REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
YILDIZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
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DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES M.A. PROGRAM

M.A. THESIS

AN INDEPENDENT LABEL TO CARRY LOCAL RAPPERS TO THE NATIONAL RAP SCENE IN TURKEY: A STUDY ON THE ART WORLDS IN MOB ENTERTAINMENT

FATİH BAYRAKÇIL
16735008

THESIS SUPERVISOR
ASSC. PROF. ONUR GÜNEŞ AYAS

ISTANBUL
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ÖZ

YEREL RAPÇİLERİ TÜRKİYE'DEKİ ULUSAL SAHNEYE TAŞIYAN BAĞIMSIZ BİR PLAK ŞİRKETİ: MOB ENTERTAINMENT'TAKİ SANAT DÜNYALARI ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

Fatih Bayrakçıl
Mayıs, 2019

Son yıllarda rap müziğin tekrar ana akım popülerliğe ulaştığına şahit olmaktayız. Rap, Türkiye'ye Cartel ile çok popüler bir noktadan girmiş, hatta bugüne kadar Cartel'in ulaştığı sayılara başka hiçbir grup ulaşamamıştır. Buna rağmen Cartel'den sonra rap müzik Türkiye'deki zamanının büyük bir kısmını yeraltında geçirmiştir. MOB Entertainment, ilk yıllarından itibaren Türkçe rap sahnesinde yer almış olan Tepki tarafından 2018'de kurulmuş bağımsız bir plak şirketidir. Şirketin kuruluştaki odağı Tepki'nin de büyümüş olduğu Küçükçekmece ve çevresindeki bölgelerdeki yerel sanatçılardır. Bu tez çalışmasında, hip hop kültürünün New York'ta ortaya çıkışı ve dünyaya yayılması üzerine tarihsel bir bakış açısı sunulduktan sonra, günümüze kadar hip hop'un Türkiye'de geçirdiği süreçten bahsedilecektir. Daha sonra MOB sanatçılarının sanat dünyaları üzerine bir inceleme yapılacaktır. Bu inceleme büyük oranda MOB sanatçılarından Hayalet, Tepki, Motive, Aksan ve Uzi ile yapılan, Becker'in sanat dünyaları ile Bennet ve Peterson'ın müzik sahneleri kuramları çerçevesinde yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeleri temel almaktadır. Bunlara ek olarak analizde aynı zamanda MOB'nin internet sitesinde yer alan, sanatçıların biyografik açıklamaları ve konserlerinden birinde dinleyicileriyle yapılan konuşmalardan faydalanılmıştır. Analizde MOB sanatçıları üzerinden Türkiye rap piyasasında lokal, translokal ve sanal sahnelerin nasıl iç içe geçmiş olduğu ve bu sahnelerde faaliyet gösteren sanatçıların sanat dünyaları betimlenmekte, MOB'nin halihazırda lokal, translokal ve sanal sahnelerde aktif olan bu sanatçılara teknik avantajlar sunmuş olduğu, MOB'nin global kurumsal müzik piyasasına ortaklıklar aracılığıyla bağlı olmasına rağmen, büyük oranda bu kurumsal güçler tarafından düzenlenmeyen bağımsız bir plak şirketi olduğu ve çoğu aynı bölgeden olan sanatçıları arasındaki yakın ilişkiler çerçevesinde kurulmuş olduğu ortaya koyulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: MOB Entertainment, sanat dünyaları, müzik sahneleri, hip hop

ABSTRACT

AN INDEPENDENT LABEL TO CARRY LOCAL RAPPERS TO THE NATIONAL RAP SCENE IN TURKEY: A STUDY ON THE ART WORLDS IN MOB ENTERTAINMENT
Prepared by Fatih Bayrakçıl
May, 2019

In recent years, we see that rap music has found its way back to mainstream popularity. Although its entrance to the Turkish music market with Cartel was from a point of very high popularity, to the point where Cartel's numbers are unmatched to this day by any other group, rap music spent most of its time underground after Cartel. MOB Entertainment is an independent label founded in 2018 by a Turkish rapper, Tepki, who has been a part of the Turkish rap scene from its very early years, with a focus on the local artists around Küçükçekmece district, where he is from. In this dissertation, after giving a historical overview on the emergence of hip hop culture in New York and its spread around the world, some information is given about hip hop in Turkey up to this day. Then an analysis is made regarding the art worlds of MOB artists based mostly on the in-depth interviews held with MOB artists Hayalet, Tepki, Motive, Aksan and Uzi, structured around Becker's theory of art worlds, and Bennet and Peterson's theory of music scenes. The analysis also uses bio descriptions of these artists on MOB webpage as well as conversations with the audience in one of their concerts. In conclusion, the analysis describes the intertwined nature of the local, translocal and virtual scenes in Turkish rap scene along with the art worlds of rap artists who have been active in these scenes, and shows that MOB has brought technical advantages for these artists who had already been active in local, translocal and virtual scenes and despite having connections to the global corporate music market through partnerships, MOB is an independent label mostly unmediated by corporate powers and formed around a family-like structure among its artists, most of whom have been active around the same district.

Keywords: MOB Entertainment, art worlds, music scenes, hip hop

PREFACE

This dissertation aims to open a window to the art worlds of rap artists working with an independent hip hop label MOB Entertainment and the effects that signing with MOB Entertainment have had on their art worlds as they moved from local, translocal and virtual underground scenes to the national rap scene in Turkey.

First of all, I would like to extend my gratitude to my thesis advisor, Associate Professor Onur Güneş Ayas, who first of all agreed to be my thesis advisor even though he did not know me and he was already really busy. He has been really helpful throughout the whole process, and did not hesitate to introduce me to his brother, Saygın Ayas, a.k.a. *Hayalet*, providing me with an amazing opportunity to interview rap artists in MOB Entertainment without facing any difficulty to get into contact with them or to try to convince them to do the interviews. I also want to express my gratitude to Saygın Ayas, a.k.a. *Hayalet*, who was most helpful, providing me with more chances than I asked for and giving me a very detailed interview as well as getting me in contact with the other rap artists in MOB. Furthermore, I would like to thank Kerem Gülsoy, a.k.a. *Tepki*, for his warm welcome and for opening the door of the big family they have under the roof of MOB Entertainment as well as Tolga Serves, a.k.a. *Motive*, Yılmaz Hüseyin Tosun, a.k.a. *Aksan* and Utku Yalçınkaya, a.k.a. *Uzi*, who were kind enough to allocate time for me to do the interview. I would also like to thank Associate Professor Kerem Karaosmanoğlu for introducing me to this topic and to Associate Professor Güneş Ayas and all my other instructors in Humanities and Social Sciences Department for their academic contributions throughout the years.

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Istanbul; May, 2019 Fatih Bayrakçıl

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Having emerged out of the necessity of a particular local culture in the United States in 1970s, hip hop has become a global phenomenon appropriated by various cultures around the world. These cultures have been using hip hop to express problems that are sometimes similar to the ones expressed by the African Americans during the formation of hip hop culture and sometimes quite different, but still carry elements of the culture of protest existing in the original culture. When hip hop came to Turkey through the migrant Turkish workers living in Germany, who adopted the hip hop culture to express the suppression and racism they feel in their host society towards them, it was a sudden hit, welcomed perhaps ironically by the ultra-nationalists in Turkey. While these rappers complained about the ultranationalistic feelings expressed towards them in Germany, they were greeted with enthusiasm by the ultranationalists of Turkey, perhaps partly due to the political and social atmosphere of the country at the time. However, Cartel, the German-Turkish rap group that brought rap to Turkey, did not survive for long as a group and rap's popularity also decreased with them. Until recently even though they were a handful of artists in the Turkish rap scene that can be considered to be close to the mainstream music, the numbers that Turkish rap music produced in Turkey looked small compared to the numbers of other types of music for some time. In the last couple of years, we have started to see a dramatic increase in the popularity of rap music. We have started to hear rap music at cafes and on TV. When we look at the Top 50 Chart of most played tracks in Spotify, we can see that there are 5 rap songs in the top 10 of this list [23.06.2019].

MOB Entertainment is an independent label that was established into such a setting in the Turkish rap music scene, aiming to invest in local artists with a purpose to bring them onto the national rap scene. Their numbers on digital media platforms still do not match the now-popular Turkish rappers; however, the label is about two years old and the founder of the label, a rapper called Tepki, expresses content in the

increase in these numbers over time and is confident that they will keep increasing. This works aims to describe the art worlds of MOB artists and the changes that have occurred in these art worlds since they joined MOB based on questions asked to MOB artists Tepki, Aksan, Motive, Uzi and Hayalet during the in-depth interviews designed around the theories of art worlds by Howard Becker (1982), and music scenes by Bennet and Peterson (2004).

I start by explaining what hip hop is and its constituents. Then I move on to discuss the history of hip hop starting from the social context that led to the emergence of the culture. After giving brief information about the history of hip hop elements, namely graffiti, breakdancing, DJing and rap music, rap's rise to popularity is described within the United States. Having discussed gangsta rap in terms of its emergence and content, the discussion continues with the explanation regarding how hip hop ended up becoming a global phenomenon and the discussions surrounding authenticity in this globalised local culture. Before moving on to MOB, I discuss how hip hop came to and spread in Turkey, the different trends we have seen in Turkey in terms of rap music throughout the years and also briefly mention *arabesk* music, which can be argued to have emerged out of similar social and economic conditions to rap with the similarities to and differences from rap. Finally, based on the interviews conducted, I discuss the ideas of MOB artists regarding the national rap scene in Turkey, the ideas surrounding locality and the family-like dynamic in the label; the effect MOB had on the artists' art worlds and the restrictions they face as artists move from their local rap scenes to the national rap scene with the help of an official record label.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The analysis that I have undertaken of the artists of the MOB Entertainment is based on the theory of art worlds by Howard Becker, while also making use of the concepts of music scenes by Andy Bennet and Richard A. Peterson. The analysis employs in-depth interviews that I conducted with five of the MOB artists. The questions of the interview were based on these theories to try to get a sense of the art worlds that these artists belonged to while they were in their local scenes through their transition into the translocal scenes and virtual scenes before MOB and how their art worlds

have changed since they started working with an independent label, something they consider to be “coming out of the underground”.

Howard Becker (1982) states that almost no human activity is done by a single person. Rather a joint effort by a number of people is required for most human activities, and art works are not an exception. Often a large number of people are involved in any art work, the cooperation of whom determine the product of the artistic process. All these different elements that contribute to the final product of an artistic process are not a must: the event does occur with or without these elements as long as the artist exists. However, each element that contributes to the art work during the process of production changes the quality of what comes out as the art work in the end. Becker also talks about the conventions that have been established by art worlds which provide certain ways of doing things in order to eventually make the process easier by providing services catered for these particularized ways of doing things. Sometimes, these conventions might restrict the artists in some ways. However, Becker points out that this does not mean it is impossible to produce art using means other than the conventional ones. Artists would have to sacrifice extra time and effort in order to go out of these established conventions. Those who cannot or do not use conventional means of distribution, for example, face some disadvantages, which in turn have an impact on their art works, which would have turned out differently if they were distributed in conventional ways. While, according to Becker, artists usually see this situation as an “unmixed curse”, those who do have access to regular means of operating in a particular art world may regard their situation as a “mixed blessing”, due to the restrictions they face as a result of using conventional facilities (Becker, 2004:6). In the face of developed art worlds where the division of labour becomes more sophisticated to the point where sometimes not all people involved need to be in the same place, Becker questions, of the people involved in this process with varying contributions, all of whom contribute to and change the final product in some ways, which ones can also be considered artists. Becker also points to the issue when in these developed art worlds, contributors turn into specialized professionals who develop their own artistic views regarding the art work, which may conflict with that of the artist. Demonstrating how decisions of different contributors who occupy certain positions may determine the fate of the art work that comes out, Becker underscores that art works are not the product of

individual artists, but rather of a joint effort by a group of individuals who are in a cooperative link formed by the conventions that have taken shape in the respective art world.

Becker points out that the state is also an inescapable part of the art worlds even if it does not directly intervene the process either in the form of restrictions such as censorship or oppression or in the form of support. The reason behind this is that even the possibility that the state *might* intervene affects the operations of the art world and the decisions taken by the contributors, consciously or otherwise.

Building on the theory of art worlds, van Maanen (2009:207) talks about the factors regarding the processes of production and distribution of art works are also connected to the social systems in the economic environment such as economic, political and judicial systems. Based on Becker's (1982:93) fully developed art worlds where the artists become the part of the economy of the society through the distribution systems, van Maanen (2009) talks about the effects of different financing systems on the values produced by the artists and received by the society.

Bennet and Peterson (2004) talk about scenes which are located outside of the corporate music market. In fact, they assert that people most of the time enjoy music outside of these corporate worlds in diverse situations. According to Bennet and Peterson, one reason that made this diversification possible was the digital revolution of 1980s, which brought amateur musicians and producers to similar levels thanks to cheaper recording technology (Bennet and Peterson, 2004:5). Moreover, the internet from the mid-1990s onward provided a means for these artists outside of the corporate world of music with a medium to distribute their work and get in touch with their fans. On the basis of these developments, they define three types of scenes; namely, the local scene, the translocal scene and the virtual scene. They describe the local scene as a scene formed around a geographical focus, which is connected to the every-day life of the local communities in which they are situated. The translocal scene, according to Bennet and Peterson (2004: 8,9), is formed when local scenes for particular forms of music come together with other local scenes in distant areas and have interactions through the exchange of recordings, bands and fans. Virtual scenes resemble translocal scenes in that the participants are located far away from each other. However, the meeting of participants of virtual scenes are not physical places

like festivals as it is for those in translocal scenes. Instead, the participants of virtual scenes are connected to each other through the Internet. They show that the interaction of these participants form similar features to that of local scenes.

Finally, I would like to point out that for the purposes of the study, the analysis focuses on concepts of "scenes" and does not make use of the term "subculture" in an attempt to make sure the analysis does not lose its focus. Furthermore, Barker (2004:193) define subculture as groups who share distinct values from the mainstream society and states that subcultures have been seen as deviant cultures in attempting to "win space" for themselves. While the situation at MOB Entertainment shares similarities with a subculture in some senses, in order to paint a clearer picture of the changes in the art worlds of these local and translocal artists after signing with an independent label and to avoid confusion, I decided to stick to concepts of art worlds and music scenes.

1.3 Literature Review

If we look at studies conducted in Turkey on issues relating to hip hop, we can see that the popularity of these studies has followed a similar path to the popularity of rap music in Turkey. Hip hop's entrance into the Turkish market was really strong with Cartel in 1995, and the social condition of the *Gastarbeiter*, the migrant workers in Germany, drew the attention of social scientists who worked on identity formation and migration. Just to cite a few examples, Alev Çınar, in her article titled "Cartel: Travels of German-Turkish Rap Music published in the summer of 1999 in Middle East Report on Labor Migration approaches the case of Cartel from the perspective of migrant identity formation. Based on the example of Cartel, she talks about how diaspora communities stuck in places with intense nationalism use hip hop music to express their ambiguous presence, which challenge the existing norms of national belonging by creating hybrid forms of cultural expression, and how such groups make use of this medium to find opportunities to open these systems of authority for negotation and change (Çınar, 1999). In a similar study about the appropriation of hip hop by the German-Turks, Lüküslü (2012) describes the tough image created by the *Gastarbeiter* hip hop artists to reclaim their masculinity in the society, which they felt had been threatened due to the power relations in Germany as well as in

Turkey as a result of the *Almancı* image in the society as a label that they feel is emasculating.

Solomon gave important contributions to get started the academic studies in hip hop that originated in Turkey as opposed to appropriations by the Turks living in Germany. He wrote two articles in 2005, one of which is about the importance and the implications of the term "underground" for the Istanbul rap scene. He mentions how much emphasis hip hop artists place on being underground in Istanbul, through which they add a local characteristic to this global culture. He describes several different implications for being underground, from desire to separate oneself from popular culture to being involved in illegal or quasi-illegal activities, and tries to demonstrate how rappers in Istanbul use hip hop as a means to imagine space by constructing new identities (Solomon, 2005a). In another article published in the same year, Solomon (2005b) again talks about how rappers employ rap music to reimagine their identities relating to space based on the analysis of a song by the rap group Nefret formed in Istanbul. Solomon concludes that by using elements of intertextuality offered in rap music, these artists take the globalized African American rap medium and re-imagine the urban landscape of the city. They do this not only through discourse around Turkish rap but also through the lyrics by having a famous quote from an Orhan Veli Poem, "Istanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı" (I am listening to Istanbul, with my eyes closed), as well as the sounds of rap songs by having discourses of Türk Sanat Müziği (Turkish Art Music) and *arabesk* (Solomon, 2005b).

However, if we do not count these studies conducted by Solomon, we can say that as rap lost its popularity in the mainstream music scene in Turkey, it lost its popularity as a research topic as well. We see that the studies that were done did not actually focus on hip hop as a culture, which is instrumental for identity formation of young people who are active hip hop artists at least in their respective local scenes, but instead saw it as a threat, similar to the way it was received by the American media during its formative years. For example, in her article titled "Rap: Slang or Swearing?" Çamkara (2006) focuses on the generous uses of slangs and how the definition of slang is sometimes expanded into what can be considered swear by the rest of the society. Similarly, Taşal and Vural (2011) focus on the violence in songs,

pointing at the frequent uses of insulting, vengeful and violent lyrics in rap music and its possible negative consequences on children. Their study aims to emphasize the elements of violence in these songs and determine how these lyrics reach children. From a similar perspective, Bozkurt, Zahal and Türe Uyan (2015) investigate the relationship between the kinds of music middle school students listen to and their emotional states based on a sample of 608 students studying in 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grade in Mardin, Tokat and İzmir. In their study, they also quote Ekinci *et al.* (2012), who studied the relationship between the preference of music and psychiatric issues in teenagers. The study indicated a meaningful relationship between mood changes and the kinds of music that the teenagers listen to and it showed that it was rock music which was preferred the most, followed by heavy metal, rap and dance music.

Another field of research within hip hop music is the studies analysing the use of rap music in religious discourses. Solomon (2006) also talks about what is called Islamic Rap based on two case studies of Kosova Dramı and Sert Müslümanlar, both of whom are rap groups established in Germany and who write mostly religious lyrics within the Turkish Rap diaspora in Germany as well as in Turkey. Solomon here talks about how these rappers make use of the medium of rap music to create new kinds of subjectivities which can be considered Muslim. Also talking about Islamic hip hop with Turkish lyrics, Zeynep Işıl Işık Dursun (2016) underscores that her work can be considered to be an introductory article in the field of Islamic hip hop, which lacks sufficient sources in the literature. She mentions how Islamic hip hop emerged as a reaction of the Muslims in Europe to the Islamophobia that they experience in Europe and that it created a Turkish audience in Turkey through the cultural codes of the Turkish diaspora who did not lose its cultural and political connection to Turkey. She draws attention to the contents of the songs which changed from the emphasis on European Muslim identity and focusing on a message of unity and peace to songs with a neo-Ottoman discourse in recent years.

When we come to recent years, we start to see more studies which focus on the hip hop culture and rap music scenes in Turkey in parallel to the increase in popularity of rap music in the mainstream media. For example Göktuğ Kutay Öztaş has an unpublished article from 2017 on how hip hop found its way to Turkey and has been appropriated by the rappers in Turkey. Dilek Göktürk Cary (2016) presented a paper

in III. International Scientific Research Days on Fine Arts, where she discussed the similarities and differences of *arabesk* music which was formed in Turkish culture and rap music which has been appropriated by them. In his MA thesis, Furkan Dilben (2016) talked about a relatively new cultural and musical phenomenon that came about with the merging of these two genres: *arabesk*-rap. Based on extensive interviews he held with local *arabesk*-rappers, he talks about the exclusion of these artists, which sometimes takes the form of insults, how these rappers always adopt a stance against the hegemony, and how these rappers criticise rap for being confined to the lures of corporate music in the mainstream, having lost the message of protest in their essence.

Although studies in rap scenes in Turkey are limited, there are other studies of other art scenes in Turkey, an example of which is the study of Roman (Gypsy) music by Değirmenci (2011), where he demonstrates the emphasis of locality that provides the basis for the commodification of Romanness, which takes the forms of attachment to spatial locations such as *mahalle*s. From the other end of the spectrum, if we are to talk about studies on hip hop scenes in other countries, we can quote Yasser Matter (2003) who studied the virtual hip hop communities in Singapore and how the virtual scene there opened the way for subcultural identities to go beyond geographic boundaries with local identities being integrated into a global subcultural identity. Another example might be Ian Condry's (2001) study of the Japanese hip hop scene, where he gives an overview on the history of Japanese hip hop culture that took form in street dance, club scene and pop market.

1.4 Methodology

The analyses conducted on MOB Entertainment were mostly based on in-depth interviews held with the artists. The artists were limited to Saygın Ayas, a.k.a. *Hayalet* from the rap group BTC; Kerem Gülsoy, a.k.a. *Tepki*; Yılmaz Hüseyin Tosun, a.k.a. *Aksan*, Utku Yalçınkaya, a.k.a. *Uzi* from the rap group GNG; and Tolga Serbes, a.k.a. *Motive*, who in addition to being a solo rap artist, is also a member of the rap group 832 Yanyol. Hayalet, as the oldest member of the label was 34 years old at the time of the interview and had been doing rap music for 22 years, which was mostly underground with their self-produced albums until March, 2019 when

they released their first official album with MOB Entertainment. They were introduced to the label through their connection to Tepki, who is the founder of the label. This connection was formed through their translocal friendship over the years in the underground rap scene. Tepki was 32 years old at the time of the interview and had been doing rap music since 2001. Aksan was 25 years old at the time of the interview and had been doing rap music for about 15 years. Uzi, who was 21 at the time of the interview, had been doing rap music since 2012. And finally Motive, the youngest interviewee was 19 at the time of the interview and had been involved in rap scenes for about 4 years. All of the artists interviewed had been with MOB Entertainment since it was set up by Tepki. Of the 9 original groups or rap artists given in the MOB Entertainment website, if we consider Motive to also represent the group 823 Yanyol as he is a member, only three had not been represented in the interviews, one of whom due to his untimely death the previous year at the age of 18. Even though more inclusive interviews including all the artists as well as different members of the groups might have painted a better picture, it was not possible due to the tight schedule of the artists and other problems such as finding suitable locations.

The questions of the structured in-depth interviews were prepared with reference to the concepts of art worlds by Howard Becker (1982) and concepts of music scenes by Bennet and Peterson (2004). The questions were grouped under five titles as hip hop as an art form, mainstream rap, MOB, restrictions experienced by the artists and the changes in artists' art worlds. The question orders were not strictly followed and were sometimes modified based on the responses of the respective artists.

