Algerian Youth and the Contestation over Sound on TikTok

Luca Bruls

Algerian Youth and the Contestation over Sound on TikTok

Luca Bruls
s2613670
Research master thesis in Middle Eastern studies
LIAS, Leiden University
July 14, 2021
31.425 words

Supervisor: Dr. Cristiana Strava
Second reader: Dr. Jonathan London

Contents

List of illustrations 1
Acknowledgments 2
Abstract 2

Introduction 3
Contextualising TikTok 4
Contextualising Algeria 5
Algeria's digital infrastructures 7
Controversial sounds 9
Structure 12

Chapter 1: "Are u Algerian?" Methodology and theory 14
Ethnographic fieldwork during a pandemic 15
Doing digital ethnography 16
Becoming a TikToker: data collection and analysis 17
Language and ethics 19
My body as a tool 20
Sonic ethnography 21
Movement, digitalisation and consumption 22
Youth on TikTok 23
Conclusion 24

Chapter 2: Performing raï in a digital age 25
From raï *qadīm* to raï *jdīd* 25
Just for fun 28
TikTok worthy: gendering bodies 31
Giving and taking 33
Dancing and *paroles* 35
Dancing *way way*: sounding semiotics 36
Conclusion 40

Chapter 3: "They will called u "*meryoula*": from *straight TikTok* to *alt TikTok* 42
"You are stuck on the wrong side" 42
Meryūl(a) and *ʿamīq* 46
Cringey TikToks 51
"When your friends put on raï" 55
Conclusion 58

Conclusion 59

Bibliography 62

Appendix 71-73

Illustrations & TikToks

This thesis contains images, screenshots and videos. The screenshots consist of images of comments and interviews conducted on TikTok. I combine (moving) images and sound with text to transform the reader's knowledge. I included the visual, aural and textual forms to exhibit how knwowledge and sensory experience can be represented in various ethnographic ways. The videos can be found on the following website: http://thesis-lucabruls.glitch.me/
Username: guest Password: aKgyj3#o

TikTok I.1	Luca dancing to *Lila Nefriha'*	Web
Figure I.2	Comments on TikTok	3
Figure I.3	Original Track page	5
Figure I.4	Cheba Warda Charlomanti's TikTok	8
Figure I.5	Awkward chat	9
Figure I.6	Condemnation of TikTok	10
Figure I.7	Condemnation of music	10
Figure I.8	Condemnation of dress	10
Figure 1.1	Luca's TikTok profile	14
TikTok 2.1	Boycott against France	Web
TikTok 2.2	Luca dancing to *Tiktoki bel jalaba*	Web
Figure 2.3	TikTok profile of a sound uploader	29
Figure 2.4	Announcement of a song	30
Figure 2.5	Interview with Chahra	30-31
TikTok 2.6	Luca dancing to *El mehaba mechi bessif*	Web
Figure 2.7	Affective comments	34
TikTok 2.8	*Dedikas* TikTok	Web
TikTok 2.9	*Paroles* TikTok	Web
TikTok 2.10	Boy dancing to *Naʿfas ʿala qalbī*	Web
TikTok 2.11	Girl dancing to *Naʿfas ʿala qalbī*	Web
Figure 2.12	Drawings	36
TikTok 2.13	Luca dancing to *Naʿfas ʿala qalbī*	Web
Figure 2.14	Two boys playing an air synth	37
TikTok 2.15	Girl dancing to *Satar satar*	Web
TikTok 2.16	Boy dancing to *Khtik mal halwa nkotlak bal bayda*	Web
TikTok 2.17	Luca dancing to *Jibouli li bghah galbi*	Web
TikTok 3.1	Duet	Web
TikTok 3.2	Luca dancing to *Tebghi sawt*	Web
Figure 3.3	Comments on *Tebghi sawt*	45
TikTok 3.4	Luca dancing to Zaki Catalonia remix	Web
Figure 3.5	Comments on Zaki Catalonia remix	46-47
Figure 3.6	Dress of *ʿamīq*	47-48
TikTok 3.7	TikToker about *ʿamīq*	Web
TikTok 3.8	Girl dancing to *Omri Chikour*	Web
Figure 3.9	Dress of *meryūl*	49
TikTok 3.10	Reflection on *Tebghi sawt*	Web
Figure 3.11	Comments on reflection *Tebghi sawt*	51-52
Figure 3.12	Interview with Romaissa	53
TikTok 3.13	Reflection on *ʿamīq* jokes	Web
TikTok 3.14	Boy dancing to *Jiboli lagmy*	Web
TikTok 3.15	Duet: boy mimicking *way way*	Web
TikTok 3.16	Boy mimicking *way way*	Web
TikTok 3.17	Girl mimicking *way way*	Web

Acknowledgments

For this thesis I owe to many. I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Cristiana Strava, who guided me through the writing and thinking process. I thank Geke Zaal for helping me master InDesign and bestowing the design with her artistic mind. I am grateful to Stan Wiersma for building a website for the TikToks. During the research period I met many online, who offered me their perspectives, ideas, translations and suggestions. I want to thank my teacher Djamel Mrah, who taught me the Algerian dialect. But above all I am thankful to all the kind people I met on TikTok.

Abstract

Since COVID-19, the amount of TikTok users has grown in Algeria. This has resulted in a music economy where youth, artists and studios move online to promote and binge-listen the latests raï hits. This thesis explores the changing consumption of and attitudes towards sound as a result of TikTok usage. The text draws on insights from anthropological discussions on semiotics, sound and movement to advance theoretical understandings of performance culture in digital spaces. I suggest the notion of chains of movement to make sense of the memetic body imageries youth spread. Based on (auto) ethnographic data, the text follows my participation in dance and lipsynch performances and a series of events that lay bare the contestedness of such performances. In conversation with Algerian youth, I demonstrate TikTok's subdivision into two opposed, yet interdependent scenes. The text draws on examples of the engagement between the two groups to reveal how youth call attention to their class identities and social backgrounds by discussing music, dress and dance. The analysis uses insights from theory on social scalability to advance understandings of sonic stereotypes and ridicule in online space. Exploring these issues, I contribute to scholarship on youth-building projects and multimedial practices.

Keywords
Sound; Algeria; TikTok; performance; raï; youth; pandemic; scenes

Introduction

Fieldnote, March 1st: Two weeks ago I danced in my bedroom to Cheb Azzedine Sghir's song Lila Nefriha (See webpage for TikTok I.1). I recorded a TikTok: In a black blouse and a yellow washed-jeans I pretend to hit the piano keys as the tempo of the tambourine synth line goes up. Bilal Messergine starts singing,"I will hurt myself a while" while moving my head to the beat I pretend to cut my arm and continue moving my arms inwards and point to my nose as he sings on: "You touched me in my honour. You hurt my heart." I knock my heart with a fist, as if stabbing it with a knife and quickly make a beckoning sign followed by two thumbs up that I bring closer to my mouth, drinking from my imaginary bottle of whisky. He sings: "Give me a bottle of JB. Tonight I will get drunk." I point at the sky and laugh into my smartphone camera as twinkling stars and a horizontal transition blur the screen.

29,100 people made a TikTok to this twelve-second snippet, while they mimicked the same moves as I. Several people commented on my TikTok (Figure I.2) Their messages touched me, because I realised that my presence and content matters to people. Our physical proximity did not imply emotional proximity. We collided in this space. Few days ago, on February 23rd, the moment had come to end my active presence on TikTok. After sending messages to my informants, I published three TikToks, where I said goodbye, explained some preliminary findings and expressed my gratitude to all my followers. Today, I still feel heavyhearted. I have become attached to the people I met through TikTok, the interactions and the entertainment. It feels incomplete. I guess, because a field exit strategy is quite different if you always carry the field in your pocket. Just now, a TikTok message popped up and I opened it like I would have done on any day during my research. But unlike the fieldwork days, Hichem chatted me and reminded me that I arrived at another stage of my research: "Did you start writing?" I replied I did. He said: "Don't forget to write that TikTok in Algeria has different sides. And there are people who follow the world trends. And there are people who chose raï to dance to." I told him of course and asked: "What do you feel is most important for me to write?" He said: "The most important part is tiktok is something embarrassing for people in Algeria. And many people here hate it. But teenagers are starting to be open about it and learn how they influence others. To do it. And enjoy it."

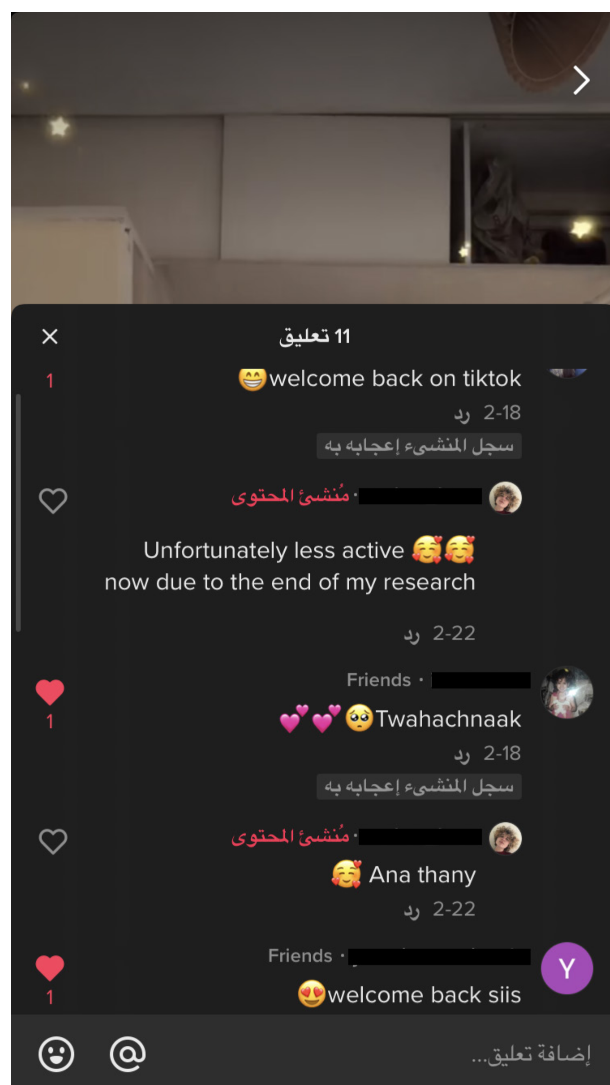

Figure I.2 Comments on TikTok (for translations see appendix)

Why should I not forget to write about the different trends that youth engage in? And how is it that Algerian people hate or get embarrassed by TikTok? Answering these questions will make us understand the complex nature of TikTok. Moreover, it will clarify why youth come together. The fieldnote anecdote exemplifies aspects that are central to young Algerians who use TikTok and shows how the dance performances on raï, the outspoken difference between youthful Algerian groups, and the judgements regarding the platform reflect specific notions of religion, digitalisation, sound and society. To embed this I will first introduce the application TikTok and delve into the unique circumstances of Algeria.

Contextualising TikTok

TikTok is a sound- and videosharing app launched in 2017 by the Chinese company ByteDance. The social media app started to gain popularity among youth after it merged with another app, Musical.ly, in August 2018. In 2019 the app, and its Chinese counterpart Douyin, was downloaded one billion times globally. During the pandemic it continued to expand and the company signed licensing deals with Sony Music[1] and Warner Music Group[2]. TikTok is known for its short dance, lip-synch and comedy videos. The application allows users to take "TikToks" – short 6 to 60 seconds videos or photo series to a selected sound with added effects, filters, and text.

To set up an account, users have to pick a *@name* and a profile picture. On one's profile other users can see the number of followers, following and likes received. Below there is an ordered list of a user's most recent public TikToks and others have the option to view one's likes of other TikToks. On the main page of the app users can navigate between the 'For You' and 'Following' page. The personalised recommendations and TikToker's following provide people with lavish hours of entertainment. TikTok's state-of-the-art technology is build around recyclable sound, which users can select and record videos or photo series to. To make a TikTok, one has to press a big 'plus' logo. Thereafter, there is the option to either select a sound from TikTok's Sound Library or add an original audio. To add an original sound to TikTok, it is possible to upload a video from a phone library, record a TikTok video and capture sounds live from surroundings, background music or someone's voice, or add a voiceover on top of an existing piece of music from TikTok's Sound Library. Other TikTokers can use this self-uploaded sound, as it becomes an Original Track with its own devoted sound page. Gliding through the Following page, users can thus easily click the note icon on the bottom right of a TikTok, see who and how many other people used a particular sound snippet and adopt it for their own TikTok. Most users use this feature and consume and share music that others have uploaded instead of uploading sounds themselves. As I explain in more detail throughout this thesis, this feature taught me that mapping sounds is one meaningful way to learn about trending modes of visual and sonic consumption.

1 https://finance.yahoo.com/news/tiktok-signs-deal-sony-music-170116348.html

2 https://themusicnetwork.com/warner-music-tiktok-deal/

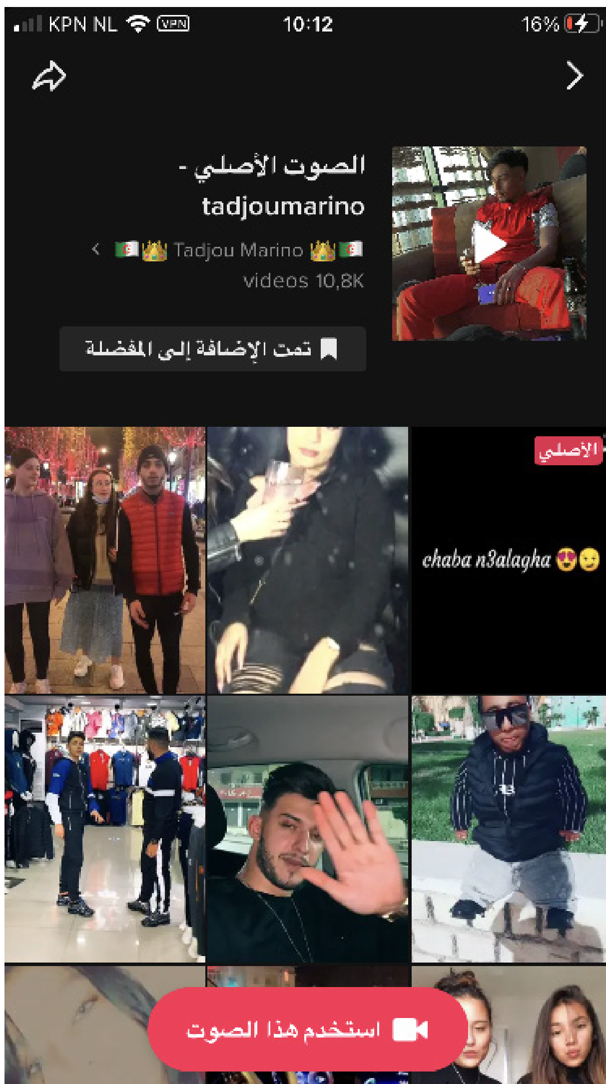

Figure I.3 Original Track page

Contextualising Algeria

At the heart of the Maghreb lies Algeria, a country with close to forty million inhabitants of which thirty per cent are young people aged between 15 and 29. The omnipresence of youth in Algeria is due to a population growth after Algeria's independence from France in 1962. After the struggle for sovereignty from French occupation (1830-1962), the promises of freedom mobilised Algerians to build a bright future. But the war had separated Algeria's revolutionary nationalist politics and the new state's authoritarian leeaders silenced the population from political decision-making processes (McDougall 2017: 238). In the sixties and seventies, the populist-socialist political culture promoted Islam as the state's religion and Arabic as its lingua franca, hereby surpassing the complexities of Muslim practices, Berber communities and the bilingualism of institutions. Meanwhile, urbanisation and population growth pressured the housing, food industry and education system (ibid.: 263). In the 1980s the oil prices collapsed and Algeria was hit by an economic recession (Pratt 2007: 92). While economic hardship and social inequality pressured the country's population, groups of unemployed youth found their way to the street to express their dissatisfaction with the sitting political elite. Surrounded by the daily sounds of a protesting city, many youth found their joy in raï, a popular musical genre produced by musicians who translated the postcolonial conditions of Algeria into their prevailing vernacular lyrics focusing on love, death, imprisonment, poverty and the pleasures of alcohol (al-Deen 2005: 601). The listening habits of youth were not well received by ruling politicians, who considered raï as an example of the degradation of morals among youth (Schade-Poulsen 1999: 20). Raï symbolised an anti-Muslim way of life, characterised by westernised signs and colonial remises.

The moral crackdown on music reflected the Islamist views that were continuously present on the political scene since the independence. After the national islamicisation programme of the *Front de Libération Nationale* ('thereafter FLN'), various Islamist groups unified into the *Front Islamique du Salut* ('thereafter FIS') in 1989. These groups spread their messages through sermon cassettes (Evans & Phillips 2008: 310, Moussaoui 2009). Their main goal was to rule the country according to sharia law and exclude anything that based on specific values of Islam and Arabness, they considered "unauthentic" Algerian culture (such as Berber traditions) or "un-Islamic" (such as raï). After receiving the majority of votes during elections in 1991, the situation

grew complex, as the sitting government did not want to give up rule and tried to suppress the Islamist surge with a military coop. This resulted in a civil war from 1991 until 2002 (McDougall 2017: 287). After the election of Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 1999, violence diminished and a ceasefire ended parts of the conflicts. Nevertheless, turmoil continued to strike the country. Discontent with the authoritarian regime, Bouteflika's candidacy for a fifth term in 2019, high youth unemployment rates (30%), and rising prices, again provoked demonstrations in February 2019 and physical protests continued up until the outbreak of COVID-19 (Volpi 2020:152). Dubbed *al-ḥirak* (the movement), these gatherings have been halted since the lockdown in February 2020. Although *al-ḥirak* increased its online presence, for example through daily radio shows by *Radio Corona Internationale,* the government has arrested and jailed over a thousand people with links to the movement in 2020 (Rachidi 2021).

As a result of the high unemployment rates, political turmoil, rapid urbanisation and crammed households with limited place for intimacy, young men in urban peripheries are likely to spend their time outside. The public imaginary[3] of *hittistes* (deriving from the Arabic word *ḥeta* (wall), meaning the youth who leans on walls) negatively portrays them as a noisy, frustrated, irresponsible generation that prefers to find their luck abroad. Farida Souiah explains they are known as *ḥarrāga* (literally "those who burn"). Not being able to obtain a visa as the result of European migration politics, they try illegal migration (Souiah 2013: 99). Although I had in-depth conversations with young people who expressed their wish to migrate and change the status quo, their motivations did not fit the above-described frame of an underemployed urban youth. Most of the people I spoke with had a job or were students. Although money and materialism were not the conversation of the day, talks about university education, the possession of smartphones, and symbolic capital in terms of TikTok fame or number of followers, indicated that the majority of my informants were Algeria's (upper) middleclass men and women. Their dissatisfaction with society was mainly focused on structures of injustice and the lack or abundance of Islamic morality.

Contextualising Algeria thus necessitates an understanding of Algerian youthfulness as a lived experience intersecting with identities such as gender, class, sexuality and occupation to learn about their actions and strategies (Yom, Lynch, el-Khatib 2019: 3). Secondly, it necessitates a consideration of the plural identities and globalised diffusion that characterise Algerian society. The historical ties to Spain and the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa), the French colonial occupation (1830-1962), the presence of Berbers – Kabyle to the north and Tuareg to the South – and the digital connectedness to global spheres all affect the linguistic and cultural expressions within Algerian society. Raï is a good example of this cultural conglomeration, because its present-day form is influenced by: 1920's melodic poems known as Moroccan *malḥūn* and Spanish *andalusī*; Bedouin music; Egyptian musicians Muhammad Abdul Wahhab and Umm Kalthoum; the closely related genre *ūahranī* (Oranian); the aim to reach western audiences, and currently circulating across transnational digital networks.

Thirdly, contextualising Algerian society necessitates understanding the role of Islam. The Umayyad dynasty

3 For example in the movie *Papicha* (2019) and comedy show *Djamel* by Fellag (2007).

brought Islam to Algeria. The majority of the population was converted to Islam by the time of Ottoman ruling. During French colonisation, the regime tried to undermine Muslim culture, but Algerians held tightly to religion. In the following years governing actors co-opted Islam to build national identity and strengthen their power (Tamburini 2020: 492). Up until today Islam is tightly interwoven with state and politics and nationalised versions of Islamic laws apply (Lalami 2012). A religious establishment of *ʿulamāʾ* (the Islamic High Council) controls most of the religious issues on political level. This includes control and fiery commentary on youth practices and artistic and sonic expression (Brown et. al). Currently, 99.7% of the population is Muslim, with a majority being Sunni (Bouherar 2020: 6). Muslim citizens practice Islam in everyday life, by advancing Islamic social and ethical codes in private and public spheres. Traditionally a patriarchal family code applies, meaning that social interaction and division of roles are based on normative notions of gender. Everyone across the gendered spectrum shares responsibility to uphold modesty in terms of dress and behaviour. However, how modesty is put into practice varies widely. Although most Algerians identify as Muslims, their practices, beliefs and relationships to God depend on individual and communal choices and temporal and spatial contexts. Anthropological research on Islam aims to show that religion and religious life is a negotiable practice. Recent ethnographic work evolves around questions of piety and the ways Muslims contextually juggle moral behaviour in order to maintain their religious identities (Schielke 2009: s25). It demonstrates how the contested nature of Islamic doctrine and practices expresses itself through debates among politicians, religious scholars, and Muslims in their mundane activities. Shortly, I explain that sound is one such contested topic, but first I unfold the circuits of digitalisation and auditory technologies in Algerian society.

Algeria's digital infrastructures

The pandemic has accelerated a digital transformation in Algeria (Bashari 2020: 580). Yet, digital media use is not a recent phenomenon among Algerian youth. Although no study is available on Algerians' online media usage, researchers across other MENA countries indicate that youth have grown up accustomed to digital infrastructures, employing it in political participation (Ouchiha 2018), expressing religiosity- (Caidi et al. 2018: 9), and shaping their "digital intimacies" or love and friendship relations accordingly (Costa & Menin 2016: 138). Beyond the MENA, Rachel Harris highlights the effects of digitalisation on sound consumption, indicating that the spread of new media changed the accessibility of sounds (Harris 2014: 12). These studies evidence the importance of anthropology's classic debate on cultural relativism (Horst & Miller 2012: 19). They oppose assumptions of the homogenising effects of the Internet, by making an argument for the cultural particularity of digitally mediated forms of communication. This thesis underlines this notion, showing that Algerians locally appropriate digital media.

