

THE POLITICS OF RAP: RAP MUSIC AS A TOOL FOR EXPRESSING  
EXCLUSION IN ISTANBUL



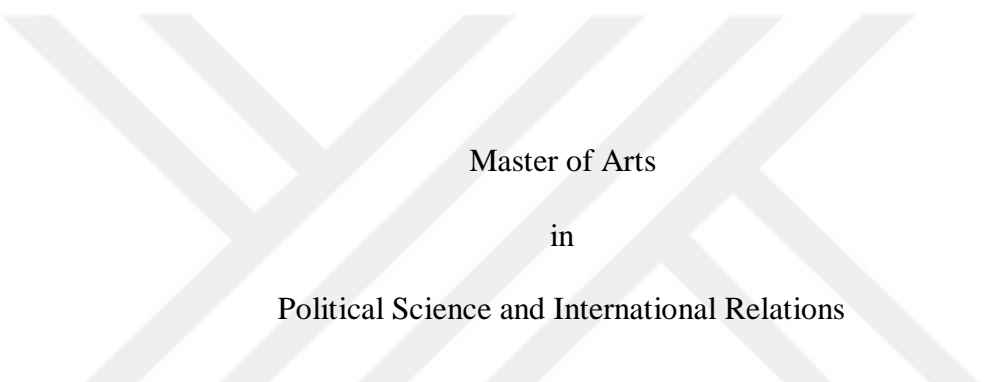
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BOĐAZIĐI UNIVERSITY

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THE POLITICS OF RAP: RAP MUSIC AS A TOOL FOR EXPRESSING  
EXCLUSION IN ISTANBUL

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Umut Mişer

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The Politics of Rap: Rap Music as a Tool  
for Expressing Exclusion in Istanbul

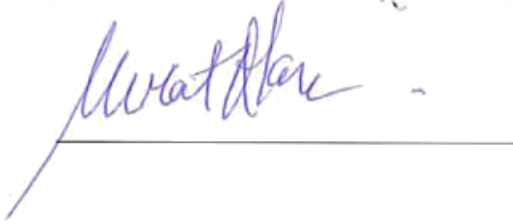
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June 2018

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Umut Mişer, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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## ABSTRACT

### The Politics of Rap: Rap Music as a Tool for Expressing Exclusion in Istanbul

In Istanbul, in the neighborhoods where there are problems such as poverty, discrimination and exclusion with the effect of urbanization, globalization and neoliberalism, young people who suffer from these problems use rap music as an instrument of resistance and as a tool for expressing exclusion. In Sulukule and Bağcılar where the abovementioned problems exist, the young people who socialize around rap music reflect both the reality of these neighborhoods and struggle against social stigmatization and exclusion. In addition, these rappers do not only talk about the local issues, but they also touch upon social inequality, justice and freedom beyond their locality and spatiality. Nevertheless, rappers who try to disseminate their arts through social media, earn money and become famous get more moderate. Especially, the discourse of Bağcılar rappers who prefer to “amateurishly” publish their works on social media unlike Sulukule rappers who make professional album works, becomes more moderate in terms of critique and resistance as the competitive market logic gets dominant.

## ÖZET

Rap Siyaseti: İstanbul'da Dışlanmayı

İfadenin bir Aracı Olarak Rap Müzik

İstanbul'da özellikle kentleşme, küreselleşme ve neoliberalizmin etkisiyle fakirlik, ayrımcılık ve dışlanma gibi problemlerin yaşandığı semt ve mahallelerde bu problemlerden muzdarip gençler rap müziği dışlanmayı ifade etmenin ve direnişin bir aracı olarak kullanıyorlar. Saydığımız problemlerin yaşandığı Sulukule ve Bağcılar'da rap müzik çevresinde sosyalleşen gençler, hem içinde buldukları mahallelerin gerçekliğini yansıtıyorlar hem de toplumsal yafta ve dışlanmaya karşı rap müziği kullanarak mücadele ediyorlar. Ayrıca buralardaki rapçiler yerele dair meseleleri anlatmakla kalmıyor, kendi yerellikleri ve mekansallıklarının ötesinde toplumsal eşitsizlik, adalet ve özgürlükten de dem vuruyorlar. Yine de sanatlarını sosyal medya üzerinden yaymaya ve bu yolla para kazanıp ünlü olmaya çalışan rapçiler, bu mecrada sanat yaptıkça ılımlılaşıyor. Özellikle, Sulukule rapçilerinin aksine profesyonel albüm çalışması yapmak yerine, “amatörce” sosyal medya üzerinden yayın yapan Bağcılar rapçilerinin dili rekabetçi piyasa mantığı egemen olmaya başladıkça isyan ve eleştiriden uzaklaşıyor.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*Niçin mi Rap? Çünkü ruhani bi yatırım o!  
Bu lanetlenmiş yerde gençliğimiz mazot gibi yakılıyo  
Bana gelip Tahribad-ı İsyan nedir? deyip yakınıyon lan  
Bu mahallede evlerden çok hayallerimiz yıkılıyo*

*Why Rap? Because it is a spiritual investment!  
In this damned place, our youth is burned like diesel  
They come and say "What is the Revolt's Destruction?"  
Our dreams rather than houses are destroyed in this neighborhood.*

This thesis examines how rap music is instrumentalized in showing dissent and resistance to social and economic inequality, discrimination and exclusion in Istanbul. This study also addresses the limits of opposition through rap music. In the last few years, rap music that had lost popularity in the last decade came to the fore again. Especially in the stigmatized, poor neighborhoods in Istanbul, young rappers draw attention. My aim in this study is to show how rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar, two of those stigmatized, poor neighborhoods, raise their voices through hip-hop in a globalized, metropolitan city, Istanbul. In addition, I will try to show how rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar have different trajectories in terms of oppositional culture as their art and music get integrated into market relations throughout time.

Rap music and its relation to politics, as a subject matter, is not a new phenomenon. Rap has been studied as a way of resistance in the context of racism, exclusion, discrimination, and poverty (Scott, 1990; Rose, 2004; Stuckey, 2013). Rappers have been evaluated as social observers and interpreters, as well (Kaya, 2002; Bennett, 2000). The moderation in rap music and softening in terms of critique and resistance has also been stated in the literature (Boyd, 1997; Blair, 1993). In the

light of these debates, I will make an attempt to find answers to the following questions; in which context and under which circumstances, rap music occurs as a way of resistance and as a tool of expression of dissent?; how is rap music used to express critique and sufferings?; what is the tension between local identities and issues, and global music and capitalism?; how and why rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar follow different paths in opposition throughout the time as they get much more popular?; in other words, how have Sulukule rappers maintained their critical stance despite increasing professionalization of their production while the Bağcılar rappers increasingly moderated the content of their songs even though they have used YouTube as a medium of distribution?

In addressing these questions, I argue in this thesis that in both Sulukule and Bağcılar, rappers use rap music as a tool of critique of and resistance against discrimination, exclusion, and poverty, yet rappers in these districts differed in terms of resistance and critique as they internalized the logic of the competitive market. While Sulukule rappers preserved their critical perspective due to the concrete events of urban regeneration and, urban and Roma activism, Bağcılar rappers' music became much more moderate as their primary objective became making money on YouTube.

## 1.1 Background

Istanbul is an ever-growing city with a population around 15 millions of people which have been a part and the subject of global neoliberal transformation from the 1980s onwards (e.g., Aksoy and Robins, 1994; Keyder, 1999). Thanks to globalization, neoliberal policies, and mobility, it took the form of a modern city in which social and economic exclusion stemming from structural economic factors as

well as social dynamics within city takes place. On the one part, some ethnically and culturally different people who have migrated to Istanbul with the hope of social and economic mobility or have remained in the inner city for a long time face economic deprivation, on the other part they are subjected to discursive and social exclusion as well. Hence, Istanbul witnesses a deprivation, poverty, and exclusion of different groups of people in several districts (Yilmaz, 2008). Accordingly, in places like Sulukule and Bağcılar, different sources of exclusion and/or subordination such as ethnicity and class overlap. While people in Sulukule are excluded due to their Romani identity, they face economic deprivation as well. Historical deprivation of Romas in both Turkey and the world collaborates with the social stigmas and state's intervention in the economic activities that Sulukule dwellers enjoy. Especially in the 1990s, one of the most important economic sources of Romani citizens in Sulukule, entertainment houses where they performed art and music were labeled as brothels and shut down by the state.

Another important factor in Sulukule that resulted in the increase in the vulnerabilities of Romas is the urban regeneration project. While poor people who settle in Sulukule that is located in the very center of Istanbul were forced to leave their houses, they were sent to the peripheries of the city. The neighborhood was reconstructed with such luxurious and expensive houses that no original Sulukule dwellers could afford to buy. In other words, through renewal Sulukule was tried to be cleansed from Romas and gentrified. This is the event that triggered the urban and Romani activism in the area. Hence interactively, young people in the area who suffer from exclusion and poverty and are subjected to seeing the demolition of their neighborhood started to socialize around and raise their voice through hip-hop culture. In Bağcılar too, especially young people face different social problems. They

are not only excluded on the basis of ethnicity and class but also discursively fallen into contempt. People in the area generally lack in education and work in the lower branches of the service sector and thus subjected to poverty (Yaman, 2013). In addition, entangled with Kurdish identity, the subcultural values in Bağcılar are regarded as the sources of stigmatization. Furthermore, drug addiction in the area is among the biggest problems. It is not only a direct problem from which youth in Bağcılar suffer but also a component through which they are labeled as defective or immoral. All in all, it is in this context that young people who are trapped in their neighborhoods and stigmatizations along with poverty and discrimination found rap music as a way of showing dissent and resistance.

## 1.2 Rap music as critique and resistance

Rap music has frequently been associated with politics, resistance, and rebellion. The context in which rap music emerged is the state of deprivation and subordination of a specific ethnic and status group in the inner city. As Sullivan states rap emerged in the middle of 1960s in the United States and popularized as a product of black youth who experienced racism, poverty, and violence (Sullivan, 2003). Hence, it is a genre that is associated with a subordinated group and is seen as a tool for raising a voice. With all its aspects of identity construction, expression of grievances, production of subculture and resistance rap music stands as a distinct form of art in its relations to politics and society.

Scholars who deal with rap music in relation to politics and society have already highlighted how rappers observe, interpret and reflect the issues surrounding them and how rap music is used to express dissent and show resistance. While Smitherman (2000) takes rappers as verbally given storytellers and historians, who

make a discussion of the complexities of African-American life, Kaya (2002) sees rap music as a mirror and rappers as contemporary minstrels. As Kaya also observes, Rose (2004) claims that rap music may be used as a counter-hegemonic power because it gives voice to the powerless. For Librado, rap music can be used as a means of making the voice of disadvantaged groups heard and also creates a space for young people to critically evaluate their own political, social and economic reality (Librado, 2010). In both cases of Sulukule and Bağcılar, rappers use these dual elements, both interpretive and reflective, of hip-hop culture. In other words, rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar observe and reflect the problems from which they suffer thanks to the space that hip-hop socialization and technologies provided.

In both districts, for rappers the first and foremost function of rap music is to make subordinates having a voice; that is to say to make them able to express and draw attention to their sufferings. While Bağcılar rappers argue that through rap music people who discriminated by the society because of class and ethnicity can find a space to express themselves, young rappers in Sulukule state that rap music is utile in attracting people's attention to the problems that they face in the neighborhood, especially to the demolishment of their houses as a part of urban renewal project.

Yet, rap music does not only provide an opportunity for rappers to express themselves but also critically examine their own realities. In other words, rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar also show the contextual situation and conditions of their districts. They explain everyday life practices in their districts and try to show problematic aspects of those practices. For example, both rappers draw attention to the problem of drug abuse in their districts.

Another common function that artists attribute to rap music is the concept of change. Most of the rappers state that through rap music they want to bring a certain change to their neighborhood in particular, to the country or world in general. Rap is not only made for the sake of music, but also for creating an advancement regarding the issues such as discrimination, poverty, and exclusion which settlers of Istanbul undergo.

Rap music in both districts has active and reflective functions. It has an active role since it provides the space to raise a voice. By rapping, young people who do not have the equal opportunity to participate in the society find the chance to express themselves and get heard, that is to say, they raise society's awareness regarding their sufferance and render the society aware of the difficulties they go through. Hip-hop also has a reflective function in the sense that young people who get engaged in hip-hop culture start to critically investigate their society and reality and reflect it in their arts. Hence, they both individually and collectively criticize the situation in which they are settled. All in all, for rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar, rap music is a means of having a voice and creating a change, drawing on the analysis through interviews conducted with them.

### 1.3 Resistance in between global and local

As a genre that came into existence in the West but also instrumentalized in the poor neighborhoods in the different corners of the world such as Bağcılar and Sulukule, rap music, raises a question about the tensions between global nature of this form and the local resistance it articulates. Rap emerged in the middle of 1970s in the United States and spread from here as a form of art and a cultural product (Sullivan, 2003). It is a western origin, global genre. However, it is instrumentalized in such a way that

a global genre becomes the form through which local subjects socialize, local identities are articulated to some extent, and local issues are treated. This is conceptualized as "glocalism" to refer to the genre via rappers reflect their local identities and experiences through universal music by Bennett (2000) and Kaya (2002).

On the other hand, the spread of globalism and neoliberal policies resulted in the increase in vulnerabilities in metropolitan cities such as Istanbul. In other words, global capitalism facilitated the functioning of mechanisms of exclusion in Istanbul. While unskilled labor force population is trapped in poor neighborhoods, these districts and people who live in those places are stigmatized as immoral, defective and idle subjects. Hence, the physical disintegration of the neighborhoods and people in Istanbul is accompanied with stigmatization and discrimination. However, these processes of alienation and labeling have the potentiality of giving birth to local flashes of identity articulation and forms of resistance, one of which is rap music. What I suggest is not that exclusion and poverty ideally create opportunities of expression for young people, but to claim that thanks to rap music, by creating a particularity in a hierarchical society, youngsters in exclusionary places find a space to have a voice. In other words, the state of disintegration and the actual space through which young people in Bağcılar and Sulukule socialize facilitated the occurrence of opposition and resistance through rap music.

Lastly, rap music as a product in the age of globalism can only be the voices of suppressed to a wider audience thanks to the technological developments in communication. Most of the rappers produce their songs easily and cheaply, without the need for professional support. More importantly, they spread their songs on

social media, especially on YouTube. Hence, in a sense, the victims of globalism and capitalism find a way to show dissent and rebel within the conditions of globalism.

#### 1.4 Limits of resistance

Despite the fact that rappers use music and the technologies and opportunities provided by the globalization and capitalism as a way of reflection of and resistance to the grievances and problems caused by globalization and capitalism, resistance within this framework has some limits. Different scholars such as Lusane had argued that as rap music gets integrated into the market; the level of critical reflection and dissent declines. Briefly, the main reason why rap music becomes more moderate is that rappers start to see rap music from the perspective of marketing. In other words, as they get much more involved in the market logic, their art turns into a commodity which they regard as a way of increasing status by meeting the expectation of rational market and consumer society. Consequently, the realities and experiences of rappers get modified into the cultural representative products, and consciousness and reason in hip-hop are eliminated by the cultural industry as once was observed by scholars like Adorno (1994).

Sulukule and Bağcılar have different trajectories regarding the continuation of resistance. I argue that unlike Sulukule hip-hop Bağcılar rap music, as it became much more market-oriented, lost its characteristics of critique and resistance. One can observe that throughout the time as rappers from Sulukule and Bağcılar become more popular, they followed different paths. On the one hand, rappers from Sulukule, Tahribad-I Isyan, released their first album with the help of one of the most famous CD companies, Doğulu Music, in Turkey. They also started to take place in concerts and TV programs. On the other hand, Bağcılar rappers continued to focus on social



media, particularly YouTube. Hence, while rap music in Sulukule wanted to professionalize itself, Bağcılar rappers wanted to preserve their amateurship with which they gained popularity. Yet, interestingly, from a comparative perspective the level of critique and dissent in Bağcılar rap music has decreased although they continued to feature videos on social media through which no censorship is applied. I claim that there are mainly three reasons for this. First is the existence of the urban renewal project that demolished people's neighborhood in Sulukule. That the effects of the projects are even today visible and the project is both a memory and an issue against which people stand together facilitates the continuation of the culture of resistance in Sulukule. Secondly and relatedly, both urban and Roma activism that triggered and supported resistance in Sulukule keeps the culture of resistance in the district alive. They do not only keep the issue in the agenda of people but also socialize children and young people in Sulukule in such a way that they become aware of social, economic and political problems that they face. However, in Bağcılar there is no such a concrete issue or activism that can bring people together in a culture of resistance. In other words, neither activists nor young people who deal with rap music in Bağcılar support one another and/or raise awareness regarding social and economic problems. This is highly related to the spatial embeddedness of the music produced in these districts. While Sulukule and Bağcılar are the places where rappers make their songs, they represent and reproduce the space they live in. Hence, while Sulukule rappers show their attachment to their neighborhoods and use rap music's transformative power, Bağcılar rappers after a certain point see rap music as a way of escape from Bağcılar, that is to say, poverty, exclusion, and discrimination by gaining popularity and wealth through rap music.

Accordingly, the music itself becomes a sphere of competition, which I introduce as the last but not the least factor in moderation. For young people in Bağcılar, rap music is regarded as a way out from Bağcılar. In other words, by making money on social media, especially on YouTube, Bağcılar rappers try to get rid of the problems that they face in Bağcılar. Accordingly, on the one hand, social media and know how on music production become the sphere of contestation. Not only among local rappers in Bağcılar but also among people who distribute their songs on YouTube there becomes a competition. Therefore, the logic of market starts to be established in the mentality of rappers in Bağcılar. They do not only see other rappers as rivals but also try to produce songs in accordance with the demands of the audience. Consequently, the political characteristics of the songs start to be replaced by the elements of entertainment. Even, Heijan, the most famous rapper from Bağcılar, deleted all of his older songs with political characteristics which I analyzed in this thesis. All in all, as the market logic starts to root in rap music which is claimed to be more likely on social media, the characteristics of critique and resistance decline.

### 1.5 Methodology and significance

This research topic is important in several ways. First most important of all, my study will present information particularly on the relation between rap music and politics and generally on the relation between cultural products and politics. It does not only show how rap music is instrumentalized as a form of resistance but also explores the limits of resistance through rap music. By integrating the issues of globalism, capitalism and social media to the debate on resistance and music I make an attempt to show the different trajectories of rap music in the cases of Sulukule and

Bağcılar. In addition, it will contribute to the literature on the rap music performed in Turkey and politics and sociology. While discussing the political expression through rap music, the historical development of rap and its relation with the market will be researched, and in that way, there will be a contribution to the debates of music and politics.

Furthermore, the social, economic, cultural and political problems which occur in a megacity like Istanbul will be one again highlighted. Istanbul that has always been subjected to projects and transformations fulfilled within the logic of neoliberalism and globalism consequently, hosts districts such as Sulukule and Bağcılar which are composed of ethnically and culturally different citizens are vulnerable in the power relations with the state, society, and the market. This study will shed light on a story of poverty and exclusion which seems to be spontaneous yet influenced by market and state as well as contribute to the debates on equal citizenship and right to the city (Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre, 1996). In addition, this study will provide qualitative data for subcultural groups in Istanbul and hence contribute to the existing literature.

Methodologically, this thesis is a comparative case study grounded in qualitative and interpretive research. According to Goodrick comparative case study “involves the analysis and synthesis of the similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal” (Goodrick, 2014, 1) It is a useful method when the questions of "how" and why" are at stake. Comparative case study is useful in explaining the "how" questions in the following sense. Despite the fact that one can argue that there is no need to make comparison in order to describe how a social phenomenon performs, comparison enables us to make an ideal-type definition through which we assert the nature of the investigated social

phenomenon (Gerring, 2004). In other words, for the purposes of this thesis, action and the performances of rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar are defined and categorized relying on the standard definitions of concepts such as exclusion or resistance. Furthermore, only through comparison of the contexts in which rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar rap one can understand the different dynamics and the limits of resistance. Drawing on this, comparative case study is also suitable to answer "why" questions.

Comparative case study is also valuable in grasping the context which is taken as an important element of the investigated phenomenon. Accordingly, in this thesis, I compared and contrasted the cases of Sulukule and Bağcılar in order to make sense of experiences and realities of rappers in these districts. As I made an attempt to show how rappers express themselves via rap music, I also tried to understand the reasons why Sulukule and Bağcılar rappers followed different paths in terms of resistance and critique as they get integrated into market relations.

In my research, I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews. The interviews and the information gathered from these interviews are an important part of the study, as they enabled me to get to know the problems that they face at first hand, establish a connection between lyrics of the songs and the experiences and thoughts of the authors of those songs and understand the complex relations within both neighborhoods and among rappers, CD producers, and other related actors. Furthermore, I benefitted from the interviews that rappers gave to newspapers and websites.

I conducted 7 semi-structured interviews in Sulukule. My first interview in Sulukule was with Cem Avcı. He was the General Coordinator of Sulukule Volunteers Association, Roma intermediary, and a social researcher. He was

working with children in Sulukule and was very knowledgeable about the process of urban regeneration and the emergence of rap culture in Sulukule. Other interviews were done with rappers. Three of the rappers were the members of Tahribad-I Isyan. They were all 23 years old by the time the interviews took place. Asil Koç was living in Sulukule, Veysi Özdemir was living in Karagümruk next to Sulukule, and Burak Kaçar was living in Güneşli. Other rappers whom I did interviews, were Emre Önceğiz, İsmail Taşpatlatan, and Yusuf Özhan. They were all 18 years old and were living in Sulukule. Among those rappers, only Burak Kaçar could make it to university. Most of them also had other jobs to earn Money. For example, Emre worked as a barista, Burak as a tattooer.

In Bağcılar, I did 5 interviews. All of them were rappers while one of them, Dinçer Öztürk, also specifically dealt with the production. He was 32 years old and living in Bağcılar. Other rappers were Furkan Can (17), Burak Yavuz (17), Yakup Karaaslan (22) and Poyraz Salan (20) also living in Bağcılar. None of them was able to have a high degree. They all dropped out from the school apart from Furkan who has also failed during high school. They mostly worked in the lower branches of textile and construction sectors.

Secondly, I used the interpretive method to analyze the lyrics of songs by rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar. By critically examining the discourses, concepts, and words in the songs, I tried to capture how politically meaningful concepts such as exclusion, poverty, injustice, discrimination, and stigmatization are treated. Analysis of lyrics enabled me to understand the political, social and economic problems that rappers suffer and the ways of expressing them. Another advantage of the analysis of lyrics is to be able to see the reflections of rappers to the political and social events and conjunctures and hence to be capable of evaluating lyrics context

wise. Looking at the lyrics also helped me to understand the relation between rappers and city, space and their particular cultures. In order to do these, I examined over 40 songs by rappers from both Sulukule and Bağcılar.

#### 1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is comprised of five main parts. The first part, by moving from the general to the specific, tries to shed light on the debate on politics and music in the literature. In this review part, I did not only touch upon the debates on the relation between music, particularly rap, and politics but also aimed at revealing the relation between rap, and market, nationalism, and space. In the last part of the literature review, I briefly mentioned about the works on Turkish rap. The second part of the thesis puts forward the exclusion and poverty generally in Turkey and particularly in Sulukule and Bağcılar. By showing the impact of neoliberalism and globalization, I tried to expose the general trend of poverty and exclusion in Turkey. Yet, I did not confine myself to relate poverty and exclusion to political and economic models but also undertook urban and space. On the one hand, neoliberal policies resulted in exclusion, poverty, and discrimination in the megacity of Istanbul. While people in Sulukule and Bağcılar are deprived of services like infrastructure and education, especially in Sulukule urban renewal projects deepened the already existing problems. On the other hand, in the cosmopolitan structure of Istanbul, through space people develop local ties and subcultures. Hence, while it is the phenomenon via certain people are discriminated discursively, economically and socially; it also creates the web of relations through which resistance occurs. The next part is on the use of rap and hip-hop culture in Sulukule and Bağcılar as a way of showing dissent and resistance. In this part, drawing on the lyrics of the songs and interviews, I tried

to reveal how rappers in both districts make sense of their own realities, reflect their sufferings and voice their criticisms. The fourth part is dedicated to explaining how local identities and problems are reflected through a universal, global genre which is rap. In the same part, I also made an attempt to demonstrate how particularities and the state of deprivation and discrimination paved the way for resistance through rap music in Sulukule and Bađcılar. This part also touches upon the debate on the politicization of art. In the last part, I argued that the opposition in rap music in Bađcılar and Sulukule followed different paths. Although rappers in Sulukule became much more professional compared to those in Bađcılar, rap culture in Bađcılar got moderated in terms of critique and resistance as it became more integrated into market logic.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Music and politics

Many theorists, starting from Plato until Adorno, tried to explain the political meaning of cultural practices. Music is one of those cultural practices. Its socio-political role has been interpreted in various ways. As Martiniello and Lafleur claim one of the most important and prevalent interpretations of music is as a source of power (Martiniello and Lafleur, 2008). Plato takes music as a cement of society that brings people together and organizes them. Music is a vital element in moving society as a monolithic entity. It provides citizens with the required discipline which will enable them to go to wars. Therefore, Plato sees music as an important constituent of society and thinks that it must take place in the educational system. Yet, Plato assigns another function to popular music in the society as well; it ensures that the individuals are bound together by providing common feelings which are stable throughout time. Hence, from a conservative approach, the new music can be a constitutive element of social disorder (Martiniello and Lafleur, 2008).

Adorno is another scholar who contributed to the discussion on order and music. In his work entitled *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, he defines the sociology of music as the study of the webs of connectivity between the audience as a socialized human being and the art of music itself” (Adorno, 1994). For him, popular music is a commodity that is produced by the culture industry. Ultimately, music has become produced in a top-down process and standardized. Adorno claims that the standardization of music created repetition which resulted in; first, the discouragement of innovation in music and second, stupefaction of listeners.



Nietzsche on the other hand, who says “without music life is pure fallacy, torment, banishment” takes music as a form of art which has the potential to destroy the order (Love, 1979, 186). In the *Birth of Tragedy* (1872) he distinguishes music from other arts. For him, plastic arts are for enjoyment and beauty. He consubstantiates plastic arts with Ancient Greek God; Apollo. Music is identified with Dionysus. Apollo and Dionysus represent a dichotomy. For Nietzsche, this is an opposition of art’s source and function.

For Nietzsche, epical writings and plastic art are beautiful. The measurement of beauty is order and temperance. Yet, music's quality is its immoderation and dare to destruction. Hence, it cannot be categorized as beautiful. It is an eccentric form of art.

In *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1877) although he praises Wagner's music, in his later works such as *The Case of Wagner* (1888) he strictly criticizes Wagner’s art. The reason why he changed his position towards Wagner is that Wagner tries to compose songs aiming at German Nationalism. Nietzsche also blames him for bending the knees in front of Christianity. In other words, he thinks that Wagner makes his music oppressed by religion and nationalism and for Nietzsche, this type of music is far away from Dionysus' enthusiasm.

Gramsci favors the idea that music can be useful in both maintenance and disruption of order. He argues that the elite class uses culture in order to justify their existing oppressive order. He claims that organic intellectuals who are the condition of the rise of the dominant class try to ensure the social order by gaining the consent of masses through culture. Hence, for him, the depiction of the reality by organic intellectuals is highly important, and culture provides the means to do so. However, for Gramsci, music can also be used as a hegemonic cultural power. It provides a

novel ethical perspective of the society that is different from and challenging to the dominant bourgeois ideology. Gramsci claims that hegemony is not a fixed state, rather a contingent arrangement of agreements which necessitate continuous negotiation through evolving practices and discourses which are naturally tied up with power. Thanks to this unstable intrinsic possibility of challenge, counter-hegemonic power arises (Gramsci, 1978).

All in all, music has been evaluated differently in its relation with order and disruption. This brief review that I provided above is useful in situating hip-hop in the debate on resistance and music in the sense that the possibility of music to become a tool of disruption and its limitations are highlighted. Yet, this review on music and politics only provides us an insight of the questions that I will try to deal with in my study. I would like to narrow down the debate to the extent that it only covers the relation between rap music and politics. I will try to show how rap music, with its elements, is taken politically meaningful in terms of social order, market relations, class and race in the literature.

