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## An emotional economy of mundane objects

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This article illuminates the affective potentialities of objects. We examine the circulation of Kurdish music cassettes in Turkey during the restrictive and strife-laden period of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. We find that the practices comprising circulation – recording, hiding, playing, and exchanging cassettes – constituted tactical resistance and generated communal imaginaries. We illuminate the “emotional economy” that is animated by a mundane object: the cassette, through its circulation, becomes saturated with emotions, establishes shared emotional repertoires, and habituates individuals and collectives into common emotional dispositions. Cassettes thus play a part in shaping and reinforcing an emotional habitus that accompanies the emergence of a sense of “us,” the delineation of the “other,” and the relationship between the two. We thus demonstrate the entwinement of materiality and emotions, and examine how this entwinement generates emotional structures that shape and perpetuate the imagining of community as well as the enactment of resistance.

**Keywords:** materiality; emotions; circulation; community; resistance; emotional habitus

### Introduction

Performing, broadcasting, and selling music with Kurdish-language lyrics were restricted in Turkey through most of the twentieth century. Yet, cassette technology, starting from the mid-1970s, and overlapping with the escalation of ethnic strife and violence, brought vitality to an underground music scene. Anyone in possession of a tape recorder was able to become a brave producer as well as a consumer of dissident music. Cassettes were copiously recorded at homes or smuggled across the borders; duplicated, exchanged among friends and relatives; hidden in dowry chests or buried underground; sold in streetcars, or from the under the counter, shrouded by covers of Turkish pop. Music was played behind closed doors, with children standing guard in hallways and door-fronts, and an exit plan in place for what to do with the cassettes if authorities dropped in. Cartoonists portrayed cassettes as hand grenades, ready to blow up in the face of law enforcement. There was fear, among the Kurds, of getting caught, and anger at the state and its instruments. There was also love for the music, the singers, and the landscapes immortalized in song, and also for the people with whom the music was shared. There was sorrow, for people lost and hometowns left behind, but also hope for better times. While music, in its evocative glory, may seem

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to be the glue that sticks these people, places, and experiences together, the unsung hero of this story is a *thing* that transcends its mundaneness. In this interpretivist study, we examine how a commodity, such as a cassette, plays a vital part, through its circulation, in generating community and resistance. The cassette, as an artifact, is easy to hide, transport, distribute, and record upon, and it easily evades attempts to restrict its circulation. Cassettes have been credited with facilitating monumental transformations such as overthrowing regimes (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994), instigating religious revivals (Hirschkind 2006), as well as re-aligning interpersonal dynamics, such as family relationships (Abu-Lughod 1989). They have been discussed as taking part in these transformations mainly by virtue of the textual content (be it song, poetry, or speech) they mediate. Studies on consumption and markets have shown, however, that objects, in their materiality, take part in the social construction of identities, relationships, and collectivities.

Things do not just “represent” and “communicate,” but “objectify” identities, relationships, symbols, values, meanings, power, and tensions (Borgerson 2005, 2009; Chitakunye and Maclaran 2014; Craig 2011; Douny 2011; Holttinen 2014; Kravets and Öрге 2010; Madianou and Miller 2011; Miller 1987, 1998, 2005). The circulation of objects across space and time, moreover, has a performative and materializing character (Aronczyk and Craig 2012; Lee and LiPuma 2002) that serves to constitute the objects themselves as well as the imagined communities (Anderson 1983) within which they circulate. Thus, we approach cassettes, in their materiality, as “more than transmitters of content” (Larkin 2008, 2). Even though emotionality is implicit in the relationships that are objectified, such as love among members of a family (Miller 1998), or the “feeling” of belonging to a community (Anderson 1983), we discern that the affective potentialities that materialization entails have not been explicated. We thus inquire: How does a *nexus of emotionality and materiality* emerge and serve to generate community and resistance?

Our focus on the nexus of emotionality and materiality moves from the premise that emotions are evoked by encounters with other bodies and objects: emotions “stick” and circulate with these objects (Ahmed 2004). Emotions are conceptualized as active, energy-laden (Illouz 2007), and generative: they create affective fields (Harris and Sørensen 2010), and move individuals and collectivities into shared ways of feeling, thinking, and acting (Ahmed 2004, 2010; Calhoun 2001; Gould 2009; Illouz 2007; Kane 2001). Thus, as an effect of their circulation, emotions generate common orientations and dispositions – hence, an emotional habitus accompanies the emergence of a sense of “us” as well as the delineation of the “other.” The role of emotions in shaping communal imaginaries (Chronis, Arnould, and Hampton 2012) and structuring consumption practices (Gopaldas 2014; Thompson 2005) has been noted, but how objects and consumption experiences play a part in the emergence of “structured and structuring” (Swartz 1997) emotional structures is less clear. We thus study how an emotional habitus emerges, and how it shapes practices and collective imaginaries.

The circulation of the emotionally potent yet legally inadmissible cassette also draws our attention to the performance of resistance through objects and their uses (Smith 2009). We propose, moreover, that the emotionality that shapes and is also generated by resistance, in conjunction with materiality, deserves closer scrutiny. Thus, we study how the materiality–emotionality nexus serves in resisting dominant orders. In so doing, we also contribute to consumption studies scholarship on resistance (see Izberk-Bilgin 2010 for a review). We elucidate how an emergent community engages with consumption in the making of a collective ethnic identity and in resisting a hegemonic

order other than the market. Accordingly, we also extend discussions on the role played by emotions in oppositional communities (Jasper 2011; Sandlin and Callahan 2009) by providing an account of the interplay of materiality, emotions, and consumption in everyday resistance.

Hence, we focus on the practices that propel cassettes into circulation; the emotions these cassettes elicit during their encounters with subjects; the relationships, socialities, and communality they objectify, and the boundaries they solidify, as they traverse their paths of circulation.

### Music and the Kurds of Turkey

Kurdish music is situated within a complicated regional history, with demands and negotiations concerning decentralized administration and autonomy ongoing to this day. After the First World War, the new borders drawn by the Allied Forces split the Kurdish population into four different countries in the Middle East. Kurds remained a stateless ethnic, multi-dialectic, multi-sectarian, tribal, and feudal community, amidst a wave of global nationalist movements. With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, non-Muslim religious minorities, in accordance with the newly signed Lausanne Treaty, were granted rights to establish their own religious, educational, and social welfare institutions (Toktaş and Aras 2009). However, Muslim peoples, including the Kurds, were not officially recognized as minorities and were not granted such rights. Constitutional law and assimilative policies aimed to homogenize the young nation. These included mandatory Turkish-language formal education as well as bans on publishing and broadcasting in Kurdish language.

While Kurdish nationalist uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s were terminated by the Turkish state, the late 1960s and 1970s presented political opportunities that allowed the emergence of numerous pro-Kurdish organizations, many of which also engaged in the production and circulation of music. The Kurdish resistance culminated in the emergence of the PKK (*Partiya Karkaren Kurdi*, The Kurdistan Workers' Party), which was established in the late 1970s. The 1970s was a time of general political unrest that ended with a military coup d'état in 1980 and, subsequently, a new, more controlling constitution. Starting in 1984, the PKK was involved in combat with the Turkish military and attacks on civilian outposts. By the late 1980s, the PKK, emically termed a "freedom movement," had become classified as a "terrorist organization" (Romano 2006). In addition to the armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish military, a state of consistent tension characterized the densely Kurdish-populated Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey throughout the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s: hundreds of people were detained on charges of aiding the PKK and approximately 3200 villages were evacuated, forcing their inhabitants to migrate to cities elsewhere in Turkey (Sargil and Fazlıoğlu 2014).

Kurdish music was intermittently banned throughout the twentieth century. Yet, a tradition of oral performance (including traveling folk singers called *dengbêj*), recordings – both locally and internationally produced – and radio broadcasts from Yerevan and Baghdad (both cities with Kurdish-speaking populations) were involved in the transmission of music. There were periods with loosened restrictions, but in the 1980s, the ban on performance, broadcast, and sales was rigorously enforced, particularly in the Kurdish-inhabited regions. In 1991 this ban was partially lifted, allowing performance and sales, but not broadcast, of music. Importantly, unofficial restrictions on Kurdish music remained well into the 2000s. Albums thought to contain separatist

lyrics or imagery were subject to confiscation and individuals who produced, owned, or sold them could be charged, fined, or even imprisoned. A prevalent “terrorism” narrative framed many cultural products and performances as such. Under these conditions, Kurdish music was unsanctioned and linked, in Turkish state and public discourse, to terrorism.

