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CANCELLING CULTURE

Cancel Culture in Turkey's Cultural Production and Circulation

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The field of cultural production and the circulation of cultural forms has long been a site of debate and contestation. It is often associated with the emergence of progressive, provocative, and unconventional ideas that have shaped intellectual life throughout history. In Turkey, this sphere has been a particular source of tension, both because of the cultural influences it draws from and because it often involves events that bring together large crowds, making it an area with which the state has often felt uneasy.

Although this domain has always been a contested field throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, the current ruling party, AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - Justice and Development Party), has placed a particular emphasis on it, as it sees this as an area in which it has been seeking to establish hegemony, but has not succeeded. This has been openly stated by the party's leader and the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (AK Parti, 2020). Given that the party has been in charge since 2002, the struggle has been going on for more than 20 years.

The term "Cancel culture", which refers to a digitalised form of public shaming and boycott, has started to be used with the widespread use of social media. Due to the ease and convenience of participation through online platforms, cancel culture has been effective to some extent, particularly in the field of cultural production and circulation in Turkey. In this paper, "cultural production and circulation" refers to the production, circulation, and public presentation of artistic works with a primary focus on concerts, festivals, exhibitions, other public cultural events, and the artists involved in them. The power struggle between various actors in the field of cultural production and circulation has also shifted to online platforms, with cancel culture being one of its tools, which has proven to be effective in this domain considering the consequences.

The main reason for its effectiveness and its result-driven nature is the instrumentalisation of cancel culture by the government.

This paper examines cancel culture in Turkey, analysing its processes, mechanisms, actors, effects and consequences, especially on cultural production and circulation, also dissecting how the government is exploiting these mechanisms according to its own agenda in its attempt to establish hegemony in this domain.

The paper first provides a brief definition of cancel culture, outlines the main arguments and critiques around the phenomenon, highlights the particularities of the Turkish context, and briefly mentions the lynching practices in Turkey's history to provide a background. It then analyses selected cases of cancelled cultural events to understand the dynamics and effects before drawing conclusions. In this paper, cancel culture is mostly treated as an analytic tool rather than discussing whether it is beneficial or harmful to society in general.

What is Cancel Culture?

Cancel culture is a highly contested phenomenon. There are different views, some of which overlap, even though they come from opposite ends of the political spectrum. The debate has attracted commentary from prominent figures, ranging from former and current U.S. Presidents to the Pope and Slavoj Žižek. I start with a technical definition of the term. Cancel culture is often conceptualised as a form of digitally mediated public shaming and boycott, generally ignited by a call-out and involving the collective withdrawal of support from individuals or institutions perceived as problematic (Ng, 2022, p. 2), with the aim of the target being boycotted, ostracized or shunned. It can be understood as both a contemporary mechanism of social control (Özer, 2025, p. 53) and a form of agency exercised by marginalised groups to demand decentralised accountability (Clark, 2020; Nakamura, 2015). Before outlining the

arguments surrounding the subject, I will refer to processes of classification, boundary-making, and the subjective nature of the concept through an anthropological lens, drawing on Mary Douglas and interpret cancel culture as a modern, digital form of a purification practice aiming to maintain social order.

The anthropological book *Purity and Danger*, written by Mary Douglas after studying the habits, rituals and beliefs of several indigenous societies, gives us meaningful insights which we can use to explain the behaviours and underlying motives of today's societies. In her book, Douglas derives some principles from the relationship people have with dirt, pollution, and purification. According to Douglas, "there is no such thing as absolute dirt, it exists in the eye of the beholder [...] Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it [...] is an effort to organise the environment" (Douglas, 1966, p. 2), and she argues that dirt should not be considered an isolated event; rather, it is the outcome of a system of order and classification, and thus belongs to the realm of symbolism (Douglas, 1966, pp. 35–36). Ideas about pollution are not solely used to eliminate what is considered dirty; they are also used to define and protect social order. Through these ideas, people come to define what is acceptable and what should be excluded in order to maintain meaning and order (Douglas, 1966). In her own words, "our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications" (Douglas, 1966, p. 37). Therefore, separating, purifying and demarcating is not just about punishing transgressions, but maintaining the moral and symbolic boundaries of society. Societies do not only protect moral codes because they are considered right, but also by producing the belief that there will be consequences for those who do not comply with these codes (Douglas, 1966).