Statistics on digitalisation in Algeria tell us that there is more than one mobile connection account per person, 60% of Algerians use the Internet and 57% are active social media users (Datareportal 2021). In recent years, the amount of TikTok users has grown, and with 850 million downloads, it is Algeria's most-downloaded app of

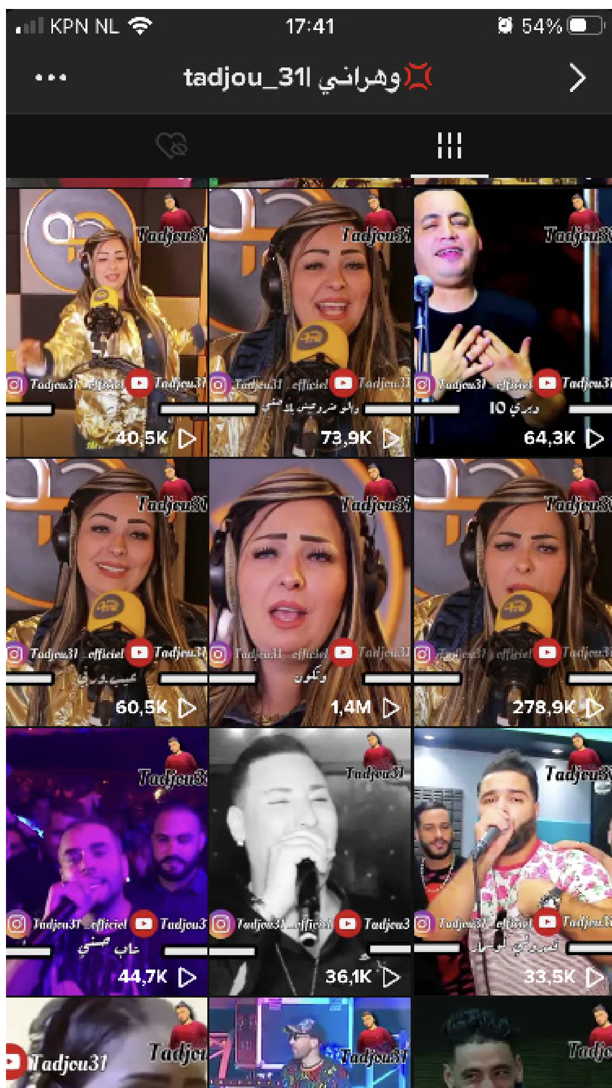

Figure I.4 Cheba Warda Charlomanti's TikTok

2020[4]. The popularity of TikTok in Algeria reflects in the stats, which indicate that search queries 'TIK TOK' and 'tik tok' (written in Arabic) are in the top ten queries. The amount of plays that some Algerian TikToks receive also indicates the usage has gone up since the pandemic (Figure I.4). 98% of Facebook users access the social media platform with a smartphone. Although no stats are available on TikTok, the percentage is most likely similar, because the web version of TikTok disables most features of the app, such as commenting, chatting and uploading. It is meaningful to think of smartphone use in relation to other digital devices, apps and their media ecologies. Mirca Madianou theorises the complexity through which people navigate media environments by viewing smartphones as polymedia. She argues: "we need to understand new media as an 'integrated structure' within which each individual medium and platform is defined in relational terms in context of all other media" (Madianou 2014: 670). The theory of polymedia emphasises how users employ the affordances of media structures by choosing a platform that suits well to their emotional needs and desires. During fieldwork, I learnt that young Algerians exploit the communicative opportunities of smartphones by accessing different media apps. Smartphones served as central objects for local and transnational networking and my Algerian informants used the audio recorder, front and back camera and screen for multiple purposes, such as making friends, gossiping, sharing secrets, bullying and performing. Although I focused on TikTok, I often switched to other apps such as Facebook, Facebook's Messenger and Instagram. Together, these platforms formed a wider environment of polymedia, which Algerians strategically used for different purposes. In chat conversations on TikTok people often asked for my Instagram or Facebook, because they preferred its affordances that allowed short sound recording messages, calling and sending pictures and videos. A conversation on TikTok chat clarifies this (Figure I.5).

Moreover, as demonstrated by Madianou, the polymediatic features of smartphones emphasise the moral weight of communication (ibid.: 672). Researchers across the MENA indicate that smartphone and Internet use increase the secret spaces where youth can transgress gendered and social boundaries. At the same time, they have to deal with the expansion of "a new conservative online 'public'" and thus carefully manage their public visibility and audibility (Costa & Menin

4 https://www.algerie-eco.com/2021/01/21/les-10-applications-les-plus-telechargees-en-2020/

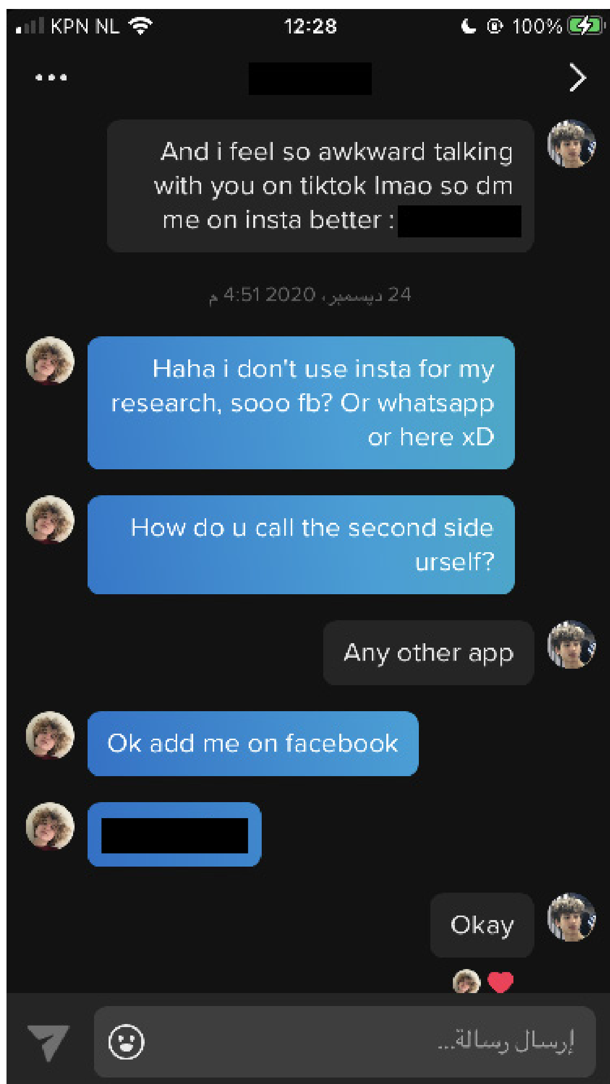

Image I.5 Awkward chat

2016: 140). Vicky Tadros argues in a study on car-listening practices in the Emirates, that contested sounds are often home to private spaces, such as the car. But, the sonic qualities of the private are always in relation to the public and listeners create contemporary values in relation to their friends, families or strangers. A similar argument can be made for social media, where youth contextually figure what to listen to or post and what not. When I asked Adham why he was quitting Facebook he told me:

ADHAM: "It's for old people and all my parents and my family are in fecbook (typo) and I don't feel free to post anything."

Firstly, the comment teaches us that Adham considers social media use to be generational. I also frequently heard this discussion in regards to TikTok, which was not accepted by old generations. Secondly, it tells that youth manage a moral self based on dominant codes and values that exist among social actors in online space. In the case of many of my informants this meant that they constantly switch platforms, accounts or delete content to circumvent the micro-surveillances of their families online. This alternation resonates with code-switching. Instead of using two or more languages in one conversation (Heller 1988: 1), youth use several platforms to negotiate social exchange. Beyond the extended family, moral anxieties about the actions of youth online appear in media publications and statements of conservative voices who criticise youth for their subversive behaviour.

Controversial sounds

On January 9th 2019, Algeria's Ministry of Education issued a statement on TikTok, warning for the dangers and risks of the application. The statement, posted on the ministry's Facebook page, focused on the risks of the ease with which users can share artistic performances, including songs, dance, comedy, *taqlīd* (imitation) and challenges. According to the ministry these performances could result in unethical and endangering situations exposing youth to exploitation and blackmailing[5]. The controversy surrounding TikTok in Algeria does not stand on itself. The Indian government succeeded in banning TikTok in June 2020. In August 2020, former American president Donald Trump announced plans to ban TikTok for security and privacy reasons, but never succeeded[6]. Whereas the Indian and American government partially viewed TikTok with distrust and hostility due to its mistrust

5 For full statement see: https://www.elkhabar.com/press/article/149182/
6 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53619287

of the Chinese government and data security, the ambivalence in the Middle East is more concerned with society's morals and orthodox Islam. In July 2020, several female Egyptian TikTok celebrities were convicted on charges of attacking family values and violating public morals with their dance and comedy videos. Adding to that, various fatwa's have been issued clarifying the prohibition of using TikTok for dancing, dressing up bare-clothed, gender swapping or acting in ways that go against the rules of the Sharia[7].

The expression of TikTok as a domain of control and censorship extends beyond public discourse by governmental institutions. Contested perceptions echo in the comment sections of TikToks and Facebook TikTok pages in Algeria. At the start of my research, I encountered a page that had at the time thirty-four thousand followers (currently over hundred twenty five thousand), which posts daily TikTok compilations of mostly young women dancing to raï. The young good-looking TikTokers appear full-bodied or with their upper body and face dancing in their bedrooms, kitchens, on the beach or in a backstreet. Mimicking one another, they perform a set of hand gestures and lip-synch to trending songs. At the time, one of the most popularly used songs was the raï hit *Bye Bye Lmiziria* by Didou Parisien. While the musical fifteen-second loop found its way through my laptop speakers, I scrolled the comment section, witnessing clashing impressions. Some of the commenters expressed their disapproval, criticising the women and their male kin for their lack of respect and ability to uphold family morals, blaming them of blasphemy through comments such as "May God curse you" or "May God punish you for your deeds". Additionally, they condemned dance, dress, and music by (re-)posting a set of images.

Figure I.6 Condemnation of TikTok

Figure I.7 Condemnation of music

Figure I.8 Condemnation of dress

7 https://wp.me/p9Wzbn-8Yj https://theislamicinformation.com/tiktok-haram-in-islam/

Figures I.6 and I.7 claim a condemnation of music and musicians based on an orthodox Islamic train of thought. The contestation surrounding the legitimacy of music in Islamic spheres is not new to the field of anthropology nor to Muslim scholars. Listening behaviours complicate the theoretical understandings of Islam. Researchers have described how heterodox sonic practices play a role in the resistance to religious authorities, in the embracing of different forms of piety, and used these to expand the understanding of the meanings of Islam and being Muslim (Al-Faruqi 1985, Jouili & Moors 2014: 979, van Nieuwkerk 2011: 4). Informed by Islam and local traditions, the perceptual understanding of sound in Algeria can be understood with Charles Hirschkind's concept "ethical sensibilities" (Hirschkind 2006: 8). Based on a study of cassette sermon tapes in Egypt, Hirschkind illustrates that sermon listening practices encourage Muslims to live piously according to Islamic ethics implied in recordings. It follows that the urban environments intensified by these sounscapes can function as "spaces of moral action (ibid.: 22)". Facebook commentsections similarly function as spaces of moral action, because here Muslims express a fear of immodesty that comes with listening to raï. Simultaneously they can express their presumed righteous religioethical positioning through likes and comments. This research contributes to this scholarship by showing that the contestation surrounding TikTok usage and sound usage are not limited to orthodox Islamic opinion. I will argue that Islam is only one element in a larger structure of the contestation over sound on TikTok among Algerian youth. Research on sound and the Middle East tends to focus on the relationship with Islam and hereby runs the risk of overemphasising Muslimness in contrast to other identity markers. In the past months, I have spoken with and received comments on my TikToks from various young Algerians, who dislike and criticise the popularity of raï *jdīd* (new raï). Although these Algerians use TikTok themselves and express their joy in using it, a disapproving, often sarcastic, view on raï is widespread among them. What fascinates me here is not simply the question whether people enjoy or detest raï, but why they do so passionately? And what does the judgement of music tell about the society at large? I argue that young Algerians consume particular music on TikTok to organise themselves in different groups to position themselves between trends and traditions. By exposing to have knowledge of consumption in terms of dress style, dance and music, Algerians try to give a positive image of local youth culture. To contribute to ethnographic knowledge on how smartphones take on cultural value and the way software changes local dynamics of sounding and listening, I formulated the following research question:

> How does TikTok usage by Algerian youth active online shape the consumption of and attitudes towards sound?

The research question delves into the exchange of sonic practices. It ties into debates on people's search for recognition and their attempts to express themselves through consumption. Consumption practices refer to meanings created by the circulation of commodities. Whereas anthropologists have taken these issues, and the way they are based on moral, social and hierarchal aspects, from perspectives of visibility and invisibility, my hypothesis is that much can be learnt about these dimensions from perspectives of audibility and inaudibility (Peterson & Brennan 2021: 372, Goodman 2010: xvii).

Structure

This thesis brings together series of performances, aiming to understand what they sonically signify. It investigates the digital technologies, materialities and spaces that surround performances on TikTok. In this thesis, we will encounter screenshots, moving images, sounds and bodies and ask what gestural, kinaesthetic and sonic registers can teach us about online sociability in Algeria. Through the prism of me: an anthropologist, TikToker, listener and dancer, this thesis centralises social interactions and articulations to learn about sonic trends. I will throw light upon my own embarassment regarding failures and successes on TikTok. I will critically address the function and meaning of my researcher profile and assess how my subjectivity affects the experience of TikTok. In this thesis, we will come across young able-bodied men and women of different cities, class, and physical appearance. We will hear the stories of Adham and Hichem, who encountered my profile in the midst of thousand others. These Algerians have generously and lovingly shared with me their experiences, their opinions, favourite TikToks, photos, and music. Although distances were large, we have moved together through similar spaces, listened to the same music and followed events occur.

The main question (how does TikTok usage by Algerian youth shape the consumption of and attitudes towards sound?) will be dealt with in two empirical chapters, chapter two and three. In these chapters I will take a dialogic approach to present observations from field notes and interview material. I use this qualitative material to tell the stories entrusted to me. To have them respond to my ideas and to approach theory and method. Whenever I draw on moments in the field, I represent a specific history that teaches us valuable lessons about ethnographic theory. First, chapter one discusses the methodologies of this research. I will expand on what it is like to do ethnographic fieldwork during social isolation. Furthermore, I expand on theoretical debates on sonic ethnography and sound in relation to movement, digitalisation and consumption. Chapter two describes the sociosonic importance of TikTok. I will analyse how people make use of the technological structures of the platform and how this cultivates sound distribution, consumption, and popularisation. The chapter sketches what Algerian TikTok is like, by drawing on examples from the field that show the tactics of music studio's and TikTokers to promote raï songs. I elaborate on a distinct performance style and discuss the modes of conduct, gestures and infrastructural arrangements that characterise it, by reflecting on my participant observation. I explore TikTok performances in terms of their corporeal, spatial and sonic features and argue that the semiotic qualities associated with verbal signs in dance movement reside in a complex network of gestures, sounds and language. By shifting the focus to online raï consumption, I contribute to the need to update ethnomusicological scholarship on raï and rethink prevailing Orientalist definitions of this genre. Moreover, I complicate vision-oriented theories of spectatorship and hereby demonstrate the necessity for scholars to rethink the role of sound in the experience of visual media.

The focus of chapter three is on my own experiences as a maker of *meryūlīn* (also referred to by my interlocutors as *straight*[8]) TikTok and the ways in which this brought me into contact with *ʿamīq* (also referred to by my interlocutors as *alt*) TikTok. I demonstrate how Algerian TikTokers create diverse identities and local narratives to distinguish themselves. I examine TikTok as a space where the sociosonic manifestation of *meryūl* and *ʿamīq* emerge. *Meryūl* (female *meryūla*) roughly defines as a young person who expresses himself through particular ways of dress, dancing the *way way* and listening to raï. Their antipode, *ʿamīq* roughly defines as a young person who expresses himself through ridiculing the *way way* and raï, listening to European and American music and an alternative way of dress. Drawing on the opinions, comments and responses of *ʿamīq*, I interpret youth's fashionising projects and the way they (re-)configure cultural models of morality, friend relationships, and music. Using the term 'scene' and 'scalable sociality', I make clear that TikTok is a space where youth can pick to communicate and live with certain groups, which distinguish themselves according to the consumption of sound.

In the final chapter, I connect the analyses. I claim that on a macro level TikTok has undeniably shaped the consumption of raï, as the growing popularity of the app motivates local studios, musicians and youth to use it for economic and entertaining listening pleasures. I argue that people creatively navigate through the memetic structures of sound media to use it for their own ends. Algerians upload, remix and mimic music and do so to collectively advance their audibility and visibility. Knowledge about their audible and visible styles tells us about typical youth-making processes in the MENA: their search for identity making and refiguration of conceptions of morality. This research adds to an understanding of TikTok as a complex and diverse environment where multiple social experiences compete. The virality of sounds, language and visuality on TikTok forces us to rethink sonic consumption and resemblances to pandemics.

[8] The two sides on TikTok (*straight* and *alt*) started based on sexuality. Alt TikTok, also known as Gay TikTok, was initiated by LGBTQ+ communities globally to seperate from cisgender heterosexual people. Although sexuality is still a feature to differentiate between the two sides, in Algeria *alt* and *straight* are mostly also used to refer to types of content people consume and make.

Chapter 1 “Are u Algerian?” Methodology and theory

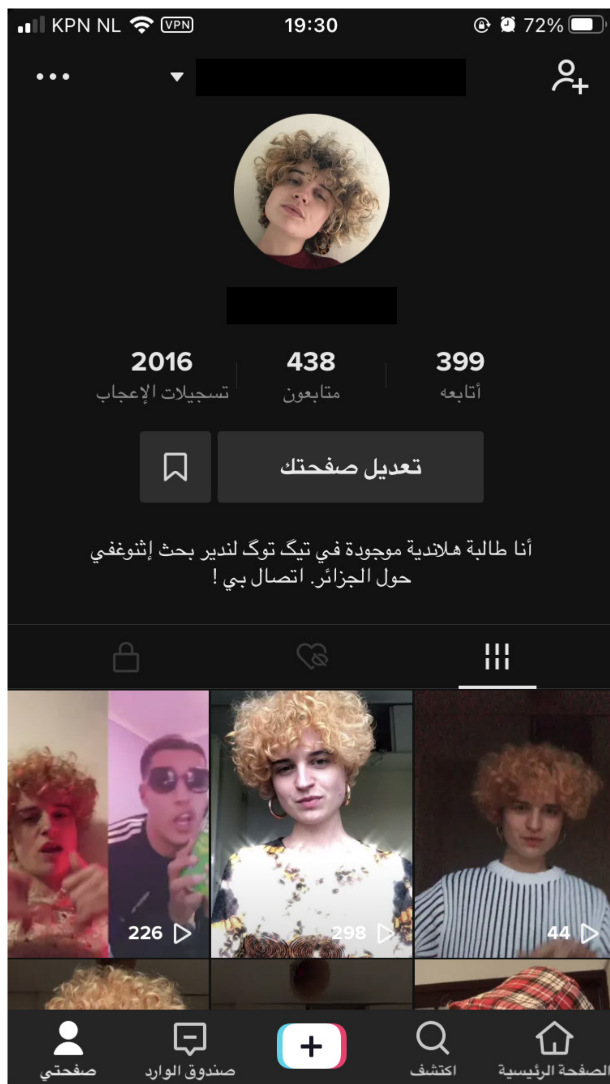

Figure 1.1 Luca’s TikTok profile

Fieldnote, December 7th: *It is morning. As I unlock my smartphone I click on the icon that looks like a note against a black background. Immediately I find myself in another world. On my ‘For You’ page I watch two excellently make-upped girls smile into the camera while they sing along and dance to a raï song. The TikTok has six thousand likes and I pause it to scroll through the dozens of comments. “Oh cc tjr classe” (oh hello always with class) writes a user. “Esm aloghniya?” (Track id?) writes another one. I wipe away the comment section to find out about the name of the song by clicking on the Original Sound link that is located on the bottom right of the screen. Containing music from Cheb Kader Tirigo 2020 Live Solazur avec Manini – Ida Bkit Mgwani – Abdou F.A Prod I read. Already seven thousand people have made a TikTok using the twelve-second snippet of the song. Scrolling through the top list I see the moving images of some of the “usual suspects”, famous Algerian boys and girls who receive thousands of likes per TikTok and have ten thousand, sometimes hundreds of thousands of followers and hereby end up high on the list of Original Sound pages.*

I double click the return button to get back to the main menu. Fourteen notifications! Ten of them are likes, three are messages and another one is a comment. I click on the preview. “Where wre you from” someone responds to a recent TikTok. An earlier comment is similar: “Waar woon jij” (Where do you live). I comment “The Netherlands” and think about the transnational and linguistic dimensions of the rendezvous that is my TikTok profile. Dutch, Moroccan and Algerian migrants in the Netherlands and people from all over Algeria coincide in this same space and engage in the activities that are central to it. In the following months I continue to receive comments from people asking for my nationality and my positioning in the physical world. “Are u Algerian?” and “Enty min Wahran?” (Are you from Oran?) they ask.

At the time of writing this fieldnote I was surprised. I did not consider myself to have a physical Algerian appearance. Yet, in the course of my research that I carried out between September 2020 and January 2021, I came to realise that this curiosity in geographic or national origin is not about appearance nor exceptional to my profile. All over TikTok fans ask where people live. Sometimes TikTok makers state the question to their fans in the captions accompany-

ing their audio-videos, while adding the *wilāya* (district) they reside in. The fact that users feel the need to post these comments and add hashtags such as *#algerienne, #dzair, #constantine25*, demonstrates the geographically dispersed quality of this space. Although people create a factual online place, they take with them their national, regional and local identities.

The question "Are u Algerian?" thus becomes one central to the scope of this research. First of all, it ties into the classic debate within digital anthropology of the relationship between the physical and virtual. Not only do they share fundamental commonalities in terms of the human, both are equally shaped by the contemporary context of the other (Boellstorff et al. 2012: 12). This connectedness between the physical and virtual is what David Miller refers to as the indexicality of the online (Horst & Miller 2012: 52). Secondly, it exemplifies that the scope of this research is not bounded by a physical place in Algeria, but by the activeness of Algerian youth in virtual space and TikTok in specific. Although elements of the arguments I will be making in this thesis can perhaps be generalised to the whole population of Algerian youth, many of them are specific to those 'dwelling' in virtual space. Moreover, it indicates, and this answers one of the first questions I set out to explore, that a localised Algerian version of TikTok exists. Although there are transnational connections, my informants refer to this space as TikTokDZ or Algerian TikTok. Thirdly, the question epitomises the methods and context of this ethnography. The pandemic and digital approach of this research deprived me of ever meeting interlocutors physically.

Ethnographic fieldwork during a pandemic

The worldwide presence of zoonotic disease COVID-19 since February 2020 has radically transformed anthropology as a discipline. The discipline is known for data collection methods that require close contact with other human beings. Although an increasing group of anthropologists do their research closer to home, the majority travels distances and works with communities that are now unreachable. Continuing local and national lockdowns, closed borders, travel restrictions, cancelled events and rituals, the need to be socially distanced and most importantly the health risks of our informants and ourselves worsen field access. In the Middle East, the pandemic has changed social structures of work, education and health, while some people, such as *al-ḥirak* in Algeria, suffer from increased oppression. Although issues of access and the sensitivity of research were around before COVID-19, many issues have heightened (Krause & Nikpour 2020). The challenging states demand rethinking of researchers outside the MENA how they can do fieldwork in the Middle East and how overcoming these challenges helps in designing research plans for the future. For this project, I was planning to do in-person ethnographic fieldwork, but to my disappointment I had to fall back on my contingency plan and adapt my dreams and plans. My expectations around ethnographic research well reflect in this fieldnote:

November 13th: *When starting Middle Eastern studies I imagined myself travelling and learning, while carrying out fieldwork. I would meet people, who would become part of my life and our social connections would exist in the everyday of things. We would go for a coffee, stroll down streets, share*

stories, perhaps intimate ones. [...] But who knows how plans can change, drastically, and how human beings will find ways to adapt. Like many other anthropologists, my research plans necessitated creative solutions. [...] Mind me, I never expected that my fieldwork could exist of long successive days of phone-scrolling in my own living room. I did not expect digital ethnography to be aspiring nor fun. But I adapted, I bought an iPhone 8 and downloaded TikTok on an Indian summer day in my living room.

