

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Spatial Analysis of Leisure Experiences in the Context of Music Subcultures: The Case of Ankara

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Abstract

This study investigated the subcultural leisure experiences in metal music venues in Ankara, through an analysis of visitor reviews from the Google Maps application within the framework of Oldenburg's "third place" paradigm. The aim was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of subcultural spaces in urban life and the dynamics of subcultural participation in the digital age. In this context, visitor reviews of the Always Rock Bar, Onaon Café, and Papaz Rock Bar were analyzed using conventional qualitative content analysis. The data were imported into MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2024 and subjected to coding in accordance with the characteristics of the "third place" paradigm. The findings revealed how these venues act as central meeting points where subcultural identities are strengthened and social networks are built. This study provides valuable insights into the importance of these places for the formation and sustainability of subcultural communities and underlines the relevance of the "third place" paradigm in non-Western urban contexts. Further recommendations for future research include the investigation of similar phenomena in other cultural settings and the combination of digital data with traditional ethnographic methods.

Keywords: Music subcultures, sociology of leisure, subcultural leisure, third place, user-generated content

Öz

Bu çalışma kapsamında altkültürel boş zaman deneyimleri, Ankara'daki metal müzik mekânlarının Google Haritalar uygulamasında yer alan yorumları üzerinden, Oldenburg'un "üçüncü mekân" paradigması bağlamında incelenmiştir. Altkültürel mekânların kent yaşamındaki rolü ve dijital çağda altkültürel katılımın dinamikleri hakkında daha kapsamlı bir anlayış geliştirilmesi amacı doğrultusunda; Always Rock Bar, Onaon Café ve Papaz Rock Bar mekânlarının ziyaretçi yorumları, geleneksel niteliksel içerik çözümlemesi çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir. Yorum verileri, MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2024 programına aktarılmış ve "üçüncü mekân" kavramının özellikleri göz önünde bulundurularak tematik olarak kodlanmıştır. Bulgular, bu mekânların altkültürel kimliklerin pekiştirildiği ve toplumsal bağların inşa edildiği merkezi buluşma yerleri olarak işlev gördüğünü göstermiştir. Bu çalışma, altkültürel toplulukların oluşumu ve sürdürülebilirliği noktasında bu mekânların önemine dair önemli bilgiler sunmakta ve "üçüncü mekân" paradigmasının Batı dışı kentsel bağlarla uygunluğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Benzeri olguların daha farklı kültürel ortamlarda araştırılması ve dijital verilerin geleneksel etnografik yöntemlerle bir araya getirilerek kullanılması gelecekteki araştırmalar için sunulan öneriler arasında yer almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Altkültürel boş zaman, boş zaman sosyolojisi, kullanıcı türevli içerik, müzik altkültürleri, üçüncü mekân

Introduction

In an ever-increasingly globalized world, the study of subcultures emerges as one of the crucial areas of research that offers a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between identity, community, and urban spaces. The concept of subculture, which has its origins in the Chicago School of Sociology, was developed and widely disseminated by the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1970s. Influenced by the pioneering studies of Hall and Jefferson (1976) and Hebdige (1979), the CCCS approach conceptualized subcultures as self-consistent groups that resist dominant cultural norms through their distinctive styles and practices. This perspective emphasized the class-based structure and symbolic resistance potential of subcultures and framed participation in these groups as a form of resistance by working-class youth against hegemonic cultural structures (Clarke et al., 2014). More recently, subcultures have been recognized as more fluid and diverse communities shaped by shared interests and practices (Bennett, 2011). This perspective underscores the role of individual agency and consumption practices in shaping subcultural identities, rather than viewing them as static and class structures (Bennett, 1999). This shift in perspective reflects the impact of globalization, digital technologies, and changing consumption patterns on the formation and expression of subcultures.

Subcultures are currently regarded as dynamic entities that can transcend the conventional boundaries of class, space, and time, facilitating the formation of intricate networks of belonging and identity (Hodkinson, 2002). In this context, the metal music subculture is a highly continuous and globally widespread phenomenon (Brown, 2015). The flexibility of this subculture, which is characterized by its distinctive musical preferences, clothing style, and political stance, represents a significant and noteworthy aspect of its ability to adapt to a multitude of cultural contexts (Weinstein, 2000). Metal music, which originated in British and American working-class communities, has proliferated in diverse global contexts, including Brazil, Norway, and Saudi Arabia, becoming a per-

vasive phenomenon (Weinstein, 2011). Metal subculture studies offer significant opportunities to explore the ways in which cultural forms are localized and reinterpreted in different parts of the world (Wallach & Levine, 2011; Weinstein, 2000). These studies highlight significant issues pertaining to cultural authenticity, the function of music in identity formation, and the interplay between subcultural practices and social, economic, and political structures (Bennett, 2000; Hodkinson, 2002; Kahn-Harris, 2007). Additionally, studies on metal subculture provide valuable insights into youth culture, leisure practices, and the evolving character of urban spaces in an increasingly interconnected world.