## 2.1 Rap Music and politics

### 2.2.1 The emergence of rap in the context of poverty and exclusion

It is worth to start with rap and hip-hop culture in the United States since rap music has come into existence in New York City and spread all around the world. As Sullivan states rap emerged in the middle of 1970s in the United States (Sullivan, 2003) Stevens states that rap music has begun to popularize in the 1970s as a product of black youth who experienced racism, poverty, and violence during the 1960s (Stevens, 2009). For Rose, the trigger of the emergence of Black hip-hop culture in

the US was the urban renewal project in New York. As she suggests black people in the city were influenced by social, economic and physical transformation in and outside of the black community;

The city's poorest residents paid the highest price for deindustrialization and economic restructuring. In the case of the South Bronx, which has frequently been dubbed the "home of hip-hop culture," these larger postindustrial conditions were exacerbated by disruptions considered an "unexpected side effect" of the larger politically motivated policies of "urban renewal." In the early 1970s, the renewal [sic] project involved massive relocations of economically fragile people of color from different areas of New York City into parts of the South Bronx. Subsequent ethnic and racial transition in the South Bronx was not a gradual process that might have allowed already taxed social and cultural institutions to respond self-protectively; instead, it was a brutal process of community destruction and relocation executed by municipal officials. (Rose, 1994: 30)

Neal also claims that "urban renewal," served to the marginalization and isolation of blacks and working-class poor in the postindustrial city where they were subjected to poverty and high unemployment. This consequently challenged their traditional willingness to maintain as a community. (Forman & Neal, 2004: 380)

Hip-hop as a distinct culture from previous structures as it is mostly shaped by African-American youngsters, as Rose puts forward, brought the ghetto back into the public consciousness by putting emphasis on neighborhood and community. All in all, rap music was instrumentalized to express exclusion, poverty, and racism in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States.

For rappers, hip-hop culture was seen as a way to tell a story of their own lives. They did not only reflect their reality but also express themselves in certain manners. Rap and hip-hop play a vital role in the reconstruction of identity.

For Kitwana hip-hop is a cultural movement which reflects the problems of black people in the US. Kitwana argues that young people that are born between the years of 1965-1984 are the first African-Americans to grow up without experiencing

legal racism (2004). Moreover, Dyson defines the music that is created by such artists "as a social critique" (2010). These artists preferred to focus on the social problems of African-Americans. In line with such views, Stevens also believes that even though, rappers who were born during this period experienced a lesser degree of racism, the pressure on them led them to express their adversities, musically (2009).

In the 1980s, rap became much more known and political. Rappers started to address issues such as violence, police brutality, poverty and racism (Martinez, 1997). This type of rap became more popular in the 1980s and 1990s (Rose, 1991). For Smitherman, hip-hop is a reaction to conditions of unemployment, poverty, and disempowerment of blacks (2000). Many rappers have shared beliefs, and their debates help to reveal the frustrations of black communities.

The exclusion towards blacks in the 80s was not only at the level of economy and policy but also at the discursive level. As Tricia Rose states:

The public school system, the police, and the popular media perceive and construct young African Americans as a dangerous internal element in urban America; an element that, if allowed to roam freely, will threaten the social order; an element that must be policed. Since rap music is understood as the predominate symbolic voice of black urban males, it heightens this sense of threat and reinforces dominant white middle-class objections to urban black youths who do not aspire to (but are haunted by) white middle-class standards. (Rose, 1994: 126)

Hence the image of African-American youth in the media contributed to the sort of social paranoia which already exists in America, especially for white middle-class people who live in the suburbs. In the eyes of American society, black rappers and hip-hop socialization were threats towards everyday life.

In an environment where blacks in general, rappers in particular, were materially and discursively excluded - and neither economically nor politically or

socially fully integrated into American society - it was inevitable that an oppositional black culture would emerge.

### 2.2.2 Rap as resistance

Stuckey (2013) and Scott (1990) regard hip-hop music as oppositional and resistant to the dominance in the US. Stuckey claims that by mixing African expressions with religious motifs created a protest genre. Scott argues that black slaves, who are afraid of whites, developed a backstage discourse in which they created resistance techniques, music, and gossip. Drawing on his analysis Rose says;

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 serve as the cultural glue that fosters communal resistance. (Rose 1994:100)

Hence, rap music at that time can also be regarded as a way of critique and resistance to white supremacy, urban renewal, discrimination and poverty from which black people suffer. Similarly, Martinez argues that rap music was used as a tool for resistance after the Los Angeles riots of 1992. In her study, by examining the lyrics of rap songs by influential rappers such as Public Enemy, she finds out that essential themes such as resistance, anger, and critique of racism and discrimination are quite prevalent (Martinez, 1997).

Lawson (2005) evaluates rap as a form of resistance music from a political and philosophical perspective. He claims that further reading of rap music can enable us to see challenges of underlying assumptions of political liberalism. In his analysis, he puts forward that some rappers in the US question the concepts of citizenship and social contract. For him, African Americans reveal their sufferings concerning equal citizenship through their relations with police and state. In their songs, they show that

the treatment of police towards blacks in the US is discriminatory. Furthermore, the sense of loyalty to the state which is one of the core concepts of citizenship is harmed due to the discriminatory policies of state and unequal citizenship rights. In addition, as opposed to what social contract theory suggests, the self-being of blacks and their private identities are not respected, and the spheres through which blacks can conduct identity politics are destroyed. Hence, one of the most fundamental concepts of liberalism, self-being, is also not respected from the perspective of rappers. All in all, he argues that the critiques raised by hip-hop artists are infused with post-modern critiques (Lawson, 2005).

Lusane (1993) stresses the fact that the resistance in the black music also stems from the structure of the post-industrial city. She suggests that for black people ghetto means being trapped in violence, desperation, and destitution. Those people's feelings and thoughts embodied in the form of hip-hop and rap music through which they can inform a resistant culture. In her words;

On the one hand, rap is the voice of alienated, frustrated and rebellious black youth who recognize their vulnerability and marginality in post-industrial America. On the other hand, rap is the packaging and marketing of social discontent by some of the most skilled ad agencies and largest record producers in the world. (Lusane, 1993: 41)

Librado is another scholar who recognizes rap music as an instrument of resistance. He argues that in the city of El Alto, Bolivia, which is characterized by poverty, exclusion, and racism, rap music is instrumentalized to express a cultural resistance and reflect reality. By analyzing lyrics along with participant observation and interviews, he suggests that as in the case of New York City in the 1970s, El Alto witnesses an appropriation of rap in such way that it reflects political, social and economic problems and provides a way of resistance for youth (Librado, 2010). As Librado suggests, the exhaustion brought by neoliberalism in Bolivia are shown

through rap music. Rappers tried to protests against the state policies which further the economic inequalities and demanded an equal right to the city. (Lefebvre, 1996; Harvey, 2008) His study is important in that he shows that the problems concerning city and that rap are used as a tool of resistance is not unique to the United States but also prevalent in different contexts.

Similar to Librado, Leu suggests that rap music in Brazil, too, is utilized for creating consciousness and rejecting the official ideology. As he puts forward, hip-hop artists put much more emphasis on local communities and deny national identities (Leu, 2014). Another scholar who reveals the function of rap in Brazil is Schutt (2007). In his analysis, by conducting surveys and participant observations, he shows that *favela* artists in Brazil express the shared experiences and realities of marginalized people in peripheries. He also shows that rappers are perceived pejoratively not only because they are coming from lower classes and peripheries but also since they are rap artists people tend to see them with negative stereotypes imported from black American rap culture.

It would not be wrong to argue that the interaction of politics and rap music is not bound to the United States and Latin American countries. There are many studies which nicely show that in many different contexts, rap music served as an instrument of resistance and critique to the political order and status quo. For example, Osumare (2007) and Charry (2012) claim that rappers in Africa, especially in Senegal try to mobilize people by their songs and protests on the streets to criticize political leaders. Similarly, as Chang states Young rappers from Palestine try to give voice to the youth's political sufferings (Chang, 2007). All in all, rap music, as universal music, is used for expressing local identities and frustrations in many different contexts. He says;

Rap music has long been considered a form of resistance against authority. Boosted by the commercialization of the music industry, that message has proven its appeal to youth all around the world. Now, from Shanghai to Nairobi to São Paulo, hip-hop is evolving into a truly global art of communication. (Chang, 2007:1)

By many scholars, while rappers are seen as storytellers and rap is regarded as a mirror through which hip-hop artists reflect urban realities. Because of the fact that hip-hop artists base their art on their real-world experiences, Smitherman takes rappers as verbally given storytellers and historians who make a discussion of the complexities of African-American life (Smitherman, 2000). By deconstructing the lyrics of songs of rappers, Parmar suggests that teaching rap music in the classroom serves as a means of vaccination of consciousness and awareness of the reality. Teachers and students become active participants "in the construction of knowledge and social change" through rap music (Parmar, 2004). Farr also claims that the success of rap music stems from this nature to reflect reality in an artistic way. He says:

The appeal of this new genre of music can be attributed to the popularity of the subjects and the inviting, seductive music that was to accompany the oral tradition of storytelling. Rappers are narrators and artists who construct stories, express emotions and communicate in a rhythmic fashion to music and drum beats. (Farr, 2002: 4)

### 2.2.3 Resistance and locality in universal rap

In the previous section, I tried to bring together the debate on the resistance through rap music. Yet, it is also important to highlight the conditions through which resistance via rap music becomes possible and visible.

It was already stated that rap music allows black communities in the United States to conduct an identity politics. Furthermore, through rap and hip-hop culture black youngsters started to define who they are and where they belong to. In his



book, Asante claims that those who were born in the twentieth century made an attempt to reject the labels such as consumerism, sex, and violence and create a different identity. He argues that rap culture brings a "real ghetto authenticity" which embraces poverty, violence, and ignorance, as "keeping it real." (Asante, 2008) In order to challenge the stereotypes that blacks have Asante argues that rappers express black sufferings in the ghettos, by not idealizing the situation of black people. Similarly, Farr suggests that black artists in the United States empowered themselves by adopting a black authenticity enriched by street culture. This authenticity is "a social identifier that could offer a sense of authenticity to black urban culture." (Farr, 2002: 48) For him, rap music is introduced as an alternative to white art. As he suggests, what is important is not the aesthetics immanent in the work of art but that a black aesthetic which will stand against white art. Hence, for both scholars, the relations that rappers establish with their own culture, identity and space are crucial in understanding the resistance through rap music.

There is a strong relationship between the city and suburbs where hip-hop culture emerged and rappers. Hence, it is crucial to take rap music as a subject matter in its relation to the "local." Librado suggests that rappers all around the world united under the umbrella of global commonalities. They all tend to reflect their marginalities and suppression through rap music. In other words, hip-hop culture can be seen as an expression of marginalization as an extent of black American culture (Librado, 2010). Yet, he also argues that African-American culture was not directly adopted. Instead, hip-hop culture was always modified and appropriated according to the local economic, social and political contexts. This flexibility in rap music makes it easier for rappers to represent their realities and lay claim on their art.

Not only the local experiences but also space itself is an essential phenomenon in the discussion of locality of hip-hop. Forman suggests that space is an essential factor which influences identity formation as it relates to the localized practices of the rappers. The territory is both the home of socialization and apparatus through which youth express their concerns and sufferings. For example, they use the walls for graffiti and hence it is a spatial practice. Besides, the space also provides a sense of belonging. As Forman suggests, there is a high level of reference to the neighbors and dwellers of a particular place in the songs (Forman & Neal, 2004).

Farr also emphasizes the concept of space in the discussion of locality. For him, spatial awareness in rap is one of its most distinguishing elements. He shows that there is intense emphasis on concepts like the neighborhood, ghetto, and city in the songs. In that sense, rap music serves as a forum wherein artists reveal how geographical space affects their lives and position in the society (Farr, 2002).

Still, it should be noted that the fact that rap music is a global and universal genre plays a vital role in giving voice to rappers. In his analysis on German rappers, Bennett (2000) suggests that the situation of rap in Germany is in between localization and globalization which he calls "glocalization." While theorists such as Ritzer (1983) argues that all of the local cultures tend to emerge under the umbrella of globalization which he calls "McDonaldization", cultural theorist such as Lull (2000) claim that local cultures create new meanings by appropriating cultural products to their local contexts which he calls "cultural reterritorialization". Bennett is much more sympathetic to the framework that Robertson provides;

It is not a question of either homogenization or heterogenization, but rather the ways in which both of these tendencies have become features of life across much of the late twentieth-century world. In this perspective, the problem becomes that of spelling out the ways in which homogenizing and heterogenizing tendencies are mutually implicative. (1995: 25)

Robertson claims that the crossing of localization and globalization is best understood in the process of "glocalization." Similarly, Bennett argues that in the multicultural environment of Frankfurt, rap music is a form of glocalization through which rappers reflect their local identities and experiences through universal music.

#### 2.2.4 Urban, urban studies, and hip-hop

I have already mentioned that some scholars take rappers as storytellers and historians who reflect their experiences and sufferings in urban life (Farr, Parmar, Smitherman). Yet, David Beer argues that hip-hop culture and rap music may be a type of urban study (2014). In his study he claims that rappers can contribute to urban research by providing an ethnographic insight by drawing on the analysis that he made based on the book by a famous rapper, Jay-z. He takes a rapper as an insider of the ghetto, and he suggests that the insights that the rapper provides can be useful for urban researchers. For him, the social inquiry must be based on a broader range of resources including music and film. Hence, he says "Hip-hop has the potential to further energize existing urban research repertoires and communicative pathways by providing us with detailed inside accounts of various types of urban living colorfully packaged in a revealing, sonically suggestive and evocative conceptual lexicon" (Beer, 2014, 2).

He does not argue that rappers are urban sociologists. Instead, he puts forward that in some cases, the agenda of the researcher and the rapper may converge. The advantage that rap and hip-hop provide us is that they can also be regarded as a Geertzian "thick description." As rappers who know the ghetto experience can easily attribute meanings to the symbolic everyday life practices, rap songs are important

resources of observation and research. In addition, the discussion on the influence of an outsider as a researcher is avoided as rappers are actually from the "inside."

On the other hand, Simon Black suggests that although some rap songs may constitute resources for urban ethnography, rap is first and foremost a form of art, not social science (2014). He suggests that rap music without meeting the imperatives of the market economy cannot be very successful. Therefore, the inner city depiction may be affected by the requirements of the market and thus manipulated.

When Beer focuses on rap lyrics, Lamotte (2014), on the other hand, approaches hip-hop from a broader perspective. Apart from lyrics, Lamotte takes performances, parties, and tapes, to draw our attention to the social practices of hip-hop and its political influence. He suggests that rap can be regarded as a "hidden transcript" which emerges in the places of exclusion. In addition, he puts forward that rap music and hip-hop culture convey a form of struggle of space in the city. I have already mentioned that Forman suggested that space is an important concept in hip-hop culture as it provides the common feelings and experiences and physical togetherness of rappers in the city. Yet, Lamotte puts forward a more complex relationship between space and hip-hop. By combining Scott's (1990) concept of "hidden transcripts" and Bayat's (2010) concept of "street politics," he claims that hip-hop culture can also be spectacular and loud. Rappers struggle for space, as it provides the room in which they can create hidden transcripts and also conduct street politics. Hence, they struggle for structural problems regarding ethnicity, race, and citizenship, and also they raise their voice for getting their share in the city through space.

In 1960s Henri Lefebvre introduced us the concept of "right to the city." In his study called "The Right to the City," he shows the relation between capitalism and

space. For Lefebvre space is not only a geographical "given" but also a socially constructed phenomenon. He says; "space is produced, a product, but also producer and reproducer of relations of domination" (Lefebvre, 2009). In the "neo-liberalization of space" (Peck&Tickell, 2002), shifting from "urban Keynesianism" (Beal&Rousseau, 2008) cities are a place of competition, where we can see an increasing implication of private actors (in housing, urban planning, provision of urban services, etc.). For Lefebvre, both state actions and market mechanisms create special inequalities, through mechanisms of homogenization, fragmentation, and hierarchization of space. "The core" (in the urban context, the city-center) is a spectacle, whereas the periphery is a place of surveillance and control. Moreover, spatial relations and urban dynamics are a function of economic modes of production and reflect the economic background of an epoch. For him, in the capitalist system, the space is valorized by its exchange value rather than its use value. In other words, the space, too, is commodified as any other commodity in the market and its value is specified external to the space and independent from its dwellers. The right to the city is thus, people's right to change and reproduce the city in parallel to their own needs and desires.

David Harvey argues that "the right to the city" is the right to have a power which has a decisive role in determining issues regarding the urban. For him, the capitalist mode of urbanization deprives people of their spaces and rights. Harvey claims that capitalism is a cyclic system made up of phases of overaccumulation and crisis. In times of crisis, states develop strategies characteristic of "primitive capitalism," and that he calls "accumulation by dispossession." The neo-liberal era is the accumulation of wealth in a few hands by dispossession, carried by market and state practices of "new imperialism" through mechanisms of privatization and

commodification (Harvey, 1990). The right to the city is vital as it has the capacity to influence the economic, social and political relations and processes through which the space is produced.

Mark Purcell claims that the concept of the right to the city should not be understood only concerning space and city (Purcell, 2002). For him, the politics through space can also be directed at issues which are beyond the city. As he suggests, the right to the city is not about the reshaping of the urban structure but rather an attempt to make a radical change in the social, economic and political structure of urban and beyond. Hence, spatial politics should not be understood only as a form of resistance to the urban restructuring or as a type of social movement only aimed at issues about city and space, but rather as a form of politics which accumulates its power from the space but whose implications are beyond it.

In conclusion, hip-hop is in relation to urban in three respects. First, this art form is produced within a certain space, and it addresses the problems immanent to this particular space. Secondly, this spatial embeddedness is accompanied by the transformative power of hip-hop. That is to say, through hip-hop artists do not only raise their voices on the issues concerning the local, but also re-define and re-represent the reality of the local. Lastly, as a form of right to the city activism, critique or resistance via hip-hop goes beyond local issues, and democratic demands such as justice or equality are claimed.

#### 2.2.5 Rap, market and popular culture

So far, I have investigated the relationship between rap music and resistance, but it is also in relation to market and culture. Lusane argues that the economic conditions of the time have always shaped black music. Like all of the black art, rap music should

also be evaluated with reference to the economic policies of and market relations in the 1980s and 1990s. She shows that the policies at that time resulted in the furtherance of poverty and unemployment of African American citizens and hence their alienation. She contends that it is not a coincidence that rap music has emerged in cities that are affected worst by Reaganian policies which damaged mostly black youth. Hence, as a signifier of class and race, rap music was functional in political terms (Lusane, 1993).

What is more striking is that she successfully points out that rap music was also a way of making money among poor black Americans. As it does not require enormous investment and in some cases results in large returns, many black youngsters saw it as a way out from their destiny. In addition, some rappers took rap not only as a tool for making money but also an instrument of integration by gaining a particular status. Yet, she also suggests that by integrating into the market economy and expanding its share, rap music also decreased its level of critique and became more moderate.

Adorno and Horkheimer argue that culture industry through influencing people's beliefs and thoughts creates false consciousness and empowers dominant ideology. This prevents the expansion of the mind. They say;

Each single manifestation of the culture industry inescapably reproduces human beings as what the whole has made them. And all its agents, from the producer to the women's organizations, are on alert to ensure that the simple reproduction of mind does not lead on to the expansion of mind. (Horkheimer and Adorno 2006: 100).

Drawing on their analysis, Marcuse argues that the culture industry eliminates reason along with culture and identity. For him, it prevents people from understanding real problems and needs (Marcuse, 2013). Hart (2009) suggests that as hip-hop turned into a cultural, industrial product, the representation of Blacks in the

eyes of Whites became their reality. In other words, the cultural inferiority of Blacks that creates inequality between Whites and Blacks is reproduced. For him, internalization of representations of Black people as “gangstas” and “hoes” through commercialized rap makes an illusion that the representation of blacks is a perfect extension of their realities.

In his work, *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction*, Benjamin (2008) introduces the concept of authenticity in relation to reproduction. For Benjamin, the mechanization of the production of a work of art was revolutionary in that it resulted in the lack of "authentic" aura in the works of art. The aura is an effect of a work of art being uniquely present in a particular time and space. It has disappeared in the modern age as art has become reproducible. A reproduced artwork is never fully present. If there is no original, it is never fully present anywhere. Authenticity cannot be reproduced, and it disappears when everything is reproduced.

Benjamin claims that in the modern age, art is emancipated from its dependence on ritual. Before the values were located in ritual and religious tradition and it was impossible to reproduce a work of art because of its unique singularity that produced the sanctity of the ritual. As a result, the experiences connected with ritual and traditions are lost. Consequently, the autonomy of art is also lost and politics replace ritual. He says:

...for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an even higher degree, the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. ... But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice; politics. (Benjamin, 2008: 224)

However, Benjamin claims that the reproducibility of the work of art can lead to fascism in the sense that state uses art as a tool for ideological diffusion and



oppression as it can create freedom. This is what he calls "aestheticization of politics" (Benjamin, 2008). Just like Benjamin, Bürger also criticizes traditional art. Bürger argues that the process of institutionalizing art that had occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries led to elitism (Bürger, 2011). According to him, this process resulted in the gentrification of art and the isolation of its inherently bourgeois audience. For him, what bourgeoisie wanted to do was to reinforce their own social and political power through art. The popular audience had been made unsympathetic with art. However, Bürger claims that avant-garde attacked the institutionalization and understanding of art. He takes it as a particular historical phenomenon distinct from the history of art due to its oppositional characteristic. For him, avant-gardists detached from bourgeois ideology by engaging in a critical analysis of society. In short, both thinkers approach the spread of work of art to a broader audience favorably and think that there could be a liberatory aspect in it.

Rap music is indeed turned into a commodity by the culture industry.

Representations of blacks and ghetto were also transformed into buyable and sellable forms in the market. The representation of blackness replaced the artistic elements in the music. Hence, in order black rappers to be successful in the market, they have to agree and meet the demands of record firms, the representations that the culture industry draws and negative Black imaginations of White people. As Hart (2009) claims, hip-hop music became more related to exploitation rather than a representation of realities. Rose also claims that the culture industry bolsters the pejorative history of blackness and racism. She says; "By reflecting images of black people as colorful and violent criminals, drug dealers, and sex fiends... it crowds out other notions of what it means to be black and reinforces the most powerful racist and sexist images of black people" (Rose 2013:139).

This consequently solidified gangsta rap by turning it into the authentic genre of rap and music itself became the mediated form of Black authenticity. Hence, the imagination of Whites regarding the Blacks became the truth of Blacks and ghettos which render them socially and economically inferior.

Some argue that hardcore rap was also depoliticized as it was turned into a commodity. As Whites became the major consumers of rap music, the concerns over sales overcame the political concerns. Todd Boyd claims that the political characteristic of rap music has been killed off by the culture industry. For him, before, hip-hop culture was aiming at claiming the Black authenticity that is defined not only by race but also class relations. However, as rappers got more integrated into the market, they softened their language and directed their critiques towards their realities as well as the state. (Boyd, 1997)

Similarly, in her analysis where she evaluates the rap advertorials, Blair claims that rap music has passed into the stage of mass production. She claims that producers try to transform rap music into a form which can attract more focus in the market. For Blair, it is unfortunate that the mass culture industry dominates the developments in rap music. Because many black young people see rap music as a way to get rid of their problems or at least as a tool to have a voice. Most of the producers do not know about the subculture wherein the hip-hop culture originated or they pay no attention to it. Hence the political meaning of rap culture is replaced by the elements of entertainment. (Blair, 1993)

Another debate regarding the relationship between market and rap music is about rap music's technological reproduction. Technological developments in music facilitated the public performances of rap music in different places. Technological

products such as turntable which helps composers to make songs out of beats paved the way for the expansion of hip-hop. Iain Chambers says:

Rap is New York's "sound system"; the black youth culture of Harlem and the Bronx successfully twisting technology into new cultural shape. Rap is sonorial graffiti, a musical spray that marries black rhythms and the verbal gymnastics of hip street talk to a hot DJ patter over an ingenious manipulation of the turntable. (1985: 190)

Therefore, while technology contributed to the dissemination of rap music, it also allowed the continuation of rap's authenticity. Forman says; "apart from constructing a bridge between musical antecedents and the present, digital sampling can imbue an element of authenticity on newer tracks as the patina of the past seeps into the new mix."(Forman&Neal, 2004: 300) The newer songs refer to older songs by using their beats. Hence, while on the one hand, some black songs become authentic, classic masterpieces of rap music, those who refer to these songs show that they have the required capital and taste which will enable them to distinguish themselves from their peers.

## 2.2 Turkish rap

In the recent decades, rap emerged as a popular genre. The history of Turkish rap starts in Berlin. As Diessel states Turks who came to work from Turkey to Germany were regarded as guest workers before. Later, as they brought their own families, they became perpetual immigrants (Diessel, 2001). In the 1990s, in the middle of Berlin, ethnically and culturally different Turkish diaspora had become very visible. The emergence of Turkish rap dates back to 1995 when the first Turkish rap group called "Cartel" came into existence. A few more groups and rappers followed them afterward.

In her study, Diessel looks for how Turkish rappers express themselves in an environment where they are subjected to discrimination, by analyzing magazines, newspapers and television and radio news and conducting fieldwork in Kreuzberg where mostly Turkish Germans live. As she describes, Cartel was regarded as a significant potential of resistance against German discrimination by Turks. Their importance was that they showed that there are a Turkish voice and culture in the middle of Germany. Besides, they also showed that Turks could participate in media organs like MTV and Spiegel, too.

Similar to Diessel, Kaya (2002) too, studies the hip-hop culture in Kreuzberg through ethnographic research. His primary finding is that young Turkish rappers in Berlin conduct an identity politics by emphasizing their authenticity in the age of glocalism. He suggests that Turkish rappers use hip-hop culture that is a universal tool of resistance to express discrimination, criminalization and German supremacy. In fact, they start rapping in English. Hence, their style and music are universal and global. Kaya claims that diasporic youth in Germany produce a subcultural system in which they express their own identities. He says that "hip-hop is a youth culture that enables ethnic minority youths to use both their own 'authentic' cultural capital and global transcultural capital in constructing and articulating their identities" (Kaya, 2002: 43). Hence, global tools serve as the instruments of expressing local problems and identities. In that regard, Kaya is one of the scholars who take rap music as a mirror and rappers as contemporary storytellers or minstrels (ozan). Drawing on Benjamin's analysis, he suggests that rappers are intellectual storytellers who have sermons for their audience and who will mobilize their communities against the hegemonic power. In that sense, he makes an analogy between traditional minstrels

and rappers. As both try to mobilize and enlighten masses against dominant classes through music, he claims that there is a resemblance between these two.

One of the common observations that Diessel and Kaya make is the discourse of authenticity in Turkish-German rap. Kaya shows that some rappers in Germany use oriental elements in their songs to reveal that they have the cultural capital which will enable them to get closer to Turkish citizens. Also, this also contributes to the multi-cultural capital of rappers, so that the majority of the society will welcome them. Diessel, suggests that Turkish rappers in Germany use oriental components as a tool for solidarity. They believe that the glorious past, focus on Islam and Ottoman will help them get together as Turks against German nationalism and discrimination. She finds an interesting similarity between Turkish rappers in Germany and African-American rappers in the US. She says "the appeal of the call for solidarity was based on the imagination of a collective Ottoman past, similar to the way that African-America rap imagines a shared African past, as well as on the linguistic idioms of brotherhood employed by American gangsta rap." (Diessel, 2001: 170) Hence, for both, the power of the words stands for the solidarity of those who are oppressed.

