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Cultural Dynamics 1998; 10; 243 
DOI: 10.1177/092137409801000301 

The online version of this article can be found at: 
http://cdy.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/10/3/243
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POPULAR CULTURE, MARGINALITY AND INSTITUTIONAL INCORPORATION

German–Turkish Rap and Turkish Pop in Berlin

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ABSTRACT

In the scholarly and public debates, rap is celebrated and valorized as the creative and ‘hybridized’ music of minority youth which empowers those on the margins by providing new spaces of identification. This paper aims to disentangle the cultural politics of German–Turkish rap/hip-hop in Berlin and challenges the oppositional and marginal qualities attributed to German–Turkish rap/hip-hop. It argues that depending on the institutions and the structures rap is incorporated into, it might very well move to the ‘center’ and contribute to the further commodification and reification of ‘cultural differences’. The analysis of the institutional framework and the structures that mediated rap to German–Turkish youth illustrates that state-sponsored institutions were actively involved in the popularization of rap among German–Turks and the traces of this institutional relationship are clearly visible both in the discursive field of German–Turkish rap and in the self-images of German–Turkish rappers.

Key Words ♦ diaspora ♦ German–Turks ♦ popular culture ♦ rap/hip-hop ♦ youth culture

Introduction

In Germany, since the early 1990s there has been a valorization of the popular culture of immigrant youth both in public and scholarly debates. This celebration is particularly centered around the rap or hip-hop groups of German-Turkish youngsters.¹ Their forms of cultural expression which are identified as 'hybrid' or 'creolized' (meaning that their elements are consciously selected, syncretized and elaborated from more than one heritage) receive considerable attention in media as well as in the scholarly discourses on German-Turkish youth. These new forms of cultural expression come to the forefront of the discourses of migrancy, diaspora and marginality as sites of identification and negotiation of ethnicity for minority youth (Sharma, 1996). Seen as the political expression of those on the margins of the power structures, rap is hastily celebrated as the new, emancipatory and creative form of expression of the minorities—Black Americans in the USA and of immigrant youth in Europe.

Not only rap or hip-hop, but banghra of British Pakistanis in the United Kingdom and rai of French North Africans in France are framed in a similar fashion. In the public and scholarly debates, these music forms—which draw on and mix melodies and instruments from different sources—and the identities constructed around these cross-overs are valorized as the new spaces in which minority youth renarrates itself and as new arenas which empower the marginalized (ethnic) minorities.

In these valorized discourses of minority popular culture, there is a considerable emphasis on immigrant youth style and most often popular music is taken as a key ethnic and style marker. However, these 'creative' forms are presented as if they were 'the authentic' expression of the second- and third-generation immigrant youth. Furthermore, they are viewed as the outcome of a relatively spontaneous process developed in immigrants' encounters and interactions with globalized images and music forms.

It is true that mass media, modern technology and the entertainment industries play an important role in the formation of the styles of ethnic minority youth. There is no doubt that the transnationalized images and sounds transmitted through MTV, for example, are important sources of information and inspiration in the formation of immigrant youth styles. However, immigrant youth's encounters with such images and sounds take place within a context. In this sense they are always mediated encounters. The institutional framework, structures and the agencies of this mediation set the boundaries, conditions and the categories of the hybridized cultural forms that result. If the institutional frame of this mediation and its agents are not taken into consideration, it is misleading to celebrate and valorize these forms as empowering for the minority youth.

The impact of the agencies and the structures of mediation on hybridized immigrant youth cultures are rather neglected in the literature.
on immigrant youth. Without the context of encounter and the agents of mediation it is not possible, for example, to explain why rap or hip-hop developed and became popular among German–Turkish youngsters (namely in the 1990s, although rap was definitely transnationalized in the 1980s) and why it is anchored within a particular discourse. This paper aims to disentangle the cultural politics of German–Turkish hip-hop in Germany and particularly in Berlin. In order to depict the impact of the structures of mediation of hip-hop on the internal character of its discourses, German–Turkish hip-hop or rap will be contextualized within the institutional networks and structures in which it is incorporated. The role of the state-sponsored institutions in the refashioning of immigrant youth cultural forms and expression of identity will be analysed. First the relationship between rap and pop, and rap and marginality, will be explored. Then the focus will be on the institutions and a variety of local government practices that had an impact on the development of Turkish rap in Germany. After looking at the impact of the success of Cartel (the famous German–Turkish rap group) on German–Turkish rap I will concentrate on the formation of new public spaces for German–Turks in Berlin and the interplay of rap and Turkish pop in the creation of such places.

**Hip-Hop and the Image of German–Turkish Youth**

There is no doubt that an emphasis on the popular culture of immigrant youth was long overdue in the studies of immigrants, particularly in Europe. This new area of research covers issues which were not dealt with in the mainstream research on immigrants and minorities. Thus a focus on the popular cultures of immigrants broadens and enriches the immigrant and/or diaspora studies in a very positive way.

