to get beyond the limits, but to achieve this goal, there was also a need for a mediator, be a wealthy friend or illegal copy of an album.

While listening to music, it would be normal to focus on the sound first. In rap music, focusing on the sound is possible cause it is based on the beats. However, the oppositional or resistant characteristics of this music, discussed in the first chapter, could also be at the forefront. Kayra’s main reason for listening and making rap music is the topics discussed in this music.

“At the end of secondary school, at the beginning of high school, we got recorded cassettes. I was a real audience. Islamic Force, Silahsız Kuvvet, Yeraltı Operasyonu... Initially, I was always listening to Turkish rap. Then, I chose the language field in high school. Our teachers were usually suggesting us to listen to the songs in English. After this suggestion, I started to listen to Wu-Tang, Public Enemy, Tupac. The issues mentioned in rap began to appeal to me. Things talked about in Karabük, Anatolian city, were evident. I was not interested in those topics. Even what I talked with my girlfriends did not intrigue them. Rap spoke of something. For example, there is a song named Töre in the Yeraltı Operasyonu album. When you examine Statik, they also touch on the difficulty of living in İstanbul. Hip-hop was a good teacher for me. At that time, there was an aim to give social messages. Indeed, some songs referred to social problems,

⁴⁴ “Müziği sevmekle başladık aslında. Özellikle babamın dinlediği müziklerden baya etkilenmişim. Dinlediğim o müzikler benim fikirlerimi etkilemiştir. Daha sonrasında beni rap müziğe iten şeyse tabi ki arkadaş çevrem oldu. Kuşadası yazlıkçı bir yer. Bizim oturduğumuz yerde de yazlıkçı bir arkadaşımız vardı. O yazlıkçı arkadaşımız her sene Amerika’ya giden bir şekilde her sene yurt dışına çıkan biraz da varlıklı bir ailenin çocuğuydu. Hep ondan bir şeyler gördük ettik. O bana dinlediği müzikleri gösteriyordu falan. Amerika’da işte bu 50 Centlerin falan daha yeni yeni parça çıkardığı zamanlardı. O zamanlarda o şekilde etkilemişti benim arkadaşım. İşte o soundu sevmeye başladık ve biraz da ilerlememiz o yönde oldu.” (İmpala ile görüşme, 26.07.2019)

poverty, children, and subordinate people. It has led to my life, so hip-hop is a passion for me.” (Interview with Kayra, 13.06.2019)⁴⁵

What importance of Kayra emphasizes here is his view about hip-hop in general. He sees hip-hop as a guiding light. It is not just a culture, but it is also a teacher that can shape the lives, especially the young ones’. Gwendolyn- Pough’s argument about hip-hop is similar to what Kayra states: “Hip-Hop is a state of mind; a way of living and being that expands further than what kind of music one listens to. And there is power there, so much power that some people are scared of it.” (2004; 284). Likewise, Kayra’s view on the hip-hop culture puts forward it as a lifestyle. What is interesting about Kayra is that his style does not fit the image of an MC at all. In other words, the expected appearance of an MC, which may include baggy pants, large hoodies or caps, does not fit in Kayra, as I saw in my interview. It can be assumed that the owner of the above quotation has a streetwear style, but he does not have. He is more formal to be an MC. Despite all, he adopts the values of hip-hop culture in his life. Hence, it can be argued that the effect of hip-hop on the style has had its day.

After realizing the first meeting with rap and hip-hop, why they attracted to the young ones and how the MCs conceive them, it can be meaningful to realize the motivation of the MCs to continue making rap music because their motive will also be the clue of how they define the music that they make. Was rap just a whim for them?

Kitwana argues that hip-hop, as one of the major cultural movements of the U.S, had an influence on the young African Americans who were born between 1965 and 1984 (2004; 341). It had started to become mainstream in the early 80s, and its popularity increased day by day. In the early 2000s, Turkish rap began to get attention, particularly from young people, and their number grew gradually. However, not all of these young ones continued making rap music; sometimes, living conditions forced

⁴⁵ Orta son lise yıllarının başı çekme kasetler geliyordu elimize. Hakiki bir dinleyiciydim. Islamic Force, Silahsız Kuvvet, Yeraltı Operasyonu... Türkçe rap dinliyordum en başta hep. Sonra lisede dil bölümünü seçtim. Öğretmenler de hep diyordu İngilizce şarkı dinleyin diye ben de sonra Wu Tang, Public Enemy, Tupac dinlemeye başladım. Rap’te bahsedilen konular ilgilimi çekmeye başladı. Karabük’te Anadolu şehrinde konuşulan bellidir. Bana gelen şeyler değildi. Sevdığım kızları bile karşılamıyordum konuştuklarım. Rap’te bir şeylerden bahsediliyordu. Yeraltı Operasyonu albümünde Töre diye bir şarkı var mesela. Statik grubuna bakıyorsun İstanbul’da yaşamının zorluklarından bahsediyor. Hip-hop çok güzel bir öğretmendi benim için. O dönemde mesaj kaygısı vardı. Mutlaka toplumsal sorunlara değinen yolsuzluklara çocuklara değinen, ezilenlerin durumuna değinen şarkılardı. Kendi hayatıma yol verdi hip-hop benim için çok büyük tutku o yüzden.” (Kayra ile görüşme, 13.06.2019)

them to give up on this music. There were also the passionates who struggled against all difficulties for the sake of rap music. It is not always easy to continue making rap while problems in your life surround you, and some of these issues can also directly affect the capacity to make music. Here, Harpya explains her reason to take some time off:

“I had a break. I came in first in a contest organized in 2010 or 2013. After, there was a Youtube channel whose admins said they would shoot videos for talented MCs. They shot Zeval’s and my music videos. After all of this, I advanced in the community. Being in sight made me scared. I think I got further away from rap because of this. At the same time, I had to sell my recording equipment, and the studio of Safra Yeraltı was destroyed due to the urban renewal project. My childhood passed with them. I had never found such heartiness in anyone because when I went to Safra’s studio, my aim was not just to make music. There was a friendly environment. Then, the studio was destroyed, and Safra Yeraltı fell apart. As a result, I receded from making rap.” (Interview with Harpya, 12.03.2020)⁴⁶

Experiences of Harpya show that the possibility of being famous can be an idea that may be challenging to deal with. Moreover, being a female MC should be in our minds when we think of being in “sight,” but female voices of rap will be discussed in the last part of the chapter. In addition to fear of fame, her economic conditions had an influence on the break-in rap music. Harpya’s living conditions refer to how these conditions can result in the limitation of cultural production. Generally, it is assumed that a microphone, a sound card and a computer are enough in order to make rap songs; however, sometimes, financial incapability pushes the limits in the music-making process. The economic difficulty that Harpya had can be seen as an individual problem; however, it was also related to the economic inequalities in the country.

With the advance in technological developments, it has become easier for people to make rap songs through their own means, but it is also still hard to access the necessary

⁴⁶ “Ara verdim. 2012-2013 yılında dediğim yarışmada 5. Oldum. Ardından bir Youtube kanalı vardı oradakiler yetenekli MClere klip çekeceklerini söylüyorlardı. Zeval ve bana klip çekildi. Bütün bunlar bir araya geldiğinde benim bir anda adım yükselmeye başladı. Göz önünde bulunmak beni çok korkutuyordu. Biraz bu düşünceyle uzaklaştım galiba. Aynı zamanda da stüdyo ekipmanlarımı satmak zorunda kaldım. İlk girdiğim oluşum olan Safra Yeraltı’nın stüdyosu yıkıldı kentsel dönüşümden dolayı. Benim çocukluğum onlarla geçti. Onların ortamının sıcaklığını hiç kimsede bulamadım açıkçası. Çünkü oraya girdiğimde sadece müzik yayıp yayınlama arzusuyla değil, gidiyordum şarkı yapıyordum muhabbet ediyordum. Güzel bir ortam vardı yani. Daha sonrasında stüdyo ekipmanları gitti Safra Yeraltı dağıldı vs darken ben biraz geri çekildim.” (Harpya ile görüşme, 12.03.2020)

equipment for recording. In addition, most of the time, these instruments are imported, so their prices are certainly linked with the exchange rate. It may be more simple to get that equipment in the U.S or one of the European countries; however, if we consider the exchange rate in Turkey, purchasing power is getting diminished day by day. Hence, people with a limited budget have difficulty in buying the equipment. Moreover, what Harpya experienced is profound to understand how significant the economic conditions are on the production of rap songs.

Another point that can be considered is the political climate of the country. In Turkey case, the dissident voices in rap music resulted in the government crackdown. Hence, the rappers were targeted by the government. After the rapid rise of rap music, some rappers like Ezhel, Khontkar, and Burry Soprano faced charges of promoting drug use. These charges brought media coverage to the rappers, but it can be hard for them to state real opinions openly. For example, Bendis, one of my interviewees, stated that she had to remove her song's video from Youtube because she felt under pressure after reading the comments below the video once. Although the MCs that I interviewed have never tended to give up due to the government crackdown, what Bendis felt is an indicator of the possibility of quitting music. Therefore, it can be argued that political conditions may affect the desire to hold on to rap music.

The previous experiences from Harpya can explain how ordinary struggles in life have an impact on the motivation for making rap music, but today, she continues to produce songs. Then, what about an MC who is in a sort of a period of stagnation? What could be the reason for him not to produce actively? Here is the answer from Virüs:

“Since the school has an intense schedule, I do not have time to write lyrics, make beats and tests for the record and prepare a demo. In addition, I do not have an opportunity to use a studio. Hence, my ideas have been waiting. Maybe I can open my own studio and will continue making songs. I have never thought that music will be on my career path. If I began to make rap music today, I would consider it as a way of building a career. Now, I have a profession that can allow me to earn money, which is a safe bet, so I do not put in jeopardy too little too late.” (Interview with Virüs, 07.03.2020)⁴⁷

⁴⁷ “Okul yoğun şu an böyle harıl harıl oturup da söz yazma, beat yapma, kayıt denemesi yapma, demo yapma gibi sürekli böyle kendimi updateleyebileceğim bir zaman bulamıyorum. Artı, elimin altında şu

At the time that I talked with Virüs, he was not recording his songs despite of writing lyrics and making beats. The reason for not going to the studio is his busy pace in school. He is a university student in the department of electrical engineering, and it seems that his belief in a future career is the primary cause to take some time off from time to time. However, the thought that if he started rap music today, he could do it as a profession refers to the rise of rap music in Turkey recently. Rap become popular day after day, and it allows young people interested in rap music to deem it as a profession. Virüs began rap when he was 13 in 2008, so it was the time when most of the beginner MCs hardly had a chance to record their songs or get to the stage. At that period, illegal music downloading was at its peak, so music labels did not prefer releasing albums of the no-names because it was not profitable. It is clear that there has been a direct intervention of recording companies in the music industry, so “an industry produces culture and culture produces an industry” (Negus, 1999; 490).

The hopeless situation in the music industry at the time Virüs started to be interested in rap led him to think that it would not be possible to live off through music in the future. Therefore, he decided to make his own way by studying in the university. All the above stories indicate that making rap music is actually not as easy as it seems. The economic, political conditions and relations with the music industry can affect the motivation to go on. However, there are also examples that have a chance to be in this struggle non-stop. When hip-hop and rap allow these young people a sort of way out, the factor of passion to this culture and music prevails. What Şiirbaz tells is the explanation of that passion:

“Passion has been my motivation. First, loving the music, not what it brings. Of course, there are lots of good things that music brings. Of course, earning money from the job that you love is amazing and meeting new people is brilliant. It is nice to connect with the people to whom you listened in your adolescence. Yet, first, I loved the music so much. Making music has never been an option for me. I feel terrible when I do not make music. It was the only way to deal with the conditions in which I live, the diffidence in me and the tough times. After handling these problems, life goes on. Your problems do not finish; they are only

an bir stüdyo yok. O yüzden biraz askıda fikirlerim. Daha sonra belki kendi stüdyomu açıp devam ederim. Ben hiç düşünmedim müzikten ilerleyeyim falan diye. Hayatımın para kazanma odağı müzik olsun, bu benim mesleğim olsun diye düşünmedim. Şu an başlasaydım kariyer olarak düşünebilirdim. Artık elimde garanti bir mesleğim var para kazanabileceğim, onu riske atmam bu saatten sonra.” (Virüs ile görüşme, 07.03.2020)

changing. Therefore, music has become a solution for me. Hence, the reason why I have made this music for 10 years is the gratitude to this culture and music because they supported me a lot in my hard times. For example, I was born in a conservative family and grew up in a conservative neighborhood. This music took a chance to get beyond the limits of my neighborhood. “ (Interview with Şiirbaz, 13.10.2019)⁴⁸

Frith argues that music has become an essential tool which provides people with organize their moods and activities (2003; 98). Supporting Frith’s claim, Şiirbaz’s emphasis on the fact that music is a problem-solver in everyday life struggles exemplifies music is less about controlling emotions. Although there can be a use of music in order to optimize the well-being (Hallam, 2001; 1), music is rather than about enjoying group belonging (Frith, 2003; 100). What rap music and hip-hop culture bring Şiirbaz has become his main motivation to keep on. Meeting new people and being in the new circles expanded his point of view. He is certainly enthusiastic about rap music and hip-hop culture, but his musical practices are embedded in “a whole series of interests and commitments” (Finnegan, 2007; 328). In addition, whenever he is in trouble, hip-hop and rap appear as a way of relaxation. Hence, the well-being through music-making may increase feeling grateful to rap and hip-hop, in general. It seems that the eagerness to produce and being in a peaceful mood are intertwined. In the case of İmpala, this appreciation in rap music is also related to serving a useful purpose.

“It is definitely the desire to produce something because you are doing disinterested work. Eventually, when you make plans for your future, you will realize that there are lots of obstacles. This may make you unmotivated, but if you consider this work as producing and creating valuable things, you will keep going without any expectations. I do not like idling, so I have to do something. Since we live in this world, we concern about things either this or that way. We should improve ourselves. Music, writing and telling people things are admirable. Availing for the older and younger people than you are significant. I can say that all of these form my motivation. Of course, there are things which

⁴⁸ “Tutku oldu motivasyonum. Önce müziği sevmek, beraberinde getirdiklerini değil. Tabi ki müziğin beraberinde getirdiği çok güzel şeyler var. Tabi ki sevdiğin işi yaparak para kazanmak inanılmaz bir şey. Bununla arkadaşlar edinmek, dinleyerek büyüdüğün insanlarla bağ kurmak harika bir şey. Ama ilk önce müziği çok sevdim. Müzik yapmak benim için asla bir seçenek değildi. Ben müzik yapmadığımda çok kötü hissediyordum kendimi. Büyüdüğüm koşulları, içimdeki mahcubiyeti, o zor zamanları vs atlatabilmemin tek yolu buydu. Onu bir şekilde atlarmaya başladıktan sonra işte hayat devam ediyor, sorunların bitmiyor sadece biçim değiştiriyor. Dolayısıyla müzik böyle bir çözüme dönüştü benim için. Yani 10 yıldır bu müziği yapma sebebim bu müziğe ve kültüre duyduğum minnettarlık çünkü çok zor zamanlarımda çok şey kattı bana. Ben mesela muhafazakar bir ailede doğdum. Muhafazakar mahallelerde büyüdüm. Bu müzik bana mahallemin dışına çıkma şansı tanıdı.” (Şiirbaz ile görüşme, 13.10.2019)

lead to a lack of motivation, like the question of how I can live off. However, I do not think these problems too much; otherwise, I open up a can of worms.” (Interview with İmpala, 26.07.2019)⁴⁹

For İmpala, what keeps alive him while making rap is the force of creativity. Yet, the trigger for this creation is related to the desire to raise a voice for the destruction and the social neglect in society. This kind of drive can also end up not only as a force for creativity but also for resistance (Rose, 2008; ix), which will be one of the topics in the next heading. Although İmpala is also in economic difficulties like above mentioned MCs, he tries not to think about those problems so that he may continue focusing on the music. The challenge in making rap music itself and being successful despite of the struggle makes the work more precious for him.

Throughout this section of the chapter, we can see that MCs’ beginning of rap journey. It can be argued that there are various factors which have an impact on young peoples’ interest in rap music. Since rap is part of the hip-hop culture, the morals hip-hop highlights, such as “respect,” can affect the link established with the audience. Therefore, it is not a coincidence to see these peoples’ impression of rap music associated with the content of the songs. Most of the time, it is the sound or the beat that strikes at the heart them. Nevertheless, when these MCs come to the point of awareness in terms of the content of the lyrics, their affirmation to rap finalizes. This explains why they can call hip-hop and rap a kind of “guidance”.

