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Music videos as protest communication: The Gezi Park protest on You Tube

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10 Music Videos as Protest Communication: The Gezi Park Protest on YouTube

*Olu Jenzen, Itir Erhart, Hande Eslen-Ziya, Derya Güçdemir,
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Abstract

This chapter explores the relevance of the protest song as political communication in the Internet era. Focusing on the prolific and diverse YouTube music video output of the Gezi Park protest of 2013, we explore how digital technologies and social media offer new opportunities for protest music to be produced and reach new audiences. We argue that the affordances of digital media and Internet platforms such as YouTube play a crucial part in the production, distribution and consumption of protest music. In the music videos, collected from Twitter, activists use a range of aesthetic and rhetorical tools such as various mash-up techniques to challenge mainstream media reporting on the protest, communicate solidarity, and express resistance to dominant political discourse.

Keywords: protest, music, Gezi Park, video activism, social media

Introduction

Today music is an established part of political communication (Street 2012). Yet, music is often marginalized in the theorization of politics. The use of music is one of the ways social movements 'gain a hearing to serve as vehicles of cultural change' (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004: 279) and among other cultural products, music 'facilitate[s] the recruitment and socialization of new adherents and help movements maintain their readiness and capacity for collective action' (Edwards and McCarthy 2004: 126). Music

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is an increasingly pivotal part of political communication across many political spheres, from election rallies to NGO media campaigns and street protests. Although some would argue that the heyday of the protest song is over (Lynksey 2010; Manuel 2017), the fact that the Gezi Park protests of 2013 in Turkey produced an extraordinary number of protest songs and music videos suggests that the protest song as political communication is still relevant in the Internet era.¹ Challenging the view that 'the context in which protest music once thrived is no longer present' (Manuel 2017, in Kutschke et al. 2017: 12), we propose that if we look at protest music online, we would see a thriving production. Particularly, if we look at the case of the Gezi Park protest, a wealth of creativity is evident with its diverse YouTube video output, combining music and image to challenge the mainstream media message about protest (and protestors), to communicate what the struggle is about, and eventually to connect wider publics to the local protest.

Research on digital activism, social media and protest has mainly focused on social media as a tool for sharing information regarding activities and for raising awareness of a protest (Bennett and Segerberg 2012). Less attention has been given to aesthetics and creativity. In this chapter, we explore the aesthetics and function of music videos as a specific protest expression and as a form of digital activism. This research, focusing specifically on YouTube videos that have been circulated on Twitter during the Gezi Park protests, forms part of the larger Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded 'Aesthetics of Protest' project which has explored visual protest culture and communication.² The protest music video, we argue, draws on already established genres of video activism such as witness documentation (Askanius 2013), rally call, and political remix videos (Conti 2015), which, when combined with a musical soundtrack, communicates across intellectual and emotional registers (Mirzoeff 2015).

Using the highly mediated Gezi Park protest in Istanbul in 2013 as a case study, the chapter explores how digital technologies and social media offer new opportunities for protest music to be produced and reach new audiences. We argue that the affordances of digital media and Internet platforms such as YouTube play a crucial part in the production, distribution and consumption of protest music. Focusing on the specific intersection

1 An impressive catalogue of music dedicated to, or inspired by, Gezi was produced. It encompassed many genres, from traditional Turkish folk to hard rock, rap and pop. See, for example, the 'Artists in Resistance' blog or the 'Çapulcu Şarkılar' playlist on Bandcamp, with over 140 songs.

2 See the 'Aesthetics of Protest' project, <https://www.aestheticsofprotest.com>, AHRC Reference: AH/N004779/1.

of digital media and protest music, we seek to demonstrate how, in the format of music videos, activists use mash-up techniques, remixing images and music to reframe media images already in the public domain with the aim to raise awareness of police brutality, communicate solidarity and express resistance to dominant political discourse. By doing so they give new meaning to both images and music and contribute to a reorientation of protest to include online audiovisual outputs by individual producers. Many of the music videos in our data set employ sophisticated methods of combining sound, lyrics, and visual material to make specific rhetorical points or to provoke new interpretations, either by turning the lyrics into a commentary on the images or using specifically chosen images to give new meaning to a well-known song. We also argue that activists tap into pre-existing popular culture notions of an authentic political voice, such as the association of rap music with social protest, a tactic that also has the potential to reach new audiences and build solidarity.