Douglas argues that culture provides a framework through which individuals organise ideas and experiences. As investment in these classificatory systems increases, facts that challenge established assumptions are often ignored or distorted, while ambiguous and unstructured elements provoke attempts to reduce uncertainty and protect the existing order (Douglas, 1966, pp. 36–38). From this perspective, canceling is directed at what is identified as a person, behaviour or attitude that violates these classifications, rather than solely at the violation of a universally agreed norm. The removal or exclusion of such individuals functions as a means of maintaining a particular moral order by reinforcing the boundaries through which that order is defined. These boundaries are drawn and enforced by different actors, sometimes by marginalised groups and at other times by dominant majorities.

Controversies around Cancel Culture

The controversies surrounding cancel culture have been expressed in various forms, but they are primarily structured around two opposing positions: those who argue that it gives voice to marginalised communities, and those who view it as repressive due to its potential negative impact on free speech and open debate. It is often framed as a mechanism through which underrepresented groups seek accountability from those in power, particularly when justice is perceived as inaccessible or insufficient through conventional channels. At the same time, as this mechanism can provoke reactions to new, provocative approaches, it also has the potential to generate a form of self-censorship and discourage the expression of unconventional and challenging ideas that are essential for the development of intellectual and cultural life. There are also arguments highlighting its unproductive nature, its ineffectiveness in producing meaningful social change, its association with cyberbullying, and its tendency to deepen polarisation. Critiques also emerge from a justice perspective, pointing to concerns such as the lack of the

right to self-defence and the disproportionality of punishment. In this paper, I focus on the two main positions - the view that cancel culture empowers marginalised groups and the view that it threatens free speech - while introducing a third dimension by approaching cancel culture as a power struggle and examining the involvement of political actors in this process.

Given that social fields are sites of ongoing power struggles that may be shaped by historical inequalities, where social consensus may not yet have been reached and dominant groups may exercise disproportionate influence, minorities, progressive groups and other marginalised actors do not always have the opportunity for a fair fight. As an example, it is difficult to deny that this mechanism has elevated the campaigns against sexual abuse and harassment of women all around the world, in a realm where legal systems often fall short of addressing such cases effectively due to the difficulties of evidence, proof, reporting, and institutional biases. On the other hand, it is a legitimate concern that due to the nature of this struggle some of the consequences might negatively affect the social field, may restrict free speech and discourage the expression of unconventional and challenging ideas. Also, it is a domain in which those in power can get involved either explicitly, as Donald Trump has publicly called for boycotts and dismissals of individuals (CNN, 2020), or implicitly, as the AKP's instrumentalisation and manipulation of the mechanism to serve its agenda for manufacturing consent, or creating the perception of consent, for its intrusion into cultural production and the circulation of cultural forms in Turkey, which we will address in detail later in this paper.

To illustrate the two position of the discussions, we can refer to "A Letter on Justice and Open Debate" which has been signed by 153 public figures and published in Harper's Magazine (2020), defending free speech and criticizing what they described as "illiberalism" spreading across society. For the counter argument we can refer to "A More Specific Letter on Justice and

Open Debate" (2020) signed by over 160 people in academia and media as a response to the former, criticizing the Harper's letter as a plea to end cancel culture by successful professionals with large platforms who wanted to exclude others who have been "canceled for generations".

To conclude this section, it is important to acknowledge that cancel culture is not a flawless mechanism and carries its own limitations, risks, and contradictions. Therefore, it should be approached with caution and critical reflection.