Even if this music and culture can lead the young ones’ lives, it does not mean that they are indispensable. Economic conditions, different career orientations and political problems may interrupt the production process of the songs. For those who can continue making rap music without a break, the motive is to do something useful, and

⁴⁹ “Kesinlikle bir şey üretme hevesim sağladı çünkü karşılığı olmayan bir iş yapıyorsunuz. Sonuçta bu işten gelecek planı kurmaya başladığınız anda önünüzde bir ton engelinizin olduğunu fark ediyorsunuz. Bu sizin motivasyonunuzu kırabiliyor ama siz işi bir şey üretmek, hayata bir değer katmak anlamında bakıyorsanız şayet. Herhangi bir karşılığı olur ya da olmaz, bir şekilde üretmiş olmak için bile o şeyi icra etmeye devam ediyorsunuz. Boş durmayı çok sevmiyorum bir şeyler üretmem gerekiyor. Madem bu dünyada yaşıyoruz, öyle ya da böyle bir şeylerin derdindeyiz vs bir farklılığımız olsun. Kendimizi geliştirebilelim. Müzik iyi bir şey çünkü kötü değil. Yazıp çizmek, insanlara bir şeyler anlatmak iyi bir şey. Kendi fikirlerinle senden daha küçük ya da büyük insanlara dokunmak önemli bir şey. Tüm motivasyonumu bu oluşturuyor diyebilirim. Tabi motivasyonumu düşüren şeyler de oluyor. Tipik hayatımı nasıl devam ettireceğim, nasıl geçineceğim gibi maddi şeyler ama oraya çok fazla takılmamaya çalışıyoruz yoksa işin içinden çıkamayız yani.” (İmpala ile görüşme, 26.07.2019)

they have materials, regardless of their quality, for the record. As mentioned above, the drive for music-making, so creativity can result in raising a voice to what is wrong in society. It can be argued that although the MCs had problems that made them upset, rap music maintained a stance against the tough conditions they had. This section can be considered as the answer to why hip-hop and rap music matter for these young people. Then, the next concern will be how they define their music and hip-hop culture.

4.3 Dissent Has No Limits!

One of the concluding remarks of the previous part is what first draws the people to rap music is the sound certainly. However, lyrics make moving forward to that music possible. Most of people probably have various experiences with those lyrics or songs. As Frith claims, “music just matters more than any other medium” (2003; 100). The selection of music can be based on an already existing self or develop a sense of self linked with the music (Binfield, 2009; 54). Yet, it is clear that music has a crucial impact on many people’s identities and lives in general. So, what about rap? What does rap imply? Why is it “special” for these MCs?

While writing my thesis, I tried to listen to rap songs as far as I could. As someone who had not listened to rap that much before, it turned into a regular volunteer listening session for me. I started to need to listen to specific songs or albums. Later, I asked myself the question of why I was unreluctantly listening to rap because it was quite strange for me to see that I was finding myself listening to rap in the day. Therefore, questioning the significance of why these MCs make rap music and of what is the special character of this music. On the one hand, to many critics, rap has nothing to do with segregation, economic and social problems, and political disempowerment; on the other hand, for some, all expressions in rap reflect the reality in the ghetto life, and the lyrics are the pure outcome of the poverty itself. (Rose, 2008; 5). As expected, the MCs whom I did the interviews with have something to say about this “war” between the views.

Music has always been a way to reflect social power, particularly the subcultural music genres, such as rock and punk. Inevitably, the subcultural groups experience being “alienated” by the popular culture, and it results in the articulation of differences which

distinguishes the group from the mainstream (Abrams, 1995; 6). The subcultural forms can become the channel for their expression of opposition (Beighey & Unnithan, 2006; 134). Rose discusses how oppression is expressed through transcripts of the language, music and dance so as to taunt those in power, and she also argues that these transcripts can be the expression of rage, dissent and subversion (1994; 1991). Music is one of the most potent media instruments by which social relations are discovered and by which identities and subjectivities can be changed and supported (Small, 1987; 46 cited in Walser, 1995; 212). Decker comes to the point of the political side of rap music, and he asserts that: “While political rap artists are not politicians, they are involved in the production of cultural politics- its creation, circulation and interpretation- which is tied to the struggles of working-class blacks and the urban poor” (1994; 101). Angus and Jhally expand the discussion on cultural politics by considering the term, everyday life:

“(Cultural politics is) the complex process by which the whole domain in which people search to create meaning about their everyday lives is subject to politicization and struggle... The central issue of such a cultural politics is the exercise of power in both institutional and ideological forms and the manner in which "cultural practices" relate to this context.” (1989; 2 qt in Rose, 1991; 277).

Particularly for those in American hip-hop studies, the cultural practices in hip-hop are closely linked to the struggle or politics. Likewise, in the studies related to Turkish rap in Germany, the relationship between rap and resistance is stated (Kaya, 1997; Çağlar, 1998). Hence, it may be substantive to ask whether there is a link between rap and resistance in Turkish rap in Turkey. In order to come up with an answer, the first step can be related to the questions of what rap music means to the MCs and of what kind of character this music has. Emresto is one of the MCs who associates being protest and making rap music:

“Rap should have a protest character, but it does not. It is based much more on entertainment. What it should be is having concerns that do not have to be arabesque. For instance, I tell my trial, someone else says divorce of his/her parents. Another one speaks about refugee children but what it should be is giving messages to the people. When people listen to that song, they should feel

something and think about their stories. That is what rap should do; it should have concerns.” (Interview with Emresto, 07.07.2019)⁵⁰

It should be noted that his first song named *Davam* was about his lawsuit process about the insult to the President of Turkey. However, while he asserts the protest characteristic of rap music, Emresto approaches the topics in the songs from a wider perspective. With his explanation, what he means by protest gets clear:

“It can be happiness or misery in everyday life. A song for your ex-girlfriend can be written, and it can also be written for the massacre in Madımak. It is related to the psychological situation at that moment. If I feel depressed, I can not write a song about nice things.” (Interview with Emresto, 07.07.2019)⁵¹

In his statement about the characteristic of the rap music, he clarifies the link between the being protest and having concerns about what is happening around ourselves. Yet, what he argues by saying protest is not limited to the opposition to those in power. The dissent can be derived from anything from the struggles in everyday life, social problems, to romantic relationships. What is significant to Emresto in rap music is that it should have a concern or an aim message.

Similar to Emresto, Alpar argues that there is anger in rap music, but it does not have to be related to the “criticism of the system”. Therefore, it can be argued that the resources of anger are various, and rage has no limits!

“Currently, the dominant type in rap music is easy in Turkey and in the world. People listen to this type of rap in order to rest their mind, but the one I am engaged in includes anger. To me, rap is related to aggression. Most of the time, rap music is identified with the criticism of the system, but the anger, anarchism, and opposition within rap are actually not linked with politics or criticism. Rap is oppositional, but it does not mean that rap is against politics. You can be against any idea. For example, they can get angry at me to drink at the street. The other may be angry at his/her family, or another one can get angry because

⁵⁰ “Olması gereken karakter protest bir karakter ama dünya şartlarında şu an öyle bir karakterde değil. Daha çok insanları eğlendirme üzerine kurulu. Asıl olması gereken şey dert anlatılması. Bu dert illa arabesk bir şey olmak zorunda değil. Atıyorum ben davamı anlattım atıyorum biri der ki anne babamın boşanmasını anlatıyorum. Başka biri der ki mülteci çocukları anlatıyorum ama olması gereken şey insanlara bir mesaj bırakmak, insanlar o şarkıyı dinlediğinde bir şey hissetmeli kendinden bir hikaye çıkarmalı. Bunu yapıyor olmalı rap müzik, bir derdi olmalı.” (Emresto ile görüşme, 07.07.2019)

⁵¹ “Gündelik hayattaki bir mutsuzluk mutluluk olabilir. Eski sevgiliye de şarkı yazılabilir. Madımak katliamına da şarkı yazılabilir. Bu tamamen insanın o anki psikolojik durumuyla alakalı. Ben o gün depresif hissediyorsam güzel şeylerden bahseden bir şarkı yazamam.” (Emresto ile görüşme, 07.07.2019)

of the famine. The reason for rage is limitless, so this is why there are lots of MCs. If everybody got mad at the same things, we would always listen to the same songs.” (Interview with Alpar, 05.07.2019) ⁵²

Although Alpar places rap in the angry side of everyday life, it is also located in commercial spaces. These commercial and raged spaces are interpenetrated, so it is hard to draw a strict dividing line between them (Abrams; 1995; 16). However, “keeping it real” or authenticity can be considered as the main component of the raged side of rap music. The phrase “keeping it real”, refers to talking straightly about the unpleasant or hard-to-hear realities in the black urban street life (Rose, 2008; 134). For Alpar, the border of keeping real has a wide range. It does not have to be associated with the problems in society because this tone can be related to any problems in life. Just because being resistant to something/someone and the authenticity debate are interrelated, Alpar’s views on these two subjects have a wide angle. Moreover, he is not alone in thinking like that. The emphasis on reality appears in the words of Hasat, too:

“I think the music which I make has a realistic character. That reality comes from the street. Wars, poverty, loneliness, cold...Even if it seems pessimistic, life's truths are not always nice, unfortunately. (Interview with Hasat, 09.03.2020)⁵³

In the first section of this chapter, the relationship between the ghetto and hip-hop has been discussed, and the significance of place comes up with the critical position of the “street”. The urban streets tell that hip-hop is also a struggle for public space (Rose, 1994; Forman, 2002; Quinn, 2005). Hasat’s answer, here, refers to that link between the street and reality, so authenticity which is also included in the discussion of popular culture and rap music. Hasat explains the topics in his songs with “reality” rather than aggression, distinct from what Alpar mentions. However, one of the examples Alpar

⁵² “Şu anda Türkiye’de ve dünyada hakim olan tür sakın. İnsanların daha kafa dinlemek için dinlediği bir tarzda ama benim kişisel olarak uğraştığım kısımda öfke var. Daha agresif bir karakteri var. Rap müzik benim için agresiftir. Genel olarak insanların kafasında “abi sistem eleştiriliyor” düşüncesi var ama aslında rap içindeki öfkenin, anarşistliğin, aykırı durumun sisteme veya politik bir duruma karşı olması durumu yok. Rap muhaliftir ama bu siyasete muhalif demek değildir. Sen herhangi bir fikre karşı olabilirsin. Mesela benim sokakta içki içmeme kızarlar ben bu fikre öfkelenirim. Başkası ailesine kızar ona öfkelenir başkası açlık yaşar ona öfkelenir. Öfkenin kaynağı bitmiyor o yüzden bu kadar farklı rapçi var. Herkes aynı şeye sinirlenseydi aynı şarkıları dinlerdik hep.” (Alpar ile görüşme, 05.07.2019)

⁵³ “Yaptığım müziğin realistik bir karakter taşıdığını düşünüyorum. Sokaktan gelen bir realite bu. Savaşlar, yoksulluk, yalnızlık, soğuk... Daha çok pesimistik bir hava gibi görünse de hayatın gerçekleri hep iyi şeyler değil maalesef.” (Hasat ile görüşme, 09.03.2020)

gives shares a common point with Hasat's answer. Although the example is not directly related to the street, Alpar problematizes drinking alcohol through the debate with the street because it gets more critical when it happens outside or in the public space. Hence, it can be argued that what happens in the streets of the city may be seen in the rap songs, and most of these songs are the sections of someone's stories from their lives. İmpala states this situation as "lives like ours".

"I characterize the music that I make as sombre. It is not too emotional. Rap is vicious and harsh music by its nature, and it is a way of music tending to say something. I make a piece of music that people who live like us have financial and psychological difficulties and questions about their lives. Sometimes I give messages; sometimes, I try to tell what is happening in my life. They are not entertaining works because we do not have amusing lives. Rap music does not have a map, so I think it is not true to define it. You can tell everything through this music, but for me, rap music tells people to something, at least provides a social benefit- it has the potential to do it- since you can give voice to lots of subjects." (Interview with İmpala, 26.07.2019) ⁵⁴

İmpala agrees with the idea that rap music has an inflamed characteristic. Since he has a rough time in his life, his songs are not for entertainment. İmpala elaborates on the angry feature of rap music with the question of who listens to his songs. All music genres are ways of representation, but subcultural genres like rap become more of an issue. Representation in rap music, particularly within the authenticity debate, refers to "shit is real", and this phrase can also be translated as "life is no laughing matter". (Smith, 1997; 347). What İmpala states above is almost the same as Smith's argument. İmpala mentions challenges in his life as well, as he believes that his audiences also have difficulties in their lives like him. Although I did not conduct research on the rap music audiences specifically, İmpala's view can tell something about hip-hop's goal in general; to shed light on the people who have been systematically deprived for many

⁵⁴ "Ben yaptığım müziği biraz ağırbaşlı olarak nitelendiriyorum. Çok fazla duygusal değil. Şimdi rap müzik doğası gereği hırçın sert bir müzik, bir şeyler anlatmaya meyilli bir müzik stili. Standart bizim gibi yaşayan, bizim gibiden kastım işte geçim sıkıntısı yaşayan birtakım psikolojik problemleri olan ya da hayatta bir şeylerin farkındalığına varma yönünde adımlar atan, kafasında soru işaretleri olan insanların dinleyebileceği tarzda bir müzik yapıyorum diyebilirim. Bazen mesaj vermeye çalışıyorum, bazen hayatımda ne olup bittiyse onu anlatmaya çalışıyorum. Çok eğlenceli işler değil bunlar çünkü çok fazla eğlenceli bir hayatımız yok. Rap müzik haritası olan bir şey değil o yüzden şudur budur demenin doğru olduğunu düşünmüyorum. Her şeyi anlatabileceğiniz bir platform ama sonuç itibarıyla bana göre rap müzik insanlara bir şeyler anlatmaya, en azından toplumsal açıdan yarar sağlamaya ya da öyle değilse bile öyle kullanmaya müsait bir müzik stili çünkü anlatabileceğiniz çok şey var." (İmpala ile görüşme, 26.07.2019)

years (Baltazar, 2019; 3). Not only he emphasizes the social benefit allowed by rap, but İmpala also claims that his audiences are the individuals who search for that benefit. Therefore, he describes his audiences as “people like him”, and this statement indicates the quotidian side of rap music. It is also critical to realize when İmpala underlines that sometimes he is talking about difficulties in his life in the songs; he also adds that the topics are not entertaining. Then, even routines in life may be the subject of a rap song. Kayra explains the significance of the ordinary ones:

“In general, my music is about everyday life, ordinary people and their ordinary works, but it expresses that these people suffer hardship. The person who did not live through anything can go through too many things. This music realizes and understands your own truth and feelings barely rather than being far away from the competitive soul and advertising by oneself.” (Interview with Kayra, 13.06.2019) ⁵⁵

The relationship between everyday life and music, in particular rap music, is manifested ever before in Kayra’s words. As stated in the second section of the first chapter, music is more than a “decorative art” and a strong medium of social order (DeNora, 2004; Frith, 2003). Considered in this way, the presence of music is clearly political. Reference to the everyday life in the interview with Kayra supports the argument of Rose, which claims that practices of hip-hop can produce communal bases of knowledge about social conditions and function as the cultural glue fostering the resistance (1994, 100). Hence, rap music as a “hidden transcript” can use disguised speech and cultural codes to comment on and object to the inequalities (ibid, 101).

Rap music draws various portraits of communication where hidden transcripts invert or subvert public transcripts. Since rap has been part of popular culture, it is absorbed in the public domain. However, this incorporation also allows rap music to be more accessible to the oppressed communities around the world. Articulation of rap’s resistant transcripts in both public and hidden domain makes them quite visible but hard to restrict. Rose argues that the difference between these “prophets of rage” comes

⁵⁵ “Günlük hayatı sıradan insanı konu alan, sıradan insanın sıradan işlerini konu alan ama en sıradan insanın bile çok çetrefilli çok meşakkatli yollardan geçtiğini ifade eden bir müziğim var benim, genel aslında bakarsanız. Hiçbir şey yaşamamış insan bile çok fazla şey yaşamış olabilir. Birazcık da bu içinde yaşadığımız rekabetçi duyguların uzağında kendini böyle allayıp pullamadan kendi böyle reklamını yapmaktan ziyade kendi gerçeğini görmeye ve anlamaya çalışan duygulara daha çıplak yaklaşılmaya çalışan bir müzik.” (Kayra ile görüşme, 13.06.2019)

from their ability to keep the spotlight of popular culture and at the same time perform as a way of social criticism (1994, 102).

“With vice I hold the mike device
With force I keep it away of course
And I'm keepin' you from sleepin'
And on the stage I rage
And I'm rollin'
To the poor, I pour it on in metaphors
Not bluffin', it's nothin'
We ain't did before”⁵⁶

As Chuck D says, rap is not the first genre that deals with social criticism. In the long history of black culture, there have been slave dances, blues, and Jamaican patios indicating criticism to the powerful. Nevertheless, the constant struggle between hidden and public transcript creates a considerable conflict than ever before. The ability to be part of the popular culture and whereas function as a way of being critical makes rap and hip-hop culture more different than other black cultural productions. While rap music brings attention to oppression and inequalities, it can be related to identity and self-assertion basically (Fedorak, 2013, 43). Through their music, MCs make clear that “who s/he is, where they are from, what time it is now and what is happening” (Best & Kellner, 1999, 7).

Seeing different parts of everyday life in rap music indicates the dissent in this music. As stated earlier, there is no limit to oppression or rage in rap. Hence, dealing with various subjects from everyday life also shows how wide the range of rap music can be. Rap songs do not have to be political, and the assumption of the fact that “rap should be political” misses the vast possibility of opposition in rap. It does not mean that rap and hip-hop are not political; of course, they have such character, but if we do not forget that hip-hop is a “culture”, then it can be realized that there is no one-size-

⁵⁶ From the album of “It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back”, 1988, Def Jam Recordings.

fits-all in rap music. Drawing a strict line between being political and not to be can actually restrict the music. The above quotation from Kayra can be one of the proves of the possibility of restriction. In order to show how the ordinary one can be an opponent, see the lyrics from “Kafamda Cehennem” by 90 BPM of which Kayra is one of the members.

“Military service, school extension

Maybe graduation, distant relatives

All divorces, severe issues

I got all in my head, all next to me”⁵⁷

These lyrics might look that what the song describes are very normal things in life. However, mentioned cases can also be seen as any concern of a young person in Turkey who is desperate about the future. Obligatory military service, unequal education system, unemployment and family issues are fit into those five lines. In the following lines, a tangle of problems is expanding.