Examining why protestors deploy particular aesthetics and how these are mediated and understood across social media we looked at different forms of creative political expressions as ‘communication which have the potential to inspire and mobilize people to action’ (McGarry et al., this volume). Quite soon on in our analysis of data collected via Twitter, it became apparent that we were dealing with a wide array of creative outputs, including photography, digital visual art, comics, poetry and music videos. Looking at the music videos separately, we could discern many different styles and genres of music. This in itself not only tells a story about the richness of the creative output, but also illustrates that the Gezi Park movement was made up of people of diverse backgrounds, ages, cultures, and tastes. The crowds, which consisted of diverse, even conflicting identities, united against what they called the ‘authoritarian rule’ (Ehrt 2014: 1728) and mobilized around ‘concerns for detrimental urban policies and for the environment’ (Atak 2013: 19). During the protests, nationalists, Kurds, Kemalists, socialists, feminists, vegan activists, anti-capitalist Muslims, LGBTIQ groups, and white-collar workers stood ‘shoulder to shoulder against fascism’ (Ehrt 2014: 1725) and resisted together (Arat 2013). In light of this, we ask how do music videos operate to mobilize and unite the movement musically and as a multimodal form of online communication? How do the videos amplify the movement’s critiques to reach a wider audience? And what does the online music video format offer to activists today?

Music can permeate protest in many different ways. Bianchi (2018) illustrates the function of music performances in the park and in the streets as part of the protest. Building on these insights, this chapter focuses

specifically on Gezi Park protest music videos on YouTube. We argue that these videos not only offer opportunities for the music to reach beyond live performances, and thus extend the momentum of the movement, but also perform distinct corrective responses to mainstream media representations. They subvert the dominant message by remixing images and music in new and creative ways. Therefore, availing such music videos on YouTube requires us to look at protest music as part of a mediated commercial-cultural terrain and to elaborate on them as part of a digital space that allows people to participate in protest in different ways.

Online music videos can be sampled in various ways (cf. Way 2015). Our approach involved starting with a data set of 300,000 tweets generated by querying the Twitter API using the key word *Gezi Parkı* (as it would be written in Turkish) from 27 May to the end of June 2013. This was the time period during which *Gezi Parkı* was a regularly trending topic on Twitter and the protests were in full swing. As many as 20% of the tweets contained images and a smaller yet significant number of tweets contained links to content uploaded to YouTube (see Table 10.1). A random sample of 133 videos were harvested for qualitative thematic analysis.

Table 10.1. Data Set of Tweets and Content from the ‘Aesthetics of Protest’ Project

Type of tweets	Numbers	Percentages
Total	243,912	100%
Images	51,781	21%
YouTube videos	3,903	1.6%

Dissatisfied with the mainstream media coverage of the Gezi Park protests, protestors resorted to live-tweeting of protests as well as live-streaming and sharing YouTube videos. Thereafter, YouTube became a symbolic rallying point for the protestors. Of the 133 videos studied, the majority were pro-Gezi Park protests and anti-government policies and police violence. The YouTube videos shared via Twitter varied from documentaries, TV clips, collages and commentary all relating to the protest. As expected, documentary footage dominated and made up 29% of the sample whilst, somewhat surprisingly, the second largest category was music videos, which represented 25% of the sample. The latter stands out as a particularly interesting category and becomes the focus for this chapter. Our analysis of YouTube videos is based on the visual and textual content of videos circulated via Twitter as well as the descriptions and the titles that frame these videos.

In addition to examining the protest message put across in the lyrics of the music videos, we also took into consideration the material qualities and aesthetic forms of each video. In our analysis, hence, we aimed to capture the multimodal aesthetical and formal characteristics of the music videos in order to elaborate on what makes them performative. When dealing with music videos published online, we came across several communicative elements coming in to play. These are namely the musical score, the lyrics, the visual style, the narrative arch, the tone and genre of the video itself. In addition, there is the context of conditions of production and distribution, and importantly for videos on social media, the social dimension. This comes to fore thanks to the audience's responses to the video within the comments field and, as in the case of the sample here, the remediation of the videos to appear in a new context, for example, embedded in a tweet. Our analytic strategies seek to respond to some of these multiple aspects and avoid treating protest music videos as static digital artefacts.³ In order to offer a more detailed analysis of the YouTube music video as protest communication, we have performed a close reading on three of the videos selected from our sample.