My romanticising of in situ fieldwork sparks this reflection on my dreams. Susan Blum (2020) argues that such fetishisation is a form of privilege, which depends on a researcher's finance, health status, and carelessness about one's carbon footprint. At the start of this project, I opposed physical and digital ethnographic fieldwork, assuming that to study sound mediation through smartphones required my physical presence in Algeria, that "being-there" in real-time was a preferred fieldwork method. I am not the first to nullify the significance of digital ethnography in comparison to a classical physical ethnography (Boelstorff et al. 2012: xiv). But, studying virtual worlds during the pandemic is actually compelling, as many people living in crammed up spaces might look for privacy in online spaces that provide another form of "social distancing" (Boelstorff 2020). During my research, I learnt that for Algerians there was indeed a changing need for social media usage due to COVID-19. When I asked my informants if the pandemic changed their use of social media, they assented. Some had opened Tiktok during the pandemic. Others just increased the use of their smartphone. They were attracted to make friends online, now that they were stuck at home more. I learnt that smartphones and apps were objects of desire, of withdrawal, of attachment, and in so being perfectly lend themselves for digital ethnographic studies.

Doing digital ethnography

Digital ethnography, also known as online or virtual ethnography or netnography (Boelstorff et. al 2012: 4), rose to popularity with the growing importance of online communications (Hine 2000: 3). It refers to the theoretical study of online environments and humans' communicative practices, the influences of the digital technologies on these practices and the methodological approaches for grasping the forms and nature of online participation. Most anthropologists study online worlds like any ethnographic study. They are attendant of a set of epistemological considerations, departing from the notion that no such thing as truth exists and that by centralising diversity, critically examining human behaviour and reflecting on subjectivity and cultural biases one can get to anthropological understanding (Kagan 2009: 141).

One of the difficulties in doing digital ethnographic fieldwork is generating contextual knowledge, meaning how sounds, visuals and words relate to the contexts of their production (Knoch 2020). Being limited to online spheres and the ephemerality of social media, where from time to time TikTok accounts are banned and posts deleted, this research sometimes lacks contextualisation to understand the motivations, experiences and listening habits of youth active on TikTok. Yet,

> "To demand that ethnographic research always incorporate meeting residents in the actual world for "context" presumes that virtual worlds are not themselves contexts;

> it renders ethnographically inaccessible the fact that most residents of virtual worlds do not meet their fellow residents offline" (Boelstorff 2015: 61).

Following Tom Boelstorff's method, I did not study the physical-world contexts of the people I followed and was followed by on TikTok. Instead I interpreted the conversations with my informants and their activities as useful data about online Algerian culture. For example, if I was swiping TikToks on my feed I was not concerned to determine the exact age of a user or who was behind the camera recording their TikTok, as other TikTok users would also not know the answers to these questions. Instead I focused on the useful identities developed on the app. These methods enabled me to do "thick descriptions" of symbols, actions and sounds on TikTok (Geertz 1973).

Another difficulty I had was my struggle to build trustful, empathetic connections and friendships. Due to the distance with people I found it difficult to negotiate access. In the first month and a half I tried to engage with people by contacting friends of friends in Algeria, but with no result. I opened a TikTok account, but I had no followers and reaching out to strangers through messaging is disabled by the app and did not seem ethical to me. Thus, I spent most of my time on Facebook, where I joined several TikTok-devoted Facebook groups and transparently spread a call for participation in my research, with no success. As a result of this shaky start, I decided to start researching myself: what can my participation on Algerian TikTok reveal about the performative features of self-display that characterise this online space? And what does it mean to be part of Algerian online culture?

Becoming a TikToker: data collection and analysis

Anthropologists use a set of methods to collect data, with at its core participant observation and interviewing (Horst & Miller 2012: 53). Depending on the formulated research question, researchers define additional methodologies (Boelstorff et al. 2012: 6). For my research, I became an interactive user, engaging in social interactions, liking and TikTok performances. This methodology, where a researcher's own experiences, articulations, memories and depictions are the focus point for data gathering is called autoethnography. Autoethnographers take interest in learning how the researcher makes sense of life events and use this process to understand a culture in practice. This methodology is of growing popularity among digital ethnographers who wish to tackle the complexities and messiness that arise from the connections between offline and online worlds (Hine 2015: 69, Atay 2020: 272).

I began my research by following hundreds of TikTokers who perform a trend that is popular on Algerian TikTok: dancing on raï. My criteria was that they had to have over 20.000 followers or at least 3000 if they actively posted several TikToks a day on the latest trends. TikTokers in the latest category often followed me back. We would like most of one another's TikToks, give compliments, and with some I made duets and had chat conversations. Because of my username and profile description, my followers could notify the scholarly reasons of my presence. My TikTok username hinted to my identity as a researcher and in my profile description I added in Darija (Algerian Arabic): "I am a Dutch student, present on TikTok to do an ethnographic research about Algeria. Contact me!" Moreover, besides uploading videos on trending music, I

made research videos in Arabic, where I asked for help in regards to pertinent questions about TikTok, reflected on self-made material and explained my interests. I did this out of ethical concerns, because I felt obliged to provide information about the material I was studying and this way I assumed to have given enough clues to indicate that TikTokers' interaction with me could be processed in my research analysis. Additionally, in this thesis I maintain all subjects' anonymity, not referring to their real names or usernames. Apart from my own TikToks, the thesis also contains occasional TikToks or screenshots from microcelebrities. These TikToks are from public profiles of users with over 100.000 followers. I argue this is ethical, because I treat these TikToks as public texts and as examples of microcelebrities who seek to spread their messages to a broad audience (Wheeler 2017: 173).

One factor that complicated the reach and determinacy of whom I interacted with in this ethnographic approach was the imprint of digital globalised infrastructures of algorithms, IP-regions and phone numbers. TikTok's algorithm depends on a user's language preference, location, the country code of a phone number, and activity. My first method to work around the problem that my feed recommended Dutch content was to look for famous Algerian TikTokers on YouTube and Facebook. On both social media platforms people created compilations with the week's best TikToks. I started following microcelebrities and used popular hashtags, such as *#dzair #algerienne #rai*, to find other active users. Yet, once I started making TikToks myself, the majority of my followers were still (Dutch-)Algerians based in the Netherlands. It took me around three months to increase my Algerian following and to achieve this I ended up installing a VPN to change my IP location to Algeria in the midst of my project.

Towards the final months, I got in touch with more people. Due to this, I expanded my methods and started doing interviews. Interviewing is a method for elicited data collection, which allows informants to talk about their practices and beliefs. I interviewed 10 informants and had short chat conversations with 8 more, who I met online through TikTok chat, Facebook Messenger or Facebook videocall. Instant messaging interviews have proved to be a convenient and comforting method (Kaufmann & Peil 2020: 239-240). In this research it worked out well, because it was easy for me to get in touch with people through chatboxes. The majority of interviews were informal. At night my informants were active on their phones, so this would be the time when we chatted. During the conversations I gathered explanatory insights into the way people relate to sound and TikTok. I chose to do semi-structured interviews in order to give interlocutors the possibility to elaborate on things that were close to their heart and experience. The activities I observed during participant-sensing guided the conversations.

Participant-sensing is the engagement of a researcher in embodied practices as they unfold in a fieldsite with the goal to learn how culture is given meaning and put in practice. Central to this non-elicited method is the idea that the researcher is a consequential social actor, who to some extend influences and subjectively experiences the fieldsite. Participant-sensing begins to understand experience through the body and subjectivity and makes place for registering ethnographic knowledge by paying attention to our and other people's gestures and reactions to sound (Duffy et al. 2011: 20). I used this

method by actively watching and listening to dance and music-focused TikTok content and mimicking this content myself. I registered my observations and sensations as fieldnotes, through screenshots and by saving TikToks. The screenshots and TikToks helped me to memorise events, illustrate observations and present the features of a virtual space (Boellstorff et. al 2012: 115). I made separate files organising my captured screenshots based on theme and focus. I managed this data by storing the TikToks on a password-protected computer and an external hard drive. Here, I created several files, including one with the names of informants and their pseudonyms.

The data analysis during and post research is open-ended and based on moving back and forth between theory and data. In this thesis I weave in fieldnotes, interviews, and TikTok sounds to demonstrate their connections as I encountered narratives in the field. I will analyse interviews with methods of Discourse Analysis (DA), in order to examine how informants use language in social interaction across different situations (Farnell & Graham 2015: 392). To unearth the nondiscursivity of sound and its functions on TikTok, I reflect on my own bodily and affective learning on TikTok and use theory at the intersection of semiotics and sound studies to meaningfully analyse this data. So instead of simply focusing on discursive discussions, which appear through speech, writing and discourse, I interpret dance and music as nondiscursive meaning-making symbols.

Language and ethics

For anthropologists, having linguistic skills in a local language is a must, because people structure their world and shape their ideas through language systems (Sapir 1921, Whorf 1940). I took an intermediate French course offered by Nederlands Instituut Marokko (NIMAR) to boost my French skills. But I learnt that few people in the online communities of my earliest encounters on *meryūlīn* TikTok spoke French well and I could barely understand the dialect people would respond in. So, I found a teacher on YouTube who gave me twice-weekly private Darija lessons. Besides being my teacher, he was helpful whenever I had questions regarding lyrics, terms and the Algerian society at large. As I improved my Darija, it was easier to understand the comments, taglines, lyrics and spoken words on TikTok. I decided to have all content on my profile in Darija, so that everyone would feel comfortable engaging with me. Nevertheless, soon as I got in touch with more people, I found that young Algerians on *ʿamīq* TikTok published content in a mix of French, Arabic and English. They used three languages to describe their experiences and reach transnational audiences. Comments on my TikToks thus ended up being a mix of English and Arabic, same as my chat conversations as I navigated my contact with both *ʿamīq* TikTokers and *meryūlīn* TikTokers.

Although I eventually managed linguistically, my lack of fluency in Darija affects this research to an extent that I may have overlooked nuances that are embedded in the native languages of my interlocutors. As Edward Sapir argues, languages do not represent the same reality, because languages are mediums of expressions that are particular to societies (Sapir 1929: 209). I try to bridge this gap by recognising the importance of cultural translation. Some terminologies were always expressed in French or Arabic, such as *way way* or *meryūla*, to which I cannot find an English equivalent. Translating these terms risks mistranslation and

misinterpretation of the linguistic realities that signify TikTokDZ. Moreover, my limited language proficiency has guided me to become interested in the stories of Algerian youth who explicitly express themselves in English. Their language choice reflects a contemporary Algerian urban context, where cosmopolitism is linked to and expressed through a hybrid mix of English, Arabic and French. I argue youth's linguistic choices manifest in their search and desire for a self-determining identity that is not aligned with older generations and other young Algerians present on TikTok. The frequently used term *spolaya molaya* is an excellent example of this. The term is a selective hearing on the original lyrics "Spotlight uh, moonlight uh" by American rapper XXXTentacion's song *Moonlight*. Algerian youth on TikTok Arabised these lyrics to refer to a group of alternative youth who distinguish themselves in fashion and music preference (such as listening to XXXTentacion). Youth jokingly, yet thoughtfully, commented this term on TikToks by people who fitted into this category.

My followers on TikTok were of course also aware of my accent in Arabic, physical appearance, race and gender, which indicated I was not a native to this online space and influenced how I accessed data. On the one hand, I was one of Algerian TikTokers, as a comment by Safae indicated: "I feel like u're more Algerian than me lol well done". On the other hand, I was "othered" and thus never authentically the same, as demonstrated in Romaissa's comment: "Ur waaaaaay better than the real Algerians". This ambiguity is common to the positionality of ethnographers, who are in a complex insider/outsider status (Hine 2015: 40). Although they immerse into a culture and adapt to habits and lifestyles, their perceptions and findings are defined by their own knowledge and intersectional characteristics. As a result of postmodern critiques, ethnographers now reflect on gendered, racial and colonial hierarchies that complicate ethnographic fieldwork and on fieldwork interactions as subjective experiences that do not represent neutral truth (Asad 1994: 57). My profile and the engagements that followed out of it are not representative for the profiles of people who do similar TikToks. I do not aim to speak for their positions or their experiences. Instead I try to recognise activities on Algerian TikTok by reflecting on my positionality and my own sensory and bodily experiences, that I interpret alongside the stories of informants I met through my own profile.

My body as a tool

The above paragraphs indicate that my physical body was a central instrument for ethnographic data collection. Because I mimicked TikToks, danced and listened to music and stories, I had to practice new dance and musical skills. Consequently, I ended up reciprocating entertainment with people in online "spaces of sonic and kinetic intimacy" (Chrysagis & Karampampas 2017: 24). While I used my body to gain ethnographic understanding, other TikTokers used their bodies as tools for different reasons. As I explain in more detail in chapter two and three, they aimed to derive fame, have joy, or be part of a community. Through my methodology I intend to address these lived experiences. Anthropology is generally known as an embodied discipline, where the corporeality of a researcher is entangled with the field (Harris 2016). Nevertheless, the majority of research that exists on the body is concerned with the bodily experiences of others (see Benedict 1968, Boas 1940, Malinowski 1949[1927], Mauss 1973[1936]), while

anthropologists function as 'brain figures' who cognitively interpret bodily activities. Recently, ethnographers have argued that the sensory dimensions of ethnographic research are essential in generating knowledge (Kesselring 2015: 7). Simultaneously, they raise questions regarding anthropologists' methods to register ethnographic experience. The majority of the discipline persists on the "writing culture" project (Clifford & Marcus 1986) that presumes the neutrality of writing practice itself and aims to make the discursive dimensions of cultures understandable through textual practices. Elsewhere I have suggested anthropology would benefit from a "listening culture" (Bruls 2019), where researchers centralise reflexive debates on intersubjective corporeal relationships and develop insights through sensory experiences and sonic methodologies. I will extend that argument further in the next section. Here, I delve into the literature of authors who focus on how sound influences and is influenced by everyday social relations.

Sonic ethnography

> "And know that the understanding of what is heard varies with the states of the listener" (al-Ġazālī in Macdonald 2009: 65).

The study of sound in the arts, humanities and social sciences grew as a consequence of an interest in embodiment and the senses in the 1980s (Bull 2018: 427). The sonic turn away from occularcentrism allowed enrichment to existing textual conventions and narrative modes in anthropological studies. Contrasting to linguistic anthropologists, who privilege semantics over sound, and ethnomusicologists who mainly represent sound through text, sonic ethnographers move beyond 'observing' and 'doing' by engaging in sensory embodied experiences (Pink 2009: 63) and seek to understand sound by studying their contexts and technologies (Voegelin 2021: 270). The new interest in sound did not set in motion an epistemological turning point, yet scholars did engage in debates that promised critical and alternative modes of representation for ethnographic data and the description of sound in particular. Murray Schafer's notion of 'soundscape' (1994), Jacques Attali's conceptualisation of 'noise' (1977), and Feld's notion of 'acoustemology' (1996) directed these theoretical and methodological debates, as anthropologists recorded and described the sounds present in particular contexts and communities (Farnell & Graham 2015: 403, Feld 1990, Truax 1999, Samuel et. al 2010, Rennie 2014, Drozdzewski & Birdsall 2018). These authors approach the soundscape as a person's experiential perception of an acoustic environment that is constructed by its architecture and sound sources. Soundscapes are sonically lived and meaningful due to a cultural arena, where it elicits human responses (Brown et. al 2017: 8).

Anthropologists generally work with soundscapes by studying physical acoustic environments, as this has proven meaningful to notice unmarked forms of speech (Farnell & Graham 2015: 403), the characteristics of aural architecture (Ergin 2008: 213), the changing technologies of mediation (Hirschkind 2006), and the complexity of mediatic collections (Harris 2014: 9). Although some of these studies highlight the growing importance of digitally mediated and manipulated sounds, scholarly enquiries do not yet focus on soundscapes by studying online environments. What might explain this is the issue that the soundscape concept implicates an analogy with landscape

and the association with three-dimensional space, hereby not capturing the virtuality, unstableness, temporality and ephemerality of sonic events and the moods and atmospheres that are at the heart of listening experiences (Eisenlohr 2018: 12). Instead, Patrick Eisenlohr suggests analysing sonic events through transduction, because it acknowledges the subjective experience of sound as phenomenological; as an experience that not only travels through the ear but through the entire body, air and back. I follow this argument, because it attends to the embodied and emotional responses sound evokes, in my ethnographic research for instance the experience of aversion to music and the kinesthetic capacities triggered by dancing. Below, I explain in more detail how sonic ethnographers theorise this holistic approach.

Movement, digitalisation and consumption

> "The body begins with sound, in sound. The sound of the body is the sound of the other but it is also the sound of the same" (Kapchan 2015: 33).

Deborah Kapchan argues that the 'sound body' is a material body transformed and affected by the sonic vibrations of an environment (Kapchan 2015: 41). Based on her own embodied participation in Sufi ceremonies in France (Kapchan 2016), she argues that sound perception is corporeal and explains how sound resonates in bodies and how a body carries songs in its memory. Accordingly, sound stimulates bodily and affective movement. Kapchan as well argues that embodied affects are a collective experience and listening creates communities. Evangelos Chrysagis and Panas Karampampas add to this that solidarity of a group and intimate relationships are built at the intersection of sound and movement. They take music and dance as examples of "the mutually constitutive nature of sound and movement" (Chrysagis & Karampampas 2017: 21). The authors emphasise the importance of contextual space in its interaction with dance and music. For example, in the online spheres of TikTok, music and dance exist in a hyper-quick format, where loops, swipes, video effects and the materialitites of the smartphone screen set the stage for performances. The infrastructures of these spatial settings are inherently the same for every person on TikTok, be it in India, America or Algeria. Yet, the physical spaces of recording and the way people perceive and make use of sound and movement differ contextually (ibid.: 30). As will get clear in chapter two and three, gender and taste condition the access to physical and online spaces for recording and what sounds youth consume. Henri Lefebvre argues that space is socially formed, because the production of space depends on series of relations. Spaces are gendered and defined by taste due to collective interactions. According to Lefebvre the accessibility to spaces depend on human-set boundaries. The spatial arrangements are the result of "representational space (Lefebvre 1991: 39)", meaning the lived experience through which dwellers of spaces imagine their social norms and experiences influences how they aim to change or maintain dominant spatial discourses. In my ethnographic research, the spaces in Algerian TikTok are roughly divided in two: *meryūlīn* TikTok for youth who promote and perform raï and *way way* and *ʿamīq* TikTok for youth who contest raï and defy trends popular on *meryūlīn* TikTok. The second group negotiates and produces space by generating rela-

tions that underscore their different and alternative sensory interests. The negotiation of these two different, yet closely related, sensory environments evokes a tension that points to the role of sound and movement in ethical self-fashioning (Hirschkind 2006: 125). Hirschkind argues that certain sounds in public space are an "assault on the ears" for some users, who experience the noisy soundscape as a site of struggle. In chapter three I illustrate how Algerians on *ʿamīq* TikTok reclaim an alternative space on TikTok to cultivate and moralise their own sounds and sense of youthfulness.

The introduction clarified that digital technologies influence the social lifeworlds of people around the Middle East. So does it influence the soundscapes perceived by its inhabitants. The performance and aurality of different sounds on TikTok are part of an economy of sound, wherein people popularise and market particular sonic aesthetics. TikTok is a sonically designed consumption environment that triggers listeners and makers to spend their leisure time in. Holger Schulze argues that our lives are presently triggered by a 'sensory economy' with at its core a sequence of entertainment services, such as streams and screens existing of sensological commodities (Schulze 2019: 10). In a desire to make new profiles, friends, and discover the newest trends people constantly surge sonic products and hereby become 'sonic consumers' (ibid.: 11). Scholars indicate that sonic consumption is localised and concurrently under the spell of globalisation and mediatised connectivity. They criticise the idea that the sonic diversity as a result of glocalisation is solely an effect of capitalist competition and individualist consumer choice (Douglas 1979: 36, Attali 1985: 40, Eisenlohr 2018: 43). Researchers thus critically assess the consumption of sound as a primacy of agency that requires people's active engagement, while simultaneously granting importance to the structural regimes of production and circulation.

Youth on TikTok

In recent years, the amount of TikTok users has grown, and with over 1.5 billion downloads, it is world's seventh most-downloaded app of the 2010s[9]. The popular media technology boosts the extent to which ideas, images, sounds and people move across borders and thus well exemplifies the flows of globalisation that Arjun Appadurai refers to as 'technoscapes' and 'mediascapes' (Appadurai 1990: 296). The ethnographic output on TikTok is not yet established. Existing work consists of discourse and cultural analytic studies, covering themes such as the effectiveness of health communication through TikTok (Zhu et al. 2019), the presence of hate speech and extremism (Weimann & Nasri 2020), the role of social media in travel experiences (Du et al. 2020), and the gendered and aesthetics aspects of celebrities on TikTok (Kennedy 2020). Seeing that 62% of users are children and youth between the age of 10 and 29, all studies focus on TikTok through the prism of youth.

The published work that overlaps most with my research, is an ethnographic work by Burcu Simsek, who illustrates the importance of music picking and the repertoires of gestures teenagers teach themselves to follow or initiate new trends on the app musical.ly (currently TikTok) (Simsek 2020: 49). The study shows girls' dual experience of inclusion and exclusion in their negotiation of becoming a microcelebrity. In accordance with my ethnographic study, it indexes youth as a group who search for autonomy, place themselves

9 https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tik-tok-statistics/

in relation to global and local trends and figure moral agency. This approach more broadly reflects recent anthropological literatures on youth practices, wherein youthhood is seen as a life stage that has value because youth action is considered a site of social change, agency and identity formation (Shankar 2015). Nevertheless, Simsek's study lacks a nuanced view of youth as a flexible category with subgroups whose moral registers change. In this study I try to lay out subtlety how notions of inclusion and exclusion fluctuate.

Margaret Mead first addressed youth as a social category in *Coming of age in Samoa* (1928). At the time, anthropologists considered youth as a liminal transitional life stage (van Gennep 1965, Tumer 1969), in between childhood and adulthood. The transition was structured by rites of passage followed by a new social status of social and sexual maturity (Liu et. al 2011). During the 1950s-'60s, sociologists looked at youth as a modern deviant subculture of urban spaces, where they created their own norms, codes and politics. But these approaches were criticised for their narrow perspectives. In this study I will build on recent conceptualisations of youth, including those coming from ethnographers studying the Middle East and Africa (Masquelier 2010, Deeb & Harb 2013, Bayat & Herrera 2010). Asef Bayat's discussion of youthfulness as a social category is especially valuable here, because he argues against the classical notion that Muslim Middle Eastern youth movements are political agents of radicalisation or democratisation. Bayat states that youth movements are about claiming or reclaiming youthfulness, which involves sociological characteristics of 'being young' such as the search for collectivity, autonomy, mobility, style, adventurism and change (Bayat 2010: 31). Nevertheless, I will not adopt the popular category 'Muslim youth'. Although being Muslim was important to most of my informants, they never referred to themselves as such, so according to their definition I will be referring to them as 'Algerian youth'.

Conclusion

Conducting research during a pandemic highlights the vulnerabilities of informants and the need for sensitive and ethical approaches to work with communities in the MENA from a distance. I have demonstrated that collaboration and building trust partially depends on a researcher's mental and bodily engagement in the field. In reference to recent work on sound I have explained that the researcher's body as a tool is central to gain a holistic understanding of a fieldsite. Ethnographic studies remind us that we should examine sound as a social matter that triggers bodily and affective movement. Throughout this thesis, I will argue that Algerian youth, who produce and/or consume TikToks are affected and moved by sound. While they travel through different algorithmic spaces they adapt, appreciate and take moral stances on sound. In the following chapter, I discuss raï and *way way* as important features of TikTok. Knowing what signifies raï and *way way* advances our understanding of music scholarship in Algeria and consumption patterns of its youth.

Chapter 2
Performing raï in a digital age

This chapter will let us further understand how youth, artists and music studios become socially indebted in relations of exchange, all the while finding leisure in the circuit of raï. It makes apparent how TikTok usage influences local music markets and disseminates music, dance and fashion aesthetics. The chapter answers questions like: what musical responses erupt as a result of digitalisation? And, what social infrastructures are at the core of these online spheres? Based on autoethnography, I demonstrate how music, dance and bodies form an interconnected web of meaning in performances and I explain the role of language and memefication herein. I show how the consumption of sound is intimately linked to images of a moving body.