The debate of solidarity also brings the discussion of nationalism. It is not the first time that rap music has been related to national sentiments. Rap music in the US too was seen as a tool of nationalist politics, namely Black Nationalism. Cheney suggests that,

Generally recognized as part of a Pan-African movement, the Black nationalist theory asserts the conviction that Black people in the Diaspora, by virtue of African ancestry and shared historical experience of slavery, share a cultural identity and therefore constitute a nationality separate and distinct from other (white) Americans. (Cheney,1999: 2)

However, Black Nationalism in rap music did not develop in the line of political nationalism but was "recognized as a very rational response to the irrational social experiences of attitudinal and structural racism" (Cheney, 1999: 3). However, the influence of Turkish rap in Germany was different. Both Kaya and Diessel claim that rap music in Germany was against German nationalism. They also contend that Turkish rappers' songs had nationalistic features. In addition, they suggest that it was a time when the nationalism in Turkey was on the rise. So, groups such as Cartel were quite welcome in Turkey. The right-wing nationalist party-MHP- wanted to incorporate them into their political propaganda. Hence, as Kaya states, Cartel quickly turned into one of the major pillars of Turkish nationalism. Turkish rap nationalism was directly transformed into Turkish context from Germany by the right-wing forces in Turkey. Çınar contends that Turkish rap which was born in Germany against nationalism was turned into a tool for Turkish nationalism against the Kurdish minority in Turkey (Çınar, 1999).

Interestingly enough, in 1996, Cartel's first album was banned by the then Turkish government, because they found the way their music talks to poor people "threatening to the state ideology of socialism." (Mallett, 2012). After that event, there became a retreat in Turkish rap until the 2000s when Nefret (Hatred) started rapping in Istanbul. Yet, as Mallett suggests nationalistic lyrics were absent instead subjects such as drug abuse and smoking, which are closer to gangsta rap as well as hatred for Islam, culture, and Istanbul were present in their music (Mallett, 2012).

One other scholar who studies Nefret is Solomon. He suggests that, throughout time, there has always been a strong relation between music and Istanbul (Solomon, 2005a). Rap music also has the characteristic of representing the space. In his work, he analyzes the lyrics of songs by Nefret and tries to find how the city of Istanbul is

imagined and introduced. He observes that words like *acımasız*, (“merciless”), *çile* (“suffering”), *yara* (“wound”), *yalan* (“the lie”), *zor* (“difficult”), *ağlamak* (“to cry”) and *yaşlar* (“tears”) are quite prevalent (Solomon, 2005a: 58). He suggests that on the one hand, the arabesque characteristics of words are quite visible and on the other hand, the difficulties and problems from which poor people and migrants in Istanbul suffer that is regarded as one of the most beautiful cities in the world are expressed. All in all, he argues that rap music as a product of global culture is useful in expressing local problems and makes different encounters more visible.

In another work, Solomon (2005b) studies locality and authenticity in Istanbul through participant observation and interviews. He argues that the culture of underground (*yeraltı*) creates specific meanings and relationships. Firstly, rappers differ themselves from pop singers. Secondly, they reimagine the city and construct new locally specific meanings. Thus, in the 2000s, rap music in Istanbul functioned in such a way that rappers "authenticize" their situation and show their cry about unequal relations in the city. He suggests that Turkish rap in Istanbul does not have the characteristics of giving voice to economically and ethnically disadvantaged groups which this study will show the otherwise later on.

One thing that *yeraltı*/underground does not seem to refer to is the ethnic and class background of the participants in the Turkish hip-hop community. Discourses of authenticity in the Istanbul hip-hop community do not focus on ‘street credibility’ of people concerning 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 mostly middle-class ethnic Turks, university-educated, often with good jobs. (Solomon, 2005b, 8)

These discussions on Turkish rap and politics will shed light on the current developments in Turkish rap. It is challenging to come across studies which evaluate rap music in political terms especially after 2004 when rap music became very

popular in Turkey. The discussions introduced in this study will help to understand how rap music can be useful in expressing local problems. In addition, the debates over the relationship between rap and space and city are also quite helpful in comprehending the identity politics through rap music and rap music as performance.

Before moving to the exclusion in Sulukule and Bağcılar, I would like to stress the crucial points highlighted in this review. First of all, rap music emerged in a context where there was discrimination against black people. Those people were also economically deprived. Besides, social and economic exclusion was accompanied by the physical segregation through urban renewal projects. In this context, rap music became a tool for expressing dissent and showing resistance. Secondly, demands through hip-hop and rap go beyond the local issues and cover a greater extent in which social justice and equality are also requested. Thirdly, while doing so, there became spatial embeddedness in hip-hop and rap in the sense that art is produced within a specific space and aimed at exploring the problems of this space as well as transforming it. Fourthly, rap music is also in relation with market mechanisms, and as it gets commodified, there is a risk that it loses its critical feature. Lastly, in the studies of Turkish rap, the primary focus is on the authenticity or national identity which I see inadequate to understand the dynamics of rap music and politics.



## CHAPTER 3

### EXCLUSION IN SULUKULE AND BAĞCILAR

Sulukule and Bağcılar are two districts in Istanbul wherein people suffer from poverty and social exclusion along with other social problems. In this chapter, after a brief theoretical explanation and comparison of social exclusion and poverty, I will explain the role of neoliberalism, globalism, and urbanization in the occurrence and intensification of exclusion and poverty. Lastly, I will try to show economic, discursive and ethnic exclusion which dwellers of Sulukule and Bağcılar face and other problems from which settlers in these areas suffer.

Social exclusion and poverty are two highly interrelated phenomena. In its broadest sense, social exclusion is the deprivation of one from his or her civic, political, economic and social rights which provide social integration (Walker and Walker, 1997). Conceptually, one of the most significant differences between social exclusion and poverty is that the former implies disintegration. For Abrahamson, the real difference between poverty and social exclusion is that they came into existence at different times. Poverty addresses the lack of wealth due to the exploitation of working class by the bourgeoisie. Yet, social exclusion refers to the opposite of integration. In the post-industrial era, it points those who break away from the middle class (Abrahamson, 2005). According to Walker, another significant difference between social exclusion and poverty is that while latter is temporary because it directly refers to the non-existence of material wealth, the former refers to a multidimensional, systematic and perpetual deprivation (Walker, 1997). All in all, while poverty is mainly about economic deprivation, social exclusion encompasses a

more complex web of relations and multidimensional deprivation which prohibits integration.

In cities like Istanbul, the contribution of economic transformations, stemming from globalization and neo-liberalism to social exclusion and poverty is undeniable. To understand this, better, new concepts such as relative poverty and new poverty are needed to be mentioned. As the level of consumption increases in big cities and consumption becomes one of the critical indicators of class and social position, eligibility of one to meet social desires becomes crucial. Therefore, poverty should not be understood only as the absolute non-existence of economic mediums but also a relatively disadvantageous position in a high consumer society. For Alcock, while absolute poverty means being deprived of the essentials of life, to be relatively poor is dependent on the position of one concerning the standard conditions of society (Alcock, 1993). Hence, what it means to be poor also means the deprivation of cultural practices, socio-cultural activities and supplements of consumer society along with essential requirements.

Inadequate level of consumption in a global, consumer city leads to isolation. In an environment where what people possess and consume specify their identity; those who cannot fulfill the expectations as a consumer are condemned to be defective. There are many terms which can help us to understand the social positioning. In different social and geographical context, different terms are used. As Buğra and Keyder state, while marginality refers to the non-integration to society in Latin America, underclass points workers who lost their jobs after the economic transformations and lived in ghettos in the United States. Buğra and Keyder use "new poverty" to address people in Turkish context who face social exclusion, economic poverty, and marginalization. For them, the type of poverty from which

people in Istanbul suffer involves problems stemming from urbanization, migration and structural economic transformations (Buğra and Keyder, 2003). This new type of poverty excludes people from social and spatial contexts and processes.

New poverty creates social stratifications not only by putting physical barriers between rich and poor but also creating despair among poor people. With the advent of globalization and neoliberal economic policies, migrated people started to lose their hope of getting rich over time. For Karakaş, as relative poverty is reproduced over and over again due to both global economic transformations and structural changes in the city, new poverty in megacities deprives people of the idea of vertical mobility (Karakaş, 2010). In other words, new poverty does not only mean the lack of material mediums but also a cultural atmosphere which comprises mental deficiencies, despair and the sense of isolation. This eventually leads to perpetual poverty.

All in all, social exclusion and poverty that people today face are multidimensional phenomena which cannot be reduced to the deprivation of material wealth. Instead, they are related to the equal participation of social life and consumption in the city. As the structure of the economy and the city changed due to global economic transformations, poverty and exclusion became very common in metropolitans. Now, I will try to expose how neoliberalism and globalization deepened exclusion and poverty in Istanbul.

### 3.1 Exclusion and poverty in the era of globalization and neoliberalism

From the 1980s onward, Turkey has witnessed great social, economic and political changes with the advent of neoliberal and global policies. Istanbul, as the biggest city of Turkey, began to transform into one of the biggest metropolitans in the world. It

had the role of integrating Turkey into the international market. Resultantly, rapid economic transformations and integration to the global markets had an impact on the social and economic structure of Turkish society.

Neoliberalism is the "commitment to the extension of markets and logic of competitiveness" as "well as antipathy to Keynesianism and/or collectivist strategies" (Peck and Tickell, 2002, 381). For Tickell and Peck, it is a process, rather than an end-state, which is produced and reproduced through institutions and political action (Peck and Tickell, 2002). Yet, it cannot be seen solely as anti-Keynesianism. It is instead the effect on the structure and dynamics of the competition and development within and interurban.

According to Wacquant, Neoliberalism differs itself from liberalism in that state's role is defined as to expand the domain of market through its regulatory power (Wacquant, 2012, 68). It requires the reconstruction of the state rather than retrieval. For neoliberalism, space and city are also significant because, through the place, people and capital circulate (Smith, 2002). As he argues, since capital and production become globalized, the structure and the function of the cities also change. In cities like Istanbul, for the sake of economic growth, the pursuit of social and cultural identity and the need for a global flow of investment, neoliberal policies have been implemented. As Aksoy states, from the 1980s onward, there had already been an attempt to turn Istanbul into a metropolis, especially in the era of Bedrettin Dalan (Aksoy,2014). These attempts were on a small scale. It was only when JDP had both the local and central governments; the globalization by the hand of the state took place in the name of neoliberalism.

One of the primary objectives of these neoliberal policies in Istanbul was to make Istanbul an attraction center for foreign investment. Accordingly, great

importance was given to the construction sector. Not only residences, business, and trade centers were built to remark the interests of global capital, but also by turning land into a commodified value, a growth based on construction took place.

Meanwhile, in the name of cleansing and renovating, the authentic images of Ottoman and Islam were also implemented in the construction of global Istanbul (Aksoy, 2014).

The state did not only relieved market but also made legal regulations for the implementation of neoliberal policies. As Kuyucu claims, the ambiguities in the legal framework of housing made the implementation of neoliberal projects easier. He states that, due to the massive domestic migration, the illegal housing in Istanbul was tolerated. This situation, within years, in a sense took the shape of political clientelism as infrastructure services were given as an exchange for a vote in the election times. Yet, in the times of urban renewal projects, the lack of legal basis of housing created vulnerabilities for the dwellers. Secondly, the state could conduct urban renewal projects through decrees. Hence, state, without argument, can produce and execute projects on cities. Another essential legal factor is the ambiguity in the definition of transformation zones. Kuyucu states that the specification of the transformation areas was left to local officials and this in return resulted in arbitrariness in the criterion of area selection and project execution. Lastly, Mass Housing Administration (MHA) became composed of technocrats who try to administer the institution to maximize the profit. As it is exempt from audit, it became necessary for establishing neoliberalization in the housing (Kuyucu, 2014).

Hence, the passage from the developmental or welfare state to globalizing state was fulfilled by the hands of the state itself. State's initiative has always taken place as to regulate and manipulate legal framework. In Istanbul, the restructuring of the

city has taken the shape of the corporation of the neoliberal program and the social and cultural ideal of the political power (Aksoy, 2014). For those who remain outside of this partnership, that is to say, those who cannot meet the speculative economic requirement of the ever-growing city and social and cultural assertiveness of the power, Istanbul became an exclusionary place.

As I have also previously mentioned, social exclusion is not only about the non-existence of wealth, but also symbolic exclusion, social deprivation and poor participation to the essential social institutions and is about the quality of the relation between individual and society (Hilary, 1995). Thus, it is also a matter of social integration or disintegration. One can argue that disintegration of lower classes and hence social exclusion and poverty deepened thanks to global economy and neoliberalism. The role that they play in social exclusion is that with the collapse of the welfare state, they decreased the systematic need for the labor force. According to Pınarcıoğlu and Işık, in developing countries where the labor power is cheap; post-industrialization, migration and the decrease in the need for labor supply resulted in long-term unemployment (Pınarcıoğlu and Işık, 2001). This consequently contributed to the social exclusion because firstly, poor people could not play the consumer roles in the society and secondly, they remained as incapable, unnecessary, inefficient, unqualified people who live in peripheries.

According to Özcan (2014), one of the most prominent effects of neoliberal policies in Istanbul was the spatial division. The city started to be divided into subspaces in accordance with class and identity. This is the method of gathering power and interest of power and capital. On the one hand, wealthy upper classes settled in protecting, self-sufficient housing estates. On the other hand, cheap labor forces which migrated from rural areas dwelled in peripheries of Istanbul. Yet, this

division is not only about class but also identity and ethnicity. Istanbul's suburbs mainly consist of people who migrated from Eastern Anatolia in order to find a job in industrializing Istanbul. Economic crises in the 1970s and the placement of neoliberal logic in economic policy execution resulted in excess of labor supply. Hence, Istanbul's peripheries became exclusionary places where ethnically or culturally different, economically disadvantageous and untrained citizens live (Özcan,2014) As employment chances and social policy mechanisms worsened due to the economic crisis in the 1990s, there has been an increase in social exclusion (Keyder, 2005). For Keyder, another critical factor that leads to deepening of exclusion is the urban renewal projects. Now, I would like to shed light on how state-led neoliberal policies worsened the conditions of vulnerable people in suburbs and shanty towns through urban renewal projects.

For Keyder (2005), throughout the whole city, in the lands where once dwelled by shanty or squatter houses, renewal projects augmented the interests of international and construction companies as well as politicians who saw these projects as land marketing. Consequently, lower classes who settle in these places started to be regarded as invaders who prevent profit maximization and thus were excluded socially and discursively (Keyder, 2005).

In places like Tarlabası and Sulukule, ethnically, economically and culturally different citizens remained in the center of the city. As Harvey claims, with the advent of neoliberalism Keynesian logic of mass consumption was replaced by competitive market logic. Hence, the city itself became the site of class conflict in this competitive environment (Harvey, 2005). The values of the places in the city are no more determined by their use value but by exchange value. Use value is about a place's physical space; exchange value is about its rent value (Şengül, 2001). Hence,

while on the one hand places which remain in the inner city yet squatted by lower class citizens were gentrified through urban renewal projects, on the other hand, those who live here are labeled as "defective others" just like their peers in the suburbs.

To explain this phenomenon, a Turkish word is used; "varoş." Varoş is different from its so-called counterparts such as banlieue or suburbs in the sense that it refers to places which are not necessarily located in peripheries. For example, Tarlabaşı is only a stone's throw away from Taksim and Cihangir which are two of the most "gentle" neighborhoods in Istanbul. Varoş also refers to a socio-economic position. It addresses those who are in poverty, ethnically different and uneducated. In the 1990s, varoş started to be used synonymously with gecekondu which refers to the illegal housing (Demirtaş and Şen, 2007). In the same period, the cultural aspects of gecekondu life also began to be debated. These debates were mainly focusing on so-called pejorative features of gecekondu culture such as continual rural habits. People who live in gecekondu were labeled as non-Istanbulites and hence people with low culture. As Demirtaş and Şen state, especially after 1995 gecekondu or varoş used interchangeably to describe potentially violent, criminal, terrorist and threatening individuals to the societal harmony in public. Today, varoş seems to be a concept which has broader meanings. Varoş replaced gecekondu by ascribing a certain marginality, political ideology, and hopelessness to the label (Demirtaş and Şen, 2007). All in all, varoş represents negative social, economic and political values attributed to those who live in peripheries and poor neighborhoods. Therefore, as this study also suggests, ethnic and economic exclusions coincide in certain places like Sukulue and Bağcılar. Now, I will try to show exclusion and poverty in both neighborhoods.



### 3.2 Exclusion and poverty in Sulukule

Poverty and exclusion in Sulukule were present even before neoliberalism, particularly urban renewal projects. Sulukule is a neighbor that is located between Topkapı and Karagümrük, by the historic walls of Istanbul. It is the second biggest Romani neighbor in Istanbul. It is stated that Romas migrated to Istanbul in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and were forced live outside the walls as they were accused of illegal activities such as fortune telling and magic. Only during the attacks to Istanbul, they managed to enter the city (Yılmaz, 2009).

In 1957, during the Menderes construction activities to build the Vatan Street, 29 houses were demolished and Sulukule's size was almost reduced to its half. Most of the people who lived in Sulukule were earning their lives through music at that time. "Entertainment houses" (devriye evleri or eğlence evleri), although not completely legal, provided welfare to some extent for Romas in the neighborhood (Yılmaz, 2009).

However, in 1990s, the situation of entertainment houses started to change. Although most of them were unlicensed, entertainment houses were somehow tolerated by the state and the police until then. Yet, in 1990s, they were started to be advertised as places of criminality and prostitution. After Saadettin Tantın became the president of the Committee of Inspection of Security General Directorate of Istanbul, operations towards entertainment houses started to take place. Superintendent Süleyman Ulusoy, known as Süleyman the Waterspout (Hortum Süleyman) because he beat LGBTI individuals in Istanbul by a waterspout, executed operations in 1990s (Yılmaz, 2009).

One of the people that I interviewed, Cem Avcı -the General Coordinator of Sulukule Volunteers Association, says;

Savaş Ay and Uğur Dündar, two of the most famous Television programmer of the time made programs to discredit Sulukule. They argued that Entertainment Houses are houses of crime, drug and prostitution. Saadettin Tantan started the pressure on Romas and Süleyman Ulusoy increased it. As Tantan gentrified Cihangir, he tried to cleans Sulukule.<sup>1</sup>

Eventually, Entertainment Houses were abolished. This led to economic collapse and marginalization of labor force of people in Sulukule. Hence, economic exclusion and poverty also deepened in Sulukule.

As in any other place where Romas are settled, there has always been ethnic discrimination towards people in Sulukule, as well. Romas were labeled as potentially criminal, threatening to social welfare and harmony, immoral and dirty.

Cem Avcı explains the discrimination that Romani students in schools face as follows;

In schools, there is already a general discrimination towards Romani students. For example, when something is lost, it is Romani students who are immediately accused of. Or, they are sat at the back of the class. Parents do not want their children study with Romani students. Even, sometimes in schools there are classes specifically for Romani students.<sup>2</sup>

The rappers that I talked to in my fieldwork in Sulukule, also state being Romani and living in Sulukule create pejorative prejudgments in the eyes of other people. For them the reasons why they face discrimination are because they are Romani and poor. For example, Emre Önceğiz, 18-year-old rapper from Sulukule, a

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<sup>1</sup>“Savaş Ay ve Uğur Dündar yaptıkları programlarda buranın suç, uyuşturucu ve fuhuş yuvası olduğunu öne sürdüler. Burayı itibarsızlaştırmaya başladılar. Saadettin Tantan zamanında baskı başladı. Hortum Süleyman lakaplı emniyet müdürü baskıyı arttırdı. Zamanında Cihangir’den LGBTİ bireylerini hortumla döverek kapı dışarı ettiği için bu lakabı almıştı. Orayı soylulaştırdığı gibi Sulukule’ye de el attı.”

<sup>2</sup>“Okullarda zaten Roman öğrenciler genel geçer bir şekilde ayrımcılığa uğruyor. Mesela okulda bir şey kaybolunca hemen Roman öğrencilerden biliniyor. Ya da Romanlar hep sınıfın en arkasında oturtuluyor. Veliler de çocuklarının Roman öğrencilerle aynı sınıfta olmasını istemiyor. Romanlar için ayrı sınıf bile açıldığı oluyor.”

member of group called Teşkilat-I İsyân, says; “Although we did not face anything directly, my mother always advises me to disguise my Romani identity and instead suggests me to promote myself as an immigrant. So, she must have experienced something.”<sup>3</sup>

In terms of education level too, people in Sulukule are in deprivation. Apart from the discrimination that they face in schools, economic difficulties also make it harder for those people to go to school. Cem Avcı claims that the biggest problem in Sulukule is that the students cannot continue their education. He says:

They are already poor students. They cannot get good education here. They fail in the exams in order to go to high schools. As they do not have money, they tend to take place in the market as cheap labor. That is why, Romani students who made it to high school are really rare.<sup>4</sup>

In my fieldwork, I also witnessed that young people in Sulukule have difficulty in either attending or finishing school. None of the rappers in the neighborhood, apart from Zen-G, achieved to make it to university education. For example, Emre is still in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade although normally students who go to 7<sup>th</sup> grade are 13-14 years old. Similarly, Asil Koç, 24 years old Tahribad-I İsyân member, is in the first year of high school while his peers are graduated from university. Instead of attending school, youngsters in Sulukule try to make money by working. For example, Emre has worked as a barista in a coffee shop, his band mate Ismail worked in the airport with his father. Similarly, Veysi from Tahribad-I İsyân worked in a pastry shop to maintain his life. This problem regarding education and working in the early ages is a common problem in Sulukule.

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<sup>3</sup> Ya direkt bir şey yaşamadık ama annem bana hep şey derdi. İşte Roman olduğunu sakla, göçmenim de filan derdi. Demek ki bir şeyler yaşamış, biliyor ki bana da öyle diyordu.

<sup>4</sup> “Zaten fakir öğrenciler. Burada iyi eğitim de alamıyorlar. Liseye geçiş sınavında başarılı olamıyorlar. Paraları da olmadığı için ucuz iş gücü olarak piyasada yer bulmaya yöneliyorlar. O yüzden liseye geçebilmiş Roman öğrenci çok az oluyor.”

Another problem in the neighborhood is drug trafficking and addiction. People in the neighborhood claim that drug dealing in Sulukule is very common. As they state, for those who want to buy drugs, Sulukule is one of the biggest markets. In my first visit to the neighborhood, one of the rappers got surprised as he saw me there. He told me that normally outsiders do not come to see Sulukule unless they want to buy drugs. So, he thought that I was there to buy drugs in the first place. Then, he informed me that just two days ago the police made an enormous bust with vehicles including helicopters.

They also say that one of the biggest reasons why an urban renewal project was implemented in Sulukule was the existence of drug dealing in the area. Rappers that I visit in Sulukule told me that if it was two or three years ago, I would not have made it to the neighbor because of these people (referring to drug dealers). Although they protest against and resist to the urban renewal project, they all agree that drug dealing was a serious problem and had to be solved. Asil says in an interview;

Well, when state came here to demolish our houses we could not stop them. Because if we have told them to stop, they could have said to us; “why”. There is culture etc. in Sulukule, but these would not have been enough. Because in Sulukule too, things started to come off the hinges. (32. Gun TV, 2017)

Yet, the biggest problems for the local people emerged with the implementation of urban renewal project in Sulukule. In 2006, Fatih Municipality and Mass Housing Administration of Turkey (Toki) prepared an urban renewal project aimed at renovation of two neighborhoods within Istanbul walls.

In legitimizing urban renewal project in Sulukule, state officials stigmatized Sulukule as a place of deviance and crime. Fatih Municipality defined Sulukule as following; “Sulukule has been occupied by low income and low cultural groups who came as immigrants without having a sense of belonging to the city. There is no trace

of a homogeneous culture in the neighborhood” (Fatih Municipality, 2006)<sup>5</sup>.

According to them, urban regeneration was a must because “Neslisah and Hatice Sultan neighborhoods have witnessed urban decay and turned into slum areas, in the centre of Istanbul. These neighborhoods have not only been physically ruined but also have become homelands for socio-economic problems” (Fatih Municipality, 2006).

Similarly, the objectives of the Sulukule Urban Renewal Project are to “preserve national and world heritage, particularly historical tissue in Sulukule including ancient walls, to stop physical decay and to secure the sustainability of the neighborhood, to maintain economic development, to promote urban integration, to increase standards of living in Sulukule and to encourage dwellers to participate in urban policies” (Fatih Municipality, 2006). In conclusion, urban renewal project was not introduced only in terms of pejorative physical conditions of the area, but also negative features regarding morality, culture and economy.

Of course, the first and foremost consequence of the urban renewal project was the destruction of houses in the area. People who live in Sulukule were offered two options. They had either to accept participating in the renewal project or to get their houses expropriated. Hence, as people live in Sulukule were not wealthy enough to afford to pay the money at the amount of difference between their own properties and newly built houses, most of them sold their estates. State bought dwellers’ houses on a relatively very little price and sent them to Taşoluk where is 40 kilometers far from the center of Istanbul (Uysal, 2012). There was no other option than moving from Sulukule for those people. Cem Avcı explains this as follows;

The urban transformation here was initiated by a decree passed in 2006. Against this, there was not much resistance from the Romas.

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<sup>5</sup> Since the execution of the project is suspended at the of writing this thesis, there is no longer access to the webpage.

Because they have no collective organizing culture. Because, throughout history, they had to hide their identity. The resistance against the police and the state started with the establishment of the Sulukule Platform. In 2009, the house of Gülsüm Bitirdi was expropriated by depositing money on the account of her dead parents. This was against the expropriation of the European Court of Human Rights. In fact, the domestic courts cannot go to this court without exhaustion. But the lawlessness here was so obvious that the court accepted it. Now she cannot get aid from the state since she resisted.<sup>6</sup>

Roman families who went to Taşoluk had difficulty in paying high rents and bills. The different socio-cultural profile of Taşoluk also left the displaced people in a more difficult situation. Those who work in the entertainment sector in Sulukule lost their jobs due to transportation difficulties. Those who showed tendency to illegal activities due to unemployment and poverty made other residents of Taşoluk uneasy. For the Roma who lived in Sulukule throughout their lives, it was also a problem to adapt to the 'lifestyle' of mass housing. The disappearance of the social support in the neighborhood (for example, unlike Sulukule, shops in Taşoluk did not accept tick) and the constraints to the maintenance of ethno-cultural practices (for example, disturbing neighbors by the night music made by displaced people) lead to the disillusionment in those coming from Sulukule. Those who refused to impose the project and chose to stay in Sulukule were forced to struggle with increasingly worsening living conditions. In addition to the troubles brought about by the demolitions, the interruptions of electricity and water threatened the health of the neighborhoods (Uysal, 2012). Today, nearly 40% of the Sulukule population lives in a nearby neighborhood called Karagümrük wherein some activists and NGOs

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<sup>6</sup> Buradaki kentsel dönüşüm 2006'da çıkarılan bir kanun hükmünde kararname ile başlatıldı. Bu duruma karşı buradaki Roman halktan pek bir direniş hareketi çıkmadı. Çünkü onlarda kolektif örgütlenme kültürü yok. Çünkü tarih boyunca hep kimliklerini gizlemeleri gerekmiş. Polise ve devlete karşı direniş Sulukule Platformu'nun kurulmasıyla başladı. 2009'da Gülsüm Bitirmiş'in evi ölmüş anne-babasının hesabına para yatırılarak kamulaştırıldı. Bu kamulaştırmalara karşı Avrupa İnsan Hakları Mahkemesine gidildi. Aslında iç hukuk yolları tükenmeden bu mahkemeye gidilemiyor. Ama buradaki hukuksuzluk o kadar barizdi ki mahkeme bunu kabul etti. Şimdi Gülsüm Bitirmiş direndiği için devletten yardım da alamıyor.

including Sulukule Volunteers Association, are active with the dislocated people (Schoon, 2014).