Music as Protest

Protest music in itself is a broad term and academically a wide field that expands far beyond the scope of this chapter, both historically and geographically. On the face of it, protest music is a relatively simple concept by which we mean music carrying a political message that is associated with a particular political protest or social movement. In other words, we are interested in deliberate political communication expressed through music. But actually, it is rarely this straightforward. Different cultures have different traditions and histories of protest music. Furthermore, part of the power of music, and the appeal of a particular song, is that it conveys sentiments and ideas through an aesthetics of protest that is layered, semantically unfixed, and playful rather than insistent.

The role of music in relation to social movements has mainly been explored from a musical point of view (Street 1986; Lynskey 2010; Way 2016) or through a political typology (cf. Mattern 1998). Both approaches have primarily focused on lyrics as the main conveyor of protest messages. However, Frith (1996) and Way (2016) investigated how musical sounds could

3 Due to space constraints this chapter does not consider the comments field content.

also convey political meaning. Musical sound has ‘a particularly powerful affective role in communication’ because of its, ‘very fluid affordances, which are highly adaptable in multimodal texts’ (McKerrell and Way 2017: 15). In other words, it is important not to reduce protest music to the contents of a song’s lyrics. It is important to approach music as multimodal to be able to appreciate its function and effectiveness when understood as part of a movement’s communication. In this chapter, we seek to expand the focus on music (sound and lyrics) to also include the visual aspects of activist produced music videos.

YouTube and Protest Communication

YouTube plays a significant role as a platform for protest communication. In terms of grassroots campaigners’ use of the platform, YouTube has mainly been discussed in terms of its potential for citizen journalism in relation to political conflict and activism (Poell and Borra 2012). Live-streaming has become an important tool enabling activists to ‘evidence’ the concerns they have (based on witnessing) and to report directly from rallies or protests as events are unfolding (Martini 2018). Yet, groups and individual activists also use YouTube to upload more technically and aesthetically proficient and crafted campaign videos, vlogs, and montages (see Thorson et al. 2010). Other researchers of YouTube activism have mainly focused on the comments field as a textual and discursive space (see Weij and Berkers 2017), noting that the platform ‘extend[s] the discursive opportunities’ of other activist spheres, importantly ‘facilitating debate between otherwise disparate publics’ (Uldam and Askanius 2013: 1200). In their analysis of comments posted in relation to the politically explicit punk band Pussy Riots’ music videos on YouTube, Weij and Berkers (2017: 14) found that ‘for YouTube audiences, political music is first and foremost a vehicle to discuss politics on levels beyond what is actually raised in the music’. Arguably, this tells us that the function of music, and the music video specifically, is broadening and evolving with new media.

Limited research is available on the use of music videos, the otherwise dominating popular culture format on YouTube, as part of protest communication. Railton and Watson (2011) highlight how music videos are complex media texts in their own right with carefully crafted images and dramatizations. They demonstrate how even a minute visual cue as the singer mouthing the lyrics signify meaning through visual codes that can be studied in terms of how these acts can lead to different political interpretations and readings. Railton and Watson’s concern is purely the

professionally produced music video, but today we also need to consider the music video as a media form open to digital remixing and amateur production – a tool online activists creatively put into productive use. Citizen or amateur creativity is widespread in fan communities. There are not necessarily any clearly delimiting lines between such playful fan praxis and more dedicated political applications. In both cases, Internet platforms such as YouTube are important for the mediation and remediation of both industry-produced music videos and user-generated productions.

Both Bianchi (2018) and Way (2016) note the importance of the Internet for the distribution of music during the Gezi Park protest. Turkish political music operates within a ‘tightly controlled mediascape’ dominated by the ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party) ideology (Way 2016: 426). Noriko Manabe (in Kutschke et al. 2017) argues that even internationally, the music industry is clearly discouraging protest songs. Therefore, the Internet and platforms such as YouTube become important for ‘alternative musical voices’ (Way 2016) and may be employed as ‘a “subaltern tactic” (Certeau 1984) to reverse an asymmetry of power’ (Mercea and Levy, this volume).