From raï *qadīm* to raï *jdīd*

Clicking from profile to sound page and back to my feed, I learnt that to listen to Algerian TikTok is to hear a large variety of sounds. Some youth lipsynched in English, embodying Google Translate's robotic voice followed by their own sketches where they remotely mocked, charmed, or informed their audiences. Others code-switched between French and Darija, all the while alternating a posh accent of a snobby madam with a low-pitched voice of a street vendor. Again others moved their limbs to the latest French-Algerian trap beats by Soolking. TikTok's mediation of sounds indicated the divergent tastes and positions of Algerian youth. In my research I mostly address raï, because my early encounters directed me to these trending sounds.

Raï *jdīd* (new raï) is the sibling of raï *qadīm* (old raï). This musical genre from Oran was inspired by *malḥūn* and ***andalusī*** music (al-Deen 2005: 598). Firstly, *andalusī* came to Algeria from southern Spain after the Reconquista. Secondly, *malḥūn* was a Bedouin poetry style practiced by a *cheikh* (lit. holy man or wise man). In the thirties and forties *malḥūn* developed into *shaʿabi-malḥūn*, a rhythmic and melodic genre that was practiced by a *cheikha* (female for *cheikh*). She was accompanied by metallic drums and flutes and performed in urban bars and brothels, where she sang a mix of poetry and colloquial phrases that translated the severity of poverty, crime, alcoholism, and the pleasure of sex and love. These topics have remained popular in raï *jdīd*. Before each song they would say "rayy" (ibid.: 601). The word literally means "my opinion", but it accurately functions to express an experience or to say "yeah" or "tell it like this" (Swedenburg 2009). Performers were under the influence of Egyptian popular music, American jazz and French chansons, and creatively conglomerated the genres into what scholars came to refer to as 'pop raï' or 'modern raï' in the seventies. Pop raï integrated trumpets, accordions, saxophones and additional percussion beats. In the eighties, Rachid Baba Ahmed and Fethi added synthesisers and drum-machines (Schade-Poulsen 1999: 17). Contrasting the titles *cheikh* and *cheikha*, raï singers adopted the title *cheb(a)* (young (wo)man). Notorious singers, such as Cheb Khaled, Cheba Fadela and Cheb Hasni, quickly spread their music among youth through cassette tape recordings (al-Deen 2005: 604). As I explain shortly, digital apparatus for music have had a similar effect on the popularisation of raï *jdīd*. At the same time, youth visited live performances in cabarets, spaces that allowed alcohol and dancing women and that similar to TikTok were contested for their transgression of public morality (Virolle

1996: 112).

In ethnomusicological scholarship, the controversy around raï is dominantly described in terms of rebellion. According to this trope, which translates to Middle Eastern studies at large, youth are a rebellious generation, who impulsively and emotionally try to fight marginalisation as a result of economic precarity and authoritarianism. Existing literatures on raï describe the genre as resistant to conservative values or Islamist extremism in Algeria and as a defense of tolerance, freedom and individuality (see Virolle 1989, Daouidi & Miliani 1996, Cremades et. al 2015). The issue with these analyses is that authors depart from Western models of resistance and freedom and that raï perfectly matches their conceptions of "liberal-minded" Muslims and "acceptable" Arab culture. Despite that the topics of songs frequently describe the scope of youth's struggles, the song texts and discussions adhere to local perceptions of freedom, morality and rebellion (Swedenburg 2009). During this ethnographic research I have not found youth criticising moral and political authorities. The only government-oriented criticism I encountered focused on the boycott of French products in October 2020, after Emmanuel Macron's defense of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed (TikTok 2.1). However, as gets clear throughout this thesis, youth do resist ways of being in Algerian society that they dislike. I observed this criticism in the chastisting of girls and queers who dance to raï and the opposition of the two scenes on TikTok. By defending or criticising a particular collective fashion, Algerian youth claim youthfulness and create religious expectations, social norms and moral values. Nevertheless, while practices related to raï remain a point of tension between governments, generations and different groups of youth, it is more meaningful to discuss raï as a contested- instead of rebellious genre.

Another issue with scholarship on raï is that researchers have selected their data in light of an ocularcentric agenda. Subsequent theories of sound from the 19th and 20th century most dominantly consist of research on music theory and the vocal aspects of language (Danielson et al. 2001: 45). Anthropologists often document and analyse sound by focusing on the "interpretation of acoustic "texts"" (Samuels et al. 2010: 333). Hirschkind for example does this when he discusses the oratical form of *khutba* (sermons) (Hirschkind 2006: 149). In the case of raï literature, scholars center texts as core units of analysis by focusing on lyrical form and describing musicological elements. They use these frameworks to exemplify the political and social contexts of music-making. But, little to no space is there for the analysis of performances, listening habits and surrounding soundscapes of raï production. Consequently, this field lacks knowledge on the sonovisual expressive domains in raï practices. Moreover, the prioritisation of text points to the fact that scholarship on raï has not yet shared in recent sonic ethnographic debates. In general the field lacks recent literature. Apart from one study on YouTube's online archive of raï from the eighties (Swedenburg 2019), there are no available accounts on the influence of digitalisation and the development of raï in the decades after the nineties.

Anno 2006, scholars mentioned that raï was becoming a genre of a distant and older generation and was desperately in need of a musical revolution (Morgan & Nickson 2006: 18). This statement came true with the advent of raï *jdīd*. According to my informant Chahra: "Old people listen to old raï like

"cheb khaled" not this modern raï cuz it's actually made for teenagers. Because raï has been changed due to time and generations." A scholarly history of when and why this upturn came is still awaiting, but I have learnt that present-day big idols such as Cheba Warda Charlomanti and Cheb Bello were already performing and releasing in 2014. Moreover, my research demonstrates that the upsurge of raï *jdīd* is closely related to digitalisation and dance. Several informants of mine directed me to Cheb Mohamed Benchenet's breakthrough song *Way way*[10], released in the spring of 2014. The title and refrain of this song came to symbolise a new dance style that emerged in the schools, streets and cabarets of *sha'abi* districts (lit. popular, known as urban districts populated by vulnerable classes). Videos of youth dancing *way way*, also known as *ey ey*, started circulating on YouTube[11] and it became one of the early products of Algerian Internet culture. The word "way" is expressed in Algerian when someone is shocked, to signal "really?" or when someone has a wound. Romaissa, a 24 years old girl who lives in Algiers and dreams of having a beauty salon and finishing her laboratory studies, told me that *way way* also spread to wedding parties, where dancers would always steal the show with their well-developed moves. Since two years, *way way* and raï *jdīd* moved to TikTok. The dance style perfectly lends itself for TikToks, because of the rapid succession of movements match the fifteen-second sounds. Moreover, the choreography evolves around the hands, arms, core, and facial expression. Meaning, the dance is 'on the spot' and does not require complex camera angles.

An author of a 2018 report[12] explained that the arrival of smartphones, social media and 3G-networks altered the raï music industry. Likewise, my informants stated that whereas old people bought CD's and listened to old raï, youth modernised the genre with their slang, use of phones and their habits to share releases on social media. Artists also adapted. They integrated digitised technologies into the musical qualities of raï *jdīd*. The genre was now characterised by the use of auto-tune and accelerated rhythms. Moreover, artists started using social media and tried to control their success by writing thematic raï lyrics on TikTok and lyrics that were meme-worthy for the short length sound snippets. Examples are Cheb Aymen Parisien's song *Tik toki bel jalaba* (TikTok in a jaleba)[13] (TikTok 2.2) and Cheb Imad Japoni's *Diri Tik Tok* (Make me a TikTok)[14], where artists sing about fame on TikTok. Although raï from the seventies and eighties was also directed at youth, it no longer reflected the lives of youth living in a digitalised era. Through raï *jdīd*, youth found a way to express and distinguish themselves from generations who listened to old raï. The fact that people felt the need to add '*jdīd*' to raï tells the story of a reinvented music genre that separated from its perceived traditions.

Hirschkind's examination of the transformation of soundscapes in Egypt lays bare that the distribution of new aural media recreates moral and political landscapes. The distribution of the modern media form TikTok consequently repositions raï traditions and listening practices in the context

10 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mbd4_v8QYI
11 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GimapMQQ8dA
12 https://musique.rfi.fr/musique-arabe/20180809-oran-festival-rai
13 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-IBiu8R8nM
14 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgwSNimIosw

of Algerians contemporary social and political life. While artists record and TikTokers rerecord and consume raï performances, they spread "sensory knowledges" (Hirschkind 2006 :2) that fit their behaviour, moral reasoning and self-fashioning practices. For example, in their performances, youth's bodies correspond to ethics of gender, beauty and fame. Central to this analysis is the notion that the uses of technologies by Algerians have effect on the sounding of their environments (Porcello 2005: 270). Based on Steven Feld's concept 'acoustemology', Thomas Porcello highlights the impact of technologies on "local conditions of acoustic sensation, knowledge, and imagination embodied in the culturally particular sense of place" (Feld 1996: 91) and calls it "techacoustemology" (Porcello 2005: 270). The online context for the distribution and consumption of raï *jdīd* shapes Algerian youth's sonic experiences. For example, the "treble culture" (Wayne 2014: 47) of smartphones, meaning the low-end frequencies in which smartphones push music, alter the sonic experience of raï *jdīd*. Additionally, the combination of video and sound has impact on how people affectively experience the circulation of sound, images and texts on social media. Rachel Harris argues that sounds on smartphones convey experiences that "accommodate to the architecture of the virtual environment with its specific modes of connectivity and affect" (Harris 2020: 140). Below, I further analyse the importance of TikTok in listeners' and artists' adaptation to online channels.

Just for fun

After the early weeks of observation, on my main page unfolded a story that gave me insights into Algerians' sonic participation on TikTok. Clicking on and on, I learnt that users who add raï *jdīd* on Algerian TikTok are mostly fans, studios, publishers and artists. Although the official TikTok music library contains some songs by raï singers from the seventies, new releases are often unavailable. Due to this bias in the availability of non-western popular music, the demand of consuming youth and the interest of artists and studios to solicit new releases in this market, raï devoted accounts have mushroomed (Figure 2.3). Examples of such accounts are *@oribi_production*, *@djebiri_mh.prod*, and *@tadjou_31*. These TikTok participants have all put a link to their YouTube, Instagram or Facebook channel in their bio. Unlike other youth, who commonly use a pseudonym, such as *POU-PiiÁ*, *TlaMcenYy* and *X_Føüfël_X*[15], and state their age, *wilāya*, and *objectif* (their goal for amount of following), artists generally use a professional name and make a statement of their work. Such as, "*prod de rai et comédien* (raï producer and comedian)" or "*al-ḥamdulillah. Juste pour le plaisir. Kūl video bi-les paroles. Suivez-moi*. (Thank God. Just for fun. Every video with lyrics. Follow me.)"

The account owners are entangled in a polymediatic network and own accounts on TikTok, Youtube, Instagram and SnapChat. Yet, the contrast with their popularity on TikTok is stark. Whereas in March 2021, *@oribi_production* had 229 thousand followers on TikTok, he only had 927 on Instagram. This example demonstrates the affordances and economic value of TikTok for raï studios. On the one hand, there is a demand for music from consumers online and the producers strategically use the sonic structure of the platform to stimulate their content. On the other hand, as the smartphone and the Inter-

15 The mixed use of letters, signs and numbers is typical for the prevailing slang used on Algerian TikTok. It reminds one of global youth's Internet languages, such as Leetspeak and BrE3ZaH TaAl.

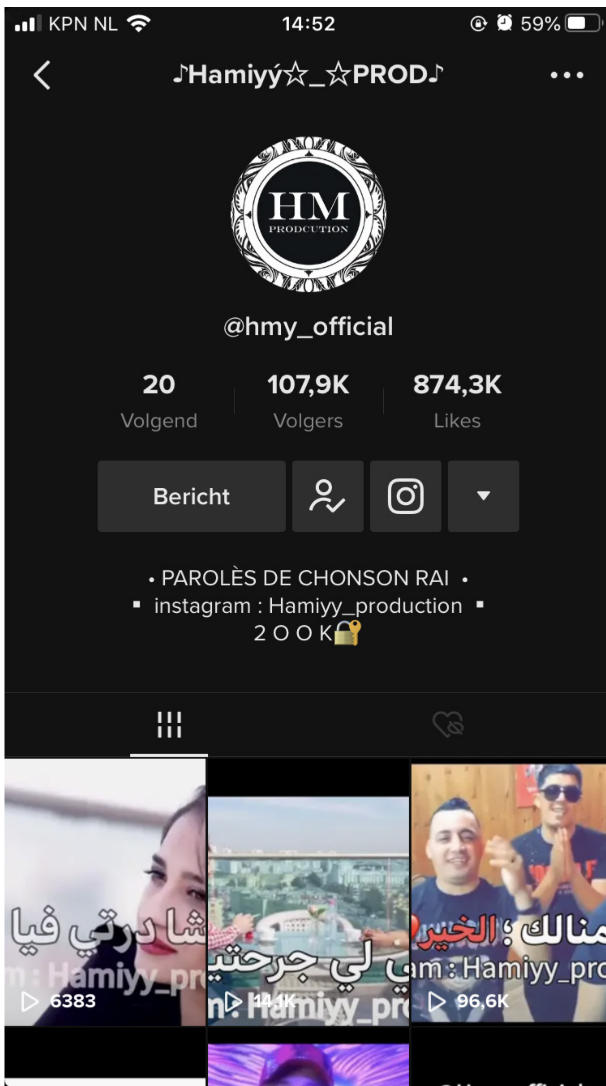

Figure 2.3: TikTok profile of a sound uploader

net have turned into necessary means of communication for many Algerian youth, the music business is becoming increasingly dependent of these structures for their distribution. Studios have to be involved in a network of strategies and alliances to be able to advertise the songs to consuming youth. Elsewhere in the Middle East these dynamics have also changed. For example in Egypt, artists distributed their music to radio in the 1920s (Fahmy 2020: 133). In the 1970s, the audience's reach to cassette players refashioned modern mass entertainment and musicians from all social strata tried to spread their voices through audiotapes (Simon 2019: 233). Since 2011, Egypt's (post)-revolutionary music industry with its corporate sponsorships opened up opportunities for artists to reach international audiences (Sprengel 2020: 546) and connect with local young audiences who increasingly listened to music online (El-Sayed 2021:458). Although state-controlled radio channels still exist, el-Sayed demonstrated that artists distributed low-budget music on underrepresented societal issues through online platforms like YouTube and Soundcloud, where they reached new audiences who favoured mahraganat[16] and rap.

This literature resembles the conditions Iman told me about. Iman is the twenty-year-old son of a raï studio owner in Oran. He manages the studio's TikTok account, which I followed to find new songs. He started following me in return and after that we once briefly had a Facebook call. He told me that he first got a smartphone in 2015 and joined his dad in the studio to make pictures and videos of performing artists. They also had a cameraman present, who uploaded the material to YouTube. Since June 2020 he got active on TikTok, which according to him was a strategic step. At the same time, he told me he enjoys spending time on TikTok. Although we never got the chance to talk extensively, the conversation suggests that raï studios and artists rely on young Internet-savvy family members to conduct their affairs in this online economy.

To promote their activities, studio account owners like Iman upload new songs on a daily basis. They take live videos when an artist records in the studio. The aesthetic of Iman's account speaks for that of others in this genre. At the backdrop of big computer screens, speakers and piled up keyboards, his TikToks feature a male or female singer surrounded by a male keyboardist, sometimes an electric guitarist, darbouka player, and an enthusi-

16 Mahraganat literally means 'festivals' and is an Egyptian genre pioneering from *sha'abi* neighborhoods.

astic crew of sunglass wearing studio managers who dance and sing along. On other occasions, the TikToks are bits of an official music clip featuring the main singer. These raï artists, such as Cheba Warda Charlomante, Sidou Japonais and Cheb Midou also have their own accounts where they post short music clips and address their fans. Especially their teasers and announcements of new songs attract large audiences (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4: Announcement of a song

Chahra first directed me to the importance of these teasers for music distribution. Chahra is 21 years old and lives in Algiers. She occasionally uploads TikToks on American trap songs but she keeps them private for people who do not follow her. We got acquainted towards the end of my research after she frequently commented on my TikToks. During an interview she explained that raï *jdīd* is a genre of the youth where music distribution depends on sharing songs in cars and on social media. In the chatbox she told me:

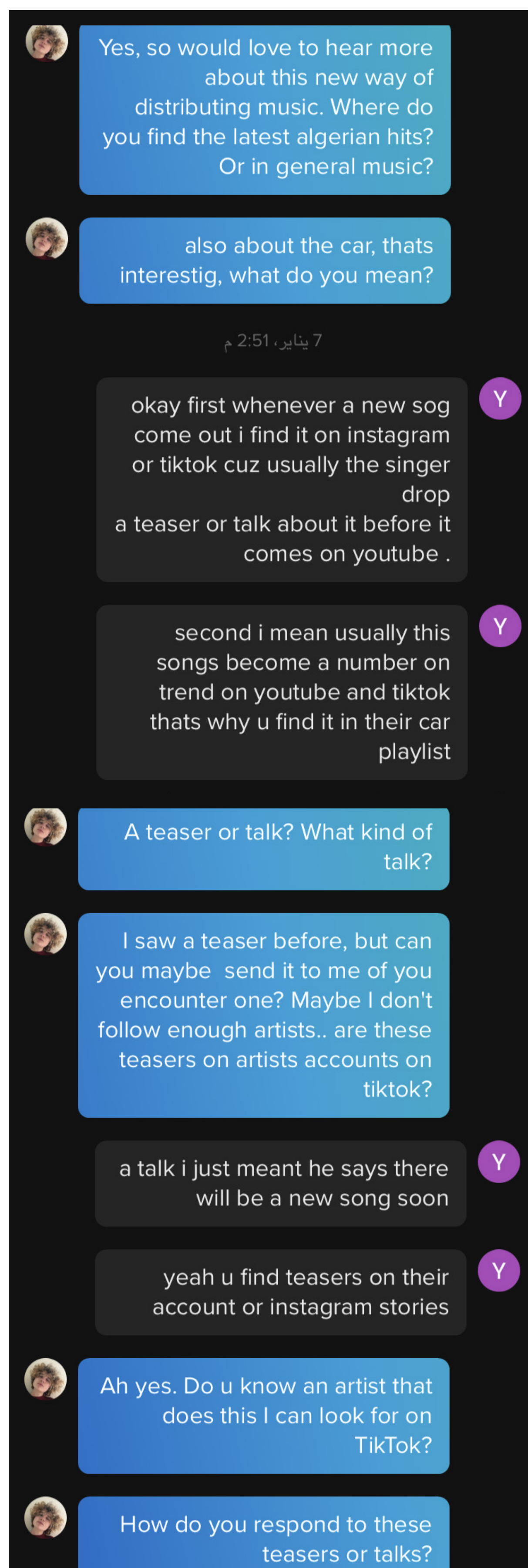

Figure 2.5 Interview with Chahra

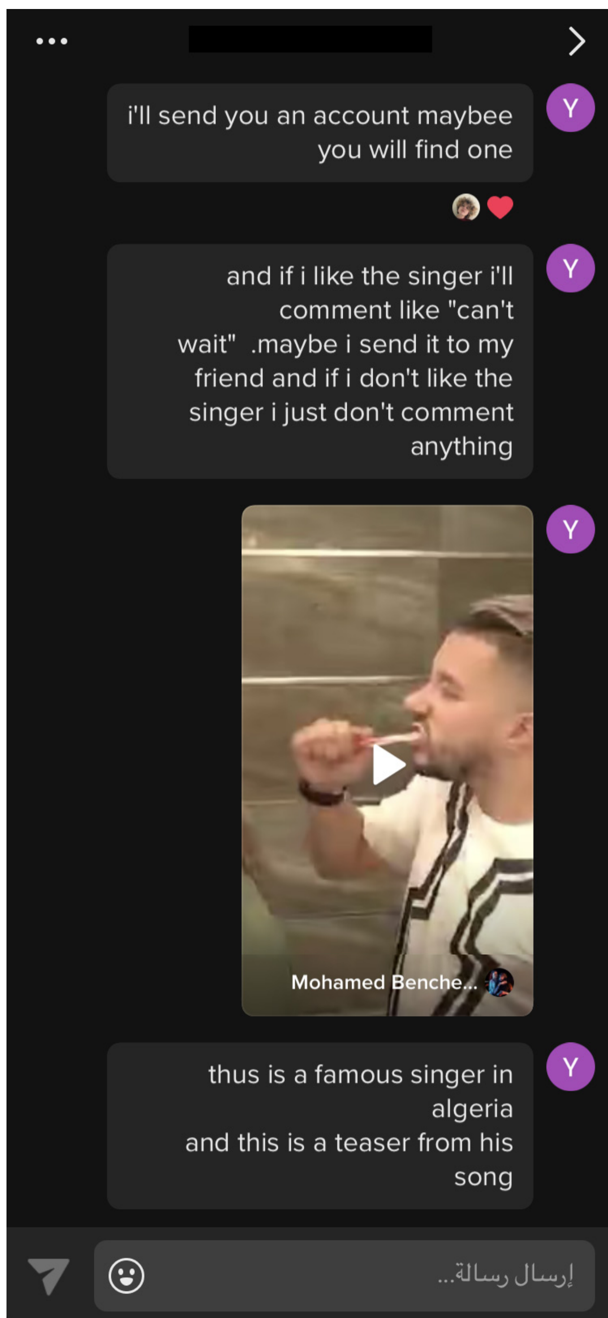

Figure 2.5 Interview with Chahra

This conversation tells that to be up to date with raï releases, audiences have to engage on TikTok, Instagram and Youtube. Although one might be able to pick up a hit from a car fleeting by, knowing and listening trending music marks social status. It provides youth with the possibility to exchange songs with their friends and make themselves audible to other roadies. Music consumption thus represents social capital (Bourdieu 1972), because sharing songs and supporting artists strengthens relationships and provides youth with a framework to define themselves in relation to others.

TikTok worthy: gendering bodies

Besides sharing and commenting the songs, there are youth who adopt the teasers and releases for their TikToks. The option to use a sound inspires youth to engage in musical sociality. Together with TikTok celebrities and other fans I participated in this activity. I noticed at micro level that I derived fame from the anthems and gained social capital, because with every TikTok I received more likes and more people followed me. Taking part in the rhythm of TikTok, I noticed how trending songs quickly spread in few days' time. Some songs die-out promptly, others remain popular for months. As soon as several famous TikTokers pick up on a snippet and record a TikTok with it, its usage grows. In this research I did not focus on the rewards of algorithmic audibility and the status of (micro-)celebrities. Nevertheless, I did learn that some users deploy TikTok to attract attention, audibility and visibility. These influencers engage in an "attention economy (Goldhaber 1997)", meaning that they strategically use certain sounds, hashtags and descriptions to make lucrative deals. The usage of songs by influencers helps to spread the word of a release, because the more TikTokers hear the song on their 'For You' page, the more they use it and mimic the movements. Take Cheba Sabah's *El mehaba mechi bessif*, to which I recorded a TikTok on the 30th of October (TikTok 2.6). In the original clip Cheba Sabah chants in an orange-painted studio with a Bob Marley painting on the wall, while DJ Moulay sets the arrangement of a polyphonic synth line. On the day of its release *@oribi_production* uploaded an eleven second snippet of the original videoclip as a TikTok. Within a few days, more than four thousand women had selected the sound for their performance. The gendered usage of the

sound is remarkable, because most of the time women and men participate in the same trending sounds. I observed this gendered division only in musical representations of topics that are culturally associated with the female domain, such as enchantment in love, nurture of children and the household. This tells that Algerian youth deem certain sounds especially feminine and that through TikTok usage they re-establish attitudes towards gender roles and relations. The observation that music-making practices and dance performances are gendered has been well discussed (Abu-Lughod 1987, Koskoff 1987, El-Tantawy & Isaksen 2020). Shayna Silverstein argued that there exist different gendered norms in private and public domains when it comes to dance practices (Silverstein 2016: 279). For similar reasons, female participation in dance performances on Algerian TikTok is contested. For some, TikTok is a public space that demands limited presence of dancing female bodies. To maintain their modesty some women make private accounts or blur away their faces in order not to be recognised by family. Hereby these women enter the 'private spaces' of TikTok. For others, modesty is not measured based on the participation of women in performances. They do not strictly gender TikTok's public spaces.