In addition to the in-depth interviews with the artists, some unstructured interviews were also conducted with some audience members before an MOB concert in Istanbul. Even though the interviews proved fruitful, there were serious restrictions regarding time and convenience. More structured interviews with a higher number of participants would be more representative and might be conducted for future research in order to focus on the audience perceptions of the artists' art worlds as they move from local, translocal and virtual scenes to the national rap scene in terms of their representations of their local scenes.

2. WHAT IS HIP HOP?

If you do not have a special interest towards hip hop culture, you probably mistake the words *hip hop* and *rap*, or think they both mean the same thing. Sometimes you may read or hear academics working on hip hop, or even rap artists use these two words interchangeably. In order to clarify the confusion, I should point out that hip hop is the whole culture that includes not only rap music, but also elements such as breakdancing, graffiti and fashion (Rose, 1994: 2; Price III, 2006: 1). Even though from a chronological point of view, rap music was not the first element of hip hop culture, it gained so much popularity to the point where it became the first thing that comes to most people's minds even to the point where people sometimes use the word *rap* when they actually mean hip hop. The reason for this is that "it proved to be the ideal form to commodify hip hop culture," as Chang (2005:176) states.

Hip hop came about in the 1970s in South Bronx and Harlem (Rose, 1994) as a result of efforts by young African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans and Hispanics to find a public platform for themselves to *"*reclaim their history, reactivate forms of black radicalism and contest the powers of despair and economic depression" (Dyson, 2004: 67-68; Hoyler and Mager, 2015). Thanks to hip hop, these people who had been oppressed, stripped of most opportunities, be it economic and social, and whose chances to get out of the living conditions in the ghettos where they lived in a state for which they were blamed, found a chance to express these feelings of marginalisation and being robbed of a fair position in the society, and establish forms of cultural resistance in an attempt to make a change (Dyson, 2004: 67-68; 595).

For the technical definition of rap music in this encompassing hip hop culture, all the rap artists I interviewed said it is lyrics spoken in rhythm or sung on a 4/4 beat. It is not that different from Rose's (1994:2) definition, where she says it is *"*a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music". However, beyond this technical definition, as part of the hip hop culture when it first emerged in Bronx, rappers became the voices of the ghetto and talked about gangs,

drugs, gun fights and losing loved ones in these everyday battles that they witnessed or experienced (Rose, 1994).

2.1 Social Impact

Rap proved to be as effective as a civil rights movement in the way that it dealt with issues of racism as well as political, economic and social issues that these marginalized people faced (Price III, 2006: 1). It did not take long for hip hop culture to be a global phenomenon and it was so readily accepted by youth in many countries that Hoyler and Mager (2001:237) defines it as "a hybrid form of cultural expression evolved in different parts of the world". It has now become a platform from which everybody can express their thoughts and feelings about what they see and what they go through in their lives (Jeffries, 2011:35).

Forman (2004:3) say that the social and cultural impact of hip hop culture is so great that it cannot be ignored by teachers and students. Hip hop culture was so promising for the youth in Bronx that it took the place of politics in their struggle for empowerment (Jeffries, 2011: 12) by helping them "carve out of more social space" (Ross, 1994:64) for black and Latino men who had been exposed to social degradation to establish identities by providing them with a means to express themselves on their conditions in an uncensored way, opening the floor for discussions regarding justice among themselves (Ross, 1994:314) with stories of oppression and creative resistance (Ross, 1994:19), and to offer criticism directed towards both the hip hop community itself and the society in which they live in general (Ross, 1994:60). Because hip hop brings together different voices from the marginalised parts of the society who are given a platform to talk about their experiences in the margins, hip hop did not stay limited to African Americans like the blues and jazz before it (Ross, 1994: 4,5). Soon after its inception, it started to attract young people from diverse backgrounds (Bennet, 2004:179). However, Rose (1994) sees the position of hip hop in the mainstream not a clear-cut situation where it is absorbed by popular culture because she asserts that:

> "[hip hop's] marginality is represented in the contradictory reaction rap receives in mainstream American media and popular culture. It is at once part of the dominant text, and yet, always on the margins of this text, relying on and commenting on the text's centre and always aware of its proximity to the border" (Ross, 1994:19).

Hip hop also makes it possible for historically disadvantaged Black men to turn their suffering into art and commerce (Forman and Neal, 2004: 138), enabling them to "yell at the system and be paid (highly) by it at the same time (Forman and Neal, 2004: 353). The distinctive opportunities hip hop gives to the disadvantaged youth such as having their own values, symbols, their own dance and style do not mean that they also stay away from the mainstream commodity culture like designer leisure wear, expensive cars and gold jewellery (Hazzard-Donald, 2004: 512). However, the culture is not without its critics. One of the most prominent criticisms made to hip hop culture concerns sexism against women. As hip hop emerged as a reaction to all attempts to keep Black masculinity under control, this reaction also extends back into Black household in the treatment of women. Black men might oppress women to feel more powerful in an attempt to break free of their historical, social and cultural shackles (Hazzard-Donald, 2004: 498). Some critics move beyond targeting certain elements and unfortunate by-products of the hip hop culture and aim their criticism at the core of the culture. For example, Kilson (2000:179) does not see hip hop as a serious cultural movement and calls it a "juvenile exercise" which offers no real political hope for the improvement of Black people's lives. bell hooks (1994:116) focuses further on hip hop artists' treatment of women and underscores that violence and sexism in hip hop, which she calls hip hop hedonism, reflect the values of the very culture that hip hop rose against, namely the white supremacist American culture.

2.2 Cultural Origins

Culture is a complex web of relations that are usually formed over long periods of time. In comparison, it might be said that hip hop culture did not take that long to emerge. However, it did not emerge out of nothing and is actually tied to much older traditions. Moreover, this connection to previous traditions is neither random nor naturally formed in its due time. As Swedenburg (2004:582, 583) says, hip hop community had to be "constructed and created, against all odds, in the face of the threat of decimation". What Swedenburg means by "decimation" is what Dyson (2004:66) means by "racial amnesia", in that young black people in the United States were led to forget all the achievements in their history and lose their sense of racial pride. The most current reason for this threat, especially for Bronx, the birthplace of

hip hop, was the deindustrialisation and urban planning in the early 1970s, which resulted in mass relocations of economically disadvantaged African Americans from various parts of New York to South Bronx in a swift way which did not allow for a smoother transition both financially and in terms of social rights (Rose, 1994: 30; Jeffries, 2011: 1).

The threat that African American culture faced traced back much further than the urban planning project of 1970s. Dyson (2004:66) claims that what rap symbolises is in part the striving on the part of African-American communities for literacy and orality after "legally coerced illiteracy during slavery". Furthermore, R.A.T. Judy (2004) says that rap keeps the experience of African Americans alive, turning the experience into knowledge as a result of being told. Consequently, this knowledge *"*liberates significance from experience*"* by showing the difference between having the experience and knowing it; hence, the slave can see the heterogeneity of her labour and her identity (Judy, 2004: 107,108). In that way, rap allows the African Americans to express their social condition and, in that expression, be able to separate their identity from their social reality. In the construction and creation of hip hop community, African Americans use elements of African culture. For example, they appropriated Jamaican Toast tradition (Bartlett, 2004: 133) and Reed (as quoted by Hess, 2007) puts forward that the "mixing and sampling technique" is a constant in African culture in that it requires a tradition of making something from scraps, an example of which can be seen in the Quilts of Gee's Bend, where African American women in Alabama knit together different parts from different pieces of cloth to make quilts (quiltsofgeebend, [12.04.2019]). Another example of hip hop tradition that traces back to African traditions is breakdancing. Michael Holman (2004:11) says it is related to "dance styles and cultural traditions spanning several continents and two centuries".

2.3 Technical Characteristics

Ian Chambers calls rap "New York's sound system" (as quoted by Forman, 2004: 389). When asked by Mark Dery about the production philosophy adopted by the famous political rap group Public Enemy, Chuck D., the leader of the group, says that they make sure it is *loud* (Dery, 2004: 413). It makes sense because, after all, the

whole point of hip hop culture is to be noticed and get their voice heard. If we look at other technical characteristics of rap music, we have to start with turntables. Turntables were originally playback units manufactured for domestic use. However, DJs like Afrika Bambaataa, Kool DJ Herc and Grandmaster Flash appropriated this device to be manipulated so that it was used to produce dance music at parties (Chambers, 2004). *Scratching* is another technique that DJs invented and have used for rap records, which is when the DJ rapidly runs the groove of the record player against the stylus in order to produce a rhythmic, percussive effect (Rose, 2004). Using such techniques, DJs "mix" vinyl records together to produce instrumental foundations, on which lyrics can be sung. These foundations are called backbeat or "breakbeat" (Back, 1996a:192 as quoted by Bennet, 2004: 178). Additionally, *flow* is defined as the ability to go through complex lyrics without any problem as well as the flow of the music, and the term *layer* can be used when rappers, or MCs, use the same word for different actions or objects and also when DJs structure sound literally as one layer on top of another (Rose, 1994: 39). As can be seen, these techniques have been developed by hip hop artists using the limited opportunities that they had, financial and otherwise, which also made it possible for others with limited financial means to learn and apply. Thanks to the nature of these methods to produce rap music, young people were able to record and produce their own records without the support of the music industry and professional recording studios (Baldwin, 2004: 172). In fact, even when there is a professional studio involved, producing a rap album costs for less than $50,000 while a rock album can cost as much as $300,000 (Lusane, 2004: 353). However, with all the technical details of rap music, it should be kept in mind that it encompasses much more than just technicalities. Chuck D. of Public Enemy says "Technical is not really the case in point when it comes to this type of music" (Dery, 2004: 413). Similarly, in my interview with him, the Turkish rapper Tepki stated that even though rap music has a technical definition, and we cannot disregard any music as not rap as long as it meets this technical definition, as a listener, he believed that rap music should have a spirit.

2.4 Rap as an Art Form

At its origin, hip hop roots and its audience belonged to the underprivileged class of the society in the United States, and its message was threatening to the social order

of things for the white Americans, which was a reason behind political moves to undermine it (Shusterman, 2004: 459). However, its cultural background was not the only reason why people did not readily accept it as an art form. Rap music is *"*fabricated from stolen snatches of pre-recorded music" (Dery, 2004: 408). Accepting rap music as art problematizes issues such as creativity and originality (Barlett, 2004: 401). Music producer and songwriter Mtume, for example, despite not being completely against the use of sampling as a musical tool, did not like the way rappers use it in lieu of musical composition (George, 2004: 437). Chuck D of Public Enemy talks about people not considering rappers as musicians, stating that they "can't even play a real instrument!" (Dery, 2004: 410). However, he goes on to say that it is not fair to disregard DJs like that because DJing also requires a lot of skill and that some DJs can play the turntable *"*like somebody else might play the guitar!" (Dery, 2004: 410). In rap music, segments of pre-recorded music is used for the songs, but a certain section of the song which is best suited for the sound desire of the artist is chosen, it is fit into a new rhythm and looped in such a way that that particular segment which may not be an important element for the original song becomes the main foundation of the new rap song, which indeed makes hip hop production a creative art in its own right (Hess, 2007:89,90).

Another point where people oppose to rap's status as a form of art is the content of its lyrics, in which the rap artist can talk about sexual desirability and commercial success. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the lyrics emphasize how all these status signs are originated from the artists' verbal power (Shusterman, 2004: 460). All in all, we can call rap music as a postmodern art form that challenges our deeply embedded artistic conventions where sampling has a collage effect, which is one of the characteristics of postmodern aesthetic (Jameson, 1984: 73-75 as quoted by Shusterman, 2004: 462). Nevertheless, we should underscore that even though rap gained its recognition as a legitimate art form in the United States, this legitimization did not automatically extend to other countries when rap went international, so rap has had to prove its worth as an art form in the new countries where it has been adopted by people to be used for various purposes. For example, despite its storming entrance to the Turkish market thanks to Cartel, for a long time it sought recognition in the music market. People were quick to dismiss it as "not suitable to Turkish culture" and as "a threat that can take young people down wrong ways*"* as someone

stated in Akbay's (2007) street interview, filmed as a part of her hip hop documentary in Istanbul. When I asked this question in my interviews, the answers I have received varied. While some rappers believed the reason behind the disregard of rap as an art form was because some people see it as hooliganism, agreeing with the guy interviewed 12 years ago in Akbay's documentary, others stated that it was partly the early rappers' fault for lacking diversity in their music and not being able to represent the culture as it deserved. However, I believe Tepki's response was the most relevant one for the recent years of rap in Turkey: "I don't think that's the case anymore." And he adds "Today, the art has become such a concept that even if you put your excrement on a carpet and hang it on a wall, and say this is art, and I am not saying it as a bad thing by the way, it is art. There's nothing anyone can do about it."

3. HIP HOP HISTORY

3.1 The Social Context for the Emergence of Hip Hop Culture

Even though the start of the hip hop culture is traced back to mid-1970s, it has borrowed and adapted from various cultures coming much earlier. For example, Morgan and Bennet (2011:180) states that one can find the aesthetic and linguistic features of rhyming that are elements of rapping all over Africa and Caribbean as well as the United States, making it impossible to isolate a single cultural direction followed by hip hop culture. Similarly, in his section on breakdancing, Michael Holman (2004:32) stated that the roots of the breakdance style actually date back to ancient Africa, feudal China and tribal Eurasia. It was considered cool for the African slaves brought to serve in the United States to mockingly imitate the European dances of their masters while combining the moves with their own rhythms, which included *"*leaps, hops, skips, falls, drops and turns (Holman, 2004). Slavery was abolished; however, it did not readily bring social equality and justice for the African American population. Even after the Civil Rights Movement, despite the national discourse which painted a picture of equality, the racial segregation in the post-industrial cities could be argued to be far more "insidious than segregated black spaces prior to the Civil Rights movement" (Neal, 2004: 366). The Civil Rights movement led the way to the Immigration Act of 1965, with which immigrant visas did not have a nationality requirement and were instead based on professional skills. It caused an increase in Asian and Caribbean migrant populations in the United States (Price III, 2006). Another effect to the social conditions around the emergence of hip hop took place when US decided to enter the Vietnam War, during which the young people that the laws disregarded most of the time were drafted in the military and sent to serve for these very laws (Price III, 2006: 4). However, perhaps the most important factor in the emergence of hip hop culture was the post-industrial urban space created by the policies of the government. During the Reagan era, the funding for the increased military spending was taken out of government-funded programs which resulted in the exhaustion of local economies, which brought about social

deterioration as well, especially for the urban poor, who were made up of mostly by African Americans (Jeffries, 2011). With the funding into youth services cut, public schools became reduced to being gateways to prison. Drugs and violence took the place left by unemployment (Ards, 2004: 353). When the middle-class African Americans left the city for suburbs, they took the guidance of a more privileged class with them, leaving the poor black urban communities more and more disorganised and divorced from the values of the mainstream (Jeffries, 2011: 79, 80).

3.2 Hip Hop Is Born

"What emerged in the shadows of many of these developments was a distinct African-American youth culture whose basic sentiments were often incompatible with mainstream African-American leadership and mainstream culture in general" (Neal, 2004: 369). In the little public space they created for themselves, African Americans followed this tradition of defiance and came up with ways to express themselves that later came to be known as hip hop (Ards, 2004: 312). This became possible partly because despite the chaotic look of gangs that battled over the control of the cocaine industry (Neal, 2004: 369), each gang in fact had an organised structure with a leader. With the right leadership of Afrika Bambaataa, whose main interest was music, but who was also aware of the political context within the community, these gangs turned into hip hop crews and tried to settle their disputes through *"*lyrical battles and break-dancing competitions rather than violence," leaving their tags as graffiti art on the walls of the crumbling city walls (Ards, 2004: 312). It was within these crumbling city walls, which also served as a metaphor for the *"*crumbling physical and social context because of post industrialization" that African American and Latino youth put together a rich, complex and interwoven set of expressions including emceeing, DJing, breakdancing and graffiti (Chang, 2006; Perkins, 1996; Rose, 1994; as quoted by Petschauer, 2009), by putting together earlier forms of mambo, funk and Jamaican soundclash. And it was indeed the former gang-leader Afrika Bambaataa who coined the term *hip hop* for this culture (Chang, 2005).

3.3 Elements of Hip Hop

3.3.1 Graffiti

In an interview conducted by Nelson George (2004:46) Afrika Bambaata states that "[...] before the whole word hip hop, graffiti was there before that*"* [sic]. Graffiti started as identity markers of gangs, who "tagged", i.e. put their identifiers, usually on public property to mark their territories (Price III, 2006). When hip hop culture started taking hold, these spray-painted tags of the gangs turned into an art form that individual artists used on all public surfaces they could find such as subway trains (Hebdige, 2004: 226). This art, which started as border signs for street gangs during turf wars over cocaine, is now so *"*so highly prized that it's sold for thousands of dollars in the New York galleries" and you will encounter it on the walls all over the world (Hebdige, 2004: 226).

3.3.2 Breakdance

In the social debris of post industrialism, breakdancing, or *breaking*, started as a way to physically exert one's presence by means of competitive and visual displays, which were tied to status among young breakdance leaders (Forman, 2004: 10). With the dissolution of gangs into party crews, DJs were basing their new techniques on the freestyle of breakdancers, who used this platform to show off their skills of virility and wit (Forman, 2004: 14). Thanks to the connection they created between the street and the disco, which developed hand in hand with hip hop, breakdancers made it possible for hip hop to move from the underground closer to the mainstream (Forman, 2004: 10). When media started to show interest in breaking, the dance which had been considered to be a serious competition as an urban vernacular dance, changed in terms of form as well as meaning, producing two distinct types of dancers, one type being the professional who took it as an art form to refine and expand, and another type who took it as a hobby to get fit or tackle it as a challenge to overcome (Forman, 2004: 14). After all, it was at least as much athletic as sports like baseball or football, which consequently had an effect on the clothing styles to make them more comfortable and washable (Hebdige, 2004: 226).

3.3.3 DJing

One of the most important people in the formation of the Bronx style in hip hop was Kool DJ Herc, who emigrated to the United States from Jamaica in 1967 with a passion for music and an extensive record collection as well as knowledge of the Jamaican sound system scene (Hebdige, 2004: 224; Price III, 2006: 11). In 1973, Herc had his own system with giant speakers in the model of Caribbean sound systems (George, 2004: 45), which was louder and more powerful than all the other neighbourhood set-ups with a better and "crispier" sound (Hebdige, 2004: 224). However, Herc realized that his new crowd in New York would not dance to reggae tunes, so he started using "Latin-tinged funk" while talking over the music, only expressing some slang here and there as well as shouting in order to excite the crowd. In time, people started to really like this new style and Herc found himself looking for records which he would only use for s small section like the lead guitar or the bass riff for a limited time, then moving onto another section of another record while talking through the microphone (Hebdige, 2004: 224). In addition to this style, which was called "beats" or "breakbeats", Herc also hired two MCs to do the rapping as he was in charge of switching between records because this switching became faster and faster, and he could not cope with it while also doing the rapping. These MCs were given the task of dancing in front of the turntable deck and "bouncing lines off each other" (Hebdige, 2004: 224). Herc was aware of the importance of music in stitching up the wound suffered by the oppressed African American youth in the hectic world of Bronx (Price III, 2006: 11).

As a result of the difficulty of doing these collages, the creative DJs started to build influence in their turfs (Toop, 2004: 238). Of these influential DJs, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash built on the original vision created by Kool Herc (George, 2004: 45). Afrika Bambaataa was in the southeast and Grandmaster Flash was influential in the South Bronx turfs (Chang, 2005). Grandmaster Flash invented two of the famous elements of rap music, which is "scratching" and "backspin" (Rose, 1994: 53). In 1975, Bambaataa founded the Zulu Nation, an organisation for the street kids, with which he hoped to transform the gang structure that he had himself been a part of with hip hop by creating a community within the community (Hebdige, 2004: 225)

3.3.4 Rap

In the interview I conducted with the rap artists working with MOB Entertainment, all of them defined rap as words said over 4/4 rhythm. However, rap at its origin was not what people think of rap now, especially in terms of its lyrics. It started as verbal competition, which had a connection to earlier African American traditions of verbal battles (Blair, 2004: 498). As part of the hip hop culture emerging in the ghetto neighbourhoods, rap was first dance music played at house parties in the company of a DJ (Blair, 2004). At the beginning, the lyrics of the MCs were very limited and it was mostly irrational bragging between males, which was all confined to the streets, reports Lil Rodney Cee (as quoted by Toop, 2004: 241). With each new rap group the level of competition increased. They spent the money they made on sound systems for their songs. Rap artists usually worked as duos with DJs (Toop, 2004). Despite all the earlier attempts in the evolution of rap music from singled out lines as shouted out between the beats of a DJ, the real breakthrough in getting rap popular around the United States was undoubtedly "Rapper's Delight" by Sugar Hill Gang in 1979 (Price III, 2006; Forman and Neal, 2004). The song used the tunes by the 1970s R&B group Chic as the foundation, over which they rapped in a rhythmic and repetitive way, which was similar to the trend of rap music at the beginning, which focused mostly on other music from African American culture. (Dyson, 2004: 61). Rap lyrics in time changed from party lyrics to "message rap" in mid to late 1980s, which was followed by "gangsta rap" in 1990s which talked about the ugly side of the ghetto (Potter and Stapleton quoted by Androutsopoulos and Scholz, 2010: 471). In 1986, rap had already become the most prominent aspect of the hip hop culture by bringing the African American youth to the position of being "voices of their generation" (Chang, 2005: 176) by giving them an outlet to talk about issues like racism and social injustices (Dyson, 2004: 62). Rap concerts became a platform for cultural resistance where rap artists had the opportunity to oppose censored speech (Dyson, 2004). When rap moved more into the mainstream, the "clean" versions were prepared for radio, but the content was still in line with the Black youth culture and experiences (Kitwana, 2004: 344).

3.4 Journey to Mainstream Popularity in the US

Hip hop at the beginning mostly depended on face-to-face interactions that were limited to the local scenes of the artists. Artists were learning the techniques during these interactions and they were building on them. For hip hop artists, importance of the events themselves surpassed the concern about any type of discourse in the 1970s (Dimitriadis, 2004: 426). These early groups were mostly limited to a "seven-mile circle", secluded from the corporate and the powerful; hence unmediated and with no responsibility to answer to anyone (Chang, 2005: 96). These invisible kids obsessively tried to show to the world that they were stronger than people thought they were (Chang, 2005).