Demolishing of Sulukule deepened economic and social problems in the neighborhood. Already vulnerable citizens became psychologically, economically and socially much more worsened. Cem Avcı says;

One of the greatest effects of demolition is the change of social fabric in Sulukule. In the beginning, the diversities were looked at with tolerance here. This was a place where the needy, the poor could live. For example, although the city is in the center of Istanbul, the house rents were 100-150 liras. From 2006 to 2009 these prices went up to 750 liras. Then prices came up to the 1500 liras with the arrival of the Syrians. The cultural wealth that existed before was destroyed, and the economic difficulties became prominent.<sup>7</sup>

In a similar sense, in an interview Asil Koç puts forward how the state intervention influenced their lives in Sulukule (Düzkan, 2017):

You would run into something else on every street. Kids playing ball in a street, elder brothers listening to Cengiz Kurtoğlu by opening the baggage of a “Kartal” ...Thousands of scenarios were available and when you are young you see all of these and distinguish between good and evil. Then the state comes and bam! It erases everything. It does not give people the right to sit there. They take advantage of their ignorance and take their houses. People do not know what they want because they do not have land titles. They are exiled to Taşoluk officially. My childhood friends went away, my friends with whom I felt the best went away, I feel alone. My favorite streets were destroyed and new buildings were built.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Yıkımın en büyük etkilerinden biri de, Sulukule'deki sosyal dokunun değişmesi. Öncelerde burada ayrıksılıklara hoşgörü ile bakılırdı. Burası muhtaçların, fakirlerin barınabildiği bir yerdi. Mesela şehrin göbeğinde olmasına rağmen ev kiralari 100-150 liraydı. 2006'dan 2009'a bu fiyatlar 750 liraya kadar çıktı. Ardından Suriyelilerin gelmesiyle beraber 1500 liraya vardı. Hem burada daha önce var olan kültürel zenginlik yok edildi, hem de ekonomik zorluklar peyda oldu.

<sup>8</sup> Her sokakta başka bir şeye rastlardım. Bir sokakta top oynayan çocuklar. Başka bir sokakta Kartal'ın bagajını açmış Cengiz Kurtoğlu dinleyip rakı içen abiler. Bin bir türlü senaryo vardı ve küçükken tüm bunları görerek iyiyi kötüyü ayırt ediyorsun. Sonra devlet gelip bam! diye siliyor. Oradaki insanlara orada oturma hakkı vermiyor. Onların cahilliğinden yararlanıp evlerini alıyorlar. Toprak tapuları olmadığı için insanlar ne istediğini bilmiyor. Onları Taşoluk'a sürgün ettiler resmen. Benim çocukluk arkadaşlarım gitti, en iyi hissettiğim arkadaşlarım gitti, kendimi yalnız hissediyorum. En sevdiğim sokaklar yıkılmış ve yepyeni binalar yapılmış.

Gentrification in Sulukule did not lead to betterment of the lives of Sulukule settlers. After the demolition, lives of original settlers got worse, economic and social problems got deepened. As the architectural and demographic structure of the area changed, social and economic problems became manifold and harsher. Cem Avcı says;

Romas are always discriminated in Turkey and in the world. On top of that, now there are more problems with the arrival of war victims from Syria. The poor Syrians are here. There's a bunk system in the houses. 14-15 people are staying in a house. So it is not the places where the rich Syrians are left as it is. These are the Syrians who have not been able to go to Europe.<sup>9</sup>

Asil Koç, on the other hand, states that the social solidarity which existed before made it possible for poor people to survive in Sulukule. For example, he says that it was possible to buy some olives or cheese from the market on account. Similarly, he tells that he used to go to his neighbors' houses to have dinner. However, as people are dislocated in the area these social practices also withered away.

New, luxurious estates and old Sulukule houses started to exist side by side. For Somersan and Schoroeder, such an urban regeneration “leads to a deepening of social divisions and a re-hierarchization of space” (Somersan&Schoroeder, 2007, 100). They argue that moderate Islamic Municipalities such as Fatih Municipality, “hegemonize the physical expression of the city, by reviving a mythical “Ottoman past” and an Islamic ethos, and dovetail with major structural changes in the economy to harmonize it with the global trend toward neo-liberalism” (Somersan&Schoroeder, 2007, 100-1). Pötüoğlu-Cook sees this as a “recycling project” and “neo-Ottomania, a classed... self-Orientalism particular to the post

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<sup>9</sup> Romanlar zaten Türkiye’de de dünyada da her zaman ayrımcılığa uğruyorlar. Üstüne bir de Suriye’den savaş mağdurlarının gelmesiyle buradaki problemler daha da arttı. Buraya fakir Suriyeliler yerleşti. Evlerde ranza sistemi var. Bir evde 14-15 kişi kalıyorlar. Yani öyle gösterildiği gibi zengin Suriyelilerin kaldığı yerler değil. Avrupa’ya gidememiş, burada kalmış Suriyeliler bunlar.



1980s Turkish free-market modernity". For her, after 1980s, Neo-Ottomanism has been reflected in discourses, material objects as well as urban spaces (Pötüoğlu Cook, 2006). What has happened in Sulukule too, can be labeled as an enunciation of Neo-Ottoman, Islamic hegemonic position in the public space.

Obviously, this project is also aimed at destroying the Romani culture and identity. Romas in Istanbul are often accused of being disintegrated to the city life and culture. The politicians frequently put forward the importance of the very central location of Sulukule in the biggest city of Turkey (Uysal, 2012). This can also be interpreted in two ways. First, Romas in Sulukule could not play the role of consumers in Istanbul. Hence, they are not providing enough demand in the highly marketed city and society. Secondly, in the very center of Istanbul, such a place should have been more open to the penetration of market so that it can create more rent. One of the main objectives of the project was to revive economy by creating capital flow to the neighbor and turning into a much more marketed area.

State officials gave speeches in which they degraded the Romani culture and identity during the project. Mustafa Çiftçi, Fatih Mayor's Chief Advisor, said that Sulukule's culture is not entertainment culture but moral degradation. A Ministry of Culture and Tourism official argued that "a handful of clarinet players do not represent a culture". Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan also stated that Sulukule must be rescued from being a "freak". According to the Turkish Grand National Assembly Commission on Human Rights, there was no question about the destruction of Roma culture in Sulukule (Uysal, 2012).

With the implementation of regeneration project, the Romani cultural life was also damaged. In the early debates on the Sulukule project, it was stated that the neighbor was going to be rehabilitated by giving no harm to the local culture. The

main objectives of the project considered initially were; to make Romas get benefit from the infrastructure, to build children's parks in the neighborhoods, to create the green areas and to allocate public lounges where the Romas could exhibit their entertainment, cinema and traditional games. While the buildings were getting renovated, Roma culture was not going to be harmed (Yılmaz, 2009)

However, no institution was established in which Romas would perform their cultural practices. Let alone creating Romani cultural institutions, Fatih Municipality built new institutions where Romani culture was excluded and moderate, Islamic, traditional Turkish cultural works are done. Sulukule Art Academy is one of the newly founded institutions where there is no room for Romas and their culture. Rappers that I talked to during my visits to Sulukule state that they first thought that the state built a place for them, but eventually it came out that it served to different ends. Ismail from Teşkilat-I İsyân group says;

We have sister Funda here. Before this one, there was a workshop where she opened by supports. For us, it was really for us. The children were depressed, psychology down and we needed to support them. They all gathered there. Then it was closed due to financial difficulties. This workshop (Art Academy opened by the municipality) was at the beginning of our thought. It was pretty big and looked nice from the outside. We finally said we could go to a nice place. Look, there's no such thing. Designed to be irrelevant to us.<sup>10</sup>

Before the opening of Sulukule Art Academy, another workshop opened by activists to serve children in Sulukule was shut down as it was located in the project area, then it was demolished. Sulukule Art Academy is, in no way, designed for the sake of Roma children and youth in the neighbor. There is no education regarding the

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<sup>10</sup> Bizim Funda abla var. Bundan önce onun açmış olduğu bir atölye vardı, desteklerle. Bizim için, gerçekten bizim için olan. Çocuklar yıkımdan etkilendi, psikolojisi bozuldu ve bizim bunlara destek olmamız lazım şeklinde bir atölyeydi. Hepimizi oraya topladılar. Daha sonra maddi sıkıntılar nedeniyle kapandı. Bu atölye(Belediyenin açtığı Sanat Akademisi) en başında bizim sanmıştık biz. Bayağı büyük ve dışarıdan güzel görünüyordu. Sonunda güzel bir yere girebileceğiz dedik. Baktık, öyle bir şey yok. Bizimle alakası olmayan bir şekilde tasarladılar.

Romani culture and music. No place for rappers in Sulukule is also provided. Most of the students and teachers come from other neighbors. Rappers say that they talked to the Art Academy to make rap workshop but their request was denied. Members of Tahribad-I Isyan claim that they could not see works from this academy in order to protect and improve the Romani culture. That is why they opened a new workshop in Elmadağ near Taksim.

Similarly, a private school named Okyanus was opened in Sulukule. Of course, no one among the older residents of Sulukule is able to afford to pay the fees of this school. It is very obvious that this institution is also a part of the project of capital flow to and cultural change in Sulukule. Members of Tahribad-I Isyan explain this as follows (Düzkan, 2017);

Asil: There is also Okyanus. They literally built a private school in the heart of the neighborhood. A very expensive school, a very good quality place. It is very strange that there is such a school in the middle of Sulukule (laughs).

Zen-G: They come out with the shuttle and go out to the service, we cannot see the children.

In conclusion, Romas in Turkey, particularly in Sulukule have always been subjected to discrimination as in other places throughout history. Especially after 1990s, with the banning of entertainment houses which are the only way of making money for Romas in Sulukule, poverty and other social problems started to emerge. In the neighbor, children are very less likely to attend school. Instead they work in their early ages if they can find a job. Besides, they are vulnerable to drug addiction and working for drug dealers. In addition to the discursive, ethnic and economic discrimination towards Romas in Sulukule, urban renewal project deepened already existing problems. While people in Sulukule were forced to move from their neighbor and houses, their economic situation got worse. In addition, the Romani

culture was also damaged as Romas were sent away and institutions and practices came into existence to deter the Romani culture that is regarded as deviant and immoral by the state officials.

### 3.3 Exclusion and poverty in Bağcılar

Demographically, Bağcılar is composed of mainly lower class citizens who migrated from Eastern Anatolia to Istanbul. According to the data of 2016 by Turkish Statistical Institute, apart from Istanbul itself, three most registered provinces as birth place in Bağcılar are Bitlis, Sivas and Malatya. After 1960s, there have been a great number of people who came to Istanbul from rural in order to work in factories, construction and service sector. Bağcılar is among seven districts of Istanbul in which immigration still takes place. It is at the same time, the most actively migrant receiving district in Istanbul (Gürel and Balta, 2011). In parallel to this, according to data provided by Turkish Statistical Institute, Bağcılar is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most populated district in Istanbul. It is at the same time has one of the biggest popular density in Turkey at the level of district (Murat, 2007). Briefly, Bağcılar's demographic and architectural structure is defined by domestic migration which took place especially after 1980s in migrants' hope of both vertical and horizontal change within society.

Bağcılar, is composed of generally lower income groups. Families are generally large and traditional. People in this district often work in the lower branches of service sector, textile and construction industries (Yaman, 2013). Murat also states that the majority of Bağcılar's employed population works in industry sector. According to the data of 2000, 57,4 percent of the people who work, are a part of industry sector. He also states that 60,5 of the working population in Bağcılar are those "who work in non-agricultural production activities and those who use

transportation machines” (Murat, 2007). According to the data provided by Turkish Statistical Institute, in 2000, the unemployment rate in Bağcılar was 15,8, while it was 8,9 in Turkey and 12,7 in Istanbul. Similarly, employment rate in Bağcılar was 40,4, while it was 50,3 in Turkey and 43,8 in Istanbul (Murat, 2007).

In early pages I explained that there had been a great surplus of labor force in Istanbul resulting from domestic migration and neo-liberal policies. For many people who lack training and education in districts like Bağcılar, unemployment and employment under bad conditions in certain sectors are inevitable. Especially, with the migration of Syrians to the district, the market became much more competitive. Consequently, poverty in those areas becomes very common and hard to overcome. The founder of Çatı Records in Bağcılar defines the district as follows:

It is not like hell in a sense to scare people. It is a district that is abandoned, like I said poor people live in difficulties, outcasted by the God. We can call it so. People are bigot and repellent.<sup>11</sup>

He also claims that one of the biggest problems in Bağcılar is unemployment that is related to the Syrians’ presence in the district. He says;

As I said these are forgotten people. Why are these people like this? Forgetting, abundance, unemployment. 3 millions of Syrians came to the country. Great annoyance. For example, I go to a workplace. I say 1000 liras is not enough for me. He says leave brother, Syrians work already. I make three Syrians work for this amount of money.<sup>12</sup>

Another common problem in Bağcılar is the lack of education. According to the data provided by Turkish Statistical Institute, in terms of education, Bağcılar generally lacks behind the average numbers of both Turkey and Istanbul. Most notably, according to the data which shows the education level of people who are

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<sup>11</sup> İnsanları korkutma babında cehennem değil. Terk edilmiş dediğim gibi yoksul insanların zorluklar içinde yaşadığı hani Allah'ın def ettiği bölge. Öyle de adlandırabiliriz. İnsanları yobaz. İtici insanlar var.

<sup>12</sup> Ben dedim ya unutulmuş insanlar. Bu insanlar niye böyle? Unutulmak terk edilmek, işsizlik. Ülkeye 3 milyon Suriyeli geldi. Büyük sıkıntı. Ben mesela bir iş yerine gidiyorum. Diyorum ki abi bin lira bana yetmiyor. Diyor ki git kardeşim Suriyeli çalışır zaten. Üç tane Suriyeli çalıştırırım o paraya

between the ages of 25 and 29, people in Bağcılar are less likely to be literate, to have graduated from high school or to hold a university, a master or PhD degree (table 1).

Table 1. Level of Education (2016)

		Turkey	Turkey (%)	İstanbul	İstanbul (%)	Bağcılar	Bağcılar (%)
level of Education (25-29)	Unknown	59672	0,972583264	17724	1,399046306	875	1,31715615
	PhD	2641	0,043045187	586	0,046255988	12	0,01806386
	Master	76777	1,251374602	24071	1,900047598	458	0,68943716
	University	2054289	33,48248928	468510	36,98189938	16547	24,9085517
	High School	1547781	25,22700591	307002	24,23324385	14794	22,2697235
	Secondary School	10518	0,171431002	1999	0,157791332	151	0,22730352
	Primary School(8 years)	1852223	30,18905166	349568	27,59319674	24931	37,5291656
	Primary School	127107	2,071694277	28881	2,27972559	2438	3,66997336
	Literate w/o attending school	312046	5,085981987	56140	4,431418393	5211	7,84422935
	Illiterate	92359	1,505342835	12382	0,977374823	1014	1,52639581
Total	6135413		1266863		66431		

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (2017)

According to Yaman (2013), dropping out from the school is very common among young people in Bağcılar. I also observed that all the rappers that I talked to in Bağcılar either quitted school or failed in at least one of the degrees. The reasons why school attendance is low and working instead of studying is more preferable are manifold. First, families are already very large and not able to afford to send their children to school. Instead, they want their especially male kids to make money in order to support them. For instance, one of the interviewees, Poyraz, states that as his father was not wealthy enough to send him to the school, he could not study. Yet, although in his 20s, he plans to finish the school and become a police officer, a state officer who gets relatively good amount of salary on a monthly basis regularly.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Allah nasip ederse iki yıla inşallah polislik. Bizim başımızda baba yoktu zamanında ,okuyamadık. Şimdi baba başta okuyoruz inşallah.

Secondly, for a young man in Bağcılar, earning his own money is very important because it increases his status. First of all, although to a certain extent, he becomes able to meet his family's expectations by providing economic support to his family. Hence, he, as a "man", behaves in accordance with the traditional models portrayed for genders. Secondly, by making his own money and increasing his consuming capacity, he believes that his social position in the society also increases. For example, Yakup, 22 year-old rapper in Bağcılar, states that he dropped out from the school at the 9<sup>th</sup> and started working as he is the only male in the family.<sup>14</sup>

Generally, people live in Bağcılar work in textile and construction service or in bazaar that is located nearby (Yaman, 2013). According to Yaman, these professions are the kind of jobs which are transmitted from father to son. Although they are providing meager salary and requiring tiny occupational ability, people have to work so, even halfheartedly (Yaman, 2013). This in return, creates a cyclic problem. As people who work in these sectors are mostly Kurdish, the problems regarding class, identity and nationality become intertwined. In other words, class as an economic and social position becomes identical to Kurdishness in certain contexts. A stereotypical Kurdish man starts to be perceived as among lower class, occupying a job in either construction or bazaar.

Discrimination that these people face in schools is also influential on dropping the school out. Students argue that in schools, like in any other place, they are regarded as potential criminals and villains. They are always seen as socially malfunctioning and morally disturbing. In his book, Yaman claims that from a wide range of perspectives, youth in places like Bağcılar are depicted as untrustworthy, wastrel and immoral. As he argues in the eyes of police officials, they are far away

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<sup>14</sup> Lise 1 terk. Çalışmaya başladım sonra. Evin tek erkeğiyim zaten.

from Turkish traditional values due to the raising styles. Similarly, teachers in the schools say that these are disrespectful, impertinent, isolated students. Students also think that they are discriminated. They claim that teachers have negative prejudgments about and pejorative, discriminatory applications towards them (Yaman, 2013).

Socialization out of the school is both a reason and consequence of low school attendance. Young people who do not go to school “hang out” in the streets. Once he is engaged in the “environment”, it is very unlikely that the student goes back to the school. Yakup explains the reason why students drop the school out as follows;

It is because of the environment. Today’s youth and older ones are not the same. There was also an environment in the past, but it was not that bad. There is bonsai and everything. When we escaped from the school we used to go to Play Station café. These are going for smoke and drug. Now, you look at the family. The child does not study. Why would they send him to the school?<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, drug addiction and drug dealing are among the most important problems in Bağcılar. People start using drugs at very early ages. This addiction generally starts with smoking cigarettes and then evolves into drug addiction. The reasons why young people in Bağcılar are addicted to drug are manifold. Yaman states that there are many factors including friends, curiosity, imitation, incentive, identification, autonomy, irresponsibility, resistance, insecurity, distrust, inadequacy, isolation from the society and weakness in having drug addiction (Yaman, 2013). People in poor districts like Bağcılar take cheap drugs such as bonsai that has been very prevalent in recent years.

Even among rappers whom I interviewed, there were some who used drug in some part of their lives. For example, one interviewee states that he also used drugs

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<sup>15</sup> Yani ortamdan. Şu anki gençlerle öncekiler bir değil. Eskiden de ortam vardı ama bu kadar kötü değildi. Bonsai her şey var. Biz okuldan kaçtığımız zaman PlayStation'a giderdik Bunlar çıkıp sigara içki madde içiyorlar. Şimdi aileye bakıyorsun. Çocuğa bakıyor çocuk okumuyor o da niye göndersin ki okula.



and what he wants now is to warn young people by showing the negative aspects of drug addiction.

Rappers in Bağcılar state that the police remain very reluctant in catching the drug dealers even though the police know them very well by indicating that they provide the necessary information to related persons and institutes.

Drug addicts who do not have enough money to buy drugs get involved in illegal activities to make money. Among these activities, there are betting, robbery and drug dealing. That is why, criminality appears to be one of the biggest problems in Bağcılar. Burak says;

For example, brother, you cannot come here at night. There's always a dealer at the corner. There are druggies or something. Some of them tend to attack.<sup>16</sup>

Burak also states that people who are addicted to drugs are already poor and they find money out of robbery when I ask him how addicts make money to buy drugs.<sup>17</sup> Poyraz too makes the same argument:

They work in textile, construction and printing house. Some of them become drug dealer as they are fed up with working. Most of my friends are thief, dealer or the slaves of the drug.<sup>18</sup>

Criminality and state of danger in Bağcılar that rappers talk about is also shown in a study conducted by Yıldız Technical University. In a survey carried out in entire Istanbul, Bağcılar is among the most insecure and dangerous districts in the biggest city of Turkey. According to the answers given in the survey, Bağcılar is the district where people are the most afraid of being attacked. Similarly, Bağcılar is among the three districts where people are most concerned with burglary. In

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<sup>16</sup> Mesela abi gece buraya gelemesin. Köşe başlarında hep torbacılar vardır. Hap içenler falan oluyor. Bazıları saldırmaya meyil gösteriyor.

<sup>17</sup> Hırsızlıktan abi. Zaten dızo hırsız demek. Diğer problem de bu. Zaten fakirler bunlar. İçen hiçbirinin durumu yok.

<sup>18</sup> Tekstil matbaa İnşaat çalışıyorlar. Kimisi bıkpı torbacılık falan yapıyor. Benim çok arkadaşım hırsız, torbacı ya da maddenin esiri olan insanlar.

Bağcılar, criminality constitutes an important source of anxiety according to the study. As it is stated in the study, the main reasons for criminality and fear are the lack of social equality and education (Bilen et al., 2013).

Yakup explains the fear and criminality in Bağcılar as follows;

I will explain it in short. There's a house over there. There is a newly married couple. The child is 20 years old. He's leaving the house. The child is leaning on to tie his shoe. There is a gun battle in front of the house. Tak, the bullet comes to the child's brain. So, these sort of things are happening here. You do not see it now but there are heroin sellers in the corner. It looks nice here if you do not go inside. For example, now a man is sitting. Look at the man, you are so king man. But he's a smuggler. He drinks marijuana, he has it all. Fifty percent of this place is smuggler. There were Kobane incidents. The new Medipol Hospital was built here. An attack was going to be organized there. Police came. He asks us: For what the place is famous? Some is famous for its drug; some is famous for its bonsai. We also said that the smuggling of this place is famous.<sup>19</sup>

The fact that the people in Bağcılar are generally poor, uneducated, working in unsatisfying jobs, vulnerable to criminality and drug addiction and; ethnically and culturally different results in another type of exclusion that is discursive exclusion.

Discursive exclusion is mostly expressed through language and stereotypes.

Lower class, Kurdish youth who constitutes its own subculture is seen as inferior and labeled with pejorative and sardonic characters. This identification is actually an expression of different, distant and separate social and economic positions as well as cultural practices. In order to draw a distinction between upper and lower class people who possess different cultures and identities, the discourse and the everyday life practices are very functional. In other words, the signifiers which are used in

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<sup>19</sup> Şöyle anlatayım uzun lafın kısası. Şurada bir tane ev var. Yeni evlenmiş bir çift var. Çocuk daha 20 yaşında. Evden çıkıyor. Çocuk ayakkabısını bağlamaya eğiliyor. Evin önünde çatışma çıkıyor. Tak çocuğun beynine geliyor kurşun. Yani burada böyle şeyler oluyor. Sen şimdi görmedin ama köşede eroin satanlar var. İçine girmedin mi burası güzel görünüyor. Mesela şimdi bir adam oturuyor. Adama bak sen desen çok kral adam. Ama adam kaçakçı. İçki esrar hepsi var. Buranın yüzde ellisi kaçakçılıkla uğraşiyor. Kobane olayları olmuştu. Burada yeni Medipol Hastanesi yapıldı. Oraya saldırı düzenlenecekti. Polis geldi. Soruyor bize: Buranın nesi meşhur? Yani bazı yerin esrarı meşhur bazı yerin bonzai si meşhur. Biz de dedik buranın kaçakçılığı meşhur.

everyday life language serve to determine the “other” in a society and hence establish a hierarchical structure within society.

In his article, Şişman argues that linguistic social practices that Istanbulites have are a reflection of the perception of “other” (Şişman, 2013). By drawing a line between upper and lower classes, individuals tend to show that they have cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). In his study, Şişman argues that upper class, white, urban society try to do this by using terms such as “Apaçi”, “Kıro”, “Amele” and “Varoş” (Şişman, 2013). By doing so, they want to address that these people are backward in adapting urban lifestyle and hence “other” as they do not share the common cultural and economic practices with them.

Although “Kıro” means “male child” in Kurdish, in some dictionaries it is defined as “someone that is rude and rough” (turkcebilgi, 2017) Similarly, the word “Amele” which means “worker” is also used in negative terms. Therefore, it can be seen that words that linguistically have no pejorative meanings, yet refer to economic and ethnic position, are transformed into signifiers which create hegemonic positions within society.

Apaçi, as a broader concept, is used to describe the economic and social positions and the subculture of the people who live in slums. Yaman argues that Apaçi is used to refer those who suffer from isolation in the city, poverty and lack of education and are subjected to labels such as “kıro”, “amele” or “dızo” (Yaman, 2013). According to the interviews that Yaman made, people perceive “apaçis” as those whose identity did not shape and who have problems with adaptation to the city life and Turkish culture. Yet, the most important distinguishing feature of the “apaçi” subculture is apaçis’ taste of fashion and entertainment. In fact, that the use of “apaçi” became that common in Turkey is related to a song which was identified

with “apaçis” and their dance. The maneuvering of the young people and the unique rhythm of the song made this subculture more visible and famous.

The most important signifier of an “apaçi” is his outfit and appearance. In fact, it is the hairstyle that these people use very commonly that names the subculture as “apaçi” since it resembles to the special Indian hat. Furkan defines an “apaçi” as follows:

Brother, it is because of his dress. He makes his hair. He wears high-soled shoes. Blue tracksuit. He wears Nike. Brother, they shave here (the underside of their hair) with number 3 and leave the rest. They cut their arms with craft knives. They wear luminous red.<sup>20</sup>

Yakup also describes “apaçi” style as following;

That's how we were dressed, when we were younger. We keep up with every fashion. We were wearing a “dizo” style, we used to wear narrow pants for a while. Now do you see, for example, anyone walking with sweatpants? But the shoes never change, it's famous. It's always Nike.<sup>21</sup>

He explains the discrimination that they face, as well;

For example, I talked to a girl yesterday. I said, “do I know your brother?” She said “my brother is not dizo” he does not hang out there”. I said what's the point? Are the people living here being a “dizo”? For example, there is always prejudice anyway. When they look at YouTube, they see us different because of our clothes, but it changes when it comes to face-to-face.<sup>22</sup>

All in all, the discursive discrimination towards youth in Bağcılar is a result of power relations and hegemonic struggle in the city. Those who are not able to adapt to the city culture and lag behind in cultural consumption and participation are

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<sup>20</sup> Abi giyinişinden. Saçlarını yapıyorlar. Yüksek tabanlı ayakkabılar giyiyorlar. Mavi eşofman. Üstüne Nike bir şey giyiyor. Ağabey adamlar alıyor burayı(saçını) 3le üstünü bırakıyor. Faça falan çekiyorlar, fosforlu kırmızı giyiyorlar.

<sup>21</sup> O zamanki giyinişimiz o çocuk aklıyla öyleydi. Biz her modaya ayak uydururuz. Bir dizo giyiyorduk bir ara, bir ara dar paça giyer olduk. Şimdi mesela eşofmanla gezen görüyor musun? Ama ayakkabı hiç değişmez, bu meşhurdur. Hep Nike.

<sup>22</sup> Mesela ben bir kızla görüştüm dün. Ben dedim abini tanıyor muyum? Dedi ki benim abim orada takılmaz dizo değil. Dedim ki ne alaka? Burada yaşayanlar diz mı oluyor? İster istemez önyargılı oluyor mesela. Youtube'dan bakıyor giyinişimiz farklı, ama yüz yüze gelince değişiyor olaylar.

regarded as inferior. Their stereotype is depicted as isolated, stolid, rude, criminal, poor, tasteless migrants. Hence, the subculture that those people developed in slum areas is labeled as backward and signified so in everyday life language and practices.

In conclusion, in slum areas of Istanbul ethnic, economic, social and discursive exclusion may lead to stigmatization to some extent (Wacquant, 2008). For Wacquant, stigmatization refers to the superimposed status associated with poverty and ethnicity. As a pejorative attribute, stigma can be regarded as characteristics of people who are assumed to be, somehow, alien to the values, norms and expectations of the society. For Wacquant, territorial fixation and stigmatization go hand in hand, because in most metropolises ethnically different and economically disadvantageous groups live isolated and stigmas help create legitimacies of urban restructuring.

In fact, one can see the indications of this stigmatization in Bağcılar and Sulukule. In both cases, there are ethnic and spatial stigmatizations. While Kurds are promoted as criminals, drug addicts or in a relatively better term working class, Romas are labeled as morally lacking, lazy and dirty. Accordingly, Bağcılar has the reputation for drug dealing and criminality while Sulukule is represented as known for prostitution and drug dealing. In addition, it is also obvious that economic and social problems in these areas contribute to hopefulness and despair as well as sense of isolation. Yet, in the next chapter I will show how rappers in both places try to break the taboos, resist the discrimination that they face and create a ray of hope.

## CHAPTER 4

### RAP AS RESISTANCE AND REBELLION

This part tries to explore how rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar use hip-hop as an instrument of resistance to exclusion and poverty from which they suffer. Drawing on the lyrics and the interviews that I conducted in these neighborhoods I will show that youngsters in Sulukule and Bağcılar reflect a political consciousness regarding the economic, social and political problems mentioned in the earlier chapter.

