Musical Effects: Glocal Identities and Consumer Activism

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ABSTRACT

This study provides further insights into the processes that occur in accomplishing identity projects in modern consumer culture. Especially illustrated is the role of cultural elements, specifically represented by (rock) music. In our four-year long fieldwork, we observe that musical codes are instrumental in shaping consumer identities. The relations between music and consumer activism are demonstrated. Transformations in conventional modern identities are found. The preliminary findings reveal that music, specifically rock music, enriches the modes of being in the world. Consumers enjoy experiencing and contesting all modes of being during their consumption experiences in the glocal rock festivals.

INTRODUCTION

How does music taste affect social experience and cultural changes? How do collective actions such as consumer activism relate to music taste? How is a global commodity such as rock music juxtaposed with consumer activism against one of the leading global brands, that is Coca Cola? These were some of the questions as we began this study.

Cultural effects in social movements can be observed through songs, art, literature, ritualized practices, and retain their presence in collective memory even in the absence of particular political platforms. However, cultural work is often subsumed in more immediate political tasks and is seldom explicitly regarded. In many social movements, activists try to distinguish the political from the cultural. Partly as a result of this separation, social movements are usually discussed and interpreted in political terms.

This study illustrates that the experience of activism is closely related with the issues of identity. In fact, consumer identity projects are widely studied and it is known that the marketplace has become the preeminent source of mythic and symbolic resources through which people construct narratives of identity (Arnould and Thompson 2005). The role of aesthetics in the ideological mapping of consumer identity projects via brand meanings and fashion styles (Thompson and Haytko 1997; Murray 2002; Sandikci and Gер 2005) and communities (Music and O’Guinn 2001) have also been studied. However, the literature still has gaps to answer how significant the cultural (i.e., musical) codes are in shaping identity or identities in such contexts.

This paper attempts to illuminate our research questions concerning how musical codes become instrumental in shaping consumer identities and reports the preliminary findings from a four-year long consumer activism study completed in Turkey.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Music and Social Movements

Social movements are not mere political activities. They provide spaces for cultural growth and experimentalism. For example, musical and other kinds of cultural traditions are made and remade in social movements. After the movement comes to an end, the music remains as a memory and as a way to inspire new activities. In omitting cultural elements, such as music, processes of social movements have generally been attributed either to anonymous universal sources, such as modernization, capitalism, or imperialism, or to charismatic leaders and powerful individuals.

Eyerman and Jamison (1998) argue, in opposition to these dominant approaches, that the collective identity formation taking place in social movements is a central catalyst of broader changes in values, ideas, and ways of life, and that social movements are key agents of cultural transformation. The evolution of the music industry with social movements in Sweden since the 1970s, the role of counterculture in the case of East Germany that accelerated the collapse of the Berlin Wall can be mentioned as examples (Wicke 1995; Garofalo 1992; Eyerman 2002).

In the 1960s, Herbert Marcuse emphasized the aesthetic dimension of movements of the time by arguing that it was primarily through art and music that social movements were remembered (Eyerman and Jamison 1998). Touraine (1981), and Melucci (1989, 1996), also stress the significance of cultural aspects in social movements. As Touraine (1988) notes, the central cultural issue underlies the formation of the self-definition) or identity. For Melucci (1996), social movements are symbolic actions which enable people to create new forms of collective identity since the results of movements can be seen as codes or signs to challenge the dominant political order. Thus, Melucci reduced the abstraction of social movements into fields, arenas, forms, logics, and symbols, to illustrate that a social movement constitutes a semiotic culture of codes and symbolic meanings. In this culture, actors have expectations of proportionate rewards with their (material and immaterial) investments as they constantly make comparisons to realize their identities. Melucci (1996) argued that in order for the conflictual response to an expectations-rewards shortfall to be chosen from among the many alternative lines of action, at least three conditions must obtain: First, there must be a temporal continuity and consistency of the activist; secondly, there must be a tangible adversary whose action affects the activist’s reference field; lastly, the activist must feel a sense of ownership over the object.