We should also note that uploading Gezi Park videos on YouTube was largely un-coordinated. Yet, the videos served to foster a sense of collective identity, solidarity and participation. For example, documentary footage from the protest features heavily, creating a link between the viewer and offline events and, as we will go on to discuss, the videos invite a viewer position of solidarity and identification with the *çapulcu* identity: a term that translates into ‘marauder’ and was first used by the government as a derogatory term to defame the protestors, but through its reappropriation by the movement the repressive meaning of the term was reversed and created a political community (McGarry et al. 2019). Some videos more directly encourage viewers to participate or connect by promoting the different Gezi Park protest hashtags such as #occupyGezi etc. Such mobilization on social media as an alternative to collective action is what Bennett and Segerberg (2012) call ‘connective action’. But what were people connecting to? In the case of music videos this question becomes quite complex. It may be that individuals’ personal ideas connect with those of the protest movement (Lindgren 2017), but equally in the case of a pop song or hip-hop video, for example, the aesthetics of the video or the recognizable composition of the music may be what primarily resonates with an individual in the way a catchy pop tune may hold the listeners’ attention. The algorithmic structure of YouTube adds another layer of complexity to this as users navigate content in ways that are determined by the platform’s algorithm. If you have been watching Turkish rap videos, further rap videos relating to the Gezi Park

protests may be recommended to you, based on a combination of data about the musical style and aggregated user choices (Airoldi et al. 2016).

Music and Gezi Protest

On the one hand, research on the relationship between popular music and the Gezi Park protest includes the work by Parkinson (2018) and Way (2016), both looking at Turkish indie rock as a politically oppositional voice in popular culture, coinciding with the Gezi Park movement by resisting rampant consumerism and value conservatism. Bianchi's (2018) research, on the other hand, explores the music performed at the location during the occupation of the park and how the image of making music also features in the visual representation of Gezi Park protest, such as the iconic image of the man with a guitar facing the riot police. The centrality of music making in the protest context is also exemplified by the music videos we have studied. Several videos visually represent people interacting around music, signalling its social dimension and function as collective action. Thus, as Bianchi states, 'music became political activism' (2018: 212). In the first month of protest, 'about 30 new songs were specifically composed' (2018: 213), but perhaps more importantly it is to a large extent through music that the protest energy has lived on beyond the couple of weeks of actual occupation through continuous subsequent engagement online and across other performance venues and cultural fora. In this way, the YouTube music videos discussed in this chapter are part of the protest continuum across the digital realm and the streets. Looking at our sample of music videos, we find typical features of online participatory popular culture, employed as activist efforts. These include different types of audio-visual remixes (often referred to as mash-ups) and digital bricolage combining moving image, text, graphics, music and sometimes spoken word. In the section that follows we seek to explore some of these aesthetics and practices that contribute to the efficiency of the music videos as protest communication and explore some of the defining features of the Gezi Park protest musical output online.

Hybrid Sounds, Hybrid Forms: Unity in Diversity

One of the main themes of Gezi Park protest was unity in diversity. A most unexpected alliance was formed for example between the rival fans of Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe, and Galatasaray – 'The Big Three' of the Turkish

Football League. During the protests, fans got together and formed 'Istanbul United', symbolized by a new hybrid flag that combined the colours and the logos of all three teams. Such hybridity is also evident in the music videos we analysed. There were hybrid sounds borrowing from folk, rock, pop, rap and jazz. Lyrics of old songs were often adapted to speak to Gezi themes and videos created by combining multiple short video clips or still images from both broadcast media and citizen footage collected from social media. Footage of police violence, usage of water cannon and gas, people's involvement in the protests, and collective resistance was edited either to illustrate and dramatize a performed piece of music or was simply published with an added musical soundtrack. There is also linguistic hybridity: to appeal to international audiences, some songs are multilingual (English-Turkish) or have English subtitles and several have text superimposed on the images, for example, displaying lyrics or the #direnceziparki hashtag onscreen. By combining sounds, forms, images and languages the protestors tried to present protest as something creative and artistic.