In this context, the circulation of cassettes stands out amongst the resistive and community-building practices available to the Kurds of Turkey. In the relative absence of written traditions – Kurdish language and writing was not standardized until the 1980s and 1990s (Ucarlar 2009) – musical traditions constituted a central place in the lives of many Kurds, in their homelands, or in diasporas (Blum and Hassanpour 1996; Scalbert-Yücel 2009). Music, in its immediacy, emotiveness, and symbolism, holds great potential for resistance (Hennion 2003). Through creating affect (Born 2011; Hirschkind 2006) and articulating emotions (Feld 1990), sound and music facilitate the formation of networks (Tacchi 1998) and communities. Collective musical practices including composing, singing, listening, and dancing have played a particularly potent role in social movements (Adams 2002; Jasper 2011). While the connecting and resistive role of music is well established, we focus on its material circulation. We find that circulation fueled a grass-roots imagination of communal bonds and provided support for pro-Kurdish political purposes, often simultaneously. We acknowledge the presence of the latter, but our primary concern in this article is the former.

Whereas tribalism and sectarianism have been prevalent among the Kurds (Romano 2006), during the 1980s and 1990s the Kurds of Turkey became unified “on a much more ethnic nationalist basis than on a tribal or religious one” (İçduygu, Romano, and Sirkeci 1999, 994). Analyses of the Kurdish movement (e.g. Romano 2006; Güneş 2012) emphasize the grand narratives that constituted this period: how political structures, resources, and ideologies came together in mobilizing masses and challenging the dominant orders. Yet, the role of the everyday material practices and the accompanying emotionality have often been overlooked. We discovered and explicated how the circulation of cassettes in daily life served “tactical” (De Certeau 1988) or “infrapolitical” (Scott 1990) resistance, and simultaneously generated feelings and imaginings of a unified community based on ethnicity rather than fragmented tribal identities.

The research presented here is part of the first author’s work on the emergence of a market for Kurdish music in Turkey. The first author was struck by the fact that when she uttered the phrase “Kurdish music,” informants immediately and passionately volunteered their historical experiences of cassettes and provided detailed accounts of their involvement in the illegal circulation of cassettes throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. What we found particularly noteworthy was how a commonality in practices of circulation was accompanied by a shared emotional and experiential repertoire (despite the diversity of informants) regarding these cassettes. Informants saw these cassettes as an inextricable component of coming of age as a Kurd in Turkey, and sometimes also explicitly termed practices related to cassettes as acts of rebellion or resistance. More subtle, however, was the way that emotions surfaced during early stages of fieldwork: not only were emotions commonly recounted as having been felt during the years in which this illegal circulation took place, but they also seeped into the act of speech in the present. Informants were often visibly and audibly moved by their retelling of experiences of the past – and terms they used to articulate these emotions were also strikingly similar. Cassettes, we found, were embedded in informants’ emotional life stories. While the particularities of life stories could be different, the emotionality

generated through and associated with the cassettes served as a unifying theme. Thus was born the focus of the article.

## Theoretical foundations

### *Emotional materiality*

Objects, in their capacity to symbolize and represent meanings, values, mythologies, relationships, and identities, have drawn considerable scholarly interest (e.g. Belk 1988; Bonsu and Belk 2003; Grayson and Shulman 2000; Holt 2004; Levy 1959; McCracken 1986; Mick 1986; Moisio, Arnould, and Price 2004; Solomon 1983; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988; Weiner 1994). On the other hand, material culture studies have drawn our attention to the entwinement of meanings, symbols, subjectivities, and relationships with the artifactual quality of objects (e.g. Aronczyk and Craig 2012; Beckstead et al. 2011; Borgerson 2005, 2009; Craig 2011; Douny 2011; Kravets and Öрге 2010; Miller 1987, 1998, 2005; Smith 2009) and to the constitutive and co-emergent, rather than merely representative, nature of this entwinement. Familial socialization and interaction (e.g. Chitakunye and Maclaran 2014; Holttinen 2014; Madianou and Miller 2011; Miller 1998), as well as belonging to religious (D'Alisera 2001; Tarlo 2007), ethnic (Avieli 2009), or literary (Craig 2011) communities are thus seen to be objectified and mediated by objects that are enmeshed in peoples' everyday lives – such as clothes, accessories, chapbooks, food, letters, cassettes, and television. This objectification of identities, relationships, and collectivities may take place in ways that conform to (Douny 2011; Naji 2009) or resist and challenge (Smith 2009) dominant moral or political orders and hierarchies. Such processes involve the entwinement of materiality and symbolism (e.g. Bartmanski and Woodward 2013; Craig 2011; Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004; D'Alisera 2001; Douny 2011; Epp and Price 2010; Holttinen 2014; Kravets and Öрге 2010; Sandıkcı and Ger 2010) – and thus the symbolic densification of objects (Weiner 1994).

Yet, we detect that the relationships and ideals that are materialized, transformed, and negotiated through objects and related practices – such as provisioning (Miller 1998), preparing food (Holttinen 2014), watching television (Chitakunye and Maclaran 2014), exchanging written letters and audio recordings (Madianou and Miller 2011) in the context of the “loving family,” or making clothes that materialize mother–daughter and kinship bonds (Margiotti 2013) – are also inherently emotional. We wonder if the objectification of emotional relationships is accompanied by the saturation of these objects with affect. Thus, relevant to our research is understanding (1) how objects become laden with emotionality and (2) how this emotional potency serves community and resistance.

Consumer research literature has explored the evocative and experiential aspect of consumption objects and practices, as well as the influence of emotions in motivating consumption practices, bonding individuals, and building communities of varying degrees of permanence. Emotions are viewed as influencing consumption choice and decision-making processes (e.g. Mogilner, Aaker, and Kamvar 2012; Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999). Transient emotional states – excitement, pleasure, anger, and others – are seen as evoked by consumption experiences (Arnould and Price 1993; Belk and Costa 1998; Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989; Bonsu and Belk 2003; Bonsu, Darmody, and Parmentier 2010; Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993; Goulding et al. 2009; Henry and Caldwell 2007; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Holt 1995; Martin 2004; Mick and Fournier

1998; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). These activities, when performed in the company of others, may lead to shared heightened emotional states – what Durkheim ([1912] 2001) refers to as “collective effervescence,” and a sense of togetherness – Turner’s (1969) *communitas*.

Research on brand and consumption communities, as well as consumer resistance movements (e.g. Belk and Costa 1998; Cova and Cova 2002; Cronin, McCarthy, and Collins 2014; Kozinets 2001, 2002; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Portwood-Stacer 2012; Sandlin and Callahan 2009; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Thompson 2005; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007) also refer to a sense of communality amongst participants. Such communities – akin to postmodern “tribes” (Maffesoli 1996) – are characterized by voluntary participation. While some communities are more transient, participation to others are more enduring. Thompson (2005), drawing on Williams (1977, 1979), has noted that commitment to such communities is structured by shared ideological beliefs which are experienced by participants as “feelings.”

Furthermore, collective consumption practices and experiences have also been demonstrated to mediate more permanent bonds among subjects and collectivities. Gift-giving, for instance, expresses and (re-)aligns relatively non-transient emotional relationships (Belk and Coon 1993; Joy 2001; Ruth, Otnes and Brunel 1999; Sherry 1983) between individuals and within a community (Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012), as do various consumption activities that take place in the context of romantic relationships (Illouz 2007, 2009). Touristic consumption experiences of visiting historical sites and exhibitions have been argued to generate emotional responses that serve collective imaginaries and communal bonding (Chronis 2006; Chronis et al. 2012) at the national level. Emotional object–subject bonds (e.g. Ahuvia 2005; Belk 1988; Fournier 1998; Lastovicka and Sirianni 2011; Roster 2014) often relate to self-identity, but may also serve interpersonal and communal ends.

Thus, even though few studies explicitly deal with emotions as an analytical category (see Gopaldas 2014; Illouz 2009 for critiques), several have worked on emotion-laden topics and point us in the direction of emotions structuring practices, generating shared dispositions and binding collectivities. We have discerned, however, that we know less about the co-constitutive linkages amongst the elicitation of emotions – particularly as mediated by objects, the generation of structures, and the materialization of communal relationships. We thus trace the emergence of an emotional structure which, in turn, animates consumption practices, and structures relationships and communities.

To this end, we turn to the literature that explores the generative capacity of emotions. Emotions have been conceptualized as evaluative (Nussbaum 2003), energy-laden (Illouz 2007). Arising through humans’ interactions with other bodies – imagined or real, human or non-human, individual or collective – emotions can also *move* and *orient* people toward and apart from other bodies, and into shared ways of being and acting (Ahmed 2004; Burkitt 1997, 2002; Calhoun 2001; Harris and Sørensen 2010; Kane 2001). In other words, emotions can generate dispositions, a la Bourdieu. In understanding how emotions generate dispositions and structures, we find inspiration in Ahmed’s (2004) arguments that emotions are “sticky” and that they circulate.