Combining culture and politics, social movements serve to reconstitute both, providing a broader political and historical context or cultural expression (Eyerman and Jamison 1998). Cultural traditions are mobilized and reformulated in social movements, and this mobilization and reconstruction of tradition become central to what social movements are as well as to what they signify for social and cultural change. Songs can invoke emotions and act as a vehicle for the diffusion of ideas of a movement into the broader culture. The evolution of the song, “We Shall Overcome,” is a good example. It shows how traditions can link some social movements by providing a link between ideas and images, and generations of activists. First, in the Nineteenth Century, there was the gospel, “I’ll Be All Right,” then, in 1901, a similar song appeared, “I’ll Overcome Some Day,” which then became “We Will Overcome,” the plural pronoun replacing the singular (reflecting a shift in the locus of redemption, from sacred to secular, or at least from the individual to the group). Later, a more grammatically correct form was introduced, probably by Pete Seeger: “We Shall Overcome.” This song no longer belongs only to its birthplace, but it has become an anthem of social movements and sung in many local languages, including Turkish.

Many social movements bring earlier movements back to life through the memory of songs that were sung and the images that were elicited, often by giving them new meaning (Eyerman and Jamison 1998). The worldview assumptions, the underlying beliefs, are articulated as much through art and music as through more
formalized written texts. In particular, singing songs, as bearers of traditions, are powerful weapons in the pursuit of social movements.

**Rock** (Rock) Music and Consumer Identity Projects

Holbrook (1986: 615-6) introspectively recounts how he tried to remain hip with the music he listened to: “Cherishing my adolescent musical iconoclasms [Elvis Presley] like a rare diamond, I searched for a way to remain hip...[A]t Harvard College...[m]y deus ex machina was the Beatles...[b]ut everybody loved the Beatles.”

Music is a practice that is capable of prefiguring changes in the political economy and in social developments to the extent that the code of music simulates the accepted rules of society. A “herald, for change is inscribed in noise faster than it transforms society” (Attali 1985: 5). Boundaries of musical-aesthetic discourses in representing or appropriating other music or culture, are important as they can facilitate articulation of socio-cultural identities (Grossberg 1991). Music engenders communities or scenes, and allows a play with, a performance of, and an imaginary exploration of identities through the aesthetic pleasures received (Stokes 2000). Music can both construct new identities and reflect existing ones. In other words, music has a formative role in socio-cultural identities. In fact, socio-cultural identities are not simply constructed in music as there are “prior identities that come to be embodied dynamically in musical cultures, which then also form the reproduction of those identities—no passive process of reflection” (Hesmondhalgh and Born 2000: 32).

The quest is no longer for an identity but identities due to an affluent image culture (Kellner 1992). As Kellner (1992: 144) claims, “the subject has disintegrated into a flux of euphoric intensities, fragmented and disconnected, and the detached postmodern self no longer experiences anxiety and no longer possesses depth, substantiality and coherence that was the ideal and occasional achievement of the modern self.” Firat, Venkatesh, and Dholakia (1995) regard this as a search to (re)present marketable self-images via interacting with other objects to produce one’s selves. Hence, postmodern consumption is no longer an end in itself, rather a productive process. Within the context of dance or rave culture Goulding, Shankar, and Elliot (2002) illustrate Firat and Venkatesh’s (1995) point that “there is no single project, or no one lifestyle, no sense of being to which the individual needs to commit” in contemporary culture. Subsequently, they interpret the juxtaposition of contradictory emotions and cognitions regarding perspectives, commitment, and ideas during identity formation in such rave communities as an indication of the emancipatory condition of postmodern fragmentation.

