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## **'Indiestanbul': Counter-hegemonic music and third republicanism in Turkey.**

### **Abstract**

This article contributes to the growing research base in Turkish popular music studies with a focus on indie music from Istanbul. It situates this music within Turkey's contemporary social, cultural and political landscapes, and in relation to the country's historical cultural narrative. Istanbul indie musicians' responses to the 2013 Gezi protests suggest that indie's counter-hegemonic aesthetics are being explored and engaged with in alignment with 'Third Republicanism', an emerging vision for Turkey that holds liberalism and human rights as its core ideals where the 'First' and 'Second' Republican visions held secularism and Islam respectively.

### **Introduction**

In 2006, in a special edition of *Music and Anthropology*, Martin Stokes asserted that Turkish music studies '[would] benefit from a critical and systematic consideration of everyday popular culture, which has long been neglected' (n.p). Much useful work has been done in this regard over the past decade, with studies of both mainstream pop and subcultures such as hip-hop (e.g. Solomon, 2005), heavy metal (Hecker 2012) and punk (Boynik and Güldallı 2008) now complementing the more substantial research base around genres such as arabesk and Turkish art music. This paper contributes to this body of work with a focus on Istanbul's indie scene in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This scene is of particular significance for a number of reasons. Most notably, its demographics correspond to a young, secular-minded middle class whose musical tastes and consumption patterns have rarely been examined in depth in academic research, where focus has tended towards those of the socioeconomic periphery.

The genre that has received the most attention in this regard is arabesk. Despite arabesk's association with economic migrants and the urban poor (Stokes 1992), its appeal has exceeded these origins to achieve a near ubiquity in Turkey's popular music tastes (Özgür 2006), accompanying a renewed acceptance of eastern identity across all strata of society. This has occurred alongside the resurgence of political Islam, and a shift in the balance of power away from the historically secular 'White Turk' elite towards an ascendant 'Black Turk' religious elite (Pope 2012). As such, the tastes of the periphery have achieved purchase at the centre, complicating the centre/periphery model applied by Stokes (1992) and others. A corollary of this reorientation is that western cultural tastes are losing their dominance at the centre, and the aesthetics of the public sphere are becoming more Islamic

(Gökarıksel and Secor 2015). This aesthetic shift has been the cause of much social tension since 2010 in particular. Although the motivations of recent civil unrest in Turkey are complex and multifarious, the initial premise of the Gezi protests of 2013 was resistance against the proposed construction of a neo-Ottoman shopping centre on the edge of Taksim Square, which Gökarıksel and Secor (2015) suggest was 'emblematic of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, hereafter AKP)'s urban projects that have privatised urban space and shaped it to the tastes of a certain Islamically-oriented, bourgeois segment of the population' (p.26). Alongside significant actual violence, the ensuing protests played out through symbolic conflict, wherein Taksim Square itself was invoked as a 'virtual political centre' (Diken 2014; p.321) enshrined in the protest slogan 'Everywhere is Taksim'.

Indie has been described as a 'counter-hegemonic' music genre (Hesmondhalgh 1999) associated with anti-establishment ethics and political antagonism (Jones 2013). Istanbul indie musicians' responses to the 2013 Gezi protests suggest that this dissident aspect is being explored and engaged with in alignment with the Gezi movement, and with what Diken (2014) terms 'Third Republicanism', an emerging vision of Turkey that holds liberalism and human rights as its core ideals where the 'First' and 'Second' Republican visions held secularism and Islam respectively. For this and other reasons, indie warrants attention among the musical forms through which groups and individuals have constructed their identities and expressed their orientations within Turkey's shifting ideological landscape. Importantly, Istanbul's indie scene provides an illuminating and timely counterpoint to the body of writing that approaches Turkish popular music in terms of reactions to the westernising project of the 20th Century State (e.g. Karahasanoglu and Skoog 2009; Stokes 1992), and a fresh focus through which to explore global issues of culture, society and politics.

The first part of this article is given over to a brief historical account of the political landscape in Turkey from the formation of the Republic in 1923 to the present day, using Diken's distinctions of First, Second and Third Republicanisms as a discursive framework. The impact of politics upon Turkish popular aesthetics, and vice versa, is also discussed. In the second part of the paper I review previous work on Turkish popular music, and identify and compare several theoretical dualisms within this literature that are pertinent to a reading of Turkish indie. In the third section I discuss the case of punk- a direct aesthetic and ideological precursor to indie- in Turkey, drawing out similarities, points of overlap and divergences with indie, before focusing directly on the case of

indie music in Istanbul in the fourth section. Drawing on existing media interviews and press archives, I explore the experiences of musicians in Istanbul's indie scene, gaining insight into its emerging aesthetics and ideological underpinnings, before analysing two songs (one with an accompanying music video) from Istanbul indie bands that engage with the Gezi protests in different ways. In the final section I consider these findings in relation to the earlier-discussed theoretical issues, and situate indie music within the Turkish cultural and political landscapes. I argue that Turkish indie musicians have perceived an ideological affinity between indie music and the civic ideals of Third Republicanism, and have employed indie aesthetics in challenging the dominant order.

### **Hegemonic aesthetics and Turkey's three republicanism**

An understanding of the Republic of Turkey's history is crucial to the study of the country's cultural phenomena. Accordingly, most writing on Turkish popular music has, in varying degrees of detail, offered an account of Turkish political developments in the 20th century following the formation of the Republic in 1923. Perhaps the most important thing to note here is that the Republican nation state established in 1923 was a means to secure a homeland for the Muslim peoples of the Ottoman Empire, following the latter's collapse. In this regard, the Republic of Turkey's very *raison d'être* was religion-bound (Mango 1997). At the same time however, the project was modelled on the secular precedent of French *laïcité* which demanded the driving of religion out of the public sphere. This paradox inheres in the Turkish flag, the emblem of a staunchly secular Republic, yet which bears the pan-Islamic symbol of crescent and star.

The sociopolitical landscape of the 20th century was marked by oscillations across the ideological dualism of Islamism and secularism. In the early decades of the Republic, Atatürk and his successors made radical reforms in all aspects of public life, in an attempt to position Turkey 'among the world's most civilised nations' ( Atatürk, 1933)<sup>1</sup>. These reforms were predicated on a Eurocentric understanding of civilisation, coupled with the notion of an 'authentic' Turkish culture, premised on the writings of the poet and sociologist Ziya Gökalp. Believing aesthetics, and music in particular, to be a central pillar of nationhood, Gökalp (1923) proposed that Turkey reject what he

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<sup>1</sup> 'Yurdumuzu, dünyanın en mamur ve en medenî memleketleri seviyesine çıkaracağız'. These words are taken from Atatürk's on the 10th anniversary of the Republic in 1933, and paraphrase an earlier similar declaration from 1923.