In what Ahmed terms an “affective economy,” emotions stick to and circulate with bodies and objects, and in effect also stick subjects together. To illustrate, “hate” is evoked by and sticks onto the bodies of such figures as the “immigrant” and circulates



with these bodies, as well as through hate speeches and texts. Ahmed suggests that hate “intensifies” on these bodies – in other words, these bodies become saturated with hate. This intensification “sticks” the bodies of the immigrants together as a “common threat,” while at the same time binding the “white nation” as a unified community. Thus, intensification has a twofold effect: it not only shapes an understanding of which bodies constitute “us,” but also constitutes and delineates certain bodies as the “other” and draws boundaries between the two. This can work through objects saturated with negative emotions, such as hate and fear as in the immigrant and the terrorist, but also through objects of positive emotions, such as love and happiness (Ahmed 2010) as in the “objects” of the family and the nation.

Harris and Sørensen (2010), drawing on Ahmed (2004), suggest that material objects generate and are inherent to “affective fields:” webs of emotionally evocative relationships amongst objects, things, and places. We discern that this notion of affective fields provides a linkage between Ahmed’s affective economy and objectification: Practices and processes that materialize relationships also draw individuals into the affective fields generated by the object. We suggest that individuals who are drawn into an object’s affective field become linked to others who have been similarly affected by the object: they come to have a common repertoire of experiences, emotions, and relationships related to that object, and they take a certain position with respect to this object. In other words, they are *oriented*. This orientation, in turn, can be broadened to encompass a more general way of relating to the world: taking inspiration from Bourdieu, an *emotional habitus*. This term has been used by several scholars (e.g. Calhoun 2001; Gould 2009; Illouz 2007; Kane 2001) to describe the deeply internalized, unreflexive, and partially conscious “structure” that shapes relations and (re)actions to objects or situations. The emotional saturation and circulation of objects thus generate affective fields, and attune people into common orientations and dispositions. Thus, we can extrapolate: objects, by generating, embodying, and circulating emotions across space and time, also play a part in shaping an emotional habitus. Through their encounters with these objects, individuals and collectivities become habituated.

Bridging Ahmed’s perspective on the circulation of emotions with literature on materiality, we propose that the objects can become “sticky” and “intense,” with a multitude of emotions, and this “stickiness” is integral to the materializing nature (Aronczyk and Craig 2012) of object circulation. The process of intensification, we note, also suggests temporality: the circulation of an object, as it continues through time and space, leads to more intense emotionality. This, in turn, can be said to thicken the threads that weave together a collectivity: solidifying the sense of “us,” while concomitantly rigidifying the boundaries against the “other.” Thus, a shared emotional disposition is generated by the circulation of a class of objects, and in turn this disposition is what binds and delineates the communal body.

We inquire how mundane objects of everyday life can become “sticky” with multiple emotions, and set an affective economy into motion. In a context laden with ethnic strife, and where the circulation of certain objects is restricted, we note that this circulation takes on a resistive character, and the emotional economy takes on a particularly political significance. We are compelled to ask, then, how emotions and materiality work together in producing and solidifying imaginaries of communities and boundaries, and in this process, also constitute resistance. Hence, we seek to elucidate how the affective potentiality of an object animates emotional structures that shape community and resistance.

***Movement and resistance***

The way that community is materialized through objects and practices not only reproduces collective imaginaries and reinforces relationships, but also by doing so may position the collectivity in opposition to its other(s). Opposition is often articulated in terms of “grievances” (Snow and Benford 1988) – perceived injustice, inequality, and wrongdoings, which, as the term itself implies, are “felt.” Grievances and opposition thus also correspond to a shared emotional orientation – one most commonly of anger and indignation – with respect to certain orders and institutions. Thus, opposition entails an emotional habitus.

Opposition can take one of two forms. It can develop into political activism and social movements (Tarrow 2012), in which collective grievances are framed and, in concert with resources and opportunities, fuel collective action. Movement activists often engage in “emotion work” (Hochschild 1979; Sandlin and Callahan 2009) – managing emotions through various tools (including music, imagery, and speech acts) to strengthen the sense of shared identity and purpose within the movement, and to mobilize people into action (Jasper 2011). Visible and large-scale organized action, however, is not the only way in which opposition is enacted. The domain of mundane everyday practices (De Certeau 1988) and more evasive and small-scale acts of disobedience (Abu-Lughod 1990; Scott 1990) also constitute forms of resistance. Unlike the “strategies” (De Certeau 1988) that dominant institutional actors employ, the subordinate engage in less organized material and discursive practices, such as poaching, pilfering, tax evasion, rumor, and gossip (Scott 1990). Rather than geared toward being noticed, these practices are performed with the hopes that they will remain undetected – yet they also function in ways to shake the authority of dominant orders. Scott (1990, 184) terms such practices as constituting “infrapolitics,” noting that they often co-exist with and “[provide] much of the cultural and structural underpinning of the more visible political action on which our attention has been generally focused.” Materiality, as emergent within specific social and historical contexts, is particularly pertinent to such types of resistance (Smith 2009). Yet, the nexus of emotionality and materiality that is generated by, and which in turn (re)produces such infrapolitical or tactical resistance, remains to be explicated. We shall thus inquire how tactical or infrapolitical practices weave the emotional underpinning of a collective resistance.

The potentialities of emotional–material dynamics for generating tactical resistance remain to be explicated not only in the social sciences but also in consumer research literature. Consumer researchers have focused on the market and consumerism as the hegemonic order to be resisted (Izberk-Bilgin 2010; see also Cronin, McCarthy and Collins 2014; Gopaldas 2014; Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Karababa and Ger 2011; Mikkonen and Bajde 2013; Portwood-Stacer 2012; Sandlin and Callahan 2009; Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard, and Christensen 2011). Moreover, cassette technology has allowed amateur producers to engage with the production, circulation, and distribution of music, and thus to subvert hegemonic market orders (Manuel 1993). However, market actors can also collaborate and challenge other dominant orders, including the state (Goulding et al. 2009; Humphreys 2010; Karababa and Ger 2011; Sandıkcı and Ger 2010). We thus supplement this emergent research on how communities engage with markets in opposing dominant structures other than the market. In doing so, we also respond to Izberk-Bilgin’s (2010, 319) call for investigations of oppositional communities “where social solidarity is longer-lasting and not based on brand loyalty, and to

which membership cannot be purchased.” Accordingly, we examine grassroots practices of cassette circulation as sites of emotional and communal resistance that target the state. We thus explore the emotionality of these resistive material practices, and explicate how such practices simultaneously facilitate unity around a shared ethnic identity.

### Methodology

The first author, a Turkish woman, immersed herself in fieldwork for two years. This ethnographic fieldwork involved in-depth interviews, engaging in unstructured conversations with Kurdish individuals at social events, including conversations during and after Kurdish language classes taken with Kurds who are not fluent in the language. These primary sources of data provided an oral-history account of music circulation in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Other sources of data included archived print and online newspapers and magazines, social media accounts of Kurdish music enthusiasts and activists, as well as readings on both academic and journalistic analyses of the history of the “Kurdish Question” in Turkey. These sources were particularly helpful in contextualizing the study.

The first informant was introduced by a mutual acquaintance, and turned into a valuable key informant and provided leads for further interviews. Other informants were contacted through snowballing and network sampling. Interviews focused on informants’ memories of cassette circulation from their childhood or youth in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s: cassette-related experiences, encounters, and stories, intertwined with life stories, were relayed. The first author maintained social relations with some of the informants, and their informal conversations – which sometimes included informants’ Kurdish friends who were not formally interviewed – turned into impromptu focus groups about music, as well as on growing up and coming of age as a Kurd in Turkey, and contributed to our comprehension of the significance of the circulations of cassettes. Moreover, many informal conversations, at concerts, political activities, and social encounters, were also recorded as fieldnotes. Thus, approximately 250 pages of single-spaced interview transcripts, 300 pages of notes on journal and newspaper archives, and over 300 pages of handwritten fieldnotes informed the emergent account presented here.

Interviews were conducted in Turkish (the language in which all informants received formal education), and were recorded and transcribed by the first author. The interviews lasted from one hour to four hours, and some informants were interviewed up to three times. In order to protect the privacy of all those who have been consulted we use pseudonyms and exclude most personal details.

A total of 27 semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals who self-identified as ethnically Kurdish. All informants had come of age during or before the 1980s; they all witnessed the restrictions on Kurdish music, and were involved in circulating cassettes. We took care to interview informants with a variety of political inclinations and affiliations. Twenty-three interviews were conducted in Istanbul, and four interviews were conducted in Diyarbakır, a major city in Southeastern Turkey with a predominantly Kurdish population. With the exception of three individuals who came of age in cities in the West of Turkey, all of the other informants grew up in cities, towns, or villages in the Southeastern/Eastern region (which we shall simply refer to as the “region” – an emic term – from this point on) of Turkey that are and historically have been densely populated with Kurds. Informal conversations also

involved individuals who came of age in Western Europe. The accounts of the informants who did not grow up in the “region” provided us with insights on how the circulation of music also reached and influenced the lives of Kurds living in the Western parts of Turkey and abroad.