However, the gendered use and appropriation of public and private space differed in offline spaces. Boys commonly recorded in public space. Wearing, for example, Lacoste training suits, boys danced solo or in groups of two or three in dense urban areas, in a sportswear shop, or while sitting at a local coiffeur getting their haircut done in the latest fashion – sides shaved off and a slicked-back lock in the middle. Girls typically had straightened long hair, blushed cheeks, finely tailored nails and dress up in, for example, Adidas vests, clourful crop-tops, and tight jeans or jalaba's[17]. Additionally, I encountered women in more visibily pious outfits. Girls recorded their TikToks alone inside the private spaces of their house such as the kitchen or bedroom, holding the smartphone in one hand to record the face or placing it at a suitable height on self-timer. Some girls were also recorded while they danced on the street or beach. Drawing on examples of western newspapers and TikTokers, Kennedy argues that due to the rise of TikTok and its visualisation of the mundanity of the girl's bedroom, the level of privacy and safety in terms of gender surveillance is no longer secured (Kennedy 2020: 1071). In the introduction I explained gendered surveillance regarding Algerian TikTok exists. Several of my female informants said they were afraid of humiliation, punishment or surveillance from other youth or their family members. Nevertheless, they did not seem to be concerned with the visibility of their private spaces, but more so with their modesty and visibility of their faces, dress and dancing. The risks of gender surveillance thus differ contextually, as does the experience of the public and private.

The aesthetics and mundane environments that characterise this side of Algerian TikTok reflect those of sha'abi youth, a group from "precarious neighbourhoods" (Strava 2020: 3), whose mode of dress, habits and values are, as we will learn in chapter three, the target of social anxiety and ridicule among middle- and upper class youth. At the same time, the above-described qualities and the performativity of these vulnerable groups of youth resonate among audiences that inhabit similar societal positions. The TikToks create

17 A jalaba is a long, loose-fitting garment with long sleeves that is popularly worn in Arab societies and by Muslims globally.

for them a sense of intimacy and recognition. Nevertheless, the intimacy is somewhat of an illusion as people specially construct and manage the presentation of online selves (Cirucci 2018: 35). TikToks are thoughtfully staged, with TikTokers visualising a state of fun, also referred to as an "aesthetic of fun" (Coulter 2018: 6), perfecting their moves, advertising their local stores, as well as investing in stage affordances, such as selfie ring light tripods.

Although TikTok has an inexpensive mode of production and presumably everyone at global scale who owns a smartphone and has a quiet alley or room can become TikTok famous, youth who wish to have worldwide fame are more apt to succeed if they match certain beauty ideals, aesthetics and are young, white, wealthy, able-bodied and heterosexual. It is significant that the majority of globally known TikTokers is based in the Global North and confirms the above-described profile. The racial and gendered tensions and discrimination underpinning TikTok fame reflect in the limited possibilities of Algerians to rise to fame beyond the Middle East. Leaked documents of the makers of TikTok show the inherent discrimination of online platforms. Moderators were instructed to algorithmically exclude 'poor people', 'abnormal body shapes' and 'ugly facial looks' from 'For You' feeds and to censor political speech (Biddle et. al 2020). But, it is also due to context that people define who and what is TikTok-worthy. My research suggests that locally normative feminine, masculine and young bodies are celebrated. I have witnessed profiles of famous black people, cross-dressing homosexuals, transsexuals and little persons, but they are not the norm. More accurately, people discriminate their bodies and sexual orientations in comments. One comment I frequently encountered on profiles of feminine looking men who dance *way way* is '106', a homophobic reference to an Algerian movie[18]. This harassing comment implies that the sex and gendered production and consumption of TikToks and the social infrastructures that support it are based on discriminatory patterns across groups. The patterns suggest that sonic consumption is one field where these quotidian issues are disputed. Due to the algorithmic discrimination and moral discussion a particular construction of youthhood flourishes online: one that consists of normative and conventional bodies.

Giving and taking

Not only the moving bodies of *way way* dancers were negotiated in affect-laden ways. The songs were also sensory stimuli that triggered particular physical and affective reactions. The vocal and kinesthetic qualities of performance resulted in the transformation of vibrating and affected bodies (Eisenlohr 2018: 85). Eisenlohr's analytic of transduction follows this line of thought as it attends to the bodily motion and movement stimulated by sound. Although my ethnographic study lacks detailed data on the listening experiences of TikTok audiences and performers, from the comments on my TikToks I learnt that listeners were moved during sonic events. For instance, I uploaded a TikTok to a snippet of Cheb Nadjib and ZakZok's song *Kolchi kan kadba* with a voiceover by a famous TikToker called Bouchra who, while she posed in a car in a shiny red padded coat, introduced the song followed by the lyrics:

18 *106* or *miyyā wi sitta* refers to a scene in the Algerian movie *L'inspecteur Tahar*, where a man cross-dressed as a maid in a hotel searches for room 106 and calls out in a purposefully female sounding highpitched voice: "106!" See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYuF1In5KEM

Makanš gaʿ lī beġīlak al-ḫayr. Aqsam bī-llah. Asmaʿ asmaʿ! (There is no one who wants something good for you. I swear by god. Listen listen!)

In response to my TikTok, I received two comments that pointed to the affective and bodily experience of music.

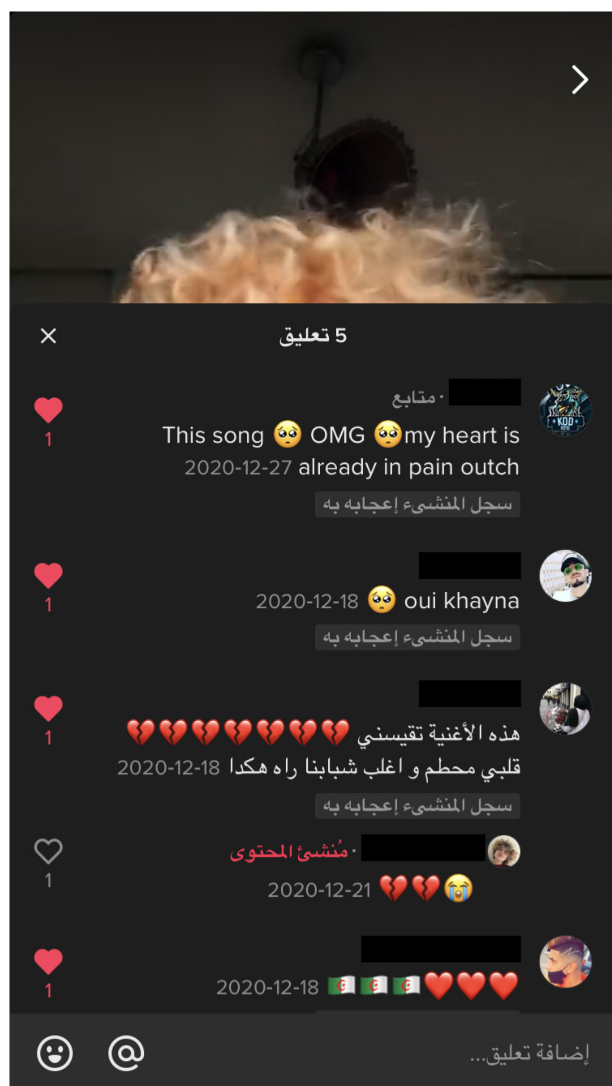

Figure 2.7 Affective comments

In the screenshot (Figure 2.7) we read that the heart was under attack. The heart symbolises the origin of feelings. The sonic materiality of the song triggered joy, smart, and a pain that youth experienced physically. These examples show that sound has the capacity to move bodies emotionally and recall memories that are carried in the "felt-body" (Husserl 1973, Merleau-Ponty 2002[1945]). In line with Kapchan's argument that "[Listening] is an act that not only transforms the state of the listener but also the affective resonance of the group" (Kapchan 2016: 34), the second comment indicates that young raï listeners believe to collectively experience embodied affects.

This notion, that music evokes shared emotional experience and a sense of belonging, is widely spread in academia (Harris 2020: 44). Music can on the one hand stimulate the formation of collective communities and on the other hand a sense of otherness, as I show in chapter three. The collectively experienced joy and resonance between young Algerians appeared from their socialisation over sonic consumption. After posting a TikTok, I had people following me and asking for the name of the song that I was dancing to. I would respond and follow people in return. Normally, a return follow culminated in a support system for the activities of one another via the exchange of likes, appreciations and encouragements. Some TikTokers also gave their fans the possibility to ask for a *dedikas* (Arabic phonemic orthography for the French word *dédicace*). *Dedikas* literally translates as dedication, but also means request. It originates in cabarets for raï performances, where audiences offered money to the singer or a middleman in order to praise their family or people present and have their favourite song performed (Schade-Poulsen 1999: 47). This ceremonial act has spread to TikTok, where audiences can ask for a *dedikas* by commenting on a recent TikTok of someone who makes dance TikToks on raï (TikTok 2.8). Contrary to the cabarets, there is no money involved in this exchange nor is it a competitive game where people make bids to get their tune played. Instead, it is a pleasurable gift-giving exchange. Audiences request a *dedikas* in a comment and ask for a specific song or a particular artist or more commonly for a Tik-

Tok dedicated to oneself, their kin or a *wilāya*. The performer directly responds to this comment with a TikTok. Hereby, audiences can make visible and audible their offline selves, because they call attention to geographical origin and social relations outside online spaces. For example, people would comment "*Dedikas khoya sohaib (bartout*) (*Dedikas* for my brother Sohaib (Bartout)" or "*Dedikas nas 04 raby yahfazak. 3ayn fakroun* (*Dedikas* for people from Oum el-Bouaghi. God bless you. Aïn Fakroun". When I commented a *dedikas* I would sometimes ask people to devote it to "*Nās Hulanda* (Dutch people)", which to my conscious was not frowned upon. TikTokers thus turn their comment into a gift for people around them, be it family members, friends, cities (for example *Nās Tlemcen*) or local areas (*Nās wilāya 04* or *Nās Sétif*) and simultaneously get to enjoy a performance in their favourite genre. Meanwhile, the TikTok maker gets a level of prestige as she receives likes, gratitude and following.

Through social encounters like the sonic gift, Algerian youth build relationships of friendship and fanhood. At the same time, TikTok is a space where youth flirt and find romantic love. During fieldwork, I frequently received affective responses to TikToks, such as "*tahabli* (you make me crazy)". Likewise, youth communicated their status, "*célibataire* (single)", "*marié(e)* (married)", in their biographies or responded to the question "*célibataire wala en couple?* (single or in a relationship?)" posed in the descriptions of TikToks. These online encounters of intimacy happened over the consumption of love songs. Additionally, youth came to TikTok for fun and leisure. When I asked my informants why they use TikTok, Aarfah, a 19 years old English literature student who lives in Algiers, told me: "The thing that I like about tiktok is that I can find people who have similar interests, people who send positivity etc". Safae: "the reason I downloaded the app is for entertainment tbh (to be honest), some tiktok comedy compilation videos used to show on my YouTube, so I used to enjoy watching them and after I started using it I realised there's much more in it than just the dancing and comedy [...]" As follows, youth turn to TikTok for plenty of different reasons. Sociosonic exchange exemplifies how youth find a balance between consumption and leisure all the while maintaining their social networks off- and online. In the coming paragraphs I discuss how people constitute these social networks through dance practices.

Dancing and *paroles*

In between the sounds and moving images, TikTok is full of text and emojis. Youth not only chat-, comment-, and craft their bios in language, they also incorporate it in their TikToks. On every Original Track page, I found TikToks where, accompanied by descriptive emojis, *paroles* (lyrics) quickly passed in sequence with the vocals onto a strobe light glittery background (TikTok 2.9). Uploaders of this material devote their profiles to these body-absent videos. Going under names such as *paroles_de_chanson_rai* and *wassim_parole* they upload several raï songs a week and decorate them with the sung text.

I have not spoken to Algerian youth why these *paroles* TikToks were popular. But in my own experience it benefited translating and memorising the vocals of songs. Although this experience is likely different due to my language knowledge, it is a fact that memorising lyrics and melody is crucial for the production of successful TikToks on raï. According to ritual, people lip-synch and follow a set of *way way* movements that match the lyrics. The movements

form chains in online space, because people mimic one another when they craft choreographies on the same song. Although dancers do not reside in the same physical space, the dance is a social practice. People share and exchange bodily knowledge and immaterial objects, by repeating the movements of others who have recorded a TikTok on the same song. When I was only watching TikToks, I got the idea that some of the movements reflected the lyrics. I recognised how people formed a heart shape with their fingers when the singers chanted words like *qalbī/galbī* (my heart or my love) and *bġītika* (I am in love with you). Or when people set two arms at right angles to another to signal a roof when they sang *dārī dārak* (my house is your house). However, it was not until I started memorising the dances myself and actively translating the *paroles*, that I recognised the hidden structures of *way way*. I learnt that lyrics and instruments resound in body language and that every TikTok dance represents semiotic chains of movement.

Dancing *way way*: sounding semiotics

Fieldnote, November 25th: *A sax-like chord cues, followed by Abdou Sghir's voice: "naʿfas ʿala qalbī (I stepped on my heart)". The lyrics appear on a black and white coloured TikTok. I can see someone articulating a heart shape with two hands, while someone else turns his puma-shoed toes on a paved street as if stubbing a cigarette. The video switches sight and I now watch a young boy on a scooter who with his iPhone in one hand points up to the sky whereupon he circles his index fingers around his temples. The auto-tuned voice recalls, "wāllah ma-narǧāʿ (I swear I will not return)". An artificial violin riddle continues for four seconds and close to the core of his body, the boy moves his fingers separately, pretending to play a synth. He grabs the handlebars of his scooter and then draws a straight line under his nose with an outstretched index finger, as if exhibiting: "Kī bġītinī nsūq? Wi anā mīt bi-la drogue (How do you desire me to drive? When I am dying on drugs)". He impulsively moves his fingers through the air as the chords hit again and the same loop starts over (TikTok 2.10).*

Going through the other TikToks on this sound page I find people doing similar gestures in front of the camera. I see some variation of people who pretend to hit something or stab their chest as they dance to the first line of the lyrics, while others slide their finger across their throat as the last line begins. Similarly most people move their fisted hands to the lyrics while pretending to steer a wheel (TikTok 2.11). While watching several TikToks, I make drawings of the hand gestures in my notebook (Figure 2.12).

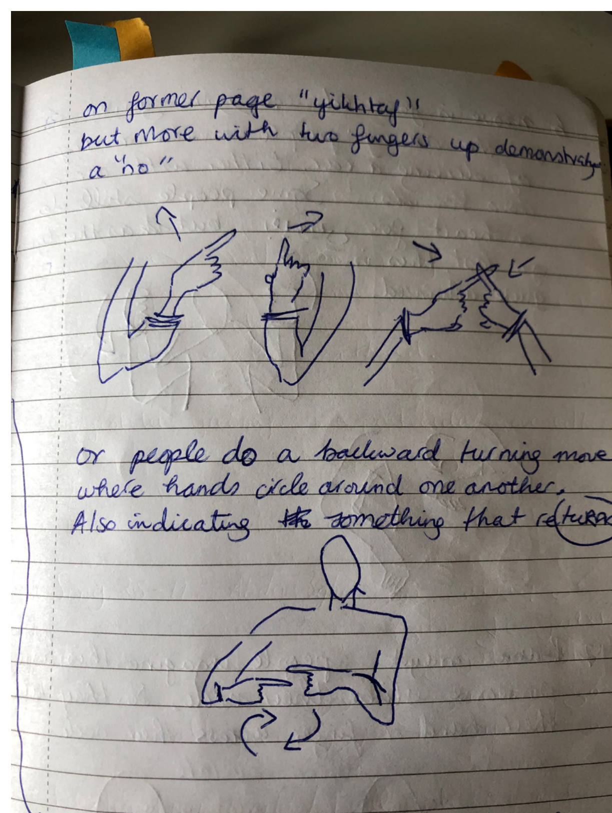

Figure 2.12 Drawings

This drawing technique helps me to recognise the way way *movements and find patterns and commonalities. After noting this down, I try to mimic the hand shapes and once I feel comfortable with them I record a TikTok. It is difficult to time the gestures with the exact words and sentences they refer to. I struggle for a quarter, trying over and over. Finally, I am happy with the result. I take time to enhance the TikTok with effects and add a description "*naʿfas ʿala qalbī #bġītikum_gaʿ #al-ǧazaʾiriyā *#tlemcen_13 #dzpower #explore". My TikTok is now ready for posting (TikTok 2.13).*

When I began recording TikToks, I noticed the performance's structures. Often the songs had a short instrumental introduction were people would improvise with random moves from the way way canon, walk towards the camera and move their hands in the air or pretend to play an air instrument. This was either an imaginary darbouka, gasba (reed flute), violin or keyboard, which youth skilfully played with their fingers (Figure 2.14). The introduction was followed by powerful words of a raï singer. Depending on the length of the snippet and the amount of words and sentences sung, people would do between five and fifteen explicit gestures. Whenever the vocals stopped, dancers would choose from the instrumental idiom, often without taking in consideration exactly what kind of instrument was being played. Towards the end of the snippet, people commonly improvised, made funny faces (pulled out their tongue) or moved around freely within the frame of the camera. The physical expressions focused on the hands, but the upper body, arms and face rotated and flexed along. The moves were fast and followed quickly upon another, but at the same time they were repetitive and recurring in different songs over time.

Figure 2.14 Two boys playing an air synth

On one night, I scrolled all the way back to Bouchra's first TikTok and noticed that in January 2019 she already danced similarly. Many of the arm and hand gestures were thus already conventionalised on TikTok in 2019. People based themselves on an existing canon of motifs that have developed since the appearance of way way in 2014. Way way movements evolve around the arms, a technique that, according to Djamel, derived from the early 2000s French dance *Tecktonik*. But unlike *Tecktonik*, the arm movements are supposed to mimic what raï artists sing or play instrumentally. In another conversation I had with Djamel, he recalled that some gestures

are common vernacular in Algeria for as long as he remembered. This indicates that *way way* borrows from a long-existing conventionalised gesture language. Djamel gave the example of a gesture that signals alcohol consumption, where people stick their thumb (and pinky) out, while seemingly grabbing a bottle in their handpalm and tipping it up towards their heads. He also gave the example of drug consumption, where people draw a *straight* line under their nose. Despite the fact that these gestures existed before the advent of *way way* and TikTok, they acquired new significance in this context. On TikTok, the themes and lyrics of raï directly frame the movements. Bodily impulses amplify the stories of love, fame, drug-use and hatred. These themes are at the heart of raï *jdīd*. Thematic songs that I frequently heard were amongst others *Jibouli Lagmy* (Give me some *lagmy*)[19] by *Cheikh* Chinwa, *Satar satar* (Line of drugs, line of drugs)[20] by Cheba Nagwan, and *Khtik mal halwa nkotlak bal bayda* (Let go of the XTC pill, I will smash you with cocaine)[21] by Cheb Bello. Singers use a range of drug nicknames, which exemplify Algerian diglossic speech and a language of secrecy (Labed 2018: 7). Examples include *n'ẖardel* (to smoke hasish), *ar-rūğ* (lit. red, XTC), *al-ḥilwa* (lit. candy, XTC), *al-bayḍa* (lit. white, cocaine), *ak-kaḥla* (lit. black, hashish), *šmakriya* (glue-sniffing), *aṣ-ṣarūẖ* (lit. rocket, XTC), and *al-eksta* (XTC). Youth have developed gestures that match this lyrical content. When the singer chants about XTC pills, they move their two hands uninterruptedly towards their mouths, as if eating something. When they sing about powdered drugs, youth use one or two flat hands or index fingers that they shift under their noses. Otherwise, they make a smoking gesture or they stump their nose or temples with their hands, followed by moving their head sideways or backwards, as if they took a blow and recover their minds (TikTok 2.15 & 2.16). These discrete bodily acts can be interchanged. Youth use them creatively to convey the social meanings of songs and express identity and emotions. But, although drug use among youth in Algeria is on the rise (Labed, 2018: 5), there is no data available to what extend it correlates with the production and listening habits of a certain genre. In chapter three I will discuss how groups of youth, who are at odd with *way way* and raï *jdīd*, nevertheless associate the explicit lyrical content of raï *jdīd* with the behaviours and drug consumptions of youth who listen to this genre.

The examples above illustrate that through synchronised movements to music, youth communicate linguistic meaning. The sounds trigger their bodies and bring up a bodily memoire of gestures. As such, bodies become sites of translation, carriers of meaning, that represent the fractured and hybrid ways in which humans communicate raï artists' intimate stories. The organisation of gestures reflects the narrative of the textual elements of songs, but also the metrical rhythms and instrumental interludes of the music. The emphasis that youth put on the lyrical and instrumental aspects of music in their performances sheds light on the fact that sound is part of "an integrated expressive system" (Faudree 2012: 520). Anthropologist Paja Faudree argues that a Peircean semiotic approach to music offers tools to analyse sonic aspects of sociality and address nondiscursive expressive forms: such as sung, spoken or gestural forms (Faudree 2012: 521).

19 A fermented wine made of dates. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNwwo67f0U8
20 https://youtu.be/HB4hrlsgadI
21 https://youtu.be/S_6wIbEWRdQ

Peirce understands semiotics as the triadic relation between representamen (the form of the sign), object (what the sign stands for) and interpretant (the idea, feeling, mental state or reaction to a sign based on one's interpretation) (Peirce 1974: 11-26). How signs link to particular objects depends on the symbolic, iconic and indexical referents of the person who makes the reference. Meaning, the interpretation of a sign is complex and inherently social. Linguistic anthropologists have thus used Peirce's theory to link the analysis of meaning to social context (Mertz 2007: 338).

Faudree states that divisions between language and music are not so arbitrary as often put and instead form a communicative whole. This holistic approach to semiotics is meaningful because it adheres to the fact that sound exists in relation to visual and textual signifiers. Expressive musical practices, such as singing, are part of a semiotic field that is available through text. For example, the performance practice 'lip-synching' on Algerian TikTok unites text and sound. In this practice, also revered to as "musicking" (Lange 2020: 5), youth downplay the volume of their own voices and embody those of raï singers. The vocalised lyrics of singers travel as objects from one human to the other (Ochoa Gautier 2014: 9) and hereby become nomadic voices. In this process, verbal and nonverbal communication coexist. To have a successful lip-synch performance, youth have to move their lips in synch with the song and embody the physicality of vocal production. Youth create the illusion that it is them singing, while the voice is actually coming from elsewhere. They engage in a special type of ventriloquism as they capture other voices and choose the raï singer as their ventriloquist narrator. As I explained before, from my experience I learnt that one has to listen to or read the lyrics carefully and rehearse the performance. If I did not, I stumbled over words and I was afraid that viewers could read from my lips that I did not know the texts well and lacked knowledge of the linguistic and musical vernacular. Moreover, lip-synching exemplifies the dialectic relationship between music, language and body, which Faudree only partially explores. Although she briefly hints to the ties between music-language and mediations in performances, she does not highlight the role of bodies as a joint dimension that can help us understand how semiotics circulate. When people engage in musical activities they use their bodies, their faces, their hands. In this process they develop "techniques of the body" (Mauss 1973: 71) that are socially transmitted and culturally formed.