Leisure activities have a significant impact on the social and cultural structure of societies because they serve not only as a source of entertainment but also as a medium for identity development and community building (Rojek, 2005). Anchored in the transformative context of sociological thought, the sociology of leisure analyzes how social structures and processes influence its social, institutional, and historical-cultural dimensions, as demonstrated through the interactive relationships between individuals and social groups (Dorsey & Collier, 2018; Shim, 2004; Spracklen, 2013; Pronovost, 2000). As leisure encompasses a wide range of activities, from passive consumption to active participation, from individual experiences to social interactions, the sociology of leisure emerges as a research field that captures multidimensional social transformations through increasingly comprehensive analyses (Denovan & Macaskill, 2017; Güven, 2019; Mizuno, 2017; Stanfors & Jacobs, 2023). From the perspective of leisure, subcultural leisure activities offer valuable opportunities for individuals to express their distinctive identities and connect with peers who share similar dispositions (Riches, 2012). At this point, the sociology of leisure investigates how subcultures construct and express their collective identities, values, and social dynamics through shared leisure activities that diverge from mainstream cultural norms, while these practices simultaneously serve as crucial mediums for fostering group belonging and reflecting broader societal transformations (Sinclair & Dolan, 2015; Sinclair et al., 2019; Spracklen et al., 2016; Williams, 2011).

Consequently, examining subcultural formations that emerge through leisure activities enables us to comprehend the manner in which both the construction of subcultural identity and the sense of collective belonging are shaped.

The concept of "third place" as first introduced by Oldenburg (1999), provides a functional framework for understanding the social significance of leisure spaces. In the context of this spatial classification approach, the residential areas where individuals reside are conceptualized as the "first place" and the work environments where they engage in their professional activities are conceptualized as the "second place." In this context, "third places" located outside these spaces, which are considered as spatial elements of primary importance in the everyday life practices of individuals, have the functions of recreational spaces where leisure activities are carried out. Third places refer to informal public spaces such as cafes, bars, restaurants, parks, etc. that are essential for social interaction and the development of social relations outside of home and work (Oldenburg, 1999). These third places are distinguished by their accessibility, neutrality, and the opportunities they afford for meaningful dialogue and relationships between visitors (Jeffres et al., 2009). The sociology of leisure intersects with third places by examining how these informal public spaces function as essential social environments where individuals exercise their leisure choices and construct meaningful social relationships outside the domains of home and work, reflecting both individual agency and broader societal structures in the organization of leisure time (Oldenburg, 1999; Spracklen, 2013; Stebbins, 2018). Within this context, the significance of third places emerges in their capacity to provide individuals, who voluntarily congregate in these spaces, with opportunities to transcend the routinized practices of everyday life.

Music as a sociological phenomenon functions as both a reflection of social structures and a medium through which individuals articulate their social status and class affiliations while simultaneously shaping and being influenced by societal transformations (Önder, 2018). Sociological analysis of music entails examining its reciprocal effects in the social sphere, enabling inferences about so-

ciety through the study of music's language, meanings, and influence as it reflects the collective spirit of society (Esgin, 2012). From this point of view, the sociology of music examines the complex relationship between music and society by analyzing both the social components of music as an art form and its cultural patterns in relation to identity, gender, and everyday life practices, enabling interpretations of both the social conditions that shape music and the societal circumstances it reflects (Güven & Ergur, 2015). Therefore, the multidimensional nature of the interplay between music and society provides a fertile ground for sociological analysis of a wide range of issues, from everyday life practices to the dynamics of social change.

With the adoption of "scene" as a more nuanced analytical framework superseding "subculture" in the sociology of music, various underground and alternative music genres have increasingly become subjects of sociological inquiry since the early 2000s (Güven & Ergur, 2015). The concept of music scene designates the contexts in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans collectively share their common musical tastes and distinguish themselves from others, offering a more flexible analytical framework than subculture for understanding music production and consumption (Peterson & Bennett, 2004). Research employing the scene perspective has distinguished itself through its non-hierarchical approach to musical preferences, comprehensive consideration of diverse dispositions among various actors in the musical sphere, and robust empirical methodology (Yılmaz, 2017). Building upon the foundational theoretical contributions of subculture studies, the scene perspective offers a more nuanced analytical framework for examining musical practices within broader sociocultural contexts.

The studies on metal music subculture have highlighted the importance of third places in the context of identity and community building (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007; Varas-Díaz et al., 2014). Kahn-Harris (2007), in his study on the global extreme metal scene, points out that local spaces are fundamental to the sustainability of the subculture by providing the required settings for performances, socializing, and reinforcing shared values. These spaces function as places where subculture members are able to express themselves more freely and

connect with others who share their passion for music (Riches, 2012; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Studies on non-Western societies have focused on exploring how metal subcultures position themselves in the cultural environments in which they exist. For example, Wallach (2011), in his study of metal communities in Southeast Asia, reveals how local interpretations of the genre interact with global metal music culture. In this context, it was asserted that studios play an instrumental role in facilitating cultural exchange and identity construction. Despite the paucity of research on the metal scene in Türkiye (Ata, 2019; Çerezcioglu, 2013; Demirci, 2023; Gülmez, 2024), it is evident that spaces in cities like Ankara serve as a third place for this subculture.