In the context of the discussions of immigrant youth in Germany, the valorization of hip-hop as their creative and self-assertive form of communication influences the way German–Turkish youth are portrayed in German society. German–Turks’ liminal and marginal state of being, which has been pathologized as ‘being torn between two cultures’ for a long time in the discussions of their cultural and identity formations, is now formulated with concepts like ‘hybridity’, ‘cross-over’, and most importantly is endowed with creativity and empowerment. This definitely shifts the narrow frame of the culturalist and essentialist questions of belonging and identity (which dominated the research on German–Turks for a long time) to a broader frame of multiple, fluid identities and creolized cultures. Within this context, the immigrant youth who have been victimized in the discourses of the so-called ‘lost generation’ of the migration process take on a different character. They are now represented as the successful and creative second- and third-generation German–Turks who are making the best of the multiple sources that shape their sensibilities and identities.
This shift can easily be followed in the media coverage of German-Turkish youngsters. Although German-Turks are still stigmatized in the media (see Der Spiegel, 1997, for a recent example)—as the victims of the failed integration or multiculturalism and of culture conflict—some success stories of German-Turks find their way into the media. German-Turkish rappers, their creativity and popularity in this new music form, are included in these success stories. In media and public debates they have a place in the category of ‘unexpected success’ stories of German-Turkish youngsters.\(^3\) In fact the media coverage of Turkish-German rappers is striking. Several interviews with these rappers appeared in prominent journals, weeklies and newspapers. Different TV broadcasters showed programs on them and interviewed them. Interestingly, other than Cartel, all these German-Turkish rappers found their way into media even before releasing their first CDs!

The designation of hip-hop or rap as the critical, rebellious but also as the creative voice of those on the periphery influences the way German-Turkish rappers are portrayed in the scholarly discourses. Those who used to be referred to as a problem group with a severe identity crisis are now the ‘organic intellectuals’ and/or ‘story tellers’ of the diasporic youth (Kaya, 1997: 2) who represent the voice of the street (of the ‘ghetto’) and of the discriminated against. However, such approaches to hip-hop assume that there is an a priori opposition between the ‘ghetto’ (the periphery’) and ‘center’ and thus attribute to rap a necessarily oppositional character. In fact, there is no intrinsic reason why rap has to be oppositional. This potential of rap can only be clarified by the context.

Rap provides new sites of identification for German-Turkish youngsters and consequently has the potential to empower them. German-Turkish youth have acquired a new visibility in the public domain and in the media. However, there is no unbound empowerment, and in order to understand the nature and limits of this empowerment and the dynamics of the identities construed around this form of popular culture, we need to contextualize German-Turkish rap in relation to the other forms of popular culture and the discourses on these forms locally (in Germany) and globally. The very categories by means of which they acquire presence in the public domain might also disempower them at the same time.

\textit{Rap and Pop}

‘Rap is a rebellion music whereas pop is commercial.’ This is how a German-Turkish rapper in Berlin formulated the difference between rap and pop. In fact he is not alone in juxtaposing rap and pop. Ironically, pop which became a symbol of youth, emancipation, progress and subversion in the 1960s serves as the opposing pole which represents the mainstream and
the ‘center’ in the positioning of rap or hip-hop in the field of popular culture today. Most of the German–Turks who are involved in rap (as a rapper, producer or as a fan) situate rap against pop music and distance themselves from the latter at least in the rhetoric.

In this opposition between pop and rap, the differences are drawn on the basis of content, rhythm and commerciality. In contrast to rap, pop is claimed to be repetitive, obedient and mainstream in terms of rhythm. Moreover pop music, with its lyrics dealing with love, passive romance and nature, is seen not to fit into the lifestyle, concerns and sentiments of minorities. As Aziza A., the most prominent female German–Turkish rapper, puts it

"I use Hip-Hop to express myself. I tell about myself, about the state of things, situations, about my views ... Pop, love, etc. They are not that important to me. I listen to pop, I enjoy myself with pop. I dance to it. But Hip-Hop, that goes deep down into me. I feel it. It's about me."\(^4\)

Indeed the social protest content of hip-hop in contrast to pop (which is believed to be solely about romance) is always emphasized and valorized by the people involved in rap (von Flaubert, 1995: 35).

**Rap and Marginality**

The main contrast between hip-hop and pop is formulated around the issue of marginality. This opposition between the margins and the ‘center’ is constructed by the axis of commerciality. In the public and scholarly discourses, rap is viewed as the self-assertive voice of the discriminated against and of those on the margins and accepted to be anchored in ‘ghettos’. Thus ‘ghetto’, conceived as marginal and off-center by definition, is positioned in opposition to whatever the ‘center’ represents. In this way a system of equivalences between ghetto minorities and hip-hop is established. The logic behind it is that hip-hop is the music and the expression form of the periphery, and for that reason necessarily different from the forms of music at the ‘center’. So it is believed not to be commercial like the pop music which represents the ‘center’. This is how the rappers situate their music and themselves in society. However, the picture is more complicated than a simple division of the discursive field by means of a series of oppositional equivalences between the ‘periphery’ and the ‘center’. In order to grasp how German–Turks’ hip-hop is positioned in Germany we need to look at world music and the representation of hip-hop there.

Rap music which has been originally associated with the South Bronx in New York arose in the 1970s as a popular medium that expressed the voices of a ‘dispossessed generation’ of Black American and Latino youth in urban America. Both in popular and academic discourses rap is defined as
Black protest music that prioritizes voices from the margins and reflects the culture of the margins and of blackness (Rose, 1994; Stephens, 1992).