“At 1 p.m., at one of the tables

Notifications came one week ago are in my pocket

What should I do with myself?

Simply, tell me”⁵⁸

The song starts with more simple concerns, but the following lines include more serious ones like getting repossessed. These lyrics also allow us to think about the reason for this bankruptcy and the ideas that end up with the economic crisis. Therefore, the issues which are seemed as ordinary or normal can actually be really

⁵⁷ “Şafak saymalar, okul uzatmalar
Belki mezun olmalar, uzaktan akrabalar
Bütün boşanmalar, kırk ayaklı mevzular
Hepsi var kafamda, hepsi tam yanımda”

⁵⁸ “Öğlenin birinde, masanın birinde
Bir hafta önce gelmiş tebligatlar arka cebimde
Şimdi ne yapayım bu kendimi?
Samimi söyle”

critical to be resistance and opposition in rap music. The argument of Rose in *Black Noise* (1994) - rap is a hidden transcript- supports that the ordinary cases in everyday life can be part of resisting the various sides of the social domination. If Rose's claim is elaborated, it can be argued that what makes Turkish rap music "hidden" is its capacity to reveal that quotidian issues in everyday life is not that simple since they might have the potential to raise critical voices. Rap music appears as an alternative venue for young people in order to engage in the debates on political and social problems (Buhari-Gülmez, 2017, 205).

Rap music allows the voiceless to raise a voice, a way of oppression or protest, and a cultural-political expression similar to what Chuck D said: "CNN of black people" (Best&Kellner, 1999, 1). Although rap music and hip-hop culture are generally identified with "marginalized" people, above mentioned word "voiceless" does not only refer to people who live in ghetto conditions or who can be considered as subaltern. Who listens to rap and who produces this music are not only marginalized youth or people from the subaltern class. Instead, they can be in a good position economically like Alpar, or they can be teachers at a state-run school like Kayra. The focus points should be why they make rap music and which problems they express through rap. When I had watched the *Hamilton* musical, the question cue of "Who tells your story?" evoked another question: Whose story is told?

As there is no limit to rage in this music, the variety of subjects are also wide. Emresto explains whose story is told in his songs as follows:

"There is no limit for that. Sometimes it can be a story of a street child; sometimes it can be a life of a billionaire. If we consider the conditions in Turkey, rap music has a specific audience group. I think they are between the ages of 18 to 25." (Interview with Emresto, 07.07.2019)⁵⁹

Arguments of Şiirbaz also support what Emresto says:

"I think a good lyricist can tell every life. I can write terrific lines about the lives of a sex worker, construction worker, a CEO or a poor person who has nothing. After all, this freedom is what hip-hop provides us. That is why we chose hip-

⁵⁹ "Bunun bir kıtası yok aslında. Kimi zaman bir sokak çocuğunun kimi zaman bir milyarderin hayatı anlatılabilir. Türkiye şartlarında düşünürsek rapin belli bir yaş kitlesi olduğunu düşünüyorum. 18-25 falandır." (Emresto ile görüşme, 07.07.2019)

hop. Restriction of it... Saying that hip-hop only tells the lives of the poor people is limiting hip-hop we love and encaging it. I do not want to be called a protest rapper. I am a good rapper and lyricist.” (Interview with Şiirbaz, 13.10.2019)⁶⁰

As Emresto states majority of the rap audiences are young, almost all around the world. However, the content in rap songs manifold. Resistance and opposition are quite significant motives behind the hip-hop culture. Yet, content variation in the songs does not mean that rap music is not oppositional. On the contrary, one of the main components of the hip-hop culture, freedom, has always preserved the rebellious side of hip-hop culture and rap music. Hence, the emphasis of Şiirbaz on freedom in the hip-hop culture is important; however, while taking into consideration the diversity provided by this culture, the question of where the position of rage is should not be forgotten. The song could be about various subjects like Şiirbaz and Emresto stated, but they missed the point that resistance is not only about the content of the lyrics. Even if the song has nothing to do with social or political criticism, maybe the way of how it is produced can illuminate another resistant character in rap music. Then, welcome to the Bermuda triangle of Turkish rap music.

4.4 The Bermuda Triangle of Turkish Rap Music: Music Industry, Popular Culture and Authenticity Debate

So far, I have discussed the association between the MCs and rap music and their perception of this music and hip-hop culture generally. Since these young people are firstly in the production side of the music industry, the question of how they are positioned within the music industry becomes essential. Rap music is one of the most industrialized genres in the world, and it has spotlighted different sectors in the market. Hence, not only the music industry is on the forefront but also various parts in the market like fashion from the commercial side of the hip-hop culture. The focus of this part of the chapter will be the link between rap music and hip-hop culture. The main

⁶⁰ “Bence iyi bir lyricist her hayatı anlatabilmeli. Ben bir seks işçisinin hayatını anlatan iyi bir 16’lık da yazabilirim. Bir inşaat işçisinin hayatını anlatan iyi bir 16’lık da yazabilirim. Çok zengin bie CEO’nun hayatını anlatan ilginç bir 16’lık da yazabilirim. Hiçbir şeyi olmayan yoksul biriyle ilgili de iyi bir 16’lık da yazabilirim. Zaten hip-hopun bize sunduğu özgürlük bu. Yani biz hip-hopu bu yüzden seçtik. Böyle sınırlamak... Yani hip-hop sadece yoksulun hayatını anlatır falan filan diye sınırlamak sevdiğimiz hip-hopu da sınırlamak ve onu kafese koymak olur. Bana mesela çok şey geliyor işte... Protest rapçi falan diye. Ben protest rapçi değilim. Ben iyi bir rapçiyim iyi bir lyricistim.” (Şiirbaz ile görüşme, 13.10.2019)

questions of this part are: How does MCs position themselves within the industry? Is there a struggle between the MCs and popular culture for the sake of rap music?

Similar to most of the black art forms, rap music can also be considered in line with the economic policies and market economies in the U.S. These economic conditions of the country led young black American to see rap as a way out from the “hood” so it was also an opportunity to make money (Lusane, 1993; cited in Mişe, 2018, 31). Popular culture is generally seen as a threat for most subcultural genres. Likewise, hip-hop heads or the audiences having a strong commitment to the culture and rap music have a tendency to fear the integration of rap music into pop. This tendency may follow separating “real” hip-hop from “fake” one. Then, the question arises: can rap music be defined by this separation?

Imani Perry calls this fear as moral panic and adds: “(...) the moral panic created by anxieties about mass production and capitalism and the threat to quality among avid listeners, or hip-hop heads.” (2004, 192). These anxieties that Perry mentioned are quite legitimate in terms of their concern about mass production which can transform the culture almost entirely. In order to understand two significant questions -whether integration into popular culture is a danger and whether this panic causes the categorizations of hip-hop which copy the other genres within the mainstream- it will be expressive to realize what people from rap music deem about the two corners of the triangle, the link between the popular culture and rap music.

Supporting these two questions above mentioned, one of the lines in *Uslanmıcaz*, a song written by Makrus, asks: “Is popularity a right choice?” and he explains this question as follows:

“Popular everything becomes trite. In 2007, we got a kick out of living in and listening to rap music. For instance, going out at night and bombing gave us a bang, but now the rap community and audiences do not understand this. They are just listening to it. Absolutely, popular everything loses its meaning.” (Interview with Makrus, 19.05.2019)⁶¹

⁶¹ “Popüler olan her şeyin zamanla suyu çıkıyor. 2007’de rap dinlerken yaşarken çok zevk alıyorduk. Gece sokaklara çıkıp bir yerlerde yazılama yapmak inanılmaz haz veriyordu mesela ama şu an rap müzik kitlesi, dinleyenler bunu anlamıyorlar. Dinliyorlar sadece. Kesinlikle popüler olan her şeyin içi boşalıyor.” (Makrus ile görüşme, 19.05.2019)

What Makrus emphasizes is the resistance in the struggle between rap music and popularity. While he advocates rap music, he stresses the existence of some meaningless or trite rappers and audiences who do not understand the “real” rap. In other words, the popularization of rap music will result in a kind of degeneration of this music, so what does meaningless rap mean? Or how do we know a rap song is not meaningless? As discussed in the previous part of the chapter, rage is at the forefront in rap music despite the variety of the topics addressed. Therefore, it can be argued that rap can be oppositional or resistant even if it does not aim to be so. The early hip-hop parties were also indicators of being oppositional without aiming it because guests of those parties made way for entertainment. Even though these parties seemed means of having fun, the root of them was rage against white domination. Then, Makrus overlooked this potential in the articulation of rap music into popular culture. It was also surprising that Makrus was also an MC who tried to make connections with the labels and producers from the music industry, so he had a tendency to be listened to by a large amount of audience, which could result in the popularization of his songs. Therefore, while Makrus criticizes the current situation of rap music, he is at risk of contradicting himself.

When the influence of popular culture on rap music is considered, its general effect on hip-hop culture should also be examined. In the second section of the chapter, there was a discussion about the question of how MCs as members of the hip-hop community perceive the culture in their life. That discussion has revealed hip-hop is seen as life-affirming and almost a guide for life. When it comes to the point of prominent features of rap music, being popular can change the priorities in this music. Kayra claims that what the priority in rap is the image now.

“Right now, rap music in the country is the most mainstream and meaningless type of rap. Things have changed. A young person just interested in rap music will not regard collectivity or togetherness. S/he will probably care about his/her look and image. Then, s/he will find a simple beat and dream of the rap video clips with all the lights. Contrary to in our time, s/he will not be set her/his life, fight for humanity. There is no challenge anymore. Hence, in Turkey, hip-hop is talked within the mainstream more than ever.” (Interview with Kayra, 13.06.2019) ⁶²

⁶² “Memlekette şu an rapin en içi boş ana akım hali mevcut. İşin rengi epey değişti. Böyle bir arada olmak falan bugün hip-hopa başlayan birinin ilgisini çekecek bir şey değil. Bugün başlayan çocuk

With the popularization of rap music, the motive for making rap has also changed. Especially in the early years of Turkish rap music in Turkey, the biggest reason for being interested in rap was the desire to learn new genres and cultures. Firstly, the beats then the content of the songs appealed to a vast amount of young people. After getting to know the social and historical background of hip-hop culture, challenging for something like one of the components of hip-hop and rap music became necessary for the hip-hop community. However, because of the articulation of rap to popular culture, the tables have turned. In parallel to what Kayra said, who has a say on the control over music, image, and distribution has shifted. Before discussing the influence of this shift, the debate over the quality of rap music will be addressed in order to comprehend the Bermuda triangle of rap music in detail. İmpala attributes the “demise” of rap music to the qualification of the people making rap music. In his song *Olmuyorsa Zorlama*, he criticizes Youtuber rappers.

“İmpala has come it is pure rap now
It is time to make it, really
You exploit rap for money
I will do it, here is the recipe
I am on the mic, also known as a slaughterous man
I am not an internet sensation, guess my name
Youtube smells like shit and all trash”⁶³

muhtemelen en önce yoğun şekilde tipiyle ilgilenir. Sonra basit bir beat bulur. Sonra kameralarla o ışıklarla rap kliplerini yapmanın hayalini kurar. Bizim zamanımızdaki gibi kendi hayatını derleyip toplamak insanlık namına bir şey yapmak falan olmaz. Küçük haliyle dünyaya meydan okumalar falan yok artık. Türkiye’de hip-hop hiç olmadığı kadar ana akımın içinde konuşulmaya başlandı yani.” (Kayra ile görüşme, 13.06.2019)

⁶³ “İmpala geldi bu tertemiz rap artık
Vakti geldi sahiden
3 kuruş paranıza alet eden rap
Ben yaparım alın bu da tarifiniz
Mic da ben nam-ı diğer katil herif
Fenomen değilim adımlı tahmin edin
Bok koktu Youtube, her çöplük”

What the authentic in rap music is generally defined by what the inauthentic is in this music. In her study, one of the interviewees of Speers establishes a connection between the “fakers” like the internet sensations and the motive behind making rap. “You can’t just do it because you think it’s cool. You can’t just do it cos your mates do it. You can’t just do it because you want to be an internet sensation. So in that sense, that’s what I mean by coming from a genuine place.” (Speers, 2014, 189). There is an apparent similarity between the arguments of Speers’ interviewee and İmpala. Both of them position themselves against fakers or those who are not coming from a genuine place. These two quotations indicate the relationship between the debate about authenticity and the popularization of rap music. Although it is not easy to answer who these fakers or the ones inauthentic are, it is arguable that they allow rappers to struggle against the fakers. Then, the rappers claim authenticity as opposed to those who are inauthentic. When I asked İmpala the meaning of “pure rap” for him, he responded to the Youtuber rappers.

“What I meant here was about Youtuber rappers, and it was a reaction to those who have turned rap music into a part of popular culture and who has made rap music meaningless. That expression says, “What you are making is not rap, and everyone should mind their business.” There are people who spend their lives on this music, so let them do it. Rap music that is supported by their other works and by subscribers of these works can get ahead of people making rap for years.” (Interview with İmpala, 26.07.2019)⁶⁴

Who makes rap music seems significant to the MCs because the quality of the content and the question of whether the song is authentic are dependent on these factors. Although the existence of Youtuber rappers has been a truth of Turkish rap music for approximately 3 years⁶⁵, the view of İmpala on the Youtuber rappers has the risk of limiting the rap music. As stated throughout this study, rap music is a way of

⁶⁴ “Orada demek istediğim biraz artık Youtuberların da rap yapmaya başlaması ve rap müziği mesajı olmayan daha popüler kültür ögesi haline getirenlere bir tepkiydi. O söylem de “Sizin yaptığınızın rap müzikle alakası yok, herkes kendi işini yapsa iyi olur bence” gibiydi. Bu iş için yıllarını vermiş emek harcayan insanlar var bırakın da onlar yapsın. Onların başka işlerden kazandığı abonelerle yaptığı rap müzik, yıllarca o işe emek vermiş insanın önüne geçebiliyor.” (İmpala ile görüşme, 26.07.2019)

⁶⁵ The examples of prominent figures among Youtuber rappers can be Berkcan Güven and Reynmen. Their songs’ videos have over ten million views.

expression, so defining who can make rap is a conservative stand. In addition, that kind of view can eliminate freedom in the hip-hop culture.

Articulation of rap music into popular culture is also related to the battle between the mainstream and the underground. The struggle of being authentic or keepin' it real comes up here too since the above-mentioned battle determines the MCs' position in the music industry, and this discussion complicates the find the location of rap music in the Bermuda Triangle. Both the production and consumption sides are included in this battle for Bendis as they are triggers of each other.

“Current popular rap does not correspond to what I know as rap music. There is a distinction between popular rap and underground rap by far. Trap and mumble that are popular are based on different things. Works that have pointless content are started to be done, which is annoying for me. Some of the MCs began to make music like pop singers that they had criticized. What I know as real rap is not this. In addition, most of the people who despised us because of listening to rap music have become hip-hop heads all of a sudden, but they do not understand anything about rap. This is a common problem now. I think we were happy with the rap that was listened by a small number of people and was telling something important. I wish this culture did not degenerate that much.” (Interview with Bendis, 12.03.2020)⁶⁶

The main focus is not rap audiences in this study, yet it will be profound to reflect on the above arguments of Bendis. She addresses the change in rap music together with the shift within the audiences. Articulation of rap to the popular culture has brought not only the variation in the content of the rap songs, but it also has led to a considerable increase in the number of audiences. Similar to the view claiming that “as rap music became more and more popular, it became less and less radical” (Pope, 2005, 79), for Bendis, the loss of radical character in rap has also affected who listens to this music. It is hard to give a clear answer to the question of whether mass production in rap music results in loss of opposition. If we say yes, all the songs written

⁶⁶ “Şu anda popüler olanın benim rap müzik olarak bildiğimle örtüşmediğini düşünüyorum. Underground raple arasında açık ara bir fark var bence. Popüler olan trap ve mumble rap çok farklı şeyler üzerine kurulu. İçerik olarak bomboş işler çıkmaya başladı ve bu bayağı sinir bozucu geliyor bana. Eleştirdikleri popçuların yaptığı müziği yapar oldu bazı MCler. Benim bildiğim gerçek rap bu değil. Bunun yanı sıra zamanında bizi rap dinlediğimiz için aşağılayıp hor gören çoğu kişinin birden kırk yıllık rap dinleyicisi edasına bürünmesi ama aslında raptan gram anlamaması durumu bayağı yaygın bir sıkıntı mesela şu an. Biz bir avuç insan gerçekten bir şeyler anlatan ve bize ait olan raple mutluyduk diye düşünüyorum aslında. Keşke bu kültür bu kadar yozlaşmasaydı.” (Bendis ile görüşme, 12.03.2020)

for the opposition will be overlooked. Yet, the fact that mass production entails repetition should not be forgotten.

In one of the discussions in *Noise* (1977), Jacques Attali examines the repetition and formulaic patterns in mass production (89). On the other hand, Tricia Rose disagrees with Attali and claims that repetition in rap music can be eliminated through the imaginative capacity (1994; 146). Both scholars are right when their points are deemed in accordance with the subjects. However, it would be more expressive to reconsider the destructive feature of repetition in hip-hop and rap music. Bell Hooks demonstrates the removal of the local is detrimental for black music.