The Turkish Context

Before turning to a detailed examination of cancel culture's effects on cultural production and circulation in Turkey, I briefly outline the characteristics of the Turkish context and the historical relationship between lynching practices and political power in order to clarify the dynamics at play.

Since the political sphere in Turkey has been highly polarized in recent decades, most controversies that lead to cancelling processes are based on the expression of political views. This dynamic emerges from both sides of the political spectrum. One other dynamic worth mentioning is that provocative ideas that run counter to traditional values are increasingly less expressed, as they often become subject to legal proceedings. Another is that the non-expression of views can also provoke reactions on certain issues at the centre of public debate, where support is often expected from public figures such as artists and intellectuals.

One of the areas where social media reactions, often leading to call-outs and cancellations, are most intense is violence against women. This is not surprising in a context where women's position in society, their protection by the police and their legal safeguards remain highly problematic. As a result, both domestic and non-domestic violence against women are widespread. Since this is a topic that deserves to be argued extensively on its own, I will

briefly give one example that I find meaningful in illustrating how those in power portray women in society. The then-Deputy Prime Minister and government spokesperson Bülent Arınç stated that women "should not laugh out loud in public" (Hürriyet, 2014).

In Turkey, the judiciary has been increasingly instrumentalised under the authoritarian AKP regime. As a result, public trust in the justice system has declined to very low levels, with recent survey-based estimates ranging between 21% and 36%, as reported by multiple research organisations and covered in the media (ASAL, 2025, as reported in T24; Gündemar, 2026, as reported in Kısa Dalga; Panorama, 2025, as reported in Enternasyonal Dayanışma). In this context, allegations of violence and harassment against women can also lead to acts of cancellation alongside formal legal processes, as there is little confidence that such cases will be handled fairly even when they reach the courts. Such high levels of distrust make the mechanisms of cancel culture more meaningful, particularly for those with limited access to power, not only women's rights advocates but also broader segments of society.

However, cancelling attempts remain relatively limited in Turkey, due to increasing control and pressure over social media, which is largely used for entertainment and everyday communication. Moreover, as political correctness is not widely observed, the ability of such processes to produce results is also limited, with the exception of cases related to cultural production and circulation, which will be discussed in detail later in this paper.

Turkey also has a history of lynching, with cancelling at times reproducing similar dynamics in a digitalised form. There have been many lynching incidents in the past, targeting minorities, some of which have escalated into massacres and pogroms, such as Greeks and Armenians (Istanbul, 1955), Alevi communities (Kahramanmaraş, 1978; Çorum, 1980), Kurds (Bozüyük, 2005) and artists and intellectuals (Sivas, 1993), as well as hundreds of other lynching

incidents (Bora, 2008). These high-profile cases are often discussed in the literature as having taken place within a broader historical pattern in which lynching practices have been tolerated, insufficiently addressed, or at times implicitly instrumentalised by those in power. As Bora (2008) notes: “The broad tolerance of authorities, the granting of an extraordinarily wide ‘right to be provoked’ to lynch mobs, and, at times, the benevolent treatment of these groups as if they were quasi-legal militias constitute a crucial dimension of lynching in Turkey […] the broader picture points to the ‘functionalisation’ of lynching in Turkey as a method of crisis management and a form of extraordinary governance ” A further illustration can be found in a 2008 statement by then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who commented on a lynching incident in Istanbul: “If you smash the windows of a citizen’s shop, if you threaten that citizen’s life, then that citizen, if they have the means and the opportunity to do so, will also resort to defending themselves.” (Cumhuriyet, 2008).

Further examples of lynching incidents targeting artists, as discussed by Bora (2008), can be observed across different periods and contexts. In 1999, during an awards ceremony, Ahmet Kaya was subjected to a widely publicised attack, after expressing his intention to produce a Kurdish-language song and became the target of sustained public hostility. In 2009, prior to a concert by pianist İdil Biret at Topkapı Palace, members of the Alperen Ocakları, a nationalist and conservative group, raided the venue on the grounds that alcohol was being consumed, burning posters and attempting to disrupt the event. The 2010 attack on an art gallery opening in Tophane, carried out by local residents, has also been discussed as a case displaying typical lynching characteristics, even when not explicitly labelled as such. More recently, artists such as Sezen Aksu and Fazıl Say have been subjected to widespread public backlash and coordinated

online harassment due to their political positions and public statements, demonstrating the persistence of similar dynamics in digitalised forms.