In a world of proliferating identity politics where otherness, cultural difference and cross-over prove to be both marketable and consumable categories, the rhetoric of otherness and aesthetical forms that play on cultural diversity and otherness have moral as well as commercial value. In order to have commercial value one does not need to be at the center. Today, as Hutnyk (1997) correctly argues, diversity and difference become commodities to be consumed so that 'hybridity' and ethnicity are used as a master signifier of marketing and advertising. 'Hybridity' itself became an essentialized category (Caglar, 1997) within the general process of 'commodification of ethnicity' and 'cultural difference'. In this context, the politics of 'hybridity' is intertwined with the politics of music in general and of ethnic youth music in particular. Thus in the context of thriving multiculturalism, identity politics and political correctness, being on the margins and representing the periphery might be very suitable both commercially and ethically. Hence being situated on the margins and being anchored in the 'ghetto' provide no checks against commercialization and against 'moving' to the 'center'. In fact, within the context of valorized discourses of marginality and diaspora, the image of being the 'authentic' voice of the subversive ethnic minority might work as a successful marketing strategy. Hip-hop and being commercial might not be mutually exclusive as it is claimed to be in the mainstream discourse on rap (Mayer, 1996).

It is no coincidence that in the German–Turkish rappers' scene in Germany, parallels are drawn between Black Americans in the USA and German–Turks. These rappers are very well aware of the above-mentioned associations of rap with the dispossessed generations, Black Americans and 'ghettos'. It is noteworthy that the forerunner to the first successful German–Turkish rap group Cartel was called White Nigger Posse (Grave, 1997: 25). One of the motivations in founding this group, which was composed of Islamic Force (Berlin), Da Crime Posse (Kiel), Karakan (Nuremberg), Mosh it up (Berlin), Mic Force (Wiesbaden) was that 'music in Germany was too white' (Grave, 1997: 25). Remarks such as 'we are the Blacks of Germany' or 'we are the niggers of Germany' are quite common in rap concerts among German-Turkish rap fans, at least in Berlin. One of the most important DJs in Berlin in the German–Turkish rap scene, Derezon, who had spent some time in Brooklyn DJing with Black Americans before joining Islamic Force, is keen to draw parallels between Kreuzberg ('the Turkish ghetto' in Berlin) and Brooklyn.

The Mediation of Rap/Hip-Hop to German–Turkish Youngsters

Mass media, entertainment industries, TV and particularly MTV played an
important role in the popularization, commercialization and the transnationalization of rap ‘as a global protest music’. However, the periodization of the popularity of rap among German–Turkish youngsters is not explainable solely by these channels of transmission. The popularity of rap among the immigrant youth in Germany is relatively a new phenomenon and once we trace the channels of this transmission to the German–Turkish youngsters, we notice interesting characteristics in the development of Turkish rap in Berlin. German–Turks’ rap is usually celebrated by the scholars working on it as a quasi-spontaneous expression of German–Turks’ protest from the street (Kaya, 1997: 12) and by the rappers themselves as the ‘voice of the people and of the Street’. However, when we concentrate on how hip-hop has found a foothold among German–Turkish youth in Berlin, we notice some peculiarities. Certain intermediary institutions in Berlin connecting local government to ethnic groups played, and still play, a decisive role in mediating this form of popular culture to German–Turkish youngsters in Berlin. German–Turks’ discovery of hip-hop as a new cultural expressive form did not take place in isolation from the surrounding German state institutions. Youth centers (Jugendtreff, Jugendzentrum) in Berlin and the local Berlin government played a crucial role in making hip-hop popular among German–Turkish youth in Berlin.

From the beginning of the 1990s, some youth centers and social workers working in these youth centers (particularly in the areas populated by immigrants in general and by German–Turks in particular) were involved in initiating and organizing hip-hop performances for the youngsters affiliated with their centers. Hip-hop was promoted together with other expressive art workshops (like breakdance and graffiti) to promote alternative forms of communication. These youth centers offered and still offer breakdance and hip-hop courses (and even separate courses for girls, for children, etc.) and graffiti workshops. For example, the prominent German–Turkish rapper Aziza A. still offers hip-hop courses to girls at a youth center. As Grave correctly observes (1997: 25) ‘For many years there have been breakdance courses in nearly all of the youth centers where Turkish youths go. The walls of the buildings in Kreuzberg have already been covered with Turkish graffiti.’ The breakdance and hip-hop courses and performances were and are part of youth centers’ regular activities. Haus der Jugend, Jugend-und Kulturzentrum Schlesiische 27, Kreuzberger musikalische Aktion e.V., Mosaik-Jugendkulturetage e.V., Treff 62 and Nauny Ritze are some of such youth centers which are financed by the local Berlin government and offer breakdance and hip-hop courses.