Musical effects are always replaced by their discursive and social contexts. Music makes possible identities available, constructs audiences, rather than represent pre-existing social facts (Frith 1981; Middleton 2001). Thus, as a cultural object, music constitutes a complex constellation of mediations (Born 1993) for identity projects. Particularly, rock music, as a successfully differentiated commodity, is positioned as a political genre and amalgamates its own social structure all over the world, with shared values (e.g., sense of freedom, oppositionality, rebellion), beliefs and myths. History of rock music reveals that by linking music, showmanship, lighting, poetry, politics and image, a complex cultural context and form have been created. In rock music, the context becomes a component of the lyrics, a component of a cultural text formed from cultural symbols of images, technology, fashion, leisure objects, and everyday materials of consumer society. Rock music imposes conditions and has cultural impositions which allow it to become a symptom of fundamental changes in societies (Wicke 1995). The ideology of rock is not just a matter of notes and words. Rock fans know what they mean by rock empirically, but the descriptive criteria in use are diverse and frequently inconsistent. Rock does not just symbolize musical means, but also refers to an audience, to a form of commercial production, to a liberated sexual expression, to an artistic ideology, i.e., rock has the creative and revolutionary integrity that pop music lacks (Frith 1981). Hence, as it provides a convenient ideological medium for the consumer identity projects and consumer activism, it is unsurprising to find rock in political movements.

**Rock for Peace: Consumer Activism at a Rock Festival**

Rock music has a long tradition in Turkey (the first rock concert was held in 1957). Rock is called “rock,” but consumed in Turkish. Rock concerts or rock bars are a part of daily lives in major cities, the concert or show contexts have been converted into a rock festival format only in the last few years. The festival, a larger event than a concert, indicates the increase in the popularity of rock in Turkey (Yazıcıoğlu and Firat 2008). The first rock festival, Rock’t 2000, was held in 2000, but a flurry of rock festivals has started with Rock’n Coke and its rival festival, Rock for Peace that both aimed to own the legacy of rock by reminding the legendary Woodstock ‘69 (Yazıcıoğlu and Firat 2007).

The Rock’n Coke Festival was first held in 2003 as part of Coca Cola’s Soundwave Project in Europe, including France, Denmark, etc. Not everybody was fond of the idea of this festival. First, “real rockers” in the public, including several columnists, criticized the exploitation of the capitalist Coke with the “anti-capitalist” rock. Leftists and Muslims described it as a cover-up operation disguised to make people forget that the Coca Cola Company was one of the major agents of globalization and cultural imperialism. Featuring world-famous groups such as The Cure as the headliner, food and beverage facilities, a theme park in addition to shopping, several multinational company (e.g., P&G featuring its shampoo) stands, an intense bombardment of TV commercials, as well as outdoor ads have all contributed to the popularity of the festival. Each year, more than 30,000 people attended the festival for two days (some of them stayed overnight in camps paying extra money for the privilege).

Rock for Peace Festival was organized on the same weekend to protest Coca Cola in 2003 and 2004 by a group of activists consisting of musicians, students and simply “activists.” The festival participants were able to stay overnight in cheaper tents and worse conditions regarding toilets and facilities than at Rock’n Coke. However, the more popular Rock for Peace has become over the years, both the nature of the protests and the participants have changed. The activists have started to include anti-globalization views more into their rhetoric. By 2005, they announced that Rock for Peace was no longer positioned against Rock’n Coke, and that the festival would be organized one week earlier. That year the laid-off Coca Cola workers joined the festival by the help of unions. The rituals at night with marches and torches contributed to the activism spirit of the festival. Although the activists eliminated the entrance fee after the second year, due to its increasing popularity Rock for Peace started to generate considerable revenues that are handed over to third parties to organize the stage, equipment, and security, with exclusive rights to sell food and beverages in return since 2004. That is, activists only coordinate the artistic features (e.g., stage performances, selections of bands, and speeches), media relations, and participation of other civil rights associations and unions. The ‘competition’ with Rock’n Coke also took place in regards the music—the headliner was not The Cure, but equally popular local
rock bands. Without any media support and with no advertising budget, in 2006, the number of participants reached around sixty thousand, which was close to Rock'n Coke.

In Turkey, activists call themselves “activist,” not using the corresponding word in Turkish. In 1980, there was a military coup in the country. Following 1983, the introduction of liberal economy, accompanied by accelerated globalization in the world, has changed the social and cultural dynamics in the country. Two of the most important consequences have been the depoliticization of the youth and the change in the social sphere e.g., civil rights associations have started actively operating. The last decade has witnessed the re-birth of activism in human rights, global warming, charities, etc.