I have already mentioned that for some scholars, rappers are story tellers who reflect the actual problems in a society. For example, while Smitherman (2000) takes rappers as verbally given storytellers and historians who make a discussion of the complexities of African-American life, Kaya (2002) sees rap music as a mirror and rappers as contemporary minstrels. As Kaya also observes, Rose (2004) claims that rap music may be used as a counter hegemonic power because it gives voice to the powerless. Hence, as Librado (2010) states, rap music is an *action* because it can be used as a means of making the voice of disadvantaged groups heard. As rap music also creates a space for young people to critically evaluate their own political, social and economic reality, it is a *reflection* (Librado, 2010). In both cases of Sulukule and Bağcılar, rappers use these dual elements of hip-hop culture. In other words, rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar reflect the problems from which they suffer thanks to the space that hip-hop socialization and technologies provided.

From the perspective of rappers, rap music is the medium of having a voice. It provides the excluded and oppressed social groups with the means of getting heard. The first and most common theme in rappers' views on hip-hop is that it creates a

space for those who cannot participate in the society. For example, Dinçer says “Everyone listens to this. There are so many “small” people in the society. There are people forgotten on one side. I opened this studio to let people know that they are not forgotten.”<sup>23</sup> Cem Avcı explains why rap music is important for young people in areas such as Sulukule in following sentences.

Hip-hop is important in this regard: People want to express themselves. The children here are both Roma and poor. Their ages also do not allow them to express themselves. But they are able to express themselves through rap music, to identify and to find out themselves. Also, the person who cannot express himself with language, shoots himself with artistic tools. For example, he illustrates or dances. Hip-hop does that too. Because it has an artistic side. There's a dance in it, too.<sup>24</sup>

Although for some, at the beginning rap music was just for fun, as they get more engaged in the philosophy of hip-hop they start to critically express the economic, social and political problems which surround them. Tahrabad-I Isyan members state that as they understood the hip-hop culture better, they commenced to write more intense and meaningful lyrics.<sup>25</sup> Ismail from Teşkilat-I Isyan group says:

Previously, on the street we played football or something. Then something different happened. It was a rap. We left the games or something. We needed to talk about our problem. We started rapping like this, and then we decided to be a band.<sup>26</sup>

Generally, in the eyes of rappers in both Sulukule and Bağcılar rap music is taken as a voice from below. Yet, rap music does not only provide an opportunity for

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<sup>23</sup> Herkes dinliyor bunu. Toplum içinde ne kadar büyümüş insanlar varsa o kadar küçük insanlar da var. Bir kenarda unutulmuş insanlar var. İnsanlara unutulmadığını fark ettirmek için ben açtım bu stüdyoyu.

<sup>24</sup> Hip-hop şu açıdan önemli: İnsanlar kendilerini ifade etmek ister. Buradaki çocuklar hem Roman, hem fakir. Yaşları da kendilerini ifade etmeye müsait değil. Ama rap müzik aracılığı ile kendilerini ifade etmeleri, kendilerini tanımaları, bulmaları sağlanıyor. Ayrıca kendisini dil ile ifade edemeyen insan kendisini sanatsal araçlarla dışa vurur. Mesela resim çizer, dans eder. Hiphop bunu da sağlıyor. Çünkü onun artistik bir yanı da var. Dans da var içinde.

<sup>25</sup> Başlangıçta eğlence için yapıyorduk ama hip hop kültürünü tam olarak kavrayınca daha anlamlı, daha içi dolu ve içimizdeki isyanı dışa vuran sözler yazmaya devam ettik.

<sup>26</sup> Önceden, top falan oynardık sokakta. Sonra değişik bir şey oldu. Ortaya rap çıktı. Oyunları filan kenara bıraktık. Dedik derdimizi anlatmamız lazım. Bu şekilde rape başladık, daha sonra bir grup olamaya karar verdik.

rappers to express themselves but also critically examine their own realities. In other words, Sulukule and Bağcılar rappers reflect the contextual situation and conditions of their districts. They explain everyday life practices in their districts and try to show problematic aspects of those practices. For example, Dinçer says; “We are the only rappers who make jokes about drugs in the world. I sat with hash heads and glue-sniffers. I even gave them roles in my clips. These are not bad people. They just need some support.” He also explains one of the stories he witnessed in his neighborhood.

For example, I witnessed something. I will tell you, trusting your sincerity. An old man goes with a woman. They say, "They sleep together, what are you going to do?" They are gossiping. We witness it. She says, "Look at the pilgrim, he f\*cked his wife" We made a song out of this. "Pilgrim has f\*ucked his wife, went on a bat, hit the wall, firecracker is 10 liras, bonsai is free".<sup>27</sup>

In these phrases, what he tries to explain is that rappers in Bağcılar are inspired by the themes and events. This does not only show the aspect of local embeddedness of Bağcılar rap music which I will try to elaborate in the later chapters, but also show that Bağcılar rappers observe and interpret their surrounding environment. In this sense, what takes place in Bağcılar in terms of rap music is also in line with the arguments of Kaya (2002) and Smitherman (2000).

Another common theme that interviewees stress is the concept of change. Most of the rappers state that through rap music they want to bring a conclusive change to their neighborhood in particular, to the country or world in general. Rap is not only made for the sake of music, but also for achieving transformation on the issues such as discrimination, poverty and exclusion which settlers of Istanbul undergo.

Tahribad-I Isyan members say “Rap music serves to break the limits of the

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<sup>27</sup> Mesela bir şeye şahit olmuşum. Anlatayım senin samimiyetine güvenerek. Yaşlı bir kadınla adam gidiyor. Diyor ki “ona kaymış sen ne yapacaksın?” Dedikodu yapıyorlar. Biz de şahit oluyoruz. O diyor “hacıya bak avradına kaymış”. Biz de bunun şarkısını yaptık. “Hacı kaymış avradına, çekmiş kafayı vurmuş duvara, 10 lira fişek, bonzai bedava”.



perception in people's minds, and we love to show the reality to those who will not like that the truth will be revealed.” Asil from this band states:

Roman people accept otherification and turn to themselves; they do not go to school. This is the space that we want to open for our young people. You can be a doctor, you can make music, you can do anything.” We want to say this to other people like us. Because his father has not gone to school, his father's father has not gone to school; he will not go to school, either. The neighborhood was demolished and we could not say "why are you destroying."<sup>28</sup> (Düzkan, 2017)

As one can understand from the words of Asil, one of the main goals of Sulukule rappers is to destroy the sense of stigmatization (Wacquant, 2008) that Romas in Istanbul endure. They are aware that not only the structural and external factors, but also internal stigmatization and behaving in accordance with the negative stereotypes contribute to the worsening of social and economic conditions of Romas in Sulukule. They use hip-hop culture and socialization as a tool for creating awareness in youth. For this purpose, the group called Tahribad-I Isyan started a project named “Children at Risk”. They state their project and objective as follows.

The broad name of the group we are teaching is 'children at risk'. For children who are stuck where they are, think that the world is only their own neighborhood and are subjected to the risk of being dragged into evil as they have nothing to do. We started these things first with the children in our neighborhood. Now we continue with refugees, Romas, Kurds and children with difficulties.<sup>29</sup>

Teşkilat-I Isyan came into existence as a new rap group in Sulukule thanks to the projects of and education by the members of Tahribad-I Isyan. Among youngsters who get engaged with rap, there are not only the members of Teşkilat-I

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<sup>28</sup> Roman insanlar bu ötekileştirmeyi kabul edip içlerine dönüyorlar, okumuyorlar. Bizim gençlere açmak istediğimiz alan bu. “Sen okuyup doktor da olabilirsin dostum, müzik de yapabilirsin, sen her şeyi yapabilirsin.” Biz bunu demek istiyoruz bizim gibi ötekileştirilen gençlere. Çünkü şöyle ilerliyor: onun babası okumamış, babasının babası da okumamış, o da okumayacak. Mahalle yıkıldı, “neden yıkıyorsunuz” diyemedik.

<sup>29</sup> Eğitim verdiğimiz grubun geniş adı ‘risk altındaki çocuklar’. Olduğu yere sıkışmış, dünyayı sadece kendi mahallesinden ibaret sanan, yapacak hiçbir şey bulamayıp kötülüğe sürüklenme riski olan çocuklar için. Bu işlere ilk olarak mahallemizdeki çocuklarla başladık. Şimdi de mülteci, Roman, Kürt ve zorluk çeken çocuklarla devam ediyoruz.

Isyan, but also many others who became familiar with hip-hop culture in Sulukule owing to the efforts shown by Tahribad-I Isyan and other activists in the area. Hence, rap socialization can be said to be important in bringing out a change in youngsters' attitude in Sulukule. Ismail Taşpatlatan who is a member of the group called Teşkilat-I Isyan explains the function of rap and how they interact with children in the sentences below.

There is an excluded group here. We are among that group, too. We need to tell someone something. The man will not hear you if you go and say it directly. But if you say it in a sarcastic way which is rap, then it attracts attention. Those who see us are enthusiastic, and they say we will be like you. We are helping them. It's kind of being transferred from generation to generation. We have already learned it from Asil brothers.<sup>30</sup>

Rap music in both districts has a dual function. It is both active and reflective. It has an active role since it provides the space to raise a voice. By rapping, young people who do not have the equal opportunity to participate in the society find the chance to express themselves and get heard, that is to say they raise society's awareness regarding their sufferance and render the society aware of the difficulties they go through. Hip-hop also has a reflective function in the sense that young people who get engaged in hip-hop culture start to critically investigate their own society and reality and reflect it in their arts. Therefore, rap artists both individually and collectively criticize the situation in which they are settled. All in all, for rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar, drawing on the analysis made through interviews conducted with rappers in these districts, rap music is a means of having a voice and creating a change.

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<sup>30</sup> Dışlanan bir kesim var burada. Biz de ona dahiliz. Birilerine bir şeyleri söylememiz gerekiyor. Gidip bunu direkt söylersen adam seni takmayacaktır. Ama bunu iğneleyici bir şekilde söylersen ki bu da rap oluyor o zaman ilgi çekiyor. Bizi görenler heves ediyor, biz de sizin gibi olacağız diyorlar. Biz de onlara yardım ediyoruz. Nesilden nesile aktarılıyor gibi bir şey. Biz de Asil abilerden öğrenmiştik zaten.

#### 4.1 Resistance and rebellion in Sulukule hip-hop

In the hip-hop socialization in Sulukule, of course, the subject of urban renewal comes to the front. Yet, along with urban renewal; poverty, exclusion, discrimination, drug addiction and other social, political and economic problems both about the district and the country are treated in the products of hip-hop culture such as graffities and rap songs. In this part, for the sake of this thesis, I will show the elements of resistance and rebellion in Sulukule's hip-hop culture by examining the lyrics of hip-hop songs.

In her article where Schoon examines a song called "Wonderland" by Tahribad-I Isyan argues that as a means of resistance to the urban renewal project, rap music creates a space for urban and identity politics. She suggests that rappers do not only expose their anger and rebellion to the urban renewal project that destroyed their neighborhood, but also try to expose the exclusion, poverty and discrimination that Romas face in Istanbul. In that way, it also paves the way for activism of "right to the city" (Schoon, 2014)

*Wonderland* starts with the words of a very famous pioneer of rap music in Turkey, Fuat Ergin. He says:

They are at the gates to destroy our neighborhood  
Today it is Sulukule, tomorrow Balat, Okmeydanı, Tarlabaşı, Gezi Parkı  
Time is running out  
They are taking from the poor and giving to the rich  
Destroyed the shanties, built luxurious apartments  
Let art and music be your gun.'  
Tahribad-I Isyan  
'Stop the Demolitions!'<sup>31 32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Translations are mine.

<sup>32</sup> Kapımıza dayandılar  
Mahallemizi yıkmaya geldiler  
Bugün Sulukule, yarın Balat.  
Ok Meydanı, Tarlabaşı, Gezi Parkı.  
Vakit daraldı  
Fakirden alıp, zengine verir oldular.  
Gecekondu yıkıp Residence yaptılar.  
Sanat ve müzik silahınız ola

One of the most central themes in the words above is the dislocation of Sulukule residents from their neighborhood. Not only Sulukule but also areas such as Balat, Tarlabası and Okmeydanı are also mentioned to imply the process of total transformation of historic Istanbul in such a way that it also transfers those places to the upper classes. Schoon also suggests that in the clip, Fuat Ergin is dressed like the “Gypsy King” and sends the rappers out armed with music and art suggests that Romani people may have power to change the process and have a word over their destiny (Schoon, 2014).

Later on in the song, Asil Slang says:

Yo! My house will also be destroyed  
Sulukule is now a bourgeois place  
Time has changed, who sees Romas badly  
is not called Racist, but Mustafa  
You name it as the urban transformation  
This is actually the collapse of this city  
The death of my neighborhood has been in front of my eyes for five years<sup>33</sup>

Asil explains both the gentrification of Sulukule and discrimination towards Romani identity in Istanbul. What he explains about the transformation of Sulukule is actually conceptualized by scholars such as Lefebvre and Harvey. For Lefebvre a space’s value is determined by its exchange value rather than its use value. The value of a space is related to its position in a competitive market (1996). What he means by that is that the space itself is valorized in accordance with the hierarchical relations among space. Hence, those which constitute the “core” are much more valuable than

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Tahribat-ı İsyânı durdurun bu yıkımı  
Hadi ulan

<sup>33</sup> Yo! Benim de yıkılacak evim  
Sulukule artık bir burjuva yeri  
Devir değişti tabi Romanlara kötü gözle bakana  
İrkçi denmez aya Mustafa denir  
Adını koydunuz kentsel dönüşüm  
Bu aslında bu kentin çöküşü  
Beş senedir önümde semtimin ölüsü

the peripheries. Accordingly, as it is stated in the song, Sulukule's value in the market has changed although its location is still the same because of the renewal project. On the other hand, for Harvey, one of the sources of the wealth of a few is the dispossession of poor masses (2008). In other words, the value that is dispossessed from poor majority is accumulated in the hands of rich minority. One of the most important means of doing so is urban renewal. Indeed, as the exchange value of Sulukule outsizes its use value through urban renewal and gentrification, new dwellers of this place become richer.

Asil further explains the mentality of the state regarding the urban regeneration in Sulukule by referring to the mayor of Beyoğlu Municipality; Mustafa Demir who conducted the project.

It is easy to remove the rich  
What you did for the poor is the real issue.  
Toki, instead of renovating the history  
Go and repair the state's brain.  
Because the damage I gave to it is minimal in comparison to that it gave to me.  
I am not afraid because nothing can damage my house, but water  
Mustafa Demir, I do not give in by your words  
Rent a rapper against me with the money you exploited<sup>34</sup>

Here, Asil firstly emphasizes the infrastructural problems that settlers of Sulukule face in Istanbul. He explains that incidents such as water flood are not rare and they are used to it. In another part of the song Zen-G says “yesterday, you gave electricity; today, you are destroying the neighborhood”. Hence, in the middle of Istanbul, there are still problems regarding infrastructure and these problems necessitate a proper urban planning and regeneration projects. Further, Asil explains

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<sup>34</sup> Parası olanı çıkarmak kolay  
Fakir için naptınız esas bu olay  
Toki tarihi yenilemek yerine  
Bi ara gidip devletin beynini onar.  
Çünkü onun yanında benim ona verdiğim hasar az  
Ne korkucam evimi sudan başka bişey basamaz  
Mustafa Demir konuşmanla gelmem imana  
Sömürdüğün parayla karşıma rapçi kirala

this necessity by stressing the importance of working for those who are poor and deprived from very basic infrastructural sources such as sewage and electricity. He also touches upon the idea of Neo-Ottomanism which is reflected in urban planning as well. When he says “renovating the history” which is one of the mottoes of Fatih Municipality in the project, Asil tries to show how the idea of Imperial past is instrumentalized by the state to legitimize and conduct urban renewal in Sulukule. This notion was out forward by scholars such Pötüoğlu-Cook. For her, Neo-Ottomanism is reflected in discourses, material objects as well as urban spaces (Pötüoğlu Cook, 2006). What took place in Sulukule too, is related to the discourse of Neo-Ottomanism not only because it is a hegemonic discourse but also because of the nature of Sulukule itself. Sulukule has always been settled by non-Turkish dwellers, throughout history. In addition, as the Romani identity is not welcome in Turkey and the area is labeled as a place of prostitution, criminality and drug, using the Islamic, authentic, imperial, Ottoman past is a very useful tool in legitimizing the project. Lastly, as he did in the previous part, Asil directly names Mustafa Demir. He blames him of being a racist towards Romas and corruption. By referring to Mustafa Demir and Toki (Housing Development Administration of Turkey), he actually blames state and its mentality by stating that the state’s brain must be repaired.

VZ explains same problems in another song called *Suç mu?*:

You all are lickspittles for each other  
You were in prison if you were looking for a criminal. Hoot!  
Come on, we're close  
Your goddamn cash did not get full  
Here there is plenty of corruption  
Infinite? No end  
It is empty, it does not fill. Poverty is very difficult  
They despise us. There is resentment, shout V.Z. V.Z.  
This is the rap intervention  
They take from the poor and build imperial suit  
They only think about their pocket

Sulukule is the gun and we're its bullets<sup>35</sup>

In this part of the song, VZ states that the project conducted in Sulukule only served to the economic interest of some state officials and enterprises who got engaged in the project. He also puts forward that the criminality which is attributed to Sulukule and its original dwellers actually belongs to those who fulfill the urban renewal project in the area in a corrupt way. By touching upon the problem of poverty in the neighborhood, he states that through rap music they try to resist the ongoing situation and become the voice of oppressed.

In the same song Asil says:

Why Rap? Because it is a spiritual investment!  
In this damned place our youth is burned like diesel  
They come to me and say "What is the Revolt's Destruction?"  
Our dreams rather than houses are being destroyed in this neighborhood<sup>36</sup>

Similar to VZ, he starts by explaining the rap music's function in revealing the social and economic problems. In addition, he puts forward that urban renewal project did not only harm their houses but their everyday life and mentality of people in the area. For rappers, by deepening the social and economic problems that Romani people face, state contributes to the stigmatization to which those people are subjected and decay in the Romani culture and socialization itself. Asil explains the inner collapse of Sulukule as follows:

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<sup>35</sup> Hepiniz birbirinize yalakasınız  
Siz hapisteydiniz eğer suçlu arasaydınız. Yuh!  
Gelin buyrun yakın masamız  
Bi' dolmadı gitti o lanet yazar kasanız  
Burada yolsuzluk yolu bol  
Sonsuz mu? Sonu yok  
Boş bulduk dolmuyo. Yoksulluk çok zor  
Gördüler hor sor. Kırgınlık var bağır V.Z. V.Z.  
Rap müdahalesi bu metrekaresi  
Fakirden alıp yap kral dairesi  
Önce cebini düşünüyö anca kendisi  
Sulukule tabanca, bizde mermisi

<sup>36</sup> Niçin mi Rap? Çünkü ruhani bi yatırım o!  
Bu lanetlenmiş yerde gençliğimiz mazot gibi yakılıyo  
Bana gelip "Tahribat-ı İsyân nedir?" deyip yakınyon lan  
Bu mahallede evlerden çok hayallerimiz yıkılıyo

I am losing my ambition to live as I spend time here  
What kind of place do we belong to? What's this about?  
Ask me if this is a place to love?  
What about those who held us captive?<sup>37</sup>

Yet, he also blames those who made Sulukule such a place of hatred. He makes a similitude between Sulukule and prison by stating that they are captives in that neighborhood. In presenting Sulukule as a prison, rappers also highlight the attribution of criminality and pejorative labeling of Sulukule settlers. Zen-G in the same song claims that those who come to the neighborhood look very nervous as they see it as a place of criminality, yet people live in Sulukule both suffer from criminals and stigmatization.<sup>38</sup> Of course, one of the most important activities that come to mind in terms of criminality and stigmatization is drug dealing. Among the major social problems in Sulukule, drug dealing is also touched upon in the songs. Asil says in *Suç mu?* “Let alone ourselves, in fact our brothers are in danger. There are more drug dealers than candy sellers in the neighborhood.”

Indeed, rappers depict Sulukule as a place of exclusion, discrimination and poverty and reflect a sense of inner collapse and stigmatization. Yet, they also claim that those who will transform this place into an area where human beings can live in an honorable way is themselves. In *Suç mu?*, they say:

Whoops! What will happen again?  
Smell! There is rebellion in the air  
Let go! There is always a tomorrow  
Oh my God, is it crime to be born in the swamp?  
Do not stick! If you have a wing, fly away  
They say, but where are you going?  
Don't escape! Fight and stay here

---

<sup>37</sup> Burada durdukça azalıyor yaşama hevesim  
Nasıl bir yere aitiz biz? Bu neyin meselesi?  
Bi sor bakıyım içinden gelir mi bu yeri sevesiniz?  
Peki bizi esir tutana kim ne desin?

<sup>38</sup> Bu mahalleye ilk kez gelen insanların  
Yüzüne bir baksana ne kadar tedirgin  
On aileye derdini sor  
Kendini onun yerine koyma sakın bu seni delirtir



Make this place a place to live<sup>39</sup>

Hence, they do not use rap music only as a means of raising a voice but as a medium of transforming messages and fostering a certain change. They believe that art and music has a transformative power and they can use it for Sulukule. In other words, in the perspective of rappers, stigmatization of Romani people who suffer from urban renewal in Istanbul, can be deterred through the injection of self-esteem and self-belief to younger generations. Rap music is used as a way of creating a social and political consciousness by those rappers along with rebellion. Therefore, in Sulukule hip-hop culture, both active and reflective elements are present as rappers use hip-hop both as a means of resistance and voice and a medium of self-critique and consciousness raising.

Sulukule rappers address the issue of poverty in their songs as well. For example, in *Sinama Beni Asil* says:

Do you think that the big winter will pass with two tracksuits?  
I have a right to object so maybe this is why I am a rapper  
Why that I born rich or poor was determined without asking me?<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, Zen-G says in *Snap Shot*:

Kids that go to college will show off  
I will do rap and sell it to them  
There is no installment by credit card for us  
You take a cab, I will take the bus<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Hoppa! Yine neler olacak acaba?  
Kokla! Havada isyan kokusu var  
Takma! Kafana bugünün bir yarını var  
Allah'ım suç mu bataкта doğmak?  
Konma! Kanadın varsa uçup git burdan  
Diyorlar ama nereye gidicen?  
Kaçma! Savaş burda kal  
Bu bataklığı yaşanacak bir yer yap

<sup>40</sup> Sence koskocaman kış iki eşofmanla geçer mi?  
Benim itiraz etme hakkım var. Belki de bu yüzden bi' Rap'çiyim  
Niye zengin doğup doğmamam bana sorulmadan seçildi?

<sup>41</sup> Kolejli çocuklar hava atıcak  
Ben de rap'i yapıcam sonra ona satacam  
Kredi kartına yok bizde taksit  
Otobüse binerim sen tut taksi

In both songs, while there is also a revolt against being poor and unequal consumption capacity, they also stress the importance and function of rap music. They state that one of the important functions of rap music is to rebel and uncover the inequalities in the society.

Still, Sulukule rappers do not confine themselves to addressing issues only related to Sulukule, Romas or their own lives. They also touch upon the matters from which people in Turkey suffer or political issues in general.

In *Gezizekalılar* which is written during the Gezi Park events, they criticize state regarding the claims of corruption and their policies which were on the agenda at the time. They say:

Do you think it is easy to send 3 children to school?  
OK, come on, forget about us  
Do not sit on that chair for your “ass hair”  
Mehmet Ali’s ship is capsizing  
The sharks are waiting for him  
My brother, democracy put art in the jail  
All authors are waiting to get out of the jail(Amen)<sup>42</sup>

When they talk about the ship, they basically refer to the corruption claims at the times that the son of president Erdoğan bought a ship with the money he gained illegally. They also criticize state policy towards encouraging having children which was highly criticized. Lastly, they critique that the number of intellectuals in the prison are so high and this was legitimized by the discourse of democracy because generally politicians in the power states that the judiciary is autonomous and they take decisions independent from governments.

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<sup>42</sup> Kolay mı sanıyon 3 çocuk okutmak  
Tamam hadi tamam biz geç  
Bari göt kilların için o tahtına oturma  
Mehmet alinin gemisi alaborada  
Onu köpek balıkları bekliyor  
Abim demokrasi sanatı hapise tıktı  
Tüm yazarlar çıkmayı bekliyor. ( Amin )

Tahribad-I Isyan continues to criticize state officials through conjectural events in their another song called *Ölene Kadar*. In 2014, 301 mining workers were dead in an accident in Soma (Çelik, 2015). They also touched upon this in their song. They say:

Ministers will not go down the ground like a miner  
Instead of helping them, they look at dead bodies  
Numbers became the common interest of all people  
Workers are waited by the children and ministers by offices<sup>43</sup>

In the same song they also criticize the system in which exploitation and alienation takes place in the following part.

The world is a great death machine.  
The poor works, the boss wins.  
He runs the engine and works the battery  
He is condemned to iron and fed up with himself<sup>44</sup>

In the earlier parts, I had mentioned that one of the biggest problems in Sulukule was the lack of education. Sulukule rappers also castigate the educational system in Turkey as well. In *Hamam* they say:

A 2-hour exam covers all my life  
Suppose I pass the exam  
The diploma does not even embellish my wall

Paid education, inadequate curriculum  
Jolly me, I don't understand  
There is no book about art  
No room for different visions

Enough, we are sick of this system  
We read but could not be a "man"  
Someone has to say "stop", you or me  
We all went to school, but we did not understand anything

Let's go to the school (Hey)

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<sup>43</sup> Bir madenci gibi yeraltına girmeyecek bakanlar  
Çıkarılan cesetlere yardım etmek yerine bakarlar  
Bütün insanların ortak derdi oldu rakamlar  
İşçileri bekler çocuklarını diğerlerini makamlar

<sup>44</sup> Dünya koca bir ölüm makinasınır  
Garibanı çalışır patronu kazanır  
Çalıştırı motoru bas akün ısınır  
Demirleri mahkum ısırırken kendinden uzanır

Burn the classes (Oh)  
Throw the teachers (Hey)  
Let's rewrite (Oh)  
Everyone read  
Nobody stay ignorant (Hey)  
No one tell us how to be a “man”<sup>45</sup>

They also point out the problems that research assistants in Turkey suffer from. According to the law in Turkey, some research assistants in Turkey have right to start working as a doctorate after finishing their PhD programs in the university that they were assigned. Yet, recently this law was annulled and the rights given to master and doctoral students were disintitiled. Tahribad-I Isyan also explains this situation in their song called *Yök Artık Daha Neler*.

As one can see, Sulukule rappers prate many issues ranging from the situation of research assistants in universities to the death of miners in Soma. Hence, they are not only interested in exposing the problems that they suffer or particular to Sulukule but also talking about general political and social problems as well. Although their most critical lyrics are about urban renewal and their political consciousness started to evolve around urban regeneration, what they do can be evaluated beyond urban politics.

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<sup>45</sup> Yapamam hayır iki saatlik bi sınav  
Tüm hayatımı zaptediyo  
Sınavı geçtiğimi farz et  
Verdiği diploma duvarımı bile süslemiyö  
Paralı eğitim yetersiz müfredat  
Tatlı tatlı anlat kafam almıyo  
Sanata dair yoktu hiç kitap  
Farklı farklı kafalar, kafa kalmıyo  
Bu düzenden bıktık artık yeter  
Kimimiz okuduk okuduk adam olamadık  
Biri bu duruma dur demeli bu ben ya da sen  
Hepimiz okuduk ama hiçbir şey anlamadık  
Okula gidelim (hey)  
Sınıfları yakalım (oh)  
Hocaları atalım (hey)  
Yeniden yazalım (oh)  
Okumayan olmasın  
Kimse cahil kalmasın (hey)  
Birileri bize nasıl adam olacağımızı  
Sakın anlatmasın

The concept of right to city, understood as to have a say on the space and city where individuals live is useful in politically situate Sulukule rappers. Schoon (2014) for example, evaluates rap socialization in Sulukule in relation to the concept of right to the city. For her, the main reason why Sulukule rappers are consciously making effort to have voice on matters which effect their lives directly is the engagement of right to the city activists in the resistance towards demolitions. In addition, that Romani activists all around the world showed their support to those who opposed urban renewal in their neighborhood also paved the way for identity politics. Hence, hip-hop in Sulukule foremost tried to create a consciousness towards ethnic discrimination and gentrification. Yet, rappers also talk about problems that they do not directly face or conduct projects for children not only in Sulukule but for those who are in prison or affected by disasters such as earthquake in eastern part of Turkey in 2011. Hence, the political consciousness and the critical culture which came to existence through resistance on space and city went beyond urban politics. Purcell's (2002) view on right to the city is much explanatory in hip-hop socialization in Sulukule because; for him, spatial politics should not be understood only as a form of resistance to the urban restructuring or as a type of social movement only aimed at issues about city and space, but rather as a form of politics which accumulates its power from the space but whose implications are beyond it. Rap socialization as a social movement which came to existence after urban renewal project did not confine itself to resisting to demolishment, but expanded its critical vision to the extent which it covers general economic, social and political problems in Turkey. This expansion, of course, is thanks to the socialization and activism on space and city.