“All African-American engagement in the performing arts, whether through the staged performance of poetry and plays, or through rap, risks losing its power to disrupt and engage with the specific locations from which it emerges via a process of commodification that requires reproduction in a marketable package. As mass product, live performance can rarely address the local in a meaningful way, because the primacy of addressing the local is sacrificed to the desire to engage a wider audience of paying consumers.” (1995, 215; qt in Perry, 2004, 200)

Appreciation of the locals is significant in order to allow musicians to stay alive in the music industry. Having such a space to reinstitute the local relationship between the music and the producer is also essential for rap music. Hip-hop, with all its cultural practices, combines street, music, and dance, so keeping the “local soul” provides MCs with preserve collective and local creation. Although mass production is a danger, this mass-produced music is transformed into a means for local participation. Particularly, in the early years of rap music and hip-hop parties, when DJs broke the beats of already recorded music and MCs rapped over them, the audiences also witnessed live reproduction of the songs. Nevertheless, the local and collective participation and creation declined not only in rap music because the products of these parties are sold to the various corners of the world.

On the one hand, there is a view that rap music has become subject to commodification because of mass production and its articulation to popular culture. On the other hand, adjustment to technological improvements and an increase in production give a chance to be heard. Having a positive point of view about the recent rise of rap music, Çağıl

relates the popularity of rap music to the change in the distribution process of the music industry.

“Turning a blind eye to the physical albums in Turkey gives a chance to the musicians who do not have an opportunity to distribute their works. Meantime, (rap) music has kept up with the time as well, as audiences started to find different examples. For me, I see a positive side to the popularization of rap. Many new musicians take courage and start to produce. As the production increases, the chance to come across interesting examples will rise.” (Interview with Çağıl, 05.03.2020)⁶⁷

During the commercialization of rap music, the balance of control over music and distribution has shifted. In the initial years of Turkish rap, the dominance of record companies was highly apparent. They still have a say in the music industry unequivocally, yet with the rise of digital streaming, the obligation to depend on a company is getting less worthy. Rose emphasizes the danger of the fact that rap music turns into a profit-making process.

“What is more important about the shift in hip hop’s orientation is not its movement from precommodity to commodity but the shift in control over the scope and direction of the profit making process, out of the hands of local Black and Hispanic entrepreneurs and into the hands of larger white-owned multinational businesses.” (1994, 40)

During the evolution of hip-hop, white executives, producers, and musicians played a significant role in the U.S. Although the dominance of black culture can not be ignored, apart from the contributions of blacks and Latinos, the effect of white entrepreneurs in U.S. rap changed the route of hip-hop. Nelson George also notes that “without white entrepreneurial involvement, hip-hop culture wouldn't have survived its first decade on vinyl.” (1998, 57; qt in Ford, 2004, 133). The paramount impact of record companies can be seen all over the world. In the late 90s and early 200s, it was almost impossible to imagine the number of independent musicians that we have today.

⁶⁷ “Türkiye’de fiziksel albümlerin Spotify gibi platformlar tarafından arka plana itilmesi, dağıtım şansı yakalayamayan pek çok müzisyen için büyük şans oldu. Bu esnada hem müzik çağa ayak uydurmaya devam etti, hem de dinleyiciler farklı örnekleri kolay bulabilmeye başladı. Kendi adıma, popülerleşmesinin olumlu olduğunu düşünüyorum. Pek çok yeni müzisyen bu durumdan cesaret alıyor ve üretmeye başlıyor. Üretim arttıkça da enteresan örneklerle karşılaşma şansımız artıyor.” (Çağıl ile görüşme, 05.03.2020)

The bond between the labels and musicians has severed, and in the formation of this difference, the contribution of digital transformation in the music industry can not be neglected. Many music genres have independent musicians and those who are signed by the companies. However, the conflict between being “underground” and “mainstream” is more vital in rap music than the other genres. As mentioned before, this struggle also refers to the discussion on “keeping it real” or being authentic. Recently, the underground and the mainstream are getting intertwined day by day since the classical cycle among production, distribution, and consumption was broken. Musicians do not have to work under the big labels. In fact, everybody can start their own label. Therefore, the struggle between the underground and the mainstream is getting complicated. How do rappers experience the link between themselves and the record companies? Are MCs willing to relinquish rap music to the bosses of the music industry?

As stated before, local participation and production are essential to keep the “hip-hop soul” alive. Susan McClary refers to the importance of local groups in punk rock, and she writes:

“Even among the most disenfranchised, the values of capitalism are strong and many groups have become absorbed by the recording industry....But while there exists a powerful tendency for industry to contain the noise of some of these groups by packaging it, converting it into style commodity, the strength of the movements is manifested by the seeming spontaneous generation of even more local groups.” (Afterword of Noise, 1985, 143)

What McClary mentions as “the spontaneous generation” corresponding to the underground in hip-hop. Underground musicians are not defined by the force of mass production or commercialization. Therefore, their primary frame of references in the works is based on the hip-hop community. Generally, these artists are not signed by record companies or do not have enough space in mainstream music broadcasts like radios and TVs. However, there are also underground rappers who have already achieved success in the mainstream have a commitment to the hip-hop community (Perry, 2004, 202). If the history of hip-hop culture is considered, it can be said that the underground is the cornerstone of hip-hop. The underground preserves what Attali

notes as “composition”⁶⁸. The underground remains strongly embedded in the cultural context of hip-hop, which includes interaction, DJing, style (clothing), live performances, and language. Moreover, it can also refuse the choice of capital and instead prefer community. Nevertheless, this preference does not mean that there will be no rhymes about buying commodities and earning money because there is a possibility of the fact that one may be out to get paid; at the same time, do not have a desire to sell out the hip-hop community.

In the struggle of being underground and mainstream, MCs’ position to this challenge varies. Aiming to indicate how they are affected by this struggle within the music industry, the following part includes the views of the MCs. On the one hand, they have to be afloat in order to survive; on the other hand, they want to “keep rap real” and preserve the rage in it. Besides the devoutness, the reason for being an independent rapper is sometimes out of the ordinary. For example, Yung Ouzo accounts for his motive to stay independent: “I am working independently, not signed by a label and content with my condition. I do not want to be intervened now.” (Interview with Yung Ouzo, 06.07.2019)⁶⁹. Remarking that he makes positive and fun songs, the answer of Yung Ouzo is more than a simple claim. Since he has sufficient materials for recording, he feels contented not to be signed by the labels. His primary reason is not the intervention to the content of the songs but instead is more personal, asking for privacy and ease. However, his premise on the interference of the record companies give hints about the circumstances in the music industry.

Some argue that rap music was turned into a depoliticized commodity. There is some truth to this claim since the rise in the number of audiences- particularly white audiences in the U.S. case- has led to overcoming the message concerns (Mişe, 2018, 34). Boyd (1997) notes that the integration of the MCs into the market resulted in the loss of critiques towards the social, political and economic problems. Likewise, in her study on rap advertisements, Blair (1993) states that producers want to transform rap

⁶⁸ Attali defines composition as follows: “There is no communication possible between men any longer, now that the codes have been destroyed, including even the code of exchange in repetition. We are all condemned to silence-unless we create our own relation with the world and try to tie other people into the meaning we thus create. That is what composing is.” (1985, 134)

⁶⁹ “Şu an bağımsız çalışıyorum ve böyle olmaktan memnunum. Şu anda bana karışılmasını istemem.” (Yung Ouzo ile görüşme, 06.07.2019)

into a musical form, drawing more attention in the music industry, which allows oppression of the culture industry ultimately. The popularity of rap music has influenced the way MCs and DJs produce in terms of the materials they use, and the boost in the amount of audiences has changed the direction of messages to entertainment. However, technological developments such as the growth of digital streaming should not be neglected when discussing the effects of the labels or the music industry on rap music. The accumulation of products is not the same anymore, so most of the rappers are not in need of those major labels. Then, do the record labels keep up their strength in the market? For Kayra, the attitude of these labels is different from what it was in the 90s or early 2000s.

“I have worked with two different labels. Neither they interfered with the songs, nor they said something else. There was a little talk about the images in the album of 90 BPM. When I worked with Basemode Records, they did not say anything. The reason for this attitude is that they know our music, so they also know it can not be intervened. If they mess with our music, the spell will be broken. That music can not be restricted; it should be natural. It is not a skill to have 1 million streams; the skill is making our song free.” (Interview with Kayra, 13.06.2019)

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The impact of the record labels is still crucial, especially for those who have just entered into the music industry. However, some of the labels are aware of the fact that when it comes to rap music, they can not behave the same way as they do in other popular music genres. Kayra’s statements imply that the tones of the rappers have the power to define how labels will act in the production stage of the songs. The rise of digital streaming, the improvements in social networking sites and file-sharing have furthered the spread of music in a productive manner which was previously unimaginable. As a result, these changes in the music industry had tottered the record companies. Following that, like many musicians, rappers have gained the chance to have a say in their productions or songs because the indissoluble bond between the artists and the labels can be drifted away. This disengagement strengthens the MCs’

⁷⁰ “Ben iki tane farklı şirketle çalıştım. Ne herhangi bir şarkımıza müdahale edildi ne başka bir şey oldu. Çok küçük, belki yani görsellerle alakalı son 90 BPM albümüyle ilgili 1-2 konuşma geçti. Hele ki Basemode ile çalışırken bana en ufak bir şey söylenmedi. Bunun nedeni de bizimle çalışan kişiler bizim müziğimizi bildikleri için ona müdahale edilemeyeceğini biliyorlar. Ona müdahale edersen zaten onun büyüsünü bozmuş olacaksın. O müdahale edilebilir bir müzik değil, onun doğal olması lazım. Bizim şarkımızı 1 milyon dinletmek maharet değil bizim şarkımızın doğal olması maharet.” (Kayra ile görüşme, 13.06.2019)

hand so that they can be freer and their songs as well, like Kayra says. Furthermore, he is not alone in such regard, since Emresto, working with a label, also thinks that record companies do not affect the content or the style of the songs.

“Working with a company has difficulties, apparently. If a rapper is signed by a label, s/he should go into it well. In Turkey, there are four-five labels on rap music. One or two of them allow rappers to explain themselves. I had a contract with one of them, so I do not think that I will have problems in making songs as I want. If I have, I cancel the contract.” (Interview with Emresto, 07.07.2019) ⁷¹

Although Emresto admits that there are still some constraints about labels, he also remarks being signed to a label is not going to change the way he makes songs or the content of the songs. In the case of Emresto, who pulls strings is him since he is keeping his options open. In other words, he is aware of the fact that he does not need the labels for the distribution of the songs. Record companies can facilitate creating necessary partnerships and issues with sales like supply albums for music stores. However, artists have the means to directly put their music into their audiences' hands directly, which strengthens the musicians' hands. The tough stance against the record labels is derived from the technological facilities. Therefore, it would appear that being signed to the labels does not have to result in drastic changes in the songs. Similar to the views of Emresto and Kayra, Şiirbaz, as an independent MC, notes that if he is signed to a label, it will not have an impact on his songs.

“I will not sign a contract that will decide what I am going to say, but if the deal does not curtail my freedom of expression, then I will sign it. If I release an album on a record label, the difference will be the banderole. Until I finish the song, I can not be worried about whether the company will accept or whether there will be a problem if it releases. The label that wants to work with me must take the risk because no one needs them. They need us. Modified album of Şiirbaz will not be a real one. Those signed to the companies do not have to be their clowns. It is about knowing what you have signed. If you drag yourself up by your own bootstraps, the companies can not impose.” (Interview with Şiirbaz, 13.10.2019) ⁷²

⁷¹ “Şirketle çalışmanın zorlukları illa ki var. Herhangibir rapçi bir şirketle sözleşme imzalıyorsa zaten o şirketi iyice araştırmalı. Zaten Türkiye’de belli başlı 4-5 tane rap şirketi var . İnsanın kendini anlatmasına izin verecek sayısı da 1 ya da 2’dir. Ben bunların biriyle sözleşme imzaladım o yüzden müziğimde herhangi bir yumuşama yaşayacağımı düşünmüyorum. Olur da yaşarsam zaten çıkarım.” (Emresto ile görüşme, 07.07.2019)

The common point between the three MCs is their emphasis on the freedom of expression. Although two of them are signed to the record labels, they assert that what the importance is not being signed to but how the MCs get a position in the music industry. Despite of the significance of their views for the reconsideration of the relationship with the music industry, it is possible to see examples close to popular music and having entertaining lyrics. However, their points imply the need to rethink the concepts of underground and mainstream. The increasing marketisation of rap music has caused hip-hop artists being found themselves in the tough position of being “inside” of the mainstream, partially defined as being opposed (McLeod, 1999, 136). Therefore, the rising interest in rap music strengthens the demarcation between the underground and mainstream.

In the earlier paragraphs of this section, MCs’ views about the popularity of rap music were mentioned. From Youtuber rappers to “unconcerned” rap audiences, their opinions are pretty adamant about the articulation of rap music to the popular culture. On the one hand, this popularity brought about a “pointless” type of rap music; on the other hand, the rise in Turkish rap music gave rise to the watching eyes of the record companies. Moreover, when it comes to the conflict between the underground and the mainstream, defining the underground is getting tricky. If the concept of underground is deemed as simply the opposite of mainstream, it would not be adequate while discussing rap in the music industry. Graham defines the underground as “a practice, a cultural philosophy of music that exists outside the mainstream” (2010, 10), so it is much more than the “physical access of the music” (Speers, 2014, 120). Hence, it seems that the underground actually appears as a preference for creative control based on shared values, regard for authenticity, and freedom of expression rather than commercial success. However, the conflicting position of rappers in the music industry remains. In other words, on the one hand, they see independent music as uncorrupted

⁷² “Ben zaten şunu söyleyebilirsin şunu söyleyemezsin diyen bir anlaşmayı imzalamam ama ifade özgürlüğümü kısıtlamayan yaptığım müziği karşılayan bir anlaşma gelirse ancak o zaman yaparım. O zaman yaparsam da zaten albümün tek farkı üzerinde bandrol olması olur. Şarkıyı yapana kadar asla şeyi düşünemem ya şirket bunu kabul eder mi şirket bunu yayınlarsa sorun olur mu falan. Benimle çalışmak isteyen bir şirket zaten bunu göze alsın çünkü şu an şirketlere falan hiçbirimizin ihtiyacı yok. Şirketlerin bize ihtiyacı var. Törpülenmiş bir Şiirbaz albümü Şiirbaz albümü olmaz zaten. Şirketle anlaşılan herkes de şirketin maymunu olacak diye bir şey yok. Biraz ne imzalıyorsun onu bilmekle alakalı. Bir şekilde sen kendi kendini yarattıysan yıllar boyunca sen zaten kendi kendine para ediyorsan şirket sana onu dayatmıyor.” (Şiirbaz ile görüşme, 13.06.2019)

by money-grubber record companies and so more free in terms of creativity; on the other hand, they occupy themselves with the lack of recognition, absence on the mainstream media and the trouble to earn money from the music (*ibid.* 121). In an interview with İmpala, he said:

“We need to make money from now on. You started to think, “Where are we going with this?”. Yet, if I could, I would do not work with a label. It is a market in which there is good money. You are an artist, and when you are signed to a company, you will sign away all the copyright. Then, something you have turns into someone’s belonging. You will live out your life, but sometimes you are forced to do this. However, until I need a record label, I do not think to be signed to.”⁷³ (Interview with İmpala, 26.07.2019)

It seems that the MCs want more recognition and maybe “respect”, but they do not have a desire to “sell-out”. Selling out is also a tricky concept since the demarcation between making money and being successful is not easy to define. It would seem that many rappers insist on being away from the mainstream. But some rappers remain faithful to the underground values and principles. In fact, they can strive for a position in keeping with these credentials. When Şiirbaz gives details about giving a concert, he emphasizes that he wants to remain underground.

“There are many cities that I want to go to, but for those people who are like me, wanting to remain underground and having no heart to appeal to everybody, there are two sides to every story in terms of financial issues. I need to spend time on it and afford to travel to the gigs. When I come back home, I need to pay off.” (Interview with Şiirbaz, 13.10.2019)⁷⁴

⁷³ “Para kazanmak lazım artık, biz de nereye kadar böyle gideceğiz telaşına insan kapılıyor. Yine de ben elimden gelseydi hiçbir şirketle çalışmazdım. Bu bir pazar, para dönüyor aslında. Sen bir sanatçısın ve şirketle anlaştığın an artık bütün yaptığın işlerin telif hakkını o şirkete devrediyorsun. Artık senin olan bir şey sonsuza kadar bir başkasının oluyor. Yaşantımı satmış oluyorum falan ama ne yazık ki buna bazen mecbur kalıyoruz. Ben yine de şirkete ihtiyaç duymayacağım zamana kadar yapmayı düşünmüyorum.” (İmpala ile görüşme, 26.07.2019)

⁷⁴ “Çok şehir var aslında gitmek istediğim ama bu işin de işte finansal kısmında özellikle benim gibi daha yeraltı kalmak isteyen daha böyle herkese hitap etme derdi olmayan insanlar için o biraz madalyonun iki yüzü. Sonuçta buna vakit yatırmam gerekiyor, cebimden yol paramı karşılamam gerekiyor. Ben eve döndüğümde ona harcadığım vaktin asgari de olsa bir maddi dönüşünü almış olmam gerek.” (Şiirbaz ile görüşme, 13.06.2019)

Although he has a wish to keep the underground base in his music, the financial problems are still at the forefront. In order to obtain his goal, on a day-to-day level, Şiirbaz experiences struggle, but he would not compromise his creative control to make a hit song. The attitudes established by the MCs toward the record labels point out the resistance of hip-hop within the music industry. From how they handle the labels to their efforts on working out problems in the accumulation of songs such as the gig expenses, the MCs' fight to survive in the music industry without getting lost in the Bermuda triangle proves the resistance. The general view of the fact that rap is oppositional in the sense that its critical lyrics actually looks at the case from a limited angle.