These centers had an impact in encouraging the diaspora youth to use an emerging global music and expressive art forms and to mix them with other forms for their own expressive purposes. What is celebrated as the relatively spontaneous development of the critical and rebellious voice of the marginalized minority youth from the street was, in fact, from the very
beginning institutionally incorporated into the ‘center’ through the youth centers and social workers. The state was and is actively involved in the popularization of hip-hop among German-Turks as a creative expressive art form of the ‘margins’. It is no coincidence that social workers and youth centers (especially those located in the areas densely populated by foreigners and known as ‘ghettos’) played an important role in transmitting a framework to the immigrant youth to express their cultural difference. As Schiffauer underlines (1997), systemic regulation characterizes the German model of the relationship between individual and society. Within this model, the task of integrating the immigrants (into a polity in which loyalty, solidarity and cultural differences are defined together) becomes the systemic coordination, regulation and modification of cultural diversity in the public domain so as not to endanger civil society. In German society, the modification and controlling of cultural differences take the form of a pedagogical project: social workers, pedagogues and teachers are the main actors of this task of taming the ‘threatening’ cultural diversity (Schiffauer, 1997). Given that the notion of ‘ghetto’ (i.e. a cultural enclave beyond state control) dominates the topos of the question of foreigners’ integration (and consequently of their failed integration) into German society, ghettos have become the dominant domain for such pedagogical work.7

Since the early days of hip-hop in Berlin, Kreuzberger Jugendtreff Nauny Ritze and Jugend-und Kulturzentrum Schlessische 27 (SO 36) have been the most active of these centers in organizing breakdance, hip-hop and graffiti workshops against violence. It is no coincidence that the popular hip-hop group Islamic Force was anchored in Nauny Ritze from the beginning.8

The Berlin government has been actively involved in shaping leisure activities and encouraging popular music forms among ethnic minority youth in Berlin since the 1980s. In this task, the Office of the Commissioner of Foreigners’ Affairs of the Berlin Senate (the Ausländerbeauftragte) had an impact. This Office was established in 1981 to function as a liaison between local government and numerous ethnic organizations to promote the social, legal and economic integration of immigrants. It sponsors organizations, initiatives and self-help groups working towards this aim. It conducts special training courses designed to counteract the phenomena of racism, anti-Semitism and other manifestations of discrimination; it provides consultation and undertakes public relations work (Commissioner of Foreigners’ Affairs, 1997). This Office and its activities are part of the representative politics of the Berlin government (Vertovec, 1996a).

‘Disco&Döner’ which was organized by the Ausländerbeauftragte in 1988 for ‘foreigner’ and ‘German’ youth was an early example of the involvement and the role of this institution in initiating such activities. The famous DJ Derezon from Islamic Force was the winner of the ‘Berliner
Senats Rockwettbewerb’ (Berlin government’s rock competition) in 1988 (Grave, 1997: 25).

Here it should be noted that these initiatives of the Ausländerbeauftragte, which Vertovec (1996a: 382) identifies as ‘public-space changing activities’, need to be contextualized within the (1991) policy guidelines of Berlin government concerning foreigners’ integration and the image of Berlin. Achieving ‘a cosmopolitan, tolerant and liberal Berlin’ (in which the permanent resident foreigners of Berlin are successfully integrated) is formulated as one of the main objectives of this policy and consequently of the Ausländerbeauftragte (Commissioner of Foreigners’ Affairs, 1997: 2–3). Given the difficult history of Germany regarding its immigrant populations, this task of making sure that ‘Berlin offers images reflecting advanced modes of managing cultural diversity’ (Vertovec, 1996a: 382) is critical for the local and national government. This image work gained urgency after the unification, especially in the context of increasing anti-foreigner sentiments.

The preface written by the Ausländerbeauftragte des Senats, Barbara John, to Martin Grave’s study of Turkish music in Berlin, Alla Turca: Musik aus der Türkei in Berlin (published by the Senate) (Grave, 1997) is very interesting in showing the discursive field, the institutional frame within which German–Turkish hip-hop in Berlin is developed and incorporated and the active support the Office offers to the ‘hybridized’ music forms of German–Turkish youth:

For many years, the young generation of Turkish Berliner has provided important musical impulses, which are of importance for the integration of the young immigrants (the situation is similar in other large German towns). A self-sufficient transcultural music scene with Turkish accents not only appealing to the young migrant generations, is developing here in our country. This is similar to the situation in London where the children of migrants from Pakistan and India storm the hitparades with Bhangra music, and the Rai-pop of the North African immigrants which is experiencing a boom not just in France. (Grave, 1997: 2; my emphasis)

Within the framework of the institutional incorporation of German–Turkish hip-hop, at least in Berlin, the oppositional and rebellious character attributed to German–Turkish hip-hop takes on a more complicated nature. At least in Berlin, as illustrated earlier, such a positioning of German–Turkish hip-hop against the power structures of the ‘center’ is not at all straightforward.

The ‘Ghetto-talk’ and the German–Turkish Rappers

Not only did state-sponsored institutions and social workers play an important role in mediating hip-hop as a creative, ‘hybrid’, authentic form of cultural expression of minority youth in Berlin, but the outlook and discourses of German–Turkish rappers also carry traces of this institutional
frame. Such an outlook is apparent in the words of a well-known rapper of Islamic Force, Boe-B:

In fact what we [the rappers] are doing is not different from what the youth centers try to do: to keep the kids away from the street and to attract them to the youth centers to make music and engage themselves with art. Kids need orientation figures. (Quoted in Grave, 1997: 25)

The rappers see themselves as providing such figures to the diasporic youth in Europe in order to encourage them to develop a positive sense of identity. Erci-E from Cartel, Killa Hakan and Boe-B all underline the social, creative, empowering and progressive character of the rap they make. It is no coincidence that the lyrics of their rap cover social problems like racism, exclusion, drug abuse and violence. Furthermore, issues related particularly to German–Turkish youngsters, like ‘being between two cultures’,9 blood feud,10 or the religious animosities between Alevis and Sunnis, 11 all find their way into the hip-hop songs of German–Turks. The title of $lamic Force’s CD, Mesaj (The Message), is quite appropriate to its content. A pedagogical mode of address (whether against violence, drugs or religious animosity) is central to the hip-hop songs on this CD.