In the context of subcultural leisure, third places assume significant importance, as they offer environments where subculture members can engage in activities that facilitate the formation of a shared sense of identity and belonging (Driver & Bennett, 2015). For instance, venues dedicated to specific music genres frequently serve as the focal point of subcultures, providing spaces for the collective celebration of both music genres and ideological stances (Weinstein, 2000). Characterized by its oppositional stance, the global metal music subculture demands spaces where people come together for cultural reproduction (Kahn-Harris, 2007). Ankara, the capital of Türkiye, offers a very convenient context for the investigation of subcultural leisure activities within the metal scene (Bayu & Özmen, 2017). The metal music venues of this city appear as the third places where enthusiasts come together, socialize, and have subcultural experiences. Among these venues, Always Rock Bar, Onaon Café, and Papaz Rock Bar are particularly prominent (Headbangers Travel Guide, n.d.). These venues function not only as a means of entertainment but also as a shelter in a socio-cultural environment where alternative identities are expressed and reinforced, especially in a socio-cultural environment where this subculture is not adopted (Ekşi Sözlük, n.d.).

Despite the significance of subcultural spaces, the number of studies examining their role as third places in leisure and community building is limited. The main problem of this study lies in the limited research on the roles regulars of metal music

venues in Ankara play in their everyday lives and their contributions to the subculture's structure. Prior research in this field has primarily concentrated on the Western context, with a notable absence of attention to the spatial dimensions of subcultural interaction and dynamics in diverse cultural settings (Williams, 2011). This study aims to address this gap by elucidating the themes and patterns in the content created by visitors about metal music venues in Ankara. In this respect, the objective is to reveal the perceptions and experiences of visitors regarding these third places within the context of a qualitative content analysis of Google Maps reviews. Visitor reviews offer a wealth of insightful data, reflecting the distinctive sentiments and perspectives of individuals who engage with these spaces (Vásquez, 2014). Consequently, it becomes feasible to investigate the manner in which these spaces influence subcultural leisure practices and contribute to the formation of identity and community.

The application of this study in the context of Ankara holds significance in multiple ways. Firstly, by focusing on the local manifestations of subcultural phenomena in non-Western societies, this research contributes to the existing literature on the diffusion and adaptation of subcultures across cultural contexts. This approach challenges the Western-centric perspective that is pervasive in subcultural studies, illuminating the intricate processes of cultural adaptation. Conversely, cultural studies frequently concentrate on subcultural spaces in cities that Istanbul frequently overshadows. This allows for the exploration of the diversity and mobility of subcultural environments in secondary cities. In this context, focusing on Ankara is crucial for a more comprehensive examination of Türkiye's cultural structure and the spatial dynamics of subculture construction processes. Analyzing these spaces as third places contributes to a more nuanced understanding of their role in terms of the development of subcultural identity, the establishment of social interactions, and the creation of a physical space for the local metal scene. This approach also allows us to explore how these spaces can function as alternative cultural production spaces within the urban fabric of Ankara.

Within the scope of the study, it is aimed to reveal the visitor experiences of Always Rock Bar, Onaon Café and Papaz Rock Bar by analyzing the content created by users in the Google Maps application, while also developing an understanding of how these spaces function as third places in terms of subcultural identity construction and social cohesion. As previously stated, this approach seeks to address the existing gap in the literature by employing digital data sources to examine subcultural leisure experiences in non-Western societies. From a methodological standpoint, this study demonstrates the potential of utilizing digital content as a valuable data source for subculture, leisure, and music research. Indeed, the analysis of reviews on online applications such as Google Maps makes it possible to explain multidimensional experiences that are extremely difficult to reveal through traditional ethnographic methods (Kozinets, 2015; Mkono & Tribe, 2017). Therefore, this study aims to address the following primary research questions:

- How do metal music venues in Ankara function as third places for subcultural leisure activities?
- How do the commonly encountered themes in Google Maps reviews of these venues express subcultural experiences?
- How do these spaces contribute to the formation and reproduction of subcultural identities in local metal music scenes?

In line with the aforementioned research questions, this study seeks to examine the subcultural leisure experiences associated with metal music venues in Ankara within the context of the "third place" paradigm. In this context, it is aimed to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of subcultural spaces in urban life and the dynamics of subcultural participation in the digital age.

Understanding the functions of these spaces as third places is crucial for exploring how subcultural communities utilize physical spaces for the sustainability of their leisure participation, especially in areas where similar subcultures may face social or cultural challenges (Baulch, 2007; LeVine, 2008). Focusing on the phenomenon of subcultural leisure, this study offers insights into how subcultural practices are experienced in urban spaces and

contributes to the development of our understanding of the concept of third place (Riches, 2012; Tuailleon Demésy, 2023). At this point, explaining the importance of third places in urban societies reveals their role in strengthening social bonds (Jeffres et al., 2009). On the other hand, with the increasing impact of digital platforms on perceptions of physical spaces, the analysis of online reviews provides valuable insights into the ways in which subcultural communities interact and make sense of these environments (Zukin et al., 2017). The interaction between digital and physical spaces creates new dynamics that contribute to the formation and sustainability of communities, making it an emerging research area in contemporary studies. Consequently, this study focuses on exploring the functions of metal music venues in Ankara as third places in the context of subcultural leisure and community building processes.