**METHOD**

Data collection contains several methods to provide insights into the meanings of consumption of music in a context where social activism takes place. These include participant observations at the Rock for Peace Festival (2004-2005-2006) and its organizers’ meetings before the festival. Photographic records as well as videography, 26 in-depth interviews with activists, musicians, participants and academics, analysis of two-year-long discussions of two e-groups (www.eksisozluk.com—a wikipedia-like online dictionary where the entries are all subjective definitions—and barisarock@yahoogroups.com—the e-group of Rock for Peace activists), and conversations with activists constituted the major resources of data. The texts were analyzed using semiotic and narrative textual analyses (Barthes 1973; Patton 2002). A discussion of some of the preliminary findings from this research is as follows.

**OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS**

The analyses of the data collected reveal several illustrations of identity formation and instrumentalization of music. One is the trial of identity combinations utilizing the contexts of both music and activism.

**Identities of a “Rocker” Activist**

We first became acquainted with her at the meeting of activists at a rock bar used for the Wednesday meetings at six pm., during the whole second year of organizing Rock for Peace. In her strapless black summer dress, she was not one of the leaders of the activists. She often just listened to the discussions, quietly, drinking beer. Although activists claimed no hierarchy, it was easy to observe who was leading. There were only three unwritten rules: Attendance, follow-up, and bringing a solution instead of criticizing others’ opinions and deeds.

Next, we saw her as she was performing on stage in front of hundreds of people as the lead vocal. Her band was one of the initial performers during daytime, the time assigned to less popular groups. Her band played only a few songs that did not excite the crowd, except a small group of people in the audience close to the stage who seemed dedicated to cherish each and every minute of the festival and each performance. She wore a suspended black shirt and jeans. The black accessories at her wrists and ears signified her rocker look.

Later when we spotted her she was in front of the TV cameras. She must have changed her outfit after the performance. Her small arms in a sleeveless black shirt waived to add emotion to her explanations of what the activists wanted to achieve in the festival. They were naturally against injustice not only in their country of origin, but were also fighting against global unfairness and inequality. Did people know how many Africans would not have starved to death if Americans drove SUVs less, or that the Kyoto Act was not sufficient to protect nature? The usual activist jargon we heard during the interviews became softer and her voice calmed down when the TV reporter asked about her stage performance. She explained how their music differed from other rock bands and what their future goals were. She also emphasized the relations between a rocker identity and politics. Everything was inscribed in their lyrics in which they protested the injustice.

A lead vocal at a rock band, an activist, a member of the collective action; she was not only one of them, she was all of these identities, and maybe more if given a chance.

**Experience of Activism in a Rock Festival: Activentertainment**

The whole experience of the festival illustrated the organization of a collective action with the help of rock music. The popular political form of music was used to be the stylized folk songs in Turkey rather than rock. Association of rock with crowds in protest started in the last decade. Previously, capitalism, right wing politics and inequality were protested in the songs. Today, conventional leftist rhetoric seems to be replaced by anti-globalization, anti-war, anti-corporate, and anti-brand expressions in the rock music context.

Activists at Rock for Peace, with an average age of 26 (ranging between 17 to 59), typically consisted of people who work part-time. Mostly representing the mid to low social strata, they generally lack a proper college education in a country where it is ‘mandatory’ to be a college graduate to find a proper white-collar job. Being a member of activism means a lot otherwise. It signifies one as a being in society and as a member of a meaningful and important (global) cause: peace. Activists at this festival also believe that they contribute to improving awareness of the unconscious, depoliticized youth in the country. Interestingly, it seems that the youth either become depoliticized or deeply involved in politics at the age of 16. It is clear that, for the politically active, activism and rock music as means for reaching other people connotes their presence in the world.

There are a few other contributors to the effort, such as lead guitarist of a rock band from the 1960s. His presence and contacts help to promote the festival to other rock bands. There are also two activists who work as reporters at a leftist newspaper and handle press related issues. Despite their effort, it is obvious that the majority of the press that receives its share from the huge promotion budget of Rock’n Coke show no interest in Rock for Peace.