saw as foreign and inauthentic Arab and Byzantine influences and reassert its Turkic cultural heritage<sup>2</sup> Gökalp's collation of Turkish music into categories of western, eastern, modern and old, Ottoman and Turkish (O'Connell, 2000, p.123) was enacted posthumously (he died in 1923) by the State, beginning with the closure of the Ottoman art music department (*Doğu Müziği Şubesi*) in the *Dârü'l-Elhan* (the Ottoman precursor to Istanbul University), and the creation of a European style State Conservatory charged with producing and curating a Turkish repertoire of western art music. As Özgür (2006) notes, 'Turks were [expected] to welcome western music because, unlike eastern music, it was logical and rational' (p.177). This new national high culture form was to be infused with the music of the Anatolian heartland, with folk melodies incorporated into orchestral compositions. =

This understanding of Turkish culture and nationhood corresponds to what Diken (2014) terms 'First Republicanism', a value system centred around the ideal of secularism, and which is enshrined in the founding constitution of the Republic of Turkey. Following the move to democracy between 1945 and 1950 however, politicians awake to the eastern orientation and Islamic values of much of the population sought to reintroduce both into public life, to varying degrees (Gökarıksel and Secor 2015). Stokes (2010) describes the period from 1950 to 2010 as Turkey's 'liberal period', despite rarely being 'liberal' in the common sociopolitical sense (Stokes acknowledges this semantic tension), to highlight the breadth of structuring elements including 'religion, political pluralism, the market, and an orientation to "outside" forces we would now label "globalization"- all set within the context of a hitherto authoritarian, secular, and generally inward-looking political culture' (p.33). In the interests of space, I must leave aside discussion of the bulk of this period, but with the caveat that this means glossing over some significant junctures. Some of these, notably the 1980 military coup d'état, are discussed as necessary later in this paper.

The AKP have held office in Turkey since 2002. The AKP have increasingly positioned religion at the centre of public life, and invoked Turkey's Islamic identity rhetorically and semiotically. Among other things, this has involved a harking back to pre-Republican, Ottoman aesthetics in planning and architecture, the building of thousands of mosques, and overt referencing of Ottoman military might in public ceremonies. The party has also implemented policies that have restricted liberal lifestyle practices, often explicitly justified in Islamic moral (if not jurisprudential) terms. This is

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of Gökalp's culture/civilisation dualism see Ayas (2015)

most apparent in legislation relating to alcohol; consumption duty was dramatically increased in 2010 (GAIN, 2015), and, in an explicit linking of alcohol restrictions to Islam, it was made illegal in 2013 to open a bar or off-licence within 100m of a mosque (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2013). As is discussed later in this paper, this holds particular implications for live music, and for indie in particular, owing to the genre's performance norms and infrastructure.

While the AKP have nominally adhered to the concept of secularism, the manner in which they have engaged explicitly with it has been cautious, and incrementally more tepid. In 2010 Burhan Kuzu, a senior AKP figure charged with leading a redrafting of the constitution, asserted that while '[the government] respect[s] Turkey's principles of secularism, [...] these principles should be re-interpreted'<sup>3</sup> (Habertürk 2010). Diken (2014) suggests that the Islamist politics of the AKP correspond to a 'Second Republic[anism]', which holds Islam as its central value concept rather than secularism.

This dualism of religion and secularism has been widely acknowledged as the defining schism in Turkey's politics. As Gökarıksel and Secor (2015) caution however, this is an 'overworked' dichotomy (p.22), and many have sought to look beyond it. Mardin (2005), for example, characterises Turkish Republican history in terms of 'a many-tiered encounter between "traditional" forces and modernity' (p.160). Rather than a patterned interaction between religion and secularism, he suggests that 'it is the specificity of the historical processes that set the character of the social and political circumstances, which finally determines that which we must deal with on an everyday basis' (p.160). As an example of such specificity, the manner in which the AKP have embraced neoliberalism has complicated the dualism of secularism and religion in the Turkish case. While Turkish political Islam was originally conceived in opposition to globalisation and western influence (Erol 2011), the AKP have attempted to align Islamic moral principles with neoliberal economics to an extent never before seen in Turkey. This hybrid value system has seen the economy grow alongside an upsurge in moral conservatism. As Žižek notes,

[...] free-market fundamentalism and fundamentalist Islam are not mutually exclusive. The privatisation of public space by an Islamist government [in Turkey] shows that the two forms of fundamentalism can work hand in hand (Žižek, 2013).

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<sup>3</sup> "Biz laiklik ilkelerine saygılıyız ancak bu ilkelerin yeniden yorumlanması gerektiğini düşünüyoruz"

In Istanbul and other major cities in particular, both Islamic and neoliberal signifiers have proliferated during the AKP's incumbency, with huge mosques, shopping malls, *tesettür* (Islamic luxury fashion) advertisements, and multinational mega-brands all increasingly prevalent in the urban landscape. The melding of Islamic signifiers and consumer lifestyle was to be reified in the proposed 'reconstruction' of the historic *Topçu Kışlası* Ottoman military barracks as a brand new shopping complex, on the site of Gezi Park. It was the protests against this development that catalysed the subsequent occupation of Taksim Square by a plural movement (Örs and Turan 2015; Özdemir 2015) in collective opposition to the concrete effects of Islamic neoliberalism, the increasingly authoritarian paternalism of the AKP and Erdoğan, and subsequently the violent response of the police to peaceful protest. Reports in domestic and international media, together with the State's own responses, variously attributed the Gezi protests to the secular elite's and middle classes' discontentment with conservative rule and animosity towards Islam (e.g. Mason 2013). Such readings have been challenged, in empirical and theoretical/taxonomic terms. For example, Göle (2013) argues that:

While [Gezi] is predominantly a secular movement, it does not embrace old State laicism and animosity against Islam. Rejecting the politics of polarization and stigmatization, the Gezi movement is reuniting people across ancient divides. The future of Turkish democracy resides in the credo of this movement which asks those in power hold their tongues, abstain from moral intrusions and ban violence. (Göle 2013)

Meanwhile, Gürcan and Peker (2015) point to the redundancy of the working-class/middle-class distinction in the context of Turkey's growing service-sector precariat. Like Göle, they acknowledge a majority of secular-minded people in the protest movement, but attribute this to conservative ideological currents peculiar to Turkish neoliberalism that have subordinated secular segments of the wage-earning classes (and associated groups such as the educated unemployed and students) in particular by way of 'increasing Islamic interventionism [that] threaten[s] [their] life chances and living space' (p.17). Gürcan and Peker emphasise the 'counter-hegemonic' (p.4) nature of the movement, in opposition to the authoritarian governance and oppressive economic strategy of the AKP rather than in support or pursuance of any clearly defined political alternative.

According to Diken (2014) it is this counter-hegemonic orientation, which cannot be satisfactorily understood in terms of the secular/Islamist dichotomy, that sets the movement apart from both the First and Second Republican visions and constitutes a Third Republicanism. Furthermore, Diken

(2014) suggests that the symbolic and spatial focus of Gezi Park represented an apolitical means to engage collectively with the possibility of a future beyond that historically entrenched political dichotomy:

The demonstrators could imagine a new world only by focusing on a particular problem, the future of the urban park. In this sense, the event opened up a new political space, gaining its impetus from an ideological refusal of political sovereignty and its economic-governmental apparatuses (p.321).

As such, the protests constituted 'a first encounter between social and economic classes that had grown estranged', whereby 'conflicting identities managed to form temporal communities to challenge the [AKP]'s neoliberal project [...] and conservative majoritarianism' (Bilgiç 2015, p.1).