Methodology

A qualitative research design was used in this study, which examines subcultural leisure experiences in metal music venues in Ankara within the framework of Oldenburg's (1999) third place paradigm. In order to identify the prominent themes related to subcultural leisure experiences in Google Maps reviews, which is the primary data source of the study, qualitative content analysis was utilized. The qualitative approach was preferred since it allows the exploration of complex social phenomena and lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, this approach was chosen as it is compatible with the aim of the study to reveal the ways in which subcultural spaces function as a third place in the context of leisure. The 453 Google Maps reviews of Always Rock Bar (263), Onaon Café (131), and Papaz Rock Bar (59), three major metal music venues in Ankara, constitute the main data source of the study. The use of online reviews as a data source is supported by previous research that demonstrates the functionality of user-generated content in analyzing visitor/consumer experiences and perceptions (Zhang et al., 2010). Reviews of the venues were collected from the earliest (12/12/2016) available review to the end (08/10/2024) of the data collection period. Both

Turkish and English reviews were included in the study to ensure a broad perspective.

Data analysis was conducted within the framework of conventional qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Offering flexibility in terms of identifying patterns and themes in textual data, this approach was chosen since it is highly convenient for exploring subcultural leisure experiences in online reviews. The analysis process involved several steps, including importing the reviews into MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2024, thoroughly reading the data, developing a coding framework considering the characteristics of Oldenburg's (1999) third place concept, systematically coding the reviews, identifying more overarching themes, and interpreting these themes in relation to the conceptual framework. The constant comparison method was used to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. In order to ensure consistency in the coding process, discrepancies in coding were resolved through negotiations (Miles et al., 2014). Although the reviews utilized in this study were publicly available, no personal information was included in the analysis and reporting

of the results in order to protect the privacy of the users. On the other hand, it remains crucial to consider the limitations of using online reviews as a data source. At this point, it seems important to consider that reviews may not represent the experiences of all users, that commenting users may be biased, and that the authenticity of reviews cannot be fully verified. However, the inclusion of all reviews of these venues in the research enables multidimensional perspectives to be explored.

Findings and Discussion

Qualitative content analysis of online reviews in the Google Maps application was carried out in this study within the framework of explaining subcultural leisure experiences in the context of Oldenburg's "third space" paradigm, through the case of metal music venues in Ankara. Based on the systematic and inductive analysis of the online review data, the themes and categories formed regarding the subcultural leisure experiences of the visitors are presented below (Figure 1.):