After taking root in Bronx, New York, it did not take long before rap spread to other cities with a large black population such as Philadelphia, Chicago and Boston (Samuels, 2004: 148); hence creating local scenes in these areas as well as translocal ones as a result of the interaction between these local scenes. One of the factors behind the relatively quick dissemination of rap was the easiness with which it could be produced (Samuels, 2004: 148). As rap started to become a bigger phenomenon, rap artists such as Afrika Bambaataa, Kurtis Blow, DJ Kool Herc started to play with the original characteristics of the emerging musical genre and rap started to discuss the elements that contributed to its birth as part of the hip hop culture such as drug addiction and police brutality (Dyson, 2004: 61). While the music industry believed rap to be a passing fad, which would fade away once the black youth lost their interest (Dyson, 2004: 61), the release of the song "Rapper's Delight" by the Sugar Hill Gang from Sugar Hill Records, which was a New Jersey-based label, changed their minds forever because as the first rap hit, it managed to find a place in the national music scene in the United States and even became the "best selling twelve-inch single of all time" (Chang, 2005: 131). One possible explanation for this instant success of "Rapper's Delight" could be that what the mainstream knew of rap music before "Rapper's Delight" was the underground recordings and hence, this was something new for the mainstream (Ards, 2004: 313). When the Sugar Hill Gang showed the hip hop world that it was possible to move beyond the local scenes that existed in the inner-city neighbourhoods, other artists also started to look for such record contracts that will carry them into the national music scenes under corporate

control. And this commercial success by the Sugar Hill Gang was followed by a lucrative contract signed by Kurtis Blow in 1981, and Run-DMC made an endorsement deal with Adidas in 1986, all of which changed the focus of the artists from only making art and expressing their living conditions to making money while doing all that. When we came to 1980s, hip hop now served as way for the artists to "make it" financially; DJs became producers, breakdancers started performing on mainstream media channels such as TVs instead of street corners, graffiti artists started exhibiting their art in art galleries instead of deserted buildings, and MCs became celebrities as the voice for merchandise (Price III, 2006: 72). However, the political motives in hip hop were not completely deserted. There was still belief that hip hop could be used to direct social change because it had always aimed to "move the crowd" (Ards, 2004: 313). Chuck D. of Public Enemy even stated that rap was "the black CNN" and that it should be used to raise consciousness via content about revolution, inspiring a generation of hip hop youth to leave their gold chains and wear Malcolm X medallions instead (Ards, 2004: 313).

In 1984, rap reached its first mass white audience with Run-DMC, who stepped onto the scene as if they had just been back from the street corner while in reality both of the artists in the group were middle class people, Run being the son of two university graduates and DMC being a *good Catholic schoolkid*, explains Bill Adler, who is a former rock critic and rap's best-known publicist (Samuels, 2004: 149). However, on stage, they looked like *"*the biggest, baddest, streetest guys in the world" (Samuels, 2004: 149). As hip hop kept expanding in 1980s, the content also expanded, additional elements serving as completing the genre rather than changing it. Standing by the ideals which formed the hip hop culture, Bambaataa tried to make sure the social, political and economic foundation of the culture remained at the centre of it (Price III, 2006: 37).

In 1990s, rap songs were sweeping through the charts, and hip hop artists were becoming pop culture icons as celebrities. NWA carried the focus to where the artists were from in terms of their identity and rap persona with their song "Straight Outta Compton" (Chang, 2005: 236). However, this move into the mainstream did not mean the demise of the local scene in rap music, where local enclaves served as harbours for future hip hop artists where they were could improve their performance

and train themselves in acquiring necessary skills away from the mainstream attention where they could only be found by those who knew exactly where to look for them. These enclaves also made it possible for some important elements of the hip hop culture to survive (Price III, 2006: 49, 50).

3.5 Gangsta Rap

Gangsta rap as a form of hip hop music, emerged as a response to middle-class oriented nationalistic rap, which focuses on African Nationalism with a political take on their music because gangsta rappers believe that focusing on Africa disregards the everyday struggles faced by the people stuck in post-industrial America (Baldwin, 2004: 165). It is a product of the violent life struggles of poor African Americans (Tate, 2013) and usually gives a crude description of the conditions such as "unemployment, miseducation, discrimination, homicides, gang life, class oppression, police brutality and regressive gender politics that dominate the lives of many black youth" (Lusane, 2004: 357).

Even though gangsta rap first rose to prominence in New York and the remainder of the East Coast, its focus later shifted to the post-industrial urban experiences of the West Coast and became a national phenomenon there, especially in the city of Los Angeles with the group N.W.A. (Niggaz With Attitude) (Baldwin, 2004; Tate, 2013).

For the gangsta rap of West Coast what mattered was the characters, plots and messages rather than the verbal discourse (Dimitriadis, 2004). For example, in the song "Dead Homiez", Ice Cube, one of the representatives of gangsta rap, talks about what he witnessed at funerals of his friends who were violently killed. In this song, there is no artistic concern in terms of the expression of lyrics. Rather, the lyrics are expressed in a quite straightforward way "with passion and emotional clarity" (Dimitriadis, 2004: 429).

For gangsta rappers, the word "nigga" became a word to express their defiance against the dominant society, which for them was made up of not only white supremacy but also other black people. The term "nigga" for them was not inherently a bad word; rather, it was a performative identity for them which included more than just being black (Dimitriadis, 2004). It was "being the product of the post-industrial

ghetto" (Kelley, 1994:210; as quoted by Dimitriadis, 2004). They express blackness as a hyper-masculine persona, hoping to create "safe spaces" with uncontested male power (Dimitriadis, 2004). Opening a window on the daily realities of their urban lives, they do not hesitate when giving accounts of *"*shocking and touching portrayals of life and death*"* (Watts, 2004:597). However, as part of the hyper-masculinity persona they created in these expressions, their songs involve *"*macho boasting, misogyny and violent fantasies" (Lusane, 2004: 357).

The rivalry between the East Coast political rap represented by groups such as Public Enemy who focused on nationalistic view on the contemporary problems faced by black people in general and the West Coast gangsta rap represented by groups such as NWA grew with contributions of competition among record labels and gang culture (Dimitriadis, 2004:429; Giannota, 2019). The rivalry originally started because West Coast rappers felt like they were not as welcomed in the East Coast, which is where the origin of hip hop lies, as rap artists from the East Coast were welcomed in the West Coast (Giannota, 2019). As the discourses went harsher, the New York Times stated the market research they had done demonstrated that the public demanded even harsher lyrics (Pareles, 1990; as quoted by Watts, 2004: 601). As the rivalry, which later started to be represented by rapper Tupac and Notorious B.I.G. started to become grimmer and grimmer, the violence started to spill over onto the real life (Giannote, 2019). According to some, the end of gangsta rap was when at the top of the East Coast - West Coast Rivalry, these two rappers were murdered (Tupac on September 13, 1996 and B.I.G. on March 9, 1997).

3.6 Hip Hop Becomes a Global Phenomenon

In an interview with Nelson George (2004: 55), upon being asked about what he likes the most about what was going on in hip hop, Afrika Bambaataa says what he loves the most is that hip hop has become international. Androutsopouolos and Scholz (2010) follow a framework developed by James Lull to explain the process of hip hop's global spread. According to Lull, this process starts with deterritorialization, which is when a cultural element is taken out of the context of its society of origin, and ends with reterritorialization, which is when this cultural element is now integrated to be a part of another society. Three cultural interactions

occur to make this process possible. The first of these is transculturation, which describes the process where cultural forms are taken from their place and time of origin and produce new forms as a result of their interaction with other cultural forms, which is usually made possible by mass media and culture industries (Lull, 1995: 153 as quoted by Androutsopouolos and Scholz, 2010). The second cultural interaction according to Lull is hybridization, which is when new and traditional cultural forms get into contact and mix, producing "cultural hybrids". The last cultural interaction is indigenization, which refers to when these new cultural forms start to take on local characteristics (Lull, 1995: 155-156; as quoted by Androutsopouolos and Scholz, 2010). Androutsopouolos and Scholz (2010: 468) also add that despite the ambiguity in terms of the differentiation between indigenization and hybridization, they infer that indigenization is the outcome of this "melding and mediation process.

Pennycook (2004) describes hip hop as "a culture without nation" (Sakar and Allen, 2007), which has been appropriated in various parts of the world as a vehicle for youth protests in making "political statements about local racial, sexual, employment and class issues, the appeal of which is especially strong if the culture into which it is imported has linguistic and cultural diversities to make up the context and content of the new hybrid culture (Mitchell, 2001a: 10 as quoted by Sakar and Allen, 2007: 118).

In terms of writing rap songs in languages other than English, timing was important (Flores, 2004: 75). Even though Puerto Ricans were active in the emergence of breakdancing, graffiti as well as being involved in writing rap music from 1970s, the rap lyrics were all English at the beginning (Flores, 2004: 69). For the Puerto Rican families, hip hop sounded like "noise" when it was in English; they considered it American. When Puerto Rican started to write rap songs in Spanish so that their families can also understand it, the families started to like it (Flores, 2004:80). And Flores adds that when they tried out their Spanish lyrics with their mostly Black audiences, they received further encouragement, as a result of which they started to use lyrics in their mother tongue more comfortably in their songs (Flores, 2004).

The song that made rap music known in the United States, "Rapper's Delight" by the Sugar Hill Gang, was also instrumental in getting it known to an international

audience because it was played on popular music stations around the world from France, Japan, Holland to the United Kingdom (Price III, 2006). In addition, more than 200 breakdancers took the stage during closing ceremonies of the 1984 Summer Olympics, which took place in Los Angeles, California, making it possible for many people around to world to be exposed to hip hop culture for the first time. Moreover, sitcoms like *What's Happening* and variety shows like *Saturday Night 'Live'* helped hip hop spread internationally. In Cuba, people could tune in to Miami radio and television stations where they saw elements of hip hop. Zulu Nations, founded by Afrika Bambaataa set up chapters around the world to help people tailor hip hop culture for their own needs and desires with a firm belief in its power to unite people (Price III, 2006: 89-90).

If we look at various cultural adaptations of rap around the globe, we will find many examples that have been formed as a result of a process of glocalisation, which is a term used by Morgan and Bennet (2011:181) to provide an explanation for the movement of local and global contexts. Through glocalisation, cultural elements are transformed as a result of the interaction between global as well as local dynamics. Similar to the process of hip hop in its country of origin, the United States, despite some earlier attempts, it becomes the success of individual artists to give it a widespread acknowledgement and popularity within each country in which hip hop culture was glocalised. In France, for example, despite the attempts by artists such as Dee Nasty, in 1984, it was the success of MC Solaar in 1991 that made rap in French language a popular phenomenon (Androutsopoulos and Scholz, 2010). It is quickly taken up by the French youth, consisting mostly of Africans, Arabs or people from lower classes, many of whom lived in government-subsidized apartments where they experience violence, drugs and other crimes (Prevos, 1996: 714, as quoted by Price III, 2006), and they utilised it as a tool for demanding social justice, social change and cultural and ethnic recognition (Price III, 2006: 91-92). Puerto Ricans, after getting rapping in Spanish accepted, started to use it to express discrimination and exclusion. Japanese youth uses rap music to differentiate themselves from what they believe the mainstream youth to be (Bennett, 2004). While Australian rappers criticise how Aborigine people are treated (Lusane, 2004: 351), Israeli hip hop paints a picture of the complex political status in Israel and is represented by Zionist, pro-Palestinian and Jewish Ethiopian-Israeli artists while Palestinian rappers have

become the alternative voice of resistance in the Israeli-Palestinian struggle (Morgan and Bennett, 2011). In Tunisia, the songs of El General were banned by the government for years from radio and he was not allowed to make any albums. When he released a protest rap song in 2010 on YouTube, the song became really popular on social media as well as being broadcast on Al Jazeera. Seeing how effective the song became also among the Tunisian youth, El General released another song in support of the protest movement, after which he was arrested by thirty police officers but soon released due to overwhelming public protest (Morgan and Bennett, 2011). Similarly, rap music is considered to have the biggest impact in the fight for freedom and liberty during the protest movements (Morgan and Bennett, 2011).

In Japanese rap, as opposed to American rap, there aren't any ultra-political or radical racial elements as a result of the social organisation of Japanese culture. Instead, Japanese rappers focus on generational challenges and individual empowerment (Price III, 2006: 95). In Cuba, rap songs are accompanied by live instruments as opposed to American rap even though DJs and breakbeats also exist. Cuban rap does not generally contain violence or misogyny; neither do the rappers promote any lyrics that are against the music industry. The main reason behind it is the support from the Cuban government for hip hop (Price III, 2006). Even a hip hop conference is organised by Fidel Castro every year, who has described it as "the existing revolutionary voice of Cuba's future" (Cepeda, 2000, as quoted by Morgan and Bennett, 2011: 186).

3.7 Rap as a Commercial Activity

Rappers aim to make money (Hess, 2007) and this commercial interest is not new. In fact, Forman states that it has been a part of hip hop from the very beginning from the highly localized marketing and promotional infrastructures it had (Forman, 2004: 156,157). On the other hand, Hebdige claims that sustaining a clear distinction between commercial exploitation and creativity and originality is not easy (Rose, 1994). This becomes even more complicated in a world where hip hop artists will declare themselves to be entrepreneurs within the record industry much more often than artists in any other genre of music do and where artists use their songs to try and

convince their listeners that they have not tainted their integrity in the process of commercialization (Hess, 2007: 19).

Before rap met commercialism, it was not a visible cultural phenomenon in the United States. Its ground where it was planted and started growing was provided by the DJ party culture (Kitwana, 2004). It relied mostly on word of the mouth and live performances for promotion and hence at the beginning, rap was completely based on the experiences of the black urban landscape. It was this commercial disinterest during the formative years of hip hop which allowed it to be developed without depending on the commercial market (Neal, 2004: 371). The reason behind this commercial disinterest, which enabled hip hop to be driven by pleasure rather than profit, was not because none of the hip hop artists wanted to make any profit. Rather it was because they were not aware that it was possible to profit from what they were doing. Upon realizing this connection, they started to market themselves "wholeheartedly" (Rose, 1994: 40). After all, Hess (2007:6) claims that it was Herc's intention to make money that started hip hop in the first place and the only difference today is that rappers talk about their agenda to make money more openly. Moreover, the hip hop group which made the song that made hip hop famous in the US as well as getting it heard internationally, the Sugar Hill Gang, was put together by a record company executive Sylvia Robinson (Hess, 2007: 164).

When rap lacked the opportunities for licensing deals and budgets, it was able to find its own way of survival by generating alternative resources, the term for which came to be known as "underground" (Negus, 2004: 538). During this time of rejection both by black and by white middle-class audiences, a fate similar to other forms of black popular music, it survived thanks to marketing done by independent labels and entrepreneurs. Once the commercial visibility was achieved, the major companies swept in to get their share; however, this traditional process of commodification and cooptation did not go very smoothly because of local cable access, accessible mixing, production and copying equipment and new relationship between independent record labels and major record labels (Rose, 1994; Baldwin, 2004). Despite reaching to number 1 as the biggest selling music in the United States (Hess, 2007:17) rap artists refuse to turn over the control of their music to the industry (Rose, 1994:41). Even for artists who have achieved mainstream status, there is a

widespread belief that rap should always remain outside of the corporate bounds; hence even artists who claimed executive positions always identify themselves with the street (Negus, 2004). However, Price III (2006) points out that artists who have reached mainstream status and intend to keep their position do not necessarily focus on preservation of the hip hop culture and act in accordance with the needs and desires of their record companies while the underground artists can be seen to work towards preserving the hip hop culture (Price III, 2006: 50). Still, the move from the underground to the mainstream is a desired one as long as the artist remains in control of their music because they claim they intend to take over the industry and change it (Hess, 2007:20). Consequently, the underground provides a source of emerging talent for the corporate music world (Kitwana, 2004: 343). It is also important to note that this line between commercialized mainstream rap and the underground rap has been thinning thanks to the improvement in technology because as technology gives the underground rappers better means to record, mix, produce and share their music digitally without the need for major record companies, they can gain access to distribution channels that were previously only available to mainstream artists, giving them the opportunity for recognition and financial gains on an equal plane as their mainstream counterparts (Price III, 2006: 50).

Except for the underground artists, hip hop has become extremely commodified from its music to fashion (Neal, 2004: 377). By late 1990s, hip hop started to be used in advertisements for all kinds of companies from Voltron to Sprite and Coca Cola (Kitwana, 2004: 342). Companies like Nike and Adidas realized that hip hop was their way into youth cultures who constituted a more brand-conscious demographic, to take their branding to next level (Chang, 2005:7). However, despite this move into the commercial world, hip hop has been successful in investing in its own philosophical and cultural basis in order to get over possible limitations posed by the corporate world. While at the beginning most people thought hip hop was going to fade away as the enthusiasm of the African American youth moves onto something else (Banes, 2004: 13), hip hop artists took this creative and aesthetic volatility to be a component of the culture (Neal, 2004:377). Rap emerged by criticising the social structures from which it emerged and now it continues its existence by selling criticisms of the very structure that enables its distribution into the market (Boyd, 2004: 327).

Ideas in rap songs about national consciousness for African Americans spread around the country not despite but thanks to this extreme commercialism in some ways (Baldwin, 2004: 172). When hip hop artists became known as marketable entertainers, they started to appear in TV shows and films, they took on advertising contracts with famous companies and as a result of this close involvement with the corporate culture, young African Americans started to pop up everywhere for people to notice (Kitwana, 2004: 342). Rap has served as another way for African Americans to "unnerve and simultaneously revitalize American culture" (Rose, 1994: 185). And perhaps more importantly, it provided for the young African Americans with limited opportunities in the ghettos an option beyond minimum-wage jobs, getting them excited about a better alternative and getting them to print their own CDs and sell them in their local areas, hoping to put their city on the map through hip hop (Rose, 1994: 377).

However, the effects of commercialization on rap have not always been positive. First of all, it had negative consequences on the content of the rap songs. When in the hands of the dominant mass culture, some rappers have started to make their songs in ways more acceptable to the mainstream audiences (Blair, 2004: 504). Even black record executives find themselves trapped by the rules of the industry because Carmen Ashurst-Watson says the industry revolves around making profit (Rose, 2004: 551). More sceptical readings of the industry go even further to suggest that even the little control the artists feel they have over their music is nothing but an illusion created by the industry to keep profiting from their work while keeping them content (Hess, 2007:18). Some also argue that when music becomes too commercialized, it loses its cultural connections and becomes a mere product for passive pop consumption (Blair, 2004:499). However, according to Hess (2007), for some artists, the concept of double consciousness by Du Bois applies, by which they try to keep themselves accountable to the cultural origins of their music while at the same time trying to produce works that will be easily consumable in the market by the mainstream listeners (Hess, 2007: 20,21).

The possible adverse effects of rap music is likely to move beyond the world of music into the real lives. West (1990) suggests that despite the financial opportunity rap provides for the young African Americans, it can also be perceived to be limiting

their opportunities, similar to society's expectations of African Americans towards being professional athletes; in that, rather than opening a whole ray of possibilities readily available to the white youth, hip hop may be perceived to add only one more way out of the ghetto for the African American youth in addition to being a professional athlete (Boyd, 2004: 327). Another effect is the discourse in rap music regarding the life in ghetto which serves to reinforce the stereotypes on the minds of the mainstream regarding the African American culture as a "deprived wasteland". With the graphic description of the violence in the ghetto by gangsta rap, the lyrics lose their political and social relevance and end up being mere rhetorical catchphrases celebrating violence, misogyny and excessive marijuana use (Boyd, 2004). Moreover, Neal (2004: 381) points out that the economic successes enjoyed by hip hop artists and the extravagant lifestyles are used in the public discussions about the social and economic disadvantages faced by the African American communities. Additionally, some young African Americans can be influenced by the rationales given in gangsta rap narratives about the lengths to go in order to make ends meet in urban America (Watts, 2004: 594).

In this struggle in the corporate music market sometimes against the mainstream record labels, sometimes within them, the place of independent labels is important. The fact that changes in the popular music are shaped by the involvement of independent labels cannot be discarded easily because these labels allow the new sounds into the music market, which are kept away by the gatekeeping characteristics of the major labels (George, 1989; as quoted by Negus, 2004: 530). These local independent record labels make it possible for like-minded artists to meet, exchange ideas and support one another (Bennet, 2004: 191). In an attempt to avoid the limitations and the dictations of the corporate music market, some rap artists found their own labels to be able to have and give fairer deals; however, according to Ashurst-Watson, these do not have a big impact on the overall functioning of the industry despite providing the artist with more control over their work, which is a pretty big deal for the individual artists to have a chance to be more than just slaves to the system and instead to be overseers. They provide the institutional foundation for the new talent to be developed and discovered; however, Ashurst-Watson believes that record companies also need bigger names to survive (Rose, 2004: 495-551). It is also important to note that it is curious as to why these independent

companies have not been absorbed by major music corporations which have the monopoly of the market in their hands as they did with other genres of African American popular music because the path the others followed was to be dominated by these major labels in terms of production and distribution after reaching commercial viability. However, in hip hop music, artists who signed to the major labels did not seem to be able to produce sales comparable to those of independent labels, who seemed to have a deeper understanding of the culture behind hip hop and rap music. Consequently, though, the major labels changed their strategy and started buying independent labels, but leaving them autonomous for the most part and providing them with resources for major retail distribution (Rose, 1994: 7).

3.8 Authenticity

When a culture that emerged from the ghettos becomes commercialized one way or another, another point that raises becomes the authenticity of the newly produced songs. A Chicago graffiti artist Wimsatt states that hip hop nationalism is about staying true and living a life that will support your words (Chang, 2005:307). Similarly, rappers do not abandon their community even after they make in onto the national scene (Swedenburg 2004:588). Rappers usually state that they are proud of where they come from, and they see that the ghetto is their home even though it is also the source of their suffering. For them, one of the ways to proudly express one's blackness is not being shy about the challenges they faced in the ghetto but instead describing them proudly (Jeffries, 2011: 62, 63). Within this context, rappers assume what is called a "cool pose", which is the persona rappers play as a tough "badman" out of the ghetto who stands strong against the adversities that life puts in front of them like racism and exploitation (Jeffires, 2011:56-59). When white hip hop artists started to adopt this style in the United States after a while, they also faced with criticisms regarding their authenticity because hip hop was inherently understood to be a black culture. In response to these criticisms, white rappers like Eminem and Nonphixion tried to show their experiences of poverty and crime, which they experienced in their neighbourhoods growing up, as a way to support their claims for authenticity in order to gain acceptance in the world of hip hop (Hess, 2007:7) Similarly, a white rap group called Young Black Teenagers claimed being black to be a "state of mind" described within the boundaries of a ghetto mindset (Boyd.