As discussed in the previous sections, making rap music and putting it into the music industry is also part of the resistance because, despite the increasing attention of the labels, the area saved for rap music in the music industry is not enough. In other words, "rap music and musicians have not been "co-opted" or invited into the boardroom in quite the same way as have other types of music and their makers, most notably the way in which rock moved from the street to the executive suite" (Negus, 1999, 506). Although rap has contended lower budgets, copyright deals and limited contracts, it has been able to produce alternative resources; rap musicians have succeeded in redefining the music, especially in the spaces identified as "underground". Therefore, their struggle is not simply to survive but also to thrive. When it comes to the challenges experienced by female MCs, the tension increases and the final section of the chapter will discuss their resistance.

4.5. "Flip The Scene Into Reverse": Female MCs in Turkish Rap Music

"Some think that we can't flow (can't flow)

Stereotypes they got to go (got to go)

I'm gonna mess around and flip the scene into reverse

With what?

With a little touch of ladies first."⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Ladies First from All Hail the Queen, Tommy Boy Records (1989).

Hip-hop culture and rap music are associated with urban male culture generally. However, female MCs, dancers and DJs have been involved in the history of this culture and music since its early years. Critics of rap music began to realize the growth of successful female rap acts during the 1990s, and although rap has often been considered as a male-dominant musical form, women have been taken part in the rap scene since its first years (Keyes, 2004, 265). Pearlman details the female presence as follows: “females were always into rap, had their little crews and were known for rocking parties, schoolyards, whatever it was; and females rocked just as hard as males (but) the male was just first to be put on wax (a record).” (1988, 26). Therefore, it can be said that female rappers have had to struggle to reach a considerable achievement close to that of male rappers. To challenge the dominance of male rappers, female rappers have not only demonstrated their lyrical skills in their struggle to survive and thrive, they have also generated spaces from which to convey strong messages. Hence, the musical activities of female MCs can be seen as an effort to create a space where they can articulate their suffering (Lupati, 2019, 140). Women are achieving major steps in rap music by breaking the taboos about female MCs in a male-dominant culture and redefining women’s place in this culture and music. Female rappers’ success does not mean that rap is not predominantly male, but female rap artists go beyond the shadows of male rappers in various ways.

In studies on Turkish hip hop and, more precisely, rap, there is a lack of information about female performers. As in many other fields, most of the available material indicates less consideration for women than for men, implying that women's contributions were and continue to be less significant. In addition, while the majority of studies on female rappers locate women’s voices in rap, they present a limited part of female representation.⁷⁶ These works tend to focus on mostly how female rappers respond to sexual objectification, so they miss the many roles and potential issues of female rappers. Tricia Rose sets a course for the question of how female rappers should be evaluated, and according to Rose, the main focus should not be just male rappers and misogyny because female MCs should be evaluated

⁷⁶ For more information on this topic, see Berry (1994), Goodall (1994) and Guevara (1987).

“but also in response to a variety of related issues, including dominant notions of femininity, feminism and black female sexuality. At the very least, black women rappers are in dialogue with one another, black men, black women and dominant American culture as they struggle to define themselves.” (1994, 147-148).

Most of the studies have been conducted by women and aim to elucidate issues about female rappers and put up a feminist analysis. Throughout the thesis, the resistance practices of the MCs within various contexts- place, everyday life and music industry- are discussed. However, the struggle in these distinctive frameworks, the gender gap is seemed to be significant. As a result, I would like to examine whether there is a difference between the challenges of female and male rappers. To put it another way, do female rappers “flip the scene into reverse”, as Queen Latifah says?

By paying attention to female MCs, we can gain an insight into how they offer a relatively safe zone where they can address issues of sexual power, misogyny and relieve the anxieties of day-to-day level “oppression”. In the previous sections of the study, the connection between hip-hop, rap and challenges of everyday life was stated, but the focus was mainly on male MCs’ struggles. In the above-mentioned sentence, the word oppression is placed in inverted commas because the experiences based on oppression can differ in relation to gender. Since hip-hop is African American art form, the question of “how the gendering of blackness is articulated, (re)presented and resisted” by the rap artists becomes significant (Isoke, 2013, 321). Moreover, it also provides female MCs with a creative side to explore various forms of female subjectivity. Although “hip-hop feminism”⁷⁷ in the U.S context is greatly discussed, international hip-hop research still lacks this focus. This part of the study seeks to understand how challenges faced by female MCs in rap music and in relation to how they negotiate and challenge gender norms in hip-hop culture and rap music. To this

⁷⁷ For more information on this discussion, see “Under Construction” written by Whitney Peoples (2008). In this article, hip-hop feminism is used as an umbrella term in order to cover works regarding women in hip-hop culture or part of the hip-hop generation. In addition, in “Hip-Hop Feminist Media Studies”, Isoke argues “hip-hop feminism effectively challenges and transforms power structures, social order and widespread cultural practices, and is proving to be an efficacious intersectional strategy for understanding complex identities and difference in women’s studies and across academic disciplines. Simultaneously, hip-hop feminism engages effective grassroots community-based social justice movements across transnational frameworks (qt in Durham, 2010, 134). For the agenda of the hip-hop feminism see Pough (2007).

end, I have interviewed four female MCs who still make rap music, and all of them continue their music careers out of the hip-hop groups.

Ayben, who is the first “home-grown”⁷⁸ female rapper and gains significant media attention, defines rap music as a “verbal self-defence” in one of her interviews.⁷⁹ Bendis, one of my interviewees, defines rap as manifestation, along with being on the same mind as Ayben.

“We can also describe it as a defence. To me, rap music is a manifestation. Actually, music is a manifestation in itself like literature, art and sculpture. I think we can tell much more things through rap music compared to other genres. Rap music can also be used to express the experiences of women.”⁸⁰ (Interview with Bendis, 12.03.2020)

Her statement emphasizes rap as a means of expression, and she thinks rap music beyond self-defence. For Bendis, the bigger capacity of rap music allows the MCs to point out the experiences. Many male interviewees also stated rap’s lyrical opportunities in terms of expression. However, what Bendis says is more than that since she refers to specifically “women’s” experiences. When we go back to the definition of Ayben, there is a kind of similarity between what Bendis and Ayben see. Defining rap as a “defence” gives clues about what women and particularly female rappers live through in Turkey. Moreover, Bendis’ emphasis on the female experiences indicates how she establishes a link between rap music and challenges faced by women in Turkey. While Bendis supports the idea of Ayben, Harpya disagrees with her but refers to giving voice to different issues.

“To me, rap music most of the time is not a self-defence. As a woman, rap music means “becoming visible”. I want to show both me and other women are here. I

⁷⁸ Ayben is not the first female Turkish rapper because two MCs from the Turkish diaspora, Aziza-A based in Berlin and Sultana from New York, had already released their first albums before Ayben. For the detailed discussion on the music of Ayben, see Solomon (2013).

⁷⁹ Interview by Tuğçe Özbiçer for Duvar on 17th December 2017.

⁸⁰ “Savunma olarak da nitelendirebiliriz tabi ki. Benim için ise rap müzik bir dışavurumdur. Aslında müzik başlı başına bir dışavurumdur. Aynı edebiyat, resim ya da heykel gibi. Rap müzikle de diğer müzik türlerine göre daha çok şey anlatabildiğimizi düşünüyorum ben. Kadınların yaşadıklarına dair bir ifade aracı olarak da kullanılabilir rap müzik.” (Bendis ile görüşme, 12.03.2020)

think I have presented that even if the genders are different, we have similar problems in many topics.”⁸¹ (Interview with Harpya, 12.03.2020)

Harpya has a different point of view compared to what Bendis states and she underlines the “visibility”. Her statement can be considered as a sign of how women are subjected to oppression or social stigmatization in Turkey. The need for becoming visible makes rap music conducive to express their stances on the problems and restrictions. Morgan (1999) claims that: “the key that unlocks the riches of contemporary black female identity . . . lie in the juncture where ‘truth’ is no longer black and white but subtle, intriguing shades of gray.” (39). Hence, she demands a space that dynamic frameworks are engaging women’s multidimensionality. Becoming visible can also be related to Morgan’s argument because spaces filled with shades of gray can be possible if the women and female rappers have a say in the subjects that interest them. As a result, not the stereotypes⁸² about women in hip-hop culture define the truth, but the subjects from the culture might do it.

Harpya also draws attention to the relationship between other female and male MCs. The commonality about the problems being come across in daily life makes her think about the negotiations. Her thoughts on this association imply what Rose calls “ongoing dialogue”. She argues that women rappers participate in dialogue with male rappers and their audiences and through the perpetual dialogue among them allows rappers to interpret “fears, pleasures and promises of young black women and men whose voices have been relegated to the silent margins of public discourse” (2004, 294). Here, Harpya not only utters the importance of rap music for women, but she also mentions a dialogue among male and female MCs. This dialogue makes way for the zone in which female rappers can address various questions from sexism to economic difficulties. Although the existence of common problems are stated by

⁸¹ “Rap müzik benim için çoğu konuda savunma sanatı olmadı. Bir kadın olarak da "görünür olmak" oldu rap müzik. Hem kendim hem de diğer kadınların da burada var olduğunu göstermek istedim. Aslında cinsiyetler farklı da olsa meselelerimizin çoğu konuda benzerlik taşıdığını da göstermiş olduğumu düşünüyorum.” (Harpya ile görüşme, 12.03.2020)

⁸² Rose asserts that rap songs about style and prestige see women as commodities, objects and ornament. She also adds there are at least two categories describing women in rap music- the “kind to take home to mother” and the “kind you meet at three o’clock in the morning” (2004, 295).

Harpya, one of the songs of Bendis is an example of how challenges in everyday life take place in female MCs' songs.

You are tired of being in the front line in this war

You are drowned in this system bothering day after day

You are oppressed with the imposition

Your name that is pressured by suppression is just a problem⁸³

While the potential references to gender inequalities and daily struggles of women are highly possible in the songs written by particularly female MCs, they also take an oppositional stance to the problems other than gender. Therefore, it can be said that songs like *Haykır* are part of what Rose called “ongoing dialogue”. Although there can be a dialogue between male and female MCs, the tension between them is still valid. In the video about B-Girls, female breakdancers, in Turkey, interviewees complain about the mansplaining in the hip-hop culture.⁸⁴ They talk about how they deal with the judgement of the fact that women are not as strong as men. This assumption can also be seen in rap music since it is part of the hip-hop culture. In the interview with Zeval, her statements are proves of male dominance.

Like it is not hard enough being a woman in this world, they try to oppress and benefit from you within the hip-hop that is the culture of peace and equality. As female MCs, we have already been a minority group. ⁸⁵ (Interview with Zeval, 20.03.2020)

⁸³ “Bu savaşta en ön safta yer almaktan yoruldun
Günden güne yakarı sıkıran bu sistemde boğuldun
Dayatmayla yoğruldu ve kalıba sokulup duruldun
Baskılarla bastırılan adın sade sorundu”
(Haykır from Mehtap Ardi Kelamlar, Records DK, 2019)

⁸⁴ +90. (2019, July 5). Hip Hop Dansının Mücadeleci Kadınları. Youtube.

⁸⁵ “Zaten bu dünyada kadın olmak yeterince zor değilmiş gibi, bir de barışın, eşitliğin kültürü olan hip-hop içinde bile sizi ezmeye ya da sizden faydalanmaya çalışıyorlar. Yeterince azınlık bir grubuz zaten kadın MCler olarak.” 8Zeval ile görüşme, 12.03.2020)

The explanation of Zeval asserts that hip-hop is generally described as male-dominated, where women have to face discourses accepting them to be minority and inferior, as well as pressure to conform to stereotypical ideas (Berggren, 2014, 242). Similarly, Cornel West (1988) on-site describes the tension between black men and black women: “the pressure on Afro-Americans as a people has forced the black man closer to the black woman: they are in the same boat. But they are also at each other's throat. The relation is internally hierarchical and often mediated by violence: black men over black women.” (qt. in Rose, 1994, 222). In spite of the fact that West elaborates on the Afro-American context, his argument can also be considered within the oppression faced by female MCs in Turkey. While West states, “they are in the same boat,” referring to the negotiation between men and women, he also indicates the hierarchical relationship between them. Zeval’s words show the oppositional relationship to the male rappers, whereas Harpya gives an example of negotiation or dialogue in the interview.

There are many advantages to doing collective works. I have two songs about women’s rights. When I had made these songs with collaboration with men, I understood what kind of view he had on this topic. Thanks to rap music, we discussed the subject. Hence, the collective soul is crucial. ⁸⁶ (Interview with Harpya, 12.03.2020)

Supporting the experiences of Harpya, lyrics in some of the male rappers’ works include the gender inequalities and increasing number of femicides like the song of İmpala, *Bugün Kim Öldü?*.⁸⁷ Similarly, Kayra also underlines his borderline on the problems that İmpala stated in the abovementioned song (Interview with Kayra, 13.06.2019). Nevertheless, this is not to say that the existence of the negotiation can cover up the challenges of female MCs having in daily life and the music industry. Furthermore, female MCs express what women live through in Turkey, such as the song of Zeval, *Tek Yol Müzik*.

It is 15.35; two more women are murdered

⁸⁶ “Ortak çalışmalar yapmanın birçok güzelliği var. Kadın haklarıyla ilgili iki tane şarkım var. Erkeklerle şarkıyı yaptığımda onun konuya hangi pencereden baktığını görmüş oldum. Rap müzik sayesinde bu konuda istişare de etmiş olduk. O yüzden kolektif ruh önemlidir.” (Harpya ile görüşme, 12.03.2020)

⁸⁷ In this song, he talks about different problems from femicides, child rapes to homophobia.

Some of them are beaten, some of them are thrown off a balcony

There is one reason! If you ask, they are religious, where is your religion? ⁸⁸

The overall message of this song is the struggles of women and women's subordination. There is anger in the song, which is the sign of "creative emotion for feminism: it does not just get us stuck in the past but opens up the future for transformation" (Ahmed, 2004, 172-178, cited in Berggren, 2014, 240).

In the preceding section of this chapter, problems faced by the MCs in the music industry are discussed in order to realize how these struggles are part of their resistance to rap music. In that part of the study, the female MCs' challenges are not examined intentionally because it would be more appropriate to debate the topic in this section. Therefore, the following pages will be about female MCs' position in the Bermuda Triangle of rap music. In the general discussion on the stress between the music industry and the MCs, their effort to survive and thrive appears as part of the resistance. Within the context of female MCs, their problem is beyond survival since they also have to deal with sexism.

Berggren claims that the portrayal of female rappers in Sweden case is "weird and different", and she adds that "hip hop is described as imbued with masculine norms that cast women as deviant. This also conveys the image of the solitude of the female rapper who is 'walking alone' – an image that is immediately put to use as a metaphor for boasting about oneself as 'standing out from the crowd' (2014, 242). Arguments of Berggren is important here since her discussion can also refer to stereotypical views on female rappers. Within the context of Turkey, there is also the expectation of behaving like a man apart from being seemed as "weird and different". Harpya points out the dichotomy between being feminine and masculine as follows:

I did not have trouble personally since I make rap as a woman, but female MCs that I am close to experience difficulties personally. For instance, this work is based on benefits. You ask for a beat; then you see that he is expecting different gains. I think since I take a tougher line, I may not have difficulties personally.

⁸⁸ Saat 15.35 olmuş, iki kadın daha katledilmiş.
Kimi dayaktan gebertilmiş,kimi balkondan itilmiş!
Sebeptek!Sorsan dindar hepsi,söyle nerde dinin?
(Zeval, Tek Yol Müzik, 2012)

However, it should not depend on being tough or naive or being feminine or masculine.⁸⁹ (Interview with Harpya, 12.03.2020)

Her words indicate that female rappers' artistic characteristics are in danger of being ignored, compared to male rappers who are generally asked about their musical works. Yet, the works of female MCs are not evaluated according to the qualification of the beat, flow, or lyric. Instead, the evaluation criterion is most of the time male MCs' works. Eva expresses this comparison based on gender norms.

Turkish rap has a strong community, but some groups are unconscious. Ignorant group comments that women can not make rap and rap is a man thing. They have never listened to Lauryn Hill⁹⁰. They do not know hip-hop culture and the fact that rap is genderless by its ideology. As a result, when a female MC approves herself, they want her to rhyme and behave like a man.”⁹¹ (Interview with Eva, 17.04.2020)

Based on the social and gender norms, these comparisons and stereotypical notions about female rappers echo in their relationship between them and the music industry. The challenges of male MCs in the music industry usually derive from the struggle to have a say in the characteristics or content of the music. However, when it comes to female rappers, their experiences in the music industry are more distinct. As it can be estimated by the statements of Harpya, female rappers are exposed to strict gender norms. Zeval explains what she has lived through while trying to be signed to a label, then her decision to become an independent MC.