I started to be involved with politics seven years ago. I was against the war then as I’m today. I have always been against brands and hierarchy. Then, I learned that Coca Cola was going to organize a festival called Rock’n Coke. As rockers and peace-lovers, we, 15-20 people, who wanted to create a counter movement, started Rock for Peace. (Activist, M, 23)

I studied law, but couldn’t graduate because I got bored. I’m not doing anything to do with law, but I have worked at different jobs. I have always been interested in social causes and participated in several campaigns. At the moment I am the manager of a rock band. (Activist, F, 36)

We’re young, we have so many dreams, we are flared up about even the smallest things, but calmed down with the smallest things as well. Apart from all of these, we are dreaming of the same classless, borderless world where there is no exploitation. If we want to talk about the most basic things here [Rock for Peace], we can say that if these people want to unite, [we can] under the dream of an unoccupied society in peace. (Activist, F, 26)
Researcher: What is the main issue in this festival if it’s not anti-branding? Interviewee: “Increasing awareness” and to establish a platform to express this awareness. To provide a mission! (Activist, F, 36)

Emphasizing the importance of their consistence and continuity (Melucci 1996), activists often emphasized how few of them there were in 2003. These initiators are de facto leaders of the organization although they claim to eliminate hierarchy. In fact, they moderate the organization committee discussions and often lead the task groups (e.g., to organize non-monetary functions at the festival arena, such as the distribution of the stands, working with unions, other civil rights associations and theatre groups, etc.) as the ‘more experienced’ ones.

She is only 17, she has the same rights as a union’s president and nobody is bothered by any other. They have equal rights to speak. Everybody has to convince each other. This is a very good and established mechanism [in the Rock for Peace organizing committee]. (Activist, F, 36)

There is no leadership. Those who know each other from political groups came together. There are also people who have devoted themselves to the peace campaign. (Activist, M, 23)

The most apparent distinction emerges during the day of the festival at the backstage. Only those 15-20 people are allowed to be backstage. The researcher was also admitted to backstage in 2006, and able to take some photographs and film.

The privileged 15-20 determined the order of the bands and walked on to the stage a few times to salute the audience with slogans. Despite de rigeur serious look on their face, they seemed to have as much fun as the audience both during the concerts and in the camping area.

What we are doing here is activentertainment [activism and entertainment] by the way we admire or identify ourselves. Yes, we are having fun, but also dealing with activism. Because it’s a festival, but a different festival, it has an attitude, a political attitude. (Activist, F, 26)

When the night comes, there remains no ideology, only music. They can now sing songs, even love songs. (Academic, F, 35)

Since then, Mor ve Otesi [The most popular rock band in the country. In the last decade, despite the illegal music downloads and piracy, each of their albums sold around 300,000 copies—a record in the country’s rock music history] is an activist band in the anti-war movement, I mean, you can see them at every activity. I see them by my side on the streets, in the stands, in other campaigns; they are not as unreachable as people think. They are activists like us. (Activist, F, 36)

The organization committee was hoping for, but not expecting a crowd equal to Rock’n Coke. Obviously, headliner bands played an important role in the increased popularity of both festivals. Despite the small difference in the number of people attending the two festivals, given Coca Cola’s advertising budget, ceteris paribus, this is still a victory for the activists.

Instrumentalization of Music and Transferability of Identities in the Communities

Identities are constructed to make us have meaning in our worlds—worlds that are self-defined and worlds through collective actions. First, the ‘festival’, both a product and an experience of the activists, has endeavored to find its own identity through their community (Firat and Dholakia 1998). At the beginning, Coca Cola was just a symbol of what they were against: the multinationals, globalization and inequality. Later they became aware that being a rival to a single global brand was a limiting factor for their goals and ideals. Both the activists and the participants searched for more comprehensive a definition as the festival grew and the festival grounds contained many different events. Starting with the organization of the 2005 festival, the decision was made that the activists no longer wanted Rock for Peace to be known as the counter festival to Rock’n Coke, but that ‘the counter’ image should be maintained to show that they did not conform to the ‘system’.