Analysis and fieldwork overlapped considerably. From early on, informants were interested in providing long answers, at times interweaving their responses with episodes from their life histories, as well as their personal analyses of political and historical events. The authors made a conscious decision to follow informants down their trails (Riessman 1993). This intertwining with life histories turned out to be quite influential in our understanding of how cassettes shaped our informants’ lives and their emotional understandings of themselves as “Kurds.”

We followed a hermeneutic approach (Thompson 1997) to analysis, particularly as field data included detailed accounts of personal histories intertwined with emotional narratives on music, cassettes, and circulation. Moving back and forth between inter- and intra-textual approaches, we conducted several reiterations (Miles and Huberman 1994) of reading the data, coding, identifying narratives, and engaging with theory. As a first step, we transcribed and coded each interview, and coded other textual (archives of published materials, fieldnotes) data. During this first cycle, we identified common themes of resistance facilitated by the materiality of cassettes as well as the emotionally charged nature of these accounts, and thus engaged with theoretical literature on emotions, community, and resistance. The following iterations concerned moving back to individual accounts, working with parts of each text, in order to understand which emotions were generated through the circulation of cassettes, and how emotional understandings of belonging to community as well as emotional orientations toward resistance developed within accounts. This was followed by a re-engagement with the theoretical foundations, and refining our theoretical contributions.

### **The circulation of cassettes**

The mid-1970s saw the widespread availability of cassette technology throughout Turkey – and hence the practices of circulating cassettes commenced and continued until the late 1990s. While a portion of Kurdish cassettes in circulation were recordings made by pro-Kurdish organizations, local performances of oral performers – foremostly the *dengbêj* – as well as other artists were also recorded. After the 1980 military coup d’état, many performers fled the country, while others were jailed or forced to stop performing. The *dengbêj* were left unable to travel as they used to, and the live music scene became more or less silent. Yet, beneath this silence, behind hidden doors, a thriving cassette culture emerged along with a resistive community.

Studio recordings of artists who sought asylum in Europe in 1980s made their way into Turkey hidden in the suitcases of Kurds making a living as “guestworkers” in various European countries, and were also smuggled across the borders by professional smugglers. *Dengbêj* music that had been recorded during live performances in the 1970s, on the other hand, was continually circulated, through copies of amateur home recordings. The 1980s thus saw no shortage of music circulation, despite various risks associated with recording, owning, playing, and exchanging cassettes. Cassettes, being small, cheap, durable, and easy to record on, transport, and hide, seem ideal for carrying music. But, as we shall see, these material properties also made cassettes open for becoming saturated with affect and, in the process, made them *matter*.

Set in that stage, we identified four entangled practices, which (non-linearly) comprise circulation: recording, hiding, listening, and exchanging. We now demonstrate how these practices set into motion an embedded emotional economy, an illegal market, and a resistive community.

### *Recording music: capturing emotions on tape*

Our findings reveal that the recording of music onto cassettes was often an emotional affair. We shall illustrate how social and political circumstances engendered the recording process as an evocative occasion, and, in turn, how the cassettes became “sticky” with the emotions that were evoked during the process. Two practices are poignant in this regard: home recordings of *dengbêj* sessions in Turkey and a studio recording made in Europe.

Until the 1980s, a typical *dengbêj* would travel through the countryside in the “region,” stopping for visits in towns and villages where families could host him. He would perform his songs, which could be based on a range of topics, including historical events, folk legends, and love stories. The townsfolk would gather at the host’s home and listen to these performances, which sometimes went on for nights on end. In the 1970s, with the availability of cassette technology, hosts started to record these sessions. In return for the performance, the host would present the *dengbêj* with gifts of grains or livestock. After the 1970s, owning a cassette recorder also became a requisite to host a *dengbêj*. Cem, a restaurant manager in his mid-30s, had an uncle who performed this role in their village in the city of Muş. Cem recalls,

[My uncle] was not a rich man, but he found the resources, not only to provide the *dengbêj* with gifts, but also to [buy] new recording devices. He always ordered new cassette recorders from relatives who came to visit from Germany, and he recorded all of the *dengbêj* sessions that took place in his home.

Cem noted that his uncle performed a “sacrifice” by allocating what limited resources he had to acting as a patron of *dengbêjs*. *Dengbêjs* and their hosts were discussed by Cem, as well as by other informants, as preserving what has now come to be consciously termed as “heritage,” thus performing community service, and doing so as acts of love and sacrifice. The host’s generosity would, in turn, be recognized by the *dengbêj*, who would acknowledge the host’s name when recording began. Thus, the host’s name would also be heard during replays of copies, sometimes hundreds or thousands of miles away and by people who had no connection to the original “producer” of the cassette. This love toward the *dengbêj*, and the respectful recognition of sacrifice performed by the host, would thus become part of a constellation, along with the music and narratives, that found body in and circulated with the “object” of the cassette.

Recordings were often made using a cheap and simple tape recorder, in the presence of adults seated around the *dengbêj*, children running around, and audience shouting terms of encouragement and adulation to the performer. These atmospheric sounds, the substandard audio quality due to poor recording equipment, the crackles arising from the material wear and tear of the cassettes after they were played and duplicated too many times, are not seen as distractions. Rather, as Dicle and Melda, co-owners of a publishing house, fondly reminisce, “you could not think of [*dengbêj*] music in any other way.” These sounds, music, narratives and the cassette have been discussed by informants as an integral part of growing up “in a Kurdish household.” The physical

and experiential particularities of the recording process weave into the cassette, saturating it with the excitement, joy, and everydayness of the recording process. These emotions seep into future experiences of listening, intensifying and becoming more tangible as the cassette continues to circulate.

The material properties of the cassette recorder and the cassette itself meant that amateur recordings as well as duplicates could be easily made and easily circulated (as opposed to vinyl, which had to be recorded professionally, and was quite fragile). The cassettes, by circulating, enabled audiences to hear similar sounds and experience similar emotions – thus generating a shared repertoire. Dicle and Melda, despite having grown up in *Zazaki* and *Kurmanji* speaking homes, respectively, in different parts of the “region,” recount these cassettes in very similar, lovingly familiar terms, as does Cem, whose childhood was divided between the “region” and a city in Western Turkey. Individuals who grew up in times or regions where *dengbêjs* did not perform also became privy to the *dengbêj* experience through these crackly, noisy cassettes – thus a union in experience and emotional orientations regarding the *dengbêjs*, the music, the hosts, and the cassettes took place; uniting people across geographies, differences in practices of oral traditions, or tribal origins. The connections among those in the audience at the time of the recording, those in different villages and cities who received and further exchanged this recording, and those hearing it, perhaps 10 years in the future in another city are materialized through these cassettes, which carry different songs but have been recorded through similar practices and give way to similar emotional experiences – which, in turn, are articulated in very similar ways. The cassette, then, is an “object” uniting these audiences: its materiality is entwined with the emotionality generated during its recording and through other practices that follow.

Studio albums produced professionally in Europe and brought into Turkey by guest workers – on their own accord or upon insistent demands – comprised another class of recordings in circulation, particularly in the 1980s, and generated similar emotional dynamics. The narrative of the recording of *Helebçe*, a song written and performed by Şivan Perwer, stands out as a collective reminiscence. Perwer, arguably the most famed, beloved, but also polarizing among Kurdish artists, has lived in Europe after fleeing Turkey in 1976 (Kevirbiri 2004). His albums have, nonetheless, circulated extensively, with some reportedly reaching a circulation of hundreds of thousands in illegal copies. The extent of his influence is best expressed by Utku, a music producer: “No single book, no single word has been as influential as [his] music, as unifying as his music,” particularly in “connecting people to their Kurdishness” and mobilizing them politically – an influence made possible through illegal circulation. *Helebçe*, the song in question, was recorded on Perwer’s eponymous album, in 1988, shortly after Saddam Hussein’s administration committed a chemical attack on the Kurdish-populated town of Halabja in Northern Iraq, leaving an estimated 5000 people dead. Perwer, deeply moved by photos of the tragedy – of children lying dead, of an old man crying – composed a song and recorded it in one take. The story of how he wrote and recorded the song has become a matter of circulation in itself, with Perwer recounting the story in interviews (e.g. Matur 2009; Perwer 2013), emphasizing that he was crying in pain while recording and that he wanted his cries to be heard on the record. Word of the song reached Turkey before the album itself, and once the cassette came, it was greeted with a mixture of joy and sorrow. Murat, a university student at the time, recalled receiving the *Helebçe* cassette, in Diyarbakır: “I’ve seen people cry

when they received that album,” he said, “not just because of the song, but also because we were able to procure such a beautifully recorded album.”