“I think people who have no idea about the (hip-hop) culture can stereotype you since it is popular. Saving your presence, there are good labels too, but it needs time to analyze and see it. They might interfere with how you walk, your hair color, and clothes like they are modelling agencies. Also, when you meet with

⁸⁹ “Kadın olarak rap yaptığım için birebir bir sıkıntı yaşamadım ama yakın çevremdeki kadın MClerin birebir sıkıntısı oldu. İşte, bu işin biraz daha menfaate dayalı dönmesi gibi. Adamdan gidip beat istiyorsun ama bu işe daha farklı bir menfaat koymuş olduğunu görüyorsun. Sanırım biraz da “sert” durduğum için de sıkıntı yaşamamış olabilirim ama bunu sert veya naif duran, çok feminen ya da maskülen duran olarak ayırmamak lazım.” (Harpya ile görüşme, 12.03.2020)

⁹⁰ Lauryn Hill can be considered as the best example of hip-hop feminism's huge influence. Her first solo album in 1998, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, was acclaimed and it won five Grammy awards.

⁹¹ “Türkçe Rap'in sağlam bir kitlesi var fakat içlerinden bazı kesimler de çok bilinçsiz. Kadın rap müzik yapamaz, rap erkek işidir gibi yorumlar yazan cahil bir kesim var. Lauryn Hill dinlememiş hiç hayatında. Hip-hop kültüründen habersiz. Rap'in ideolojisi gereği cinsiyetsiz olduğundan habersiz. O yüzden bir kadın MC çıktığında erkek gibi okusun, erkek gibi davranış istiyor.” (Eva ile görüşme, 17.04.2020)

them for significant work, they want to be closely acquainted with you. If you reject the corporation, they will end it or stop keeping in touch with you. However, they are the epitome of making us wild in this culture.”⁹² (Interview with Zeval, 12.03.2020)

Zeval’s statements imply that female MCs are blamed because of being “wild”. Then, it can be argued that female MCs’ rage against the patriarchal supremacy in rap music started to disturb people who do not want the scene to be reversed, be the profit-driven labels or male MCs who want to be “superior”. Similar to what Zeval had lived through, Harpya had also almost the same experience, but hers is not only about labels’ ask for personal changes. Her practice may also be an example to comprehend how severe it can be the pressure of labels.

“If you do not prove yourself and have a sound audience community, companies modify you in such a manner that they can make more money. Once I was about to be signed to a label, but I gave up at the last minute. They want me to make K-Pop songs. They collected five or six girls who make aggressive music. They showed us K-Pop videos and asked us to be like the girls in the video. We are out to break the rules and wear suits. Then, they showed us K-Pop. They try to exploit you as far as they can do. They try to monetize you but someone you are not. They give less money that you do not deserve.”⁹³ (Interview with Harpya, 12.03.2020)

The position of the female MCs in hip-hop culture and rap music is highly controversial, and it is hard to give a specific answer to the question of what kind of relationship they have in this culture and music. However, it can be said that these rap artists have offered a critique of the world, and this critique has a strong emphasis on gender. Furthermore, while their place in hip-hop is naturalized day by day, they are still in the secondary position. The location of the female MCs in the Bermuda Triangle of rap music is not explicit because they not only tackle the money-driven record

⁹² “Kültür hakkında en ufak bir fikri bile olmayan insanların sırf popüler diye seni farklı kalıplara, istemediğin kalıplara sokabileceğini düşünüyorum. Sözüm meclisten dışarı, çok iyi şirketler de vardır fakat iyi bir analiz ve zaman gerekiyor bunu görebilmek için. Nasıl yürüdüğünüze saçınızın rengine kıyafetinize bile karışabiliyorlar sanki mankenlik ajansı. Bir de, önemli bir iş için bir araya geldiğinde bile seni hep daha yakından tanımak istiyorlar, reddedince de işbirliğini sonlandırıyorlar ya da iletişimi kesiyorlar. Halbuki bu kültürün içinde bizi yabancılaştıran ta kendileri.” (Zeval ile görüşme, 12.03.2020)

⁹³ “Sen kendini kanıtlayamamışsan bir kemik kitlen yoksa şirketler seni para kazanabileceğin şekilde restore ediyor. Ben bir şirkete girecektim mesela girmedim son dakika. Bana K-Pop yap dediler orada. 5-6 tane kızları toplamışlar, kızların çoğu da böyle asarız keseriz tarzı müzik yapıyor. Bize geldiler K-Pop klibi attılar böyle olacaksınız diye. Biz diyoruz biraz daha kuralları yıkalım takım elbise giyelim, bize K-Pop gösterdiler. Olabildiğince seni sömürmeye çalışıyorlar. Olmadığın biri üzerinden para kazanmaya çalışıyorlar. Sana da hak etmediğin paraları veriyorlar.” (Harpya ile görüşme, 12.03.2020)

companies but also try to contend with gender inequalities. Therefore, they are pulled around by the corners of the triangle.

Women have been in an unpleasant and unjust state of subalternity for years, not just because of their struggles to simply be part of the culture but also because they have been actively struggling against hegemonic masculinity. In fact, it is imbued in the hip-hop culture, and it has long attempted to reduce the visibility of women in comparison to men. To get to the issue of “flipping the scene into reverse”, in spite of these problems, female MCs try to turn the tables on behalf of them and change the sexist mentality through their words. Maybe the dialogue and negotiation would be the solution, as Rose (1994) stated. Female MCs have survived and thrived in the hip-hop culture and rap music for years, but their position in the culture and the music is not coherent. While their participation in hip-hop is naturalized since they are integral parts of the struggle in this culture, their position remained secondary within the struggle, and their presence was seen as a way to raise the profit of the label or colour in the songs. Yet, in recent years a lot has changed in Turkish rap music for female MCs because not only the increase in their number but also the power to express their feelings has been accelerated. They turned girls who could not go to the hip-hop parties alone into women who resist the patriarchy and the male-dominated music industry.

In this section, it was aimed to urge to build a space where the voices of female MCs can be heard. The uneven scenario in rap music revealed above is nothing more than a portrait of what happens within society. Women's rap contributes to creating a space where female MCs can speak for themselves and promote emancipation and collective empowerment. When global rap is concerned, women have continuously contributed and made efforts to develop their own careers, despite social and cultural constraints, throughout history. Most of the time, being a rapper entails becoming willing to gain space and respect in a male-dominated industry where women are underrepresented, as well as being able to overcome sexism for not embodying conventional female roles. In addition, women in rap music often face marginalization and objectification: they are frequently portrayed as mere sexual bodies in the lyrical and image production, while in terms of music production, they are often assigned to background roles, such as singing in choruses. Women in rap have made significant contributions that

demonstrate their desire to create a space where they can express themselves without being mediated by men. Then, it can be argued that female rappers' musical activities are more than this because it is also related to resistance against a wide array of dominant discourses. A career in rap for a woman has a deeper meaning: it means overcoming historical and socio-cultural obstacles while also making a political statement and contributing to the feminist and womanist cause. In this respect, rap and hip-hop culture work as a source of empowerment since "through hip hop women are able to boldly and unapologetically lay claim to the male-dominated public sphere" (Isoke, 2013, 122).



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Greil Marcus explains briefly what many research studying on music within the context of cultural studies, sociology or ethnomusicology, saying: “Music seeks to change life; life goes on; the music is left behind; that is what is left to talk about” (Marcus, 1989, 3). Rap music can be considered an unusual musical genre because of its components, offering a complicated combination of music and speech (Arıcan, 2011, 102). The aim of this thesis has been to examine the change in the resistance in Turkish rap music during its transition of from Germany to Turkey. In this respect, the formation of rap music has been discussed and analyzed through the findings from the fieldwork. Being affiliated with the processes of capitalism, appropriation and globalization, hip hop “has affected nearly every place on the map” (Osumare, 2001: 171). As it has become increasingly popular and commodified, questioning what the individual and societal components of rap music can be illuminating, which might help to untangle some of the complicated political, social and cultural strands in rap music. In addition, this will involve facing rap’s contradictory articulations, especially to the popular culture, and situating them in relation to the challenges about power, meaning and resources.

Rap music as a part of the hip-hop culture can be considered as a black cultural expression that “prioritizes black voices from the margins of urban America [...] It began in the mid-1970s in the South Bronx in New York City as a part of hip hop, an African-American and Afro-Caribbean youth culture composed of graffiti, breakdancing, and rap music” (Rose, 1994, 2). Starting as a local performance practice in the Bronx neighbourhood, rap music turned into a multi-million dollar industry. In fact, these local performances in the various parts of the world have begun to form the majority of the studies focusing on hip-hop within the context of social sciences. This globalized character of hip-hop has led to the claim that “[t]here is no single ‘local’ to

be studied; audiences are diverse and linked by mass mediation” (Walser, 1995, 194). Although the argument of Walser mentioned the audiences, his claim can be valid for the musicians or rappers in this case. Hence, consideration of the transition of Turkish rap music might be a pathway to understand the differentiation.

It can be argued that the hip-hop culture and rap music rooted locally, yet they resourced youth cultures globally. Since its emergence in the 1970s in the US, rap music has been a way of expressing dissent against social problems. The starting point of this music was street and house parties organized by usually the gangs. Therefore, it could be contradictory to consider rap as a way of resistance when looking from the outside. Although its contradictory aspects have manifested themselves, particularly in the music industry and the articulation of popular music, the beginning of rap music was not just about having fun at parties. As mentioned in the second chapter of the thesis, these parties were actually the signs of social exclusion and racial discrimination. Similar to the US example, migrant youth coming from Turkey to Germany also met the hip-hop culture and its practices because of exclusion and racism. Even though American films such as *Beat Street* had the role of introducing the American culture, the interaction between the American soldiers living in Germany and the young migrants who sought means to express their alternative identity and style. Since these young ones had a chance to spend time at the American discos or bars, discovering the hip-hop culture and its practices changed their view on how to struggle with the problems of being a migrant. Besides the challenges related to being a migrant, the fight among the street gangs in Turkish neighbourhoods transformed after their meetings with hip-hop. They started to put up the fight in a different way. As a result, the migrant youth had the opportunity to widen their limited world and borders through hip-hop practices which were seen as a means to express rage and resistance to the social problems faced.

After its import from Germany, Turkish rap music aroused interest in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. Famous MCs gave concerts in major music festivals such as Rock’N Coke, and collaborations with pop singers became widespread. In addition, rap music used as jingles in advertisements. Later on, this popularization, there was almost a “stand by” period in Turkish rap music until 2017. As stated before in the

third chapter of the thesis, the economic and social problems in Turkey, from unemployment to violence against women and LGBTQ+ and authoritarianism, have led the young people to crystallize grievances through musical expression. In this case, rap music has become one of the musical genres to raise a voice about these problems. With the advent of digital streaming in the music industry, access to music with dissent characteristics has got easier compared to the early 2000s since there is no need to copy the songs to the CDs illegally nowadays. At the time of writing this thesis, songs like *Susamam*, *Olay*, and *Boğaziçi Hür*⁹⁴ released in order to express rage against the various issues in Turkey. Therefore, it can be argued that rap music is still used as a medium to reinvigorate opposition in the country.

In this study, the transformation of resistance during its journey from Germany to Turkey examined under the five headings which aimed to answer the research questions. Firstly, the starting point of Turkish rap music was investigated because finding the location of the Turkish rap can show the difference between Turkish-German rap music and Turkish rap in Turkey in terms of in which circumstances they emerged. As stated in the third chapter of the study, the social exclusion and racist attacks on the migrant youth in the German diaspora led the young migrants to choose hip-hop practices as a way of expression. In the emergence of Turkish-German rap, the specific neighbourhoods such as Kreuzberg became important, and the rap music among the migrants expanded, particularly in the ghettos. Living in the ghettos as migrants was one of the triggering factors in the emergence of this music in the diaspora because the ghettos were the indicators of exclusion, discrimination and economic problems like unemployment and poverty. It should also be noted that after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Kreuzberg became one of the central points in Berlin; however, it had been a place for especially impoverished worker migrants and their families for years. When sought for Turkish rap's location after its import from Germany, it can be argued that it is not the same as the Turkish-German rap. Most of the early pioneers of Turkish rap music had university degrees and sufficient economic power to obtain the necessary equipment for recording. In the early 2000s, it was not easy to have such materials. Hence, they were not actually youth from the ghettos,

⁹⁴ To understand the aim of the release of this song you can see: <https://www.duvarenglish.com/rap-anthems-of-the-bogazici-protests-article-56158>, Retrieved on 7.02.2021

which was surprising when I found out. As a result, what I expected from the field study was also not this result, but the findings of this thesis showed that most of the studies about Turkish rap in Turkey could be mistaken.

The interviewees stated that it was not easy to have access to the equipment necessary for recording the songs in the early and mid-2000s. Even a “mediator” was needed in order to listen to rap music as İmpala said that he listened to rap songs through his friend who could travel the US and bought rap albums from abroad. Sometimes the relatives living abroad brought some albums, like in the case of Kayra. The lack of Internet access also limited meeting with new cultures or worlds, so almost the only way to hear rap music was through TV clips. As a result, as long as they had economic self-sufficiency, they did not have a chance to learn rap music or hip-hop culture. The biggest facilitator in the early and mid-2000s seemed to be pirate downloading programs or copying CDs; however, to do these, a computer was also needed, at least. Hence, it can be argued that people who made rap music in the early period of Turkish rap could not be the people living in the ghettos. The emergence of Turkish rap did not depend on the social, economic or political problems in Turkey since it imported from Germany, so the emergence of Turkish rap was close to a cultural appropriation, but the issues in the country did not give rise to the Turkish rap. If it arose like the American or Turkish-German ones, it would be different; in that case, the most expected pioneers of rap music might be Kurdish youth in Turkey. Recently, there are songs about living in the ghettos or dealing with the different problems in the country and rappers who make a rap in Kurdish; however, when we consider the location of Turkish rap, the ghettos can be places where rap music spreads, not the starting point of this music. It is also hard to give a specific place, but in this study, “streets” were suggested as the location of Turkish rap. By considering the streets, all the parts of the cities were included, instead of naming the ghettos, the city centres etc.

After finding the location of the Turkish rap, this study aimed to understand the MCs’ beginning of rap journey. Today, the number of people who listen to rap music is pretty much so it would be expressive to realize young people are interested in rap music. In Turkish-German rap, the involvement in hip-hop, in general, originated in the social problems that they confronted with. They used rap music in order to express their rage,

and the gang affiliations also had an impact on the rise of young people's interest in rap music. In the case of Turkish rap in Turkey, the musical part of the rap impressed the young people. After realizing the meanings in the lyrics, their affirmation to rap music finalizes. In addition, the values within the hip-hop culture like respect and freedom also had an impact on the connection with rap music, which explains why the MCs see them as guidance for life. Moreover, their motivation to keep making rap music is related to the feeling of doing something useful. Yet, it is not like being storytellers, and organic intellectuals, as Kaya (1998) argued. Their motive is close to having a purpose while expressing themselves. For those who had broken in making music, the reason was linked with usually individual problems. It was surprising that none of my interviewees gives up rap music because of political concerns or social problems, although the political climate in Turkey is suitable for asserting these reasons.

Resistance and opposition are quite important elements of the hip-hop culture. Since its emergence, rap music has always been associated with social, economic and political problems. The emergence of rap music in the 1970s was closely related to the marginalization of black identity (Rose, 1994; Sullivan, 2003); hence, it became an important means to raise a voice and show dissent for young people. Also, it was defined as a "social critique" (Dyson, 2010). In order to understand the resource of dissent in rap music, what rap music means to the MCs and their perception of the character of this music were analyzed. It can be argued that rap was seen as a way of showing dissent and opposition. Hence, its character was usually considered as being oppositional. However, the change in the music in terms of its content was also stated by the participants, and they argued that the popularization of rap music resulted in the loss of messages, its resistant characteristics too. As the popularity of the rap music increases, the risk of being lost in the music industry has always been alive. Hence, it can be claimed that MCs are stuck within the conflicts of popular culture. That is to say, even they have a tendency to put social critique on their agenda, rules of the music industry may suppress this tendency.

The interviews in this study also indicated that the resource of the dissent in rap is not unilateral. Hence, as mentioned before, rage has no limits. The resource of being

oppositional can derive from not only the everyday life problems but also from the social and political issues. The importance of the ordinary issues and their potential to show dissent were examined in the study, and it can be claimed that the subjects considered as ordinary can also show dissent or be a social critique. There are also songs that directly give messages about the social and political problems in the country. Hence, what kind of individuality is represented in rap music can become crucial. In short, it can be concluded that there is a resistant characteristic in Turkish rap music, but it is ambiguous that where this rebellion will tend to do, what it wants to do, what method it will adopt in order to express dissent. It can also be claimed that there is an age that can not realize itself. Then, this is a rebellion that cannot find how to express itself. As Kurt (2021) stated, it is a rebellion that can not be covered in flesh and bones through one of the verses of Ezhel, “ete kemiğe bürünemeyen isyan”.

Despite of the existence of dissent in Turkish rap music, there is a risk of being part of the music industry and the deviation from the aim of voicing critical. In this study, the dilemma the MCs have confronted defined as The Bermuda Triangle of The Music Industry. In order to earn from making music, most of the MCs need to be listened to by a considerable amount of people. Then, the risk of the articulation into the popular culture increases. The relationship between the labels and the MCs should also be considered while considering the popularization of rap music. Because of the rise in digital streaming, the diversity of the way in which releasing the songs has also increased. Hence, the MCs do not have to be signed to a label in order to release their albums. This freedom allowed by the streaming helps the MCs to act in a way that they can decide all the processes of production to distribution. As stated before in the fourth chapter, today, the labels need the artists more instead of quite the opposite because the artists can have a chance to be a label themselves. However, it should also be thought that in order to release the songs on their own, they have to pay a fee to the mediator platforms which allow the release of the songs in the digital streaming services. Most of the time, this fee is paid in the dollar, so there is a face of having access to those platforms.