It’s not only a music festival; with speeches, stands, theatres, it’s a culture festival as well. Although it’s been positioned against Rock’n Coke, an organization which now stands on its own feet. (tuonela, posted on <eksisozluk>, August 28, 2005)

Rock for Peace Principles: 1) It has never been “commercial.” It has promised not to touch the money that will be “earned”, 2) It has resolved everything other than the compulsive items with cooperation spirit, 3) Its only agenda and problematic have been “peace.” It worked for the peace culture and peace call to become spread, and part of the international anti-war activism. (moderator, posted on <barisarock@yahoo groups.com>, January 2, 2006)

Some activists take things more seriously. Rock is a safe ground for activism and activism makes their lives seem more meaningful; simply being a rocker cannot justify their political being. Above all, rock also has hedonistic associations that contradict with the seriousness of activism. They have the self-tolerance for hedonism, but in a collective action, they do not confess to it openly in order not to risk their rewards. However, they seem to experience this conflict:

Having fun for the sake of having fun is totally a different ideology. (Activist, M, 33)

When I had started to express myself with a socialist identity, I quit associating myself with rock. When you read a couple of socialist books and start seeing yourself as an important person in a big struggle with the system … you can start preferring the shitty voice of Livaneli [a leftist singer] rather than Robert Plant’s. (Ex-Rocker/Activist, M, 38)

Those who go to Rock’n Coke only listen to music with no message. You cannot say that “war is good,” or “nuclear weapons are great.” If you cannot utter praise, you don’t talk about it in such a place, hence, there is only music, that’s all. Perhaps, they also have fun there; but that must be weak fun—without any spirit. (Activist, M, 33)

As the identity of the festival was being shaped by rock music, so were the collective identities that were essential to maintaining their communities:
Just because of the rebellious nature of rock music, all of them feel like protesting their own environs in my opinion. They become a part of this rebellious attitude by listening to rock… At Rock’n Coke there is a community that is based on ‘difference’, everybody does something different to differentiate himself/herself and say “OK, I am now in this system, but as myself, as someone unique.” Hence, they do not recognize any norms, their hair is, how do you say, rasta, is it rasta? They put on the trendiest or the weirdest outfit, etc. This is a need to identify themselves as more different than the others. This is like wearing black shirts at Rock for Peace, a common attitude… People in Rock for Peace distinguish themselves through similarity (Academic, F, 35)

But rock music is noble by birth. It is rebellious and has an attitude. Rock music should not be purchased or sold, not can it be bottled. Rock music is rebellious, rock music is a cry. (Activist, M, 23)

The festival that was initially covered by rock emblem provided both activists and participants a rich medium to shape or link their identities. Search for an identity through rock music or a meaningful self can all be realized at the festival where the unwritten rule is “you will not be held responsible for the things you do during these two days” or “you are free to do anything you want,” a sense of freedom and an “escape.” In a country such as Turkey where modern ways of leisure constitute a relatively new lifestyle, a festival and a music genre that is rock may represent different meanings as observed during our analysis and in the in-depth interviews:

It is so obvious that there is an identity you acquire by listening to rock music. You like that identity. I mean, [identity of] being a cool person. You can’t exactly define that cool attitude initially, but when at school, and even nobody understands, you feel like building a self-charisma, by saying “I listen to Pink Floyd.” (Ex-Rocker/Activist, M, 38)

They try to make use of rock music’s manner of protest. They become a part of that protest, by listening to rock. (Academic, F, 35)

Characteristics of the festival, such as its ‘sincerity’, seem to be a contagious element, which is conveyed from participants to the activists. Their major claim to prove their sincerity is rock music, a genre that only those who are sincere can listen to.