Cancel Culture in Turkey's Cultural Field

The cultural production and circulation sphere, in terms of its qualitative contribution to society, has historically occupied a relatively marginal position in Turkey. However, high levels of public engagement with popular artists, mainly for entertainment purposes, have rendered it a visible domain, subject to ongoing power struggles, some of which take place on online platforms in the form of cancel culture. Examining a number of incidents, these cancellation attempts can be categorised based on the type of processes, actors involved, reasons for reaction and the symmetry of the power struggle, allowing the dynamics and effects of this mechanism to become clearer.

Processes driven by society

Based on how cancellation processes unfold, the first category consists of cases where the process is initiated and carried out by societal actors, where neither the judicial system nor state authorities are involved. These processes generally proceed through horizontal power dynamics, if the target is not strongly aligned with or protected by the ruling power or does not occupy a privileged position in society.

One of the reasons for cancellation in this category is misconduct, where the targeted individual is believed to have engaged in harmful or inappropriate behaviour towards someone or a particular segment of society. These cases generally involve allegations of abuse or violence towards women, employees or colleagues, as well as insults directed at a group or a segment of society. An example is Hasan Ali Toptaş, an acclaimed author, who faced widespread cancellation following public allegations of harassment by multiple women, which he later

acknowledged. Some of his awards were withdrawn, his publishers terminated their contracts and he has remained largely absent from the public domain since (Bianet, 2020).

Another reason for cancellation can be categorised as political, where the targeted individual is subject to backlash due to openly expressed political views. As the political domain in Turkey is highly polarised, there are numerous incidents that fall into this category. A recent example is Abdülkadir Özkan, one of the partners of the promoter company DBL, who posted a tweet insulting those participating in a boycott campaign initiated by opposition leader Özgür Özel, targeting government-controlled media and companies. This triggered an intense cancellation campaign, which eventually reached Muse, the internationally renowned rock band whose upcoming Istanbul concert was being promoted by DBL, ultimately leading the band to cancel their concert in Turkey (BBC Türkçe, 2025). Ane Brun also cancelled her show promoted by the same company, which eventually led to the cancellation of several upcoming events, including Trevor Noah's show (Euronews, 2025) and ultimately to the dissolution of the company.

Another reason for cancellation is interference with artistic content, in which an artist or a company involved in the circulation of artistic production intervenes in content in order to avoid negative reactions from the government or traditional segments of society, which often act in tandem. In the case of the İstanbul Bienali, the selection of the curator sparked significant controversy, as it was perceived to have bypassed established internal procedures and norms of transparency. Following intense public backlash, particularly across social media and within the art community, criticisms quickly evolved into a broader questioning of institutional governance and accountability. Open letters, statements by artists and collective reactions amplified the

pressure on the organisers. In response, the biennial was postponed by one year, with the institution acknowledging the need to reassess its processes (Artdog Istanbul, 2024).

While there are numerous other incidents that fall under this category, these cases illustrate how sustained public pressure can directly shape the cultural field, in the absence of formal state or judicial intervention.

Processes Accompanying Judicial Proceedings

Another category, in terms of process, consists of cases in which society either initiates the process, which eventually becomes the subject of judicial proceedings, or calls for cancellation during and after proceedings initiated by the complainant. In the cultural production and circulation sphere, these mainly consist of cancellation cases arising from misconduct, particularly abuse and violence against women. The persistence of cancellation efforts, even after allegations become subject to judicial proceedings, can be linked to widespread mistrust in the judicial system, alongside a broader perception that male offenders are often favoured within it, from law enforcement practices to sentencing, including the application of mitigating circumstances (Women for Women's Human Rights Association, 2021; Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation, 2021). As a result, society feels the need to put pressure on the judicial system for a fair trial, if not maintaining justice through additional informal social sanctions, whose effectiveness depends on the targeted individual’s alignment with the ruling power. In some cases, such as that of actor Ahmet Kural, was chosen to play the lead role in a series by the government-controlled state television channel TRT after being convicted of assaulting Sıla, an acclaimed pop singer who was then his partner, despite intense calls for cancellation.