Even though the MCs are not as subjected as to the labels they used to be, the support of a label can help them to be listened to by more audiences. Then, the risk of being

trapped in the triangle appears. On the one side, there is a willingness to earn money from doing the job they want; on the other side; they do not want to be in the grip of the labels since being signed to a label can result in the loss of control over the musical production. This loss can also move the MCs away from “keeping it real”. Therefore, it can be argued that along with the rage against the social problems in Turkish rap music, there are also struggles to strive in the music industry. This challenge in the triangle also shows a new dimension of resistance in rap music.

When it comes to the problems that female MCs confronted, it can be argued that the struggle is different from the male ones. Although there have been female MCs since the history of rap music, the attitude towards them has been usually male dominant. In the case of female MCs, even learning the craft of MCing in hip-hop, such a male dominant social space can be considered as showing dissent to the patriarchy. In the early period of hip-hop culture, female MCs were seen as “sisters” in the hood, so they were the members of the hip-hop groups or gangs, so they actually were not considered as “individuals”. This view was also valid for the Turkish-German rap. Recently, the number of female MCs has increased, but the perspective towards them has still problems. As mentioned in the field chapter, if a female MC airs a grievance about rap music or hip-hop culture, she can be labelled as “wild”.

The problematic view towards the female MCs also continues in the music industry, which can be deemed one of the important factors behind why there are fewer female MCs in Turkish rap music. The male ones’ struggle in the industry is generally about the content of the songs; however, the female MCs try hard not to lose their control over not only the music but also their body. It can be claimed that there is a less of a market for female MCs, and either they are going to have to be sexualized or turn into a “pop star “, even a K-Pop star, or they are going to face the risk of less of market space. Sometimes the labels intervene the female MCs so much so that they might ask women to change their style or hair color. In addition, the female MCs are considered as musical colors, so the gender hierarchy among the MCs reveals. There are only a few female rappers such as Ayben and Kolera who nearly overcame the prejudice stating “women can not rap”. Yet, they have become exceptions because it is hard to become as mainstream as male MCs for the female ones. It also should not be ignored

that some new names have started to be known, like Lil Zey although I did not have a chance to interview with. It can be concluded that the female MCs raise voice against not only the social problems in Turkey but also the challenge of being women. Hence, their struggle can be deemed as a new dimension to the resistance in rap music.

Given its extent and scope, this study mainly attempted to examine the change in the resistant characteristics of rap music during its transition from Germany to Turkey along with the dimensions of the dissent characteristics of this music by conducting in-depth interviews. Of course, there are many related angles that remain unexplored that researchers can want to discuss within hip-hop studies. For instance, a study that focuses on the audiences' perspective to rap and their motivation to listen to this music can be another critical research. Since the number of female interviewees was limited in this study, there can be a study examining the female MCs in a more detailed way. In this respect, other issues need to be investigated and potential study opportunities should be considered.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARASTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

DUMLUPINAR BULVARI 06800
ÇANKAYA ANKARA/TURKEY
T: +90 312 210 22 91
F: +90 312 210 79 59
ueam@metu.edu.tr
Sayı: 28620816/458

21 KASIM 2019

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Barış ÇAKMUR

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız İrem ELBİR'in "Popüler Kültür Kısacasında Türkiye'de Hip-Hop Kültür ve Rap Müzik" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 438 ODTU 2019 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.


Prof. Dr. Tulin GENÇOZ

Başkan


Prof. Dr. Tolga CAN
Üye


Doç. Dr. Pinar KAYGAN
Üye


Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Emre TURGUT
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şerife SEVİNÇ
Üye


Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Süreyya Özcan KABASAKAL
Üye



B. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Makrus: He is working at OSTİM, one of the industrial areas in Ankara. He is working with his father at their own store. He is a high-school graduate. He started making rap music when he was a teenager and lives in Ankara. He has released his songs on different streaming services.

Kayra: He has been making rap for almost 15 years and lives in İstanbul. He is working as a teacher at the state-run school. His parents were also teachers. He has both solo and collaboration works. He was the most renowned rapper that I interviewed during the study.

Alpar: He started making rap music unprofessionally but wanted to make music as a profession and he lives in Ankara. He received education at fee-paying school so he has affluent family. At the time of the interview, he was preparing for the university entrance exam.

Emresto: He started making rap music as a ghostwriter so he wrote probably many songs but his name has been visible for a couple of years. He lives in Ankara. He stated that his family usually had economic difficulties. He is working part-time at the advertising agency. At the time of the interview, he was also a university student.

Şiirbaz: He has been both a producer and a rapper and released his albums by himself. He also lives in Ankara. He is a high-school graduate. He worked in many different jobs, from construction worker to grocery store clerk, until he started making money from music.

İmpala: He was a university student soon to be graduated from the sociology department. Recently, he has been signed to a label. He is from Aydın but lives in İzmir because of his education. He stated he is a child of parents from working class.

Çağıl: He was a DJ at the first hip-hop radio in Turkey and he works as an academic at one of the universities in Turkey.

Virüs: He was an engineering student at the university and made rap music unprofessionally when he was a teenager.

Yung Ouzo: He moved from Turkey to Austria due to his family's work and has been made rap music more recently. At the time of the interview, he was preparing for the university entrance exam.

Hasat: He is a university graduate. He has made rap music unprofessionally and at the time of the interview he was searching for a job and he lives in Balıkesir.

Bendis: She was a graduate of environmental engineer but she was working at the accounting office. She recorded her first demo approximately 10 years ago but she did not earn considerable money by making music.

Harpya: She is a university graduate. She lives in İstanbul and she started to listen to rap when she was 7 or 8. She started making music in an underground hip-hop group but she has continued making music solo.

Zeval: At the time of the interview, she was on the anvil of her second album but music did not bring in much so she worked part-time at two different jobs after the graduation.

Eva: She lives in Ankara and works as a fotomodel. She has made music more recently although she has been a good rap music listener for years.

C. TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Hip-hop kültürü, günümüzde her yerde var olan ve tüm dünyaya yayılan popüler kültür biçimlerinden biridir. 1970'lerde New York'un Bronx gettosunda ortaya çıkmasına ve ortaya çıkışından bu yana yoksulluk, ırkçılık ve şiddete maruz kalan siyahi gençler arasında popüler hale gelmesine rağmen, “küresel hip hop gençlik kültürü, kelimenin tam anlamıyla bir fenomen haline geldi ve haritadaki neredeyse her ülkeyi etkiledi. ” (Osumare, 2001; 171). Bu nedenle, Japonya'dan Senegal'e kadar dünya çapında çoğalan popüler bir kültürel form haline geldi. İletişim teknolojilerinin gelişmesi, küreselleşme ve göç, hip-hop kültürünün dünya çapında gençlerin birbiriyle iletişim kurma biçimi olarak yayılmasına ve benimsenmesine katkıda bulunmuştur.

Hip-hop kültürü, rap müzik, grafiti, DJ'lik ve breakdans gibi unsurların yanı sıra gençlerin seslerini yükseltmesinin bir yolu olarak görülmüştür. Yine de rap müzik, tüm hip-hop unsurları içerisinde en belirgin bileşen haline geldi. Rap, ABD'deki siyah gençlerin zorlu deneyimlerinden ortaya çıktığından beri, bu insanların yaşadıklarını, rap müzik yoluyla öfke ve muhalefeti ifade etmeleri üzerinde etkili oldu. Dolayısıyla, ABD'deki sosyal, politik ve ekonomik sorunların, direniş ve isyanla bağlantılı rap müziğin yolunu açtığı söylenebilir.

Ev ve sokak partileriyle başlayan rap müzik, 1970'lerin sonunda müzik endüstrisi ile ilişkisinde dönüm noktası yaşadı. Sugarhill Gang tarafından yayımlanan Rapper's Delight, milyonlar satarak ticari başarı kazanan ilk rap şarkısı oldu. Bu ticari başarının ardından rap müziğin muhalif özelliği bir sıçrama yaptı. 1982'de Grandmaster Flash ve Furious Five, yoksulluk içinde yaşamının mücadelelerini anlatan “The Message” adlı single'ı yayınladı. Şarkı getto mahallelerinde yaşayan çoğu insanın yaşayacağı sosyal ve ekonomik sorunları detaylandırdı. Aynı zamanda, bu koşulları yüceltmeden, zorlu koşullarda yaşama perspektifini sunan ilk şarkılardan biriydi. Bazı şarkıların içeriği daha muhalif hale gelse de, rap müziğin ana akıma girişi devam etti. Örneğin, Aerosmith'in şarkısı olan Run DMC'nin Walk This Way şarkısı, MTV ve pop radyoları gibi büyük müzik kanallarına rap müziği tanıttı. Ayrıca Run DMC'nin My Adidas adlı şarkısı, pazardaki başarısı ve Adidas ile olan kârlı sponsorluğu ile dikkat çekti. Aynı zamanda bu şarkı, hip-hop kültürü ve rap müziğin bir yaşam tarzı olarak

pazarlandığı ilk şarkı özelliğini de taşımaktaydı. Böylece rap müzik yeraltından ana akıma doğru geçiş yapmaya başladı. Daha popüler bir müzik biçimi haline geldikçe, bu müziğin yaygınlaşması hızlandı. Bu yayılmada Türkiye de payını alan ülkelerden biri oldu.

Türkçe rap müziğinin kökleri Almanya'ya ve Türkiye'den gelen ikinci ve üçüncü kuşak göçmenlerin deneyimlerine kadar uzanmaktadır. Bu göçmenler işsizlik, ırk ayrımcılığı ve sosyal yabancılaşma gibi ekonomik ve sosyal zorluklar için çabalayan insanlardı. Hayatlarındaki bu zor koşullar, genç göçmenleri hip-hop kültürüne ve rap müziğe doğru yönelmelerine sebep oldu. 70'lerdeki ekonomik, sosyal ve politik sorunlar nedeniyle yaşadıklarını ifade etmenin bir yolu olarak hip-hop'u gören Afrikalı-Amerikalı gençlere benzer şekilde, Almanya'daki Türk göçmenler hip-hop kültürü içerisinde grafiti, DJ'lik, rap ve breakdance üzerinden kendini ifade etmeye başladı. Rap müziğin genç göçmenler arasında yükselişi, Berlin Duvarı'nın yıkılmasının ardından Almanya'daki ırkçı saldırıların hızlandığı ve yayıldığı zamana denk geldi. Böylece, rap şarkıları göçmenler arasında yabancı düşmanlığına karşı birliği güçlendirmek için bir araç haline geldi. Bu şarkılardaki öfke, ırkçılığa ve bununla ilgili sorunlara karşı duruştan kaynaklanıyordu. Bu bağlamda, hip-hop bir iletişim yolu olarak göçmen gençlerin dışlayıcı tavırlara karşı kendi kimliklerini talep etmelerine izin verdi. Ayrıca bu çalışmadaki bölümlerden biri de Almanya'da Türk-Alman rap müziğinin ortaya çıkışına ve diasporadaki sosyal, politik ve ekonomik koşulların bu müziği nasıl etkilediğine ayrıntılı olarak odaklanacaktır.

Türkiye'de Türk rap müziğine geldiğimizdeyse, 2000'li yılların başında Almanya çıkışlı hip-hop grubu Cartel'in öne çıktığı 1990'lara göre çok daha fazla kişi tarafından bilinmeye başladı. Ancak müzik endüstrisi aracılığıyla rap müzik yapabilenlerin sayısı oldukça azdı. Rapçilerin çoğu, müziklerini endüstriden herhangi bir finansal veya pazarlama desteği almadan yapmak durumundaydı. Bu nedenle, endüstri dışında kalan müzisyenler bandrolü olmayan CD veya kasetlerini kaydetmek ve dağıtmak için gerekli ekipmanı kullanarak kendi şanslarını yaratmak zorundaydılar. Bugün, müzik endüstrisinde dijital dağıtım hizmetlerinin ortaya çıkışı rapçilerin elini güçlendirdi, çünkü müzik eserlerini bir plak şirketiyle anlaşma yapmadan milyonlarca kişiyle paylaşmak artık çok daha zahmetsiz. Müziğe erişim kolaylaştıkça müzikteki çeşitlilik

de görünür hale geldi. Bu nedenle, dinleyiciler istediklerini dinlemek için birçok seçeneğe sahip hale geldi. Dijital müzik platformları tarafından sağlanan listeler, büyük plak şirketleriyle ilişkileri açısından tartışmalı olsa da, dinleyicilerin tüketimdeki konumu 2000'lerin başına göre daha özgür olarak kabul edilebilir. Müzik endüstrisindeki bu gelişmenin Türkiye'de Türkçe rap müziğin yükselişinin önünü açtığı söylenebilir. Müzikte dijitalleşmenin yaygınlaşmasıyla birlikte, Türkiye'nin siyasi, ekonomik ve sosyal sorunları da özellikle gençlerin rap müziğe olan ilgisini artırdı. Gençlerin geleceğe dair çaresizlik, ülkede otoriterliğin yükselmesi ve işsizliğin artması gibi endişeleri onları rap müzik dinlemeye yöneltti. Bu bağlamda, Susamam ve Olay şarkılarının yayınlanması ile hükümet yanlısı gazetelerin bu şarkıları yapanları “terörist” olarak nitelendirmesini akılda tutmakta fayda olabilir.

Bu tezde, Türkçe rap müziğin Almanya'dan Türkiye'ye geçişinde rap müziğin muhalif özelliğindeki değişim incelenmeye çalışılacaktır. Bu bağlamda rap müziğin oluşumu, araştırma bulguları üzerinden detaylı bir şekilde tartışılacak ve analiz edilecektir. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda bu oluşum sürecinin temel belirleyicilerini anlamayı ve ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç, Türkçe rap müziğinin popüler kültür bağlamındaki muhalif özelliğine ışık tutacaktır.

Bu çalışma, üç nedenden dolayı zamanlama açısından önemlidir. Her şeyden önce, hip-hop çalışmalarına dair değerli katkıların varlığına rağmen, Türkçe rap müziğin Almanya'da Türkiye'ye geçiş aşamasına odaklanarak direnişin rolünü dikkate alan çalışmaların eksikliği mevcuttur. Bu tez, bu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. İkincisi, rap müziğe olan ilginin son dört yılda arttığı düşünüldüğünde, MC'lerin rap müziği nasıl algıladıklarını ve genel olarak hip-hop hakkındaki görüşlerini analiz etmek önem taşımaktadır. Rap müziğin muhalif özelliklerini tartışmak Türkçe rap üzerine yapılan çalışmalarda toplumsal sorunlar ile öfkenin ifade edilmesi arasındaki bağlantıyı görebilmeyi kolaylaştırmaktadır. Ancak bu çalışma, rapçilerin müzik endüstrisi ile ilişkisini dikkate alarak direnişe bakış açısını genişletmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Son olarak, yukarıda da belirtildiği gibi, Türkçe rap müzik üzerine yapılan çalışmalarda kadın rapçilerle ilgili literatür yetersizdir. Bu tez aynı zamanda kadın rapçilerin Türkçe rap'teki konumu ve direnişle ilişkileri hakkında ipuçları verebilmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Bu çalışma, Türkçe rap'in Almanya'dan Türkiye'ye yolculuğundaki muhalif özelliğindeki değişimi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu bakımdan Türkçe rap müzikteki direnişin popüler kültür kıskacında nasıl dönüştüğü sorusu önemlidir. Araştırmaya yön veren diğer ana sorular şunlardır:

- Türkçe rap müzik nasıl ortaya çıkmıştır?
- Türkiye'deki yapılan Türkçe rap ile Almanya'da ortaya çıkan Türkçe rap müzik arasında ne gibi farklar vardır?
- MC'ler rap müzik ile duygularını, günlük hayat deneyimlerini ve düşüncelerini nasıl ifade etmektedir?
- MC'lerin gözünden müzik endüstrisi nasıl anlaşılmaktadır?
- Kadın MC'ler ne gibi sorunlarla karşı karşıya gelmektedir?

Çalışmanın araştırma soruları göz önüne alındığında nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden yararlanılması uygun bulunmuştur. Veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve katılımcı gözlemi yoluyla toplanmıştır; ancak, ekonomik sorunlar ve COVID-19 koşulları- her ikisi de sınırlı seyahati ve katılımcılarla yüz yüze etkileşimi engellemiştir- bu nedenle görüşmelerin bir kısmının çevrimiçi yapılması zorunlu hale gelmiştir. Ayrıca alanla ilgili tartışmayı desteklemek amacıyla rap şarkıları analize dahil edilmiştir. Çalışmanın amacına hizmet etmesi için, temel veri toplama yöntemi olarak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme seçilmiştir. Profesyonel veya profesyonel olmayan rap müzik yapan ve kendilerini rapçi olarak tanımlayan görüşmecilerden ve endüstri içinde bulunan bir kişiden veri toplamak için görüşme yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın örnekleme sürecinde olasılık dışı örnekleme kullanılmıştır. Profesyonel ve profesyonel olmayan katılımcılarla 14 yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yapılmıştır. Rapçiler ve müzik endüstrisindeki kişilere erişmek için, kolaylık sağlayan örnekleme stratejisi olan iki örnekleme stratejisine başvurulmuştur. Bu amaçla, kartopu örnekleme ve amaçlı örnekleme uygun bulunmuştur. Bu örnekleme yöntemlerinin temsili bir örnek oluşturması amaçlanmamıştır. Daha ziyade, rap müzik ve hip-hop kültürü ile ilgili kişilerin çeşitliliğinin sunulması amaçlanmıştır.