To offer a summary at this point then, the history of Turkish politics from the founding of the Republic to the present day can be approached in terms of three republican moments: a staunchly secular and western-oriented First Republicanism, an Islamist and morally interventionist, yet neoliberal Second Republicanism, and an emerging Third Republicanism defined in immediate opposition to the Second, yet which does not oppose Islam *per se*, nor seek recourse to the First, but instead represents a counter-hegemonic, 'horizontal politics' (Bilgiç 2015). As is discussed above, the First and Second Republican moments were (/are) accompanied by hegemonic aesthetic frameworks actively applied by the State. Among studies that have approached the Gezi movement in aesthetic terms, the employment of 'revolutionary humour', the appropriation and subversion of symbols and performative pluralism have been identified as key strategies (Özdemir 2015; Öztürkmen 2014; Varol 2014); yet the aesthetics of Third Republicanism, particularly beyond the immediate spatial and temporal boundaries of the Gezi protests themselves, are still emerging and have yet to be afforded significant focus. Later in this paper, I suggest that Istanbul's indie scene evidences a counter-hegemonic aesthetics and ideology that aligns with the Gezi movement and Third Republicanism.

### **Dualisms in Turkish Popular Music Scholarship**

Various dualisms have been proposed and/or applied by scholars to consider how different genres of Turkish popular music have reflected and responded to the sociopolitical circumstances



discussed above. It is worth giving a summary account here of this work, as it provides us with some theoretical starting points from which to consider the specific case of indie music in Turkey.

Stokes (1992) approaches arabesk, a genre of Turkish popular music prevalent from the 1960s until the 1990s (and to a lesser extent beyond), by way of two concomitant and interwoven dualisms: that of secularism and Islam, and that of the centre and periphery. Stokes (1992) suggests that through its conspicuous easternness (as opposed to 'Turkishness' as understood by Gökalp (1923)), arabesk evoked Turkey's Islamic heritage, and articulated the experience of the social periphery in the context of rapid industrialisation and globalisation under the policies of the ruling secular (First Republican) elite. In doing so, it served as both a salve and a means of performative resistance against the State's westernising project. Stokes (1992) discusses the State's role in the emergence of arabesk as the preeminent Turkish popular music genre, initially inadvertently through the censorship of eastern-sounding music on State radio and television, which precipitated an industry reliant on alternative distribution channels outside of State control (mainly bootlegged cassettes), and later through the co-optation of arabesk by political parties (in political broadcasts and campaigns) seeking to appeal to poorer demographics' eastern, Islamic identity. These instances of State mediation are presented by Stokes (1992) as issuing from the to and fro between the value systems of secularism and Islam, which map onto the demographic divide between a ruling, western-oriented, secular-minded centre and a poor, traditional and Islamic periphery.

Özgür (2006) extends Stokes's (1992) focus on arabesk into the early 21st Century, but applies the dualisms of secularism and Islam and centre and periphery as aspects of the broader, overarching dualism of East and West. Özgür argues that during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century 'music became a contested arena in the struggle between western modes of cultural expression- radiating from elite and urban spheres- and eastern modes of cultural expression radiating from the grassroots portions of society' (p.177). He notes however that arabesk has found appeal beyond its peripheral roots to achieve 'near ubiquity' in Turkish tastes, and that 'Turkish elites, originally the bastion of anti-easternism in their country, are now embracing Arabesk [...] at a time when they have become doubtful of the West's commitment to them' (p.179). Paradoxically however, Özgür's (2006) interviews with music listeners in Turkey suggest that the same traits ascribed to East and West within Eurocentric narratives have been internalised and romanticised as part of this reawakening to eastern aesthetics, with respondents 'relying on conventional 'wisdom' in Turkey that westerners are rational and calculating while easterners are irrational and emotional' (p.185). This can perhaps

be understood in terms of 'cultural intimacy' as explored by Stokes (2010), wherein 'aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment [...] nonetheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality' (Herzfeld 1997, p.3, quoted in Stokes 2010, p.33). Stokes argues in *The Republic of Love: Cultural Intimacy in Turkish Popular Music* (2010) that at different times and in different ways throughout Turkey's 'liberal period' (see above), singers who have embodied something of the nation's common sociality have been revered not only as musicians but as ideal *citizens*.

Karahasanoğlu and Skoog (2009) employ Said's (1983) dualism of filiation and affiliation to elucidate the development of a number of popular music genres in Turkey during the 20th Century. Broadly speaking, this relates to the processes of engagement/identification with one's parent culture (filiation) and with cultures outside of one's heritage (affiliation) respectively. According to this dualism, the state-sponsored promotion of western art music was an act of affiliation. However, rather than an instance of filiation, arabesk is deemed an instance of 'counter affiliation' by Karahasanoğlu and Skoog (2009, p.57), since it marked not a continuation of historical Turkish forms but instead a 'spontaneous synthesis' (Tekelioğlu, 1996) of predominantly Arab features which had an 'aesthetic resonance with performers and audiences' (Karahasanoğlu and Skoog 2009, p.58) and (amplified) instrumentation and substructural elements drawn from western popular music.

Further dualisms are applied by Karahasanoğlu and Skoog (2009) in their analysis of 100 Turkish popular music songs. The first of these is that of substructure and superstructure. They note that where *Anadolu Rock* (Anatolian rock) of the 1960s and 1970s featured a primarily Euro-American substructure but drew upon Turkish folk melodies for its superstructure, such experimentations would ultimately coalesce into a 'West-Arabesk-Turkish' (p.63) amalgam across the substructure and superstructure of Turkish popular music by the 1990s. Thus the passage of time complicates the filiative/affiliative dualism, since by this point 'genres were no longer clearly 'foreign' or 'domestic' because decades of performing foreign music styles had effectively integrated them' (p.63), and many historically western substructural elements no longer denoted affiliation.

The second musicological dualism identified by Karahasanoğlu and Skoog (2009) corresponds to the use of the Phrygian mode and *Kürdî makam* in the superstructure of Turkish popular music. The *makam* system is a core principle both in Ottoman art music and Turkish folk music, and although each *makam* corresponds to a series of intervals in the manner of modes in western art music, it is more than this, and has an accompanying set of performance and composition rules, based on

prescribed routes (*sehir*) through the notes. Different *makams* correspond to different musical traditions, and are thus a means by which performers denote filiation. From the 1950s, many *makams* fell into disuse, and performers began to rely on those that resembled western modes, the *Kürdî makam* being most prominent among these and similar to the Phrygian mode in terms of tone series (the principal differences being that the latter lacks the former's prescribed performance characteristics and quarter tones). Accordingly, by using *Kürdî makam* or Phrygian mode, performers 'can simultaneously make gestures of filiation and affiliation' (p.66), and the *Kürdî makam*/Phrygian mode duality thus functions as 'a musical Janus, showing whichever face the listener expects to perceive' (p.66).