Visual mash-ups are one of the most commonly used creative strategy in the music videos. The most basic form of mash-up videos that we found are those that consist of a visually intact newscast package, reporting on the protest, with the original voiceover simply replaced with music. These videos still cast the documentary images in new light as the anchorage provided by the reporter is removed and images set to music are much more open to interpretation. Shared across different social networking sites and online platforms, they also provide cultural material for political commentary. The appropriation of mainstream (anti-Gezi) reporting performs a 'reading against the grain', suggesting that the same images can be interpreted differently. This is a significant strategy whereby activist use aesthetics to perform a critique of state ideology.

However, there are also some more sophisticated or skilful remixes, where an assortment of found footage (moving image) is carefully synced to the beat of the music. Typically, in these activist-produced videos the lyrics work to provide commentary to mainly documentary images. In one of the most viral videos from the protests, *Everyday I'm Çapulling*, a techno beat instrumental piece of music is used to convey the energy and atmosphere of the protests. By skilful editing of footage of protestors in the street, bodies are made to look like they move in sync with the music, conveying a gleeful portrayal of the protests as a dance party, or at least as something dynamic that you want to be part of. This video also, perhaps inadvertently, foregrounds the performativity of protest through the recasting of bodies in movement to music. The video is both playful and serious, and hence achieves a sense of legitimacy by adding authentic sound recordings of chants from the

protests mixed with the techno music. In a way, this video is exemplary of the merging of popular culture and protest reporting that the Gezi Park protest music videos establish as a mode of online activism. It illustrates how the online DIY popular culture praxis of manipulating found footage in adept, often witty ways, to be eye-catching and fun to share, is used strategically in protest communication.

Several videos in the sample employ the strategy of ‘recycling’ a well-known and already popular song adding newly written Gezi specific lyrics to it. An example of this is the video by the internationally known Bogaziçi Jazz Choir. During the protests, a choir member rewrote the lyrics of one of their most popular songs ‘Entarisi ala benziyor’ (Her dress is a beautiful red),⁴ otherwise a folk song popular across the Balkans, to convey a protest message and a call to mobilize:

Are you a *çapulcu* *vay vay* (well, well)
Are you an activist *vay vay* (well, well)

The gas mask like red
Pepper spray is like honey
My TOMA⁵ is spraying at me

There will be a solution – people have risen
They are on barricades on the way to Taksim

Gas masks come in many different styles
I’m marching for Taksim
Don’t hang about,
Come for your rights

Gas masks come in many different styles
Gezi Park is as old as you
Come banging pans and pots⁶
With forks and spoons⁷

4 The choral arrangement is by Muammer Sun.

5 A TOMA (Toplumsal Olaylara Müdahale Aracı, or Intervention Vehicle against Social Incidents) is an armoured water cannon designed for riot control manufactured by a Turkish company.

6 Refers to the protest where people violently hit kitchenware with spoons in support of Gezi around 9 pm every evening.

7 ‘*Çapulcu musun vay vay. Eylemci misin vay vay. Gaz maskesi ala benziyor. Biber gazı bala benziyor. Benim tomam bana sıkıyor. Bulunur bi çare halk ayaktadır. Taksim yolunda barikattadır.*

The video is shot by a member of the crowd that gathered around the choir members. It is lit up using mobile phones operating as torch lights as the choir were rehearsing the newly written lyrics, and posted on YouTube the next day. Despite being immersed in the political discourse and events of the protest, this video is clearly also about showcasing the group as musicians. It is a spontaneous street performance, channelling the 'Gezi spirit' symbolized by spontaneous collective singing. This instils some of the atmosphere from the protest on the ground into the online communication. The video is also an invitation to participate in protest (e.g. 'don't hang about come for your rights', 'come banging pans and pots') and protesting is depicted as social and fun (they can't help laughing at the new lyrics while singing) yet absurd (the TOMA spraying at its own people). A sense of hope dominates the video and it clearly seeks to unite around the Gezi activist identity of the *çapulcu*, which is a strongly emerging theme in the music videos. There are two main rhetorical mechanisms at play here: first the re-signification of the term '*çapulcu*', giving it the new meaning of 'social activist' (as in the lyrics above where the two meanings are intertwined in the opening lines) and second a unifying of the movement around the *çapulcu* identification. The playful and rebellious remixes of songs, sounds, genres, as well as of clips and images hint at the characteristics of the *çapulcu*: all-embracing, witty and glocal. Extending the idea of the glocal, in the next section we will take a closer look at an example of *çapulcu* rap.