The sorrow that Perwer recorded as a reaction to the Halabja massacre, while he was in exile from his own homeland, is bridged to the audience’s sorrows regarding their own strife and struggles – particularly those related to being a Kurd – and the collective sorrows were intensified with the circulation of the cassette. The cassette, when it is delivered into the hands of a Kurd in Diyarbakır, is already loaded. Many Kurds have already been touched by the emotions and atmospheres that Perwer sings about, and they already have an emotional repertory (Nussbaum 2003) related to music cassettes. Even before they receive the physical artifact, or before they hear the songs on the album, they are ready to be attuned to the affective field (Harris and Sørensen 2010) generated by the cassette, and are thus the cassette’s primary addressees (Warner 2002). The sorrowful emotional orientation with respect to Halabja (the city), as mediated by *Helebçe* (the cassette), eventually comes to be shared by many a Kurd: thus the cassette plays a part in shaping an emotional habitus, and elevates a collectivity formed around the cassette into a broader “Kurdish” community. In Ahmed’s (2004) terms, the cassette becomes sticky with emotion, and by virtue of this stickiness, plays a part in bonding the community.

These two examples illustrate how recording music onto cassettes sets the stage for the emotions, experiences, and narratives that would come to circulate throughout the cassette’s trajectory. The social, historical, and material properties regarding the manner in which the music is performed, recorded, played, and exchanged, along with musical content and stories that circulate, potentiate the cassettes with emotional density. Affective fields that comprise joy, sorrow, anger, or pain felt by those involved in recording, continued to circulate as the cassettes were received, played, exchanged, intensifying even when cassettes remained hidden in chests, buried underground, or were burned in fires. The circulation of cassettes, starting with recording the music, thus provided the means for socialization (Thompson 2005) into an emergent “structure of feelings” (Williams 1977, 1979). This structure, as we will continue to explore, became stronger through time, as emotions intensified (Ahmed 2004); and came to encompass a broader constituency: the community was imagined as larger but also as more solid, and the boundaries against the “other” became more defined.

### ***Hiding, storing and destroying cassettes: emotions buried and afloat***

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, households in the “region” were frequently searched by police, military, or special operative forces. Materials that were seen as evidence linking inhabitants to illegal activities and organizations (particularly the PKK) included Kurdish music cassettes, even after the production and sales of Kurdish music became legal. Individuals arrested and taken under custody were reportedly subject to severe physical violence, and often received terrorism charges and a prison sentence. Tahir, a musician and sound engineer says, “Some people never survived these arrests . . . some people’s fingers and arms were broken.” News of such ordeals would travel, accompanied by waves of fear and anticipation of violence. Thus, cassettes were often kept hidden in hopes of escaping detection during a possible search: the bottoms of women’s dowry chests, beneath the haystacks in the barn, and sometimes, buried deep underground.

Sami, a social worker in his 30s, grew up in a small Kurdish-inhabited town in the Northern part of the “region,” in the same household as his uncle. His narrative illustrates the secrecy and care his family paid in hiding their cassettes:

My uncle owned a large collection of cassettes, which he kept hidden somewhere in the house, in a briefcase, next to his guns. Every once in a while, he would ceremoniously take the briefcase out of its hiding place, which no one else in the household knew. Everyone would gather around the cassette player, observe, and listen. No one else was allowed to handle the cassettes.

Sami's uncle had accumulated this collection arduously throughout the years, through gifts and by requesting cassettes from personal contacts. However, in 1990, the town became rife with tension due to armed conflict between the PKK and the military. Police raided households suspected of aiding the PKK, and took several people under custody, which started, in Sami's words, "an endless cycle of violence and torture." Sami's narrative highlights the intensification of fear during that period:

It was terrible, everyone was really frightened. It was a huge crime to be caught owning guns, because there were armed conflicts all around. In that period, all the cassettes were also destroyed. But before they were destroyed, I remember that the cassettes and the guns were thrown into a hole that was dug in the barn and then buried. They were buried as a precaution, [the cassettes] were that dangerous, that's how [we] perceived the situation.

We note that the cassette comes to be perceived, by Kurds and Turkish authorities alike, as a "weapon" (as dangerous as guns) against the state. Hiding, burying, or otherwise destroying cassettes are ways of tricking the authorities – what De Certeau (1988) refers to as diversionary tactics of "perruque" – to the objects, and thus constitute infra-politics or tactical resistance (Scott 1990). Fear was a prominent response to being sealed (Ahmed 2003, 2004) as "terrorists" by the law, the authorities, and to some extent the general public, and this fear "stuck" onto the cassettes, through their possession being associated with "terrorist activities." Fear intensifies with the burial and destruction of the cassette, and a fearful relationship between the people and the state is materialized through this practice. As such, the very presence of the state as "the other" is *felt* through these emotionally charged experiences, and the emotional saturation of the cassettes become denser.

Throughout fieldwork, we witnessed that our informants were most moved – with anger as well as sorrow – while they were relating stories about hiding or destroying their cassettes. It was not unusual for a Kurdish informant or acquaintance to offer a story about their buried cassettes, almost immediately after meeting the first author. Elif, a Kurdish student raised in German, is one such example. She spoke of visiting her family's village during the summers in the 1990s, and noted how surprised she was when one summer, her cousins took her to the barns and retrieved some cassettes that were hidden underneath the haystacks. This occasion was her initiation into understanding the fears, secrecy, and frustration associated with being a Kurd in Turkey – this took place through her initiation into the affective field generated by the cassettes. Ersin, a librarian in his 30s, talked about the cassettes his father had felt obligated to bury in their backyard, not five minutes after meeting the first author. He was visibly saddened when he recounted how, 20 years after burying these cassettes, his father had asked to find them. He and his brothers managed to locate and unearth these cassettes – unforgetten for 20 years – but they were consumed by mold and had to be thrown away. Despite being disposed of, the cassettes continued to have an emotional hold on the family to this day – an indication that the affective field does not necessarily diminish once the object is destroyed. Similarly, a number of other informants have commented that there are "graveyards" of cassettes (*kaset mezarlıkları*) throughout



the “region.” The repetition of this emotionally loaded metaphor is indicative of a shared emotional vocabulary (Burkitt 2002) developed to express similar feelings generated by the practice of burying, and which might not be initially comprehensible to outsiders. This, in turn, is indicative of a “structure” of emotions, or a habitus: one that is reinforced through practices of hiding and burying, as well as the narratives that continued to circulate.

Hiding or burying create an even stronger affective field around the cassettes, and these fields also served to compound and intensify fear, anger, and resentment; thus reinforcing a resistive stance against the state. This relationship amongst the state and the Kurds, as objectified through the cassettes, was also narrated through the notion of being “marked:” a more literal usage of the term relates to the arrests (i.e. “marks”) that many Kurds had on their legal records. In a more figurative sense, it relates to a “feeling” of being marked as an illegitimate member of society. It is so common to be “marked” in both manners that when the state established a Kurdish-language television channel in 2009, their attempts to find Kurdish employees with “clean records” became a source of ridicule among Kurds, because, in Dicle’s words, “there are no unmarked Kurds.” Being “marked” due to owning, hiding, or burying cassettes, and the narratives that accompanied these “marks” intensified the affective field generated by the cassettes. The notion of “sacrifice” also deeply colors these “marking” experiences and narratives related to cassettes. Informants emphasized, “despite all the risks” people continued to procure and hide music cassettes, some forsaking their safety and freedom in the process – a notion that is emically referred to as “*bedel*,” a Turkish word that roughly translates as “sacrificial price.” Again, this emotionally loaded term is part of a shared vocabulary and expresses the resentful, fearful, but also proud emotional orientation that accompanies a resistive stance against the state.

Thus a generative structure emerges: the emotional habitus, shaped by experiences and narratives, in turn disposes its constituents toward certain ways of being, acting, and feeling. An emotional habitus shaped by fear, anger/resentment, sacrifice, and sorrow in turn shaped practices that were sacrificial and resistive – and such practices further reinforced the emotional structure. Rather than serving identity projects that are limited to the individual (Ahuvia 2005; Belk 1988; Roster 2014) or the nuclear family (Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004; Epp and Price 2008, 2010) the possession, use, and dispossession of objects generated emotional experiences and orientations which led to (real or imagined) alignments with a collective body. In-group and out-group dynamics also simultaneously took shape through this process. The very idea of an “other” takes shape as a coherent entity – in this case, the state and its apparatuses – through encounters and experiences that also generate an emotional structure. Such coherence and boundary shaping dynamics also characterized experiences of playing the cassettes.

### ***Playing cassettes: building the audience-public***

The practice of listening to cassettes often assembled family and friends together and, at times, served to establish new friendships and social networks. But, importantly, it connected individuals and collectivities on an imagined level, among past, present, and future audiences, by virtue of listening to the same recordings, learning the same stories, and constructing a common repertoire of experiences. Shared emotional orientations that emerged through these practices served to connect Kurds across national, lingual, and tribal borders.

In Kurdish homes, noted Mehmet, an academic, “whenever there were guests one of those poorly recorded *dengbêj* cassettes would be played,” if only in the background while the adults were conversing. “The music *had to* play there,” he says, even if no one actively listened to it, and notes this obligation was in place especially because these cassettes were illegal, interpreting it as a form of resistance. There were also times, Mehmet recalls, when a cassette would be the reason for getting together and all the conversations that night would concern that cassette. Such gatherings were common in the “region,” but also took place and were even more emotionally charged in other parts of Turkey (which were “diaspora” for the Kurds).

