

KADIKÖY SOUND: LOCAL IDENTITY OF KADIKÖY'S ROCKSCAPE

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A Case Study of Place and Music Interaction

Abstract

Kadıköy Sound is a concept that emerged in 1990s to identify Turkish rock music movements happened in Kadıköy, İstanbul. However, the definition and the content of the term have been interpreted in various perceptions by musicians and audience through the time in Kadıköy's rock music scene. In this study, the notion of Kadıköy Sound is analyzed in the case study of the band Kesmeşeker and the band leader Cenk Taner's local identity expression via musical behavior. This paper is also an extended study of fieldwork on Kesmeşeker's music and local identity which was conducted in Spring 2014.

Kadıköy's Music and Subculture Scene

Kadıköy is one of the oldest residential areas of İstanbul with its history dating to 3000 B.C.. In the Republican Period its importance as a center of transportation and population has risen due to its geographical location bordered with Marmara Sea, the Bosphorus and the districts Üsküdar, Maltepe and Ataşehir. In 1984, Kadıköy has been a local municipality and has been governed by leftist political parties since 1989. Today, Kadıköy is the most developed social center of Anatolian Side of İstanbul within more than 10 culture centers governed by municipality and cultural events and festivals organized.

Besides the public service places opened by municipality, there are also many bars, music studios and live performance halls managed by free enterprisers in Kadıköy. Those places have been gathering centers for youth cultures in past decades and some of the subcultures have been formed and developed in those places. Those subcultures are mainly based on popular musical movements in the world of the era they belong to as James Lull states that "Subcultures mainly gang up among musical social groups or music." Lull also focuses on the gathering occasion of those subculture communities in particular places for particular events to share and express their ideas to each other, such as thrash concerts of punk culture (Lull 2000:45). In this manner, particularly for movements shaped by music genres, the importance of the places as the gathering centers of those communities is undeniable.

In 1980s and 1990s Kadıköy, little bazaars named as 'pasaj'¹ located in the center of Kadıköy which covering several shops where people can buy music albums, books, posters and merchandises have been gathering centers of youth due to availability of music albums and merchandise as well as the opportunity to meet people who also listen to and produce similar musical genres. Akmar Pasajı is the most distinctive example of 'pasaj' culture as a gathering

1- The Turkish word 'pasaj' is intentionally used in the paper. 'Pasaj' stands for a kind of bazaar that located in a building that has several entrances that connects different streets to each other as a passage.

place of rock/metal genre audience and musicians within the music shops, such as Pentagram Shop, Zihni Music and Hammer Music and the pasaj's close location to the center (Kumral 2012:49). However, in the early 2000s, the society of Akmar has been accused of Satanism and it resulted with closing of many shops and dissolution of the society. Along with music shops and bars, fanzine publications such as; Mondo Trasho, Laneth, Lull, Kargart Magazine, Underground Poetix have been the other primary sources for cultural information transmission and social group formations.

Likewise the pasaj, café and bars also have been gathering and socialization centers for youth subcultures in Kadıköy. In 1990s Masal Evi, Karga Bar, Woodstock Café and Akdeniz Café became the primary places for social organization, music events and cultural production of youth. Most particularly Akdeniz Café draws the attention, because it is the place where the term Kadıköy Sound is proposed by Cenk Taner and his friend who gathered in there (Taner: 2015).

Kadıköy Sound and Kesmeşeker's Local Identity



Figure 1: An event poster of 'Kadıköy Sound' with Cenk Taner on it

Bir Kadıköy Sound Gecesi, 24 Nisan 2013. <http://www.kesmeseker.org/multimedya> (20 May 2015)

living and making music in Kadıköy, including Cenk Taner and his friends who mainly spend time at Akdeniz Café (Taner: 2015). The aim of proposing that term was to create a musical collectivity among the musicians of Kadıköy who write lyrics in Turkish (Karadeniz: 2011). However, musical collectivity of Kadıköy musicians as the scene in the concept of Kadıköy Sound has been a polemical concept to interpret by both musicians and the audience. Kadıköy's music scene has been formed by various

Kesmeşeker is the band founded in 1990 in İstanbul by members Cenk Taner, Belen Ünal, Tayfun Çağlar and Melih Rona and published their debut album in 1991. The band has been making music since then, however, all the band members except the band leader and songwriter Cenk Taner are replaced over the history of the band. Until today, Kesmeşeker published seven studio albums. Apart from the band, Cenk Taner published two solo albums and two books. The band Kesmeşeker today still continues to produce albums and make gigs².

As a band founded and has been living in Kadıköy, Kesmeşeker is most identified band with the term Kadıköy Sound among the musicians and bands of Kadıköy. This identification case is accessible in fan and social media web platforms, the articles published about the band or the interviews made with Cenk Taner and the band, and the events entitled 'Kadıköy Sound'³.

Kadıköy Sound does not have any formal definition, but it aims to reflect a local musical movement in 1990s Kadıköy by some rock musicians. The term is named by rock musicians

2- Solo music of Cenk Taner is pretty similar with Kesmeşeker's music in the manner of both lyrics and sound. Thus, Cenk Taner's musicality is considered as a whole in the paper.