Another category in the cultural production and circulation sphere accompanying judicial proceedings involves artists targeted by the government for expressing views or acting against

"national and moral values", which can be considered political. These intimidation attempts are relatively widespread, but only those initiated through online platforms fall within the scope of this paper. Artists become subjects of judicial proceedings due to their views, stage costumes and performances, or lyrics, following campaigns initiated by ultra-conservative groups mostly invoking pro-Sharia rhetoric (Yeni Yaşam, 2022). This dynamic is examined in detail in the following section.

In contrast to the "Processes driven by society" category, state authorities emerge as an additional actor in these processes. Power dynamics may take either a horizontal or vertical form, depending on the involvement of the government, whereas the judiciary is not treated as an actor within the cancellation process in this discussion.

Processes Instrumentalised by the Government

The final category consists of processes that are instrumentalised by the government in pursuit of cultural hegemony and the regulation of ways of life, operating through vertical power relations and positioning the state as an authoritative actor. These are processes in which the government works in tandem with ultra-conservative groups to bring about the cancellation of cultural events. The need to mobilise cancellation mechanisms through such groups stems from the lack of sufficient legal grounds to pursue these interventions through the judicial system, as well as the need to maintain the appearance of broader societal consent.

In recent years, this has taken the form of a recurring practice, with the government cancelling dozens of festivals and concerts every year, including 16 events in the summer of 2022 alone (Gazete Duvar, 2022). Whereas university spring festivals were once a common feature of campus life across Turkey during the 2000s and early 2010s, many universities have either cancelled, restricted or transformed into far more limited events in recent years. Some of

these cancellations are formally justified through the refusal to grant permits on grounds such as security, public order, traffic, and environmental concerns, many of which appear questionable. Although such decisions are often not preceded by public calls for cancellation, they frequently receive online support from ultra-conservative groups once they are announced. However, in a number of cases, such justifications are difficult to sustain, for instance, where events are held in fully licensed venues or follow the same format and take place in the same location where they have been organised for years without issue. These are the situations in which the instrumentalisation of cancellation mechanisms becomes most apparent. While the underlying reasons for the government's instrumentalisation of these mechanisms will be examined in the next section, one example can be outlined here as a template for similar cases.

In February 2026, two heavy metal concerts scheduled to take place at Zorlu PSM, one of Istanbul's most prominent concert venues, were cancelled by the District Governor's Office following a statement that "the events have led to reactions from various segments of society on the grounds that they are incompatible with social values" (Oksijen, 2026). Prior to the decision, both groups had been publicly targeted by ultra-conservative groups, with calls for the cancellation of their concerts based on allegations that they were "Satanist."

These practices can be interpreted as instances of governmental instrumentalisation for two main reasons. First, in democratic systems, administrative decisions are expected to be grounded in legal frameworks rather than vague references to "social values". Second, the ultra-conservative groups whose reactions are invoked in such decisions represent a relatively small segment of society. Based on research published in February 2025 by Pew Research Center, only around 11% of respondents in Turkey were classified as "religious nationalists." According to this research, respondents were assessed as "religious nationalists" in the Turkish context, based

on criteria such as an emphasis on a Turkish–Islamic identity, sharing the same religion as the national leader, support for the influence of the Qur'an on laws, and prioritising the Qur'an in cases where it conflicts with the will of the people.