Cem and his family migrated to a city in the Northwest of Turkey when Cem was five years old. Cem recalls that in their new hometown, they initially avoided acknowledging to neighbors that they were Kurds, and they no longer spoke Kurdish in public. “When people learned we were Kurds, they treated us as if we were aliens,” he says. Cem’s family brought along all their existing cassettes to this new dwelling and continued to enlist friends and relatives to bring back new recordings back from the “region.” Upon the arrival of new cassettes, Cem’s parents would host “cassette sessions:” liminal (Turner 1969) spaces and times during which emotions and Kurdish language flowed freely:

About 90 percent of the time, [we would gather] because someone came to visit from our hometown, so [all the Kurds living in the area] would get together in someone’s home. And then after each song, [the grown-ups] would refer to the story in the song. It would be a love story told by *Dengbêj Şakiro*, for example, so thousands of time, they would make the same comments about that song. This and that happened . . . like there was a story where a young woman falls in love with a *madrassa* [religious school] student, that story was told to us [children] perhaps a thousand times. . . . there were other things, like escapades. They would tell us about things they remembered from their own lifetimes, such as the cruelties of *Feshi Ağa* [a feudal lord], they would recall the bandits who were famous back then, how brave they were . . . In those cassettes, you would always hear the voices in the background, people calling out [words of encouragement], and other laudatory words, like *her biji* [long live]. If someone in the room had actually been there the night that cassette was recorded, they would commemorate that. People would get extremely emotional, which was also because we were [far from home]. At least one or two people would most definitely say “I would like a copy of this cassette,” so the host would be assigned this duty as well.

The emotional economy of the cassette – set into motion during recording, as evidenced once again in Cem’s narrative – is compounded by the emotions displayed and the storytelling that takes place during group-listening practices. The young children are initiated into “being Kurdish” through these sessions. They learn about the stories told in and around the cassette. They observe and experience the emotions and the *communitas* generated through the cassettes during these sessions, and thus enter into the affective field created by the cassettes, and become habituated.

Strangers were also sometimes invited and became attuned into this field – thus new relationships materialized through practices of listening together. Cem recalls that some Kurdish residents of their new town heard about “the new Kurdish family” in possession of a large cassette collection. These people initiated contact, and started attending cassette sessions at Cem’s home. They would bring gifts, such as homemade yogurt and fresh produce in gratitude for being hosted. The cassettes were responsible for bringing the music, stories, and conversation into the family home, and objectified these friendly relationships. Memories would be rehashed,

with Kurds from different regions and perhaps with different affiliations sharing their similar yet different stories. New collective experiences became part of shared repertoires. Sorrow accompanied listening to the music of the hometown left behind and colored the experience even if the music itself was happy or upbeat. This love and sorrow for the hometown found body in the crackling cassette that played, and these emotions were experienced by the children who perhaps never even saw the hometown. The experientiality (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982) of the session thus has broader consequences that transcend temporal and geographic locales. The emotionality generated during the session draws the participants into partaking in a broader and markedly “Kurdish” experiential repertoire. Making a copy, as requested from the host, not only enabled the music to change hands, but also extends this constellation of music, experience, and emotions – tears, crackles, and all – into the lifeworlds of others.

Listening to cassettes also objectified intimate and familial relationships (Miller 1998), and moreover, our findings suggest that these experiences are part of a common repertoire of “being Kurdish.” Even the materialization of intimate relationships has communal repercussions, as illustrated by the narratives of informants who had difficulties in communicating with their parents. Children received mandatory formal education in Turkish, thus for those who came of age in larger cities after the 1980s, Kurdish was not the primary language of communication and socialization. On the other hand, parents, especially those who did not receive much formal education, were often not as fluent in Turkish as their children. This sometimes created chasms in relationships. Cem was worried, as an adult, that he was never able to properly express his love for his mother. He and his mother frequently listened to cassettes of the *dengbêj* Şakiro together. It was through listening to these cassettes that Cem came to learn most of his Kurdish, and he also came to realize, that even without words spoken between them, “we were able to express ourselves to each other by listening to cassettes together.” Nurten, the director of an NGO, went to school in Diyarbakır in the 1980s. As a child, she prided herself in her fluent and accent-free Turkish, and struggled with her feelings about her mother, whose Turkish, she felt, was embarrassingly flawed. Nurten herself refused to learn or speak Kurdish. Nonetheless, she says she knew many songs by heart, as they always played cassettes at home. Cassettes objectified, mediated, and also mended the relationships at times when words were not available. Interpersonal and familial bonds, including emotional frustrations, as materialized or resolved through cassettes, were articulated as part as growing up as an ethnic Kurd. The affective field generated by cassettes thus also included these shared familial love and frustrations – which in turn indicate a pointedly *Kurdish* emotional habitus. Thus, the object and practice not only “crafted” love (Madianou and Miller 2011) and negotiated family identity (Holttinen 2014) but also contributed to the emotional structuring of Kurdish community.

Listening, particularly in groups, could also bring the emotions and sufferings of other Kurds, even across state borders, into the circle, effectively situating them as part of a Kurdish “us” that transcended national borders. The experience of listening to Perwer’s *Helebçe*, the lamentation sung in memory of the deaths of Iraqi Kurds in the hands of Saddam Hussein, is an instance in which sorrow finds body through and circulates with the cassette, entering the field of emotions and experiences of the participants of other social circles. Murat recalls the times he and his friends got together and listened to the song, over and over again, always crying while doing so. The emotional density of the cassette intensified each time it was played, and later

copied and given away. The cassette, already “sticky” (Ahmed 2004) with emotions – recall, if you will, that Perwer cried while recording it, and the students cried with joy and sorrow when they received it – thus kept thickening with sorrow for the Kurds of Halabja, and also bridged to the audience’s own experiences, emotions, and dispositions related to being a Kurd in Turkey, giving this sorrow a different flavor than what would be experienced, say, by someone who is not a Kurd. It is this particular flavor that indicates an emotional habitus, and that allows the cassettes to “address” (Warner 2002) a Kurdish public.

While intimate and imagined relationships constituting “us” were objectified, the resistive relationship with “them” simultaneously emerged and took shape through listening practices. As with hiding and destroying the cassettes, fear colored many experiences of listening. Cem recalls that whenever his parents listened to cassettes in the 1980s (by themselves or during the cassette sessions), they would assign a few children to play outside the door, so that they could have ample warning if someone – say, an intolerant Turkish neighbor, or the police – came by. In the “region,” fear was even more intense and was also commonly exercised by law enforcement as a means of upholding order. Mehmet recalls, as a young boy, that a wedding he attended was raided by “special ops carrying very large guns.” Children would hang around the street and give news of approaching law enforcement. Adults would then try to switch the cassettes, hiding them in Turkish covers, and playing Turkish pop before the enforcement arrived – as with burying, a case of employing a *perruque* (De Certeau 1988) appropriate for that moment.

An evocative case of such diversion, shaped by and generating the dual emotions of fear and bravery, took place in minibuses, which to this day provide transportation between cities, towns, and villages in the “region.” In the 1980s and 1990s, the minibuses would be stacked with Kurdish music cassettes, which would be played throughout the journeys, during which solidarity amongst the driver and the passengers prevailed. There were multiple military checkpoints, and upon approaching them, the driver would hide the cassettes with a sleight of hand. According to Sami, who grew up speaking *Kurmanji* Kurdish, military forces conducting searches knew that cassettes were hidden somewhere on the minibus, and the driver and passengers knew that the soldiers knew. Yet, the passengers would never speak out. On some days, the soldiers would perform thorough searches, forcing the driver to turn the cassettes in, and would consequently destroy the cassettes. On other days, they would let this offense slide. Such games characterized many exchanges between Kurds and law enforcers – the Kurds affirming their own communality, banding against the authorities (even in their silence) and forcing the boundaries to the limit. In *Zazaki* speaker Dicle’s reminiscence of similar incidences in a different city in the “region,” the driver would turn the volume on full blast after passing the checkpoint. The passengers, in turn, might applaud the driver. The first author has witnessed that checkpoints, as well as the habit of turning the music off at the checkpoint and turning the volume all the way up after passing inspection remain today. And, despite the legality of the Kurdish music the conflicted relationship between “us” and “them” continues to play out in the collective imaginary. Similar stories articulated in very similar ways, and practices that even to this day remain embedded in daily life, are indicative of an emotional habitus shaped by emotions and the fields generated by these encounters.

Stories of “in-your-face” acts of disobedience are also to be found alongside narratives of evasive and manipulative practices. Mehmet recounted a confrontation that took place when he was a teenager working a summer job at a shoe store. He frequently

hung out with other teens who worked at surrounding shops. One of these shops was a music store, and the boy who worked there, a few years older than Mehmet, was “a very rebellious boy” they were all envious of. One day, this boy played Şivan Perwer at full blast while armored military vehicles were passing by. “Suddenly,” Mehmet says,

one of the [vehicles] stopped, turned around, and the [special ops] guys got off, these huge men, carrying automatic rifles. They came into the shop, shook [the boy], stomped onto some cassettes, and told him to never play this music again.