2004: 326). In the same vein, the main character in the film *The Commitments* (1991) states that the white group in the film can identify with the African American culture because they, too, had been oppressed by the society as Northern Irish working-class Catholics as African Americans had been in the American society (Boyd, 2004). However, the attempts to authenticity by white artists were greatly undermined by Vanilla Ice when it turned out that his claims about being from a poor ghetto background and his stories about growing up witnessing crimes and cultural oppression had been falsely made in an attempt to gain acceptance from the hip hop world by showing these as proofs for authenticity (Hess, 2007:114,115).

Of course, when such an influential source emerges out of a culture that is pushed to ghettos, it meets a certain reaction from the mainstream. As such, rap has faced several obstacles. Traditional discourse in the US had been that Black influences constituted a threat for the general American society. In this sense, even though metal music was also seen as a threat to the society, they considered metal fans to be victims, while rap fans as well as rap artists were taken to be coconspirators in the spread of black cultural influence (Rose, 1994: 130). This discourse against the black culture was so deeply embedded that during the objections against Ice-T's song "Cop Killer", these objections kept referring to the song as rap even though it was produced as a metal song. Ice-T even claims that it is not possible to call it a rap record because it is so far from it. However, calling it rap makes it much easier to criminalise it (Rose, 1994).

The common reaction to rap concerts was usually fear felt by the middle class white suburbans that their stable lives would be threatened by the rap concerts that took place in their neighbourhoods because that was where the major concert venues were (Neal, 2004:378). As a result of feeling threatened, insurance companies demanded prices too high for the venues if hip hop concerts were to be held there, which decreased venue availability by 33% in the latter part of 1980s (Rose, 1994:130).

The reaction was not limited to rap concerts. Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC) was established against sexually explicit lyrics in songs by Tipper Gore, and wives of three other politicians, who managed to force the music industry to put "parental advisory" stickers on rap records (Jeffires, 2011:151). Censorship efforts were not limited to this. The FBI issued warnings to the N.W.A after the release of

their song “Fuck tha Police” and to Ice-T’s group after “Cop Killer”, referring to it as a rap song. Laws even prohibited minors to buy certain rap CDs (Hess, 2007: 162). Rap artists talked about all these issues in their lyrics and eventually despite, or perhaps thanks to these efforts to shut them up, rap became more and more popular (Hess, 2007).

3.9 Locality in Hip Hop

Sakar and Allen (2007: 118) point out that the complex relationships between language, ethnicity and territory has always been at the basis of the formation of new identities. This holds especially true for the hip hop culture, the birth of which resulted from the social conditions faced by its founding fathers in South Bronx (Hess, 2007:8). The conditions which led to the emergence of hip hop culture in South Bronx were very specific to that particular area in terms of the current and historical social, political and cultural conditions that prepared the plane necessary for hip hop culture to grow.

What is really important in the local cultures where hip hop is cultivated is the posse, or crew, culture, which dates back to the first emergence of hip hop when DJs, graffiti and breakdance crews battled for territories (Rose, 1994:53). These crews were established as alternative local identities in reaction to the mainstream with their own fashions, language, and names. Young people find an alternative family in these crews based on specific, local experience and supporting environment (Rose, 1994:35). These posses were so important that acts couldn’t succeed without the approval and support of the crew (Forman, 2004:2067). Chuck D of Public Enemy says forming a posse is the only way to react to and not drift away in the divisive effects of capitalism (Eure and Spady 1991: 330; as quoted by Forman, 2004:206).

As a result of the connection between hip hop culture and the local environment, the ‘hood’ in which it emerged and grew, this locality has become a source of authenticity for rap artists. In order to “keep it real”, rappers frequently talk about their lived experience in the ‘hood. Even after getting themselves established in the mainstream market, it is easy to find rappers referring back their connection to the ‘hood in order to reaffirm their identities (Forman, 2004) because it is a point of reference for the collective hip hop identity (Jeffries, 2011:75). Moreover, even

though hip hop is the product of localities, it is possible to see local cultures shaped by hip hop music when rappers function to articulate notions of local identity, thereby also shaping it in a new direction (Bennet, 2004:197) or young people selling their CDs that they produced with their limited production capacity in an attempt to "put their city on the hip hop map" (Kitwana, 2004: 343).

The importance of locality in rap music has been reflected on the rap lyrics since the beginning. Rap artists use their lyrics to reflect their identity (Rose, 1994: 95) and they have taken the abstract notion of space and made it a focus of experience, the boundaries of which are clearly drawn (Forman, 2004: 156). In addition to the lyrics, even the technique of sampling used by rappers show how collective identities are important (Rose, 1994:95). Rap artists seek validation to the extent to which they can express their "street knowledge" in their songs, meaning their knowledge of life on the streets and the skills necessary to survive in an urban neighbourhood (Price III, 2006:40).

Even as rap has become a global phenomenon, spreading to many countries around the globe, the importance of locality has remained significant. Graffiti artists, breakdancers as well as rappers have integrated hip hop into their own cultural experiences and created new meanings that related to their own cultural environments by transforming their societies as they do so (Forman, 2004: 157). As rap was adapted to fit the needs of the culture into which it was adopted, some elements were kept by the borrowing culture while some were replaced. For example, according to a study conducted by Androutsopoulos and Scholz (2010: 472), tradition regarding the use of message rap for protest has been kept in Europe based on their data relating to France, Italy and Germany. However, in London, for example, Afro-Caribbeans came up with the term "wigger" to criticise those who adopt seemingly 'black' styles because they believed this was an indication of inauthenticity as they were moving away from the locally appropriated and thus established form of hip hop (Bennet, 2004:192). In Europe, the adaptation of rap did not only include the lyrics and the content; it also encompassed the music where citations from the local music was used in addition to the US samples as well as the language to include regional dialects, all the way to the visual design of the CD covers (Androutsopoulos and Scholz, 2010: 475,476). Additionally, we can see that

Australians MCs interpreted the American hip hop culture elements in a way that will relate to their local culture, young people in East Germany used hip hop to express themselves in search of their true identities as people stuck between different cultures (Bonnet, 1999; as quoted by Liad, 2012), and Nigerian youth adapted hip hop as a product of a transformational process which has been accepted into the local culture by young people from all spheres (Babalola and Taiwo, 2009; Onjeci 2002; as quoted by Liad, 2012).

4. HIP HOP'S JOURNEY TO TURKEY

Hip hop culture was based on the very specific social and cultural conditions experienced by the African Americans and Latinos in the South Bronx, New York in the United States. However, it did not stay limited to that area and in fact became global in a relatively short time, being adopted and appropriated by young people around the world according to their own social and cultural conditions and their own experiences for which they used this imported culture in the form they locally adapted. However, compared to most countries that have adopted hip hop in its various forms, its journey to Turkey was a bit different because it didn't start out by being adopted by young people living in Turkey, appropriated in some form to express their own conditions. Despite some earlier attempts, it was inarguably brought to Turkey by the hip hop group Cartel, which was formed in Germany by mostly Turkish immigrant hip hop artists who adopted rap music to express their cultural and social conditions as immigrants living in Germany when they started writing rap music with Turkish lyrics. They achieved great success in Turkey and got the Turkish population to hear rap music for the first time. To be able to understand Cartel's formation and music, we need to understand the social conditions which led to their formation as an immigrant rap group in Germany.

4.1 Hip Hop by the *Gastarbeiter*

Migrant workers, or in German *Gastarbeiter*, which actually translates to "guest worker", first came to be as a concept in the sixties when first generation of workers moved to Germany. The initial arrangement was to keep a system of turnovers with workers going back to their countries after working for a certain amount of time and being replaced by new workers. However, after some time, German government realized that it made more sense to use the expertise that the initial workers had acquired in their respective fields instead of training new workers again and again (Ickstadt, 1999). However, still stuck with the label *Gastarbeiter*, these people became foreign co-citizens with neither German citizenship, nor the opportunity to

hold a double nationality (Elflein, 1998). As a result, their children started to be a problem. Children from Turkish *Gastarbeiter* parents created problems for their parents because they did not want to oblige in Turkish customs and traditions and they were defined by Germans as "unruly and unmanageable". As a result, 80% of these children did not finish school in the 1970s although the rate dropped in the 1980s (Ickstadt, 1999: 573). Hence, the problem for the second generation *Gastarbeiter* was illiteracy and this feeling of being stuck between two separate cultures. The problem for the third generation *Gastarbeiter* in the 1990s was unemployment, which was 30% higher for them than it was for young Germans (Ickstadt, 1999). Elflein (1998) believes that this third generation did not see this state of cultural in-betweenness in terms of alienation but rather as opportunity. When hip hop was introduced to Germany, it was these third generation that quickly took it up as a way to express themselves in their state of cultural in-betweenness (Ickstadt, 1999).

Erci E., a rapper from Cartel, states that the reason why they embraced hip hop was that it was a means for the second and third generation *Gastarbeiter* to express their protest against the German culture that did not want to see them on equal footing (Ickstadt, 1999). As what Kaya (2007) calls transnational subjects, they occupied a distinct transnational space in an arena of social, political, cultural and economic interaction between Germany and Turkey (483). *Gastarbeiter* youngsters adopted rap music because they saw that theirs was also a "distinct form of lived experience" that required its own separate and localized mode of expression (Gildor, 1993: 82 as quoted by Bennett, 2004: 181,182). They assumed their role in the eyes of the German society as Germany's "blacks" and played the role of "bad, bad Turk" like what the gangsta rap did in the United States (Ickstadt, 1999).

First experimentations with hip hop music in Germany were to a large extent inspired by the influence of the African American rap groups, to which Germans were exposed thanks to the radio stations and TV channels that broadcast in Germany in service of the US Army Personnel stationed in Germany after the Second World War between 1945 and 1996 (Bennet, 2004:181). After writing English lyrics to their rap songs at the beginning, these groups started to add German to their music (Bennet, 2004). After the switch in the language took place, it did not take long for the groups

with members of Turkish origin to start rapping in Turkish. After Turkish language rap become more and more common among the *Gastarbeiter*, the community began to criticise those who kept on writing German lyrics as they saw it as a desire to be seen German and not being proud of one's own nationality In fact, a young Turkish woman is quoted by Bennet (2004:184) criticising the group Advanced Chemistry, whose members were not of German origin but wrote songs in German, saying that they should be proud of their roots and should not be ashamed to say it. Since we can consider the language itself a political statement, this desire to rap in Turkish expressed more than just using a language with which the rappers were more comfortable because after many years of living in the country, rapping in German was not difficult for these rappers anyway. While the second generation *Gastarbeiter* rapping in German were trying to find ways to integrate themselves into the German society, the third generation rapping in Turkish were expressing their defiance in a culture that did not want them (Bennet, 2004: 185). These feelings of nationalistic belonging was to a level at which Bennet recalls a scene that occurred at a competition where Turkish people waiting for a Turkish rap band to take the stage got angry and hurled eggs at a German rock band just because their songs were performed in German and the Turkish people took it as racist and accused them of being Nazis (Bennet, 2004).

Appropriating the African American culture of hip hop to express their protest against a dominant and hostile German culture (Ickstadt, 1999), Turkish rap groups rapped mostly about fear and anger they feel towards the racism and resulting insecurity, through which they aimed to "reconstruct notions of identity tied to traditional ethnic roots" (Bennet, 2004:184).

4.2 Cartel as the Hip Hop Ambassador to Turkey

It was onto this cultural and political scene which Cartel was established by several such rap groups from different parts of Germany. In line with other rap groups established in Germany by the *Gastarbeiter* youth, Abdurrahman, one of the Cartel members, state that he belonged to some anti-Nazi organisations established by Turkish people in Germany in order to fight against the racist attacks that they experienced from the Neonazis. Now he says that they can protest more effectively

through music (Çınar, 1999:43). Similarly, other members Alper and Kerim state that through their music they can express the anger they feel for being considered inferior (Çınar, 1999). In order to express these feelings, their songs focused on Turkish-German identity and anti-racism messages (Dursun, 2016). While their original target group, as a result, was Turkish people living in Germany as *Gastarbeiter*, the number of whom reached a million (Elflein, 1998), they became more popular among Turks living in Turkey. Their self-titled album that they released in 1995 was moderately successful in Germany, selling 30,000 copies within the first month, but became a huge success in Turkey with 180,000 sales within the same period of time (Çınar, 1999:43). This actually constituted a conflict for the group even though it wasn't spoken out loud often. The ultranationalists and members of the right wing Nationalistic Movement Party accepted the Turkish identity that Cartel put forward as a universal Turkish identity that encompasses and hence delegitimizes non-Turkic people living in Turkey, which was especially important considering 90s were the peak of the conflict in the East of Turkey between the Turkish armed forces and the separatist Kurdish movements (Çınar, 1999: 44). This put Cartel in an awkward position because their protest against ultranationalism in Germany was highly regarded by and manipulated for the agenda of the ultranationalistic movement in Turkey (Çınar, 1999). While the Turkish side cheering Cartel chose to ignore the social conditions that they experienced which ultimately led to their existence in the first place, a similar process also took place in Germany, with the German media choosing to ignore the very same conditions by focusing on the first part of their statement as "You are a Turk" and choosing the ignore the second part which connects it to being from Germany. By stating that "home" for Cartel, hence for these Turkish youngsters, was Turkey, they showed that they did not have to find ways to integrate them into the German society because they were Turks who belonged to Turkey (Çınar, 1999: 44).

In a documentary directed by Cengiz Karaözbekir in 2015 on Cartel based on an interview with one of the members, Kabus Kerim, it is stated that despite the 20 years that passed after Cartel, no rap group has been able to match their numbers in terms of sales. They have given a concert at the İnönü Stadium, which is again a success that hasn't been able to be surpassed by any other rap group to this day. In my interviews, while Hayalet explained this sudden rise to popularity by stating that

it was something new, something people had not experienced before, Tepki referred to the political atmosphere of the time and said that the music they made resonated with the conditions of the time. However, they could not keep this success for long and after the first album, the group separated. Stokes (1999) explains this disappearance with the fascist audience that Cartel attracted in Turkey. He says "[…] the group attracted a group of Turkish fascists. Probably for this reason, Cartel disappeared more or less without a trace" (Stokes, 1999:13). In any case, despite their short life span as a group, today there is no doubt that there is one definite trace Cartel left, which is the introduction of hip hop culture to Turkey.

After rap music entered the Turkish market from a point of such high popularity, it did not stay at the top for long. When Cartel broke up, rap music also mostly retreated from the mainstream media in Turkey into the local scenes. It did not disappear with Cartel because they showed the Turkish youth another path to follow. Based on interviews with people involved in the Turkish hip hop scene, Lüküslü (2012) concludes that most of the initial Turkish rap artists that came out in the 1990s after Cartel, tried to imitate Cartel's style in their songs because they did not have many other examples of Turkish language rap; however, when we come to 2000s, Turkish rap artists managed to free themselves of the Cartel style and develop their own styles of doing Turkish rap (Lüküslü, 2012:94). Among the first to pick up their trail was the rap artists Ceza and Dr. Fuchs, who started doing rap music in mid 1990s (Solomon, 2005b). Together, they formed the rap group Nefret in 1998. In the cover of their first full album released in 2000 after the compilation album that came out in 1999, they are seen standing with the Bosphorus in the background; a move that shows that they situate themselves as part of the urban geography of the city (Solomon, 2005b: 51). Solomon (2005b) states that in their song titled "İstanbul" from this album, they bring together the ghetto discourse of the East Coast American rap with the *arabesk* discourse relating to city life with the pessimistic atmosphere of the song.

4.3 Islamic Rap

Turkish rap has also been used with religious content, assuming the name "Islamic Rap". This movement also took its start in Germany. Işık Dursun (2016: 217, 218)

quotes Swedenburg who states that rap was one of the most obvious reactions of European Muslims to Islamophobia. She states that the reasons why rap music was chosen as the medium instead of other kinds include the marginal lifestyle of punk movement, the association of rock music with the political left, and the approach of the conservatives towards rock music and music production (Işık Dursun, 2016: 209, 210). Another point that Işık Dursun (2016) emphasizes is that while conservative performers avoided the use of musical instruments, they became part of the modernisation process with the use of digital sound and music video production (Frishkopf, as quoted by Işık Dursun, 2016). It is also curious that in recent years, the Islamic Rap started to show a political nature. The songs of the rap group Nefes, formed in Belgium in 2010 by Turkish twin brothers raised in Belgium, show effects of Neo-Ottoman discourse as well as the political discourse of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) (Frishkopf, as quoted by Işık Dursun, 2016: 222, 223). Another rapper, Zeo Jaweed, who participated in various talent shows, wrote two rap songs for AKP, one to be used in the election rallies and the other for the youth branches of the party while Grup Nasihat is known to be close to the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) (Dursun, 2016: 224).

4.4 Rap's Rise to Popularity in Turkey

As mentioned before, rap music stormed the Turkish market with Cartel when it just entered it; however, after Cartel, it could not maintain that level of popularity in the mainstream music and mainstream media. Still, it did not disappear, either. Most rap music was produced and distributed in what rappers call "the underground". When talking about rap music in Turkey, Solomon (2005a) talks about the emphasis by the Turkish rap artists on the term *underground* despite the ambiguity in its definition. He points to four definitions of the term by the artists in the Turkish rap scene; first one being in the commercial sense in that artists do not sign with record companies and distribute their songs with their own means; second one being underground not by choice due to the content of their songs which would face censorship by the state otherwise, the third one involving participating in "quasi-legal" or illegal activities such as doing graffiti or underground sales of CDs; and finally, and most comprehensively, being in the margins of the society and away from what they consider to be mainstream like pop music (Solomon, 2005a: 12).

When we look at viewing numbers at YouTube for some of the "popular" songs that came out in these "underground" years between 2000 and 2011, we see that the numbers of the popular songs stay limited to around 1 million views with some exceptions, which in a way confirms that only a few artists managed to come close to the mainstream. The table below shows YouTube viewing numbers of some songs released in this period.

Title of the Song	**Artist(s)**	**Release Year**	**Number of Views [on 23.06.2019]**
Fok	Kuvvetmira (Fuat, Sahtiyan, Sagopa Kajmer, Ceza)	2003	855,787
Bağdat	Sagopa Kajmer	2003	1,089,716
Holocaust	Ceza	2004	18,610,239
Psikopat Yazar	Salsar Salvo	2006	1,167,301

Table 1: YouTube Viewing Numbers of Some Rap Songs in Turkey between 2000 and 2006

In the interviews conducted by Çiğdem Akbay for the documentary *Hiphopistan: Representing Locality in a Global City* (2007), we can see that rap is in the margins. When asked if he heard of an artist named Ceza, for example, the Atlantic Records Co-Founder Ahmet Ertegün looks confused and he can only comment that it is a nice name. When the camera turns to the people out in the streets, all the reactions to hip hop is negative, mostly with an obvious demonstration of the ignorance about it. One man even says it is wrong because it can lead young people down wrong paths and that we should listen more to music more suitable for Turkish culture such as "classical music". Two people who are asked about their opinions on graffiti are clearly against it as they feel that it contains political messages that they do not agree with even though they do not know what they are. A graffiti artist, Atakan, points out

how his father hates rap music. However, in the same documentary we also see how things started to change back in 2007 when the documentary was filmed because Atakan adds "But my little brother loves rap music." Ahmet Ertegün, despite not knowing perhaps the most well-known rapper of the time, admits that hip hop was taking over Turkey like it did in the United States and in Europe, and a breakdancer, Joker, observes that people who used to raise their hands up at Serdar Ortaç concerts 2 years earlier now come together at rap concerts in the very same venues. A rap artist, Sahtiyan, says that the society is yet to grasp this new culture and that they need maybe another ten years for some rappers to be really popular at the forefront of the music industry (Akbay, 2007).

In fact, around the same time as Akbay's documentary, we see that things started to change for rap music in Turkey. Ceza, who prided over being in the underground and clearly expressed his dislike for pop music, performed duets with Sezen Aksu and Candan Erçetin and let one of his song be used for a Turkish TV series *Adanalı*, and Sagopa Kajmer, one of the earliest and most famous Turkish rappers of the time, wrote a song for Cem Yılmaz's film *G.O.R.A.* (Öztaş, 2017:9). In interviews done by Öztaş in 2017 with rappers who had been in the rap scene before this period, we can see how they are disturbed by the developments that took rap more into the mainstream as is usually the case when there is a shift in a movement. They state how rap music done before this period was closer to the original culture and how after that, it moved away from its essence by focusing more on being popular (Öztaş, 2017:10).

If we look at *eksisozluk* entries over the years under the title of "Türkçe Rap", even though it will not be a reliable and unbiased source, I believe it might give an overall sense regarding the society's attitude towards it. We see that the first entry was in 2001, in which a user nicknamed delikan76 talks about the "occasional good songs" even though they sound sure that it was not here to stay. We see an entry in 2002 criticising the imitated styles, of American rappers as well as of rappers born in Germany. In 2004, a user talks about how the rapper Ceza managed to border mainstream with the duet song he made with Candan Erçetin and how this was as popular as rap will ever get. In 2010, we get a sense of the same feeling of nostalgia that Öztaş (2017) talks about with a user asserting that the brightest year of Turkish

rap was between 2002 and 2007. In 2011, we have entries that claim that Turkish rap already ended and that rap is not real music anyway. In 2012, we start to see claims that it is being reborn and started to gain momentum with the new generation of rappers. After 2015, we see a myriad of new entries which make up for more than half of all the entries written under the said title. We cannot see people discussing legitimacy of rap as an art form anymore and rather, we start to see people arguing over the "best rappers" and making top rap song lists. And finally, when we come all the way to 2019, we even see a user complaining about being booed by their friends for not knowing the famous new-generation rap artists.