The fact that groups such as İlim Yayma Cemiyeti, Müdafaa-i İslam Hareketi, and Milli Gençlik Vakfı, which fit the definition used in the Pew Research study but do not necessarily represent a broad societal consensus, are nevertheless invoked by the government in the cancellation of dozens of cultural events each year suggests that this mechanism is being instrumentalised by the government (Diken, 2022; İYC, 2022; BirGün, 2022). The close relationship between some of these organisations and the political establishment is further illustrated by the fact that Bilal Erdoğan, the son of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, serves as the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the İlim Yayma Vakfı, a foundation established by the İlim Yayma Cemiyeti (İlim Yayma Vakfı, n.d.; Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi, n.d.), which has also played an active role in calls for the cancellation of festivals in Anatolian cities. The same pattern has been repeatedly applied in recent years, resulting not only in the cancellation of numerous events but also in the targeting of artists and intellectuals, often leading to their exclusion from events in which they were scheduled to participate, with some also being subjected to judicial proceedings on the grounds of their views or elements of their artistic expression, including stage performances, clothing, song lyrics or scripts (T24, 2023; DW, 2025; Euronews 2025).

Instrumentalization by The Government

In order to understand the government's instrumentalization of this mechanism, we need to examine the rationale behind it. Although it is commonly accepted that the AKP falls under the category of an electoral authoritarian regime and is founded on conservative, traditional and

Islamic values, which provides some insight into its motivations, it is still worth looking more closely at why it has persistently and systematically targeted the sphere of cultural production and circulation, despite its relatively limited role within the broader public sphere.

Drawing on Victor Turner, festivals and similar gatherings can be understood as liminal spaces, as they are “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Turner, 1969, p. 95). Turner argues that liminality can be found in collective experiences that temporarily suspend the ordinary structures of social life. He sees festivals and similar events as existing outside the regular structures of social life, where hierarchies and classificatory systems are temporarily suspended and participants enter a condition of communitas. He argues that communitas is characterised by comradeship, anonymity, egalitarianism, and the temporary absence of status and rank. Such liminal phenomena may be considered “dangerous and anarchical” (Turner, 1969, p. 109) by those responsible for maintaining order. Such environments generate a powerful sense of collective belonging and shared experience, enabling forms of freedom, solidarity and emotional intensity that are otherwise constrained within structured social life.

Turner also incorporates Douglas's (1966) discussion of classification and pollution into his analysis of liminality, arguing that entities which fall between established classificatory boundaries are frequently regarded as “polluting” and “dangerous” (Turner, 1969, p. 109). In this sense, communitas and liminal phenomena introduce forms of social experience that, particularly for an authority enforcing a conservative moral order such as the AKP in the Turkish context, may be perceived as destabilising, and therefore in need of regulation, restriction or suppression.

Although this paper does not draw on formal ethnographic fieldwork, over nearly three decades of organising concerts and festivals in multiple cities across Turkey, I have observed

that these events function more than sites of entertainment, especially in a society where the pressure on public sphere is constatly increasing. These environments constitute one of the few realms in which young people can express themselves freely, socialise with large numbers of peers, enjoy anonymity while being out in the open surrounded by masses and be guided primarily by the norms of like-minded individuals.Within these spaces, they can act and dress as they wish, become intoxicated, dance exuberantly, sing out loud, scream and shout collectively and engage in flirtatious interaction. At the same time, they are able to encounter and engage with their idols, the artists, while remaining largely free from familial, societal and authoritative pressures, fostering a sense of belonging to a broader, even global, community and alternative sociality, precisely the kind of experience that the AKP seeks to constrain.

Additionally, as noted at the beginning of this paper, the AKP believes that it has established political hegemony but not cultural hegemony, and it seeks to change this situation. This objective was also openly expressed by one of the regime's most prominent figures in recent years, Fahrettin Altun, the then Head of Communications, who stated: "Your political hegemony has ended; your cultural hegemony will end as well" (Yeni Şafak, 2023). Although the AKP has established political dominance during more than twenty years in power, the gap between political control and cultural influence remains significant. Without a corresponding degree of cultural influence, political dominance may struggle to secure the broader social consent necessary for its long-term stability. Therefore, their interventions in cultural production and circulation can also be interpreted through this perspective.