Çapulcu Rap

We were particularly drawn to the rap videos in our sample of music videos relating to the Gezi Park protest because of the way they exemplified an attempt to link the 'local' protest in Istanbul to wider international social justice movements. By using the genre of rap music, the activists not only stylistically link their music to socially conscious music that preceded them, but also take on the characteristics of the rebel performer telling it like it is, strongly associated with the genre. Taking a closer look at the example of the *Ayakta Kal çArşı* (Stand strong çArşı) video, posted by RAAD,⁸

Çapulcu musun vay vay. Eyleci misin vay vay. Gaz maskesi biçim biçim. Yürüyorum taksim için. Üşenme gel hakkın için. Bulunur bir çare halk ayaktadır. Taksim yolunda barikattadır. Çapulcu musun vay vay. Eylemci misin vay. Gaz maskesi çeşit çeşit. Gezi Parkı senle yaşıt. Vur tencere çatal kaşık. Bulunur bir çare halk ayaktadır. Taksim yolunda barikattadır'

8 Also known as the Gezi Park March.

we will discuss how the rap video calls out the injustices caused by the government's and media's treatment of the Gezi activists, how it aims to mobilize protestors and authenticate the *çapulcu* identity by linking it to the well-known Turkish football supporter group *çArşı*.⁹

Rap is broadly seen as giving voice to a disadvantaged, disenfranchised, and racialized group in American society – poor black urban youth – and thus has rebellion and resistance to oppression at its core. Despite the fact that many contemporary forms of hip-hop, both the commercial and sub-cultural scenes, are not primarily produced or consumed as radical expressions of politics or activism, the sounds, styles and composition of rap music have resonated with groups involved with political struggle around the world (Kahf 2012; Kellerer 2017; Tarifa 2012). Music journalist Andy Morgan (2011), who has written about the role of music in the Arab uprisings, portrays how rapper El Général helped spark the uprising in Tunisia by posting his videos challenging the regime on Facebook. As a commercially successful American popular culture export, rap culture has a global market and is accessible to huge audiences via online distribution. It is also highly adaptable to local tastes as illustrated by highly successful domestic artists rapping in their own language. Its bricolage or 'sampling' tradition means that it lends itself to playful remixes bringing in local and traditional music styles or borrowing highly recognizable cords and lines from a well-known song, which is essentially what the *Everyday I'm Çapulling* video does by channelling rapper Rick Ross's 2006 song 'Everyday I'm Hustlin'.

The tradition of Turkish rap dates back to Germany and the Turkish minority, those so-called Turkish guest workers (Diessel 2001; Kaya 2002). Nonetheless, Turkish rappers are also active in other countries thanks to the Internet operating as an important tool for the Turkish-speaking hip-hop community (Solomon 2005). Solomon (2006) discusses insidious Turkish hip-hop culture and presents the example of two rap groups – R.A.K. Sobataj and Tuzak, who explore and promote Islamic and conservative values. But Islam is not the only theme among rappers in Turkey. For instance, the group called Tahribad-ı İsyân, one of the groups that were active during the Gezi Park protests, uses rap to resist the restructuring of Istanbul neighbourhoods.¹⁰

9 An Istanbul-based football supporter group, founded in 1982 on leftist, anarchist, anti-establishment principles by small shop owners in the Beşiktaş's *çArşı* district.