#### 4.2 Resistance and rebellion in Bağcılar hip-hop

Similar to Sulukule, rappers in Bağcılar too, talk about issues such as poverty, discrimination, crime and drug. On the one hand, Bağcılar rappers highlight the poverty and discrimination which stem from structures external to Bağcılar, on the other hand they emphasize problems within and particular to Bağcılar. Hence, while they actively try to become the voice of passive citizens in Turkish society, they also reflectively criticize their own reality.

First and foremost, issues which are treated in songs are interrelated topics; drug, crime and police. In many songs, drug addiction, robbery as a way of making money for buying drug and encounters with police are explored. For example, in *Gene mi Amcalar? Part 2* Heijan- the most popular rapper from Bağcılar says:

Let's go to the neighbor and take a walk  
Get two fumes and blow up the drug  
Then get faster homie  
Go to the robbery and push the doors

Let's have a booze-up, then joy is with us  
Those cops are waiting in the corners  
Look at them, they are badass  
If they were your children, you would not like them<sup>46</sup>

In his another song called *Mame Hacı* he says:

Dealer, thief, glue-sniffer and hijacker  
Police kick them to the curb  
First jail, then the court  
There is no mercy within cold walls<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Hadi semte gidek baba piyasa yapak  
Bi' iki duman alıp hapı patlatak  
Sonra çat diye homie biraz hızlanak  
Sonra tufaya çıkıp kapı zorlayak  
Al bi duman sonra neşe bizimle  
Köşede bekluyo lan o ayan abiler  
Tipleri kes mugo bakışlar fena  
Evlat olsa sevilmez la bunlar

<sup>47</sup> Torbacı gaspçı balleciyle hırsız  
Emiyet polis yunuslar paket  
Hurra nazaret sonra mahkeme  
Soğuk dört duvar yok yok bi merhamet

In *Gene mi Amcalar?* Hejjan says:

There's drug, there's drug in rap, there's fire  
There's death, there's bonz that fires with a smoke  
Life here forces you  
If it does not work, I got you a cigarette<sup>48</sup>

Lyrics in this song may indeed sound like gangsta rap where drug and gangster life are frequently narrated rather than political matters. However, in this song drug is not expressed in such a way that it represents entertainment and luxury like in gangsta rap, but as a problem in Bağcılar from which many suffer in the district. Topics which are related to drug in Bağcılar are death, difficulties and crime as one can infer from the song. Hence, here drug is not reflected as a luxurious element of a gangster life, but a threat to and an addiction of the youth in Bağcılar which drive them to crime and eventually to prison as I have quoted from the rappers in the previous section on the problems in Bağcılar.

Another common theme that appears in songs by Bağcılar rappers is poverty. Economic problems which stem from competitive market and inadequate level of qualifications and education that young people have in the district are very common in the songs. For example, Hejjan in the same song says:

The district is ours bro, but house is rented  
Do we have enough money for the bills?  
We are so called famous, but moneyless  
But, they say rappers have money like shit<sup>49</sup>

Hejjan, in *Farklı Sementin Çocukları*, also puts forward the unequal distribution of wealth in Istanbul and stresses the exclusion that they face in such a cosmopolitan and competitive megacity like Istanbul.

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<sup>48</sup> Hap var, rapimde hap var, içersen ot var  
Bi' dumanla patlar bonz var, ölüm var  
Bur'da hayat seni zorlar  
Yaramıyosa koçum sana boş sigara var

<sup>49</sup> Sement bizim birader ev kira  
Faturalar kapıda yeter mi ki para  
Sözde ünlüyüz hani baba yok para  
Lafa gelince rapçilerde bok para

This city is a land of gold  
For everyone except us  
Why we are always in the role of guilty?  
Why the handcuff is always in our arms?  
Istanbul which has been paradise for you  
You do not know this place, for me  
You do not hear the sounds of the night  
You do not see us in secluded corners<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, in *Mame Hacı* he says:  
Is Istanbul heaven for you?  
Also ask us what kind of hell it is  
No one holds you when you get down, believe me  
You get lost in a blind street<sup>51</sup>

The metaphor of heaven and hell in explaining Istanbul is very common in the songs by Bağcılar rappers. That the city is represented as hell for some and heaven for people live in Bağcılar mainly stems from the unequal distribution of wealth and thus disproportionate benefitting from the city. This is also shown by the debate on relative poverty in the literature. Today's society and especially Turkey's biggest city is defined by its very highly consumer characteristic. In such a context, having inadequate access to cultural practices and material goods which define social positions also cause poverty that is not absolute but relative. Deprivation from unequal participation to social life in the city is also a symptom of poverty as it excludes certain groups and stigmatizes them as backward or poor. Hence, position of one with regard to the standard conditions of a society in terms of consumption and participation to the city life creates also discursive exclusion along with

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<sup>50</sup> Taşı toprağı altın olan bu şehir  
Bi bize mi eksik yaptı hayatta  
Neden hep suçlu rolünde biz varız  
Neden kelepçe bizim kolumuzda  
Size göre cennet olmuş İstanbul  
Buraları bana göre bilmiyorsunuz  
Duymuyunuz gecenin seslerini  
Bizi kuytu köşelerde görmüyorsunuz  
Ve biz her gece burda dumanlıyoruz  
Çektikce kalbi zorluyoruz

<sup>51</sup> İstanbul size göre cennet di mi?  
Bir de bize sorun nasıl bir cehennem  
Düşümmü tutan yok inan bana  
Kaybolursun çıkmaz bi sokakta



economic exclusion. Labelings such as “varoş, amele or kiro” which refer to a certain subculture and class are expressed in everyday life. These are also reflected in the songs of Bağcılar rappers.

Unequal distribution of wealth and juxtaposition of poor and rich in Istanbul is reflected in songs as “injustice”. That the wealth is seen the only symbol of status and the wealth is only accumulated in the hands of few is unjust in the eyes of rappers. In *Mame Hacı Heijan* says:

Come bro, this is Turkey  
If you have money, then you are a man  
Do not talk about justice  
I saw starvation deaths<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, for them many popular people in Turkey make money although they do not have any qualifications but they do so merely because they are famous.

For example, in *Mame Hacı Heijan* says:

In case a fame falls down  
Great headlines in the morning  
Bro, our lives are ruined  
No one is interested, where is justice?<sup>53</sup>

In addition to stating that some people on TV make easy money, they also make fun of their behavior and appearances. By doing so, they in fact criticize society’s understanding of entertainment and value judgments. For example, in *Mame Hacı Heijan* says:

House, car, yacht and salary  
They marry at age 70  
Knocking shops are subjected to taxation  
But we are so called Muslims<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Gel baba burası Türkiye  
Paran varsa adamsın lan işte  
Adaletten söz etmesin kimse  
Açlıktan ölenleri gördüm ben

<sup>53</sup> Herhangi ünlünün ayağı kaysa  
Sabah gastelerde büyük manşet  
Oğlum bizim hayatımız kaymış  
Kapıyı çalan yok nasıl bi adalet

<sup>54</sup> Ev araba yat bir de maaş derken  
Yetmiş yaşında gelin oluyorlar  
Vergiye tabi onca kerhane

Similarly, Mavzer and Cash Ömer in *Evleneceksen Gel* say:

Egos are like Nişantaşı and styles are like Tarlabası  
Come to get married  
She says I did not like him  
TV is full of disgrace ... come to get married<sup>55</sup>

Here, marriage reality shows and moral decay in Turkish society is criticized.

That people who attend those shows value material goods a lot and see them as key factors to marriage is reflected as a symptom of moral decay in Turkish society.

Similarly, that knocking houses where people can have sexual relationship by the exchange of money are legal in a country like Turkey where the majority of people are Muslim and religion is blessed and propagated by the state.

This issue of moral decay is treated in a patriarchal language in the songs of Bağcılar rappers. While they address moral breakdown, they criticize the consuetude of entertainment that youth have in Turkey from a conservative perspective. In another song called *Abin Dızo Bremin* they say:

Some are swinging back and forward  
No one knows who touches who  
Citation in the newspaper: "Harassment of the young girl!"  
Don't you have mother or sister?<sup>56</sup>

Another point that is very visible in the songs by Bağcılar rappers is the stress on different districts in Istanbul. They frequently juxtapose rich and gentrified districts and slums in Istanbul to highlight the encounters of rich and poor and show different encounters in Istanbul. Even in the example above, Mavzer and Cash Ömer

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Ama lafa gelince müslümanız be

<sup>55</sup> Ego nişantaşı ve tipi tarlabası  
Evleneceksen gel  
Anam beyendi diye geldim ..bide kız demezmi bunu beyenmedim  
Rezillik dolu bu televizyonlar.. evleneceksen gel

<sup>56</sup> Bir ileri, iki geri sallanıyo' kimi  
Kim kimi elliyo' farkında değil  
Gaz'teye manşet: "Genç kıza taciz!"  
Senin anan, bacın yok mu lan aciz?

liken egos that people who attend those shows have to Nişantaşı in order to show how high they are and their styles to Tarlabası to state their ugliness.

Now, I would like to give examples from songs where rappers use different districts and neighborhoods to show the exclusion that they face and social problems that they suffer as well as critiques towards their own reality. For example, in *Yansın Geceler* Hejjan says:

He eats always the same; hamburger and potato  
When he needs a car, he has the gallery in Florya  
His father is engineer, the son is crazy for girls  
“Ameles” like us hit the trowel in the construction.<sup>57</sup>

Here, Hejjan tries to express the injustice in the sense that although at the same age, one needs to work hard in order to maintain his life, the other possesses everything he needs thanks to his family. Florya as one of the richest neighborhoods in Istanbul is used in the song to make an analogy between the difference between Bağcılar and Florya; young poor man and rich man. The word “amele” is also used to point first the construction workers who need to work hard and second the discursive discrimination that is commonly used in everyday life language.

In his song called *Şizofren İnsan* Cash Ömer says:

When he wears Nike he becomes rich  
Why do we become thief when we have it?  
Police have many reasons  
If you do not look rich, they start to rub down search<sup>58</sup>

He wants to state that the discursive exclusion, that is to say the phenomenological discrimination and prejudice based on class, race and ethnicity which is reflected in everyday life language, is so deep that even when they possess

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<sup>57</sup> Yediği hep aynı; hamburger, patatesi  
Araba lazım Florya'da galerisi  
Babası mühendis, oğlu kız delisi  
İnşaatta mala vurur bizim gibi amelesi

<sup>58</sup> Nike giyer zengin cool olur aga  
Biz giyince neden hırsız oluyoruz  
Amcaların derdi hep ayrı  
Tipin az bozursa başlar arantın

similar material goods, they are immediately stigmatized as thieves. Similarly, some clothes such as Nike shoes become a stigmatization symbol of “Apaçi” culture.

Poyraz from Bağcılar explains this as follows.

The shoes are comfortable. They all dress the same. It is for rich men there. Here we are the thief Apaçis who wear it. It is cool there, here for thieves. You are rich, we are poor. Prejudice always exists. By looking down on us, they increase their position.<sup>59</sup>

Rappers from Bağcılar, similar to those in Sulukule, also provide critiques towards matters regarding the society and government at large. In his song *Mame Hacı* Heijan says:

Bro, you robbed this country  
This people has no peace, you fucked them  
Be proud of what you have done  
When you are in trouble you are innocent<sup>60</sup>

In parallel to the songs of rappers from Sulukule, Heijan raises the issue of corruption in Turkey. In another song he brings the issue of obligatory military service that is one of the highly debated issues in Turkey. In *Mame Hacı Part 2* he claims that obligatory military service that lasts 12 months is analogous to a penalty given by the state.

We had a little bit of wisdom; state took it away, too  
12 months of military service and they say have some patience  
As if it was rental payment bro, it takes 365 days to go  
Would the state punish me like that if I committed a murder?<sup>61</sup>

Another issue that is treated in the songs by Bağcılar rappers is Kurdish issue. In their songs they try to claim that every citizen in Turkey are equal and they have

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<sup>59</sup> Ayakkabılar rahat. Hepsini aynı giyiniyorlar. Sizin orada zengin işi. Bizim burada hırsız Apaçi işi. Orada cool burada hırsız. Siz zengin biz fakir. Önyargı her zaman olan bir şey. Onları oturtmak için ezilen taraf burası.

<sup>60</sup> Oğlum bu ülkeyi soydunuz  
Bu millette huzur yok amına koydunuz  
Şimdi övün sen işinle kusursuz  
Dara düşünce tabi siz masumsunuz

<sup>61</sup> Az birazcık akil vardı onu da aldı devlet  
12 ay askerlik bir de diyolar sabret  
Sanki ev kirasi babam şafak 365  
Cinayet işlesem böyle ceza verir mi devlet

the same right. In their song named *Türk Kürt Kardeştir* in which they use both Kurdish and Turkish, they state that Kurdish people are labeled as terrorists and thus excluded.

I am the voice of a nation that has been excluded for years.  
Brother, do not listen if what I'm writing offends you, never mind.  
According to you, I am not Kurdish, I am terrorist.  
In the slightest case, the Kurd is immediately called the guilty.  
Tell me now if you're comfortable.  
Where is Ahmet Kaya, where is the Deniz Gezmiş, are they forgotten?  
Which Turks have loved this country like them?  
Did they love the country after they're dead? Do not make me laugh.  
Now, I am also a Kurdish son, send me away, too.  
Those martyrs and deaths were in vain, huh?  
Now I'm calling you a through banned language.<sup>62</sup>

This is maybe the most political song produced by Bağcılar rappers. Yet, this is not the only song related to the Kurdish identity and political matters. In the same year, 2014; when Kobane incidents took place, Sezer and Yakup from Bağcılar wrote another song. In their song called *Kobane Katliamı* they tried to raise awareness for the massacre attempt by Isis towards Kurdish people in the area. Hence, as one can infer from the content of the songs, rappers from Bağcılar do not confine themselves to the matters specific to Bağcılar and their own lives, but they also touch upon the issues related to the moral decay in Turkish society and sense of humor as well as problems regarding the identity and politics at large. Therefore, similar to Sulukule hip-hop, in terms of content, they also provide a critical perspective to the political, social and economic issues in the country.

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<sup>62</sup> Yıllarca dışlanmış bir milletin sesiyim  
Kardeş zoruna gidiyorsa söylediklerim boşver, dinleme  
Size göre Kürt değil lan adımız oldu terörist  
En ufak bir olayda suçlu demeden hemen Kürt  
Şimdi rahat mısın söyle bana, nerede şimdi Ahmet Kaya,  
Deniz Gezmiş nerede, unutuldu mu bunlar?  
Hangi Türk sevdi söyle onun kadar ülkeyi  
Öldükten sonra mı sevdi güldürmeyin lan beni  
Şimdi ben de Kürdüm oğlum kovsanıza lan beni  
Onca şehit onca ölüm sebepsizdi öyle mi?  
Şimdi yasaklanan bir dille sesleniyom size

## CHAPTER 5

### GLOBAL, LOCAL AND RAP MUSIC IN BETWEEN

One of the central themes in studying rap music in Bağcılar and Sulukule is the relationship between global and local. In many studies, scholars have argued that rappers use rap music that is a western originated, global genre in order to express particular realities. This is conceptualized, as I previously stated as “glocalism”. Bennett uses the term “glocalization” to refer to the form through which rappers reflect their local identities and experiences through a universal music. This concept is also relevant for Turkish rap music. In his study in which he investigates Turkish rap music in Germany, Kaya claims that young Turkish rappers in Berlin conduct an identity politics by putting emphasis on their authenticity in the age of “glocalism” (Kaya,2002). He suggests that Turkish rappers use hip-hop culture that is a universal tool as a way of resistance to discrimination, stigmatization and German supremacy. The same observation can also be made in the cases of Sulukule and Bağcılar.

Originally, rap music is a Western music. Yet, it became a global genre thanks to the technologies of marketing and distribution. However, the fact that rap music became so much popular in all around the world and easily performed by different artists is thanks to another characteristic it has. Rap music as a way of rebellion and resistance is very useful in giving voice to the suppressed and deprived. Many people all around the world raise their voices through hip-hop and rap. The social, political and economic context in which hip-hop has originated gave the characteristics of rebellion and resistance to rap music. In accordance with the objectives, functions and principles of rap music at the time that it first came out in 1970s, many rappers and hip-hop artists use their art in order to reflect their discomfort and sedition to the

problems that they face. That rap music is speedily spread and easily performed is a result of that it can easily be produced. Unlike most other types of music, complicated instruments and studios are not required to produce rap songs. Hence, the production of a rap song is not privileged to a certain group that possesses the adequate economic and cultural capital. Furthermore, performance of rap music becomes much easier and common since internet and computer technologies enable rappers to produce and reproduce songs by using already existing backgrounds.

Most of the rappers that I interviewed with state that they do not need a lot to perform rap music. For example, Dinçer from Bağcılar says;

There's an expatriate friend in Australia. The man came from Australia just to see the studio. He said "how could you achieve 100 million clicks. I have a studio that costs 45-50 thousands of euros. I could not do it; how did you do it?" There are tools here which cost 3-5 thousands of liras.<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, rappers from Teşkilat-I Isyan suggests that rap music is almost always and anywhere possible to perform as a way of resistance. Emre says;

I think the way of rebellion in the music is rap. If you want to say bad words, you have to do it with rap. Streets are enough to rap. You do not need any musical instrument. We have a mouth, we make beatbox.<sup>64</sup>

For people who lack the economic capital to afford to pay for musical instruments and professional productions, rap music is among the best options to express themselves. Rappers in Bağcılar, Furkan and Burak say that they can easily tape their songs with their mobile phones and make clips and put them on the internet. This facile way of production is very functional on the spread of rap music globally. In addition, as Cem Avcı states, people do not have to have a very strong or

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<sup>63</sup> Gurbetçi bir arkadaş var Avustralya'da. Adam avustralya'dan kalktı buraya geldi. Sırf stüdyoyu görmek için. Sen dedi bu 100 milyonu nereye izlettin dedi. Benim 45 50 bin Euro'luk stüdyom var. Ben bu kadar yapamadım, sen nasıl yaptın dedi. 3 -5 bin liralık aletler var.

<sup>64</sup> Bence müzikte isyan etme biçimi rap. Kötü sözler söylemek istiyorsan bunu rap ile yapman gerekir. Rap yapmak için sokaklar yeter. Müzik aletine gerek yok. Ağzımız var, beatbox yaparız.

beautiful voice to rap.<sup>65</sup> All in all, rap music although originated in the West, is likely to be spread and performed globally since it is easy to be produced massively.

The content of rap music is also effective in its global spread. It makes it possible for the deprived and suppressed to have a voice in a very competitive music market. As it originally came out as the way of oppressed black communities in the USA rebelling and resisting, it gave inspirations to many people all around the world to reflect their own realities. Rappers from Sulukule say;

It is American films and songs that have influenced us and helped us getting started to rap, and America is the starting point for the hip hop culture. We even liken Bronx and Sulukule to each other in terms of ghetto. It's because that we are the Roma neighborhood and they are black communities and the events of the urban transformation took place in both neighborhoods. Sulukule is the fate partner of the excluded black neighborhoods in America.<sup>66</sup>

Hence, it can be argued that people who suffer from similar social problems in different corners of the world make a better sense of their problems drawing on the experiences of others through rap music. In addition, rap music in its original form in the US did not only create a common sense in terms of content and attitude, but also created a globalized understanding of style and technic, too. For example, as Kaya observes in Germany, Turkish rappers in Kreuzberg started rapping in English (Kaya,2002). Many rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar too, tend to use English words or routine words that foreign rappers use in their songs. They also state that they follow American rappers to learn their technics and develop themselves.

In her article, Shoon suggests that one can also claim that there are themes in the clips of Tahribad-I Isyan which gives us clues about the relationship between

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<sup>65</sup> Hem rap yapmak için sesinin de güzel olmasına gerek yok. Sesi berbat olan rapçiler de var.

<sup>66</sup> Bizi etkileyen ve rap'e başlamamızı sağlayan şey Amerikan filmleri ve şarkıları oldu, zaten hip hop kültürünün çıkış noktası da Amerika'dır. Hatta Bronx ve Sulukule'yi birbirine gettoluk açısından birbirine benzetiyoruz. Oranın zenci bizim Roman mahallesi olmamız ve her iki mahallenin de başına gelen kentsel dönüşüm gibi olaylardan ötürü. Sulukule Amerika'daki dışlanmış zenci mahallelerinin kader ortağı.



global and local. She argues that in *Wonderland*, as the contradictions of Istanbul; the encounters of the streets of Sulukule and newly built luxurious houses are depicted, Istanbul's situation in the context of globalization and neoliberalization is shown (Schoon, 2014). As Turkey adapted itself to the open market and globalization, Istanbul itself became a place of different encounters and the juxtaposition of local, everyday life practices and global contexts is expressed in the clip as camera first shows marginalized citizens in Sulukule and Istanbul from a wider perspective. Schoon also suggests that local concerns of Sulukule and global Roma activism come together in order to bring a solution to the demolitions. Hence, in addition to the global characteristics of rap music, particularly in Sulukule, global Roma movements are also important for rap music.

Yet, Kaya states that, although their style and music is very universal and global, diasporic youth in Germany produce a subcultural system in which they express their own identities (Kaya, 2002). In other words, global tools serve as the instruments of expressing local problems and identities. That is why he takes rappers as modern minstrels or storytellers who reflect their own realities through their own lenses. In accordance with the argument of Kaya, Asil Koç states that he tries to make an analysis of what he observes in his neighborhood and rap about it. He says in an interview;

Writing made me a masochist. I started to write better things by nourishing myself with my grievances. As the poet deliberately falls in love with a girl and uses her to write poetry ... I watch and analyze when people get into a fight in the neighborhood. I write its story. (Cinmen, 2017)<sup>67</sup>

That there is a sense of locality in hip-hop culture in Bağcılar and Sulukule is not only due to that rappers in both places reflect problems particular to their

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<sup>67</sup> Söz yazmak beni mazoşist yaptı. Acımdan beslenerek daha iyi şeyler yazmaya başladım. Şairin bilerek bir kıza aşık olup, onu şiir yazmak için kullanması gibi... Mahallede kavga çıktığında izliyorum ve analiz ediyorum. Hikayesini yazıyorum.

districts, but also to the language that they use. As those rappers are among ethnically different and excluded people, they use their unique everyday life jargon or slang in their songs. In the songs of rappers from Sulukule, it is very common to see words and exclamations such as “Abe” or “Aman” which are identified with the Romani culture. Similarly, in Bağcılar rap, rappers use Kurdish words such as “Mugo”, “Mame”, “Dızo” or “Bre min”. They also have usages like “Kezban” to refer to women or “Ayan” to address police officers which they themselves make up in the subculture of Bağcılar. Hence, as they use English words in their songs, they also write in their original language or use words which are specific to their culture or district. Thus, the juxtaposition of English and Kurdish or Romani words signifies the intertwining of a global music and local identities.

That rappers use local components in their songs facilitates identification of audiences with artists. As people see problems that they face or situations that they come across in their everyday lives are mentioned in the songs, they establish more proximate relationships with both rappers and their songs. In addition, that audiences see that rappers who become popular are coming from similar backgrounds and similar districts to themselves is effective in having a closer relationship. Hence, not only due to style but also content and identification that these songs created, rap culture in these districts became very unique and characteristic.

The local embeddedness of rap music’s language and content in Bağcılar and Sulukule is also a part of the struggle via space. As Farr suggests, the spatial awareness in the rap culture is highly important in the sense that it may serve as a forum through which rappers expose their demands and sufferings on the geographical space and thus their position in the society (Farr, 2002). Indeed, in both

American rap and rap music in Bağcılar and Sulukule, there is a strong emphasis on concepts like neighborhood, ghetto and city. On the one hand, rappers, by putting emphasis on their own districts, rappers show their identity and identification with neighborhood and web of relations in this district. On the other hand, by making comparisons, they try to reveal their relative position in the society. For example, in many of his songs Heijan says; “Here is Bağcılar, Welcome to Hell”. By doing so, while he puts forward his sense of belonging to Bağcılar, he also expresses the feelings of exclusion and deprivation. In order to make it more obvious, he makes a comparison between Bağcılar and the most developed neighborhoods of Istanbul. In *Pelinsu Eceler* he says;

Nişantaşı, Ortaköy, Bebek, Beşiktaş  
Nights are burning, all the women are gorgeous  
Taksim, Maçka, Nispetiye, Fulya  
Singers, footballers, big shots are all here.<sup>68</sup>

By comparing the neighborhoods in Istanbul, rappers from Bağcılar betoken to the uneven development of the city as well as the physical segregation of classes and ethnicities. Yet, they also try to establish a spatial particularity and reality that are shaped by their own moralities and experiences.

The concept of reality in hip-hop is a two-sided phenomenon (Asante, 2008). On the one hand, hip-hop is real in the sense that it is different from commercial rap as it reflects actual social, economic and political problems from which a certain group of people suffer. In that regard, it is identical to conscious rap that is different from gangsta rap which only express luxurious life and entertainment. Hence, real hip-hop is the one that is not fully integrated into the market economy and has a critical and interpretive function. Secondly, hip-hop tries to represent a reality which

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<sup>68</sup> Nişantaşı, Ortaköy, Bebek, Beşiktaş  
Yaniyo' geceleri, manitalar hep taş  
Taksim, Maçka, Nispetiye, Fulya  
Topçusu, popçusu, kodamanı burda

belongs to a certain identity and locality. In this second sense, by “keeping it real”, rappers identify the reality itself and present it. In other words, real hip-hop celebrates “the social effects of urban decay and poverty” as an “authenticating device responding to the removal of rap music from the organic relationship with the communities creating it” or “an explicitly ideological stand against selling one’s soul to the devils of capitalism or assimilation” (Perry, 2004, 87).

Hence, rap music as a global style can actually turn into a tool to stand against capitalism which makes it global. It can also be a medium of representing local identities and realities. For Bozza, hip-hop has the capacity to “connect and define the self-image of countless teenagers” (Bozza, 2003, 130). Similarly, Perry suggests that “Black American music, as a commercial American product, is exported globally. Its signifying creates a subaltern voice in the midst of the imperialist exportation of culture” (Perry, 2004, 19). Levy describes hip-hop as “a global, post-industrial signifying practice, giving new parameters of meaning to otherwise locally or nationally diverse identities” (Levy, 2001, 134). For Mitchell too, “Hip-hop and rap cannot be viewed simply as an expression of African-American culture; it has become a vehicle for global youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identity all over the world” (Mitchell, 2001, 1–2). As all of these scholars suggest, rap music paves the way for articulating local issues and interpretations of truth according to the local contexts.

Indeed, in the music of rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar, there is a sense of social and local embeddedness in the sense that they treat local themes in a universal and global music. However, what I want to put much more emphasis on is not that they express local issues, but rather how structural effects like exclusion and poverty paradoxically helped having a space for youth in Bağcılar and Sulukule to express

themselves through rap music. What I suggest is not to say that exclusion and poverty ideally create opportunities of expression for young people, but to claim that thanks to rap music, by creating a particularity, that is to say a stigmatized identity which is not absorbed by the surrounding norms, in a hierarchical society, youngsters in exclusionary places find a space to have a voice. Rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar do reflect local problems and represent their realities as it is suggested in the literature. Yet, I also argue that thanks to rap music, by using the reality that they created, rappers in both districts try to disturb social inequalities and hierarchies which enabled them to have their own socializations and define realities.