This power struggle also has a historical background. Since the Republic of Turkey was designed as a Western-oriented, secular modernisation project, many Islamic references were replaced and Western values, aesthetics and disciplines became the primary sources of aspiration

in arts and culture. This has long been a source of tension between conservative Islamic factions and secular groups. Conversly, as an early example predating the AKP, the controversy surrounding the planned Itri (legendary 17th-century Ottoman-Turkish musician, composer and poet regarded as the master of Turkish classical music) concert in 1971, which was ultimately blocked after being framed as incompatible with the ideological foundations of the Republic, illustrates the resistance of the founding state ideology toward Ottoman-Turkish musical heritage (Yeni Şafak, 2022).

The AKP, during its time in power, can be seen as acting in a revanchist manner, seeking to establish cultural hegemony by actively targeting and dismantling the dominance and practices of a Western-oriented cultural sphere, particularly in areas where it has not been able to replace them with alternative cultural forms. It has managed to bring television series largely into line through a combination of control over mainstream media channels, regulatory mechanisms such as RTÜK and judicial pressures that function as a deterrent for actors and managers. However, it has not achieved any tangible success in other cultural domains and almost none in the field of music.

As a populist party that consistently grounds its legitimacy in electoral outcomes, that is, consent, it also seeks to frame the cancellation of cultural events as being similarly grounded in consent. It is in this context that cancel culture becomes a particularly effective tool in creating the perception that there is consent behind these repressive practices.

Conclusion

Although cancel culture often struggles to produce effective outcomes for some of the reasons discussed above, it appears to be considerably more effective in the field of cultural

production and the circulation of cultural forms in Turkey due to the government's involvement in cancellation processes. This distinctiveness was the main reason that drew me to this topic.

As discussed throughout the paper, the government can explicitly or implicitly become a participant in cancellation practices and drive outcomes in line with its own agenda. Beyond direct involvement, when a controversy becomes politically sensitive or the government feels the need to intervene, the effectiveness of cancellation often varies according to the targeted person's relationship with political power. This is also evident in controversies related to the polarised debates surrounding conservatism, secular lifestyles and social values. In some cases, the government may intervene by providing or withholding access to cultural spaces, resources or employment opportunities for targeted individuals.

In non-political cases, the effectiveness of cancellation appears to vary according to the characteristics of the targeted person's audience. Public figures followed by more intellectually engaged audiences may be more vulnerable to cancellation campaigns, while figures with broader mainstream followings are often less affected by them. At the same time, while public pressure may occasionally accelerate judicial processes in non-political cases, it is generally more difficult for marginalized groups to achieve tangible outcomes in ideological or political matters.

As this paper has argued, the government has become an important actor in contemporary cancellation practices. At the time of writing, a legislative proposal requiring identity verification for access to social media is on the political agenda. If implemented, such a measure could have significant implications for oppositional expression in digital spaces, a topic that would merit a study of its own, and may also reshape the future dynamics of cancellation practices in Turkey.

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AI Statement

For this paper, I have used ChatGPT and NotebookLM.

After defining my main arguments and deciding which issues I wanted to analyse through existing theories, I used AI to suggest anthropologists and sociologists whose work might be relevant to my topic. After briefly reviewing these suggestions, I decided which authors were relevant and asked AI which books or chapters I should read, since I do not have a broad background in sociological and anthropological theory. I then read the relevant literature myself, took notes, and decided independently which parts to use in the paper.

I also used AI to suggest additional sources that could be useful for the topic. I reviewed these materials myself and decided which ones were relevant to my argument.

Finally, I used AI as an editing tool. I asked for help with grammar, spelling, translation, sentence structure, and the academic phrasing of some words, terms, and expressions. AI was not used to write the paper, develop the arguments, conduct the literature review, or produce the analysis.