This attitude of attributing to themselves a kind of ‘community worker mission’ is clear in the interview Killa Hakan gave to Der Spiegel (1997: 88). ‘In my concerts I tell the youth how I ended up in youth gangs and violence. Now I am happy that I am no longer violent as I used to be.’12 In telling ‘ghetto-tales’, German–Turkish youngsters’ rap shares the current terminology and the concepts of the public and even scholarly discourses on the cultural formations of (ethnic) minorities. Debates and the terms of multiculturalism, gender, the image of Turkish women in Germany (particularly in Aziza A.’s lyrics), and most importantly a community worker tone and terminology all find their way into German–Turks’ rap.13 They adopt categories of ‘otherness’ (no matter how ‘hybrid’ they are) and remain within the security of bounded ethno-cultural category induced by identity politics, thus themselves contributing to the reification of these categories. In this sense, rap provides a voice and a new visibility to German–Turkish youngsters in the public sphere with new (‘hybrid’) forms of ordering and so empowers them. On the other hand, German–Turkish rap is disempowering for German–Turks as it ends up ‘encorporating’ (Baumann, 1997) them into German society. They are de facto excluded from some crucial parts of the public domain and confined to culturally defined spaces within it (Vertovec, 1996b: 60).

**Cartel: A Success Story**

If a kind of ‘community worker’ outlook is one aspect of the mission German–Turkish youth attribute to their rap, then seeing rap as an
important means to fame and success is another. Ironically what is val-
orized as empowering the ‘ghetto’ is simultaneously conceived by the rappers as a ticket out of the ghetto (Kaya, 1997: 14).

The unexpected and rapid success of German–Turkish rap group Cartel had a considerable impact on the image of German–Turkish popular culture in general and on the hip-hop scene of German–Turks in particular. After the manager Ozan Sinan left Ypsilon Music in 1994, the group White Nigger Posse transformed itself into a smaller group to form Cartel in May 1995. The decisive development in the popularity of Cartel in Germany was its quite unexpected success in Turkey. While the sales of their CD were increasing gradually in Germany, it became an immediate success in Turkey in the summer of 1995. They went straight to number one and their video was seen on all the TV channels in Turkey. They built up a considerable fan base.

What was specific in Cartel’s music was the Turkishness they added to rap. They Turkified rap by mixing instruments, melodies and languages. This kind of cross-over was later practiced by almost all German–Turkish rappers in Germany in varying degrees and gave way to oriental rap. Moreover, there was a strong emphasis on Turkishness in their lyrics and it was this emphasis which later became controversial.

Cartel’s relationship to Turkish nationalism triggered discussions about Cartel in Turkey. Their emphasis on Turkishness hit a nerve among some nationalist groups in Turkey. Indeed, some followers of nationalist groups like Grey Wolves were seen at Cartel’s concerts. However, the members of Cartel rejected at once any accusations of propagating nationalism and links with the Grey Wolves. The main reason for this confusion was that Cartel had simply adopted the categories used to designate them, as German–Turks, in Germany and made use of them without critical reflection. These same categories in the context of Turkey had different connotations and associations: ‘Turk’ or ‘Turkishness’ brought them closer to the discursive field of the nationalists (the Turkists) in Turkey. The members of Cartel were themselves surprised by these discussions centered around Turkishness. ‘Everyone sees you as a Turk but when you yourself enunciate this then you are in trouble. We referred to ourselves as Turks and we were categorized as fascists’ (Terkessidis, 1995: 36). This confusion and the Cartel members’ reaction illustrate how some of the mainstream categories of the hegemonic discourse on German–Turks in Germany were adopted by German–Turkish rappers in Germany. The discourse of German–Turks’ rap was cast in the ethno-cultural categories of the ‘center’.

Cartel became popular not only among the ‘nationalist groups’ in Turkey, but also among the youth in general there. However, Cartel became popular among German–Turks in Germany and Turkey for different reasons. For the Turkish fans (other than those with a nationalist orientation) they represented a new music form of ‘the West’ and, more
important, they were seen as a ‘Turkish’ group which was acknowledged in ‘the West’. Cartel’s video and the fact that they were the first Turkish group to appear on MTV also played an important role in the popularity of Cartel in Turkey.

Cartel and their success (including their financial success) received extensive media coverage both in Turkey and in Germany. Their success illustrated for German–Turkish youngsters that self-assertiveness and an ethnic-minority status could pave a way into ‘success’ and ironically a way out of the ‘ghetto’ into the ‘center’.

**Turkish Pop and the New Public Spaces of German–Turks**

German–Turks who are incorporated into German society and the economy not only penetrate into the wider public sphere controlled by the state and media in Germany, but are also trying to create their own public space. The discussion of German–Turkish rap and the institutional framework in which it is embedded illustrates that these new forms of cultural expression were not very successful in opening up spaces in which new scripts of identity and community could be negotiated. They have rather inherited the unexamined essentialist categories and personal statuses that amount to some kind of communal ‘coopting’. Public spaces construed around Turkish pop in Germany might be considered as opening up such alternative spaces in the public sphere.