10 Tahribad-ı İsyân's video is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FB253Dz4XGU>, accessed 12.04.19. Further noteworthy examples of Turkish rap videos referencing the Gezi Park protest on YouTube include: *Şanışer & Alef High #direngezi*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOMAE-MTXBk>, accessed 12.04.19; Fuat Ergin's *Karar Bizim* (in collaboration with Işıl Eğrikavuk and Jozef E. Amado), <https://www.youtube.com/>

The political merit of rap music in itself is not something we seek to settle in this chapter (see Baker 2011). However, what is clear is that the marketing strategy of rap to achieve 'authenticity' through a 'telling it like it is' rhetoric and image (Stapleton 1998) pairs with political communication. It produces, what Kane (2001, in Street 2012) calls, 'moral capital' as a form of emotional authenticity lending valuable rhetorical 'ethos' to the music as protest communication. In the case of the video posted by RAAD, performing the song *Ayakta Kal çArşı* (Stand strong çArşı), the 'moral capital' is compounded by the association with the football supporter group çArşı, one of the key actors during the protests (Övünç Ongur and Develi 2013) with an established public image of being the guardians of justice and a vocal voice against anything unfair. Their choice of the genre, therefore, also strikes a cord with çArşı's rebellious image. The group's logo contains the anarchist 'A', and their motto is 'çArşı is against everything'. With their creative and witty banners, they have announced being against many things including fascism, animal rights abuses, capitalism, nuclear plants, domestic violence, child pornography and climate change. The group was one of the first to join the Gezi Park protests (see figure 10.1) and the witty humour and antagonism its members brought to Gezi helped generate public support (Erhart 2014). The connection between the supporter group and the protest movement is manifested in the rap video when the performers speaking as çArşı members not only celebrate the *çapulcu* but fully take on the identity:

I'm just a 'ÇAPULCU'
I know who I am¹¹

This video brings together amateur footage from the protests in the streets, interspersed with close ups of Bora Gramm performing his rap, energetically expressed to camera, with genre-characteristic body language. Bora Gramm is depicted in multifarious ways: recording in a studio setting, establishing him as a professional musician; street rapping whilst marching with the crowd; rapping outdoors in the night using a shaky handheld camera to give the impression of a spontaneous performer, and as such an integral part of the protest with his make-do approach to performance of protest. In this sense, the video also connects to a core characteristic of rap videos where artists often perform in an urban 'street' environment. The video makes

watch?time_continue=1&v=Mxcw4gxNf2U, and *OZBİ – Asi (Gezi Park Şarkısı)*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jFpsKhfdMQ>, accessed 12.04.19.

11 'Ben sadece bir çapulcuym. Ne olduğumu biliyorum'.



Figure 10.1. A *çarşı* supporters' banner in Gezi Park with the slogan 'Taksim is ours. *çarşı* is ours. The street is ours.' Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.

a case for the right to protest and offers strong criticism of the media and the police. This relates to the point made by Özge Özdüzen (this volume) that within video activism, activists' bodies either depicted or indirectly represented through the movements of the handheld camera function as a source of protest narrative.

Images and text are juxtaposed to draw attention to the gap between what should be the case in terms of democratic justice and the freedom of expression, on the one hand, and the political reality of the situation in Turkey, on the other. The video starts with a quotation from the constitution of the Republic of Turkey noting Article 34, which says that 'everyone has the right to hold meetings, demonstrations without prior permission unarmed and peacefully'. Then follows a set of dictionary entries presented in a stylistically formal way, using typewriter lettering for key words such as *direnış* (resistance), *dayaniřma* (solidarity), *adalet* (justice), *polis* (police) and *medya* (media). The media entry is accompanied the image of a penguin, one of the symbols of the protests that mocks the Turkish mainstream media's refusal to report on the events (CNN Türk broadcasted a documentary about penguins whilst protest events were unfolding in Istanbul and reported on by CNN International). The image of 'penguin media' draws heavily on irony as a rhetorical tool, and this

indirect argumentative reasoning is used throughout the video: for instance, the police is seen destroying tents, removing banners and attacking the protestors which is juxtaposed with the dictionary entry for *polis* (police), which mentions the police force's duty to protect the citizens. The paradox of the 'universally' accepted dictionary definitions in contrast with what unfolds in the protest footage dramatizes the video. Similarly, the quote about the right to protest is set in contrast to images of protestors suffering violence and others helping those exposed to tear gas. For this strategy to be effective, we argue, the 'moral capital' of the sender, as discussed earlier, is imperative, and thus the 'rapper-protestor' position is what makes the ironic delivery ring true.