As a culture born out as the voice of the underdog that had been struggling to get its voice heard, hip hop's appropriation in Turkey also has similar characteristics. For example, Mitchell states that rap has now become a "tool for reworking local identity" around the globe (Solomon, 2005b: 61). We can see the same concern for representing locality in the album of Nefret, for example, with the use of the Bosphorus in the background, which can be considered to be the symbol of Istanbul. Solomon (2005b) finds it ironic that Nefret uses the globalised culture of rap which originated in the United States to criticise the negative effects of globalisation on the city in which he talks about a more complex dynamic than mere resistance to the global culture in imagining two Istanbuls, one as a global cosmopolitan city as a commercial hub, and the other one a city filling with people migrating here as poor workers, both of which are a result of globalisation (Solomon, 2005b: 61, 62). In addition to, perhaps as a result of, this feeling of locality and related identity formation, the notion of neighbourhoods and brotherhood became important as well. Cartel, for example, was more than a music group, they constituted a symbol of brotherhood as seven people from different parts of Germany who came together to make music in Turkish (Lüküslü, 2012:96). The role of women in Turkish rap can also be considered to be an extension of these feelings of belonging and family. While a Turkish German rapper interviewed by Lüküslü (2012:97) kept referring to her as *abla* (bigger sister), the letter "A" in the stage name of a Turkish rapper, Aziza A. stands for the same word *abla*. Moreover, possibly the most well-known female Turkish rappers in the history of Turkish rap are Ayben, who happens to be Ceza's sister, and Kolera, who was married to Sagopa Kajmer until 2017. We can also see the social effects of rap in search of what Lüküslü (2012) calls a search for

recognition from the society, which can be argued to be in parallel with the origins of the culture in terms of getting one's voice heard, but also in opposition to the protesting characteristics associated with the hip hop culture (Lüküslü, 2012: 88, 89). While Öztaş (2017:9) quotes some rappers stating how rap music contributed to their social life in getting them to meet various people from different cities, we see several hip hop artists in "Hiphopistan" from breakdancers to graffiti artists as well as rap artists saying how hip hop kept them away from the "wrong paths" as opposed to the comments of one of the people interviewed who claimed that it might lead people down wrong paths by providing them a means to express themselves. They clearly state how they could have found themselves doing drugs or involved in other illegal activities if it hadn't been for hip hop. One even admits being involved in such a world until he met hip hop (Akbay, 2007). This idea of seeing hip hop as a way to keep young people away from illegal activities is reiterated by several rap artists including Anıl Piyancı and Tepki on a talk show "EYS Gece Modu" in which they were guests on April 2019.

We can also talk about a generational effect in rap's rise to popularity in Turkey. In order to explain the increased attention towards rock music in 1960s and 1970s, Martin states how the people who grew up with this music started to occupy positions in the society where they can have an editorial influence in the media (Martin, 1995: 182). Similarly, Anıl Piyancı talks about how he still sees the same people in his concerts as he did 10 years ago. The only difference is, while those people were only teenagers 10 years ago, they are now in respectable positions in the society such as pilots. Therefore, rap music cannot be disregarded as music only for teenagers anymore.

Whatever the causes are, in recent years we have witnessed a radical increase in the popularity of rap music. Looking at viewing figures on YouTube, we see that *Suspus* by Ceza (2015) has over 119 million views while *Günah Benim* by the new generation rap artists Eypio and Burak King released in the same year has over 250 million views. While *366. Gün* by Sagopa Kajmer released at the end of 2016 has over 107 million views, *Biladerim İçin* by another new generation rap artist Ben Ferro has more than 39 million views even though it was only released in February 2019. When we look at Spotify chart for top 50 in Turkey based on the number of

most played tracks, we can see that 5 out of the top 10 songs are rap songs. Even though the huge difference between numbers can also be partly explained by the increased availability of digital platforms in recent years, when we make a comparison in terms of its place in the market, we can see its steep rise to popularity in recent years.

4.5 *Arabesk* vs. Rap

While we talk about the start of hip hop being adopted by the urban poor youth in different cultures living in neighbourhoods that they call ghettos where illegal activities are an everyday reality, what we see in the Turkish music scene is a bit different, in that there is already a genre that emerged as a result of these social and cultural conditions: *arabesk*. Stokes (as quoted by Solomon, 2005b: 48) calls *arabesk* "a music of and about the city". *Arabesk* songs, according to Stokes (1999) paint a grim and pessimistic picture of the city, talking about how the poor sections of the urban population suffer as a result of the machinations of the city (quoted by Solomon, 2005b: 48). It is a genre of music that took its root from the huge influx of migration from the rural areas to the city after the 1950s, with the population of Istanbul increasing by 10 folds in fifty years coming to the millennium according to official data and up to 15 folds according to unofficial records. Istanbul was unable to absorb this enormous increase in its population, as a result of which emerged illegal squatter neighbourhoods called *gecekondu* in the suburbs of the city along with the jobs with very low pay and an infrastructure that is unable to support the population (Özbek, 1997 as quoted by Solomon, 2005b: 48). Stokes (1999: 10) connects the cultural roots of *arabesk*, which literally means "arab style", to Egyptian media that Turkish people were exposed to in the 1930s, which was met by a hostile attitude by the elites of the society as it did not go well with the Westernising efforts of the Turkish state at the time. Gülay (2015; as quoted by Cary, 2016) connects the emergence of *arabesk* music to the intervention by the state in their efforts to cut ties with the East and to become more westernised. According to her, one of the biggest impacts in the emergence of *arabesk* is feeling of protest born out of the desire to express one's thoughts freely and get their voice heard after the bans on Turkish TV and radio in the 1930s (Cary, 2016: 159). Even though Martin Stokes (2009 as quoted by Cary, 2016) states that the relationship between these

cultural conditions and *arabesk* is only a vague one (Cary, 2016: 159), the timing of the emergence of *arabesk* with the aforementioned migration movements and that *arabesk* singers came from these migrants cannot be explained by a mere coincidence (Dönmez, 2011 as quoted by Cary, 2016: 159).

In addition to the cultural and social conditions into which they were born, rap and *arabesk* music share other similarities. For example, content-wise, songs in both genres talk about being excluded, poverty and suffering, with common themes ranging from death, murder, low self-esteem and depression. Both cultures and genres are masculine in terms of their attitude and content with few female performers. In addition, despite their emergence in a particular group with a certain socio-economic condition, both genres have attracted listeners from a wider audience from the society with rap appealing to not only lower class African Americans but also middle and higher class white Americans, and *arabesk* appealing to an audience of not only families of rural origin living in cities, but educated people with higher incomes. Moreover, both rap artists and *arabesk* artists base their songs on real-life experiences and reflect the realities of their societies in their lyrics (Cary, 2016: 169). Cary (2016), nevertheless, also adds that there are also differences between the two cultures, including but not limited to the treatment of women in the songs, where in rap music sometimes women are seen as a sex object and rap songs might have misogynistic elements while in *arabesk* music, artists talk about how much they love the woman who deserted them even when cursing them and even stating that they want to kill them (Cary, 2016: 169,170).

Why did young people in Turkey adopt the hip hop culture and rap music when there was already a local culture born out of a similar social, cultural and economic background? One easy explanation is the technical facilities provided by rap music. Rap music can be made by equipment that is not expensive and that can be stored in apartment buildings common in Turkey (Dursun, 2016:215). On the other hand, Stokes (1999: 10) points out that *arabesk* is the product of *"*a highly organised cultural industry". Stokes adds that "*arabesk has always been a studio music*" (Stokes, 1999). This point is further reinforced by the comments of an *arabesk*-rap artist interviewed by Dilben (2016) who upon being asked why he prefered *arabesk*-rap over *arabesk* music, stated that he "would have done *arabesk* if I could". Hence,

we can conclude that in some cases even if the artist feels closer to the *arabesk* culture and wants to produce *arabesk* songs, he might be deterred from it due to the high technical and musical knowledge required by it as well as difficulties they are likely to face in terms of the production of the songs while they can write and record rap music with a few pieces of simple equipment that are not expensive without much musical knowledge. Another possible explanation could lie in the attitude of the Turkish elite and middle to higher classes to *arabesk* music, especially at its emergence. In 2012, Fazıl Say, a famous Turkish pianist, is even quoted saying that liking *arabesk* music is treason on a TV show that he attended on CNN (hurriyet.com.tr, 2012 [22.04.2019]). As a result of the Westernising efforts by the state that can be traced way back into the early days of the Republic, the general attitude of the society towards *arabesk* at the beginning was that, as the name suggests, it was a culture that belonged to the Orient and, hence did not have a place in the modern Turkish society with Western values and in fact was interpreted as the "antithesis of the Turkish music" (Ayas, 2019). This negative perception of *arabesk* remained limited to the elite with a Western focus when conservative politics started to use it as part of its ideological discourse focused on cultural dichotomies (Ayas, 2019: 2, 3). However, after 2000s, *arabesk* started regaining popularity and even became a part of the popular culture with famous *arabesk* artists taking part or even hosting TV shows on mainstream TV channels. Even though rap was really popular when it was first introduced to Turkey, it faced with similar criticisms after Cartel for not being suitable to the Turkish culture, this time for being too Western instead of being too Eastern. We can see that the first generation of Turkish rappers in Turkey started to emerge just at the junction of this change in politics regarding *arabesk*. It is possible to speculate that they perhaps turned to rap music instead of *arabesk* as a result of this past disdain by the general Turkish policy. A more possible speculation, considering the new generation rappers who have been born after the integration of *arabesk* into popular music is precisely this very integration of *arabesk* into popular music. Since rap music has been described, both in its inception and by the interviewees as a music of protest where its separation from pop music is strictly drawn, *arabesk* has not been regarded as an instrument to protest anymore.

5. THE ART WORLD WITHIN MOB ENTERTAINMENT

> MOB, Music of the Block, is a record company with its own production, own songs, own relays. What differentiates it from other record companies is that it is an independent label. We are independent from the global and Turkish music dynamics. We completely have our own unique perspective on music and art. That is what makes us different.
> (Tepki, a.k.a. Kerem Gülsoy, the founding A&R of MOB Entertainment)

This is how Tepki defines MOB Entertainment. It is an independent label, like Tepki says, founded under the auspices of an investor, who was convinced into this investment after receiving professional presentations. Tepki explains on EYS Gece Modu, a TV show that he attended as a guest on April 15, 2019 that he founded MOB based on his experience of a similar failed attempt in 2009. Their web page explains their aim as investing in talent, opening its doors to a wide variety of fields from music and dance to photography and song writing (mob832.com/about-us/). Its founding members consist of rap artists from the European side of Istanbul, mostly Küçükçekmece, Güngören and Esenler districts. However, these artists had been doing rap music, usually together then as well, for some time before they signed with MOB Entertainment. Based on in-depth interviews with five members, an interview on the TV Show EYS Gece Modu, as well as conversations with some audience members in their Istanbul concert on May 2, 2019, I aim to discuss the art world of MOB artists as well as the changes that have taken place in their art world since they signed with MOB Entertainment as they had already been part of the rap scene in Turkey.

Tepki explains the aim of the label as providing a means for the people being brought up in suburban districts, devoid of many opportunities, to get out of these "ghettos." Similarly, Hayalet says MOB does not want to sign artists who have already achieved a certain level of fame or success. Rather, the label focuses on talents that deserve investment, but have not been able to receive such investment. Hence, as a result of their local focus, it is possible to categorise MOB Entertainment as one of the independent labels described by George, which drive changes in the music market by providing a way into the market for artists stuck outside due to the gate-

keeping activities of the corporate record labels. However, Tepki states that MOB Entertainment is a Germany-based label with a partnership to the production company of Jay-Z and Beyoncé. Based on the relative autonomy provided for Tepki in his management of the label, we can conclude that MOB Entertainment is the product of a strategy followed by corporate record companies that Rose describes. Rose says when big corporations decided to sweep in and take full control of the rap music industry after it reached a mainstream success as they did with other forms of black music, they realized that the success rates of the artists signed to major corporations remained unmatched to those signed to independent labels, which seemed to serve the culture more faithfully. As a result, the corporations started to buy the independent labels, but left them mostly autonomous (Rose, 1994:7)

Howard Becker (1982:1) explains art worlds as the patterns of collective activity performed by a usually large number of people as a result of a more or less routine form of cooperation. The rap artists I interviewed were Tepki, a.k.a. Kerem Gülsoy; Motive, a.k.a. Tolga Serbes; Aksan, a.k.a. Yılmaz Hüseyin Tosun; Uzi, a.k.a. Utku Yalçınkaya and Hayalet, a.k.a. Barış Saygın Ayas. 32-year-old Tepki's first experience with hip hop was when he covered a song by Cartel for a Children's Day ceremony on April 23 while he was still a middle school student. He competed in the Turkish Rap Contest in 2004 and came out as the winner. Aksan, who grew up in Güngören and has been working with MOB Entertainment since its establishment, is 25 years old and has been actively writing rap music for 15 years. The 19-year-old Motive has been actively writing rap music for 4 years and has been with MOB Entertainment since its establishment. Also having been working with MOB since the beginning, Uzi has actively been in the rap scene since 2012. Finally, the most experienced rapper in MOB and in fact one of the most experienced in Turkey, Hayalet has been working with MOB as part of his rap group BTC for over a year and has been in the rap scene in Edirne for 22 years.

I believe it will be useful to look at the bio descriptions written on the MOB web page for these artists as these will provide some key points in the personas created within the body of MOB.

The bio of BTC draws attention to the difficulties faced by the double life that BTC members lead as rap artists who have "day jobs". The description carries the

elements of contrast between two lifestyles; that of a civil servant and that of a rap artist as the members of BTC are described as writing and composing rap songs on their way to work early in the morning and talks about how they try to squeeze in rap lyrics in their lunch breaks and commute. “I have sixteen bars of lyrics. I am planning to write another sixteen during lunch and another sixteen on the way home.” The contrast is also reflected on their attire, described as wearing a black suit and a white shirt while listening to a hip hop playlist on Spotify with Beats headphones (mob382/artist/btc/ [30.04.2019]).

Aksan’s bio, written in the form of lyrics, focuses on the difficulties of growing up in a tough neighbourhood “never short of trouble or stress”. His life is described as *“*stuck between making it for the first time on an away game and being drowned in a dump”. The bio ends with the warning that these lines are not quoted from a book, but rather from real life (mob382/aksan/ [30.04.2019]). In the bio description of Uzi’s rap group GNG Clan, who are from the same neighbourhood as Aksan, namely Güngören, the focus does not change. Their status of belonging to the ghetto is strengthened via a reference to the 1999 İzmit Earthquake that occurred when Uzi was only 1 year old, and the bio mentions how they grew up among sirens and gunshots. It talks about how they were raised not with the songs of Zeki Müren, a famous singer of Turkish classical music, but with American rap artists such as NWA, 2Pac and Dr. Dre (mob382/artist/gng/ [30.04.2019])

In Motive’s bio, the focus shifts from difficulties faced by the artist to his dedication to rap music. The bio concentrates on his young age and refers to him as a good representative for his generation. It says that for Motive, who keeps on improving himself not to be an ordinary rapper, music is the main purpose; the rest is just details (mob382/artist/motive/ [30.04.2019]). For Tepki, on the other hand, the bio talks about how he got his name as Tepki (meaning “reaction”) by reacting to a slap by his teacher at school, but more importantly by taking the opposite side again in years “when hip hop was a foreign substance”. While it mentions that it was his father who taught him to be himself and not to back down, it also talks about how his father was wrong in terms of his advice about working hard based on the story of the Ant and the Grasshopper, and how he did not live long enough to teach him about trade, being cunning, and staying away from evil. It says that for the founder, MOB is all

about not backing down, not imposing forced acceptances and not getting tired and giving in (mob382/artist/tepki/ [30.04.2019]).

5.1 MOB Artists' Thoughts on the Turkish Rap Scene

In the 33rd episode of EYS Gece Modu, Eser Yenenler starts the programme saying that only Ceza[1] and Sagopa Kajmer[2] would come to people's minds when you said rap once, but now rap is everywhere. However, his guests Tepki, Burry Soprano and Anıl Piyancı, all of whom are rap artists, disagree with the first part of that sentence. Tepki has been doing rap music for almost two decades, Anıl Piyancı for more than 10 years. Tepki states that they have always been around, but they were mostly underground. He says that there was one person who was considered to be the organiser in the local scene of every city who was responsible for setting up rap events and everybody knew them. Tepki explains that there used to be a place in each city where you could sell your albums, be it a clothing shop, sometimes a music shop or a small studio, talking about the restricting distribution means of the local and translocal artists in their underground art world. Hence, with the local and translocal scenes already in place, there was a structure readily set for rap music in Turkey; what happened recently was that this underground structure started to adopt a corporate quality. Moreover, this was not something that happened overnight; Tepki and Piyancı suggest that they always knew that this period was coming and they have been preparing for it (EYS Gece Modu [April 15, 2019]). Therefore, we can say that what Tepki defines as underground rap scene in Turkey before this period of proliferation was organised mostly around what Bennet and Peterson (2004: 7) describe as a set of translocal scenes, in that they were "widely scattered local scenes drawn into regular communication around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle", with each city in this sense representing a local scene and these organisers in each city acting as the link that turns these local scenes into translocal ones.

[1] Bilgin Özçalkan, a.k.a. Ceza is a Turkish rap artists born in 1976. He started his career in 1995 and had his breakthrough in 2004 when he was invited to the Turkish rock music festival Rock'n Coke (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceza)

[2] Yunus Özyavuz, a.k.a. Sagopa Kajmer is a Turkish rap artist born in 1978. He started his career in 1999 under the psydeunym "Silahsız Kuvvet", which he changed to "Sagopa Kajmer" in 2002. In 2005 he set up his own production company (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sagopa_Kajmer)

Becker suggests that it is impossible to know what the audiences will like and support in the market (Becker, 1982:126). The interviewees also seem to agree with that statement in the Turkish rap scene. For example, Hayalet of BTC talks about how when Eypio, who is now a mainstream artist after making a song for a famous Turkish TV series, first came to Edirne, people did not like him at all, to the extent where they even booed him on stage, which really surprised BTC because as people in the Turkish and Edirne rap scene for more than 20 years, and they had thought that the people would have liked his style. Tepki also agrees, stating that he has experienced many times occasions when a particular group of audience really likes a particular songs, while others even refuse to consider it rap music. Aksan also points out how some songs in which they had put a lot of confidence ended up with few listeners. However, they all have some idea as to what makes a rap song popular in Turkey. Hayalet thinks it is the connection of the song with popular media such as TV. He adds, to the Eypio example, that after being booed on stage in Edirne, one of his songs was featured on a famous Turkish TV series and when he came back to Edirne, he was all sold out. He says that Turkish people don't really pay attention to what Bennet and Peterson (2004:7) call "local scenes" as scenes coming together around a geographic focus. They mostly look down on local artists. However, only when the artists find a way to get themselves known in the national scene do the general public start paying attention to them, letting the mass media direct their tastes in music. Aksan seems to think that adding *arabesk* elements to rap songs might explain their popularity in some cases. He also says simplifying the songs also might have an effect, with which Uzi agrees, saying that Turkish people don't usually like tiring songs, meaning songs that make them think. They prefer more relaxing songs in Uzi's opinion.

Light (2004) talks about how the year when rap artists such as Hammer, Ice and the Crew came out was unfortunate because although there is "criminal about bad music or even simple-mindedness", they may have determined the perception of rap music by the general American public, causing their definition of rap music to be based on "a simplified analysis of the genre's basest cultural and sociological components and the most uninspired use of its musical innovations" (Light, 2004: 138). The interviewees referred to a similar situation in the Turkish rap scene in the previous years that might explain why rap music took so long to climb back to popularity in

the mainstream despite its impressive entrance to the Turkish music market. Hayalet stated that while one reason for this lack of popularity over the years might be the simple look of rap music production as rhymes said on a set of beats, he states that some rappers over the years invited these criticisms based on a false perception of rap music in that their work was too simple and lacked a certain organisation beyond this simple structure. Aksan connects this delay in Turkey in rap music's path to the mainstream to the mistakes of earlier rappers as well. He says "people started to have prejudices in Turkey because here it turned into children's music (*çocuk müziği*) and silly (*saçma sapan*) songs came out". As a result of this false perception on the part of the general society, Aksan says only a small community has been formed around rap music, who strive for success and are mocked by the people outside of this small community. However, he adds that they, as artists of MOB Entertainment, are not part of this small community; they are at a different level. Uzi, on the other hand, points out that the reason for this delay to popularity can be explained by the fact that earlier rap artists who in time achieved a certain level of fame wanted the spotlight all for themselves and did not try to help out younger artists on the way to success.

Chaney suggests that young people in young working class families might adopt and adapt the Black forms of cultural expressions to express the affinity they feel with the Black people and other minorities. Nevertheless, one should remember that this cultural association is an actively constructed one, not merely a result of the structural circumstances (Chaney, 1996; as quoted by Bennet, 2004: 190). In line with what Chaney says, Aksan points out that if not for the financial difficulties his family living in the suburbs of Istanbul faced when he was growing up, he might not have turned to rap music to express himself. Motive talks about how he found rap music during his search for identity in his teenage years. He first turned to writing comics as a way to express himself, but he stopped making comics when his teacher on whose advice he had started making comics had a car accident. Later, upon finding out about hip hop culture from his cousin, who is a breakdancer, he realizes his talent for rap music as a form of self-expression that he had been searching for and he embraced it. Tepki, who Uzi defines as different from other early rappers in that he has been trying to help out young people who are interested in this culture, talks about how he tries to offer rap as another way, as a way out from the "ghetto mind-set" for the young people living and searching for a form of self-expression in

places like Küçükçekmece or Güngören. He says he has been trying to show people that having been born in these neighbourhoods does not mean that they have started life at a disadvantageous position. Similar to the way Cartel created a generation of Turkish rappers trying to make it onto the national music scene, rap's popularity today also offers the same platform for Turkish youth. Just as hip hop offered an alternative in the American ghettos for youngsters to being an athlete to make it out of the ghetto, Tepki says hip hop offers an alternative for the young people living in these suburbs in addition to being a pop star or a football player. He says if you have academic inclinations, you can go to university and try to have an academic career; however, if not, now you have another option. Once you help out these young people to give it a shot to express themselves using rap music, you also end up drawing the attention of other young people in the region and extend your local scene (EYS Gece Modu [15.02.2019]). As Kitwana (2004: 343) explains how people from all over the United States now try to put their city on the hip hop map, Tepki states that their aim as MOB Entertainment is to make Küçükçekmece a hip hop base for Turkey, which he suggests as the motivation he had in establishing the company in Küçükçekmece after receiving the financial support from a corporate source even though he could have set it up in locations that would be deemed to be more elite by most people such as Etiler or Levent (EYS Gece Modu [15.02.2019]). In line with what Chaney says regarding the appropriations with the African Americans, Motive talks about how they make representative (*reprezentan*) style rap music in that he represents the European side of Istanbul and reflects it in his music similar to the East Coast versus West Coast rapping styles in the United States. He says that it is this representative style expressing their locality in their music that differentiates them from the other rappers in Turkey.