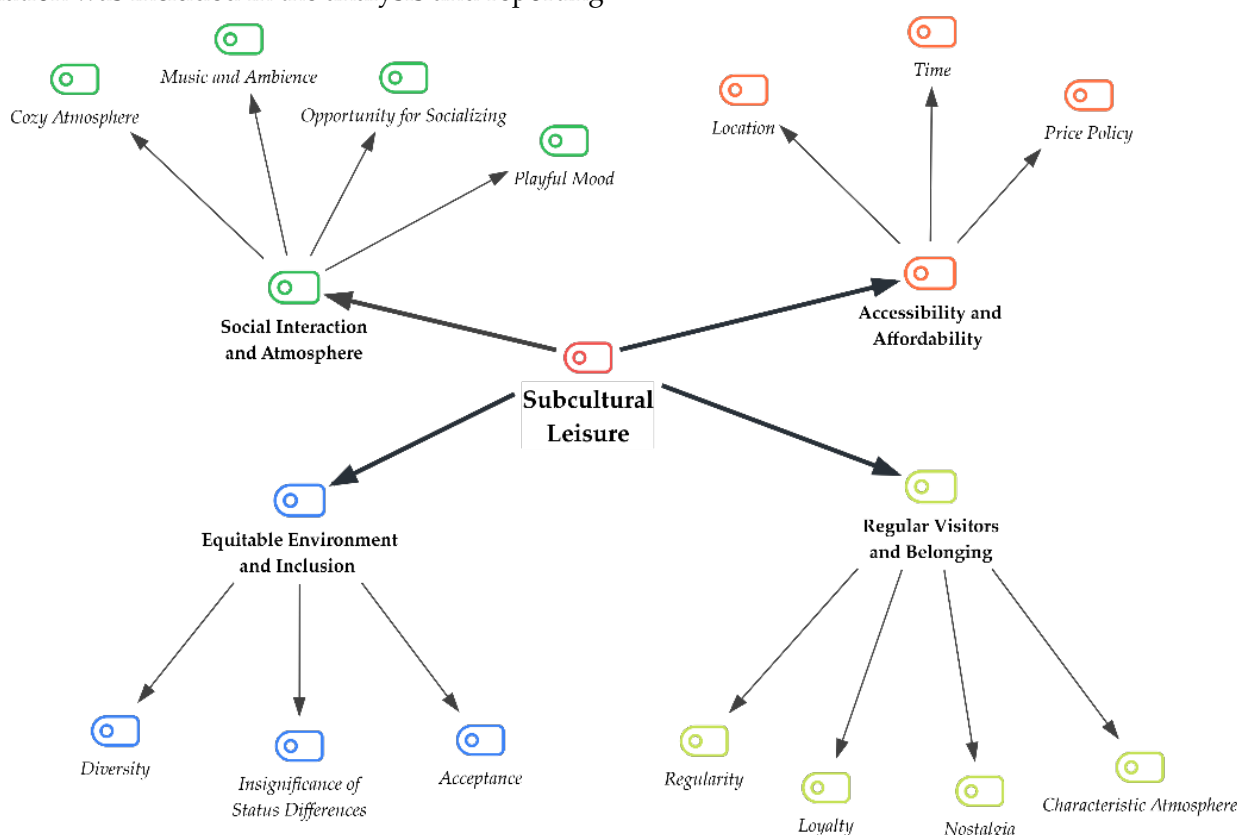


Figure 1. Themes and Categories of Subcultural Leisure Experiences

Social Interaction and Atmosphere

The categories of "cozy atmosphere" and "music and ambience", which are prominent in visitor reviews, clearly reveal the social interaction and atmosphere characteristics of the analyzed venues. The features emphasized by Oldenburg (1999) in the concept of third place, "feeling comfortable like home" and "the presence of regulars", explain the characteristic features of these venues. Reviews such as *"It is one of the sanctuaries of metal music in Ankara"*, *"If you are a fan of metal music, you will undoubtedly enjoy this place, as well as the friendly staff and excellent music"* and *"It is a place we love to go to"* reflect the intimate atmosphere of these venues. These venues, which are interpreted as meaningful leisure spaces for members of the subculture, are considered as hubs where subcultural identity is strengthened, as can be inferred from the review *"the heart of the metalheads in Ankara"*. Reviews like *"It is the only place where you can listen to metal music"*, *"The idea of a music box is great"* and *"There is rock and roll metal; what more can you ask for?"* emphasize the importance of venues for visitors in terms of musical experience by highlighting their unique atmosphere. As Rosenbaum et al. (2007) state, third places provide emotional and social benefits to their visitors; in this context, the above reviews reveal that these venues function as third places that offer both social interaction and authentic musical experience for the subcultural community.

The categories of "opportunity for socializing" and "playful mood" represent crucial experiential dimensions that reflect the third place character of these venues. The "potential for socialization and interaction", which Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) emphasize as the main characteristic of third places, shapes the nature of these spaces. In terms of socializing opportunities, the reviews, *"Whether you're alone or with friends, it's the place to go. Even if you go alone, you'll make friends here if you have the courage to talk to strangers"* and *"We went on the recommendation of friends; anyone who wants to listen to metal, chat with the people they love, and "drink ice cold beer" should try this bar"*, emphasize the supportive nature of these spaces for social interaction. As Steinkuehler and Williams (2006) emphasize, the

neutral ground offered by third places is highly significant in terms of socialization opportunities. In the category of "playful mood", the reviews, *"It is one of the alternative places of entertainment... If you ever pass by, I suggest you stop there"* and *"It's a great place with its music and atmosphere. It always plays rock music; it has the atmosphere of a rock bar"* represent the positive atmosphere these venues offer in terms of leisure time utilization. These reviews indicate that these venues are crucial for the subcultural community, as they facilitate the formation of social bonds and provide enjoyable experiences. Moreover, it is seen that these venues are not only spaces for listening to music, but also environments that create positive emotions and a sense of community through social interaction.

The findings of the "social interaction and atmosphere" theme reveal how the venues in Ankara examined within the scope of the study function as third places that facilitate social interaction and offer a unique atmosphere for members of the subculture. While these venues embody Oldenburg's (1999) concept of third place by providing home-like comfort and hosting regular customers, they appear as leisure spaces where subcultural identities are reinforced through shared musical experiences and social bonds. Riches (2016) argues that metal music venues are emotional spaces where people engage in an emotional relationship with the world through physical interactions and subcultural identities. In this context, the analyzed spaces manifest their social dynamics by facilitating emotional and meaningful interactions among subculture members. The "neutral ground" (Oldenburg, 1999) atmosphere of these spaces creates an environment that enables the establishment of new relationships within the subcultural community through socialization opportunities provided by overcoming social barriers.

Local scenes foster richly textured interactions through their risk-free environments, where participants can simultaneously maintain visibility and anonymity while engaging in music-centered social affiliations within a concentrated mass of individuals shielded from broader societal scrutiny (Lee & Peterson, 2004). These spaces exhibit the

traits of "neo-tribal"¹ gathering places, fostering a sense of belonging and collective identity through shared musical tastes and cultural preferences (Bennett, 1999). Driver (2011) states that subcultural authenticity is constantly reproduced through the concretization of the knowledge learned in the subcultural context, at which point it is evident that the venues signify a meaning beyond listening to music and that they have a functional position in terms of subcultural sustainability through social interaction and shared experiences. Conclusively, the findings of this theme show that venues in Ankara play a key role in ensuring the continuity of subcultural cohesion and offer social interaction opportunities within the framework of an atmosphere in line with subcultural leisure needs.