In addition to the rise of Turkish rap, the opening of Turkish discos, clubs, cafes mark the 1990s in Berlin. The first Turkish disco (Hadigari) was opened in the summer of 1994 in ‘down-town’ Berlin to be followed by others (Chateau/Sato, Kara, Yeni Bodrum, Paparazzi, Limon, etc.) in Berlin and other German cities.16 Today there are seven such Turkish discos in Berlin. Other than these discos, some Turkish clubs, bars and a new type of music restaurant (like Pasha’s, 1001 or Kestane Bar) appeared in Berlin. These places very quickly became popular among German–Turkish youth. There have been Turkish night-clubs and restaurants in Berlin since the 1970s, but the new Turkish bars, cafes and discos were different in terms of their location, music, food, and most importantly in terms of their self-image.

The night-clubs or music restaurants of the 1970s and 1980s (like Efes, 1001 Nacht, Pussycat, Marmaris) were located in the areas that were densely populated by German–Turks in Berlin such as Kreuzberg, Wedding or Schöneberg. The food, the music and the entertainment forms they offered were folkloric. There was belly dancing, Turkish art music, Turkish folk music and *arabesk*.17 The oriental and folkloristic interior decoration of these places clearly revealed their self-image. Such places could be designated as part of the Turkish niche economy which catered and still
cater for middle-aged and/or first-generation German–Turks and some Germans who are eager to experience something exotic and ‘ethnic’.

In terms of location, orientation and clientele the new Turkish clubs, discos, and music restaurants of the 1990s are very different. First of all they are located in the most expensive parts of the city where not many German–Turks live. Both the owners and the customers of such places stress that they owe a substantial part of their popularity and success among German–Turks to their locations, i.e. not being located in the ‘Turkish ghetto’, but at the ‘center’. Basically, they target and cater for German–Turks and primarily German–Turkish youth. According to the owners, 90 percent of their customers are German–Turks and they employ German–Turkish waiters and waitresses as a policy. In their self-presentation there is a conscious effort to underplay Turkishness. In fact, the choice of interior colors and decorations keep up with the general popular trends in cafes and bars in Berlin.18

However, these cafes, bars, music restaurants and discos—almost without exception—play Turkish pop music, and this is the crucial aspect of their popularity among German–Turks. These new types of Turkish bars, cafes and discos in Berlin and their popularity are not explainable without reference to the rise of Turkish pop in Turkey in the 1990s. As Grave rightly points out, only with the rise of Turkish pop did it become possible to have Turkish discos distinct from the other discos in Berlin (1997: 8). In these discos, bars and cafes, Turkish is the main language of communication, with even the DJs making their announcements in Turkish. If we consider that it is not self-evident for the second- and third-generation German–Turks to use Turkish when relaxing then this dominance of Turkish in communication becomes particularly noteworthy. The second-generation owner of a popular Turkish bar put it in an interesting way:

In these bars Turkish is spoken. You should have seen these girls. If you had seen them two years ago, you would not have recognized them as Turkish. They walked around listening to their Walkmans. They watched only MTV and did not speak Turkish with each other. Now they all speak Turkish here, listen to Turkish pop all the time and they are our regular customers.

Turkey and Turkishness have a considerable presence in the new cafes, bars and discos popular among German–Turkish youth. However, this presence is complex and definitely different from the oriental and exotic Turkishness of the Turkish night-clubs or restaurants of the 1970s and 1980s in Kreuzberg and Wedding.

In Berlin Pasha’s and 1001 are the most popular of such places. 1001 was opened at the end of 1995 and nine months later Pasha’s followed. 1001 is a music-cafe/restaurant and Pasha’s is a bar-club.19 On weekends there is live music in Pasha’s. When I asked the owner about his motivations in opening a place like Pasha’s, he answered
In the place of 1001 I had an Italian restaurant. There were some problems with it so I closed it. I wanted to bring here the atmosphere of the bars, of the entels places in Istanbul, in Ortaköy. I opened first 1001. It became popular immediately. It was full all the time. We had live music then and it was terrific. We had only Turkish pop. The dwellers of the building complained about us because it was very loud and there were traffic jams 4 o’clock, 5 o’clock in the mornings (in front of 1001). Then its customers started changing. Those who do not know how to enjoy themselves also started coming to 1001. There was a vacancy across the street, so I decided to open Pasha’s there and moved the live music to Pasha’s.

The owner clearly expresses that he modeled 1001 and Pasha’s after the bars and cafes in Istanbul that are frequented by entels. He is not alone in orienting himself towards the big cities in Turkey. One of the owners of the Kestane Bar in Berlin also expressed his aim in opening his bar as ‘to create the atmosphere and the ambience of the bars in Izmir [another big city in Turkey] in Kordon’.

The references to Turkey in these places are very selective in that they all refer to the metropoles and urban spaces in Turkey, not to Turkey as a cultured space. The emphasis on Turkish language or on Turkey by no means alludes to a fixed and bounded ‘traditional Turkish culture’. On the contrary, the metropoles to which the owners of 1001 and Kestane Bar referred are conceived as world cities in which there is an openness to difference, variety and, most importantly, to the West. In the emergent discourses centered around these spaces, openness to world heterogeneity and being cosmopolitan seem to have replaced the ethnic closure of the common representations of Turkey and Turkishness that conflate the public discourses on German–Turks in Germany.