5.2 Locality for MOB

Locality has a great deal of importance for the artists in MOB Entertainment. BTC can perhaps be considered to be the creator of the local rap scene in Edirne as they seem to be the ones doing it for the longest period of time. They seem to have done it via establishing what Rose (1994) calls "neighbourhood crews" as a way to establish local identities because Hayalet says that their group was at one point 13 people because he says "we actually wanted to help out the young people in Edirne who

wanted to be involved in this culture and they supported us". The local scene in Edirne, according to Hayalet, was not very big and they used to be really excited when 10 rappers ended up in Edirne as a result of an event of some sort. Moreover, he talks about the fight he gave to get this culture to be accepted by people in Edirne. He says people would even oppose them wearing loose trousers and it is thanks to the fights he had that now people can wear hip hop style clothes without others saying anything to them. Similarly, Tepki talks about how he founded the local scene in and around Küçükçekmece District in the European side of Istanbul and is now carrying it from the underground to the national rap scene in Turkey with MOB. He talks about how the underground hip hop structure in Turkey has been based on cities with each city having its unofficial organiser that everybody in the scene knew. And being from Küçükçekmece, he says MOB is made up mostly of artists from Küçükçekmece, Güngören, Esenler and Bağcılar. These people harbour some really talented hip hop artists, but he says people haven't been paying attention to these places (EYS Gece Modu [15.04.2019]). Aksan also points out the importance of locality for the rap artist. He says:

> Your location is actually the most important thing because the way you were raised, the things you saw and experienced also make up your music and the things you bring up in your music. It is not even just the lyrics, but it also forms your music because those kinds of music start to sound nice to you. Just like how in the United States while East Coast rap talks about tougher things while the West has more enjoyable sounds. The music you like also takes shape accordingly. It is not like this only in rap music but in all genres. For example, it can be fast in some places in line with the geographic location of the place. The things you talk about, the path you plan to take are also shaped accordingly because for example if I had been raised in a nicer place, if I hadn't experienced financial problems when I was growing up, I might not have put such big targets for myself and I might not have been this ambitious. That's why I think the place you live is the most important thing, at least it is what has shaped me.

We should also note that the adoption of the original hip hop culture as it emerged and still exists in the United States is not always "appropriated" by the artists in the MOB, in that some cultural elements that belonged to the rap scene in the United States did not go through the process of indigenization in the process of transculturalization (Lull, 1995: 153 as quoted by Androutsopouolos and Scholz, 2010). One example could be the way these rappers refer to their neighbourhoods as "ghetto". Oxford Dictionary describes ghetto as "part of a city, especially a slum area, occupied by a minority group or groups." While in the case of the United States where hip hop emerged as a culture in the ghettos, these ghettos were in fact areas occupied by African Americans and Latinos segregated from the "white"

neighbourhoods, we cannot see such a separation in the districts that MOB artists prefer to refer to as “ghettos”. Even though these places can be said to be slum areas, the people living in these areas, we cannot talk about an ethnic or religious separation. Even though we can see other addresses to these neighbourhoods, such as in the song “Varoş” of the late Vio, *varoş* as a word meaning “a slum area”, we can see that the use of the word “ghetto” in reference to the American ghettos is more common in the songs released under MOB Entertainment.

Another element transculturalized in MOB Entertainment, which can be argued to lack indigenization, is their focus on the East vs West distinction in their music. Even though Aksan is probably right in how the place you have been raised in has an effect on your music as well as your lyrics, the claims by the MOB artists to be representing the “West Coast” of Istanbul, as an appropriation of the West Coast vs East Coast separation in the United States can find its objections within the genre. Even as the founder of MOB Entertainment, Tepki upon being asked about the locational rivalries in hip hop, talks about this distinction in the United States as East Coast vs West Coast and also gives examples from Germany; however he also adds that he believes these kinds of rivalries damage the culture rather than contribute to it. Moreover, while for example Motive says their music is representative of their neighbourhoods, he does not specify how exactly the “West side” of Istanbul is different in sound from the East side, and his current style of rap music, *trap* is a recent trend in the global rap music market.

In terms of the importance of locality, it was also interesting to see in MOB’s Istanbul concert on May 2nd, 2019 that close to half of the audience that I spoke to knew one of the artists personally from their neighbourhood. Moreover, different sections of the audience from different districts reacted to the artists that are from their district as they took the stage and moved forward from the audience to sing along to those songs, which artists also encouraged by shouting to the people from their district when they took the stage. Artists such as the GNG and Aksan even came on the stage with the scarves of Güngören sports team, to which a section of the audience who came wearing Güngören jerseys reacted frantically.



Figure 1. Aksan on Stage Wearing a Güngören Scarf

Despite the importance of these local scenes, Istanbul has a special place in the Turkish national rap scene. Anıl Piyancı, who lives in İzmir and has a studio there where he records his music, says that he knows that everything regarding hip hop music happens in Istanbul, meaning that the national rap scene in Turkey is based in Istanbul; however, he feels a deep attachment to Izmir, which is why he cannot leave. Similarly, Hayalet says he would like to move to Istanbul because he faces a lot of difficulties as a rap artist who lives and works in Edirne, especially in what we understand to be their process of moving from the underground onto the national rap scene in Turkey with MOB because the whole operation takes place in Istanbul, more specifically in Küçükçekmece where MOB Entertainment is located. He says

that once he reaches a point where he can resign from his job in Edirne and make a living off of rap, he will move to Istanbul. Here we see the effects of what van Maanen (2009) calls conditioning factors in financing systems in terms of aesthetic freedom where BTC falls in the category of artists who have jobs on the side to support their artistic endeavours. Even though after singing with MOB, they do not totally belong in this category anymore, in which they did not face any restrictions other than lack of time or means, they aren't still completely rid of these restrictions because subsidy of MOB hasn't taken full effect as it has only been a couple of months at most since their first official album release and they haven't come to a point where they can only use the income from their artistic work to make a living.

5.3 Artists' Art Worlds before MOB

As we mentioned before, none of the interviewees started their rap career with MOB Entertainment. As artists who produced as a part of their local scenes, they had been in the Turkish rap scene, and except for Tepki, all of them had been producing in the underground, meaning that they hadn't signed with any other label before and they were producing and distributing their songs by themselves without the support of independent or corporate record companies. And Tepki pointed out in our interview that he hadn't signed a long term contract with any label before, and that all his contracts were limited to individual albums.

Becker (1982:3) mentions the manufacturing and distribution of the materials and equipment as part of the production of art works. When all these roles were placed on the shoulders of the artists working independently, they faced some challenges born out of having to embrace other roles than producing the artwork itself. He also states that this has an effect on how their work turns out. He adds that artists usually regard this situation as an "unmixed curse" and try to reach the regular means of distribution for their works (Becker, 1982:6). This is not necessarily the case for all the rappers. Especially the older generations, Hayalet and Tepki, despite being grateful for the chances provided for them by MOB Entertainment, can look at things from a wider perspective. BTC did not always strive to be a part of a label, and Hayalet said they did not have the intention to step onto the national scene in Turkey. Tepki, on the other hand, says that he misses being freer. Even though he does not

seem particularly upset about a certain part of his contract, he says every signature you give constitutes a restriction on your freedom. Remembering how they made music in the early years of rap music, Hayalet talks about how they used to record using the limited opportunities they had. He says they started recording with a cheap computer microphone and a demo version of a recording software. The software did not support more than 3 channels, and with one channel being for the music and one for the back vocals, he remembers how sometimes they had to take turns on the microphone during the recording when main vocals included more than one person. Moreover, similar to what DJ Kool Herc says about how he started DJing in 1970s (Chang, 2005:13), Hayalet says that at first they were only doing it for fun and after recording a song, they would make the other person promise not to show it to anyone before sharing it with them. However, after improving themselves, they started to give small concerts in small venues in and around Edirne, stepping into the translocal scene. Becker (1982:321) says that audiences also remain local for some time, which it did for BTC. Having met other rappers in events held around Edirne, they formed a translocal friendship, feeling part of a larger community (Becker, 1982: 136). Like all other interviewees, Hayalet also talks about how they had all the roles in their art world, from writing the song to recording it. They even burned them on CDs, designed their own covers and sold them on the street, similar to what Kitwana (2004: 343) says about rappers selling their songs "out the trunk" regionally, trying to put their city on the hip hop map. What introduced them to MOB was the effect of the translocal friendship they established with the rappers they had met during rap festivals and similar organisations around Turkey. Hayalet explains:

> A couple of years ago, when rap became so popular in Turkey, we started to have this rap organisation in Edirne. They also invited us, and then we said let's do another one and then another one… For one of these organisations, as we were thinking about who else to invite, we decided to call Kerem (Tepki) because we knew that he wouldn't start laying down conditions to come. And so it happened and he was there the next day. It was something he said that day they convinced me to join MOB Entertainment. There, Kerem said to me, "You have been doing this for 20 years and the things you did 10 years ago are the things that should be done today. Why don't you join us and we will get the revenge for those 20 years together?"

BTC has also been the part of the virtual rap scene ever since one existed. Hayalet remembers the 56K modem that they had which took a long time connecting to the internet using the same line as the landline and how it took them ages to be able to upload one song. Tepki also talks about how difficult life was for them before the virtual scene because the mainstream media would not give them any screen time.

Even now, Hayalet says people in Edirne only listen to rappers that they see on TV. Tepki says before social media, sometimes they had to perform a duet with someone even if it didn't really fit their style, or make a song that wasn't really their style hoping that it might be popular (EYS Gece Modu [15.04.2019]).

Aksan represents a transition generation when internet started to be more widespread. He says when they first started, they had a group called Terör İstanbul, which dissolved in 2010. He says his first listeners were mostly people around him because internet then was not this common and they could not upload anything they wanted onto YouTube. He also mentions preparing CDs and distributing them on the street and singing their songs in their local scene around Istanbul.

Rose (1994:55) talks about how rap music is as much dependent on technology as it is on vocal production and Price III (2006:50) states that technology has brought the underground sections of the hip hop music onto a similar level with the corporate sections thanks to the ease of distribution. Perhaps the most important effect of technology has been the ease of distribution of the songs for the rap artists in their respective local scenes in order for them to reach the national and perhaps even the global scenes through this virtual scene. In this regard, things have been more different for the newer generation in MOB because they did not have to make CDs and distribute them on the street for people to know about them; they could just upload their songs online even though they still performed all the other roles themselves. Motive, for example says they used to record in their home studio, do the mixing of their songs themselves, shoot their own video clips and then share it on YouTube. He says that he used to share everything from his YouTube channel before MOB because nobody supported them back then. Similarly, Aksan says thanks to the experience he gained over the years working independently and doing everything himself, if you just put him in a room and give him a computer, he can write a song, record it, do the mixing and film a video clip for the song in a way that will not be obvious that it has been recorded on a computer. I also observed the importance of the virtual scene for these rappers at the concert they had in Istanbul on May 2nd, 2019. Asking the audience where they heard of MOB artists for the first time, the answers indicated local scenes and virtual scenes, in that among the people I spoke with, the number of people who discovered them online was almost equal to the

number of people who were there because they knew one of the artists personally. Hence, we can say that the art worlds before the internet became a common means of communication followed a more linear process, starting from local scenes and then evolving into translocal scenes. However, when virtual scenes came into play with the widespread use of the internet, they became an integral part of the art worlds of local artists as well as those on the national scene, in a way bringing them onto, perhaps not equal, but a similar footing. For the new generation of rap artists who were born into the age of the internet, sometimes virtual scenes became their primary means of distribution even before they have reached a local audience. For example, the older generation interviewees, BTC and Tepki, were involved in their local and then translocal scenes, but as soon as internet became an option, the virtual scene also became a major part of their art world with the possibilities of distribution it provides. On the other hand, for new generation artists like Motive and Uzi, internet was their primary source of distribution from the start of their career while Aksan represents a transition period when he started by selling the CDs he had burnt to sharing his songs in the virtual scene when it became an option.

Born and raised in Güngören, Uzi mentions how he started doing rap music by stating that he met the local rap artists, and after realizing that "Güngören is situated at the foundation of rap music in Turkey," he went deeper and started making rap music and getting his first audience from the people around him like his family and friends. It is interesting to see that Tepki says they sometimes felt they had to make songs that weren't really their styles in order to reach a wider audience in the national scene because they did not have the possibilities created by social media. On the other hand, Uzi talks about his first song that achieved success above a certain level saying that it was not really their style of music, so he doesn't really like it that much. They made it for a TV series, but when it didn't end up on the TV series, they still wanted to release it because "they knew it would be popular." The song titled "Semt Çocukları", which can be translated in this context as "ghetto kids" did become popular and he says the actual ghetto kids really liked them. However, he also adds that they used to like the song at the time. Regarding the change in their audience from tougher ghetto kids to a more mainstream audience he says "My audience was mostly ghetto kids before. Now all kinds of people listen to our songs. Our songs have also changed; they became appealing for everyone". What he means

by the song not being their style is not that they made the song to become popular even though it wasn't their style, but more that their style is tamer now and they try to attract a wider audience with MOB, so it does not fit their current style with MOB. Uzi also mentions the collection of all the roles onto their shoulders before MOB. He says he was really productive then, writing songs, recording them, doing the mixing and sharing them online. He says some days there were 3 new songs in a day on their accounts. However, he says, now they only make the song and the rest is done for them. Burry Soprano also emphasizes the importance of the virtual scene for the Turkish rap scene saying that YouTube was a turning point for them. He says they just shared the song Mary Jane on YouTube without any promotion, which then went on to become really popular and to be censored by the state for promoting illegal drugs. He also credits Tepki for creating the platform for them to thrive now, meaning the local and translocal scenes that paved the way for the success of rap music today.

Becker (1982:126) states that artists working in culture industries come to depend on the feedback and judgement of their peers on the one hand and of people responsible for the distribution of their work on the other since they do not have a direct connection with their audience. In the same vein, Motive says that before their concert in Beyrut 2 years ago, he regarded his audience as just viewing numbers that he saw online. All the interviewees in MOB said that they take each other's opinion during the process of writing a song. Hayalet says they always send the songs to each other before they are released. Similarly, Uzi says after writing a song, he gets feedback from his flatmates Aksan and Ceset. Only if he gets positive feedback, does he go to Tepki with the song because he says "If the song hasn't been approved by everyone, there is no way Kerem Abi will like it." After Tepki's approval, they record the song. Aksan also mentions the importance of getting the final approval from Tepki. He says that everybody is very open to each other in MOB, and that a song he makes goes through not just Tepki but all the artists in MOB. He says he knows that if what he has done is not good enough, his friends will not let him record and release it, which gives him a sense of comfort.

Becker (1982:357) says that since artists are aware of the fact that people will make judgements about them based on their previous work, they try to exert a certain

amount of control over what becomes available to general public as they want to keep their reputation at a certain level. This might explain why the artists took down all the songs they previously recorded and shared before they signed with MOB from all platforms. For the songs they made before MOB, BTC says that they still keep all of them, but they are not planning to re-record them under MOB with the opportunities they provide because they can still produce new material and none of them had become really popular to deserve re-makes. Aksan also keeps all the recordings, at least the ones he made onto CDs, but perhaps not the first ones he made on cassettes. He says that as part of the attempt with MOB to form a more global career, he took down some of his work from online platforms. He does not have anything that he is too embarrassed about, and he re-records and shares some of his earlier work, but he seems to believe that they should pass through a new filter created in accordance with the image of MOB. Motive also says he still keeps his earlier recordings and tries to incorporate his earlier work into his new songs.

Dimitriadis (2004: 426) talks about how earlier groups like the Sugar Hill Gang were "loosely structured" with three or more members. We can see a similar case with MOB as well. For example, one of the MOB groups called 832. Yanyol, named after the local address where the group was set up, has officially 8 members, among which we also have Motive and Burry Soprano. In MOB concerts as well we can see how the groups sing most songs together, taking each other's place when one is not present. For example, in the Istanbul concert of the MOB tour in 2019, which took place on May 2nd, BTC member Hayalet could not make it and Tepki took his place on the stage to help Hücum, the other BTC member, with the songs. We can also see the same loose structure in the history of BTC, referring back to the times when their group reached up to 13 people at one time.

Chang (2005:96) talks about the rewards of being invisible, meaning underground in this sense. He states that the underground artists are unmediated by corporate money and they are not authorized by the powerful; on the other hand, they do not have to answer to anyone. Even though all the artists talk about how free of a place MOB is and how it is like a family, they still have certain rules. For example, talking about the differences between how they used to make music before MOB and how they do it now, interviewees said that they used to write and share music whenever they

liked. However, now they have to start the process about two weeks earlier before the release of a song so that the promotion and the legal procedures will be completed in time.

5.4 The Impact of MOB on the Artists' Art Worlds

Even though all the interviewees stress how different MOB is from corporate labels, there are still things a lot of things that have changed in their art worlds, mostly for the better according to what they stated during the interviews. Aksan said that they were actually a group of rap artists who had already been in the rap scene with the rap group MAZE consisting of Tepki, Motive and himself and all that did was to invite their friends from around the block to set up this structure. He says what brought them together is their mutual perspective on the world. Tepki also adds the technical aspect of the label such as the presentations done to an investor who believed in their work. He states that even though they haven't been able to give a return on the investment just yet, they have made a lot of progress despite the short amount of time since their establishment and they will be able to make good profits soon while Hayalet also emphasizes how profit was never the primary motivation behind this label because he says everyone from the investor to the tea-maker is there because they believe in this culture and in what these young artists are doing. Aksan states that MOB hasn't changed the way they do things to a great extent because he sees MOB as an investor who invested in them because they believe in what they had already been doing. Therefore, he sees it more like an investment that they can direct in the best ways they deem fit for their art.

All the rap artists interviewed without exception stressed the family-like structure in MOB. Hayalet states that they had no intention of attempting to climb onto the national rap scene before MOB because they are relaxed people who refuse to try and fit into a certain mould. However, what attracted them in MOB was the family-like atmosphere in the label. Uzi also states that MOB is a family before being a record label because they were together back when they had nothing and achieved all this together. Therefore, he says, they don't have artist to A&R relationships, rather they are like a big family who solves each other's problems all together. Aksan adds that there is a connection between them like brothers, and that what matters to them

just as much as the music people make is the characters of these people. Becker (1982) states that even though recruiting new artists is relatively easy for record companies, it may be difficult to keep them in the same label after they reach a certain level of success. When asked of any precautions they have in MOB as to prevent artists from leaving the label after a certain point in their career, all the interviewees stated that they do not need such precautions in MOB because of the family-like structure they have. Hayalet says as a result of the family-like structure in the label, there is no need for such precautions and nobody in the label thinks what will happen in five years. He says that beyond doing business, they are already a group of friends who are in touch. Motive adds that they are loyal to their family-like connections in the label and should any problems arise, they can solve it among themselves.

None of these positive remarks that place the label away from the, sometimes harsh, realities of the corporate world that focuses solely on profit surprised me. After all, MOB Entertainment is less than 2 years old and all these artists except for Tepki have been in the underground rap scene, devoid of the professional means of production and distribution that MOB Entertainment now provides for them. And they in fact had been friends in the underground scene before signing with MOB as they stated and they still seem to decide most things about their art together, under the supervision of Tepki. When asked about what they miss from before they signed with MOB, Tepki brings up freedom. He says that he wishes had had the technical means he has now when he had his freedom. He says "If I had the freedom I had back then now, things could be more different, but now I am not free." When I further question what he means by this lack of freedom, he does not go further than saying "Every signature you sign is a restriction on your freedom, of course. On your financial freedom, sometimes on your artistic freedom, it depends." Aksan also talks about how now he has to "sign all these documents" before releasing a song without giving any further details.

Rose (1994:13) talks about the lack of control rap artists have over the production of their music videos, and that the record companies do not take into consideration the desires and demands of the artists when deciding on the music videos. Based on the interviews, we can see that MOB differs from other corporate brands that Rose talks

about in this manner as well. Uzi states that after writing a song, if he has come up with a script for the video clip, he presents it to Tepki. If approved by Tepki, that idea goes. If not, sometimes he suggests something else and they all decide together on the best alternative from the collective suggestions. He says that everybody contributes to the process in one way or another should it be the songs or the video clip. In the same vein, Aksan says that he is the one who decides the concepts for his video clips, which is of course opened for discussion for everybody; however, still he is the one putting forward the first suggestion, and thus setting the direction for his video clip.

The first advantage that MOB Entertainment has brought to these local artists seems to be the technical benefits such as the professional recording studio and video clips. Aksan mentions how they used to record their songs in their home studio and film their clips with the equipment they had, but now they can record their songs in a heavily-invested professional studio, and they can work with any producer or arranger that they like. Motive also states that they can find everything they look for within the body of MOB with a music studio that is above its counterparts in Turkey. They even have a kitchen and bedrooms in the label. Aksan states that while they already had their respective audience before MOB, with MOB they managed to enter the mainstream market. Motive gives an example for this by stating the effect of MOB on his audience, saying that people who did not use to pay much attention to him before have now started to look up to him after seeing his poster somewhere or saw his label, which is on a lakefront in Küçükçekmece. Aksan also talks about the distribution possibilities of MOB by being able to promote them for a bigger audience and set up bigger concerts for them.

As the interviewees had combined all the roles required in their art world on themselves, there has been a group of new actors entering their art world together with MOB. Becker (1982: 13) states that all people needed to produce an art work doesn't even have to be under the same roof. Similarly, in MOB not all the participants of the art worlds of the artists are under the roof of MOB, such as mastering, which is outsourced. Even though they decide most things about a song together in their family-like structure, which seems to make up most of their art work, the songs after recording are sent to a sound engineer outside of the company.

Hayalet says they are not even involved at that part of the process; however, he also knows the importance of it. He talks about how even small changes that the sound engineer makes, even sometimes to the point where the difference cannot actually be heard by the human ear, are of great importance for the art work that comes out at the end.

Hayalet says after writing the song and deciding roughly on the music, the decision has to be made regarding the beats. They can prepare the beats/music themselves if they choose to do so, and states that two of the songs of their five-song album released with MOB were composed by him. After recording the song, the mixing is done by Anıl, who is the mixing engineer and part of the family that everybody spoke so highly about in terms of his mixing skills even though Uzi also talks about the learning curve he got through and how he also improved himself in terms of mixing together with the artists. Aksan talks about the positive effects of this distribution of work, stating that as opposed to doing everything related to a song, he is now able to focus all his attention onto the actual music without being distracted by all the other details such as how to film the video clip or where to get the video camera and so on. Upon being asked the effect of these new professionals in their art world, Hayalet says:

> You can paint your house yourself, or you can get a professional painter to do it. When you try to do it, you might drip paint everywhere, and it won't be as good. But a professional will do a better job than you do. We are professionals in music, after all, we have been doing it for years. But when it comes to mixing and mastering, it is better when you work with professionals.

Describing this situation, Becker (1982:25) indicates that artists produce their art in a network where several people contribute, all of whom are essential to the final product. However, he also questions how little of the work is enough for these contributors to be considered artists (Becker, 1982: 19). According to the interviewees, everybody who has a contribution on the art work is an artist. Uzi also talks about the producers as being artists following the developments in their respective field on a global scale. Anıl is also a great artist for him. He says there is no need to even mention the video clips because "everybody in it is an artist since it has a visual basis". Hayalet states:

> The person making the music for example. If there is anything to be played live, those performers are also artists. Then the person doing the mixing is also performing a great art, so

> does the person taking the recording in the studio. The last touch is also very important. The sound engineer doing the mastering is also an artist.