A final dualism that is pertinent to a discussion of Turkish indie is the deterritorialisation/re-territorialisation dualism adapted from Appadurai (1996) by Yazıcıoğlu (2010) in her study of rock music consumption in Turkey, which has some theoretical proximity to Said's (1983) filiation/affiliation dualism as applied by Karahasanoğlu and Skoog (2009). Sitting ambiguously within the Turkish popular cultural field, rock music has according to Yazıcıoğlu (2010) historically been neither opposed by the State nor a significant counter-cultural force, and unlike other cultural products of the West was never seen as a form or force of cultural imperialism. Yazıcıoğlu considers the extents to which rock music has been deterritorialised, that is, 'taken from its [original] social context and applied to a new one in a different physical space' or *reterritorialised*, which involves 'the making of this cultural pattern one's own by producing a local form in this new society and geography' (p.240). Based on interview and online forum data, Yazıcıoğlu (2010) identifies three types of rock fan in Turkey - *Pro-Westerners*, *Rock Boomers* and *Pro-Turkish Rockers* – representing a continuum spanning from rock perceived as a deterritorialised and essentially western form, to rock perceived as a local form independent of and different to its western counterpart. The *Pro-Western* fan is typically over 35 years old, educated, and among other characteristics 'despise[s] the sound of rock in Turkish' (p.244), listens primarily to western rock sung in English, and identifies with western rock culture. The *Rock Boomer* is similarly educated and middle class, but is younger, and listens to both mainstream international rock and domestic Turkish rock; for this type of fan, 'rock transforms itself into a local genre [but] with a continual dialogue with its [western] origins' (p.245). The *Pro-Turkish Rocker* however listens exclusively to Turkish Rock (*Türkçe Rock*) and feels no affinity with western rock at all. As such, Yazıcıoğlu (2010) asserts that 'after four decades of deterritorialization, rock is reterritorialised, making *Türkçe Rock* a new internalized experience'

(p.248). Yazıcıoğlu (2010) notes that fans of *Türkçe Rock* can display highly conservative values, particularly with regard to notions of (female) sexual purity and modesty.

It can be seen from the work reviewed above that scholars have for the most part sought to apprehend Turkish popular music, and its relationship to wider political, cultural, social and economic contexts, in dualistic terms. Taken together, the intersecting dualisms discussed above provide a useful framework within which to approach Istanbul's indie scene, and help us to situate it in relation to the notion of three Republicanisms, discussed earlier.

### **Punk, a precursor to indie**

Before directly focusing on the case of indie in Istanbul, the case of punk, a direct precursor to indie that provided much of the latter's infrastructure, aesthetics and ideology (Hesmondhalgh 1999), helps to reveal some of the complexities relating to global subculture forms achieving purchase within Turkish popular culture. Despite a resurgence in global punk scholarship, there has been scant scholarly focus on the Turkish context. Among the exceptions, Boynik and Güldallı's book *An Interrupted History of Punk and Underground Resources in Turkey 1978-1999 (Türkiye'de Punk Ve Yeraltı Kaynaklarının Kesintili Tarihi 1978-1999)* (2008) contains a few short, quasi-academic<sup>4</sup> essays in which the authors reflect on the status of punk, and the experiences of punks, in Turkey. The rest of the book comprises transcripts of retrospective interviews, photographs and reproductions of fanzine covers, gig flyers and other artefacts. As such, while it offers only a limited scholarly analysis, it is a substantial and illuminating archive of primary source material and testimony.

The book's title alludes to the lack of a sustained narrative of punk activity in Turkey, owing largely to the post-coup era of the 1980s during which counterculture, from universities to street level, was suppressed and all but eradicated. The book thus documents some initial and largely superficial experiments with the punk aesthetic by Turkish rock artists in the late 1970s, before moving to the 1990s when the bulk of Turkish punk activity occurred. Punk, the authors suggest, arrived in Turkey by way of British heavy metal magazines a decade later in Turkey than it had in the West, with the Headbangers' formation in 1987 marking the point at which 'punk gained public meaning in the

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4. This is not a derogatory description; Boynik explicitly distinguishes the book from academic literature, positioning it somewhere between 'subcultural resource' and historical testimony, and the editors' writing shifts across scholarly and journalistic registers.

fullest sense' (Boynik 2008, p.564), and gained traction in the 1990s as Turkish youth sought to overcome '[having] its memory erased' following the 1980 coup d'etat (Güldallı 2008, p.362).

Boynik and Güldallı are cautious that they do not, in Boynik's words, 'make a cow out of a crow (*sineği inek yapmak*)' (p.349); that is, exaggerate punk's presence and significance in Turkey to the point where 'a non-existent history and a non-existent tradition are invented' (p.565). Boynik makes the point that a substantial presence of punk in global contexts can ironically be taken to denote healthy cultures of (and safe environments for) dissent, to the extent that punk ironically serves as a 'litmus paper' (p.566) for free, democratic societies. To overstate the scale of punk in Turkey would thus give credence to Turkey's governments and State. According to Boynik then, the small presence of punk in Turkey is most revealing by way of its corollary- that it was negligible and largely absent. Boynik (2008) equates punk in Turkey to the act of 'selling snails in a Muslim neighbourhood (*müslüman mahallesinde salyangoz satmak*)' (p.568), an expression that at once points to an inherent cultural incompatibility and a clumsy attempt at surmounting it. Boynik highlights Turkey's 'ambiguous cultural conservatism', which extends across right and left and Islamic and secular and thus undermines the absolutism of these conceptual dualisms. Interestingly however, Boynik argues that conservative mainstream cultural expectations within Turkey are mirrored both globally as a result of the orientalist gaze, and within counterculture by way of 'auto-orientalisation' (p.569). He gives the examples of John Peel and Thurston Moore, whom he accuses of fetishising easternness in Turkish popular culture and favouring 'folkloric' flourishes in Turkish alternative rock and punk, and Turkish bands (unnamed) advertising themselves as a synthesis of 'Müslüm Gürses and The Can' (p.569). Such syntheses with western counterculture have, according to Boynik, become normative, such that ironically they evidence a veiled conservatism within the Turkish alternative popular culture domain. As is discussed below, indie bands have voiced frustrations at this same expectation among domestic audiences that their music ought to possess a conspicuous easternness. Boynik's observations thus offer insight into how the issues of filiation, affiliation and synthesis as proposed by Karahasanoğlu and Skoog (2009) might play out beyond the mainstream and within minority subcultural forms. Also pertinent for the purposes of this article is that punk in Turkey, at least that which is documented in the book, displays no commitment to either First Republican aesthetics or to Islamic aesthetics *per se*; rather, it was resistant to the hegemonic order of the post-coup period, to the entrenched conservatism of Turkish society, and to mainstream commercial culture. To this extent, it hints at a third vision for Turkey, foreshadowing the Third Republicanism emerging in the 2010s. A significant difference however is the prevailing nihilism that courses

through the interviews and artefacts in Boynik and Güldallı's book; there is little discernible intent to effect change on a national level, but instead a sense of building alternative social and cultural spaces for small, pre-existing social groups, akin to Bey's (1991) anarchist notion of the temporary autonomous zone (TAZ), an emancipated but inevitably transient space within an ongoing narrative of suppression and resistance. In contrast, the examples of Turkish indie discussed below evidence a more idealistic outlook heralding the possibilities of protest, collectivism and change through critical mass.