Children also often witnessed scenes when the music was shut down, cassettes broken, their homes searched, family members threatened and sometimes even taken away. Through such experiences, the relationship between the armed forces (and thus the Turkish state) and the Kurds was objectified in a manner that is fraught with fear, anger, and rebellion, and the materiality of the cassette is entwined with these emotions. Such encounters engender a shared emotional disposition, which in turn drives various tactics and rebellions toward the state. A structure of feelings thus develops and solidifies through practices, experiences, and encounters related to playing cassettes.

Another site in which these emotional dispositions toward the “other” found body was the wedding party. Utku, a music producer, notes that the bride and groom were sometimes “figurines,” and the wedding was more of an opportunity to get together, engage in political discourse, distribute political pamphlets, and feel incensed. Talat, an employee at an NGO remembers people dancing, at weddings, while “songs about martyrs played on the cassettes.” Semih, the owner of a bookstore, noted that guests would become angry if songs with agitative lyrics were not played. A popular song of the 1980s was Şivan Perwer’s *Serhildan Jiyane*, whose title translates to “resisting is living.” This phrase aptly serves as a trope for the emotional habitus that is constitutive of living life as a Kurd, and in explaining such resistive acts and attitudes even at celebratory events. The risky acts of listening to illegal cassettes at homes, weddings, and minibuses, not only shaped young peoples’ understandings of being Kurdish, but simultaneously shaped their understanding of the state as oppressive and hostile, thus moving them into banding together, engaging with politics, resisting authorities in evasive as well as confrontational manners.

Informants often emphasized the emotions and contextual particularities as shaping their listening experiences – sometimes above and beyond the lyrics or compositions. For example, when Cem was asked to talk about memories of listening to his favorite songs, he referred to “[my parents’] fear, their longing for our hometown, how we kids used to go to wait at the doorway while they listened.” He moreover emphasized the music of *dengbêj* Şakiro as occupying a special place among his favorites, as this was the music that he listened to with his mother. Thus, it was also the secrecy, the fear, and the longing that *mattered*. These emotions, in turn, shaped Cem’s relationship with his parents, especially his mother, his own identity as part of the Kurdish community, and also shaped how he learned to regard the state as posing a looming threat. Such experiences were common in other interviews – more than one informant referred to music as teaching her/him “what it means to be a Kurd,” and when asked to elaborate, informants often focused on practices related to the cassettes. This indicates that the emotionality of the content also intensified upon the object of the cassette. Thus, the elements of the music, lyrics, and narratives are part of a constellation that finds body in the cassette, which, through the practice of listening, generates affective fields that touch all those who come into contact.

Through listening, then, joy, bravery, sacrifice, love, anger, fear, and repulsion were evoked, intensified, and continued to circulate. Cassettes as objects provided ways to emotionally address (Warner 2002) Kurds as a public, by drawing them into an emotional habitus. The “feeling” of belonging that is noted by Anderson (1983) can be explained as stimulated by being habituated into such this shared structure. Emotionally charged experiences related to listening to the music and playing the cassettes thus materialized interpersonal as well as communal relationships (imagined and real), influenced people’s understandings of their selves as Kurds, and also shaped resistance against those who were perceived as the oppressors – in other words, collective alignments and boundaries emerged. Practices of exchange, as we shall see, enabled cassettes to move amongst people, and thus to touch and move new people into this emergent resistive community.

### ***Sharing, gifting, and selling: the exchange of cassettes***

In the absence of a legal network of distributors and retailers for Kurdish music, dispersed efforts to duplicate and exchange cassettes allowed the music to travel throughout places with Kurdish inhabitants. It was very common for individuals to make copies of cassettes and gift them within friendship and kinship networks. More concerted efforts to duplicate and sell the cassettes on the black market were also in existence: studio recordings that were smuggled across the borders, as well as recordings of famous *dengbêj* were duplicated by makeshift equipment, and sold by unregistered vendors and also by regular retailers “under the table.” These “off the books” sales remained in place well after legalization in 1991 – partly due to the cheapness of reproducing cassettes in this manner, and partly due to remaining legal and normative restrictions.

Street vendors called *tablacıs* sold cassettes in the “region” as well as other cities with Kurdish populations, including Istanbul. The *tablacıs*’ merchandise was not limited to Kurdish music, but they would often also hide the Kurdish recordings under cassette covers of Turkish pop. How to locate these vendors was part of a repertoire of local knowledge; new customers – especially during times of heightened surveillance – would have to use chains of reference. Formal retailers, after legalization, were still under close scrutiny and surveillance by Turkish authorities. Cassettes often traveled perilous roads, crossing borders and checkpoints, evading inspections. Stories of how far a cassette traveled until it reached a particular home or vendor could intensify the affective field a particular cassette generated, and thus thicken its emotional saturation, and also increasing its emotional impact on the buyer or receiver. Encounters with law enforcement created an economy of fear, which was countered by tactics (De Certeau 1988) and the formation of a repertoire of insider knowledge. Cassettes were duplicated and circulated in masses, vendors and retailers alike made mix tapes from popular songs found on both legal and illegal recordings, and sold them off the books for cheaper prices. There was, thus, a wide array of cassettes on the market.

The exchange of cassettes was often described as being primarily non-commercial in intent, even in cases where the cassettes were sold for money. Informants framed their own acts of sharing and gifting not only within the realm of friendly or kinship relationships, but also as a means of helping other people learn about and embrace Kurdish identity – thus including others in what they perceived as *their* community.

Trying to make money out of this almost-sacred process was, according to Cem, embarrassing. He noted,

It was only [after the 1990s] that Kurdish cassettes were sold for money. Previously they were only duplicated, and given away as part of a gift-giving culture ... a person might bring his or her own blank cassette and ask, could you record [that album] onto this cassette?

Murat similarly framed selling music as more of a service to the people rather than a profit-making practice, indicating that sellers would often provide discounts, or even give cassettes away for free, as their primary purpose was to circulate the music. The exchange of cassettes materialized relationships that were beyond transactional and embedded in the sacred realm of communality. It has been argued that anonymously bequeathed intracommunal gifts – as opposed to dyadic gifting – generate solidarity and communality (Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012). Yet, we find that dyadic gifting practices, as well as other forms of exchange, by contributing to shared experiential and emotional repertoires, and by drawing individuals into affective fields, serve communal bonds in addition to interpersonal relationships.

One of Murat's memories regarding exchange further illustrates the lack of financial concerns and the role of gifting in establishing communality. While still a teenager in the early 1980s, living in a province of Diyarbakır, he had a cousin who made frequent visits to the city center and brought back cassettes each time. There was a minibus service between the city and the provincial towns, and it was almost always the same driver who served that route. One memorable encounter with this driver is as follows:

On one journey, this driver saw that a cassette that had fallen out of my cousin's bag. He asked for the cassette, and said, "if you don't give it to me, I will report you to the gendarmerie or the police." My cousin somehow told the driver that if he was serious in his threat, he wouldn't give the cassette, [the driver] should go ahead and call the police or gendarmeries. However, if the driver wanted to listen to the cassette, [my cousin] would give it to him as a gift. The driver apologized, said he had been joking and took the cassette, saying he would like to listen to it. My cousin said he gave the cassette ... thinking maybe the driver really wanted to listen to this music. When he told me about this, we thought why don't we make copies of other cassettes and give it to the driver. We presented them to the driver the next time he passed through their town. The driver was really delighted. He didn't charge us on one of our following journeys to the city center.

An interesting juxtaposition took place here: rather than being afraid of or angry at the bus driver, Murat's cousin tactically invited him into forming a relationship based on camaraderie and compatriotism, at which he succeeded. Gifting the cassettes thus helped someone establish or strengthen the bond with his own "Kurdishness" and it also created rapport among three members of a community. While gifting cassettes to friends and relatives was common, the type of gift-giving between Murat, his cousin, and the driver, points toward a relationship established among strangers who only have an ethnic background in common. This common background, through the practice of gifting, becomes elevated into "community." Engendering a loving disposition toward members of one's ethnic community – despite possibly being of different tribal, regional, lingual, or religious backgrounds – is established, in part, through these gifting practices. In some cases, a person might not be aware of what being

part of this community entails – in such cases, gifting the cassette may teach a lesson of camaraderie.