Scholars studying semiotics have already looked into gestures, facial expressions, and other body signals to learn about body-language relationships. Linguistic anthropologist Marcel Danesi connects Peirce's three dimensions of 'firstness, secondness and thirdness' to body, mind and culture (Danesi 2004: 18). This approach helps to understand the semiotic codes in TikTok performances. Danesi argues that information that comes from sensory triggers is organised by systems of signs. The body is the physical source of signs. A sign thus appears in the form of a bodily movement or gesture, also "representamen" (Peirce 1974). For example, youth lightly touch their chin with a thumb and index finger when they hear something related to *šeb(a)* (youngness or beauty). When making these gestures, dancers connect the sounds to their body and mind to provide aesthetic experiences, negotiate meanings and convey messages. The

audiences have the ability to interpret the signs and connect them to the sonic and linguistic world around them. Knowing that the representamen has linguistic meaning and corresponds to particular sung lyrics or sounds of instruments requires interpretation and social knowledge of the culture wherein a sign occurs. In the case of Algerian *way way* dances, one has to understand and contextualise the double meanings of words, such as the drug nicknames. I will give another example.

Many of the TikToks I recorded are about love relationships and suffering. Often the singers chant about the fragility of falling in love, sometimes about the threatened peace of households or cheating. Take Cheba Warda Charlomanti's song *Jibouli li bghah galbi* of which I danced to (TikTok 2.17). This song is full of poetic metaphors. Charlomanti sings, "*ya mūt kayna wi tkūn*", which literally means "dead exists and will always exist", but more accurately means "difficult people will always exist". On this sentence, I move my flat hand across my throat, thereafter I bring the other hand close to my body on *kayna* and cross it with the other on *tkūn*. She goes on: "*ma-nḫalīhš maġbūn* (I will not let him be complicated)" and I make a negating gesture and rub my hands on my cheeks pretending to rub tears away. She chants: "*Kī walā maʿāya yibān, dāwartū gāʿ kī ḏabān* (When he will be with me it will become clear, I will turn him into a bug)". With my fingers I make two rounds as if imitating to wear glasses and move them in front of my eyes. I turn my index fingers in rounds on shoulder height and grab air with my hands, making them appear as the wings of a fly. In between the lines we read that the man is a bug that is attracted by a woman, who is as sweet as a fruit. This becomes clearer in the next sentence where she sings: "*min kul gīha matālabnī, ya mālhum kalāwnī* (from every direction they gather around me, what is their problem, they eat me). She can barely fight the men off and I embody her lyrics by bringing my hands to my head and shake it. After that I bring my hands to my mouth.

From this example we learn that youth literally translate the lyrics into dance moves, often disregarding the double meanings and metaphors. They display dominant notions of love, as they embody the musical drama. By listening to the music, reading the movements, and reflecting on their social context youth interpret the semiotic meanings of signs. In this context the signs are continuously chained, because people mimic them, record a TikTok, make them go viral and hereby recreate a similar or a new sign. In this context of chaining, sounds and signs thus quickly spread among groups of youth. The interaction between sound, body and text is important for understanding TikTok usage among Algerian youth, because it clarifies how sound is part of an expressive whole and how habits are culturally transmitted. The distribution and consumption of raï on TikTok is not simply a question of sound but also of visuality.

Conclusion

The examples in this chapter show that no day passes by where TikTok is not being used. Artists and fans promote and stay up to date with raï hits through this platform. The dividing line between the two is thin; youth are often fans and artists at the same time. They consume and produce paroles-, *way way*-, and studio TikToks. Although I first got the impression that youth are mainly consumers of sound, I learnt that their online activity has influence on the trending sounds of raï's music economy. Large groups of boys and girls dance

in their modish togs to raï songs and quickly boost raï singers with a click on their smartphones. Hence, raï artists and TikTokers are mutually dependent of one another's input. The participation in- and consumption of music on TikTok is a form of agency, which also favours those in *shaʿabi* neighbourhoods. It is a way for youth to openly express their joy in music, dancing and fashion and renew the visible and audible lifestyles in Algerian public space. At the same time, it is a field of control, humiliation and exclusion, where there is less space for black, queer, disabled and non-conforming bodies. Meaning, TikTok is more than a source for amusement. It is a system of disciplinary practice, which requires youth's conformation to and knowledge of local ideals, aesthetics and commitment to everyday online activity. Youth's pre-occupation with certain visible and audible characteristics results in the resentment of people who do not fit these categories.

More than that, TikTok is a symbol of communality, where people with similar interests meet. I have demonstrated that TikTok is a space where youth can make audible their desires of love, friendships and entertainment. On this globalised online platform, Algerians distinguish themselves with local performance styles. By using examples of my participation in mimicking, this chapter has demonstrated that the influence of TikTok usage on the consumption of sound is inevitably tied to the consumption of dancing bodies. To analyse sounds meaningfully and holistically I had to familiarise myself with a vocal and bodily language. Hereby, I engaged in a communal habit, the making of TikToks on raï songs, that represents the social lifeworlds of mostly *shaʿabi* youth. In the coming chapter, I will dig into the reception and rejection of these habits and show how my informants install a social consciousness through their engagement on TikTok.

Chapter 3 "They will called u "meryoula"": from *straight TikTok* to *alt TikTok*

"You are stuck on the wrong side"
Fieldnote, December 4th: *It is Friday night and I am having dinner at a friend's house. I reach for my phone to check the time and automatically open TikTok. Sixteen new notifications! Wait, what? That is a lot more than usually after two hours. I click on my inbox and see that a girl called Sihem has dueted my TikTok. No one has ever dueted me before. I click on the TikTok (TikTok 3.1) and watch myself dance on the right side of the screen, while on the left side Sihem shakes her head and laughs as the song plays. My heart starts beating faster when I click on her profile and find out she has 270 thousand followers. I watch the TikTok again and re-read the text and description added to it. I open the comments and read: "oh god somebody pls save her", "OMGJDKNDKF", "Ammma ra3tt bdahhk (I sweat from laughter)", "Hadik hadik (Approving sound of clapping)", "Noooo please have mercyyyyyy". I am overwhelmed. With a startled face I tell my two friends what has just happened. I show them the footage and they are intrigued. One of them explains that her sixteen-years old brother has told her about the difference between the subcategories on TikTok before. I was not aware of the existence of straight and alt TikTok. Have I, for the past two months, been stuck in the algorithm of Algeria's straight TikTok? What is Sihem trying to tell with this duet? How can I interpret it? What are the consequences for my research? With these pressing questions in mind I go home.*

In the following days, I talked to Sihem on TikTok chat. Sihem found my profile because of a public Facebook video I made with my Darija teacher, an interview where he showed the linguistic success of one of his students and I was able to tell about my research. My trustful teacher was a gatekeeper whose contacts granted me access to informants on Facebook and TikTok. Sihem is nineteen years old and lives in Algiers. She studies journalism and started using TikTok in June 2020 during the pandemic, whereupon she quickly arose as a star. Her content exists of sketches with funny characters or she dances to American hip-hop. As I am writing this down Sihem has gained an additional hundred thousand followers. One of her TikToks even appeared on Al-Jazeera. She told me her parents are supportive of her activities. Businesses and social media celebrities have started contacting her with offers and for collaborations. Although she is still unsure what to accept and reject, one thing is certain: she wants to be famous on alt TikTok.

Sihem explained to me that TikTok is divided in alt and *straight* TikTok. *Straight* Tiktok, on the one hand, consists of dance content, challenges, verified TikTokers such as Loren Grey and Charli Damelio and is popular amongst conservative people. Sihem referred to it as "cringey" and the "wrong side". As an example she sent me a TikTok of a Trump supporter, who apparently downplayed the political ideals of TikTokers from the "good side". *Alt* TikTok, on the other hand, is short for alternative TikTok. This side includes comedic and artistic content made by and for people with alternative fashion and music interests. From Sihem I learnt that the terms alt and *straight* TikTok are not known in Algeria, because of the lack of English speaking communities. Nevertheless, Darija-speaking TikTokers are well aware of the difference and Algerian TikTok has become standardised

around two specific groups of users. In response to my question whether a local term exists for the different sides of TikTok, Sihem said the closest it gets is: "Lmeryoulin for people who do videos like yours. And 3ami9in for people who do "alt videos"". These "alt videos", I was told, are mostly done by English-speaking Algerians, who make TikToks in English or add English captions to their content in Darija, make anime fan videos or dance to American pop, rock and metal songs by artists such as Tame Impala and Billie Eilish. Although these genres and artists are mainstream on the global market, in the context of Algerian TikTok, youth consider these acoustic habits to be meaningful denominators of someone's alternativity and their fluency in a bilingual culture populated by highly educated people. As a consequence of the live video with my teacher and Sihem's duet, *ʿamīqīn* were the youth who started following, liking, and responding to my TikToks.

ʿamīq (plural *ʿamīqīn*), also known as 3ami9, literally means deep in Arabic, but in the context of TikTok youth use it to refer to a side (alt TikTok) or a person. The term 'deep' is also used on global TikTok to signify a sub division of alt TikTok. Yet, it is unsure whether the term originates in this global context. The term *meryūl* (feminine *meryūla*, plural *meryūlīn*) derives from the Italian word *mariolo*, meaning a cunning person (Daoudi & Miliani 1996: 265). The phonetic Arabic term is known from raï songs. It has plural meanings and definitions. In raï songs, *meryūla* for example corresponds to a femme fatale. In the viral TikTok song *Omri Chikour* Cheba Siham Japonia (TikTok 3.8) refers to *meryūl* as the dangerous one (*al-waʿra*) and a gentle guy (*anūš*), who has authority (*yaḥkam*), gets drunk (*yiskir*) and attacks (*yazdam*). My informants used the term to indicate a person who enjoys life: *la moda* (the latest trends), dancing *way way*, listening to raï *jdīd*, going to cabarets and nightclubs, smoking, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, wearing a lot of make-up, wearing Lacoste and dating various people. According to my informants the meaning changed on TikTok, where youth popularised the definition that *meryūl* refers to youth who listen to raï and wear a particular style of clothes.

The division of TikTok into two main sides, of *meryūlīn* and *ʿamīqīn*, can be explained with what Miller et. al refer to as 'scalable sociality'. The term stands for the different scales people use social media for. It encompasses the polymediatic structures of social media, and thus the relations between different platforms and the reasons why people visit them. Scalable sociality corresponds to the levels of privacy people negotiate when they socialise on a platform. The term is employed to demonstrate how people interact with a specific group of users on different platforms (Miller et. al 2016: 6). In the context of Algeria, youth generally use Facebook for their family, Instagram for their close friends, and TikTok for contact with friends or strangers of their same age group. TikTok is a space where youth can avoid the adult gaze. On their 'For You' page they get recommended both sides. Hereby they engage in atypical relationships with people from different positions of social privilege. Youth normalise the contact with strangers on this platform, because they can share interests that they cannot share anywhere else. But inside TikTok they scale in order to socialise with people with whom feel connection and have fun. This connection is stratified by the class positions of youthful individuals. They control their social lives, their socio-economic psoitions and online

identities by liking, making or following TikTokers from a particular side.

Affluent youth like Sihem connect with their community by consuming certain sounds, fashion and dance styles. Anthropologists' theorisation of the relationship between sound consumption and class origins in the idea that consumption is a central arena where people generate culture and share group identity (Douglas 1979: 37). Music, dress and dance are goods that communities consume to make their culture audible and visible. Will Straw conceptualises the consumption patterns of cultures in geographically specific spaces, where certain recreational activities or musical genres are the point of attention, as 'scenes' (Straw 1991). Scenes refer to the collective set of habits of people who get together based on a certain enthusiasm. Straw describes it as followed:

> ""Scene" is used to circumscribe highly local clusters of activity and to give unity to practices dispersed throughout the world. It functions to designate face-to-face sociability and as a lazy synonym for globalised virtual communities of taste" (Straw 1970: 6).

The concept is meaningful for the discussion of different TikTok sides, where users gather because they share taste and affinity and the same life conditions in terms of class and nationality. Viewing sociability and the participation of Algerian youth in certain 'sides' on TikTok as scenes allows me to order and map the local character and global interconnection of virtual spaces. While the trending music, dance and dress on *meryūlīn* (*straight*) TikTok overlapped with trends in Tunesia and Morocco, the users of *ʿamīq* (alt) TikTok had stronger ties with (im)material culture that was trending in Japan, Korea, America and Europe. The international and regional TikTok scenes differed in their, linguistic and musical characteristics. Still, the trends in both scenes were the result of local dynamics and youth responded to the activities that represented the other scene.

The interactions as a result of my TikTok illustrate this. The fact that people felt the need to comment on my TikTok underlines the discussion that surrounds TikTok usage. It points to the contradictory positions of youth. While I joined a trend and followed the movements by people like Bouchra and *Lokmeeen*, who seemingly enjoyed dancing to Cheb Bello's lyrics, my new followers and Sihem's followers expressed disdain when it came to those practices. Especially my dueted video was despised. In this TikTok I danced to Cheb Bello's song *Tebghi sawt* from 2015 (TikTok 3.2). He sings: "*Ya tibġī sāwṭ, tibġī sāwṭ. Ma-tsāwṭahaš, ma-tḥalālhaš*. (Oh, she likes to get hit, she likes to get hit. Don't hit her. Don't show her mercy)". When making this TikTok, I mistranslated the lyrics and thought the first sentences meant, "you like to hit, don't hit her". Due to the setback, I learnt about the correct, female-unfriendly translation. I was confronted with the fact that I had mistakenly interpreted the lyrics and also overlooked the other side of Algerian TikTok. People addressed my shortcoming and voiced their dislike in private conversations and comments (Figure 3.3). My followers and informants found it important to share this information with me. Firstly, because they wanted to express their moral perspectives. Secondly, because they wanted their online worlds to be represented as well. As we already learnt from Hichem's remark in the Introduction, researching Algerian TikTok meant that I should not forget to write about

people who do *not* dance to raï.

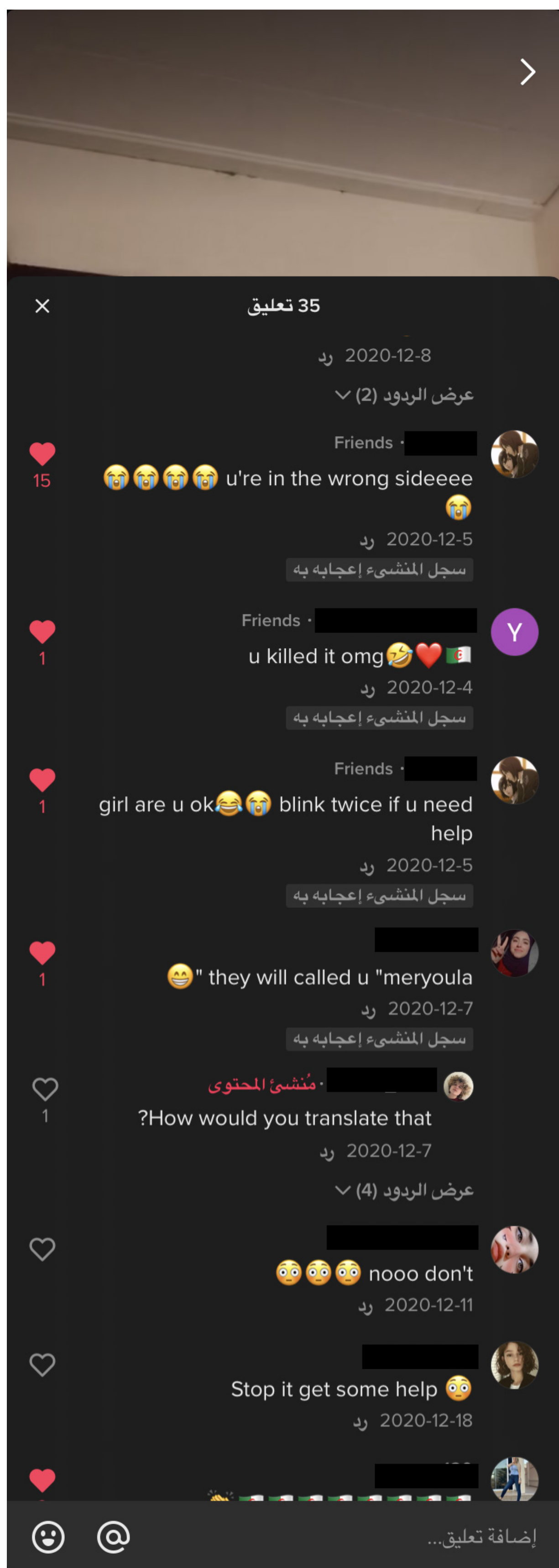

Figure 3.3 Comments on *Tebghi sawt*

In response to my TikToks, people offered their help in my research. According to some of my informants, I was "stuck on the wrong side of tiktok due to the songs" and I was eager to learn what moral values underpinned their disturbance with the actions and behaviours associated with TikToks on raï. It was clear that I failed to inhibit a certain behaviour that fitted youth's notion of the "right" side of TikTok and that this was linked to the sounds, lyrical content and the everyday stories it represented. At the same time, I was not a full member of the "wrong" side. People complimented me and made comments such as: "ommggg ur officially an Algerian tiktoker now hahah but pls check the alt side of our tiktok too the *straight* side is full of normies but I admire 1". Apparently, I was admired, but also a normie. Due to my liminal position as a researcher, I could look at *meryūlīn* and *ʿamīq* TikTok simultaneously and never be fully part of one or the other. In a conversation I had with Adham he confirmed this position.

ADHAM: "I really like all your videos, but I think they are funny. Hahaha. So, I did show your video to my brother and he was really laughing. He told me: "She is not, she. Look, she dresses like *ʿamīqīn*. How the fuck is she dancing to raï music?" I told him she is doing experiments for her doctoral and stuff."
LUCA: "Do you agree with your brother that I look like an *ʿamīq* and that I do not fit this style that I am doing?"
ADHAM: "Yes of course. Hahaha are we talking serious? [...] You really dress well. I like your outfits, you dress well."

My dress was a marker that separated me from people who danced to raï music. Apparently, these two could not coexist. The fact that I was doing research allowed me this in-between status. Although I dressed like *ʿamīq*, I could still behave and dance like *meryūla* for scientific purposes. Through my reflection TikToks, I further marked this ambiguous status. I continued to dance

on raï, to maintain consistency in my research and learn from the elicited responses to this style of TikToks.

Meryūl(a) and *ʿamīq*

After my encounter with people on *ʿamīq* TikTok, I started following the pages they recommended. My 'For You' page gradually featured a combination of raï dancers and TikToks about anime, mental health and sketches. Sihem explained that in Algeria, Zaki Catalonia popularised the term *ʿamīq*. She referred to Zaki as "your basic meryol", a comment that well signified the friction between the two groups. Zaki Catalonia frequently did live sessions on Instagram, where he played raï music and talked to his fans. In one session he spoke about *ʿamīqīn*[22]. This video went viral on YouTube, Instagram and TikTok. In the video Catalonia made fun of *ʿamīq* by referring to them as weirdos and stereotypically portraying their anime fanhood. At the end of my fieldwork period, someone crafted a remix out of Zaki's comments. The vocals went as followed:

Inta ʿamīq, ġarīb al-aṭwār hahaha (you are an *ʿamīq*, a weirdo hahaha)
Wi al-ʿamīqīn hadūk yišūfū naruto, ġurbāʾ al-aṭwār (And *ʿamīqīn* they are the ones who watch Naruto[23], weirdos)
Tatḥaylū ʿalayna bi-lmikiyāt, ya aḫī ġarīb al-aṭwār (you appear to us with Miki's[24], oh brother what a weirdo)
Ya šabāb, ya al-ʿamīq, ah ya ay dāy (oh youth, oh *al-ʿamīq*, oh ya BAM) x2
C'est très gentil (That's very nice)

When I found this sound on TikTok, it only had 3 videos and I decided to record a TikTok with a big caption where I asked my followers: "What is the meaning of the word "*ʿamīq*" on TikTok in your opinion?" (TikTok 3.4) In this TikTok, I changed my dancing style to one that was more alike the hip-hop influenced dances *ʿamīq* TikTokers did. I had success. My TikTok went viral and thousands of others ended up using the same sound for their TikTok. Soon I received dozens of reactions of Algerians who send me their definitions and understandings of the term as the screenshots below show (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 Comments on Zaki Catalonia remix

22 https://youtu.be/Y-rHm7qAi1Y, https://youtu.be/hQnnMnoEiS8
23 Naruto is an anime series
24 Miki is an anime character or Japanese name

46 تعليق

that kinda get popular in Algeria.
is like "عميق"And Algerian means by
1-22 an Eboy
سجل المنشئ إعجابه به

رد على _probably.no.one: انا جزائري فلا حاجة للشرح ياشباب 1-25

رد على : I'm Algerian too. 1-25

عرض المزيد — إخفاء

1-18 Ur cute
سجل المنشئ إعجابه به

1-19 It's not even a real word

deep person who reads books , has différent style listening music
1-23
سجل المنشئ إعجابه به

1-19 = Uur stile
سجل المنشئ إعجابه به

The word deep means strange in
1-21 Algeria
سجل المنشئ إعجابه به

it's not strange. "عميق" The heck. So
And this sound came from a video
that kinda get popular in Algeria.
is like "عميق"And Algerian means by

العميق معناها الفتى اللي يلبس اسود
وشاهد الانمي كتيير ومانو اجتماعي و شاطر
بالمدرسة وشباب معناها طفل او ولد ولها معنى ثاني
"شباب" جميل 2-9

1-21 Deep, get out, get out

مُنشئ المحتوى ·
1-21 ?Haha wesh

1-21 سي تخي جونتي

1-28 it means eboy
سجل المنشئ إعجابه به

إضافة تعليق...

Figure 3.5 Comments on Zaki Catalonia remix

The comments indicate that *ʿamīq* has ambiguous meanings. Youth mention alternative listening practices, dress styles that derive from street and emo culture, anime, and literacy or intellectual capital. The characteristics of *ʿamīq* epitomise an internationally oriented lifestyle of youth who have enjoyed higher education. Adham summarised the dress style (Image 3.6).

Figure 3.6 Dress of *ʿamīq*

In interviews, my informants used similar classifications. My data demonstrates that youth agreed that all of these characteristics were part of the identity. They thought being *ʿamīq* was beautiful, cool and positive. Nevertheless, they also explained that it was a complex identity that caused conflict. In Algerian society other youth used the word *ʿamīq* as an insult or to mock, as the remix of Zaki Catalonia already

Figure 3.6 Dress of *ʿamīq*

indicated. I listened to my informants' struggles, of being called gay or weird and having anxiety to wear their favourite outfits or piercings on the street. For many, they lived by double standards and TikTok was one of the few spaces where they could stand up for themselves and connect with people who were alike in their self-articulation. Although the label *ʿamīq* was a sign of one's deviance from a social group and it often carried negative connotations, youth re-appropriated the label to mark their status as insiders of a group of other deviants (Becker 1973[1963]: 31).