The impact of the multiculturalist discourses—as a celebration of the equity and co-existence of different cultures—is also evident in the discourses construed around these new spaces of German–Turks. The name 1001 is also telling. The owner of 1001 explained the name as an allusion to 1001 faces, 1001 nations and to 1001 kinds of people. Ironically the discourse of multiculturalism, openness to different cultures, peoples, colors, to the West, are parts of the self-images of places which target and cater for almost exclusively German–Turks and which are centered around Turkish pop music yet do not valorize Turkishness as a bounded ethnic community. The Turkish pop played in these places is not viewed as representing an ‘ethnic’ music type. On the contrary it represents a cross-over of something western—which is usually identified as being ‘modern’ in Turkey—and of something ‘local’. Turkish pop singers play on the western images they adopt and on their international connections. Their videos produced in the USA have an impact in mediating such images of western (seen as modern) cross-overs. Thus places like 1001 and Pasha’s which are closely associated with Turkish pop music take on metaphorical meanings. They come to stand for things that are open to differences and become icons of German–Turks’ incorporation in Europe, in the West beyond the taken-
for-granted categories of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘culture’. A 32-year-old German-Turk formulated the changes he observed among the Turks in Berlin as:

there is the kabadayi (rough) youth who do not know how to enjoy themselves and who listen to arabsesk music all the time. And there is another youth who is friendly, smiling, joyful and integrated into German society. Turkish and European at the same time. It is the youth that goes to places like Pasha’s, 1001, Kestane Bar, etc.

Both groups of German-Turkish youth, those centered around hip-hop and those around Turkish pop, play on Turkishness self-consciously, but in different ways. Of course there is no clear-cut dividing line between German-Turkish rap, Turkish pop and arabsesk in terms of its audience and music among German-Turks. However, these different types of music come to symbolize different lifestyles and positionings within the German-Turkish population and consequently regarding German and Turkish societies. They are anchored in different self-images and spaces. While the rappers define and identify themselves with the ‘ghetto’ and the marginalized (ethnic) minorities, those whose identities are construed around Turkish pop try to transmit an open, European, western and an international self-image. While the identities are anchored in ‘cultured spaces’ (ghettos) in the former, the latter anchor their identities in the new Turkish discos, cafes and bars at the symbolic ‘center’ of Berlin and do not necessarily see these locations as cultured spaces referring to a bounded ethno-cultural community.

Both groups use particular music and entertainment forms to construct ‘oppositional’ identities. Their popular cultures direct a critique to the common binary oppositions of the discourses on German-Turks’ belongingness and cultural formations which fix them either in German or Turkish culture. In these identities, constructed through particular music types and represented by an identification with different spaces, there is a common desire to reject the dominant discourse on German-Turkish youth and provide an alternative identity which refuses any kind of fixity on the basis of reified ethnic and/or cultural categories. From this perspective, these forms of popular culture and the spaces they are anchored in might be seen as constituting the sites where the renegotiation of new scripts of community and identity is taking place.

Concluding Remarks

Studying popular culture means exploring the way particular practices are articulated to specific sensibilities as well as to other formations in society and in the lived reality of daily life (Grossberg, 1992). If one aspect of this endeavor is to focus on the cultural forms which constitute sites of belonging around which meaning, desire and pleasure are articulated, the
other aspect of it is the contextualization of a given form of popular culture into the networks of concrete social and political structures and institutions. It is true that popular culture entails a mode of engagement with a strong plane of affect and consequently empowers the people involved. However, the limits and the nature of this empowerment are given by the structures and institutions these forms are incorporated into. Thus instead of endowing German–Turks’ rap with political redemption—on the basis of the peripheral, disadvantaged and ghetto-based positioning of German–Turkish youth in Berlin—it might be useful to contextualize this form of popular culture within a network of institutions and within a field of other cultural forms that gain force in the lives of German–Turkish youngsters as sites of belonging. The political and critical nature of such forms of popular culture seems to be explorable only in these kinds of contextualizations.

Both power and lack of power inscribe themselves in the urban landscape. The spatial inscription of an ‘ethnic’ minority in urban space by means of ghettos (which imply spatially bounded and cultured spaces) might introduce a certain blindness to the other spatial narratives of German–Turks in Berlin. We might end up contributing to the reproduction of the hegemonic discourse on German–Turks’ presence in Berlin.

Although the new spaces of German–Turks linked with commercial Turkish pop are not centered around a fashionable and marketable discourse of social protest, or margins, they might still be seen as parts of German–Turks’ battling over ‘representational rights’ in the symbolic center of the city—maybe more than the much valorized German–Turkish rap or hip-hop. These new spaces constitute an arena for a negotiation of new scripts of community and identity beyond the given categories of ethnicity and community in Berlin and for that reason could be considered as the crucial aspects of the emergent diasporic German–Turkish public sphere.