In the song rapper Bora Gramm addresses those who have been taken in custody during the protests urging them to 'stay strong'. It opens with a section sung in English:

You gotta stand on ya feet
 If y'all need equality
 Stand on ya feet
 This is 'Anonymous'
 'Red' and all these
 Other colours around it

Hereby, the group is calling for citizens to mobilize, to stand up for what they believe in, and thereafter connects the Gezi Park struggle to the Internet-based activists of 'Anonymous' and places themselves at the heart of contemporary protest movements. Then the performer begins rapping in Turkish about the 'Istanbul United' spirit at Gezi, and how it has eradicated longstanding football fan antagonism declaring that the rivals Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray are no longer enemies with the following lines: 'See, we are not enemies anymore – Galatasaray Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş are everywhere', and declaring that what unites them is their stance 'against this system' [the AKP government]. Later in the song the theme of standing united against a common opponent is further emphasized in the lines 'a day comes when there are jackals all around – merging is the only solution', and 'when it is time to defy, hold my arm – we are one although our colours are different'. The main chorus is sung in the style of a melodic chant:

Go on Gezi Park!
 Resist Gezi Park!
 Merge!

Stay strong!
Go on Gezi Park!
Resist Gezi Park!¹²

The video shifts from Turkish to English and the narrative continues to talk about togetherness and brotherhood, drawing on the notion of a shared football fan identity, extending it to also apply to the protest movement. In some lines the political expression is more explicit: the performer advocates anti-consumption, anti-individualism – very much in the *çArşı* spirit he calls to ‘say goodbye to buyin’ anything you wanna have – Y’d betta share cuz we share this life’. He paints a picture of the Gezi protest as a leaderless movement that anyone can join: ‘You should realize that a single hand can’t make a noise – there are no commanders in us – this is a public resistance!’ and describes *çArşı* as a group that is against all that is unfair, if need be, even against itself.¹³ However, the lyrics also narrate street bravado and toughness, typical of ‘gansta rap’: ‘they all swore to die for their hood’ and ‘we are fair and tough in any hood’, thus making it universally recognizable as a rap text, appealing to audiences that are into the music genre, as an expression of urban youth culture, but not necessarily attuned with Turkish politics. For example, utilizing the image of ‘the hood’, which is a hallmark trope of the genre, makes it familiar to listeners and widens its appeal. Social media is absolutely key to the global spread of a socially conscious hip-hop as an idiom of opposition that many different social movements have appropriated and engendered, but as we have demonstrated in this chapter, its aesthetics could equally be a resource for musical political communication.

Concluding Remarks

The Gezi protest yielded a wide range of musical expression across a diverse range of genres. The way it mediated and remediated recordings and remixes of music and visual content on YouTube served to amplify the protest voice, mobilized through energy and emotion, and both consolidate and make accessible to wider publics the *çapulcu* identity. Online platforms and

12 ‘*Hadi gezi parkı / Diren gezi parkı / Tek yürek ooo*’.

13 Here, he is referring to an actual incident in 2008 when the spokesperson for the group announced that *çArşı* will put an end to all its actions. The unconfirmed reason was unrest within the group. A banner was also held by which the group members announced that *çArşı* was now against itself.

social media are not only used to create audiences, but enable a wider participation. Digitally 'creative citizens' as well as activist performers contribute to movements and generate political commentary by producing music videos, ranging from visual collages of found footage set to music to recorded live performances and sharing these on social media. Thus, the proliferation of music online constitutes an additional dimension to how the 'local' protest in Istanbul has gained support around the world and resonated with wide ranging and diverse publics. The online output, we suggest, is a continuum of the protests that extends beyond the occupation of the Gezi Park area. Music videos, both original recordings and remixes, could be a vital part of a movement's larger ecology of communication, expressions and connections.

As demonstrated in this chapter, looking at the YouTube videos, music is often used to dramatize images, and to convey emotions. Editing practices are one tool through which vernacular voices express dissent, for example, by combining music, text and images in ways that reveal and challenge dominant framings of the protest movement, but also other strategies such as producing new lyrics to already popular songs were used. Furthermore, we found a particularly vital output in the rap videos. The remix ethos of rap music combined with its energy, and subaltern rebellious perspective, encapsulate the musical aesthetics of protest. Online music videos are a form of digital activism that sustains social and political consciousness affectively both during and beyond the protest event and as we have sought to demonstrate here are utilized to resist symbolic domination.

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