Becker (1982:152) talks about how members of the art world sometimes cannot agree on the extent to which art world participants can influence the work of art. Among our interviewees, Motive is convinced that it is without doubt the artist who has the biggest impact on the art work. He does not believe that the other participants, or in this case artists in the art world can have a significant impact on the art work. Hayalet states that it is the mixing engineer who has the biggest impact on the art work after the artist. He believes that the artist has to be there for the mixing process and tell the engineer what exactly he wants in the song because it has a big impact on the end result. He talks about how he had to keep in contact with the sound engineer through the phone all day long because he was working in Edirne and could not personally be in the studio to tell him what he wants. He still found a way to be a part of the process despite the lack of sleep after working a night shift and stayed awake just to keep in touch with the mixing engineer during the mixing process of their songs. Tepki, on the other hand, states that the effect of the producer on a song can sometimes be almost equal to that of artist. He says that he used to do his musical arrangement himself, but now even though he cannot find time to do the whole thing himself, he stands by the producer to give him suggestions (EYS Gece Modu [15.04.2019]).

According to Becker (1982:198), it is not just artists that make works of art, but rather it is the art worlds because the art work is shaped by all the choices that all these participants make during the production of the art work. In agreement, Aksan attributes his last album to MOB and says he does not see it as *his* album but rather their collective album with him as the lead singer. We can also see that not all the choices are made by the artists. For example Motive talks about how Anıl asks him to change the bits of a song which "he feels uncomfortable with". Tepki states that all the actors have their signatures on the end result because they all make choices during this process. He adds that otherwise, this process would be done by computers. Aksan says that being a producer is not that different from writing or singing music in terms of creative capacity, so the effects of the producer on the song cannot be underestimated.

Considering the involvement of these professional groups of people in the art world, Becker (1982:25) points to a possibility where the specialized aesthetic, financial and career interest of these artists may be different from those of the artist, which constitutes a likely ground for conflict. Tepki says that these kinds of things sometimes happen during the mixing process because the mixing engineer also has his set of aesthetic judgements and interpretations. He says that fifty percent of the time the artist ends up being right while fifty percent of the time it is the mixing engineer who ends up being right, which is decided after listening to the versions. Hayalet also agrees, stating that the result of such a conflict is resolved by fifty-fifty. He says that for example for a solo part of the song, the mixing engineer may want to turn down the volume of that solo part while you might want to turn it up higher, and that you have to find the middle ground somehow. However, he also adds that due to the family-like structure of the label, they did not have big problems and that if you are used to each other's style, you will somehow figure things out. Uzi says that during the mixing process, if Anıl makes a comment on something in which he is the expert, Uzi complies and does it in the way Anıl wants.

Talking about working underground as considered by artists as an "unmixed curse", Becker (1982:6) also points out that access to the mainstream chances can be considered to be a "mixed blessing", in that these regular means of operation can restrict artists in several ways. Motive, for example, says that they cannot do everything they want now, and that they even have to be careful in how they use their social media accounts because there are now certain things they have to consider now that they are turning into an official structure. And another point that is mentioned by almost all of the artists is that they cannot just release a song whenever they want now and they have to start the official processes for releasing a song at least two weeks earlier.

Tepki talks about how as MOB Entertainment, they invested in no-name artists in whom most record companies couldn't dare to invest (EYS Gece Modu [15.04.2019]). So, how does this family-like structure expand? In an interview with Rose (2004:541), Carmen Ashhurst-Watson, the president of Rush Communications at the time, which was the parent company for the second largest black-owned entertainment company in the US, stated that the artists who come to the attention of

record companies usually already have a large body of work and that they cannot be discovered right off the street. She says “Usually a rapper has done several hundred song and picked three of the several hundred that somebody likes before he’s even in the league of being commercially viable” (Rose, 2004: 541). However, the things are different for MOB according to the interviewees. Hayalet says that MOB does not want to work with people who are already well-known, having reached a certain number of followers on Instragram etc. MOB is a label which invests in musicians that are unheard of as if they have a million followers. In fact, they don’t have to have any. Hayalet says that during the process of discovering new artists, Tepki works with a team to listen to the suggestions by other artists or the recordings sent to them via e-mail one by one to pick out the promising talents. Tepki adds that they are looking for a certain spirit, that they are a label which looks for fully-equipped hip hop artists instead of being a label that concentrates on financial success because that way they would not be able to find the future rap starts, which he believes his artists are. He describes them as “game-changers”.

Hess (2007:20) states that hip hop artists “want to change the record industry by taking it over”. When talking about mainstream artists in Turkey, Tepki says that there is nothing wrong with being mainstream and in fact, that is what he wants for MOB as well. In that way, he says, we are not that different from them. Our difference, however, he says, is that we are not trying to be in the mainstream by making songs that will appeal to the mainstream; but rather we are trying to carry our style of music into the mainstream. Hayalet also points out in a similar vein that their main purpose is not just to make money, but instead bring the 3% rap music gets from the overall share of music in the Turkish music scene to 70% and then even go further, trying to reach an international scene with their music.

Even though the interviewees seem to regard almost all the changes that MOB has brought upon them under a positive light except for certain restrictions such as the use of their social media accounts and song releases, about which they do not seem to complain, Hayalet mentioned the workload as a possible downside of coming from the underground, which perhaps can be explained by what Becker (1982:115) explains as the demand from the dealers for a certain supply of work to be sold, putting some pressure on the artists to produce enough work for both the label and

the artists themselves. Although I doubt that the time pressure they felt was completely a result of the desire on the part of MOB to sustain themselves, but rather trying to fit everything into a tight schedule, it still seems to have exerted some pressure on the Hayalet, who says they had been used to work more flexibly in their own time for long years. However, Hayalet once again emphasises that he does not see this as a negative point in terms of MOB because the reason why he does not complain about being on such a tight schedule with both his work and his music career is to achieve his dream of making music his livelihood.

5.5 Restrictions the Artists Face

When asked about the restrictions on their music, all artists state that there are no restrictions on the part of MOB. Motive says that you can talk about anything because rap music is free music. Hayalet says that when there is a restriction in that sense, then the music you make will not be rap music; that you might as well make pop music and go perform the requests written on napkins. However, as Becker (1982:180) says, the state affects what the artists do by intervening in their activities in forms such as open support or censorship. Although none of the artists mentioned any support from the government, except for Tepki, who stated that the only support from the government was the indifference they have shown to rap music, which made him a better musician, a better mind setter and a better entrepreneur, they all talk about possible restrictions on their music. Aksan states that the state can now intervene because rap music has taken a strong position in the society where it can guide young people. Even though all artists suggest that there is no direct restriction on the "risky" topics such as drugs or politics in their songs from MOB, Tepki states that they try to minimize the risk through effective artist management. Hayalet mentions the lack of any guidelines to follow before a certain song is released. The state does not specify the elements forbidden on songs. Only afterwards might the state intervene and censor the song, as happened with the song Mary Jane by Burry Soprano. This is in parallel to what van Maanen (2009) says regarding how the balance between freedom of art and action by the state is not clearly defined, which causes the judiciary system to find itself having to determine this relation time after time based on individual cases (van Maanen, 2009: 223). Hayalet talks about how songs should not be taken literally in rap music because in rap music you tell a story.

He gives an example of an American rap artists who rapped about the ghetto and the harsh conditions he experienced having been brought up in the ghetto. After his death, however, his mother is quoted saying that they were not actually in such bad conditions. Based on this example, Hayalet says that in rap music, you talk about the things you see on the street. If the rap artist has grown up in an environment where he was exposed to the use of drugs and violence, he can talk about these elements in his rap songs. Similarly, Motive says they can use the music however they like and even though none of them use drugs, they can talk about drugs or they can talk about politics in their songs. While Uzi says he does talk about things like drugs in his songs; however, he tries to deter people from using them. Aksan, on the other hand, says that if he really believes in a risky topic like a political issue one day, he will write music about it despite the possible legal consequences even though currently he does not write in what is considered to be risky topics.

All interviewees all state in unison that MOB Entertainment poses no restrictions on their music whatsoever and they can talk about anything they want. They state that the first objection would not be from the label but perhaps from the state afterwards. However, I believe it is interesting at this point to highlight the words of Tepki, who says that artist management gains important in this regard. Tepki underscores the importance of choosing the right artists to invest because "you wouldn't want your artist to spend the next five years in prison." Both Tepki and Hayalet talk of the lawyer that the label has that they can go for legal advice in "these issues" when asked about the subject of "risky" song lyrics. Furthermore, the removal of the songs artists had before signing with MOB and the songs they have released after signing except for the case of "Mary Jane" by Burry Soprano, seem to point to an element of control even if it is an implicit one.

5.6 Lyrics from MOB to Support Their Words

Jeffries (2011: 62, 63) points out how rap artists are proud of where they come from and the ghettos for them are their home despite also being the source of the things they have had to endure. Chang (2005) points to the fact that sports brands like Nike and Adidas realized how the rap audience was more brand-conscious and started making advertisements that focused on these demographics. In addition, Shusterman

(2004:460) indicates the mentioning of commercial success in rap songs, which the artists connect to their verbal power. In the process of reterritorialization of hip hop by the artists in MOB (Lull, as quoted by Androutsopouolos and Scholz, 2010), we can see that MOB has also borrowed these elements of emphasizing locality by stating that they represent the west side of Istanbul, more specifically districts around Küçükçekmece, Güngören and Bağcılar, and how they mention sports brands and other elements which show wealth, such as Rolex watches or Mercedes cars. For example, while taking photos after the interviews, they explained to me that the hand gestures they did while posing were the signs of West Coast hip hop in the United States and since they "represented the west side of Istanbul", they were also using these gestures. Even though it is open to discussion as to whether these appropriations are actually appropriated through a process of indigenization during this process of transculturalization or are more direct borrowings, we can see examples to such appropriations in the lyrics by MOB artists that they have released under the MOB label. Even though we come across such elements in all their songs, here I will only focus on one song from each interviewee after talking about what can be called the label's promotional song with many artists called "Çekmeceden Yıldızlara".



Figure 2: Aksan Showing Me How to Make the West Coast Gesture

5.6.1 “Çekmeceden Yıldızlara” by Ruby, Misha, Motive, Burry Soprano, Aksan, GNG and Tepki

When we look at the artists featuring in this song, Tepki’s statement regarding how from the outside people sometimes think MOB is a rap band makes more sense. As the debut song of MOB Entertainment, the title, meaning “From [Küçük]çekmece to the Stars” as MOB Entertainment is located in Küçükçekmece and was founded by artists from Küçükçekmece. Hence, we can see the importance of locality right in the title of their debut song.

Düşmem ne şehrin ne mahallenin dilinden	Neither the city nor the neighbourhood will stop talking about me
Ben hırslıydım bu caddelerde bilinmezken	I was ambitious even before nobody knew about me on these streets
Çekmece'nin yoksulları gülümserler	The poor of ‘Çekmece smile
Yıldızlarım gökyüzünden silinmez	My stars won’t be erased from the sky
Çöküyoruz piyasaya hayallerim adına (yeah)	We are raining down on the market for the sake of my dreams (yeah)
Bırakmayız bu sefer yanına	You won’t get away with it this time
Ne bugüne, ne yarına	Neither today nor tomorrow
Pasaportu para Çekmece'nin	Passport for ‘Çekmece means money
Çıkıyoruz sınırların dışına	We are going out the border
En sonunda	Finally
Böyle iyi mi? Böyle iyi mi?	Is it fine like this? Is it fine like this?
Piyasana göre değiliz, göre değiliz	We are not suitable for your market, your market
Gözlerime bak! (Bak!)	Look into my eyes! (Look!)
Senin gibi köle değiliz! Değiliz!	We are not slaves like you! Like you!

In this first verse of the song sung by Tepki, he talks about how his ambition over the years has brought them to a state where they are able to make enough money from their art to get out of the ghetto, by stating that “Passport for Çekmece means money

and finally we are going out of the border". With the faith he has in his "stars", Tepki also emphasizes how they are different from the mainstream artists, saying how they "aren't for your market", and how they "aren't slaves like you".

832, ah! 212, yah yah!	832, ah! 212, yah yah!
Söylesene kaç kuruş edecek elindeki, ha?	Tell me, how much is that you are holding worth, ha?
Bütün şehir bizim, ha!	The whole city is ours, ha!
Almalısın izin maalesef	You have to get permission, I'm afraid.
Bu kültür başından beri reddetti sizi	This culture has rejected you from the start
Çünkü her işiniz leş! (leş)	Because all your works stink! (stink!)
Hepiniz copy paste!	You are all copy paste!
Tek yolum bu "asıp kes"le ilerlemez vites, sorun ne? (sorun ne?)	This is my only way, the gear won't step up with those violent words, what's wrong? (What's wrong?)
Artık kim olduğunu seç!	Choose who you are already!
Hesapta hepiniz keş de hedef kitleniz kreş, ah!	Supposedly you are all junkies, your target audience is kindergarten, ah!
Yıllardır içindeyiz, bilmedin şu lanet oyunu	We have been in this damn game, you wouldn't know
O yüzden umrumda olmadı hiçbi' yorumun	That's why we don't care about any of your comments
Elimde değil, ucuz olmak senin sorunun, yah! yah! yah! yah!	I can't help it, it is your problem to be cheap, yah! yah! yah! yah!
Bu getirir sonunu	This will bring your end

In this verse sung by Aksan, we can see the criticisms he directed towards the mainstream rappers in our interview as well. He talks about how their songs only aim for audiences that are "kids", in saying "your audience is kindergarten". Moreover, he points out how this culture, meaning the hip hop culture, has rejected these people from the start, which again found expression in his interview where he said how he usually listens to English rap songs because the Turkish rap songs fail to represent the real culture, which is something that MOB has been changing.

In the fourth verse of the song, Motive raps about "You are not in my orbit, I lay back and watch you from my Mercedes/ I couldn't be a high school graduate but I throw out diplomas and money on the streets[3]". Here we see what Tepki means by how rap offers an alternative way out for the kids in the ghetto if they are not suited for academic careers when Motive says he could not graduate high school but he still became successful because he is talented in rap music. Moreover, we see the effect of boasting with commercial success that Shusterman (2004) mentions when he talks about his Mercedes. He also says "You will see a glow from anywhere in the city centre/We will either stay here, or the city and the lights will rise to the skies with us/ this is what makes us different from others[4]" where he focuses on how Küçükçekmece is becoming an hip hop centre in Turkey like Tepki dreams, being a home to many stars who will rise to the mainstream success, and how they are different from others because of this representative style they have.

5.6.2 Cilala Parlat by BTC

As the group that has spent the most time underground before signing to MOB with members still working side jobs to finance their livelihoods in addition to their aesthetic endeavours, BTC focuses on these efforts in this song by saying "Work, polish and brighten!" in their chorus of the song in their debut album which they chose as their first music video. By saying how "Rap is like the Mustang that I don't yet have[5]", they talk about the financial gains they will have once they "I will come out of the underground to get what I deserve" because "the underground is like hell"[6]. The second verse of the song focuses on how they are determined to work hard to get what they deserve, saying "The destination is the sky/I will give all my days and my nights for this/ All the grapes in this vineyard will be mine[7]". Moreover, we can see the elements of commercial boasting in the lyrics Mustang and Rolex even though they are stated more as plans for the future for BTC.

[3] *Benim eksenimde değilsiniz, izliyorum uzanıp Mercedes'imde/ Lise mezunu olamadım ama saçarım caddelerde diploma, para.*
[4] *Parıltılar görürsün merkezin herhangi bir yerinden/ Ya burada kalırız ya bizimle göklere yükselir şehir ve ışıklar/ Bu bizi ayırt eder diğerlerinden*
[5] *Henüz altımda olmayan Mustang gibi, rap*
[6] *Yerin altı cehennem gibi, çıkıp üstüne alacağım hak ettiğimi*
[7] *Sonu gökyüzü, sonu gökyüzü bunun/ Vereceğim her gecemi ve her gündüzümü/ Benim olacak bu bağın her üzümü*

5.6.3 Mercedes by Tepki

Tepki talks about how he wants a Mercedes, as a proof for commercial success in this song. "I want a Mercedes/Let its star shine all the time/ I think about it every night / I will fill my friends in it / I will make this happen"[8]. However, in the last part of the song, Tepki admits that Mercedes here is only a symbol: "A history will be written here / The bourgeoisie will run right and left/ Your system is divided by parcels even for dreams / But my streets will be victorious / Do you think Mercedes is the main aim here?[9]" The song, as can be seen, generally focuses on the desires of an artist born in a poor neighbourhood, and the story of making it out by becoming wealthy. Tepki asks "How are we going to save ourselves from this darkness?/ Tell me how?/ How are we going to get away from this swam?[10]" And he talks about how he started to see Mercedes as a symbol of wealth in high school where two bullies in the schoolyard of the high school named "Eşref Bitlis", which is actually the high school that Tepki attended, were captivated by a Mercedes. Then his dream was "Get inside and detach from this world/ My shitty city in my rear mirror/ You wouldn't understand unless you are from here[11]". He finishes the verse, saying how he achieved this dream: "We made it, look, I am the pride of Çekmece[12]". The song includes both elements of the neighbourhood as the source of suffering and elements of feeling a sense of belonging, which Tepki also mentions in the interview, and which is also in parallel with what Jeffries (2011) states regarding the rap artists' relationship with the ghetto.

5.6.4 Bana İyi Bak by Aksan

In this song, Aksan recommends people to "have a nice look at me" before "things start to go really well" because after that point, they won't be able to reach them anymore and by ending the chorus saying "Bye bye", he suggests that they are already at that point. He suggests that in this path to fame, he will not change,

[8] *İstiyorum bir Mercedes/ Yıldızı parlayıp dursun /Onu düşünüyorum her gece/ İçine dostlarım dolsun/ Bunu çevireceğim gerçeğe*
[9] *Burada bir tarih yazılacak/ Burjuva sağa sola kaçışacak/ Düşe de paraya parselli sistemin / Ama sokaklarım kazanacak/ Sence Mercedes mi asıl amaç?*
[10] *Nasıl kurtulacağız bu karanlıktan?/ Söyle bana nasıl olacak/ Nasıl sıyrılacağız bu bataklıktan?*
[11] *İçine bin ve dünyadan kop/ Dikiz aynamda boktan şehrim/ Buralı olmayan anlayamaz*
[12] *Başardık, gururuyum bak Çekmece'nin*

expressed in lyrics "Be dragged behind me or stay and watch how I won't change[13]". He also talks about the spoils of commercial success, saying that now "I wear Givenchy, I drive a BMW[14]". He adds that he used to have lots of troubles and no peace, but now "handfuls of cash is spilling from my hand". And he says now that they have made it, "We have achieved this and the thoughts disappeared/ Now give me what's in your pocket/ Give me all I deserve![15]"

5.6.5 İnanma by Motive

Motive, whose bio description focuses on his young age and talent, and who is also considered to be the most talented in MOB by some of the people in their Istanbul concert on May 2nd, 2019, seems to confirm these through the lyrics of his song. The chorus of the song talks about his parents, him saying to them "Dad, don't believe them/ I have been cleaned from the ashes of the streets / Mom, don't believe them / I have held the hands of the sky/ No one would believe but the adventure suddenly took a turn/ Believe me, I have worked day and night[16]". Talking about his parents, he also makes a connection to the American rap scene by including Tupac Shakur's mother, saying that "Afeni Shakur wouldn't want his son to be embarrassed[17]". Even though his description does not talk about his ghetto background, he mentions it in his lyrics saying "Houses in ruins, I grew up in a problematic neighbourhood/ Ghetto birds have early deaths/ unless you are in prison or in grave / Raise your hands because that's the only way[18]", focusing on how rap is a way out of the ghetto lifestyle. By mentioning both his young age and his commercial success through the use of an expensive brand, he says "Young age/ new adventure/ Responsibilities slide from my hands / I can't hold it / The kid inside started clawing on my ears again / Wrap my shoulders, like I said, Gucci bag/ The proof of my success is made of genuine leather[19]".

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[13] *Peşimden sürüklen ya da kal yerinden izle, nasıl değişmem*
[14] *Giyiyorum Givenchy, sürüyorum BMW*
[15] *Bunu başardık artık yok oldu düşünceler /Şimdi cebindekileri bana ver/ Bütün hak ettiklerimi geri ver*
[16] *Bana, inanma/ Arındım caddenin küllerinden/ Anne, inanma / Tuttum gökyüzünün ellerinden/ Kimse inanmazdı, değişti birden serüven/ Bana inan, ah, çalıştım gece gündüz demeden*
[17] *Oğlunun utanmasını istemezdi Afeni Shakur*
[18] *Yıkık dökük evler, sorunlu bir mahallede büyüdüm/ Ghetto kuşları geç ölür/ Hapiste yahut mezarde değilsen/ Elini kaldır yukarıya, bu tek çözüm*
[19] *Genç yaş, yeni serüven/ Sorumluluklar kayar elimden/ Tutamıyorum, içimdeki çocuk tırmalamaya başladı kulağımı yeniden/ Sar omuzlarımı, dedim ya Gucci bag/ Başarılarımın kanıtı hakiki deriden*

5.6.6 Hızlı Sokaklar by GNG

GNG usually describes the grim scene of the ghetto that they grew up in, with their name representing their home district, Güngören. The song talks about how they used to cause problems every day, "rot in a *kahve* in the neighbourhood" and don't try to beat people up and how they have saved themselves from this "shit hole". Beyond these, they also carry the physical marks of their ghetto upbringing, stating how "Ghetto left some marks on my arms / I grew up with the pains of the cuts[20]". They also show their success with their commercial brands, saying "My hair is always bowl-cut/ My track suits are always Adidas[21]". All over the song, we can see a nostalgia for their ghetto upbringing as well as relief for having been saved from it. The song says "Fast streets, fast kids/ They are all together, waiting for you[22]". They admit that they are struggling not to go back to their problematic street kids past: "I am resisting, I don't know what will happen/ The Güngören kid inside is fighting me[23]".