Exclusion and poverty may result in alienation and stigmatization (Wacquant, 2008; Buğra and Keyder, 2003) However, I argue that for young people who suffer from both exclusion and poverty, the particularity that they created out of exclusion and poverty became functional through rap music in having a voice. To put it differently, Sulukule and Bağcılar rappers invest in their stigmatized identities and alien subjectivities with new positive meanings through art. In other words, poor and excluded people in Sulukule and Bağcılar turn their disadvantageous positions in the society into their own reality, thus enable themselves to create their own social and cultural capital; hence spoil the hierarchical structure of the society.

The reality of Sulukule and Bağcılar that rappers created is fed by political, economic and social isolation as well as ethnic and discursive discrimination. Rappers in both districts put a great emphasis on the unique characteristics of their neighborhood despite being deprived and discriminated. They commonly use stigmas with which they are labeled in such a way first to refer to differential relationships between spaces, ethnicities and classes and second to disturb those already existing hierarchies in the society. In other words, they use their experiences and uniqueness

which are affected by poverty and exclusion in order to subvert the hierarchical relations.

Rappers in Bağcılar and Sulukule always try to present their districts as unique places. They use the names of neighborhoods frequently in their songs to highlight their belonging to the neighborhood. They establish a relationship between rap and the space where they perform most of their arts. Sulukule and Bağcılar, as the only houses of rappers are both where they belong to and what make possible for them to rap.

The particular cultural atmosphere of neighborhoods also influences the hip-hop culture in those places. For example, in Bağcılar, one of the most common events that young rappers find an opportunity to perform rap music is wedding ceremonies. Despite traditional characteristics of wedding ceremonies, a universal music, rap music can easily find a place for itself to be performed. This can be one of the most revealing examples of intertwining of local and global.

The uniqueness of those places is also presented in such a way it does not only entail a cultural particularity or belonging, but also encompasses a uniqueness which comes to existence due to the social and economic hierarchies in the society. In other words, what constitutes Sulukule's and Bağcılar's reality is not only cultural eccentricity but also social and economic factors which create different kinds of stigmatization. By adopting the stigmas with which they are labeled, rappers in both places obtain social and cultural and to some extent economic capital and hence stand against the hierarchies which stigmatized them. This, I argue, is one of the most important functions of rap music in Sulukule and Bağcılar.

I already mentioned how people in Sulukule and Bağcılar are subjected to ethnic and discursive discrimination. I also showed how rappers in those places put

forward that they are excluded and discriminated and how they resisted to these through their arts. Now, I would like to reveal, how they use stigmatizations to disturb hierarchical social relations.

In their song *Pelinsu Eceler* Heijan and Muti say;

Whiskey, Vodka, cappuccino  
It is like Dubai, in the morning they are in a hotel room  
The Father Bank does not deficit, he is always cool  
“Wretches” like us drink nothing but tea.<sup>69</sup>

In the first gaze, one can argue that they are not content with their own lives and are jealous of the lives of rich youth. However, they state that the identities in such a web of relations are defined through only economic positions. Hence, they find it immoral, insincere and vulnerable to be broken down. They say;

Cool cars, yachts, summer houses  
People following the fashion and spitting like a mannequin  
They give tip to the waiter by saying “keep the rest”  
Always insincere, ridiculous attitudes<sup>70</sup>

They argue that in such an environment there is no place for people like them coming from Bağcılar as they are not equipped with the requirements of this type of relationality such as insincerity, deceit and immorality. According to them, in this environment everything is defined by money and all the relations are based on economy. They say;

What kind of a case? Everything is money!  
But it does not work wretch, there is no such a world  
No one will call you when you are in trouble  
Then you will understand that everything is a dream<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Viskisi, Votkası, kapuçino tayfası  
Şekiller Dubai, sabah otel odası  
Ve batmıyor Baba Bank, bitmiyor havası  
Biz gibi garibana demli çay ablası

<sup>70</sup> Havalı arabalar, yatlar, yazlıklar  
Modayı takip edip manken gibi kasılanlar  
Garsona bahşiş "üstü kalsın"lar  
Hep samimiyetçi, saçma sapan tavırlar

<sup>71</sup> Nasıl bi' dava? Her şey para!  
Ama yaramıyo' garibana yok öyle dünya  
Düşünce dara kimse aramaz ama

Hence, rappers in Bağcılar accept that there are barriers among groups of people within society. They underline that there are differences among people in terms of class and culture and that people who belong to different classes and cultures have different consumption patterns and capitals. However, one cannot argue that this is a symptom of stigmatization or an inner decay in Bağcılar. On the contrary, by attributing morality to the signifiers of different groups in society, they actually claim that they are superior to higher classes as they see themselves more decent and sincere.

In their song *Zorlama Abisi Amelesin* Cash Ömer and Mavzer say;

Do not push bro, you are a worker  
You can't have blonde or brunette  
Taksim, Ortaköy and Bebek are not for you  
You can't eat lobster, you better eat beurek<sup>72</sup>

In this part, while on the hand they show the spatial disintegration within Istanbul on the basis of economic and social position, on the other hand they address the different consumption patterns of different classes which settle in different districts in Istanbul. In addition, rappers intentionally use the word “amele” to refer to both a social position and stigmatization. They state that an “amele” cannot have the same consumption practices or socialize in the same spaces with those who belong to upper classes. What they put forward is in accordance with what the literature on relative poverty claims. In this case, one can infer that they are not so poor that they cannot maintain their lives, but they are deprived from the equal right to participate in the city and cannot consume as upper classes.

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O zaman anlarsın ağa her şey bir rüya

<sup>72</sup> Zorlama Abisi Amelesin

Gelmez Sana Sarışını Esmeri  
Neyine Taksim Ortaköy Bebeği  
İstakoz Neyine Ye Kol Böreği



However, it would be misleading to interpret these songs only as the announcement of relative poverty and complaints about deprivation from equal participation and consumption. In the same songs, rappers also criticize upper classes' lives. They argue that their lives are "unreal" in the sense that what they do is not for the sake of entertainment or happiness but of showing off and especially young rich people get stupefied by the social media. For them, the relations in Bağcılar are much more "real" because people's values are not determined by money and it is sincerer. Hence, they approach rich people's lives critically. Poyraz explains this as follows;

I used to come to Boğaziçi University while I was doing shipping. Last year. I am an intern student at LC Waikiki now. I found it myself to make some money. The people in the Boğaziçi are quite strange. They are hanging on. Yet, we don't want to be like them. Here, the money does not grow on trees.<sup>73</sup>

The reason why rappers in Bağcılar establish a differentiation between their district and other places is that they create a reality that is particular to Bağcılar. In that sense, as Asante states, they "keep it real" (Asante, 2008). They do not only show their own reality but also start to read the whole society from this reality. In other words, they do not only reflect the stigmas and problems belong to Bağcılar as their realities, but also critically make an assessment of the politics and society through the reality which came into existence in the complex relations within and between Bağcılar and other districts. For this reason, they repeatedly use the stigmas like "amele", in order to both blazingly show the exclusion and discrimination that they face and fill those signifiers with new meanings which are the parts of a discourse that despises people in Bağcılar. Hence, they try to subvert down the discursive hierarchical relations by attributing new meanings to the stigmas and

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<sup>73</sup> Ben sevkiyat iş yaparken Boğaziçi Üniversitesi'nde geliyorduk. Geçen yıldır. Şu an LC Waikikide stajyer öğrenciyim. Cebim boş kalmasın diye kendimi buldum staj yerini. Oradaki insanlar bayağı bir garip. Takılıyor tip falan. Hiç özenmiyoruz ama onların hayatına. Burada ekmek aslanın ağzında.

practices with which they are labeled. For example; in their song called *Semt*

*Oturuşu* Mustafa says;

You, who sat on my heart in Bağcılar style  
Revealed the “ayan”(friend) inside me.  
Why do you tango with someone else  
Instead of dancing halay with me?<sup>74</sup>

The same arguments can also be made regarding the hip-hop in Sulukule.

Sulukule rappers also stress their neighbor’s particularities. They reflect their realities in such a way that stigmatizations are a part of their reality. Members of

Tahribad-I Isyan say;

“Varoş” in the songs... We describe the things that the poor people in Sulukule cannot find a chance to express; the negativities they have experienced, the poverty in the most realistic state. “Sulukulelik” (being from Sulukule) is to feel belonged to there. It is very difficult for someone from outside to adapt and to socialize with us.<sup>75</sup>

Hence, on the one hand one can infer that rappers have an understanding of reality on Sulukule that is particular, on the other hand, this reality is not free from the stigmas with which Sulukule dwellers are labeled by non-Sulukule settlers. Thus, the reality of Sulukule in the eyes of rappers, does not reject stigmatizations but rather it changes the meanings of these stigmas and hence criticize social positions.

The same observation can also be made through the songs. For example, in *Snap*

*Shot* Asil says;

We don’t have babyfaces  
You don’t look and smile  
“Varoşluk” is the reality of our existence  
And you will turn around and go ...<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Kalbimin üzerine semt oturuşu yapıp  
İçimdeki ayanı çıkaran sen  
Benimle halay çekmek dururken  
Başkasıyla Tango neden?

<sup>75</sup> Şarkılardaki varoşluk, Sulukule’de yaşayan yoksul insanların dile getirme fırsatı bulamadığı şeyleri, yaşadıkları olumsuzlukları, yoksulluklarını en gerçekçi haliyle anlatıyoruz. Sulukulelilik, oraya ait hissetmektir. Dışarıdan birilerinin adapte olması ve bizimle kaynaşması çok zordur.

<sup>76</sup> Yok ki bebek yüzümüz  
Bakınca gülsün yüzünüz

Hence instead of rejecting that they are “varoş” they accept it as their reality. Similarly, they put forward that they are prejudiced as they are Romas and rappers who has socialized in Sulukule. For example, in *Ayrı bi Götsün* they say;

I grew up living in Sulukule and I am a Roma, yes  
This prejudice doubles as I am a rapper  
But neither I nor Zen-g or Veysi  
Give a damn and it renews our enthusiasm even more

They also establish a similarity between “varoş” identity and “ghetto”. In their song *Wonderland* they say;

“Abe” if they are ghettoes, we are “varoş” here.  
My words become an avalanche and I roll them from the slope  
We don’t expect anything from the money in your pocket  
Do not speak unnecessarily as long as you do not come and live here<sup>77</sup>

Hence, they regard all the stigmatizations as meaningless labels; yet they state that they gain power to struggle from them.<sup>78</sup> They put this forward in their song called *Ölene Kadar*;

Our fate is locked by locks and chains  
We are as angry as a homeless person in the streets  
You were angry with the kids to teach them life  
We are the children that mothers tell children not to play with<sup>79</sup>

In doing so, showing stigmatizations and problems in Sulukule, yet trying to gain power from them is very important. All in all, they see their culture as unique and regard external interventions such as urban renewal project as alienating, yet consolidating forces. In the *Wonderland* Zen-G says;

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Varoşluk bizim özümüz  
Dönüp arkamı gidiceen..

<sup>77</sup> Abe onlarda ghettoysa bizde burda varoşlar  
Sözlerim bi çığ olur ve yuvarlarım yokuştan  
Medet ummadikki zaten cebindeki kuruştan  
Gelip yaşamadığım sürece gereksizdir konuşman

<sup>78</sup> Gücümüzü zorluktan ve ötekileştirilmişlikten alıyoruz.

<sup>79</sup> Onlarca kilit vurulup zincirlendi bahtımız  
Bi evsizin sokaklarda yattığı kadar kırgınız  
Hayatı öğretmek için çocuklara kızdınız  
Biz annenin onalarla oynama dediği çocuklarınız

Because of Toki we say “where is this?”  
Yoo, where is our home you slavish dogs?  
Here, we had only “darbuka”  
Neighborhood cheers up everybody  
Sulukule is authentic to the mad  
I am sorry, but I can’t tell you to come<sup>80</sup>

In conclusion, I claim that the mechanisms of exclusion in Istanbul that people in Sulukule and Bağcılar face are functional in the existence of realities of those places. The subcultural values, resistance and critique in these districts are not only based on anger and grievances towards social, economic and political matters but also on disintegration within society. As I tried to show in this part, rappers do not see exclusion and discrimination that people in Sulukule and Bağcılar face as a source of decay or stigmatization but as reference point from which they can draw their own reality.

As I already explained in the previous sections, modern city is also exclusionary. In other words, while the city includes those who fit to the norms of the society and meet the expectations of the state and the market, those who fail to do so are excluded. What I argue here is that this exclusionary mechanism is functional in creating an oppositional culture in modern cities. By this I do not mean that exclusion in megacities is helpful for the existence or the conservation opposition. Instead I propose that as some people are not subjected to the assimilative forces of market and state, they can find the space and opportunity to adapt their own subculture and experiences.

In Sulukule and Bağcılar, the reality is exclusion, discrimination and poverty. The fact that people in Sulukule and Bağcılar are labeled as backward or defective is

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<sup>80</sup> Tokinin eseri burası neresi dememiz  
Lan adı köpekler nerede evimiz  
Burada iki darbuka sesine  
Mahalle neşe saçar herbiyere  
Sulukule özgün biyer deliye  
Üzgünüm ama size gel diyemem

due to that they are not fully integrated into the market and society where individuals are seen as equals in abstract terms regardless of their participation capacity. Hence, while some are regarded as “acceptable”, some groups of individuals are precluded. This in return creates a space to make their own reality for those who are discriminated in society and market as they are not able to play the consumer roles.

All in all, in the emergence of subcultures in Sulukule and Bağcılar, particularly hip-hop culture, the barrier between rappers and, market and society is functional. That some people are excluded because they do not meet the expectation of the state and market, first enabled them to escape from the assimilative forces of these two. Secondly, as those people are already disintegrated they found space in modern cities to create their own reality. I suggest that rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar create and portray a reality drawing on the exclusion and discrimination that they suffer. However, in the last part I will show that how the level of resistance and critique is decreased in Bağcılar hip-hop as it became much more integrated into the market.

## CHAPTER 6

### INTEGRATION INTO THE MARKET

Previously, I had mentioned, with references to different authors such as Lusane, that as rap music gets integrated into the market; the level of critical reflection and dissent declines. Briefly, the main reason why rap music becomes more moderate is that rappers start to see rap music from the perspective of marketing. In other words, as they get much more involved in the market logic, their art turns into a commodity which they regard as a way of increasing status by meeting the expectation of rational market and consumer society. Consequently, the realities and experiences of rappers get modified into the cultural representative products and consciousness and reason in hip-hop is eliminated by the cultural industry.

In this section, I will argue that unlike Sulukule hip-hop Bağcılar rap music, as it became much more market oriented, lost its characteristics of critique and resistance. First, I will show the reasons why Sulukule and Bağcılar rappers differ in terms of critique and resistance in integrating to the market. Then, I will make an attempt to show how Sulukule rappers tried to preserve their critical perspective although they became much more professional in terms of production and performance of art and how Bağcılar rappers replaced critique and dissent with the expectations of market.

In 2017, Tahribad-1 Isyan released their first and only album. They started to work with professional production companies and attended many professional music organizations. They found the chance of taking place in many concerts and TV programs. Some rappers from Bağcılar, especially Heijan, too became very famous in Turkish contemporary music. Their songs hit the records of clicks on YouTube

and became some of the most popular songs in clubs. Yet, how is it possible that while these two became much more famous in Turkey and liked by masses, while Sulukule rappers preserved their critical perspective, Bağcılar rappers became more moderate?

Now, I will try to give two answers to this question and elaborate them. The first and foremost difference between these two hip-hop cultures is the existence of social activism in Sulukule. While rap culture in Sulukule is blended with and empowered by external social activism, in Bağcılar there is not such a process. Secondly, the integration of these two rap cultures into the market is very different. While rappers from Sulukule try to use much more professional mediums to perform rap music, Bağcılar rappers mostly use social media to spread their music. Although one might expect Sulukule rappers to be much more bound with the imperatives of market due to professionalization, in fact Bağcılar rappers have adapted to the competitive market logic much more.

In her article, Schoon (2016) suggests that in Sulukule, the formation of resistance towards demolitions emerges both from global “right to the city” and Roma activism and local consciousness. For her, this is a case where various actors including global and local forces have taken place. Somersan and Schoroeder also claim that both international Roma activist groups and NGOs and local people and activists gave a hegemonic struggle against state (Somersan&Schoroeder, 2007) Similar arguments are also made by Yilmaz (2009) and Islam (2009). Indeed, all around the world there have been support for resistance in Sulukule. For example, very famous singer Manu Chao gave one of his concerts in France with a t-shirt that says “Sulukule will not keep quiet” (Manu Chao'dan Sulukule'ye destek, 2008). Similarly, Sezen Aksu, a very popular Turkish singer, showed her support by visiting

the district (Sezen Aksu'dan Sulukule'ye 'göbekli' destek, 2008). Kardeş Türküler, a famous band in Turkey, performed a duet with Tahribad-I Isyan and helped them to raise their voices (Kardeş Türküler'in 'Barış' Çılgılığı, 2014). In addition, an important German-Turkish rapper, Sultan Tunç who is also a sociologist made workshops in Sulukule for children to teach them rap music and gave some of them chances to be on the stage or release songs. Such events are not only important to sustain resistance and critique by supports, but also important in the formation of an understanding of art that always has the characteristics of rebellion. By both being supported and socialized with important artists, rappers in Sulukule attribute more the functions of critique and rebellion to their arts. However, it is not only support from artists but also from activists that accelerated resistance in Sulukule. As Yılmaz (2009) states there have been over 15 actors including international and local non-governmental organizations involved in Sulukule. The reason why there was such an intense activism was the grievances out of urban renewal project and the overlapping of urban politics and issues of ethnicity. Indeed, that there was such an event which concretizes the discrimination and exclusion in Sulukule and keep those alive in the minds of people is very influential in activism of both NGOs and rappers.

Involvement of external activists in Sulukule was especially important for the occurrence of culture of resistance in the district. As Cem Avcı says;

The urban transformation in 2006 was initiated by a decree. Against this situation, there was not much resistance from the Roman people. Because, they don't have any collective organization culture. Because, throughout history, they had to hide their identity. Resistance to the police and the state started with the establishment of the Sulukule Platform.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Buradaki kentsel dönüşüm 2006 çıkarılan bir kanun hükmünde kararname ile başlatıldı. Bu duruma karşı buradaki Roman halktan pek bir direniş hareketi çıkmadı. Çünkü onlarda kolektif örgütlenme kültürü yok. Çünkü tarih boyunca hep kimliklerini gizlemeleri gerekmiş. Polise ve devlete karşı direniş Sulukule Platformu'nun kurulmasıyla başladı.



Rappers also suggest that activism in Sulukule was important in their social and political consciousness formation. They say that thanks to their “brothers” and “sisters” who tried to socialize them through art, they developed an awareness of the situation and society that surround them. In addition, activists also tried to find spaces for them to perform their arts.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, V.Z. from Tahribad-I Isyan says the following on one of the activists in Sulukule and the founders of Sulukule

Children Art Workshop, Funda Oral:

She made us conscious when writing our words. We were children and we did not know what we were doing. She taught us what we did was, what rap is. We learned later that rap is a rebellion. The one in trouble the neighborhood started running to us. "They are firing their assistants in ITU", we were helping them. There was an earthquake in Van, we went there. We went to Suruc. We started to tell you everything on we could touch and see. Rap became our weapon. (Cinmen, 2017)<sup>83</sup>

As they are socialized in these kinds of places, they also attempt to create chances and spaces for younger generations. Tahribad-I Isyan conducts workshops for children and visits children prisons and detention houses. They explain why they do this as follows;

Broadly, we give education to 'children at risk'. For children who are stuck where they are, who think that the world is only their own neighborhood and those for whom there is no risk of being dragged into evil. We started these things first with the children in our neighborhood. Now we continue with refugees, Roma, Kurds and children with difficulties.<sup>84</sup>

Rappers from Teşkilat-I Isyan also state the same understanding. Ismail says;

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<sup>82</sup> Bizim Funda abla var. Bundan önce onun açmış olduğu bir atölye vardı, desteklerle. Bizim için, gerçekten bizim için olan. Çocuklar yıkımdan etkilendi, psikolojisi bozuldu ve bizim bunlara destek olmamız lazım şeklinde bir atölyeydi. Hepimizi oraya topladılar

<sup>83</sup> Sözlerimizi yazarken bizi bilinçlendirdi. Çocuk yaşlardaydık ve neyi, ne için yaptığımızı bilmiyorduk. Funda yaptığımız işin, rap'in ne olduğunu öğretti. Rap'in bir isyan dili olduğunu sonradan öğrendik. Mahallede derdi olan bize koşmaya başladı. “İTÜ”de asistanları atıyor” dediler, onlara yardımдық. Van’da deprem oldu, oraya gittik. Suruç’a gittik. Dokunabildiğimiz, haksızlık gördüğümüz her şeyi anlatmaya başladık. Rap bizim silahımız oldu.

<sup>84</sup> Eğitim verdiğimiz kitlenin geniş adı ‘risk altındaki çocuklar’. Olduğu yere sıkışmış, dünyayı sadece kendi mahallesinden ibaret sanan, yapacak hiçbir şey bulamayıp kötülüğe sürüklenme riski olan çocuklar için. Bu işlere ilk olarak mahallemizdeki çocuklarla başladık. Şimdi de mülteci, Roman, Kürt ve zorluk çeken çocuklarla devam ediyoruz.

Those who see us are enthusiastic, and they say “we will be like you”. We are helping them. Something like being transmitted from generation to generation. We have already learned rap music from Asil brothers.<sup>85</sup>

Hence, art for rappers in Sulukule is a way of creating awareness in youth and they believe that they can bring a change by rap music. That is why, they do not confine themselves to performing rap music but also they try to teach the components of hip-hop culture and thus create a political and social consciousness in youngsters in both Sulukule and other places. Therefore, for them rap music is not only a way of making money. In fact, they state that, in the cause of their ideals, they refuse the chances that they face. For example, they state that there is a great pressure of censorship. The manager of Tahribat-I Isyan says that because of the lyrics, although their clip is watched more than one million times, no TV channel tends to broadcast it. Even in live TV programs, they are subjected to censorship and some words in the songs are cut. Yet, although Sulukule rappers refuse to be censored they can find spaces to raise their voice. For them it is important to perform rap in any place because it is a medium of creating consciousness. They say;

Censorship is applied. We made every effort to say, without hesitation, what we wrote. Despite their censorship, we think that we convey what we want to say correctly. We should show our rebellion on such platforms, because we are trying to raise awareness in zombies that are bound to these platforms.<sup>86</sup>

They also state that despite having the chance of making much more money, they ideally prefer to perform in their own way which creates some difficulties as well. For example, Asil says; “Sometimes we are hungry to keep our standing. But we have had a lot of spiritual gains.” (Cinmen, 2017). Similarly, V.Z. says;

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<sup>85</sup> Bizi görenler heves ediyor, biz de sizin gibi olacağız diyorlar. Biz de onlara yardım ediyoruz. Nesilden nesile aktarılıyor gibi bir şey. Biz de Asil abilerden öğrenmiştik zaten.

<sup>86</sup> Sansür uygulandı. Biz yazdığımız her sözü çekinmeden söylemeye gayret ettik. Onların sansürlerine rağmen söylemek istediklerimizi kitlelere doğru bir şekilde aktardığımızı düşünüyoruz. İsyanımızı bu tür platformlarda göstermeliyiz, çünkü bu platforma bağlı kalmış zombilere farkındalık yaratmaya çalışıyoruz.

It is not easy. While our parents are working such as repairmen and waiting for us to support them, we turn our minds to the other side and focus on music. It's a bit disturbing to our conscience because we do not have such a luxury. (Cinmen, 2017)<sup>87</sup>

Zen-G also states that this dilemma is not only problematic in material terms but also disturbing for mental well-being. He says;

We've been having spiritual exhaustion lately. We started to take place in the environments on which we had not dreamed before. We had a chance to see the luxury lives Şebnem Ferah congratulates us suddenly! Şeyma Subaşı is dancing in front of us. I feel good, but once you get out of there and go back to Sulukule. You're entering the neighborhood at 2:00. On the corner, Osman Abi asks, "Do you have 1 lira?" An hour ago, where were you, an hour later where? ... The spirit is disturbing.<sup>88</sup>

All in all, Sulukule rappers do not behave in accordance with the rationale of the competitive market. Instead, they try to act morally and idealistically. However, I argue that Bağcılar rappers, unlike those in Sulukule adapt a more competitive logic and consequently in their art the level of critique and rebellion decreased.

Rappers in Bağcılar, almost always distribute their songs on social media, especially on YouTube. It is mainly because it is very fast and cheap and does not require any bureaucratic procedures. For those who do not have the chance to work in studios or reach record companies, it is a big advantage. In addition, there is no censorship that they are subjected to on YouTube. Most importantly, YouTube pays a certain amount of money according to the number of clicks that a video has. Hence, for rappers in Bağcılar, YouTube is perfect because they can say almost whatever they want, in a very easy and freeway. Furthermore, they get paid as their videos are

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<sup>87</sup> Kolay değil. Ailelerimiz tamircide falan çalışıp, onlara destek olmamızı beklerken biz kafamızı başka tarafa çevirip, müziğe odaklanıyoruz. Bu biraz vicdanımızı rahatsız ediyor çünkü aslında böyle bir lüksümüz yok.

<sup>88</sup> Son zamanlarda ruhani yıpranışlarımız oluyor. Daha önceden hayalini kuramadığımız ortamlara girmeye başladık. Lüks yaşamları görüp, bir yer edindik. Durduk yere Şebnem Ferah bizi tebrik ediyor! Şeyma Subaşı önümüzde dans ediyor. Kendimi iyi hissediyorum ama oradan çıkıp Sulukule'ye dönüyorsun. Gece 2'de mahalleye bir giriyorsun. Köşede Osman Abi, "1 liran var mı?" diye soruyor. Bir saat önce neredeydin, bir saat sonra neredesin... Ruhun dalgalanıyor tabii.

watched online. When this is the case, rappers tend to make and arrange their own songs and clips on their own. In addition, they need to reach as high number of clicks as possible since they make money in accordance with it. Consequently, there becomes a competition among rappers. So, in a sense, the logic of competitive market starts to rule. This is explained by rappers in Bağcılar as follows;

For example, I teach you a computer program, and you teach it to someone else. I teach him a rap, but he does not teach it to someone else. He wants to keep it to himself. He does not want you to improve.<sup>89</sup>

Dinçer states that producing a rap song requires certain knowledge of computer and programing. Hence, as a matter of capital, Bağcılar rappers do not wish to share their knowledge so that only they can produce songs and make money. This issue of computer program technology is also explained by Yakup. He says;

But we do not know how to do this, the program, we do not know anything. Nobody says anything. The man does not want to give us his secret. He's downloading his program; he does not show it to us. There is competition. I would not want to show it to other, too. There's a secret to this.<sup>90</sup>

Another important point in rapping in Bağcılar is to earn money by having high hit rates on YouTube. As YouTube pays certain amount of money to people who upload their videos on the website, young people in Bağcılar see this as a good opportunity of making money. For example, Yakup says;

For example, Dinçer says he earns a lot. He's making \$ 1,000 a month. But we do not do it that much. So, for example, would you earn a lot if you have a shop that you open every 6 months? We get 100 liras a month or something. We had a 6-7 million song and we got it for 2000 liras.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ben sana bir bilgisayar programı öğretirim, sen de başkasına öğretirsin. Ben adama bir rap öğretiyorum, o başkasına öğretmiyor Kendisine kalsın istiyor. İlerlesin istemiyor.

<sup>90</sup> Ama biz bunu nasıl yapacağız, programını bilmiyoruz, hiçbir şey bilmiyoruz. Kimse bir şey söylemiyor. Adam bunun sırrını bize vermek istemiyor. Programını indiriyor, bize göstermiyor. Rekabet var işte. Bana göstermek istemiyor, bana da gelip dese bana göster ben de göstermem. Bu işin bir sırrı var.