On one day I encountered a video by a famous TikToker with deep-red coloured hair, who often wore black lipstick and dark clothes with skulls and spikes (TikTok 3.7). Several of my informants referred to her as an excellent example of *ʿamīqīn*. She complained about people calling her *ʿamīq*. Her video and the comments showed the sensitivity and discussion around this category. She did not like the label. In the comments I got to know Adham, who reacted that it is hypocritical to complain about this word, because many *ʿamīqīn* also use the word *meryūl* to make fun of others. After I liked Adham's comment, he started following me. We soon voice messaged every other day. Adham is a university student and big fan of Radiohead. He lives in Oran and Bel-Abbès. He told me that the famous TikToker had blocked him because of his comments. This felt strange to him, because he identified with her and the term *ʿamīq*. About this incident he said:

ADHAM: "People like her dress the same way and listen to the same music. So, basically I told her that we are in the same group, because we like certain things. And we are on the same side [...] So, some people make fun off *meryūlīn* people, but you don't see *meryūlīn* like, say: "Don't call us *meryūlīn*. And that's sad. Don't do that". They don't get offended by this."

This quote demonstrates some of the elements I have laid out in the above paragraphs. Adham had a strong sense of belonging to a scene that connected based on fashion and sonic consumption. He used the term *ʿamīq* to designate this group. People in this scene kept others at a distance. This social act, where the self is defined by social interaction with others illustrates one of anthropology's key debates: that of the self and other (Holstein & Gubrium 2000: 4). Youth on *ʿamīq* TikTok labelled others who were not members of their scene as *meryūlīn* and ridiculed their behaviour.

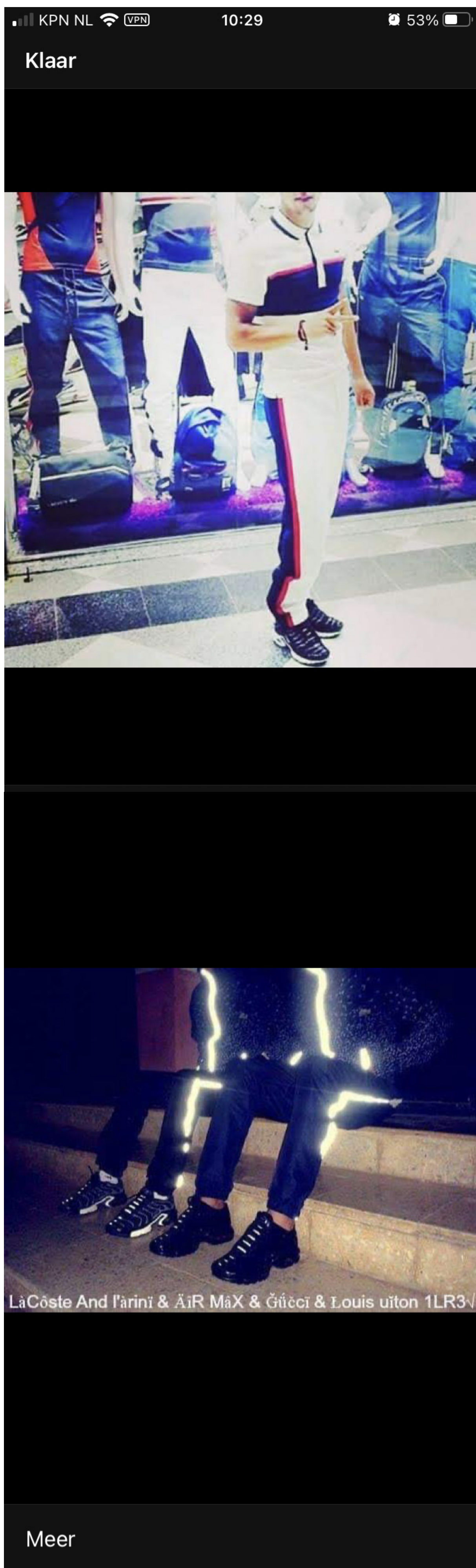

Figure 3.9 Dress of *meryūl*

For example, Adham laughingly sent me the aside images, which depict young men in training suits and Nike Air Max, to explain the clothing style of *meryūlīn*. According to Adham these style aspirations of vulnerable class consumers were funny. He believed that *meryūlīn* did not care about the ridicule and category, a category that indeed was also widely used among *meryūlīn* themselves. Sharing his laughter with me made us come closer together. However, I noticed that making fun of *meryūlīn* carried along other implications. It was also a symbol of exclusion. My informants showed contempt for their behaviour in our conversations. These young Algerians embodied a sense of superiority, because they presumed their members' social visibility and audibility to be better than the behaviour of *meryūlīn*. Although *ʿamīqīn* advocated that everybody was allowed to be strange and different, they shifted their ethical registers when speaking of the appearance and listening practices of *meryūlīn*. The term had a negative connotation. My informants described *meryūl*(a) as "*ḥağa mašī malīḥa* (something unpleasant)", "a person who is not romantic", "not beautiful", "not elegant" and "reckless and impulsive". Hichem, a nineteen-years old student who works in a smartphone store in Algiers and dreams of becoming a famous influencer travelling the world, pointed out that *meryūlīn* encouraged a haram lifestyle. He said that their search for trouble was a result of the sociopolitical circumstances in Algeria. While we face-timed he pointed at the broken pavement and said:

HICHEM: "Look at the streets, they (the government) can't even take care of the streets! They do nothing for us. They don't organise the lives for us. So people end up drinking alcohol and going

to clubs."

Hichem was the first to give a socio-political explanation for the attitudes of Algerian youth. He cleared up something that I had observed, but that was obscured by my other informants. The significance of class. Pierre Bourdieu argued that defined tastes for music depended on social origin and educational level (Bourdieu 1984[1979]: 1). He introduced the concept 'distinction' to explain the role class plays in aestheticised consumption styles. According to Hichem *meryūlīn* were from *sha'abi* neighbourhoods. Although the political elite was neglecting 'us', meaning all Algerians, they did especially little for precarious districts with high unemployment rates. This presumably nurtured people into lifestyles with excessive alcohol consumption and unaccepted lyrical music. Hichem said that this distinctive behaviour was also the result of what he refered to as the impact of *aš-šāriʿ* (the street):

HICHEM: "*Aš-šāriʿ* is where they teach you to do drugs and steal from people. All the bad things are in *aš-šāriʿ* in Algeria. [...] It teaches you to become more negative and aggressive and more danger."
LUCA: "And is this related to *meryūlīn*?"
HICHEM: "Yes it is so related to *meryūlīn*. A lot of *meryūlīn*s they learn those things from *aš-šāriʿ*. [..] When you are born in a popular place, we call it *ḥuma sha'abiya*. Popular street or popular city. People, when you are younger and get to the street and start talking to people. People will teach you their lifestyle and how they see things, how they react. And they will be inspired by them and become a *meryūl*."

His depiction of *sha'abi* neighbourhoods as dangerous and violent exemplifies the affective and moralising responses that proliferate in Maghreb countries (Strava 2020: 3). The presumed loudness and aggression of the masses needed to be civilised. According to my informants, the precarious nurture of certain Algerian youth was a logical explanation for their consumption of raï and *way way*, styles that were equally associated with vulgarity, trouble and a lack of culture. The looks, sounds and behaviours of vulnerable Algerians were to be managed and silenced according to the norms of middle class citizens. Like the orthodox commenters on Facebook, alt TikTokers engaged in "discourses of sensory shaming (Fahmy 2020: 8)" by expressing their class anxieties and judgements. Anthropologists working with Muslim communities demonstrate that consuming leisure is a moral project. In a study of café culture in Beirut, Lara Deeb and Mona Harb describe how local youth negotiate piety in their search for and organisation of leisure activities (Deeb & Harb 2013: 8). From my conversations with Hichem I learnt that in the context of TikTok, balanced consumption was also based on notions of what is *ḥalal* (permissible) or *ḥaram* (prohibited). Algerian youth's moral judgements regarding music consumption can thus be framed in terms of "halal entertainment" (Jouili 2014: 1080). Moreover, the above examples indicate that like consumption, leisure has class implications and is a marker of class status. This is in line with Deeb and Harb's argument that people literally have time "to spend" and also display and make audible their leisurely activities through consumption (Deeb & Harb 2013: 14). The examples below illustrate in more detail how youth figure their own understanding of ethical behaviour and contextually negotiate when they listen to transgressive sounds.

Cringey TikToks

For my alt informants raï *jdīd* was an "assault on the ears". Schulze argues that the regulation and rejection of unwanted sounds has to be explicated by beliefs on "unwanted cultural practices, lifestyles, forms and expressions of existence" and conceptualises the erasure of particular sonic consumers as "sonic cleansing" (Schulze 2019: 205). In the recent study on street sounds during early and mid-twentieth-century Egypt, Ziad Fahmy demonstrates that the classification "unwanted sound" has class implications, because it is often the cultural elites who publically define what is considered noise and what not (Fahmy 2020: 8). In the context of TikTok, youth disassociated themselves from the producers and consumers of raï *jdīd*, who besides their undesirable lifestyles and lack of cultural taste, were presumably narrow-minded, homophobic and sexist. Contrastingly, the imagined behaviour of people on alt TikTok was based on correct interactions: they were respectful, open-minded and tried to normalise queerness and feminism. The predominantly American music they listened to themselves was not a point of discussion. It reflected the listening practices of educated middle and wealthy classes. Although the makers of *way way* TikToks on raï were transgressing conservative styles of dress and consumption patterns, by dancing to songs about alcohol, sex and drugs, their attitudes and expressions did not conform to middleclass youth's presumed morally superior values of freedom and their subjective understandings of "good taste". According to the latter, a local conception of freedom was signalled by youth's physical performances and practical knowledge of virtues. They saw aural and visual codes as symbols of morality.

For example, one month after posting the TikTok where I danced to *Tebghi sawt*, Adham commented "Luca delete this video". In a private voice message on Facebook I asked him why. He told me that he found the lyrics sexist and he thought that raï songs like these normalise abusive behaviour among young men. I explained that I decided not to delete the TikTok because it marked an important realisation point in my research. Nevertheless, we agreed that the lyrics were sexist, so I decided to make a TikTok where I clarified my opinion and suggested people to approach me if they had further questions (TikTok 3.10). This TikTok manifested temporal bonds with my followers, who praised my initiative. At the same time, my post brought to the surface arguments against using and listening to raï *jdīd*. This is clarified in the screenshots below.

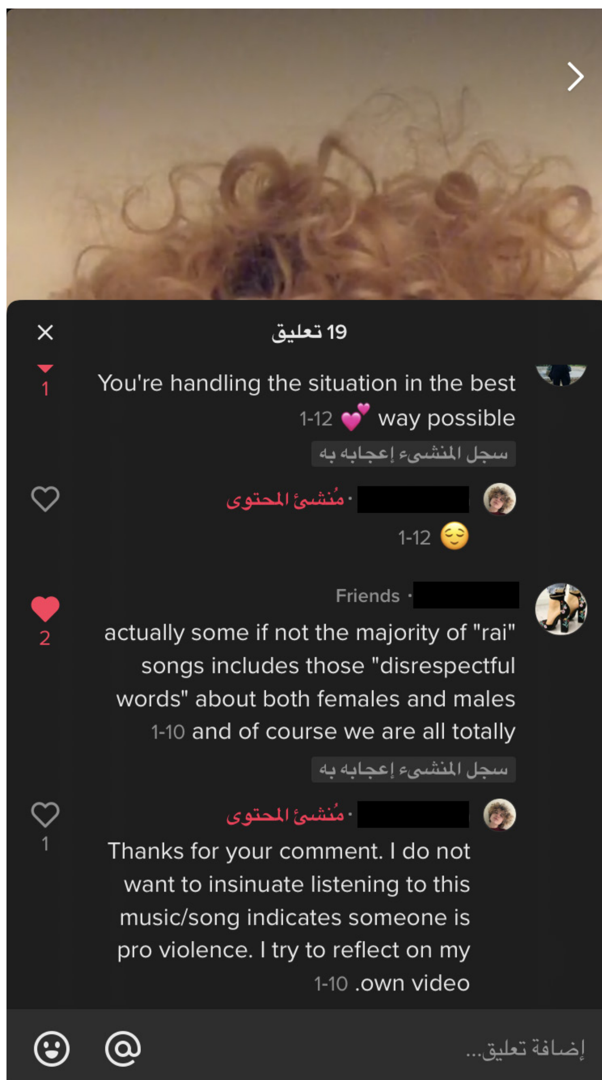

Figure 3.11 Comments on reflection *Tebghi sawt*

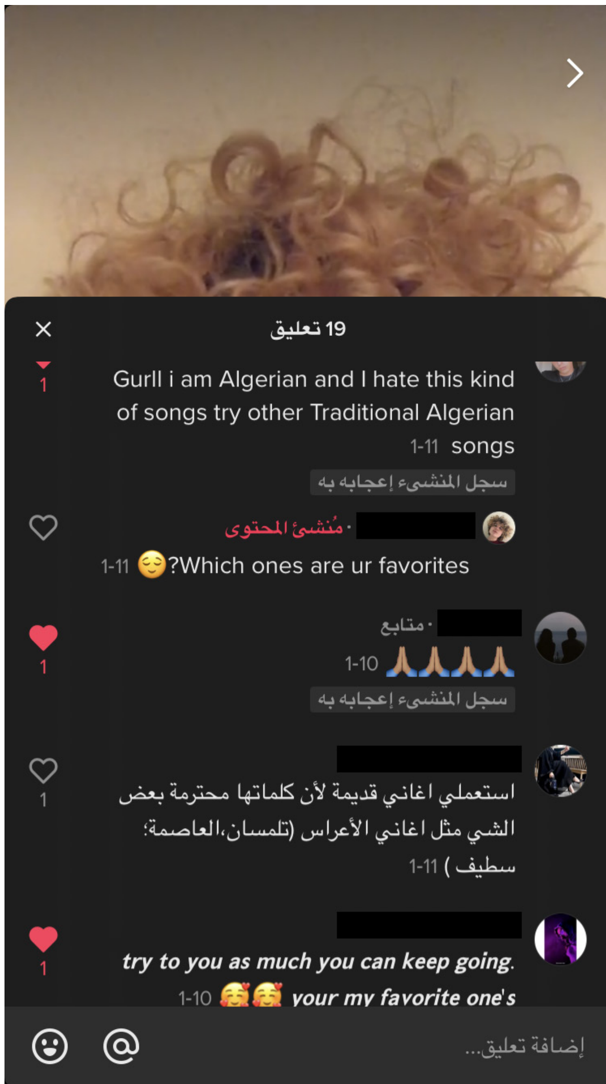

Figure 3.11 Comments on reflection *Tebghi sawt*

One girl addressed her issue with raï by talking about respect. Although supposedly "all" Algerians consider respect important, there was a lack of it in raï songs. She had ethical concerns that listening entertainment for the masses overshadowed their values regarding gender. Loudly playing raï through smartphones might lead to public disorder. By commenting on my post, this girl expressed her wish to silence raï consumers in public space. Other followers and informants equally expressed their sentiments by talking about respect. Listening and enjoying raï lyrics gave youth on TikTok a shameful reputation. Their TikToks were opposed to the morals and ideologies of middle class citizens' understanding of the contemporary Algerian society. The eighth comment highlighted this: "Use the old songs, because their words are respectful to some extent, such as weddings." With a serious tone, this girl made explicit raï music's intergenerational differences and advised me to reform my pick of music. Using raï *jdīd* for TikToks did not fit her moral standards, because the lyrics lacked respect. Listening to raï *qadīm*, in contrast, was a way to learn and get disciplined. It signaled good taste. In the name of social betterment, music became susceptible to youth's interventions while they defined the legitimacy of sounds (Cardoso 2019: 2).

TikTokers were not only exposed to the state's hearing interventions from a governmental level, sound control practices also resonated at micro-level, where youth tried to limit the popularisation of raï *jdīd*. The distinction between raï *jdīd* and raï *qadīm* was frequently highlighted in conversations with my informants. Raï *qadīm* was celebrated and framed as a good alternative to raï *jdīd*. For example, after I made a TikTok to Cheba Warda's song *Omri raba lahia*, who sings: "*Ndīrū waḥid wi zūǧ. Wala ʿaǧibtna nʿawdū* (Let's go 1 and 2. And if we like it we repeat it)", I discussed it with Romaissa. She explained that the song was about having sex and that she was disgusted by raï lyrics like these. The screenshots show parts of our conversation.

KPN NL 14:00 100%

Cause these kind of lyrics it's like so silly and so useless even if u listen to them it's so stupid cause has no meaning

What ever there's other lyrics deserved to be listened

Yes so which lyrics do you think deserve to be listened to? And how do they differ from these?

Our first old famous singer his name is

Cheb hasni

In his time he was like the famous one what ever there was other but believe me his the king of rai

His songs are so oozing

Are soo amazing

Like for the lovers for the heart break one's

For the life struggle

For younger generation

Also the old one

His songs where strongly meaningful

After his death he left a big mark in our heart cause his songs and lyrics were deserved to be awarded

Not silly as the most of it for now

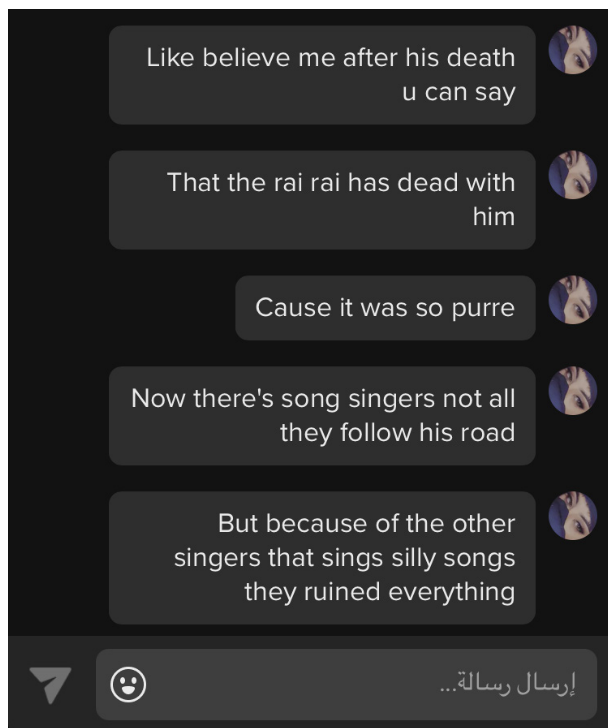

Figure 3.12 Interview with Romaissa

Romaissa grew up listening to raï *qadīm* with her parents. At home, she would enjoy the songs of Cheb Hasni, Cheb Khaled and Cheb Mami. In this nostalgic conversation she longed for the intergenerational affection that Cheb Hasni embodied. He triggered old and young people. Raï *qadīm* promoted social cohesion, whereas raï *jdīd* – as I was reminded time after time – was made for youth and thus separated generations. Romaissa explained to me later on that she thought raï *jdīd* was immodest and insulting to listen to with family and people she respected. Like my other informants, Romaissa tried to make sense of contemporary musical expressions by relating it to the past. She liked lyrics that reflected the everyday lived realities of Algerians. This sonic nostalgia mirrored her attempt to maintain an identity in an uncertain world. Youth collectively memorised raï of the past as a "clean" and stable genre that was left undiscussed and allowed in familial contexts. During interviews I learnt that they perceived raï *qadīm* as a genre that had a message (*risāla*). It installed among its listeners social knowledge about "pure" love and family matters.

Contrastingly raï *jdīd* singers' messages were empty and vulgar, because they chanted about drugs, alcohol and sex.

The available literature on raï contradicts this perception. Marc Schade-Poulsen's ethnographic account demonstrates that the lyrics on drugs and sex were also common in the eighties and nineties. One of the examples in his book is Cheb Khaleds' *Dallāli, dallāli* where he sings "*Nṣawwaṭha w nbakkiha* (I'll beat her and make her cry)", a sentence that reminds me of the disputed lyrics by Cheb Bello I danced to. Schade-Poulsen explains that these lyrics were also reason for discussion and for the organisation of listening practices: "People I met during my fieldwork in Algeria rarely commented on raï without mentioning the problems of listening to it in the family. It was not the musical part as such that was problematised, but mostly words such as *slām* (kisses), *rūj* (red wine), *birra* (beer), *sakra* (drinking alcohol) [...]" (Schade-Poulsen 1999: 143).

The similarities between the nineties and contemporary Algerian society are the result of comparable family dynamics, notions of modesty and shame. I have already discussed that orthodox critics consider TikTok usage and associated music un-Islamic. Scholars argue that rather than being either secular or religious, sounds can become one or another depending on the intensions and perceptions of their consumers (Jouili & Moors 2014: 983). This is also true in the context of TikTok. Some of my Muslim informants, like Hichem, called dancing *way way* to raï *jdīd* haram or expressed that their friends or family members did so. They made sense of their own understandings of Islamic piety by judging other youth's behaviour. Romaissa, for example, said that many of today's youth have a lack of piety (*taqwā*) and morals (*aḫlāq*) due to foreign media and their consumption of entertainment. The problems in their ethical disciplining were gendered. While girls underwent sins (*iṯm*) because they dance sensually (*šahwī*), boys easily transgressed sacred taboos (*maḥramāt*) because they were appealed to listening to raï songs about sex, drugs, and seduction.

Other informants of mine did not discuss the culture around raï *jdīd* in religious terms, but they nevertheless objected to the genre based on similar culturally constituted morals. According to all of them, alcohol and drugs were at the core of raï *jdīd*. They made assumptions that raï listeners frequently used these substances and strongly criticised this behaviour. Although the genre's lyrics were equally about love, *ʿamīq* TikTokers mainly called attention to the drugs to portray the lives of *meryūlīn*. The audibility of youth from *shaʿabi* neighbourhoods was attended to as a problem, because to alt TikTokers their listening habits represented the amoral consumption styles. The conversations about the missing "civilisational" messages in raï *jdīd* signal the friction between Algerian middle classes and vulnerable classes over definitions of good and bad music. Youth's concern about "unrefined" sounds, in contrast to their own sensible and pious lifestyles indicates a search for class distinction, where middle classes attempt to distinguish themselves from "ordinary" Algerians.

Listening practices and media consumption were thus important factors to evaluate ethical and class behaviour. My informants regarded raï *jdīd* and the TikTok culture around it "as a space of moral action" (Hirschkind 2006: 22), that helped them to fashion their own ethical identities. Stereotyping and moralising sounds were ways to mark their different attitudes, knowl-

edge, and taste. But, although *ʿamīq* TikTokers criticised *meryūlīn* TikTok, they did not abstain from consuming this side themselves. Youth did not feel the need to have a consistent aural piety or morality. They engaged in "situational ethics" (Masquelier 2010: 226), where their mundane actions demonstrated contradictory and inconsistent "moral registers" (Schielke 2009: S29). If they wished to fulfil their joy with consumption of raï, they could do so without that being a sign of their lack of morality. For example, Romaissa frequently sent me TikToks with raï *jdīd* and admitted to have "guilty pleasures". The need to call them guilty pleasures shows Romaissa's anxiety of looking stupid. Although the songs were "guilty" according to an orthodox understanding of Islam, they were pleasurable according to a heterodox set of beliefs (Langer & Simon 2008: 282).

Occasionally or sarcastically listening to raï *jdīd* and watching *way way* TikToks was accepted, because it was a way to have fun and engage in the modern technologies that were central to this young generation. As long as youth did not identify with the socio-economic and cultural context associated with these sounds, they justified this behaviour. By emphasising the temporality of the act, they could consume or appropriate this aural media without it affecting their moral conduct. This was also one of the reasons why it was accepted to listen to raï *qadīm*. Although from a historical perspective, this music was no less controversial than raï *jdīd*, from a contemporary perspective it was, because today's youth did not associate raï *qadīm* with a *meryūl* lifestyle. They associated it with their parents or a nostalgic past. Raï *jdīd*, on the other hand, was an important marker of someone's social status in online subcultures. By embracing raï *qadīm* as a better alternative of raï *jdīd*, my informants were able to distinguish themselves. At the same time they used music as "a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community" (Attali 1985: 6) with other online-active youth around Algeria. They used music as an "attribute of power" (ibid.) to demarcate scenes and moralise the sonic expressions of youth from *sha'abi* neighbourhoods.