Rock for Peace is the most sincere rock festival. (Participant, M, 21)

It’s [Rock’n Coke] not even a festival. It’s something like an exploitation festival, they both advertise their product and grab young people’s money. I mean it’s an insincere business. (Activist, M, 23)

The nature of Rock for Peace has changed due to its becoming equally popular as Rock’n Coke. Although the activists eliminated the entrance fee after the second year, and this exclusion of commerce from the artistic domain symbolizes the protection of amateurism and naïvétê for activists, the market logic has slowly become apparent in representations and orientations of the activists due to their increasing power, pointing to tensions between collective and individual identities. Despite this tension, participants at specifically a ‘rock music festival’—devoid of the other causes like anti-globalization, ecological concerns—feel that it provides a space for them to express themselves:

I can express myself very comfortably. I can say whatever I like, this is a space for me, a space I can do whatever I want. I can’t find freedom outside, but I find it at Rock for Peace. (Activist, M, 24)

It’s not a youth festival, it’s surely a rock festival. It emphasizes rock. It’s something to do with the roots of rock. It’s the sound of opposition, it’s in its tradition. (Activist, M, 33)

If there were no rock music, there wouldn’t be any Rock for Peace. There are other festivals in addition to Rock’n Coke in other genres, such as jazz, although they are not as popular as rock festivals. There have been such festivals for a hundred years. Why rock music? Because, it was the music of the collective movement of the 60s and 70s. It was born in a mass movement. Hence, it is not surprising to see rock music in such a movement. (Activist, F, 36)

Eventually, the success of Rock for Peace, which started as a means to protest against the dominance of the market, has become an end in itself due to its increased popularity and despite activists’ excluding themselves from “the business side,” the unavoidable income generated from festival facilities. Ironically, market influence has also been reflected in the increase in the number of adversaries (i.e., Coke has not remained as the only adversary), and in the number of supporters. Previously hesitant ‘activist’–rock bands strive to perform in this now popular and crowded festival, but unfortunately not all of them are ‘eligible’, as the activists aim for the best to ‘serve’ the audience better.

The conflicts are contested openly in a democratic manner, but that is generally not sufficient as “…the actor expects certain rewards because s/he recognizes, and attributes value to her/his own investments (the effects of the action) and looks to others for them to lend the same recognition” (Melucci 1996: 56). At a rock festival for peace, the paradoxes emerge in the efforts to achieve social recognition through the success of activism and through the success of the musical performances. For most of the rocker-activists, these are inseparable as they compare the rewards and investments constantly in a context where they strive to realize their identities both as rockers and activists.

I see such things in our organization of Rock for Peace, but cannot tell anybody. I mean at a peace festival, some rock bands are fighting with each other. “Why is that guy not doing anything?” or “I am the toughest activist” or “I am the most political,” are the nonsensical stuff they say. This is one of my biggest concerns at the moment. We have to understand those children. They live intensely and work like crazy. The guys whose music were not liked by them [the fighting rocker/activists] become popular in the market and they start despising this “popularity.” However, if they had the chance, they would also want to become popular. I see all of these, but hardly talk about these, because I know rock bands which are both popular and make good music. I try to establish a balance among Rock for Peace activists … At such a festival, self-denial is important as well, but that’s not easy. (Rocket/Activist, M, 59)
Collective Production: Emergence of Global Activism Discourse

Rock for Peace activists share the concerns of Seattle 1999, and more importantly they think that they are one of the successors of the global activism community (Figure 1). The conventional leftist recipes were no more sufficient, they needed to find other solutions to the ‘global’ problem. Associating themselves with global processes and counterparts seems to improve the significance they perceive in their existence. Similar findings in previous research (Fırat 2004; Kozinets 2004) indicate the importance of shared values of global activism in people’s willingness to become involved in contemporary social movements. That is the reason why organizers of Rock for Peace have chosen to share various other concerns of global activism instead of targeting a single global brand as their adversary. Furthermore, this stance establishes international liaisons that make the festival a greater ‘happening’, i.e., bands from Ireland, Spain, Armenia and Egypt performed in 2007. Rock music acts as the amalgam in this collective production.

We have a political perspective. We don’t stare at each other and ask “What shall we oppose today?” We don’t make up things. It may be a cliché, but this is the anti-globalization movement that developed after Seattle 99. (Activist, F, 36)

Activists also point to a change in conventional politics. The strict ideological stances of traditional leftist views are dropped and, importantly, distinctions such as left and right are paradoxically juxtaposed, constituting contrarieties rather than exact opposites. The causes are greater than strict political stances. Such positions imply the postmodern condition (Fırat and Venkatesh 1995; Fırat and Dholakia 2006).