Various forms of exchange, then, extended the affective fields of cassettes to a variety of places and spaces. Cassettes crossed borders between regions, dialects, tribal and religious backgrounds, established bridges and helped shape a constituency. Violent or non-submissive encounters with authorities and law enforcement – the oppressive other – shaped these fields, and also were an inextricable part of the process of understanding and experiencing this resistive communal ethnic identity. The constant danger of violence created fear, anger, and frustration; but also bravery and camaraderie, which saturated the cassettes. Resistance, as well as communality, was materialized through these practices, in these objects and bodies. Through the practice of exchange, particularly through gifting, loving relationships were created and maintained. While the recipients of cassettes could already exist as part of an individual's network of friends and families, the selling and gifting of cassettes could also act as a means of initiating people into one's broader network of fellow Kurds – that is, exchange could act as a means of inviting people to *become* Kurdish, and attuning them into the affective field of the cassette: moving them from strangers into parts of “us” who share emotional orientations. As the cassette was shared, exchanged, and consequently encountered new individuals, the stories and emotions circulated as well. Emotions intensified, weaving thicker threads through the community and fortifying the boundaries against its “others,” throughout the cassette's travels.

## Discussion

We traced the circulation of cassettes through a number of practices – recording, owning, hiding, destroying, playing, and exchanging. Through informants' narratives, we examined the various experiences and encounters, the elicitation of emotions, and the materialization of relationships that the circulation of cassettes animates. Our findings allow us to explain the entwinement of emotions with materiality, as well as the generative and structuring potentialities that this entwinement entails.

Our first argument concerns the entwinement of materiality and emotionality. We observe in our findings that cassettes are inextricably entwined in the interpersonal relationships with family members, friends, local community members, as well as imagined relationships with a broader Kurdish community, and a resistive relationship with the state. Cassettes objectify these unifying as well as oppositional relationships through various practices, experiences and encounters, such as collective listening experiences with family and local community members, gifting to strangers – and resistive encounters with the state, in manners that are overt (such as playing loud music toward law enforcement) and evasive (as with hiding the cassettes, or enlisting the children to stand guard). Inspired by Ahmed (2004), we use the metaphor of “stickiness” to explain the association of the emotions that are elicited during these materializing experience and encounters. This emotional “stickiness” of cassettes is evidenced by our informants' emotionally charged narratives in relating their experiences with cassettes. Cassettes remain “sticky” to this day, through narratives that continue to circulate, as evidenced by emotions that continue to surface today while talking about these past events – even years after many cassettes have been thrown out, legal restrictions have been relaxed, and other technologies have replaced tape players.

Our second major argument is that the emotional stickiness of materiality works to “stick” individuals, binding them together and also orienting them against others. The



circulation of objects materializes communal bonds (Aronczyk and Craig 2012) and resistance by also enabling the circulation of emotions (Ahmed 2004) and generating an emotional structure that is both “structured” and “structuring” (Swartz 1997). The structured-ness is derived from and reinforced by repeated evocative experiences, encounters, and relationships that are common to people across regional, lingual, religious affiliations: emotions that are elicited while listening to music together, dealing with law enforcement (in actuality or the threat thereof), hearing stories, and through other experiences, become part of a shared repertoire – one that is evidenced by the similarity of stories told, as well as the commonality of vocabulary (Burkitt 2002) and metaphors (Kane 2001) that are used – such as graveyards, markings, and sacrifice – in describing experiences and encounters. The cassette is the object that brings these experiences to life and makes these shared repertoires of emotions possible – and thus it plays a vital role in socializing individuals into the “structure.”

The “structuring” aspect of emotions, on the other hand, works to align individuals into a collective body and orients them against the state. This structuring-ness moreover entails a disposition toward performing certain practices – particularly resistive and rebellious ones – that ensure the continuation of circulation. People buying cassette recorders and making copies for friends and family even though they have limited resources, gifting cassettes – sometimes to strangers, selling without intending to make profits, hiding cassettes from law enforcement and disposing only as a last resort, and presenting a united front toward the law enforcement are some of the practices that are shaped by the emergent emotional habitus. In turn, these practices reinforce and strengthen this structure. These practices also allow new people to be socialized, and thus maintain the structure: children are introduced by participation in cassette-related experiences, gifts are given to those who had not been initiated before – thus the structure also disposes its constituents to habituate others.

Thus, the cassette transcends its mundanity, and emerges as an “object” that stimulates an emotional economy. While the entwinement of iconization and signification with materialization (Bartmanski and Woodward 2013; Beckstead et al. 2011; Craig 2011; Douny 2011; Kravets and Öрге 2010) has been documented, we provide an additional dimension to materiality. Examining the entwinement of materiality with emotions, and exploring the structuring potentiality of the materiality–emotionality nexus also allows us to see how seemingly individual or interpersonal experiences – such as listening to music, owning cassettes, gifting, selling, or dispossession may serve communal bonds by generating shared experiences and emotional orientations.

A “feeling” of “being Kurdish” and of being resistive against the state, then, are experienced as emotional dispositions. In other words, the imagining of a community (Anderson 1983) comes from being habituated into and constituted by an emotional habitus. The emotional habitus is “sticky” and, as such, “sticks” the community: with the circulation of objects across time and space, and the intensification of objects’ emotional saturation, the habitus also becomes stronger. The communal alignments that it structures become more solid, and the boundaries against the other more rigid.

Previous research has acknowledged that “structures of feeling” (Williams 1977, 1979) and collective emotional dispositions (Gopaldas 2014) shape consumption decisions and practices and form the basis of consumption communities (Thompson 2005). In these studies, how such structures emerge and how individuals are socialized into shared dispositions are not explicit. We contribute by elucidating the linkages between evocative experiences – which involve the consumption, disposal, and

various forms of exchange (including gifting and selling) of a material object – and the habituation of individuals into an emotional habitus. Whereas Thompson (2005) notes that ideology and politics are personally experienced as feelings, we show how the opposite also holds – that emotions orient individuals toward holding political and ideological stances, such as identifying as a member of an ethnic minority community and taking part in resistance. Hence, the structures generated by an emotional–material nexus can engender processes and movements of political import. By underscoring the entwinement of emotions and materiality in generating structures, we also extend Chronis et al. (2012) who note that emotions elicited during consumption experiences play a part in (re)producing collective imaginaries. The imagining of community, we show, entails the habituation into an emotional habitus, or structure. While consecrated landscapes (Chronis et al. 2012) and heritage exhibitions (Chronis 2006) may provide an avenue to become habituated, we show that a mundane object can also elicit emotionality and habituate.

Moreover, we contribute to our understanding of collective tactical resistance (De Certeau 1988; Scott 1990; see also Izberk-Bilgin 2010) by revealing its material–emotional underpinnings. We show how the hegemonic “other” that is resisted is also emotionally delineated, and that the nature of the relationship with this “other” also shapes an understanding of “us.” In-group and out-group dynamics and relationships are thus mutually and simultaneously objectified through an object category and related practices of circulation. The tense and violent relationship between the state and the Kurds shaped a Kurdish community that is resistive. The role of consumption in interpersonal, familial, and communal relationships are often depicted as bonding, and these relationships are often described as “loving” (e.g. Holttinen 2014; Miller 1998; Moisiu et al. 2004). Yet, we see that oppositional, violent, and separatist relationships can simultaneously be materialized through the very same objects, and that these relationships can be fraught with fear, indignation, hatred, and other “negative” emotions. The cassette, while materializing “positive” bonds of love and kinship amongst members of the ethnic community, simultaneously materializes a resistive relationship based on anger, fear, and violence with the Turkish state. Thus, we note that consumption, markets, and material objects have the power to not only enliven bonds and objectify inclusive relationships, but also to materialize relationships that are divisive, exclusionary, oppositional, and conflicting.

## Conclusion

This article examines the emotional economy that was set in motion by the illegal circulation of Kurdish music cassettes in Turkey. We found that the practices of circulating cassettes constituted tactical resistance and emotionally shaped the “imagining” (Anderson 1983) of a community and its boundaries. We contribute to our understanding of materiality by drawing attention to its entwinement with emotionality, and explore the structuring potentiality that this entwinement generates.

Cassettes, as they circulated, materialized relationships – real and imagined, interpersonal and communal, associative and disruptive – and in so doing, became laden with the emotions they elicited. As cassettes circulated, they infused people with their positive and negative emotionality, orienting them toward acting and feeling in ways that struck bonds as well as disconnections, and also perpetuated circulation. Thus, resistive practices of cassette circulation played an important part in shaping collective dispositions – a “structured and structuring” (Swartz 1997) emotional habitus

(Kane 2001). A repertoire of cassette-centered experiences served to generate a sense of a unified “us” as well as of distance to the “other,” the state – the contentious relationship which significantly shaped the emotional habitus that structured this emergent community. In this way, objects and consumption experiences serve not only harmonious, but also divisive, oppositional, and resistive relationships and communalities. In that process, just as ideologies can be experienced as “structures of feeling” (Williams 1977, 1979; see also Thompson 2005), a person’s engagement with ideology and politics may be shaped by emotions. Finally, we suggest that the “stickiness” of an emotional habitus may help explain the enduring affiliations people uphold with certain communities and the perseverance of resistance. We thus note that materialities, markets, and consumption can serve the generation and intensification of emotional structures that relate to the unification of communities, and the enactment of resistance – processes of great political import.

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