NOTES

1. German–Turks came to Germany within the framework of the ‘guest worker’ system after the first bilateral agreement signed between Germany and Turkey in 1961. Today 2.1 million German–Turks live in the Federal Republic of Germany. Although most Turkish migrants came as workers, today they no longer form a homogeneous group. They are represented in almost all strata of German society, and they are fully integrated into the German economy. Berlin, with more than 150,000 German–Turks, has the largest German–Turkish population in Germany.

2. As there is no significant Turkish rap music in Turkey, I use Turkish rap in Germany to refer to German–Turks’ rap there.

3. See the Zitty coverage on the German–Turkish Rapper Aziza A. (Mandel, 1997: 43–4) for a recent example.
4. In a talk after a panel discussion on hip-hop in Aile Cay Bahcesi in Berlin (14 October 1996).

5. See $lamic Force’s songs on their CD Mesaj.

6. Here it has to be noted that the activities of these centers are wider than this. There is a broad spectrum of activities, including saz or folk dance, but they also consciously encouraged hip-hop among young immigrants.

7. For an elaboration of the notion of ‘ghetto’ as a root metaphor of the immigration discussions in Germany, see Caglar, 1998.

8. The group was initially called Islamic Force. Then they changed their name to Kan.Ak, playing on the pejorative German expression for ‘foreigners’ Kanaka and the Turkish word Kan ak meaning ‘to shed, to flow blood’. The latter name was thought to be more suitable for the music market in Turkey. However, due to copyright matters in using Kan.Ak, they returned to a slightly changed version of their former name. Now they are called $lamic Force. Here the allusions to slums and to the United States (again by means of a deformed dollar sign) are noteworthy. They show the vivid presence of the parallels drawn between themselves and the ghettos (slums) of America.

9. See the song ‘Gurbetci Cocuklari’ on Mesaj. In the booklet enclosed with the CD there is an explanation of the contents of the songs. The parallels between these explanations and the mainstream academic and public discourse on the second- and third-generation German–Turks are astonishing. For example, the song ‘Gurbetci Cocuklari’ is explained as ‘Turkish kids of the third generation in Germany got the problem of living in two cultures. In Germany they are Turks, in Turkey they are German. So these kids are looking for their own identity.’ See also ‘Iki Dünyा’, ‘Es ist Zeit’, ‘Kendi Yolun and Analari Aglatan’.

10. See Mesaj.

11. See ‘Bu Dünyα’ and ‘Canlardir’on Mesaj.

12. Here Killa Hakan refers to his former experiences in a youth gang.

13. See the interview with Killa Hakan in Der Spiegel (1997: 88) and the essay on Aziza A. by Mandel in Zitty (1997: 43–4) for such parallels.

14. Here it has to be noted that the refrain ‘Türksün Türk’ (You are a Turk, a Turk) was acted on stage (for example in 1996 at Tempodrom, Berlin) in such a way that it was not their self-designation but the designation of the ‘Other’. This staging might have been introduced after the controversy about their nationalist sentiments; nevertheless, there is an ambivalence about their use of the category of ‘Turk’ or ‘Turkishness’ in their music.

15. Some conjectural factors played a role in the success of Cartel, such as the rising racism particularly targeting German–Turks in Germany. The arson attacks in Mölln and Solingen which left eight German–Turks dead had an impact in the construction of a sensibility and a self-consciousness around Turkishness among German–Turks in Germany. Cartel referred to these sentiments in Germany.

16. I am aware of the problems involved in delineating ‘down-town’ in Berlin, but I use ‘down-town’ or ‘central Berlin’ in the way the German–Turks I interviewed use it: as a broad category to refer to Charlottenburg and particularly to the areas around Ku’ Damm, KaDeWe and Europa Center.

17. Arabesk music is a syncretic form of music mixing western, oriental instruments and the beat of traditional Turkish folk music and arabic rhythm. This style of
music became very popular in Turkey after the 1960s. It is usually seen as representing a particular lifestyle of the newcomers to the big cities.

18. The owners of such places underline that they want to attract non-German customers and for that reason they do not want to be identified as Turkish restaurants or cafes. In terms of their target group they differ significantly from the bars and cafes of the 1990s.

19. There is no dancing or disco in 1001. In Pasha’s there is a small dance floor which is used on weekends.

20. Entel is an abbreviation of the Turkish word entellektüel which means intellectual. This notion of entel designating a particular lifestyle established itself in the media and popular culture in Turkey in the 1980s.

21. Ortaköy is a neighborhood in Istanbul on the Bosphorus. Since the beginning of the 1980s Ortaköy has become a center for cafes and bars which are frequented by students and the middle classes in Istanbul.

22. Here he is referring to people who listen to arabesk. He simply answered my question about who these people were by saying ‘those who always want to listen to arabesk, who do not know how to behave in a bar. The people who order for example a bottle of raki [the most popular hard liquor in Turkey] in a bar! These kind of people. Those who do not know how to behave in a civilized way. [Those] who disturb women, etc.’

23. Pasha’s is also the name of a well-known and very up-market night-club and disco in Istanbul on the Bosphorus.

24. Kordon is a very expensive and popular neighborhood in Izmir.

25. Killı Hakan is a good example of the absence of such clear-cut divisions. This well-known rapper is also a fan of arabesk. Moreover rappers mix and use sounds and melodies from arabesk. Aziza A., among others, draws on famous arabesk singers in her ‘oriental rap’.

REFERENCES


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