3- Interviews, newspaper articles and event posters are available on official web page of Kesmeşeker www.kesmeseker.org

genres including Kesmeşeker's music as well as Kadıköy Acil's rap or punk bands of Kadıköy. Even for rock music fractions, there have been many differences in both musical genre and ideology of the music bands. As Sara Cohen depicts, music activity within specific geographical areas might be named as "scene" as happened in Kadıköy Sound phenomenon or Seattle rock scene example, and this scene concept implies the subcultures and communities which are the music-related and geographically formed groups (Cohen: 1999: 128). In the case of Kadıköy Sound, common places, exchange of music and experience might be common among musicians, however, the musical collectivity or a common textual expression have not been established in Kadıköy's rock music scene. Most of the criticism on the concept of Kadıköy Sound focus on the variety of genres and musical expressions of various Kadıköy musicians who could also stands for a Kadıköy Sound concept, but they have different musical production and identity expressions. On that debate, music author, producer and DJ, Tayfun Polat who also lives in Kadıköy for decades and works for Karga Bar and Karga magazine indicates that "Kadıköy Sound never happened. If you ask it to Cenk Taner and Demirhan Baylan who are the inventors of the term, they will also admit that truth. To establish a local sound terminology, I think the bands should have a similarity in sound and collectivity in attitude. It only happened among 1990s punk musicians of Kadıköy, but they did not name themselves as Kadıköy Sound, but only as punk" (Keskiner: 2013). However, as one of the inventors for the concept Kadıköy Sound, Cenk Taner's music in both solo projects and Kesmeşeker has been labeled as Kadıköy Sound by some of the audience, music authors and the journalists who write on Kesmeşeker's music or make interviews with Cenk Taner. The band's relationship with the place they live and how they reflect that relationship in their music and perspective is the main discussion to comprehend the band's local identity and their position with respect to Kadıköy Sound phenomenon.

Cenk Taner defines himself as a resident of Kadıköy. His band Kesmeşeker is also formed in Kadıköy and established their musical life in Kadıköy by making most of the gigs in Kadıköy or practicing in there. Taner's own perspective for Kadıköy is that it is the place home for him, thus he experiences the life in there. As the result, Kadıköy became the place of life experience and this is reflected in his music as being the place where they have been experienced.

The main medium to express Kadıköy in the content of music is provided via lyrics in Kesmeşeker's music. There are seven songs that directly using the word 'Kadıköy' and one song uses the ancient name of Kadıköy which is *Khalkedon* and one song named as "Kadıköy Karabatakları" exists in discography of Kesmeşeker and Cenk Taner solo projects. In those songs, Kadıköy is included as the place of narrative in the lyrics. The most striking example among those songs is "Tek Kişiyim Ben Hala" (2004). This song is narrated by the author's perspective and Kadıköy stands as the place where the narrator turns back from Taksim, as home. Being Kadıköy as home for the musicians supported by the all interviews of Cenk Taner on the importance of expression of Kadıköy and locality in his music and attitude.

Besides the songs, the metaphors used by the band and band's audience have strengthened the local profile of the band. Both the band and audience use a sports game metaphor the define Kadıköy gigs and other İstanbul gigs, mainly the gigs happen in Taksim, European Side. The Kadıköy gigs are defined as 'home concerts', whereas the other ones are named as 'playing away'. Cenk Taner believes that being a resident of Kadıköy facilitates their ways to gigs and relationship with pub owners. It is easy to go anywhere by walking from home, however, the gigs in European Side means traveling and playing away from home.

On the debate of Kadıköy Sound concept, Taner does not directly depicts what Kadıköy Sound stands for, but he explains what Kadıköy stands for his music and band. Taner simply explains the concept in his interviews as “Kadıköy Sound is a concept including the musicians that live and produce in Kadıköy. I think there’s something in favor of artistic production in Kadıköy, because people live in here and it is a rather quite place in İstanbul. Our music is also known as music from Kadıköy, because we are one of the bands that use Kadıköy in music very often.

Conclusion

Ambiguity on the boundaries and definition of the concept Kadıköy Sound led the audience and musicians to interpret the term in various ways. However, among those local Kadıköy identities of various musicians and audience, Kesmeşeker’s local identity expression is a pioneering example which is more directly related to notion of Kadıköy Sound. Kesmeşeker’s and the audience’s interpretation on the concept and the relation of the term with the band’s musical behavior is primarily shaped by Cenk Taner’s position, who is the person that creates the content of the band’s music as well as being one of the persons who proposed the term Kadıköy Sound. Use of Kadıköy in the content of lyrics, expressions and metaphors of Kesmeşeker has formed a local identity for the band and maintained the relation between band’s local identity and the notion of Kadıköy Sound. This study was an attempt to depict the various interpretation of Kadıköy Sound concept in the case study of Kesmeşeker’s music and behavior, with respect to their expression of local identity.

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