Sadece dört kadın görüşmeci olduğu için görüşmeler cinsiyet açısından eşit temsil sunamamıştır. Dolayısıyla, grup maalesef ağırlıklı olarak erkekti. Görüşme sırasında yaşları 19 ile 33 arasında değişen kişiler ile görüşülmüş ve görüşmecilerin yaş ortalaması 23'tür. Rap müzik ile ilişkileri değişiklik gösterse de tüm katılımcılar aktif olarak rap müziğe aktif olarak dahil olan görüşmecilerdi. Örnek rastgele olmasa da, geniş bir yaş yelpazesini, rap müziğinin alt türlerini ve farklı yıl deneyimlerini temsil eden görüşmecileri içermektedir. Bu sayısal açıklama, kişisel özellikleri ve onların rap ile olan geçmişlerini sunmakta yetersizdir, bu nedenle Ek A, görüşülen kişilerin kısa biyografilerini sunmaktadır.

Giriş ve sonuç bölümlerinin yanı sıra bu tez üç ana bölümden oluşmaktadır. Bu bölüm esas olarak çalışmanın amacını ve önemini sunmayı amaçlamıştır. Ayrıca, araştırma metodolojisini, arka planı ve çalışmanın temel kavramlarını detaylandırmıştır. Ek olarak, hip-hop kültürü ve rap müzik ile ilgili mevcut çalışmalar kısaca gözden geçirilmiştir.

Çalışmanın geri kalanı aşağıdaki şekilde düzenlenmiştir. İkinci bölüm, 1970'lerde ABD'de hip-hop kültürünün ve rap müziğin ortaya çıkışını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu bölümde, hip-hop kültürünün tarihsel arka planı ve hip-hop'un ne olduğu sorusu da detaylandırılacaktır. Rap müzik ile sosyal, politik ve ekonomik sorunlar arasındaki ilişki ayrıntılı literatür taramasıyla analiz edilecektir. Bu amaçla, bu kültür ve müziğin baskı ve direnişle nasıl ilişkilendirilebileceği sorusu tartışılacaktır.

Üçüncü bölüm, Türkçe rap müziğinin kökenlerini ve Türkiye'ye olan yolculuğunu anlamaya çalışmaktadır. 1960'larda Türkiye'den Almanya'ya işçi göçünden başlayarak, bu bölümde Türkçe rap müziğin nasıl ortaya çıktığı yanıtlanmaya çalışılmaktadır. Türk-Alman rap müziğinde Kreuzberg'in mekân ve müzik arasındaki bağlantısı da kısaca analiz edilecektir. Ayrıca Türkçe rap müziğin Türkiye'deki tarihsel arka planı ve bu müziğin değişen bağlamları incelenecektir. Bu bölümün ardından, dördüncü bölüm tezin ana bulgularının analizini ana hatlarıyla açıklamaktadır. Öncelikle Türkçe rap müziğinin Amerikan ve Türk-Alman rap müziği ile farkları, katılımcıların görüşleri üzerinden analiz edilecektir. Bu açıdan Türkçe rap müziğin

çıkış noktası bulunmaya çalışılacak. Bu nedenle müzik ile mekan arasındaki ilişki bölümün odak noktası olacaktır. İkinci olarak, görüşülen kişilerin hip-hop kültürünü ve rap müziğini nasıl algıladıkları tartışılacaktır. Bu amaçla, müziğe nasıl başladıkları ve hip-hop'un onlar için ne anlama geldiği incelenecektir. Üçüncüsü, Türkçe rap müzikteki öfke ve muhalefetin kaynağı bu bölümün odak noktası olacaktır. Katılımcıların rap müziğin muhalif özellikleri ve direniş ile görüşmecilerin hayatlarında karşılaştıkları mücadeleler arasındaki ilişki gösterilmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Dördüncüsü, rap müziğin Türkiye'de yaygınlaşmasının yanı sıra müzik endüstrisi ve katılımcılar arasındaki bağlantı tartışılacaktır. Ayrıca, katılımcıların fikirlerini tasvir ederek özgün olmaya çalışırken sektördeki gerilimleri nasıl müzakere ettikleri tartışılacaktır. Son olarak, Türkçe rap müzikteki kadın rapçilerin zorlukları odak noktası olacaktır. Ayrıca, sektördeki ve rap müzikteki erkek egemenliğine karşı bakış açıları tartışılacaktır.

Bu çalışmada, rap müzikteki direnişin Almanya'dan Türkiye'ye yolculuğundaki dönüşümü, araştırma soruları üzerinden beş başlık altında incelenmiştir. Öncelikle Türkçe rap müziğin çıkış noktası araştırılmıştır çünkü Türkçe rap'in konumunu bulmak, hangi koşullarda ortaya çıktıklarına göre Türk-Alman rap müziği ile Türkçe rap arasındaki farkı gösterebilir. Çalışmanın üçüncü bölümünde belirtildiği gibi, Alman diasporasındaki göçmen gençlere yönelik sosyal dışlanma ve ırkçı saldırılar, genç göçmenleri bir ifade biçimi olarak hip-hop kültürünü seçmeye yöneltti. Türk-Alman rap'inin ortaya çıkışında, Kreuzberg gibi belirli mahalleler önem kazandı ve özellikle gettolarda göçmenler arasında rap müzik yayıldı. Gettolarda göçmen olarak yaşamak, bu müziğin diasporada ortaya çıkmasında tetikleyici faktörlerden biriydi çünkü gettolar dışlanma, ayrımcılık ve işsizlik, yoksulluk gibi ekonomik sorunların göstergeleriydi. Ayrıca belirtmek gerekir ki, Berlin Duvarı'nın yıkılmasından sonra Kreuzberg, Berlin'in merkezi noktalarından biri haline geldi; ancak yıllarca özellikle yoksul işçi göçmenler ve ailelerinin yaşadığı bir mahalle olmuştu. Türkçe rap'in Almanya'dan ithal edildikten sonra konumu arandığında, Türk-Alman rap'iyle aynı olmadığı söylenebilir. Türkçe rap müziğinin ilk öncülerinin çoğu üniversite diplomasına ve kayıt için gerekli ekipmanı elde etmek için yeterli ekonomik güce sahipti. 2000'lerin başında bu tür malzemelere sahip olmak kolay değildi. Dolayısıyla, aslında gettolardan gelen gençler değildiler, bunu öğrenmek şaşırtıcı bir noktaydı.

Sonuç olarak, saha çalışmasından beklediğim şey de bu sonuç değildi, ancak bu tezin bulguları, Türkiye'deki Türkçe rap ile ilgili çalışmaların çoğunun yanlış olabileceğini gösterdi.

Türkçe rap Almanya'dan ithal edildiği için Türkiye'deki sosyal, ekonomik veya politik sorunlara bağlı olarak ortaya çıkmadı, bu nedenle Türkçe rap'in ortaya çıkışı kültürel bir uyarlamaya yakındı, ancak ülkedeki sorunlar Türkçe rap müziği doğurmadı. Amerikan ya da Türk-Alman rap müziğindeki gibi ortaya çıksaydı durum farklı olurdu ve rap müziğin en beklenen öncüleri Türkiye'deki Kürt gençleri olabilirdi. Son zamanlarda gettolarda yaşamak ya da ülkedeki farklı sorunlarla mücadele etmek ile ilgili şarkılar ve Kürtçe rap yapan rapçiler var; ancak Türkçe rap'in yerini düşündüğümüzde gettolar bu müziğin çıkış noktası değil, rap müziğin yayıldığı yerler olabilir. Belirli bir mekanın ya da şehrin ismini vermek de zor ama bu çalışmada Türkçe rap'in konumu olarak “sokaklar” önerilmektedir. Sokaklar dikkate alındığında gettolar, şehir merkezleri vb. yerler yani kentin tüm bölümleri dahil edilebilmektedir.

Türkçe rap'in konumunu bulduktan sonra, bu çalışma MC'lerin rap yolculuğunun başlangıcını anlamayı amaçladı. Günümüzde rap müzik dinleyenlerin sayısı oldukça fazladır, bu nedenle gençlerin rap müziğe duydukları ilgiye odaklanmak anlamlı olacaktır. Türk-Alman rap'inde hip-hop'a gençlerin katılımı genel olarak karşılaştıkları sosyal sorunlardan kaynaklanıyordu. Bu gençler, öfkelerini ifade etmek için rap müziği kullandılar ve sokak çeteleriyle olan bağlantıları da gençlerin rap müziğine olan ilgisinin artmasında etkili oldu. Türkiye'deki Türkçe rap örneğinde ise rapin müzikal kısmı gençleri etkiledi. Şarkı sözlerindeki anlamlar anlaşıldıktan sonra rap müziğe olan bakış açıları kesinleşti. Buna ek olarak, hip-hop kültüründeki saygı ve özgürlük gibi değerlerin de rap müzikle bağlantısının etkisi oldu, bu da MC'lerin bu kültürü neden yaşam için bir rehber olarak gördüklerini açıklıyor. Dahası, çalışmam bulgularında rap müzik yapmaya devam etme motivasyonlarının, faydalı bir şey yapma duygusuyla ilgili olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Ancak Kaya'nın (1998) öne sürdüğü gibi hikâye anlatıcılığı ve organik entelektüel olmak gibi amaçların, bu çalışmaya katılanlar için geçerli olmadığını söylemek mümkün. Önemli bir diğer bulgu ise, görüşmecilerden hiçbirinin siyasi kaygılar veya sosyal sorunlar nedeniyle rap müzik yapmaktan vazgeçmemesidir.

Müziğin içeriğindeki değişimle ilgili katılımcılar, rap müziğin yaygınlaşmasının mesajların kaybolmasına ve muhalif özelliğinin kaybolmasına yol açtığını ifade ettiler. Rap müziğin popülaritesi arttıkça müzik endüstrisi içinde boğulma riski de canlı kalmıştır. Dolayısıyla, MC'lerin popüler kültürün çatışmaları içinde sıkışıp kaldıkları iddia edilebilir. Yani gündemlerine toplumsal eleştiri koyma eğiliminde olsalar bile müzik endüstrisinin kuralları bu eğilimi bastırabilmektedir. Bu çalışmadaki görüşmeler, rap'teki muhalefetin kaynağının tek taraflı olmadığını da göstermiştir. Bu nedenle, daha önce de belirtildiği gibi, öfkenin sınırı yoktur. Muhalif olmanın kaynağı sadece gündelik yaşam sorunlarından değil, aynı zamanda sosyal ve politik meselelerden de kaynaklanabilir. Gündelik veya sıradan konuların önemi ve muhalif olma potansiyeli araştırmada incelenmiş, sıradan olarak değerlendirilen olayların da muhalefet gösterebileceği veya sosyal bir eleştiri olabileceği iddia edilebilir. Bu nedenle, rap müzikte ne tür bir bireyselliğin temsil edildiği önemli hale gelmektedir. Kısacası, Türkçe rap müzikte bir direniş olduğu sonucuna varılabilir ancak içindeki isyanın nereye yöneleceği, ne yapmak istediği ve hangi yöntemi benimseyeceği belirsizdir. Bu bağlamda, kendini gerçekleştiremeyen bir isyanın var olduğunu söylemek mümkün. Kurt'un (2021) belirttiği gibi, Ezhel'in “ete kemiğe bürünemeyen isyan” sözlerinde olduğu gibi bu bir türlü vücuda gelemeyen bir isyan.

Türkçe rap müzikteki muhalefetin varlığına rağmen, müzik endüstrisinin bir parçası olma ve eleştirel olma amacından sapma riski de mevcuttur. Bu çalışmada, MC'lerin karşılaştığı ikilem Müzik Endüstrisinin Bermuda Üçgeni olarak tanımlanmıştır. Müzik yaparak para kazanmak için, MC'lerin çoğunun hatırı sayılır bir kitle tarafından dinlenmesi gerekiyor. Bu dinlenmenin ardından, popüler kültüre eklemlenme riski gelmektedir. Bu sebeple, rap müziğin popülerleşmesi düşünülürken plak şirketleri ve MC'ler arasındaki ilişki de dikkate alınmalıdır. Dijital platformların artışı nedeniyle, şarkıları yayınlama yönteminin çeşitliliği de arttı. Bu nedenle, artık MC'lerin albümlerini yayınlamak için bir plak şirketiyle anlaşmaları gerekmiyor. Dijitalleşmeyle gelen bu özgürlük, MC'lerin, dağıtım için tüm üretim süreçlerine karar verebilmelerine olanak sağlamaktadır. Dördüncü bölümde daha önce de belirtildiği gibi, bugün plak şirketlerinin sanatçılara daha çok ihtiyacı var çünkü sanatçılar müzikteki dijitalleşmeyle kendi başlarına bir plak şirketi olabilirler. Ancak, şarkıları kendi başlarına yayınlayabilmek için de aracı platformlara bir ücret ödemeleri

gerektiği de düşünölmelidir. Çoğu zaman bu ücret döviz olarak ödenir, dolayısıyla bu platformlara erişimin de bir sıkıntı olduğunu unutmamak önemli bir noktadır.

MC'ler eskiden oldukları gibi şirketlere tabi olmasalar da, bir şirketin desteği daha fazla dinleyici tarafından dinlenmelerine olanak tanımaktadır. Bu da çalışmada bahsedilen üçgenin içinde sıkışma riskini ortaya çıkartır. Bir tarafta, istedikleri işi yaparak para kazanma isteği var; diğer tarafta ise; bir plak şirketiyle anlaşarak müzik prodüksüyonu üzerindeki kontrolün kaybedilmesi ihtimali söz konusu. Bu durum aynı zamanda MC'leri özgün olmaktan uzaklaştırabilmektedir. Dolayısıyla, Türkçe rap müzikteki toplumsal sorunlara yönelik öfkenin yanı sıra müzik endüstrisi içinde mücadeleler olduğu söylenebilir. Üçgende bu zorluk aynı zamanda rap müzikteki direnişin yeni bir boyutunu gösteriyor.

Kadın MC'lerin karşılaştığı sorunlara gelindiğindeyse, mücadelenin erkeklerden farklı olduğu söylenebilir. Rap müzik tarihinden beri kadın MC'ler olmasına rağmen, onlara karşı tutum genellikle erkek egemen olmuştur. Kadın MC'ler söz konusu olduğunda, rap müzik yapmak bile, erkek egemen sosyal alana ve ataerkilliğe muhalefet olarak düşünülebilir. Hip-hop kültürünün ilk dönemlerinde, kadın MC'ler mahallede "kız kardeş" olarak görölmekteydi bu yüzden "birey" olarak görölmediler. Bu görüş, Türk-Alman rap müziği için de geçerliydi. Son zamanlarda, kadın MC'lerin sayısı arttı, ancak onlara yönelik bakış açısında hala sorunlar var.

Kadın MC'lere yönelik sorunlu görüş müzik endüstrisinde de devam etmektedir. Bu sorun, Türkçe rap müzikteki kadın MC'lerin neden daha az olduğunun önemli sebeplerinden biri olarak kabul edilebilir. Erkeklerin sektördeki mücadelesi genellikle şarkıların içeriğiyle ilgili olmasına rağmen kadın MC'ler sadece müzik üzerindeki kontrollerini değil vücutları üzerindeki kontrollerini de kaybetmemeye çalışıyorlar. Kadın MC'ler için daha az pazar olduğu veya objeleştirilmeleri sorunları bir yana, bir "pop yıldızına" hatta bir K-Pop yıldızına dönüşmelerinin istenilmesi gibi absürt sayılabilecek tuhaflıklarla mücadele etmeleri gerekmektedir. Bazı şirketler, kadın MC'lere o kadar çok müdahale etmekte ki kadınlardan stillerini veya saç rengini değiştirmelerini bile istemektedirler. Ayrıca, kadın MC'ler müzikal renkler olarak kabul edilmekte bu da MC'ler arasındaki cinsiyet hiyerarşisini ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Ayben ve Kolera gibi “kadın rap yapamaz” önyargısını neredeyse aşan az sayıda kadın rapçi var. Yine de kadın MC’lerin isimlerin bilinmeye başladığı da göz ardı edilmemelidir. Bir diğer nokta, kadın MC’lerin sadece Türkiye’deki sosyal sorunlara değil, aynı zamanda kadın olmanın zorluğuna da ses çıkardıkları sonucuna varılabilir. Dolayısıyla mücadeleleri, rap müzikteki direnişin yeni bir boyutu olarak düşünülebilir.

Bu çalışma, kapsamı göz önüne alındığında, ağırlıklı olarak, derinlemesine mülakatlar yaparak, rap müzikteki direnişin Almanya’dan Türkiye’ye geçiş sürecindeki değişimini ve bu müziğin muhalif özelliklerinin boyutlarını incelemeye çalışmıştır. Elbette, araştırmacıların hip-hop çalışmalarında tartışmak isteyebilecekleri keşfedilmemiş birçok ilgili nokta bulunmaktadır. Örneğin, dinleyicilerin perspektifinden rap müziği dinleme motivasyonuna odaklanan bir çalışma, başka bir kritik araştırma olabilir. Bu çalışmada kadın görüşmecilerin sayısı sınırlı olduğu için, kadın MC’leri daha detaylı inceleyen bir araştırma yapılabilir. Bu bağlamda, ilgili olabilecek diğer konuların araştırılması ve potansiyel çalışma fırsatlarının araştırılması önemli bir katkı olacaktır.

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YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : ELBİR

Adı / Name : İrem

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