Accessibility and Affordability

Visitors' reviews in the categories of "location" and "time" draw attention to the main features that strengthen the third place function of these venues. Oldenburg's (1999) criteria of "accessibility" and "regular visitor profile" for third places clarify the characteristic features of these places. In terms of their spatial features, the venues are reviewed as *"On Sakarya Street. Don't look for it downstairs, it's on the 3rd floor. No live music. Has its own style"*, *"One of the oldest places in Sakarya"* and *"Give up your prejudices and sit down and have a drink with a view of Konur Street. You won't regret it"*, by emphasizing their strategic location within the city. The reviews, *"The place that hasn't changed for years"*, *"Continued since 2017..."* and *"It has been like my home in Ankara for years. It always tells you that this is where you belong with its warmth, good taste in music, and the feeling of trust inside"* represent the sustainable experience that these venues offer to their visitors. These reviews highlight the accessibility and engagement opportunities that these venues offer to their visitors. As Waxman et al. (2007) emphasize, spatial continuity and familiar atmosphere play a critical role in creating a sense of community in third places. Based on visitor reviews, it is ap-

parent that these spaces function as consistently accessible leisure spaces for members of subcultures in urban life.

The reviews in the "price policy" category reveal the economic accessibility dimension of the venues. Oldenburg and Brissett's (1982) emphasis on the "democratic" nature of third places overlaps with the economic accessibility of these spaces. The reviews, *"It is one of the favorite places in Ankara with very reasonable prices. The staff is also very attentive"* and *"The prices are very good. Long Island was 40 liras. Great atmosphere for those who like rock music. For those who don't like rock music, the prices are great"* indicate that the venues offer affordable options. Similarly, reviews such as *"The prices are very reasonable and the music is great"*, *"It's a good quality bar that hasn't changed for years and is student-friendly"* and *"Very cheap, shabby atmosphere"* emphasize the budget-friendly aspects of these venues. These reviews highlight how these venues serve as inclusive social spaces, appealing to metal music fans from a variety of economic backgrounds through their price policies. The economic accessibility of these venues makes them social spaces that are regularly preferred, especially by the student population.

The findings of the "accessibility and affordability" theme, in which the physical and economic accessibility features of these venues are revealed, are broadly compatible with the characteristics of Oldenburg's (1999) concept of third place. Strategically located in Kızılay district of Ankara, around Sakarya Street and Konur Street, these venues offer aspects like spatial continuity and familiar atmosphere, which Waxman et al. (2007) argue are essential for strengthening community belonging in third places. The long-term preservation of the existence and character of these spaces contributes immensely to their role as sustainable leisure spaces for subcultural community members. In accordance with Oldenburg and Brissett's (1982) explanation of the "democratic" nature of third places, these venues follow a pricing policy that is accessible to different socio-economic groups, especially to the student population.

¹ Neo-tribes represent ephemeral social configurations founded on dynamic consumption patterns and momentary affective bonds, distinguished by their emphasis on shared sensibilities and experiences rather

than enduring commitments or ideological positions (Kahn-Harris, 2007).

The location of these spaces in the urban center of Ankara aligns with Oldenburg's (1999) important spatial factors for the sustainability of third places, thus supporting ongoing processes of participation and community building. The strategic location, stable history, and affordability of these spaces combine with Adu's (2024) elements of "accessible cultural spaces" to ensure the sustainability of cultural participation. Furthermore, Shank's (1994) investigation of the local music scene situates the urban location as a dynamic space where multiple musical narratives intersect and evolve simultaneously. Overall, the findings of this theme reveal that these venues, while preserving their subcultural authenticity, provide economic accessibility for members of the subculture and function as third places for leisure due to their strategic location.

Equitable Environment and Inclusion

Visitor reviews evaluated under the categories of "diversity" and "insignificance of status differences" reveal the characteristic features of the venues that foster social interaction. Oldenburg's (1999) "equalizing" and "inclusive" qualities for third places provide an explanation for the social interaction dynamics of these spaces. In the context of diversity, the review, *"I go there since 2009. Sometimes crowded and lively, sometimes solitary. Although the entrance part is a bit bad, the jukebox, the decoration of the walls, and the lights are very nice"* is a representative example for the openness of these venues to different visitor profiles. In terms of the insignificance of status differences, the review, *"I'm 30 years old; now we go in suits where we used to go in band t-shirts. So has our enjoyment decreased? Of course not; it's still the same quality, the same smiling faces, and the same quality music"* emphasizes the inclusive character of these venues regardless of social status. These reviews show that these venues offer an accessible socializing space for different social segments. According to Oldenburg (1999), third places are public spaces that enable their patrons to convene on equal terms, free from social status differences. In this context, it is clearly observed that the egalitarian and inclusive atmosphere of the analyzed venues plays an important

role in strengthening the social bonds of the sub-cultural community.

Reviews within the category of "acceptance" represent a further significant aspect that reinforces the third place function of these venues. Visitors perceive third places as "home-like" environments that satisfy their emotional needs, fostering stronger community ties (Alexander, 2019). At this point, the reviews, *"All in all, it's an awesome bar because the prices are cheaper than most others there, and you can go in even if you're by yourself because most bars in Ankara only let couples in"*, *"It's a perfect place where there is respect, love, and friendliness and where people feel peaceful and safe"* and *"The music is nice and the staff is friendly. It is a good place to hang out alone or with friends"* reveal the welcoming and embracing nature of the venues. As Oldenburg (2013) notes, the inclusive and safe atmosphere of third places supports community building and the strengthening of social bonds. These reviews demonstrate that these venues create an open and safe environment for visitors from different social groups. Visitor reviews reveal that the inclusive atmosphere of these spaces plays a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of the subcultural community and encouraging the participation of new members. In addition, the safe and comfortable environment offered by these venues serves as an essential ground for different social groups to meet and interact.