### **Indie in Istanbul**

The term 'indie' (which is used in its English form in Turkish) is amorphous, and tends to be understood tacitly rather than according to explicit definitions. It derives from the word 'independent', and originally referred to music released on independent record labels as opposed to multinational majors. Although independent labels have been releasing music since the advent of commercial recordings, indie as a conceptual term emerged in the UK and USA during the post-punk era of the late 1970s when independent labels began to curate distinct house styles and harness the do-it-yourself spirit of the punk movement in their brand image. By the mid-1980s the term had gained traction and began to usurp the term post-punk (Hesmondhalgh 1999). The ethics of indie are distinctly more pliable than those associated with punk however, and artists' orientation to the mainstream is according to Bannister (2006) constantly renegotiated as they seek to simultaneously generate income and achieve aesthetic autonomy.

As Hesmondhalgh (1999) notes, indie has 'proclaimed itself to be superior to other genres not only because it [is] more relevant or authentic to the youth who produced or consumed it [...] but because it was based on new relationships between creativity and commerce' (p.35). The major/independent distinction has become blurred however as independent labels have grown in scope, capacity and ambition, and major labels have concurrently sought to capitalise on the 'indie' cachet by releasing music through 'independent' imprints.

The term has come to denote a genre of music *historically* associated with independent labels, typically featuring guitars but eschewing the virtuosity and flamboyance characterising mainstream guitar music at the time of indie's emergence. Exceptions to these aesthetic characteristics demonstrate the normative fluidity of indie music, and by extension the instability of the term. Internal taxonomic distinctions have emerged (e.g. indie pop, indie rock, indie disco) to account for

the lack of musical or conceptual unity, and keep pace with fragmentation occurring as a result of the co-optation and appropriation of other musical traditions, which is a central compositional strategy within the genre. Indie, then, is best understood as a primarily ideological descriptor corresponding to an orientation towards the counter-mainstream and a disassociation from the aesthetics and infrastructure of mass production, rather than a stylistic distinction or a business model. As noted earlier, indie, like punk before it, has also presented itself historically as 'left-leaning' (Bannister 2006) and 'counter-hegemonic' (Hesmondhalgh 1999; Jones 2013).

These definitional complexities present challenges for classifying music within this study. Some of the artists discussed below have explicitly described themselves as indie acts, either in interviews or on their Facebook or other social media pages. In such cases, attributing the classification of 'indie' is to some extent straightforward, in that it corresponds to artists' self-identification (see discussion of *The Revolvers*, below). Other artists covered here describe their music using other labels such as 'art rock' or 'garage rock', but have been referred to as 'indie' by third parties such as music critics. Beyond this, there is no obvious meaningful way to render this classification more precise without ignoring indie's aesthetic heterogeneity, discussed above. In any case, as is demonstrated across the literature reviewed in the previous section, the fluidity of musical aesthetics and their subsequent classification is crucial to our understanding of popular music's function in the formulation and expression of identity. In acknowledgement of this, the challenge of taxonomy is approached discursively as necessary.

Like punk before it, indie music appears to have had a minimal presence in Turkey compared to that of other diasporic Anglo-American genres, despite the boom in guitar bands from the 1990s onwards (Stokes 2012, cited in Dawe and Eroğlu 2013; Yazıcıoğlu 2010). A short series of Youtube films by amateur filmmaker Karl Ertunc called 'Indiistanbul' documents, as its title suggests, an indie music scene in Istanbul. My use of the indefinite article is important here as the films make no claim to comprehensiveness in documenting *the* Istanbul indie scene, or offering the definitive narrative of indie in Istanbul. That said, the infrastructure for original live music in Istanbul is small, and is centred in two main loci (Beyoğlu and Kadıköy), such that other scenes would likely intersect with those portrayed by Ertunc. Today, these areas hold the highest concentration of music

performance spaces in Istanbul. Original live music is a comparative rarity however, and limited to a small number of dedicated venues.<sup>5</sup>

The sale and consumption of alcohol is thoroughly embedded into Beyoğlu's and Kadıköy's nightlife. As noted earlier however, successive restrictions on the sale of alcohol imposed by the AKP have impacted on the live music industry. In particular, the restriction banning young people under the age of 24 from attendance at concerts where alcohol is served provoked fears for the survival of indie performance spaces (Golz, 2013), although this was subsequently lifted. Furthermore, sponsorship of live music by alcohol brands has been banned, a move that Ekin Sanaç of the indie band Kim Ki O suggests will have a crippling effect on Turkey's live music culture:

'[...] the economy is structured more privately than in the EU, it is normal that many music events and festivals are sponsored by alcohol brands. Now they have shut this off, which affects the cultural life in the city directly. The events don't know how to finance themselves anymore.' (quoted in Golz, 2013)

Other musicians interviewed by Golz (2013) draw links between the government's legislation and an underpinning Islamist ideology. Murat Ertel, singer from the band Baba Zula, suggests that the alcohol legislation illustrates the government's 'real face, [...] their fundamentalist, non-secular face'. Doğu Yücel, editor of the music magazine Blue Jean, suggests that the legislation's effect on live rock music is not a side effect but a deliberate consequence; similarly Serhat Eman of indie band The Revolvers believes that this effective curtailing of alternative music is calculated, and motivated by a distrust of the West:

The government is rejecting different colours of sound, because it is a fundamentalist, Islamist government in Turkey right now and they are against the Western culture and all those things that represent the West. Music is one of them, because it is the symbol of freedom and they are against the freedom. (quoted in Golz, 2013).

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<sup>5</sup>Hecker's (2010; 2012) ethnographic research into heavy metal in Turkey reveals many points of similarity and intersection with punk and indie. Most significantly, Hecker demonstrates how Istanbul's historical Ottoman demographics, particularly the concentration of non-Muslim minorities and international diplomatic and business communities in Beyoğlu, together with reforms to alcohol laws from the Tanzimat period (1839–1876) onwards, set the conditions from which new lifestyle norms and public spaces (beer halls, and later bars) emerged. This in turn provided spaces for subcultures such as metal to formulate following the 1980 coup. Hecker (2010) notes that the beer halls (birahaneler) that would later develop into metal bars were kept afloat in large part by college students from the elite high schools and lycées in Beyoğlu. As in the case of indie, the heavy metal scene demographics still correspond to this secular middle class.



Native Turk 4-piece The Revolvers were formed in 2006 (Hanngar Röportaj 2013) and are the subject of the first 'Indiastanbul' film dating from 2011, which intersperses live footage with interviews in which the band discuss their affinity with indie as a genre, their experiences of playing indie music in Turkey and their future ambitions. The band repeatedly differentiate themselves from mainstream Turkish music and musicians, in terms of style, content and approach, and speak of the parochial tastes and expectations that they hope to circumvent. In particular, they highlight resistance among Turkish audiences to original live music, and to bands who do not follow the accepted route to market:

Serhat [singer]: In England it is normal to see groups playing their own music in clubs. For example Babyshambles [...] were doing that, but in Istanbul they couldn't understand the concept of a new band playing their own songs instead of covers. It had never been done before and people thought it was strange. [...]