Interviewee: It [activism at the festival] is both joyful and also outside the long-standing leftist tradition—something exceeding that, something where you can express yourself comfortably.

Researcher: How do you describe the traditional leftists?
Interviewee: It’s both looking at the world in clichés and behaving in clichés.
Researcher: What kind of clichés are they?
Interviewee: It’s like speaking in clichés without understanding what kind of problems people have and offering some ready-made recipes; it’s something that doesn’t lead to any change.
Researcher: What did the traditional leftists fail to understand?
Interviewee: I mean they didn’t understand that the world had changed; the people on streets, those who are not among them wanted to change the world as much as they did. They didn’t understand that they have common problems. (Activist, F, 36)

To me you have the chance to realize collective actions today. There could be big social changes, there is an opportunity for that; there are hints of that. There are mass movements, not only the anti-war movements ... That’s why we should not act in a protective manner, you don’t need to protect yourself from your environs, on the contrary, you have to be open. The more we are open, the more we have a chance to see how many people there are we can get along with in the world. Those guys were from AKP [a conservative political party], Islamist people. We sat together and chatted about the system, opposition, capitalism. How similar were our rhetoric! I see and experience that so often. Previously, we were trying to convince everybody as to how the system makes our lives worse. Now, the evils in the system are not disguised, everybody sees that. (Activist, F, 36)

CONCLUSION

This study provides further insights into the processes that occur in accomplishing identity projects in modern culture. Especially the role of cultural elements, specifically represented by (rock) music, is illustrated. Also demonstrated are the relations
between music and social movement activism. First, it is observed that both music, specifically rock music, and consumer activism prepare the convenient ideological ground and multiple cultural codes for consumer identity projects. Evidently, the richness of the experience not only tolerates, but also encourages multiple identities. That is, being a rocker and an activist is more preferable, but also neither the rocker nor the activist presents a single type. There are multiple modes of being a rocker; the same is true for the activist. Festival goers encounter multiple possibilities and try different combinations.

In the festivals rocker identities point to local identities. Sharing global values of the rock culture is, nevertheless, accomplished through internalization yet appropriation to emphasize local occurrences—such as the firing of unionizing Coca-Cola workers—within the global framework of anti-corporatism and anti-globalism. Furthermore, only being a rocker is not sufficient for the ideals of activists. Hence, the ideological discourse of rock music meets the globally shared values of counter-culture causes that correspond to the image of rock. In the intersections of the global and local symbols that identify rock and activism at the festival, choices for identity become possible to adopt and to experiment with.

We find transformations in conventional modern identities. For example, left and right wing politics and identities are no longer positioned as exact opposites. One reason seems to be that new global habitats have engendered mutual antagonisms, such as income inequalities among social classes and nations. Moreover, global concerns such as global warming are seen to constitute the greater danger for everyone. Hence, life is contested on the same grounds among different communities, leading to a third insight, which is the importance of collective action and communities in identity projects. In collective action, multiple identities were enabled to emerge in the safety of being under the umbrella of a community. No individual identity project was observed. Significantly, there is initially a collective production in the Rock for Peace. The festival identity was established in order to validate the identity of the community. Consumers, then, preferred to act as part of a community.

During both the fieldwork and the analysis, we challenged the data with the following question: “What would have happened if there were only one single project of activism? For example, would they rather organize a ‘Peace Festival’, with no music?” Most of our respondents found this question to be meaningless or absurd. “Exclude music from activism?!” Music was there, music had to be there. Without music Rock for Peace activists would not have organized a festival; without the music at the festival, messages would not be conveyed to anyone. It was also the music that made different identities possible: Rocker-activists, activists who like dancing, rock musicians who work for the global problems (using U2’s Bono as an example). Music, specifically rock music, contains various cultural codes, enriching the modes of being and consumers enjoy experiencing and contesting them during their consumption experience.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