[20] *Ghetto birkaç iz bıraktı kollarımın üstüne/ Büyüdüm kesiklerin sancılarıyla*
[21] *Saçım hep tas/ Takımlarım Adidas*
[22] *Hızlı sokaklar, hızlı çocuklar/ Hepsi bir aradalar, bekliyorlar seni*
[23] *Direniyorum, ne olur bilemiyorum/ İçimdeki Güngörenli savaşıyor benimle*

6. CONCLUSION

Born as a culture to answer the needs of a local social, political and a cultural scene in South Bronx, New York, hip hop has been appropriated by different youth cultures around the world as a result of a process Lull calls reterritorialization, through which a cultural element travels outside of the culture in which it originated and is integrated into another culture (Lull, 1995: 153 as quoted by Androutsopouolos and Scholz, 2010). The first steps hip hop took into Turkey were taken by Turkish immigrant workers, Gastarbeiter, who lived in Germany under conditions where they were marginalized, excluded from the society and exposed to racism, which enabled them to make a connection between their lived ethnicity and that of African Americans during the formation of the culture (Gilroy, 1993: 82 as quoted Bennet, 2004: 181). Cartel was one such group formed by immigrant workers' children in Germany, mostly made up by Turkish youngsters. Because they rapped in Turkish to express these feelings of protest by the *Gastarbeiter*, which included elements of Turkishness in a land where they were exposed to racist attacks for it, they were cheered by the ultra-national elements in Turkey, which, along with the political atmosphere of the time helped them achieve enormous success in Turkey (Çınar, 1999). However, this unmatched success of Cartel remained limited to their one album, after which the group separated. After this enormous success that introduced rap music to Turkey, some Turkish youngsters also took up rap music to express themselves. Some of them achieved a certain level of success over the years and some even made duets with famous pop music artists and wrote songs for popular films; however, none of this could match the popularity we have witnessed in rap music in the last couple of years. We have started to hear rap music everywhere from cafes to TV shows and rap songs have started to establish themselves in the music charts. In fact, according to Spotify data, the highest number of listeners belonged to a rapper, Ezhel in 2018 (t24.com.tr, 2018) and half of the top 10 from the Top 50 chart of Spotify are rap songs [23.06.2019].

The time in the Turkish rap scene between its inception at a point of high popularity and right into the mainstream and the recent period when it started to be a part of the mainstream music scene again was occupied mostly by a translocal underground structure as explained by Tepki (EYS Gece Modu [15.04.2019]). In this structure, Tepki talks about what Bennet and Peterson (2004) call a translocal scene, where local scenes from different towns are connected through "organizers" in each town. These organizers are responsible for organizing rap events and inviting artists from other local scenes. In these scenes, distribution was possible in small shops that agree to display and sell the albums produced by these artists. After a long period of working underground with only a few rappers known to a wider general public, who over the years came closer to the mainstream, recent years saw a big increase in rap's popularity again. We can perhaps connect this to the fact that when rap retreated to the underground from the mainstream, it still kept a connection to the new generation because while Aksan, in my interview, criticised Turkish rap for having been tailored to teenagers and failing to become a "grown-up genre", Anıl Piyancı who was in the other guest spot with Tepki on EYS Gece Modu states that he sees the same people in his concerts as when he did 10 years ago; the only difference is that while those people were only teenagers and students back then, they now occupy respectable positions in the society like doctors and pilots. This almost resonates what Martin (2010) states regarding rock music, in that rock music is now considered to deserve extended attention because people who grew up with it back in the 1960s and 1970s have now reached positions where they can influence the media (Martin, 2010:182). Seemingly aware of the generational effect on the popularity of genres, Tepki says they have been preparing for this recently-found-again popularity of rap music in Turkish mainstream music. As part of this preparation, he attempted to establish an independent label back in 2009, which failed. However, in 2018, he set up MOB Entertainment with the other local artists in Küçükçekmece district and this time he believes he has achieved success.

MOB Entertainment is an independent music label focusing on hip hop music, established as a result of the efforts by Tepki who now works as the A&R (artist and repertoire) executive in the label. However, Tepki is more than just an A&R for the artists in the company. Aksan, one of the interviewees and artists of MOB states that it was a group of rappers in the west side of Istanbul, even working together under

the rap group Maze that established this label, who then invited the rappers around them who they were friends with. Without exception, all the rap artists that I interviewed kept emphasising the word "family" when describing the relationship they have in MOB. The core crew in the label have been working together and have been friends long before MOB was established. Tepki, who among the artists in MOB is the most experienced in the Turkish rap scene with several albums released under different labels, seems to be the leader of this family. Tepki is the third oldest artist in the label, after Hayalet and Hücum, the artists in the group BTC, and even though BTC has been doing rap music longer, Tepki is more experienced in the music market because BTC operated mostly in the underground local, translocal and virtual rap scenes until last year when they signed with MOB, having been convinced by Tepki and influenced by the family-like structure in the label. Both the members of BTC and Tepki are respected by the other younger artists to a great extent and called "*abi*".

When asked about their relationship to what is generally considered the mainstream rap scene in the Turkish music market, Motive states that they "are doing representative (*reprezentan*) rap. I live on the west side of Istanbul and so I represent the west side." Having been established by the artists in Küçükçekmece and consisting mainly of artists around that district like Güngören and Bağcılar, we can say that MOB seems to have appropriated the hip hop culture in the United States also in terms of the East Coast vs. West Coast distinction through a process of reterritorialization by considering themselves to represent the "West Coast of Turkey" with their style of music. Even though we can argue whether this is an actual appropriation as a foreign cultural element going through a process of indigenization during this process of transculturalization, this element of locality frequently finds expression in their lyrics as well, with their most popular songs being "Çekmeceden Yıldızlara" (From Çekmece to the Stars), *Çekmece* in this sense meaning the district Küçükçekmece. In addition to the concept of East vs West separation, the reterritorialization of the hip hop culture for MOB also includes elements of commodity culture such as "designer leisure wear, brand-name kicks, expensive cars" (Hazzard-Donald, 2004:512). While we can clearly see this in their songs that talk about "Jordan shoes on Çekmece pavements" (Tepki) or "Adidas jacket" (Aksan), we can also see that this probably extends to sponsorship

agreements based on the social media of the artists, which showed how they went shopping to buy designer shoes from a famous designer-shoe store *Superstep*.

In our interview, Tepki defined the mainstream as reaching to a mass audience, and keeping doing the thing that has made them popular, and consequently, making money. He also adds that there is nothing wrong with that and in fact, that is what they aim as MOB as well, but with one difference: they aim to carry their style of rap music into the mainstream. While rap is taking hold in the Turkish popular music scene, MOB attempts to attract a wider audience, but while doing that, they are decisive not to lose their style of representative (*reprezentan*) music, as Motive calls it, and move their music as a block into the mainstream. As BTC says, they aim to increase the share rap music gets from the general music market to the high rates that pop music currently holds. This is also echoed in the song "Hızlı Sokaklar" by the GNG, "What I want is not a slice from your cake, we came to steal the whole cake from you![24]" Of course, as Tepki states, there is a price to being in the mainstream. In this new style that the artists created among their label MOB, they have changed some things in their music. Aksan, for example says he does not keep all the songs he recorded before MOB because they are trying to establish a more global career with MOB. Motive says that they use to write harsher lyrics before MOB, which they have been filtering now. And Uzi says that he does not listen to the songs he made before MOB because he believes he changed both his music and his point of view after joining MOB, and adds "My audience was mostly ghetto kids before. Now all kinds of people listen to our songs. Our songs have also changed; they became appealing for everyone."

Tepki states that one of his big motivations for establishing such a label was to help the local youth in the region. MOB artists regard districts that they grew up in like Küçükçekmece and Güngören as "ghettos" because these regions also lie on the outskirts of the city, the occupants of which are people from the working class even though we cannot talk about a racial or religious separation as is in the case of ghettos. Aksan says, for example that he might not have started doing rap music if his family's financial situation was not so grim when he was growing up. Moreover, the founders of hip hop, DJ Kool Herc and Africa Bambaata used it as a tool to stop

[24] *İstediğim dilim değil pastanızdan anlayın/ Biz tamamını önünüzden kaçırmaya geldik!*

young people from being involved in criminal activities, which we can say a purpose of the culture that Tepki seems to have reterritorialized by trying to use the same culture for the same purpose in these districts in Istanbul. As we can see in the documentary of Akbay (2007), hip hop also served this purpose during its underground years because the hip hop artists like rappers, graffiti artists as well as breakdancers state in their interview that they could have been involved in criminal activities and drugs if they hadn't found hip hop to express themselves. While this sentiment was repeated by the interviewees, Tepki also emphasizes the difficulties of working with such a demographic (EYS Gece Modu [15.04.2019]). He states that he constantly finds himself having to manage crises because these people, because of their social and cultural backgrounds, are inclined to get aggressive when they receive negative comments even online.

All in all, considering the technical opportunities that MOB Entertainment has brought for these local artists that they could only dream of, and also with the family structure in the label, in which they make their art with their friends that they had already been doing rap music before, they all define the changes that MOB has brought for them under a positive light. Now they can produce their songs with professional equipment, working with professional people specialized to handle certain roles of their art worlds which they had to do by themselves before, all of which enable them to focus only on making art. As a result of the close-knit relationship they have in the label, they do not have a problem when the people who now occupy the different roles which they had before end up influencing the art work that they produce. They decide most things together such as ideas for video clips, and sometimes what the mixing engineer suggests, for example, may not sound like the right way to go for them. However, since they resolve all such conflicts because they are "a family." In fact, Tepki says that if you ask around, most people think MOB is a music group rather than a record label; and Aksan says he cannot say his last album was solely his; rather he was the vocal of the collective efforts of everyone who contributed to the album in different ways. Tepki is the only interviewee mentioning a restriction on his "financial" and "artistic" freedom apart from others talking about what they consider to be minor inconveniences such as having to inform the label some time before they can release a new song.

We can perhaps consider MOB Entertainment as one of the independent companies that George (as quoted by Negus, 2004:531) defines as driving changes in the music market by identifying new sounds and circulating them outside of the systems where major corporations act as gatekeepers. However, Tepki says that MOB Entertainment is a partner to the record company of Jay-Z and Beyoncé, and their headquarters is in Germany. In that sense, we can perhaps conclude that MOB is the product of the changed tactics by the corporate record labels, whose strategy used to be to swoop in and dominate the market when a genre started to have commercial viability (Rose, 1994). However, Rose (1994) states that when this strategy did not work in hip hop because the artists signed to major labels could not produce sales comparable to the ones working independently or with independent labels, major corporations changed their strategy and instead started buying independent labels, but letting them operate mostly freely. Hence, we can also say that MOB is the product of this new strategy by the corporate label of Jay-Z and Beyonce in that they support MOB Entertainment financially and otherwise; however, they let Tepki make most of the executive decisions, who has experience in the Turkish rap music market and has been active in the local as well as the national rap scene for a long time.

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APPENDIX 1 – PHOTOS OF THE INTERVIEWEES



Figure 3: Tepki, after the Interview at MOB Entertainment Building



Figure 4: Aksan, after the Interview at MOB Entertainment Building



Figure 5: Motive after the Interview at MOB Entertainment Building



Figure 6. Uzi after the Interview at MOB Entertainment Building

APPENDIX 2 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

İsim:

Ne zamandır rap yapıyorsunuz?

Ne zamandır MOB ile çalışıyorsunuz?

Yaş aralığı: 15-20 20-25 25-30 30-35 35-40 40-45 45+

Bir Sanat Türü Olarak Hip Hop

- Size göre rap nedir? Ne rap değildir? Rap müziği diğer türlerden ayıran şey nedir? Bunlara kim karar verir? Seçim için yapılan rap şarkıları?
- Bir rap şarkısı hangi unsurlardan meydana gelir? Bunlar arasında en önemlisi nedir? Eğer bir tane seçecek olsanız hangisini seçerdiniz?
- Size göre rap kabul edilmemesi gereken şeyler hakkında kurallar var mı? Rapte ne olmamalı?
- Hip hop Türkiye'ye geldiğinde ne gibi zorluklarla karşılaştı?
- Bazı insanlar rap'i diğer müzik türleriyle karşılaştırdığında bir sanat olarak görmüyor. Sizce rap neden bir sanattır? İnsanların bu konudaki görüşlerinin arkasında yatan şey ne olabilir?

Ana Akım Rap

- Sizce hip hop denilince Türkiye'de insanların aklına ilk hangi isimler geliyor? Böyle olmasının sebebi ne? Onları farklı kılan şey ne?
- MOB'deki sanatçılar olarak ana akım rapçilerinden farklı mısınız? Ne gibi farklar var?
- MOB sanatçıları arasında en popüler olanı hangisi? Bunun sebepleri sizce neler?
- Hip hop'ta "çok satan" özellikler neler? Bu özellikleri siz de eserlerinize entegre etmeye çalışıyor musunuz? Bu konuda MOB size tavsiye veriyor mu?
- Hip hop'ın nasıl yapılması gerektiğine dair yerleşmiş kuralların ve alışılagelmiş tarzların sizi kısıtladığını hissettiğiniz hiç oldu mu? Bunların dışına çıkmak isteseniz zorluklarla karşılaşır mısınız?

MOB

- MOB hakkında neler söyleyebilirsiniz? Kaç sanatçı var? Bu sanatçıların ortak bir yönü var mı? Diğer şirketlerden farkı nedir?
- MOB'nin kuruluşu finansal anlamda nasıl sağlandı? Artık kendini çevirir, hatta belki kar getirir bir pozisyona ulaştı denebilir mi?
- Prodüksiyon şirketleri genelde yeni sanatçı bulmakta zorluk çekmezler, ancak ellerindeki tutmakta bazen zorlanabilirler. MOB, anlaşması olduğu sanatçıları kaybetmemek için ne gibi önlemler alıyor?
- MOB iyi ama, şu da olsa iyiydi dediğiniz bir şey var mı? Varsa bu hizmet MOB'de neden olmayabilir?
- MOB size finansal anlamda ne gibi destek veriyor? Sağladığı imkanların yanında uymak zorunda olduğunuz kurallar var mı? Bir MOB sanatçısı ne olursa olsun istediği her konuda her şekilde şarkı yapabilir mi?
- MOB sanatçıları için ne gibi tanıtım yolları izliyor?
- Bir şarkı ortaya çıkana kadar kimlerin kimlerin elinden geçiyor? Herhangi bir şarkının üzerinde kimlerin emeği var? Bu kişilerin hangilerini sanatçı olarak görüyorsunuz? Onların sonuçta ortaya çıkan eserdeki etkisi hakkında ne söyleyebilirsiniz? Bu kişiler arasında aslen rap dışındaki bir alanda uzman olan kişiler var mı?
- MOB grupları veya ürünleri seçerken nelere dikkat ediyor? Takip ettiği kriterler var mı?

Kısıtlamalar

- Şarkılarınızda "riskli" kabul edilen siyaset veya uyuşturucu gibi konulardan bahsedebilir misiniz? Bahsedebilmeniz gerektiğini düşünüyor musunuz? Bahsedememek sizi kısıtlanmış hissetmeye itiyor mu?
- "Mary Jane" şarkısı konusunda ne düşünüyorsunuz? Burry Soprano gibi sıkıntılar yaşamamak adına bilinçli veya bilinçsiz önlem alıyor musunuz?
- Doğrudan ve açık bir şekilde devlet tarafından getirilen kısıtlamalar söz konusu mu? Kariyerinizin herhangi bir noktasında devletin herhangi bir desteği hiç söz konusu oldu mu?
- MOB ile anlaşmadan önce kaydettiğiniz şarkılara ne oldu? Bunların hepsi yeniden kaydedilecek mi? Kaydedilmeyecekleri ne yapacaksınız?

- Şarkıları yazıp bestelerken prodüksiyon imkanlarını ne kadar göz önünde bulunduruyorsunuz? Aklınıza gelen ancak mevcut imkanları göz önünde bulundurarak ertelediğiniz proje var mı?

Neler Değişti

- İlk dinleyicilerinize nasıl ulaştınız? Dinleyici sayınız nasıl arttı? Dinleyici kitleniz üzerinde MOB'nin ne gibi bir etkisi oldu?
- Dinleyicileriniz başta çoğunlukla yerel miydi? Yaşadığınız civarda yaşayan insanlardan mı oluşuyordu? Bu durum ne ölçüde değişti?
- MOB ile anlaşma imzalamadan önce şarkılarınız dinleyicilerinize hangi yollardan ulaşıyordu? Bu yolların getirdiği kısıtlamalar var mıydı? MOB sayesinde bütün kısıtlamalar ortadan kalktı, artık istediğiniz gibi şarkı yapıp dinleyicilerinizle buluşturabilirsiniz denebilir mi?
- MOB ile imzalamadan önce hep böyle bir hayaliniz var mıydı? Hedefiniz en başından beri ülke çapında bilinir olmak mıydı?
- MOB'den önce serbest çalışmanın ne gibi avantajları vardı?
- MOB ile çalışmaya başladıktan sonra neleri farklı yapmaya başladınız? Neler değişti? Gerek devletten gerek başka türlü uymanız gereken kurallara ilişkin MOB'den sonra neler değişti?
- Şarkılarınızın ortaya çıkması sırasında MOB'den önce ulaşamadığınız ve MOB'nin size sağladığı imkanlar var mı? Bu imkanlar sonuçta ortaya çıkan eseri nasıl etkiliyor?
- Bir şarkıyı ilk kez yazdıktan sonra şarkının kaydedilmesine kadar geçen süreçte kimlerin fikrini alırsınız? MOB'den önce kimlere danışırdınız, şimdi kimlere danışıyorsunuz? Profesyonel eleştirmenlerin değerlendirmeleri oluyor mu?
- Bir şarkının sözlerinin yazılmasından bir müzikle kaydedilmesine kadar oluşturulma sürecinin tamamında MOB'den önce iş bölümü nasıldı? Hangi aşamadan kim sorumluydu? Bu rollerin hangileri MOB'den sonra da hala sizde? Hangileri değişti? Bu değişimler sizce şarkılarınız üzerinde etki sahibi mi?
- Nihai ürün olarak şarkının ortaya çıkmasında katkısını bulunan kişilerden yeri doldurulamaz olan kimse var mı? Onları böyle önemli kılan şey ne? Bu kişinin yetkinliklerinin sizi kısıtladığını hissettiğiniz hiç oldu mu?
- Bir süre sonra İstanbul'a daha merkezi bir yere taşınmayı düşünüyor musunuz?

APPENDIX 3 – TRANSLATION OF THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS INTO ENGLISH

Name:

How long have you been doing rap music?

How long have you been working with MOB?

Age range: 15-20 20-25 25-30 30-35 35-40 40-45 45+

Hip Hop as an Art Form

- What is rap to you? What is not rap? What differentiates rap music from other types of music? Who decides these things? How about rap songs for electoral campaigns?
- Which elements make up a rap song? Which one of these is the most important? If you were to choose one, which one would you choose?
- Do you believe there are rules as to what should not be regarded as rap? What shouldn't rap entail?
- What kind of difficulties did hip hop face when it first came to Turkey?
- Some people don't consider rap as a form of art compared to other forms of art. Why do you think rap is art? What do you think lies behind such opinions?

Mainstream Rap

- In your opinion, who comes to mind when you talk of hip hop in Turkey? What is the reason for it? What makes them different?
- As artists of MOB, are you different from the mainstream rappers? What kind of differences are there?
- Which MOB artist is the most popular? What may be the reason behind this?
- What are "best-selling" characteristics in hip hop? Do you try to integrate these characteristics in your work? Does MOB give advice in this regard?
- Do you ever feel restricted by the established rules and customary styles regarding how things should be done in hip hop? Would you face any difficulties if you wanted to move beyond these conventions?

MOB

- What can you tell me about MOB? How many artists are there? Do these artists share anything in common? How does MOB differ from other companies?
- How was the establishment of MOB financially achieved? Has it become self-sufficient or perhaps even profitable?
- Production companies usually have no difficulty finding new artists, but sometimes they face challenges to hold onto the ones they have. What kind of precautions does MOB take not to lose the artists that they have signed?
- Is there anything that makes you go "MOB is great, but I wish ...."? If there is, why may that service not exist in MOB?
- What kind of financial supports does MOB provide for you? In addition to the chances they provide, are there any rules you have to follow? Can an MOB artist make songs about whatever they want, no matter what it is?
- What kind of means of promotion does MOB provide for its artists?
- Who touches on a piece of work until it is released? Who contributes to any song? Which of these people do you consider to be artists also? What can you tell me about the impact of these people on the final product? Are there any who specialize in areas other than rap among these people?
- What does MOB consider when choosing groups or products? Are there any criteria followed?

Restrictions

- Can you talk about topics that are considered risky in your songs, such as politics or drugs? Do you think you should be able to? Does not being able to talk about these things make you feel restricted?
- How do you feel about the song "Mary Jane"? Do you take conscious or subconscious precautions not to face problems that Burry Soprano faced?
- Are there direct or indirect restrictions from the state? Have you ever got support from the state at any point of your career?
- What happened to the songs you recorded before signing with MOB? Will all of them be re-recorded? What will you do with the ones that will not?

- To what extent do you consider the production capabilities when writing and composing your songs? Have you ever postponed a project after taking into consideration the existing capabilities?

What Changed

- How did you reach your first audience? How did your audience expand? What kind of an effect has MOB had on your audience?
- Did your audience mostly consist of local people at the beginning? Did it consist of people who lived in your neighbourhood? To what extent has this changed?
- Before signing with MOB, in what ways did your audience reach your songs? Did these ways have certain limitations? Is it possible to say that thanks to MOB, all the restrictions have been lifted and you can now make songs however you like and let your audience reach it?
- Did you always have such a dream before signing with MOB? Did you aim to be famous around the country from the start?
- What kind of advantages did working independently before MOD have?
- What have you started to do differently after MOB? What has changed? What has changed in terms of the rules you have to abide by both from the state and otherwise?
- Are there any capabilities provided by MOB that you could not have access to before? How do these capabilities affect the final work?
- Whose opinions do you consult when after writing a song for the first time up to its release? Who did you consult before MOB and who do you consult now? Do professional critics ever judge your work?
- How was the distribution of roles before MOB throughout the whole process from writing the lyrics of the song to recording it? Who was responsible for which stage? Which of these roles are still on your shoulders after MOB? Which ones have changed? Do you think these kinds of changes have effects on your songs?
- Are there any indispensable people from those who contribute to the song until it comes out as the final product? What makes them so important? Do you ever feel restricted by the abilities of these people?
- Would you consider moving to Istanbul/a more central place after a while?

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

2016-2019	Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul
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2010-2015	Boğaziçi University, Istanbul
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	Translation and Interpreting Studies, B.A.
	GPA: 3,53
2013-Winter	Johannes Gutenburg Universitat, Germany
	Erasmus Exchange Programme

Work Experience

September 2017 – Present	Istanbul Medipol University

	English Instructor
July 2014 – Present	*Freelance Interpreter and Translator*
September 2016 – July 2017	Nişantaşı University
	English Instructor