Murat [drummer]: There's an assumption in this country that you have to start locally [...] here in Istanbul, then more nationally and then try internationally. After becoming famous in Turkey, then you can start singing in English or you can participate in the Eurovision, etc. and then you can start to play abroad. But for the first time ever we are a group who doesn't think like that (Ertunc 2011).<sup>6</sup>

The band report having received a more positive response from foreign gig-goers, which they attribute to 'universal[ism]' in international listening tastes that have yet to arrive in Turkey. They assert that indie is a 'universal' genre with a global listenership, and that there is 'no difference' between themselves and UK and US bands other than the fact that 'they are in the West, we are in the East'. They explain that while 'the whole world is listening to indie [...] it hasn't come to Istanbul yet', but they are optimistic about the future:

For Turkey, we are trying something new. [...] We're more than a band limited to Istanbul. We want to make universal music.

[...]

The Turkish people are opening up to the outside world. We believe that we are doing an international thing.

[...]

There's a saying 'without courage, you can never win a battle'. We've shown some courage, and as a result of that, we have reached a certain place. Now the time has come for us to play gigs outside Turkey (Ertunc 2011).

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<sup>6</sup> Quotations here are taken from Ertunc's English subtitles (the interview in the film is conducted in Turkish).

The band express no intention of establishing a distinctly Turkish indie sound, or distinguish between Turkish and (for example) English indie, but see both as part of a global indie phenomenon. They refer to Turkish audiences' taste for eastern or arabesk elements, both in terms of instrumentation and lyrical themes:

Murat [drums]: People have always wanted something ethnic, a darbouka, a saz. In the Turkish spirit there's always a kind of pessimism, a kind of loss, and people have always liked bands that reflect this attitude.

Berkan [guitar]: Honestly, at first, the most difficult decision to make was to follow the easy road or the difficult road - to choose whether to make music to appeal to a large Turkish audience, i.e. to include Anatolian elements to our music which is expected here, or to make our own music, the music we feel (Ertunc 2011).

While the band speak favourably of some artists, they are generally disparaging of attempts by Turkish bands to infuse their music with local, Turkish features:

Serhat [vocals] They define themselves within that border. This is what their problem is - they see cultural divisions. We play without frontiers, they play within frontiers.

Berkan [guitar]: 'this is our culture', this is how they perceive things. By the way, we love our culture, we've got nothing against that. But at the same time where's the world going? The idea of 'we do this over here, they do that over there, we do it like this in Turkey', to be honest, we don't think it's that important anymore (Ertunc 2011)

In contrast, guitarist Berkan suggests that the band have 'tried to create something universal' by avoiding eastern signifiers; there is no sense that they conceive of Indie as *necessarily* western. The band sing in English, which drummer Murat argues 'takes guts' in Turkey and was a 'radical choice', but this is justified on the basis of universalism (and English as *lingua franca*), rather than a desire to emulate English or American bands specifically. It appears therefore that, at the time of this 2011 interview, the Revolvers conceived of indie as a deterritorialised global form with roots in the west, but which is not exclusively open to the West or western *per se*. We can align the band's position in this regard with Yazıcıoğlu's *Pro Western* rock fan type, who consider themselves 'belong[ing] to western rock culture' and see rock as a genre 'not *borrowed* from the West, but [...] a global phenomenon [open to] anybody who likes the sound' (2010, p.245, my emphasis). Unlike Yazıcıoğlu's (2010) *Pro Western* rock fan however, they are not opposed to globalisation as a phenomenon and actively celebrate the 'opening up' of Turkish audiences to the aesthetics of the 'outside world':

Berkan [guitar]: We've appeared at exactly that time and we don't need to cater to typical Turkish tastes. We believe we're doing an international thing, and the interesting thing is that Turkish audiences are now adopting this outlook. In the past that wouldn't be possible (Ertunc 2011).

Considering themselves to be at the forefront of cultural change in Turkey, they speak of a 'snowball effect' that might over time cause 'this repressive and conservative outlook [to] disappear' (Berkan [guitarist]).

Interestingly, in 2013 the band's members formed a second band, Gri<sup>7</sup>, under which name they released a single, 'Günah Şehri' (Sin City), comprising Turkish lyrics, a chorus melody composed in Phrygian mode (see figure 2), and lyrics that overtly reference Turkey, all absent from the Revolters' songs. The lyrics to 'Günah Şehri' border on the arabesk in their portrayal of Istanbul as a seductive, deceitful and corrupting city, although the playful delivery is far removed from the melodrama and anguish of arabesk, and the video features the band performing in a bar to a crowd of urbane twenty-somethings. This move towards Turkish language rock might most obviously suggest a desire on The Revolters' part to target a domestic audience and market segment, but might also suggest a softening of the band's earlier resistance to local aesthetics displayed in the interview quoted above. Alternatively, the Phrygian melody might be interpreted as holding no deliberate connotation, instead exemplifying the 'janus-like' quality of the Phrygian mode in Turkish popular music and/or the temporal erosion of the filiative/affiliative distinction in relation to stylistic elements, both identified by Karahasanoglu and Skoog (2009). In any case, however this is interpreted, across the rest of the Revolters' output and interviews up to and including 2013, their championing of a global cultural orientation and liberal lifestyle and resistance to cultural conservatism are more pronounced than any resistance to eastern aesthetics *per se*. Their musical aesthetic can be characterised as internationalist and cosmopolitan, and accompanies a professed counter-hegemonic ideological orientation; as discussed above, the band have been outspoken in interviews about the moral interventionism of the AKP government.

Like the Revolters, the Away Days sing in English and are ostentatiously international in outlook and aspiration. Their name refers to their lack of a sense of belonging to Istanbul, and enjoyment of travel outside of Turkey (Reevell, 2013). In interviews, singer Oğuz Can Özen has regularly

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<sup>7</sup> In interviews as Gri, the band make no secret of also being in the Revolters.

highlighted the extent to which the Away Days' sound is at odds with Turkish mainstream tastes.

For example:

When people hear us they say, 'Oh my god, that band can't be from Turkey, because even Turkish rock bands have a Middle Eastern sound' (quoted in Todd 2015).

The Away Days participated actively in the Gezi Park protests, and the band's drummer Berk Tekelioğlu was seriously injured when a gas canister hit him on the head. In an interview with the NME (Reevell 2013), Özen explained that the band's reasons for participating in the protests were not political:

We're not a political band- we're not like the Beatles. But when we saw how the police attacked those people, we went out to protest among thousands of other people. It's not about politics, it's about defending basic human rights (quoted in Reevell 2013).

The Away Days were also affected by the ban on alcohol advertising for music concerts (discussed above), which led to the cancellation of the One Love Festival in Sarıyer, where they were scheduled to perform alongside English indie acts such as Foals and the Vaccines (bands they cite as major influences). Özen links moral conservatism of this kind directly with the protest movement:

The government is intervening in people's lifestyles, which is a main reason these protests have gotten so big. Turkey is not Iraq or Iran. I want Erdogan (sic) to resign. [...] In two weeks a generation has awakened. [...] I want to say to Erdogan (sic): don't bother us. Don't touch our music. Don't touch our rights (quoted in Reevell 2013).