The findings of the "equitable environment and inclusiveness" theme are compatible with Oldenburg's (1999) framework of third places that minimize social distinctions and enable individuals from different segments to interact on equal terms, which Oldenburg (1999) describes as "leveling". The findings reveal that these venues are analogous to the spaces described by Williams and Hannerz (2014) as subcultural spaces, which eliminate traditional social barriers while at the same time preserving their unique character. The fact that these spaces are able to welcome people from various social strata, ranging from "casual" visitors to regulars, is in line with Alexander's (2019) view that third places offer not only entertainment options, but also function as "home-like" environments that fulfill emotional needs. This inclusive atmosphere and hospitable attitudes, particularly toward lone visitors, embody Oldenburg's (2013)

emphasis on community building and the strengthening of social bonds. At the same time, while preserving their subcultural authenticity, these venues also offer an environment that visitors can experience without feeling alienated, exemplifying what McLeod (2024) refers to as the adaptive nature of music². Through its emphasis on inclusivity and cultural spaces, both physical and virtual, the scene framework illuminates the interconnected nature of participant relationships and collective memory-making (Lutz, 2022). Concisely, the findings of this theme reveal that the analyzed venues go beyond being just music venues and continue to exist as egalitarian and inclusive spaces where subcultural identity is exhibited.

Regular Visitors and Belonging

Visitor reviews evaluated under the categories of "regularity" and "loyalty" emphasize the features that reinforce the third place function of these venues. Oldenburg's (1999) description of third places as "the presence of regulars" is one of the main elements that shape the social fabric of these spaces. In the context of regularity, the reviews, *"We have been regulars for 10 years. I guess we will be here when we get old :) Always is our home; Mustafa Abi is our pioneer"* and *"I've been a regular for a year, the only rock bar in Ankara. Sometimes I even go there just to listen to the music"*, expose the long-term visitor loyalty to the venues. Regular customers in third places form social bonds that enhance their loyalty to these spaces (Rosenbaum, 2006). In terms of loyalty, reviews such as *"I visit every time I come to Ankara; this place is indispensable for me"* and *"I go every week; I have a friendship with the staff"* emphasize the unique meanings of these venues for regular visitors. These reviews indicate that these venues constitute more than simply entertainment venues for their regulars, as they are socializing spaces that create a strong sense of belonging. The strong bond between the venues and their regular customers clearly plays a major role in making these venues an indispensable part of everyday life for the members of the subcultural community.

Reviews in the categories of "nostalgia" and "characteristic atmosphere" reveal further significant aspects that reinforce the third place character of these venues. The characteristic atmosphere and continuous nature of third places play a critical role in the formation and strengthening of community identity (Calvert, 2019). In the context of nostalgia, the reviews, *"It is a pleasant place where you can feel Türkiye of 2006-2007. The prices are also very reasonable"* and *"I went 15 years ago; it seems like it hasn't changed at all. Only the music is sometimes loud"* emphasize the continuity and unchanging character of the places over time. In terms of the characteristic atmosphere, the reviews, *"It could be called an underground place that my friend took me to"* and *"It is a great place with its music and atmosphere. It's always playing rock music; it's like a rock bar"* demonstrate the unique atmosphere created by these venues. These reviews reveal that the venues offer their visitors a continuous and unique socializing experience. The nostalgic and characteristic atmosphere of the venues is perceived to be a determining factor in the continuity of the subcultural community and in gaining a differentiated identity in urban life. This atmosphere fortifies the visitors' emotional attachment and sense of belonging to the space, positioning these venues as a distinctive third place in urban life.

The findings of the "regular visitors and belonging" theme are consistent with Rosenbaum's (2006) emphasis on the importance of regular customers in building and sustaining the social fabric of third places. In this context, the findings reveal that the spatial interactions of persons defined by Oldenburg (1999) as "regulars" (those who visit the venues on a regular basis) build emotional attachment and community belonging. Similarly, Robinson and Spracklen's (2019) examination of local leisure spaces in Yorkshire Dales revealed how scene regulars cultivated a deepening sense of belonging as they transitioned from strangers to connected participants who shared musical insights and event information. The social bonds formed among regulars increase their loyalty to the venue and contribute to the development of a strong sense of belonging (Rosenbaum, 2006). Visitors' feedback

² Music as an adaptive system is a dynamic network of interconnected elements, including musicians, listeners, industry stakeholders, technology, economic structures, and cultural contexts (McLeod, 2024).