<sup>91</sup> Dinçer mesela çok kazanıyor dediğine göre. Ayda 1000 dolar kazanıyormuş. Ama biz o kadar yapmıyoruz. Yani Mesela senin bir dükkanın var 6 ayda bir açsan kazanır mısın? Bizim ayda 100 lira falan anca geliyor. 6-7 milyonluk bir şarkımız vardı ondan 2000 lira aldık.

Drawing on the idea of making money from YouTube, in the vision of rappers in Bağcılar there is a concept of “Çağatay Akman type of song”. Çağatay Akman is an 18-year-old rapper from Zeytinburnu who made a great success on YouTube with his song called *Gece Gölgenin Rahatına Bak*. He achieved over more than 200 million of views on YouTube with a single song and hence made a good profit. Rappers in Bağcılar too want to make a similar song that easily catches people and hence be listened a lot on the internet. For them, this is one of the easiest ways of getting rich. Accordingly, Yakup explains his objectives in rap as follows;

That's our goal now. Sezer has a project. It is a song similar to “Gece Gölgenin Rahatına Bak”. We will do it in an original studio, with the original camera. A catchy song, good sounding, attracting people. Like, when you are walking in the store the song catches you. We have that kind of a project.<sup>92</sup>

Dinçer also explains “Gece Gölgenin Rahatına Bak” style as follows;

Now there's something like this. The club style is more popular. Because we have something like this; we dance like hustle and bustle. We also have “indigestion”. Three months later we forget. For example, "Gece Gölgenin Rahatına Bak". Nobody remembers it after three months.<sup>93</sup>

Hence, for many rappers in Bağcılar as they see the opportunity of making money from YouTube, the function of rap music starts to evolve from raising a voice to improve their economic positions. That for young people in Bağcılar, one of the main objectives in life is to become rich is also observed by Yaman. In his study, he finds out that for most of the young people in Bağcılar material wellbeing is among the most desired conditions. He states that the common answer to the question of “What would you want to have in your life” is related to material goods such as cars

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<sup>92</sup> Şimdi amacımız o. Sezer'in bir projesi var. Hani böyle gece gölgenin rahatına bak tarzı bir şarkı. Orijinal stüdyo orijinal kamera ile yapacağız. Kulağa hoş gelen, insanı ister istemez çeken. Hani mağazada yürüyorsun ya kulağın takılıyor. O tarz bir projemiz var.

<sup>93</sup> Şimdi şöyle bir şey var. Klüp tarzı daha çok seviliyor. Çünkü bizde böyle bir şey var. Habadan habadan hop oynuyoruz. Biz de hazımsızlık var. Üç ay sonra unutuyoruz. Mesela “gece gölgenin rahatına bak”. Üç ay sonra kimse hatırlamaz.

and houses. Similarly, they see money as the condition of happiness. Hence, for them making easy money, getting rich immediately is very important (Yaman, 2013).

Along with the object of getting rich, lack of an environment through which a political culture which helps sustaining the critique in hip-hop is also influential on the loss of dissent in Bağcılar rap. Unlike Sulukule, there is no social and political activism regarding the young rappers in Bağcılar. Hence, unlike those in Sulukule young people in Bağcılar cannot start rapping or improve themselves and socialize through it. As I demonstrated above, the music production in Bağcılar becomes a matter of monopoly as it requires certain level of technological know-how, thus newcomers are seen as challengers. In addition, as there is no activism coming out of the district like in Sulukule, young people in Bağcılar cannot socialize within a critical discourse and political culture other than their owns.

As the function of rap changes, the styles and the content of rap music in Bağcılar also changes. Rappers try to produce songs that can attract more listeners. Hence instead of treating issues that reflect their own particularities or realities, they prefer to produce more entertainment. For example, when I ask Furkan and Burak, young rappers from Bağcılar, whether there is a change in songs after making money out of song production they say;

Brother, it changed. They were telling Bağcılar before. It's now wider. The words he uses also change, man. New Year's Eve or something. I mean, it's not anymore "This is Bağcılar welcome to hell". It is Ortakoy or Beşiktaş. Now, for example, Taksim, Ortaköy, he is trying to open. I think he's trying to get popular and he became famous. I do not think Bağcılar is right, now. He opened himself.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Abi değişti. Daha önce Bağcıları anlatıyorlardı. Şimdi daha geniş. Kullandığı sözcükler de değişiyor abi. Yılbaşı tuttun mu başı falan. Daha Bağcılar olmuyor yani. Burası Bağcılar welcome to cehennem olmuyor yani. Ortaköy Beşiktaş. Şimdi mesela Taksim, Ortaköy açılmaya çalışıyor yani. Nam salmaya çalışıyor bence yani ve o namı da bence saldı. Şu an Bağcılar dese bence tutulmaz. Açtı kendini.

They did not only start to write about issues external to Bağcılar, but also start to focus more on entertaining songs. One way of doing this is to use popular topics, generally spread on the internet, or to refer to popular people. It can be observed that rappers in Bağcılar started to make videos of not only their songs but parodies of famous topics and people which they believe that they can go viral. For example, Hejjan and his friends made a video that imitates one of the most popular TV series at the time called “İçerde” (Müge Nazlıcan, 2017). Similarly, when he showed me their videos, Dinçer also stated that they try to make references to famous people, including Nusret who became much known in all around the world as “Saltbae” with his move of spilling salt.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, as Dinçer states, Bağcılar rappers try to come to the fore by “dissing” other people. Diss is the slang version of disrespect and rappers use it to insult, make fun of or criticize other rappers. Dinçer says they diss to Ceza, who is the most famous rapper in Turkey because he took a role in an advertisement. He says;

Ceza sold himself to Didi (Icetea brand). What did we do to Didi? We made an advertisement. We gave it to Didi, by saying "You are talking to the Ceza" they did not want it. We have dissed Ceza. Ceza did not leave Çaykur (The company that Ceza advertises). He is not the man of Didi. He is a rapper. Stupidly, he is playing in the commercial. (He shows the ad.) We made diss to him for that stupid ad. What we said; “Didi Naber, I was fine.” Now we will troll it. We will have a place at the grocery store and talk to the Didi. We will put it on YouTube. Didi will ask for it from us, but we will not give it. We'll troll the ad.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ya Bak ben burada Nusret'e bile gönderme yapıyorum. (Tuz dökme hareketini yapıyor.)

<sup>96</sup> Ceza kendini sattı. Kime sattı Didi'ye sattı. Biz ne yaptık Didi'ye? Reklam yaptık.(Şarkı açıyor) Biz bunu Didi'ye verdik “Ceza'ya laf atıyorsunuz” diye istemediler. Biz Ceza'ya diss attık. Ceza Çaykur'u bırakıp gitmedi. Ceza Didi'nin adamı değil ki. Rapçi. Salak salak çıkıp reklamda oynuyor. (Reklamı açıyor.) Şu salakça reklam için biz ona diss attık. Biz ne dedik; Didi naber, didim iyidir. Şimdi biz bunu trolleyeceğiz. Bakkalda bir yer kuracağız, açacak didiyle konuşacak. Youtube'a koyacağız. Didi bunu bizden isteyecek ama vermeyeceğiz. Reklamı trolleyeceğiz.

On the one hand, Dinçer seems to be criticizing Ceza as a rapper because he believes that rappers should not take place in such settings. On the other hand, by taking advantage of Ceza being in the advertisement, Dinçer and rappers whom he works with find an opportunity to increase their popularity. They believe that by dissing to Ceza, they will have more attention on YouTube.

In fact, it is also interesting to see that rappers who criticize Ceza since he plays in the commercial, want to take place in advertisements. When I asked Dinçer if he would play like Ceza he said;

I would play, of course. But they did not agree at first. Now, I would not. We were going to diss with Ceza. Now, Lipton did it for example. There's one blind guy, playing in the movie (Referring to Hayko Cepkin- a very famous rock singer in Turkey). We will troll him too. In this country, it is psycho, that is to say, trolling people is very famous. I'm going to put it on YouTube as Didi's new ad. It will be trend immediately.<sup>97</sup>

Similarly, when I ask him if he would make songs for advertisements, he said;

Of course. I do it already. I've made a lot of commercials, movies. I have made that of Cem Yılmaz. We also trolled him. We did the same to Fatih Ürek, we did it to Lipton. To these disses, answers are also coming. Usually we are trolling. We are a music troll. The goal is totally trolling.<sup>98</sup>

As making money through internet by rapping becomes central to Bağcılar rap, the changes in the content and the function of rap music gets very obvious. Yakup explains this very well;

We write what is on the agenda then. We were joking with girls with mustaches, for example. Whatever you write on it, you will be so effective. Trolling a person, catching his weakness... Heijan, for example, is now making long videos. He's having fun or

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<sup>97</sup> Oynardım tabii. Ama başta kabul etmediler. Şimdi isteseler de oynamam. Biz Ceza ile kapışacaktık. Şimdi Lipton yaptı. Var ya bir tane kör, oynuyor filmde. Biz onu da trolleyeceğiz. Bu ülkede psycho, yani insanların trollenmesi çok meşhur. Ben atacağım bunu Didi'nin yeni reklamı diye youtube'a koyacağım. Trend olacak hemen.

<sup>98</sup> Yaparım tabii. Yapıyorum zaten. Reklam, film yaptım bir sürü. Cem Yılmaz'ın haydi gidelimi var ya. Onu da yaptık trol. Aynısını Fatih Ürek'e yaptık, Lipton'a yaptık. Bu dissilere cevap da geliyor. Genelde biz trollüyoruz. Müziği trollüyoruz. Amaç tamamen trol.



something. Putting ads together, he makes more money. Our previous mindset was not making money. We were doing it as a hobby. Now we want to make money, too. Our present aim is to open a studio and make money by making songs and also do them for other people. Our songs will be long. So we have a lot of plans. Now he is not like his old times. You cannot write your love now, is there love anymore?<sup>99</sup>

Another important technique that Bağcılar rappers use is amateurship. They believe that people at large tend to like works that are done in an amateur way as they find them sincerer. Dinçer says;

We are small producers. For example, I cannot compete with a guy in Unkapanı- the famous market of CD producers. But he cannot compete with me, either. Because, being professional ends amateurship. They want amateurism. For instance, I will give you an example from Koray Avcı- a famous singer in Turkey who became popular through internet. He was watched very much on his first release. Now 2 million to 3 million. Other songs are 20 million to 30 million. Amateurs are also sincerer. Professionalism remains at the back when you take part in something official. Sometimes people want people like they are.<sup>100</sup>

He also gives another example:

For example, "Eypio". For example, there were a lot who listened very much to him in universities. He later became a professional. Then, when they go a step back, they fall to the ground. Of course it is better to be semi-professional instead.<sup>101</sup>

As the entertainment aspect of music increases in Bağcılar rap, the level of critique and dissent in the discourse of Bağcılar rap decreases. I want to elaborate it by comparing two songs. I had mentioned that *Türk Kürt Karderştir* is the most

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<sup>99</sup> O zaman gündemde ne varsa onu yazıyoruz. Bıyıklı kızlarla falan dalga geçiyorduk. Ne varsa onun üstüne yazarsan o kadar Etkili olursun. İşte bir insan trollemek, onun açığını yakalamak. Mesela Heijan da artık raptent ziyade uzun videolar yapıyor. Komiklik falan yapıyor. Video uzatıyor araya reklam koyulur daha güzel para kazanıyor. Bizim önceki zihniyetiniz para kazanmak değildi. Hobi için yapıyorduk. Şimdi biz de para kazanmak için yapmak istiyoruz. Şimdiki amacımız bir stüdyo açıp hem şarkı yapıp hem de insanlara yaparak para kazanmak. Şarkılarımız uzun olacak. Çok planlarımız var yani. Şimdi eskisi gibi değil. Aşkını yazardın şimdi yazamazsın, artık aşk mı kaldı?

<sup>100</sup> Ufak kesimiz biz. Ben mesela şu anda Unkapanı'nda bir adamla yarışmam. Ama o da benimle yarışamaz. Çünkü profesyonel olmak amatörlüğü bitirir. Amatörlük istiyorlar. Mesela Koray Avcı'dan sana örnek vereyim. İlk çıktığında çok çok izleniyordu. Şimdi 2 milyon-3 milyon. Diğer şarkılar 20 milyon-30 milyon. Amatörde daha samimi. Bir şeye resmiyet katıldığı zaman profesyonellik geriplanda kalır. Bazen insanlar İnsanları olduğu gibi isterler.

<sup>101</sup> Mesela "Eypio". Üniversitede bunu çok dinleyen insan vardı mesela. Sonradan profesyonelleşti. Sonra bir adım geri gitti mi tap diye düşüyorlar. Tabii ki bunu yerine yarı profesyonel olsalar daha iyi.

politically critical song. In his song Heijan and Cash Ömer explained how Kurdish people are discriminated by using Kurdish words and putting an emphasis on Kurdistan. In the clip, there were pictures of Kurdish people resisting to police forces and Kurdistan flags. However, in a later song called *Tek Türkiye*, Cash Ömer and Mavzer say;

I am son of a Kurd, I do not distinguish my friend  
Let him be Turk or Laz or Circassian  
The color of the flag comes from and only goes with the blood  
Of course those who want to divide us is the “united nations”<sup>102</sup>

In this song, one can see that it is argued that the society is artificially divided along with ethnicities and the reason why people are divided is because external forces, that is to say, foreign states. Through this discourse, not only discrimination that Kurdish people face in Turkey is hidden, but also the structural factors which create discrimination and poverty are also rendered invisible. Similarly, in another part of the song one can see that there is a strong emphasis on the unity of society and any social division in metropolitan Turkey is secondary and artificial;

One body and one wrist, one color in the same vein  
Whoever stands against us, one day we will surely pour his blood.  
My way is the Right way and your way is the way of shit  
In this metropolis there are those who make Turks and Kurds killing each other  
There are people who effervesce and burn things  
Do not forget that there is God asking for account.<sup>103</sup>

The same observation can also be made in the songs of Sezer and Yakup. I showed that in their song called *Kobane Katliamı* Sezer and Yakup tried to pay attention to the massacre attempt by Isis towards Kurdish people in the area and

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<sup>102</sup> Ben bi kürdün oğluyum ayırd etmem dostumu  
Türk olsun laz çerkez veya zaza farketmez  
Bayrağın rengi kanla geldi ancak kanla gider  
Bölmek isteyenler tabi ki birleşmiş milletler

<sup>103</sup> Tek vucut ve tek bilek aynı damarda tek bi renk  
Karşımız da kim varsa bir gün elbet kanı dökülecek  
Benim davam hak yolu ve senin davan bok yolu  
Bu metropolde kürdü türke türkü kürde vurdan  
Bi lafla galyana gelip ortalığı yakan insan var  
Unutmasın ki yukarda hesabı soran Allah var

argued that the Turkish state and society did not have any initiative on the issue. Yet, later on, they made another song called *Ölürüm Türkiyem* by using Justice and Development Party's election campaign song named *Dombıra*. In this song, they show their admiration to Turkish culture by referring to Middle Asian traditions and myths (KuPsi & Sezer Music, 2017). Yakup explains the change in their songs as follows;

(For Kobane song) Yes, we did. There was something in the neighborhood. Sezer said let's do, I said okay. Sezer's previous habits were so different. In Turkey we do not divide people. We write anything about our people. We do not have anything like our side, your side or left or right side. We have not been really laying emphasis on these kinds of issues for two and a half.<sup>104</sup>

Accordingly, it can be observed that rappers from Bağcılar started to make songs in which Turkish nationalist themes and sentiments take place. For example, Heijan and Mustafa Ak made a song for Turkish National Football team that will join 2016 European Cup. Similarly, Dinçer states that they make the soundtracks of a TV series called "Söz" that is about Turkish Special Forces who struggle against terrorists.<sup>105</sup>

Drawing on all the examples that I gave either from interviews or from lyrics, I argue that the integration into the market rationale resulted in the loss of dissent and critique in Bağcılar rap music. Previously, I mentioned that for Benjamin (2008), the mechanization of the production of a work of art was revolutionary in that it resulted in the lack of "authentic" aura in the works of art. He takes authenticity in a work of art as an effect of a work of art being uniquely present in a particular time and space and he argues that as this is lost with the advent of the technology of reproduction,

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<sup>104</sup> Evet yaptık öyle mahallede çok şey olmuştu. Sezer yapalım dedi. Ben de tamam dedim. Yani Sezer'in önceki huyları çok değişik. Şimdi Türkiye'de biz o bu şu ayırmayız. Bizim halkımız ile ilgili ne olay olursa yazarız. Bizim sağ taraf sol taraf gibi bir şeyimiz yok. Son bir buçuk iki senedir pek üzerinde durmuyoruz.

<sup>105</sup> "Söz" dizisine yaptık mesela, aranje yaptık. Söz dizisi bu yeni çıktı biliyorsunuzdur. Gerilim müziklerini biz yaptık

“authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice; politics.” (Benjamin, 2008: 224) Benjamin explains the transition of the work of art in its single existence, such as a statuette, to reproducible forms, such as movies, thanks to technological advancements. For him, what is important is the replacement of ritual by politics. It is in fact due to the loss of aura of a work of art which gives it a certain authority. As this aura is lost, art starts to function politically. He suggests that if the work of art can escape from the manipulation of the state, it can lead to freedom since it becomes able to transmit messages to wider audiences. In that sense, the politics takes the shape of aesthetics in an emancipatory way. Bürger (2011) claims that as the middle and lower classes got involved in the production of art the monopoly of the bourgeoisie over art was broken. In this sense, the avangardist movements which facilitated the involvement of lower classes in the production of art are quite important. However, their sole importance is not to break the monopoly of the higher classes but also to bring a critical perspective to art. In this sense, he sees avangardist art as a peculiar historical phenomenon distinct from the history of art due to its oppositional characteristic. In conclusion, from the views of these two thinkers, massively production of art and involvement of lower classes in the production of art may result in oppositional characteristics in the work of art. In other words, a more democratic production of art brings about a sense of critique to the nature of art.

Yet, I also claim that in addition to the mass production of a work of art, its being sellable and buyable in the market prescribes artists to be apolitical. Adorno also criticizes the mass production of work of art. For him, popular music is a commodity that is produced by the culture industry. Thus, music is a production in a

top-down and standardized process. That music is standardized eliminates politics from its essence.

In Bağcılar rap music too, one can observe such a process. Young people in Bağcılar started to produce their own music in their own studios. This is similar to the processes that Benjamin and Bürger talk about in some senses. As Bağcılar rappers can produce songs drawing on already existing, famous songs and can distribute these songs online rapidly and freely the massive production of art can be said to take place. In addition, as the requirements of such a process is dramatically low even with people with low economic, cultural and social capitals can produce such songs.

For rappers in Bağcılar, rap music is easy to produce and spread. They can make songs drawing on already existing back sounds. Dinçer explains this as follows;

Now look at the song “Gece Gölgenin Rahatına Bak”, it is stolen. Stolen from a Greek song. You cannot do it without stealing. There is my song, for example, stolen from fifty cents. (He plays the song) I changed the back sound a bit. Look at the melody, it is not exactly the same. Sample is not going well. The reason I do this is copyright. So that they cannot claim copyright.<sup>106</sup>

Hence, technology creates a space for those who cannot find an opportunity to raise a voice. Even with a tiny knowledge of computer and minimal capital, it is possible to make rap songs. That everybody can participate in artistic production like Bürger claimed, results in the use of art for emancipating the lower classes like Benjamin argued. In that way, many people who normally would not express themselves through art can actually do so. In other words, they can produce and reflect their political and social realities.

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<sup>106</sup> Şimdi gece gölgenin rahatına bak şarkısı çalıntı. Yunan şarkısından çalıntı. Çalmadan yapamazsın. Benim şarkım var mesela., 50 Centden çalıntı. (Şarkı açıyor) Değiştirdim altyapısını. Melodi tamamen birebir aynı değil bak. Sample uyumuyor. Bunu yapmamın sebebi telif hakkıdır. Teliften bize çıkmagysınlar diye.

On the other hand, as art becomes massively consumed and people make money from it, in Bağcılar case thanks to YouTube, the market rationale commences to be established. This rationality demands profit maximization. For Bağcılar rappers, this is through making as much views as possible on YouTube and they prefer to do so either by using apolitical concepts so that they can attract more people by focusing on entertainment or by using their reality as a market product by cleansing it from the politics.



## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

Rap music, throughout its history, has always been associated with politics. In Turkey too, there are cases within which rap music is instrumentalized in showing dissent and resistance to social and economic inequality, discrimination and exclusion. In Istanbul's two stigmatized and poor neighborhoods; Sulukule and Bağcılar, young artists use rap music as a way of showing dissent and critique.

In a city like Istanbul which falls under the influences of globalism and neoliberalism, social and economic exclusion stemming from structural economic factors as well as social dynamics within city takes place. It is a city where class and ethnic based discriminations overlap and already existing discriminations and subordinations are deepened by the hands of state and market. While in Sulukule, underclass Romas are excluded and discriminated due to their identity, the urban renewal project contributed to their vulnerabilities. In Bağcılar, Kurdish people who lack education and constitute the labor force of the lower branches of service sector are excluded on the basis of ethnicity and class. This is accompanied by the discursive exclusion on the basis of stigmatization for drug addiction or crime.

In this context, rap music became an important tool for raising a voice and showing dissent for young people. Rappers in Bağcılar and Sulukule through rap music find a space to express themselves against discriminations by the society on the basis of class and ethnicity. In parallel to the earlier discussions on rap music and its relation to resistance, what one observes in these two districts represent cases wherein rap music functions in such a way to express a state of deprivation and exclusion. As scholars such as Stevens (2009) and Sullivan (2003) argued, the

emergence of rap music in 1970s was a result of marginalization of black identity and urban working class, Sulukule and Bağcılar cases too show us how marginalized urban poor and ethnically excluded underclasses show their dissent and critique through hip-hop. This can also be evaluated as what Dyson defines the music that is created by such artists “as a social critique” (2010). Yet, in this study I also showed that rappers from Sulukule and Bağcılar do not only “speak from the margin” but also try to distort the hierarchies between the center and margin. In other words, by giving new meanings to the stigmas with which they are labeled and drawing a moral line between upper and lower classes, they make an attempt to break the hierarchical relation between different societal groups.

It should be highlighted that rappers do not confine themselves to express their experiences but they also critically examine their own realities. In other words, young artists in these two neighborhoods reveal the contextual situation and conditions as well. They explain everyday life practices in their districts and try to explore problematic aspects of those practices. Thus; as Librado (2010) suggests on the one hand, rappers actively raise a voice and critique via music and on the other hand, they reflectively interpret the context in which they perform their art.

Critique and resistance through rap music brings about another important debate that is aestheticization of resistance. As it has already been shown in the literature and I have tried to show in this thesis, the language of rappers is very harsh and the level of critique in the songs is high. The fact that the critiques regarding very hot social and political matters are raised so explicitly by rappers is thanks to the nature of rap music. On the one hand, historically the very first function of rap music is criticism and resistance. On the other hand, resistance and critique, when executed in such an artistic way, become more visible and tolerable. In this sense, the



relation between politics and art in general, rap music in particular become much more meaningful, as new forms of resistance can take place. Among these forms of resistance, there is not only rapping but also the production of space through hip-hop is important. Along with criticisms raised by songs, the relation that rappers establish between themselves, hip-hop and space is meaningful. Because the cases studied in this thesis are also locally and spatially embedded, a reading of resistance through space must also be made. Beyond talking about local issues or reflecting local problems, rappers create a certain belonging to the space and hence an identity but also produce a new publicity embedded in a specific space. In other words, for rappers their neighborhoods are not only the space wherein they rap. Neither are they only places whose problems are expressed in the songs. But rather, these are the spaces within which all attributes to the marginalities are re-defined and the signifiers are filled with new meanings within a new discourse. In that way, while those neighborhoods were identified with ghettos where rap music emerged out of exclusion, poverty and exclusion, stigmas which label rappers' neighborhoods also are changed and thus an overall social hierarchy is tried to be disturbed. Therefore, all the graffiti, tags, dance and music activities as well as new meanings attributed to these specific neighborhoods serve not only to create a particular space identity, but also create a political culture and hence a broader level of critique and resistance. In this sense, in line with Lefebvre's (2009) understanding of space that is a constructed phenomenon which produces and reproduces social relations, rappers greater demand for social justice can be read through their relations with space. For rappers, space is important as it provides the means of rapping and resistance. However, it is also important because space has been produced in the processes of social exclusion, physical disintegration, poverty, urban renewal and gentrification.

Thus, resistance through rap music in such a space is also directed at the social, economic and political issues create those problems. In this regard, rap music in these neighborhoods can be viewed a demand to the “right to the city” (Lefebvre, 1996; Harvey, 2008).

The place of rap music in the debate on local and general is not only to the extent that it covers only the content or the objection of the art. It also entails the role of capitalism and globalization. Rappers in both Sulukule and Bağcılar make use of the advantages provided by the nature of rap music and technology in the age of capitalism. Rap music as a western origin, global genre is instrumentalized in such a way that a global genre becomes the form through which local subjects socialize, local identities are articulated to some extent and local issues are treated. Hence, what is local is represented through and as a universal form. This is what has already been observed by different scholars such as Bennett (2000) and Kaya (2002). As they frame it, glocalization refers to the form of cultural production in which both global and local content and phenomenon are treated. In other words, within the discussion that whether popular culture, market and capitalism make art monotonous or local cultures create new meanings by appropriating cultural products to their local contexts, our cases reveal that it is not a matter of homogenization or heterogenization but rather intertwining of local and global.

Paradoxically, the state of deprivation and exclusion in that rappers stand which is facilitated by globalism also create the space within which the culture of opposition and resistance occurs. In other words, the processes of alienation and stigmatization accelerated by the neoliberal policies have the potentiality of giving birth to local flashes of identity articulation and forms of resistance, one of which is rap music.

In a similar vein, rap music as a product in the age of globalism becomes the voices of suppressed to a wider audience thanks to the communication technologies. Rappers in Sulukule and Bağcılar produce their songs easily and cheaply, without need for professional support and spread their songs on social media. Therefore, in a sense, the victims of globalism and capitalism find a way to show dissent and rebel thanks to the provisions of globalism.

However, as the rappers in both neighborhoods get integrated into market relations, different trajectories in terms of opposition and critique started to emerge. In the literature, it is already argued that rap music as integrated into the market solidified in terms of resistance and critique. This is explained through the transition from conscious rap to gangsta rap. This does not only explain the change in the content of the songs and hence a transition from resistance to entertainment, but also the reproduction of white supremacy and already existing hierarchical structures in the society. In our cases, two different paths have been observed. While Sulukule rappers remained critical, Bağcılar rappers adopted a more entertaining genre throughout time.

Despite the fact that Sulukule rappers followed a more professional path as they released their album and organized concerts in different corners of Turkey, their level of criticism remained high in comparison to that of rappers in Bağcılar. While rappers in Bağcılar continued to release their songs on social media which is claimed to be more independent sphere, they commenced to produce more moderate and apolitical songs. There are mainly three reasons for why this is the case. First is the existence of a concrete problem in Sulukule, which is the urban regeneration. The demolition of the houses ensured the grievances of the settlers in the neighborhood strong enough. Secondly, Roma and city activists in Sulukule tried to

create a political culture within which young rappers preserve their oppositional art. Lastly, in Bağcılar, as rap music was seen as a way of escaping from Bağcılar by making money on social media, the logic of competitiveness overwhelmed the critical characteristics of rap music.

Decline in critique in rap music and the replacement of resistance by entertainment have already been underlined in the literature on the relation between market, popular culture and music. However, the transformative effect of social media, especially Youtube has also been highlighted in this study. Although the internet seems to be a sphere that promotes freedom, it actually results in the decline in critique because the desire to make money from Youtube creates a competitive logic which prioritizes entertainment to resistance or critique in rap music. One of the most important evidences of this phenomenon is that many songs which can be labeled as critical or political by rappers were deleted from Youtube. For example, by the time this thesis is finished, almost all of the older songs of famous rapper from Bağcılar, Heijan, were no longer available on Youtube. Yet, it is worth to state that as Heijan was once taken into custody due to the claim that his songs were encouraging people to use drugs. Very recently, the same also happened another famous rapper, Ezhel. So, in further studies the state interference in rap music should definitely be taken into account as to account for the limits of resistance.

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