Özen's comments here convey a strong sense of generational collectivism, wherein music is a marker of identity and a totemic asset of liberalism. Like the Revolvers therefore, the Away Days align themselves with a growing movement in opposition to the hegemonic conservatism of the AKP. Indeed, while the context is quite different, the Revolvers' and the Away Days' outspoken desire to wrest the nation's cultural and social destiny from the state is redolent of the sense of civic duty identified by Stokes (2010) on the parts of Orhan Gencebay and Sezen Aksu at earlier periods in the Republic's history, which implies a distinctly counter-hegemonic ideal of citizenship.

Garage rock three-piece the Ringo Jets have also spoken in interviews of their participation in the Gezi protests (Tez 2014). Although they do not use the term indie to describe their music, they participate within the same scene as bands such as the Away Days and the Revolvers, share the same spaces (rehearsal space, venues) and audiences, espouse an independent, DIY ethos and have been identified as an indie band in media (e.g. Parker, 2014). In any case, as Bannister (2006) notes, the groundwork for the modern garage rock revival was laid by indie, such that the distinction between the two genres is porous. All of their songs' lyrics are in English, and most employ idiomatic clichés drawn from and/or referencing blues and rock (e.g. 'I got that black coffee blues'). In contrast however, the lyrics to their song 'Spring of War' directly express feelings of oppression, suffocation and suffering:

Well they are isolating  
Manipulating  
Toxicating  
And it's suffocating us

Well you can smell it in the air  
The spring of war is here (The Ringo Jets 2013)

Although no explicit reference is made here to the Gezi protests of 2013, these lyrics depict the mood of the protest movement and obliquely reference the State's treatment of protesters<sup>8</sup>. In contrast, the music video features direct images and slogans from the Gezi protests, thus rendering the song's thematic content unambiguous. The video features the band's drummer Lale Kardeş as a television news anchor lip-syncing the lyrics as if reading them from a teleprompter (Image 1), while Deniz Ağan, one of the band's guitarists, plays the part of a reporter in the field (Image 2). The song lyrics also move across the bottom of the screen throughout as 'breaking news'-style ticker tape. These scenes are interspersed with found footage of the protests in Taksim Square and elsewhere, to simulate live reportage. The band's second guitarist Tarkan Mertoğlu plays the part of a weatherman who, instead of placing meteorological symbols on a map, applies symbols denoting protest and police violence, such as gas masks, shields and water cannon, to an aerial photo of Gezi Park (Image 3). Perhaps the clearest condemnation of the State comes in the form of an advert for a cleaning product, 'DemoCrazy', which is able to erase stains of 'opposition', 'protestors', and

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<sup>8</sup> According to the band's drummer Lale, the lyrics originally referred to the Tahrir Square protests in Egypt in 2011.

'freedom of speech' (Images 4 and 5). In its comic juxtaposition and playful use of symbols therefore, the video to 'Spring of War' exemplifies the revolutionary humour and semiotic subversion identified by Özdemir (2015) and Varol (2014) as key aesthetic strategies of the Gezi movement.

Musically, 'Spring of War' follows the blues rock-influenced style of the majority of the band's recorded output, featuring a harmonic structure based around chords I, IV and V, heavily distorted guitars, and vocal melodies, guitar riffs and solos primarily in the minor pentatonic scale. Live however, the band are known to incorporate covers of famous Turkish television advert jingles, and have spoken of their passion for Turkish psychedelia from the 1970s (Hawkins 2013), suggesting an openness to local influences outside of the Anglo-American rock vernacular.

Among the indie bands who frequently perform at venues such as Peyote, KargART and Pendor Corner are many that comprise non-Turkish members, typically English or American, who work in the city as English language teachers. One such band was Scorpio Rising, an Istanbul 'art rock' band, active between 2011 and 2014, who feature in the 'Indiistanbul' films. The band comprised both native Turks and English immigrants, and were led by English singer-songwriter Sean Parker. During his time in Istanbul (he has since been deported from Turkey for overstaying his visa by 10 years) Parker also worked as a music journalist, promoter and English teacher, and alongside self-releasing his own music also curated two compilation albums, 'Istanbul Dogs I' and 'II', of Istanbul-based indie artists.

The lyrics to Scorpio Rising's song 'Taksim Meydan' (2013) make no explicit reference to the Gezi protests of 2013, but instead reference them obliquely through repeated incantations of associated locations ('Taksim Meydan', 'Kadıköy', 'Üsküdar'). The vocal is shared by Parker and two Turkish female backing singers, though Parker's voice is loudest in the mix. An interesting effect of this doubling is that while Parker delivers the lines in an English accent, the other singers' Turkish enunciation can be heard beneath, in particular in the rounding off of the word 'Üsküdar' with a sibilant fricative 'r', marking the song with a sense of both native voice and cosmopolitanism. The substructural instrumentation is western, comprising drums, bass guitar and electric guitar, and the

substructure is built around the Phrygian mode<sup>9</sup>, the bass figure based around the tonic and dominant, moving to flattened second and sixth in the root. The superstructure of vocals and violin is also Phrygian. The violin also makes use of double stops with a droning open string, an effect that evokes the *Kemençe*, a bowed lute that commonly accompanies folk dancing. A guitar solo in Phrygian dominant mode<sup>10</sup> is performed on a nylon stringed flamenco guitar. These elements arguably all connote Turkey's eastern aspect, and thus underscore the song's lyrics, which are also rare within the band's oeuvre for explicitly referencing Turkey. 'Taksim Meydan' can therefore be read as an oblique protest song in which identity and geography are expressed through the use of figurative musical and linguistic elements.

In applying the affiliation/filiation dualism as proposed by Karahasanoglu and Skoog (2009) we encounter some complexity in the fact that the song's composer is an Englishman, while the band is comprised mainly of native Turks. In this respect, the song can be seen as a product of Istanbul's cosmopolitanism, and the issue of affiliative and filiative gesturing is thus complicated both by the passage of time (Karahasanoglu and Skoog, 2009) and by different (a/)filiative cultures represented in the band collective. Furthermore, where earlier examples of eastern tropes being incorporated into Turkish popular music can be understood as 'counter-affiliation' (Karahasanoglu and Skoog, 2009) in response to the western affiliations of First Republicanism (Diken 2014), this song is a response to the Islamist and neoliberal AKP government's treatment of a pluralist protest movement. As such, its eastern-sounding elements cannot be read as signifiers of a suppressed Islamic heritage as in the case of arabesk; rather, they connote a less straightforwardly ideological identity that defies dualistic codification.

Although the Phrygian mode is not employed in the music of the Ringo Jets, the Away Days or the Revolvers (with the exception of the latter's work as Gri), the Phrygian/*makam* dualism is nonetheless useful in this case for highlighting the widespread *absence* of eastern connotative elements in most

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<sup>9</sup> Or Phrygian dominant; the third interval is not played, although see next footnote regarding the guitar solo.

<sup>10</sup> This is in D. The beginning of the solo effects a Phrygian descent in the home key of A through the tetrachord of D, C, Bb, A, common to both Phrygian mode in A and Phrygian dominant mode in D. A second solo, also in D, is performed over the B section of the song, in which the home key modulates to D and all of the instrumentation is built around Phrygian dominant mode in D.