highlights the special meaning of the venues for the regulars, showing that these venues are not only entertainment venues but also socializing spaces that strengthen their sense of loyalty, thus becoming an indispensable part of the daily lives of subculture members. Subculture members' expressions about the spaces reflect Bennett and Rogers' (2016) findings on how music venues foster belonging, while Emms (2018) emphasizes that similar venues have become an integral part of the participants' subcultural cohesion thanks to the nostalgic and emotional ties they create. The preservation of the unique qualities of these venues, which enable long-term regularity, reveals the integration of subcultural authenticity with the notion of sustainable community building in a highly compatible manner. This is consistent with Moss et al.'s (2023) emphasis on the role of third places in terms of both preserving subcultural identity and ensuring community evolution. Conclusively, the findings of this theme show that the analyzed venues assume a multifunctional role in terms of preserving subcultural memory and maintaining relationships within the community.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study conducted an in-depth investigation of subcultural leisure experiences in metal music venues in Ankara by analyzing and interpreting user reviews in the Google Maps application in the context of Oldenburg's (1999) "third place" paradigm. A lack of comprehensive understanding of the role of subcultural spaces in non-Western urban environments, particularly in terms of their contributions to identity formation and social cohesion within subcultural communities, formed the rationale for this research. It was aimed to uncover the role of metal music venues in Ankara as third places in facilitating and supporting subcultural leisure activities. By focusing on Always Rock Bar, Onaon Café, and Papaz Rock Bar, the local expressions of metal subculture in Ankara were exemplified. The findings emphasize the importance of these venues as central meeting places where subcultural identities and social networks are manifested, underlining the relevance of the "third place" paradigm in this context. Furthermore, this study offers valuable insights into the dynamics of

subcultures in urban spaces in non-Western contexts, contributing to a broader global understanding of subculture.

The qualitative content analysis of the user reviews revealed four key themes that highlight the multifunctional importance of these venues for the subcultural community. Firstly, the social interaction and unique atmosphere in these venues were found to contribute significantly to the formation, maintenance, and strengthening of subcultural identity. Visitors emphasized the friendly and open environment that allows them to connect with like-minded people, which not only strengthens community identity but also fosters new social bonds. Secondly, the findings revealed that the high accessibility and suitability of these venues due to their central location in Kızılay district and their affordable price structure significantly contribute to minimizing barriers to participation. This aligns with the characteristics of third places, according to Oldenburg, which are characterized by neutrality, openness, and the promotion of informal social interactions. Thirdly, the analysis showed that the venues promote an egalitarian environment and inclusion by negating social status differences and welcoming visitors regardless of their social background or individual characteristics.

Furthermore, the presence of regulars and the sense of loyalty derived from this also play a central role in the functionality of these venues as third places. Several visitors have reported longstanding patronage and a deep emotional connection to these venues, which supports the sustainability of these places as social meeting places. Relationships with other regulars and staff deepened the sense of belonging and contributed to transforming the venues into essential places for the subcultural community. Finally, the reviews emphasized the importance of nostalgia and the characteristic atmosphere of the venues, creating a sense of permanence and familiarity in an ever-changing urban environment. The unchanging atmosphere over the years allows visitors to connect with the history and traditions of the subcultural community, fostering a sense of continuity and cohesion.

The scholarly contributions of this study are multifaceted and significant for the fields of sociology of leisure and music. In this context, the study expands the existing body of knowledge in these fields by demonstrating how metal music venues in Ankara function as third places and contribute to subcultural identity formation as well as social cohesion. Consequently, it enriches the existing body of literature on subcultures by emphasizing the importance of physical spaces for the maintenance and development of subcultural communities. Additionally, the study contributes to the advancement of the "third place" paradigm by demonstrating its applicability to subcultural leisure activities in the digital era and illustrating that third places remain central to social interactions and community building despite the advance of digitalization. It also highlights the role of user-generated digital data as a valuable source for researching social phenomena and capturing authentic and diverse perspectives from visitors.

Based on the findings of this study, there are several recommendations for future research in this area. Firstly, further studies should be conducted in different geographical and cultural contexts to examine the transferability of the findings and to identify possible cultural differences or similarities. In this context, studies in other cities or within other subcultures could help to develop a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the role of third places in subcultural communities. Secondly, there is a suggestion to strive for methodological triangulation in similar studies by combining digital data with traditional ethnographic methods such as participant observation and qualitative interviews. This would enable a deeper understanding of subcultural dynamics and capture the complexity of interactions and experiences among subculture members more comprehensively. Thirdly, the interaction between digital and physical spaces should be further investigated, especially with regard to the impact of digitalization on subcultural participation, identity formation, and community building issues, which are essential in an increasingly networked world. Furthermore, while the utilization of online reviews as a data source necessitates caution due to potential social influence and selection biases inherent in online review systems, future research should remain aware of these limitations and

employ methodological diversification to present a more comprehensive and valid picture of subcultural phenomena.

In conclusion, this study has impressively demonstrated the central importance of music venues in Ankara as third places for subcultural leisure and community building. It provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of subcultural spaces in urban environments and creates a sound basis for further research in this significant and fascinating area. The insights gained emphatically underline the need to recognize, support, and protect subcultural spaces as an integral part of urban life and cultural diversity. Besides being relevant for the understanding of subcultures from the perspective of the sociology of leisure and music, these findings also contribute to enriching the social discourse on cultural diversity, social inclusion, and the importance of informal social spaces in contemporary urban environments.

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