Or

This is in D. The solo initially descends (0.39-0.41) through the notes of D, C, Bb and A, effecting a phrygian descent in the song's home key of A (also the Kurd tetrachord), continuing through G, Fsharp, Eb, D, the first tetrachord of the Phrygian dominant mode in D (also the Hijaz tetrachord). This is resolved in the song's B section (1.06-1.28) which modulates to the Phrygian dominant in D across all tonal elements.

Turkish indie, in contrast to the overwhelming majority of Turkish popular music. For the Away Days and the Revolvers, the rejection of such eastern signifiers is a calculated gesture of aesthetic distance from the Turkish mainstream. Indie's politics of taste bring an additional layer of significance here. Bannister (2006) argues that indie's aesthetics have developed in part through a rejection of black popular music tropes – taken to denote a corrupted, commercialised mainstream – and the imagining of an affiliative lineage issuing from white, male groups of the 1960s, which have in turn positioned a canonical 'whiteness' at the crux of indie conceptions of authenticity. The ideological and aesthetic associations of Anglo-American indie do not traverse straightforwardly to indie in its deterritorialised, Turkish form, but we must acknowledge at least the trace of these canonical practices, the aesthetic hierarchies they sustain, and in turn the demographic hierarchies they have been taken to imply. There are clear points of analogy (though not equivalency) with the Turkish context, in which a historically dominant, western-oriented 'White Turk' elite has delimited its cultural space through a narrow Eurocentric canonicity and a deliberate eschewal of peripheral, eastern tastes. The demographic of Istanbul's indie scene is largely middle-class, secular and educated (Parker, 2015), and thus might be equated (*prima facie*) with this White Turk elite, in the same way that the Gezi protest movement has been (see above). Yet, as discussed earlier, historical understandings of class and socioeconomic status in Turkey have been problematised by the emergence of a secular-minded, educated service sector precariat with no footing at the centre of Turkish society; the demographics of Turkish indie would appear to align more closely with this emerging class than with the erstwhile secularist elite. Moreover, indie (in the global context) has historically aligned itself with the politics of power struggle, and despite its adherence to canon is 'anti-traditionalist' (Bannister 2006, p.86). A crucial distinction to make in this regard is that between cultural capital as proposed by Bourdieu, which in material and embodied forms confers power upon elites and reinforces social hierarchy, and *subcultural* capital as proposed by Thornton (1995), which corresponds to youth culture enlightenment and 'hipness', conceived in stark opposition to 'straight' society. Accordingly, indie's (sub) cultural capital corresponds not to dominant groups within Turkish society, but to notions of counter-hegemonic 'enlightenment' (Bannister 2006). In this respect, Turkish indie stands in aesthetic opposition to both the Islamist-neoliberal elites associated with Second Republicanism, *and* the Eurocentric elites of First Republicanism, and corresponds to a newer, counter-hegemonic aesthetic paradigm that chimes with the ideals of Third Republicanism as set out by Diken (2014).

## Conclusion



On the 17 June 2016 - almost to the moment that I began to draft the conclusion to this paper – a launch party for the band Radiohead’s album ‘A Moon Shaped Pool’ at Velvet IndieGround, a small independent record store in the Çukurcuma neighbourhood of Beyoğlu, was attacked by a gang of 25 men wielding metal bars. The attack received global media attention. The public consumption of alcohol during *ramazan* appears to have been the gang’s principal grievance, but the altercation speaks more broadly to the ideological fault lines in Turkish society, discussed in this paper, and is an example of how tensions and identity politics can play out around culture and lifestyle practices, often violently, particularly in areas that have undergone rapid gentrification. As discussed in this paper, alcohol is thoroughly woven into the indie lifestyle in Turkey, and was also a totemic *cause célèbre* of the Gezi protests, and as such can be read as a unit of discursive practice through which liberalism and resistance to conservative hegemony are performed within the public sphere. This is not to cast the listening party as a formal ritual of protest, but to emphasise that within this contested ideological and cultural landscape, lifestyle practices inevitably constitute symbolic vocabulary.<sup>11</sup> Erdoğan’s apportioning of equal blame to the attackers and partygoers (Hürriyet Daily News 2016b), and suggestions on social media that Beyoğlu’s authorities were complicit in the attack (there was no police response) together illustrate both the perception of and actual moral interventionism by the State. Two days later on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2016, a crowd of three hundred staged a sit-in protest in Firuzağa Square in Cihangir, close to Velvet IndieGround, and in scenes reminiscent of Gezi, were dispersed using water cannon and teargas (Hürriyet Daily News 2016).

Indie is by no means the only genre of music that can be associated with recent opposition to authoritarian rule and moral interventionism in Turkey, but as this paper has shown, indie musicians have perceived an ideological affinity between the aesthetics of indie and the values of liberalism, internationalism, and resistance to both conservatism and consumerism, that characterise the Third Republican vision as identified by Diken (2014), and have employed these aesthetics in expressing a counter-hegemonic orientation and identity. The form of these expressions can vary significantly however, in ways that at once enrich and destabilise the dualisms by which Turkish popular music, and its relationship to society, have been understood. For example, the use of affiliative and filiative elements is complicated both by the passage of time and by heterogenous demographics, and the dualism of West (vs) East cannot be read in terms of a politically connotative

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<sup>11</sup> See also Hecker (2010) for a discussion of lifestyle practices among metal fans as ‘clear statements that Muslimness is not a relevant category for most of them’ (p.10).

aesthetics where the former corresponds to Eurocentrism and secularism and the latter to Islamic heritage, and takes on a more fluid and less essentialist aspect in both its political and aesthetic dimensions. Applying the dualism of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation however requires a caveat; as noted earlier, I make no claims to have represented Istanbul indie comprehensively, and the constraints of time and word-count are such that I have only been able to cover a selection of bands, chosen on the basis of relevance to the themes discussed. All of the bands discussed sing in English and cite English and American music as their primary influences, and display a take on indie as a global, deterritorialised form with its origins in the Anglo-American context; it is essential however not to gloss over the existence of many Turkish indie bands who sing in Turkish (such as Kim Ki O, quoted earlier), and Turkish indie record labels (such as Shalgam Records) whose rosters feature predominantly Turkish-language indie (comprising subgenres such as psych, electro, bluegrass and folk). Such examples suggest the possibility of a *reterritorialised*, Turkish indie music, targeted towards domestic audiences and not beholden to the norms of the genre's Anglo-American 'home' context. Yet, reviewing these bands' social media and web profiles, I was struck by the extent to which, aside from their choice of language, their music and attendant visual style were broadly similar to those of the bands reviewed, and indeed to those of indie bands from other global contexts, and did not convey a sense of localism nor nationalist inwardness as identified by Yazıcıoğlu in respect of *Türkçe Rock*. Depictions of liberal lifestyle practices, such as drinking beer (see Image 6) were common, and eastern musical elements were rare, if not non-existent. This suggests that if Turkish indie is undergoing a process of reterritorialisation, this is not occurring via a process of synthesis with hegemonic conservative aesthetics or cultural or moral norms, but rather with the liberal, counter-hegemonic outlook associated with the emerging vision of Third Republicanism.

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