"When your friends put on rai"

When I had been introduced to *ʿamīq* TikTok and did my first chat interviews, I noticed something else. The aversion to *meryūlīn* TikTok, that had been so affectively recalled in conversations and comments, was also exhibited in TikToks by *ʿamīqīn*. The TikToks made me pay attention to the different avenues youth used to express their attitudes towards the sounds and lifestyles of "others". On chat, people would justify their opinions by moralising or giving verbal examples of their source of irritation. They would criticise *meryūlīn* TikTok. In the TikToks the frustration became embodied in gentle sarcasm and ridicule. The jokes showed how the differentiation between the two scenes was also fun and bonding. In a fieldnote I describe how I tried to learn more about the tropes in these mocking narratives and imageries:

December 23rd: *I have written a short text in Arabic to accompany my newest reflection TikTok (TikTok 3.13). It translates as followed: "Goodmorning! This video is for the people on alt TikTok who enjoy watching comedians who make fun of raï music and* way way *dancing. I am looking for more videos on TikTok that are alike the following examples. It would help me a lot if you could send me those." To the text I add four examples of comedy videos from*

alt TikTokers who mock raï and way way. All of them have added captions in English that describe a situation or person, followed by their (sarcastic) response to this situation or imitation of the person. One is a compilation with apocalypse themes that no Algerian is ready for, a trend I have seen more people doing: the first photo is from the famous raï singer Cheikh Mamidou and the second is from a famous meryūlīn TikToker who dances way way. Since a long time I was following this guy and it is striking to see that other people make fun of him. Apparently, he is the height of stupidity. The other videos also refer to raï music and the lifestyles and spaces associated with it, in these cases drinking alcohol, music listening in cabarets and cars[25]. Shortly after posting my TikTok, I receive a message from Chahra. She is willing to help and sends me several accounts of mockers who she thinks are funny. One TikTok is by a young guy who dances to the trending raï song Jiboli Lagmy by Chinwa Problem (TikTok 3.14). He totters around his bedroom with a bottle of milk in his hands, sipping it and pretending to be drunk. I chuckle watching the video. It is over the top! I have never seen a meryūlīn drinking alcohol in a public TikTok. Yasmine explains me what is happening: "The singer is talking about a type of wine called "lagmy" but since he can't drink because it's harm he is using milk".

Chahra enjoyed the guy's TikTok, because it was a way to label raï and *meryūlīn* as *ḥaram*. Ridiculing this behaviour aided her to make sense of her own position in relation to Islam and online society. Similar kinds of TikToks were popular and well-received on *ʿamīq* TikTok. Although mere observation would not have been enough to tell whether the cosplay and usage of raï was sarcastic, the interviews and my three months presence on TikTok enabled me to recognise the irony. I was able to scale between the several scenes of Algerian TikToks. The sarcastic and mimetic videos are a great example of social scalability, because *ʿamīqīn* post audiovisual material on social media that only makes sense to the people they are close to and who understand what it refers to (Miller 2016: 6). The videos were amusing for users on *ʿamīq* TikTok, because they built on similar "sonic stereotypes" (Schulze 2019: 181). Sonic stereotyping is based on fixed notions of what people listen to and how they live. These ideas are reductionist and reenact the existence of "the other". Based on the fact that youth were on *meryūlīn* TikTok, raï *jdīd* was projected as the essence of their musical interests. In a study on colonialism and anthropology, Michael Taussig acknowledged the significance of the other in mimesis and sarcasm (Taussig 1993: 19). He argued that people meme others in order to become other. Taussig suggested that the body is central to actualise mimesis and that camera and film opened up new ways to mimic images and characters (ibid.: 33). Similarly, Douglas Rushkoff stated the Internet facilitated media viruses, where memes in the form of events, music, messages and images infectiously spread through communities in mediaspaces (Rushkoff 1994: 9-10). I argue that the smartphone is also mimetic machinery that enables people to pass along body languages, images and sounds. Instead of verbally defining stereotypes, youth imperfectly imitated stereotypes about *meryūlīn* through sensuous images that easily spread online. Besides sonic stereotypes, their videos consisted of criticism

25 In several interviews my informants explained that one of the few places where they listened to raï was at weddings or in the car.

on or exaggerated imitations of dress, dance, drug-use and characteristics of *meryūlīn* TikTok profiles. Audiences met the TikTokers' humorous videos with laughter and collectively they shared their class-based ideals of taste, belief and affiliation. By imitating or commenting upon TikToks by *meryūlīn*, *ʿamīqīn* socially exchanged conceptions of irony and mockery and further marked the boundaries of their scene.

Like in the case of the guilty pleasure, the TikTokers did not want to be taken serious when using raï *jdīd* for their videos, because they would fall outside to box. One strategy to disclose the irony and sarcasm of their music usage was the use of text balloons in English with commentaries on the songs or videos. English was the lingua franca on *ʿamīq* TikTok. The display of linguistic education was used as a device to separate from the Darija-dominant *meryūlīn* TikTok. Another strategy that clarified the irony was the instalment of overblown facial gestures and body languages. For example, youth who mimicked *way way* danced non-existent movements in a very quick manner without taking the *paroles* into consideration. They subverted the semiotic quality of the movements, such as appears from a duet where I mimicked the canonical *way way* moves and another boy ironically invented them (TikTok 3.15). The boy followed a trend (TikTok 3.16 & 3.17), wherein people replied to a comment where someone questioned their Algerian nationality (in the example "Are you Algerian?"). In this trend, a pop song by Tame Impala accompanied a shot of themselves in their regular dress. This was followed up by a shot of them dancing on a raï song in a dress that was presumably typical to *meryūlīn*. The second shot functioned to "proof" their Algerian nationality and their knowledge of Algerian culture. These TikToks were loaded with meanings, because they laid bare how *ʿamīqīn* saw themselves and how they saw others. The reference to their non-Algerian audible and visible markers and use of English hinted to the construction of an "alternative" and "modern" Algerian culture that they cultivated. In contrast, *meryūlīn* were the audivisibly recognisable examples of local culture of the masses. They corresponded to the imagined "traditional" Algerian culture. Scholars have demonstrated that the understandings of modernity and tradition in the Middle East are complex and depend on local processes and conceptions of rationalisation, emancipation, technologisation, and progress that are separate from Euromodern projects, yet also results of colonialism and imperialist control (Schielke 2012: 127, Said 1973[1994]: 394, Comaroff & Comaroff 2016: 3). Algerian youth constructed modernity by criticising and making fun of *meryūl* as a "popular", "uncreative" or "useless" character that undermined Islam and a high-educated social class status.

Ridicule on TikTok thus has political and social functions. The inside jokes of *ʿamīqīn* part them from other youth and adults. Within their scalable scenes they know what rules apply for appropriate ridicule. Or as Adham explained me: "I laugh at these videos when they make fun of each other, but I get mad when they cross the line. When they judge people". The defining line between judgement and freedom of expression was ambivalent, yet my informants agreed that the imitation of *way way* and listening to guilty pleasures was a source of joy that was allowed as long as it was done inside the social spaces of their scene. This finding is in agreement with Chrysagis and Karampampas' argument that sound and movement are guiding activities for

solidary relationships and that people create these relations as they tune- and move into particular spaces. Hence, music was a way to mark boundaries. Youth organised their sounds and consequently engaged in a conversation of power. Whether someone was able to grasp the humor in raï listening, indicated their societal position, both off- and online. That is, because *ʿamīqīn* linked music listening with cultural capital, intellectuality and morality.

Conclusion

When I posted a TikTok, the discussion about raï and *meryūlīn* often came alive. A seemingly trifling comment like "dude u like raï?", questioned more than taste. It communicated the sonic boundaries of different TikTok scenes and the collective passion to define who is and who is not part of a scene. My research profile became a stage where the different dynamics of Algerian TikTok could be observed. It epitomised some of the trends and fashions of both *meryūlīn* TikTok and *ʿamīq* TikTok. The narratives that I collected because of it, testify how youth created a feeling of proximity although they were at physical distance. Based on comparable preferences of talk, dress, dance, fun and music, my informants engaged in the everyday rhythms and interactions of their scene. Although I had one foot in each scene and sympathised with both, I did understand why youth were longing for togetherness, a condition that was scarce during the pandemic and that carried along a collective excitement of being seen and heard. Coming together as well meant rejecting and mirroring other youth. How they looked and how they sounded.

The ridicule and songs about *ʿamīq* and *meryūl* expose that debates about communities and their consumption habits get expressed through sound. It is meaningful for researchers to further explore whether the aural contestation about cultural expressions overlaps visually and what we can learn from the similarities and differences. This research indicates that the renouncement of raï also means the renouncement of other sensual markers, such as dress, dance, and the imaginary of the dangerous other. I have demonstrated that in the context of Algerian TikTok, debating youth amplify sonic stereotypes about people from vulnerable classes. This finding confirms existing theory about noise and unwanted sounds in relation to class (Lynch 2019: 44). Fahmy's regional and historical study demonstrates that middle class citizens differentiated a sensory hierarchy, while the sounds, dress, taste and behaviour of vulnerable classes was silenced and branded as vulgar (Fahmy 2020: 53). The echoing of classist arguments and sentiments across the region make evident that middle class identity projects and their search for belonging are powerful quests that survive the test of time. However, the situations in which they become salient differ. This indicates that it is worthwhile to further examine how listening and sound produce class hierarchies. The examples from this chapter tell at least that sound media helps people to hear class and morality. Tropes of audible '*shaʿabi* culture' appeared on Algeria's sound media, through conversation about and ridicule of raï *jdīd*, while raï *qadīm* got a new sonic image of cleanness and comfort. Although Algerian youth could temporarily increase their social status through algorithmic stardom on TikTok, their class status remained publicly enacted through listening practices and body disciplines.

Conclusion

The sounds of the contemporary world differ from place to place. In Algeria we learnt how youth voiced their opinions, jokes, and feelings through music. Elsewhere we might learn how industrial or agricultural sounds carry people's stories. In this thesis I have demonstrated that stories about sound unmask social, economic, and political dynamics. Whether perceived as gendered or class-based sounds, the study of these nondiscursive expressive forms enables the understanding of contemporary societies. There is a lot to gain from sound studies, because it caters a holistic and vibrant perspective of the contemporary world. This is meaningful specifically because digitalisation is transforming the soundscapes around us. The digital societies we study now prepare us to comprehend the effects of future changes too.

While the sounds of TikTok muffle those of cassette tapes, sensory knowledge and experience change. People alternatively reflect on and listen to the past and present. This thesis has illustrated these changes by examining myself, *ʿamīq* TikTokers, *meryūlīn* TikTokers, raï *jdīd* artists, production studios, and critics such as Algerian ministers. It tied into the surveillances, tensions and discussions around sound and how these connect to class and gender. I have described that the expanding usage of TikTok in Algeria has altered the social infrastructures of music industries and of its audiences. The majority of users, Algerian youth, are used to the technologies and easily navigate through them to find the latest songs. But older generations, as they told me, were not used to listening music online. Older generations' absence on TikTok and their ignorance of the benefits and sensory knowledge youth gained from TikTok, proofed their incompetence as participants in a digitalised network of sonic consumption. Sensory knowledge was tied to questions of modernity and tradition: the first represented by digital consumption and the second by analogue consumption. Digital consumption was an important symbol of modernity and articulation of youth's cultural values. But, the meaning of modernity was more complex than that. Music from the past, raï *qadīm*, was simultaneously put on a pedestal of modernity by some youth precisely because they did not associate it with the Algerian sound of digitalisation, raï *jdīd*, and its sonic consumers. What modernity meant was thus also inversed to digital technology. It was simultaneously defined by a conservative orientation of middle class youth, who desired to find connection with youth with similar lifestyles and social backgrounds. The romanticised nostalgia for raï *qadīm* separated them from the public expressions and sounds of the streets and vulnerable classes and *ʿamīq* TikTok became an exclusive space for their own sensory expressions.

In this research I started with the expectation that sonic surveillance would exist. However, I expected the surveillance mainly to come from parents or religious and political institutions, such as the state and imams. Although these "state-hearing" surveillances existed on the background, micro-surveillances and resistances turned out to be more important. I have contributed to the field by showing how middle class youth deal with unwanted sounds in the less controllable spheres of algorithmic environments. 'Scalable sociality' might also offer other academics insights into how people control their sonic environments online.

Social media usage, from TikTok to YouTube to Facebook, changed not

only how consumption sounded, but also how it was felt and classified. The massive collective participation in this sensory economy made youth want to distinguish and scale to find particular genres and solidarity. Hence, they tuned in and out of the multiscalar spaces on TikTok. In this process they committed to actions that are eminent to youthhood: the formation of intersectional identities and moral agencies. This supports the theory on youth I departed from. Algerian youth showed that music, dance and fashion styles were measures of alternativity and social change. By juxtaposing two distinct scenes on TikTok, they thus shaped their attitudes towards sound. The participation in the two scenes peculiar to TikTok cultivated who they shared music with, how they heard music, and what sounds were popularised, appreciated, and unwanted. Since the division of alt and *straight* TikTok exists globally, researchers might be interested to do comparative studies in other areas. Firstly, this will further our understanding of how communities make aesthetic and moral connections in society. Secondly, it can contribute to my finding that the smartphone is not only a catalyser of sounds, but possibly also of images, dreams and fantasies. As digitalisation has quickly slipped into the everyday, it can seem difficult to grasp what it means and feels like for people to be part of a digitalised society and how it shapes their perception of the past and future. By tuning in, moving on, and looking at digitalisation, research caters embodied ways of knowing – acoustemologies – that go beyond epistemics of rational thinking.

In this research I have done the latter by putting my body to use. I participated on TikTok to learn what it facilitated and how it led my informants and me interact. This autoethnographic method was limited because it did not cover what was happening behind the screen of my informants and other TikTok users, nor did it give a complete description of all youth's experiences when it came to TikTok usage. In that sense the method was not fully effective to answer my research question. However, due to the unconventional method I gained unexpected insights into the conceptualisation of my research question. Where I first expected to focus on sound as a separate entity, my participation on TikTok made me reflect more thoroughly on the intersectionality of sensory knowledge. The consumption of and attitudes towards sound were mediated along with the consumption of and attitudes towards the body. Or as Eisenlohr formulised it: "The sonic is powerful in itself; but culturally attuned bodies and selves also ascribe power to sound" (Eisenlohr 2018: 4). Building on work by Eisenlohr and Kapchan, this research has advanced knowledge of how sound bodies can also be studied through digital autoethnography. It proposes that sound bodies are not only affected by collective movement and intercorporeality, but also by movements in solitude. Algerian youth and I shared movements on music online and at the same time we were alone-, in isolation, in our rooms and streets. The approaches of this research open up new perspectives for anthropologists who are interested in studying sound and movement at distance. This is especially crucial in times of constraints induced by pandemics or other manmade disasters. The connection between pandemics and the digital study of movement and sound also parallels with the discussion of the semiotic chains of movements in chapter two and the discussion of mimesis in chapter three. Both exemplify the viral spread and copying of body language, sounds and images. In 1962,

William Burroughs drew an analogy between languages and viruses in his novel *The ticket that exploded*, followed by biologist Richard Dawkins, who coined the term "meme" as an analogy for gene to describe the cultural transmission of ideas, habits and behaviours from person to person (Dawkins 1976: 192). As I briefly mentioned in chapter three, the analogy with viruses also makes sense when discussing Algerian TikTok. Rushkoff described the media virus as follows:

"The "protein shell" of a media virus might be an event, invention, technology, system of thought, musical riff, visual image, scientific theory, sex scandal, clothing style or even a pop hero — as long as it can catch our attention. Any one of these media virus shells will search out the receptive nooks and crannies in popular culture and stick on anywhere it is noticed" (Rushkoff 1994: 9).

Throughout this thesis, plenty of examples illustrated the stickiness of media: Zaki Catalonia's song about *ʿamīq*, dress copies of *meryūlīn*, asking for *dedikas* and forming a heart sign as part of a *way way* sequence. These cases examplified that youth picked icons – memes – that were easy to copy. They chose memes that other youth would share, embody, reuse and remix. In spite of algorithms, the sonic viruses depend on the input of young users. What is bound to succeed depends on popular understandings in local social networks. The more often youth used sounds, mimicked dance moves or ridiculed dress styles, the more symbolic their memes became for their communities. In line with Peirce's argument that the reaction and feeling towards the symbolic and iconic referents of signs depends on one's interpretation, I have shown that *ʿamīq* and *meryūlīn* have different understandings or feelings when it comes to the same signs. While for some raï *jdīd* was a symbol of fun, for others it symbolised uncreativity and vulgarity. The finding that signs can go viral gives us new ethnographic understanding of how stereotypes come into existence. Inside online spaces, the contagious sonic and visual symbols can become alienating or even disturbing to some people whereupon they magnify the "strange" expressions and make it their own. The simplicity with which middle class youth described and mimicked the consumption of vulnerable classes shows how easily they spread their biased beliefs of another group in Algerian society and thus how sonic stereotypes came into being.

This finding resembles the increasing academic interest in misinformation, conspiracy theories and "fake news", because it demonstrates the connection between othering, stereotyping and viral media. This thesis therefore encourages academics in digital humanities and social sciences to adopt a creative approach to learn about people's schemes to acquire knowledge. What can we as scholars assess from the truths, lies and stereotypes circulating on TikTok? And how does that push us back to long-existing debates on facts and fiction and objectivity and subjectivity? These are pressing questions that go beyond Middle Eastern studies. They tie into societal debates of who has the power to distribute truth claims and what journalists, academics and ordinary people do to hold on to their "alternative facts". Although sound is not at the core of this conversation, it is an important field where identities and realities play out and where people, like Algerian youth, are able to find their "alternative reality".

Bibliography

Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Veiled sentiments: Honor and poetry in a Bedouin society*. Cairo: American University in Cairo press, 1987.

Algerie Eco. "Les 10 applications les plus téléchargées en 2020," January 21, 2021, https://www.algerie-eco.com/2021/01/21/les-10-applications-les-plus-telechargees-en-2020/. Last accessed 12 July 2021.

Al-khabr. "Wizāra at-tarbīya taḥḏar min al-TikTok," January 16, 2019, https://www.elkhabar.com/press/article/149182/. Last accessed 12 July 2021.

Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy" *Public culture* 2, no. 2 (1990): 1-24.

Asad, Talal. "Ethnographic, representation, statistics, and modern power." *Social research* 61, no.1 (1994): 55-88.

Atay, Ahmet. "What is cyber or digital autoethnography?" *International review of qualitative research* 13, no. 3 (2020): 267-79.

Attali, Jacques. *Noise: the political economy of music.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1977[1985].

Bashari Salmi. "Développement de la digitalisation en algérie pour la période post Covid-19," *Les cahiers du cread* 36, no. 3 (2020): 577-612.

Bayat, Asef. "Muslim youth and the claim of youthfulness," in *Being young and Muslim* eds Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera, pp. 28-48. Oxford university press, 2010.

BBC news. "Tiktok: Trump says he will ban Chinese video app in the US," August 1, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53619287. Last accessed 12 July 2021.

Becker, Howard. *Outsiders.* New York: Free press, 1973[1963].

Benchenet, Mohamed. "Cheb Mohamed benchenet *way way* le grand succé 2014," March 21, 2014, https://youtu.be/9mbd4_v8QYI.

Beratto, Leïla. "À Oran, le raï est toujours roi, mais il a changé," *Musique RFI*, August 9, 2018, https://musique.rfi.fr/musique-arabe/20180809-oran-festival-rai.

Biddle Sam, Paulo Victor Ribeiro and Tatiana Dias. "Invisible censorship: TikTok told moderators to sup-press posts by 'ugly' people and the poor to attract new users," *The Intercept*, 16 March, 2020, https://theintercept.com/2020/03/16/tiktok-app-moderators-users-discrimination/. Last accessed 6 April 2020.

Birdsall, Carolyn and Danielle Drozdzewski. *Doing memory research: new methods and approaches.* Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Blum, Susan. "Fieldwork from afar," *Anthropology News* website, September 10, 2020, https://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2020/09/10/fieldwork-from-afar/. Last accessed 1 March 2021.

Brahim, Kaddour. "L'inspecteur Taher – 106 – al-mufattiš Taher - badal al-mišya ntāʿk," December 4, 2019, https://youtu.be/iYuF1In5KEM.

Bruls, Luca. "*Listening culture*: reflections on sonic approaches in schol-

arship on the Middle East," essay for critical area studies (2019).

Boas, Franz. *Race, language and culture*. New York: MacMillan, 1940[1948].

Boelstroff, Tom. *Coming of age in second life: an anthropologist explores the virtually human*. Princeton university press, 2015.

___. *Virtual cultures in pandemic times.* https://faculty.sites.uci.edu/boellstorff/virtual-cultures-in-pandemic-times/. Last accessed 1 March 2021.

Boelstroff, Tom, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce and T.L. Taylor. *Ethnography and virtual worlds: a handbook of method.* Princeton university press, 2012.

Bouherar, Salim. "Religion and culture in Algeria: the impact of religious interpretations on social practices," *International journal of education and knowledge management* 3, no. 2 (2020): 1-15.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a theory of practice.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2013[1972].

___. *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste.* Routledge & Kegan Paul ltd, 1984[1979].

Brown, Lex, Truls Gjestland and Danièle Dubois. "Acoustic environments and soundscapes," in *Soundscape and the build environment* eds. Jian Kang and Brigitte Schulte-Fortkamp, pp. 1-16, Boca Raton: CRC press, 2016.

Bull, Michael. "Sounds as data," in *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection* ed. Uwe Flick, pp. 426-36, SAGE publications ltd, 2018.

Caidi, Nadia, Susan Beazley and Laia Colomer Marquez. "Holy selfies: performing pilgrimage in the age of social media," *The international journal of information, diversity and inclusion* 2, no. 1&2 (2018): 8-31.

Cardoso, Leonardo. "Introduction: hearing like a state," *Sound studies* 5, no. 1 (2019): 1-3.

Catalonia, Zaki. "Bek-bek – ah ya l3ami9," November 4, 2020, https://youtu.be/hQnnMnoEiS8.

___. "*Zoubir catalonia clash CSR, Zaki Caṭalonia yiḥawwas ʿala CSR*," August 9, 2020, https://youtu.be/Y-rHm7qAi1Y.

Cheb Bello. *"Cheb Bello khtik mal halwa nkotlak bal bayda avec Mito 2020, ağmal uġnīya li-lmawsim,"* November 19, 2020, https://youtu.be/S_6wlbEWRdQ. Last accessed 12 July 2021.

Cheba Nagwan. *"Jdīd Cheba Nagwan 2020 al-uġnīya al-muntaḍara / saṭar saṭar rah ʿalaya yakḥal,"* September 23, 2020, https://youtu.be/HB4hrlsgadl.

Chinwa Problem. "Jibouli lagmy," February 18, 2020, https://youtu.be/DNwwo67f0U8.

Chrysagis, Evangelos and Panas Karampampas. *Collaborative intimacies in music and dance: anthropologies of sound and movement.* New York: Berghahn books, 2017.

Cirucci, Angela. "Facebook and unintentional celebrification," in *Microcelebrity around the globe: approaches sto cultures of internet fame*, edited by Crystal Abidin and Megan Brown, p. 47-56. Emerald publishing limited, 2018.

Clifford, James and George Marcus. *Writing culture. The poetics and politics*

of ethnography. Berkeley: University of California, 1986.

Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. *Theory from the south, or, how Euro-America is evolving toward Africa.* London: Routledge, 2016.

Costa, Elisabetta and Laura Menin. "Introduction: digital intimacies: exploring digital media and intimate lives in the Middle East and North Africa," *Middle East journal of culture and communication* 9, no. 2 (2016): 137-45.

Coulter, Natalie. "'Frappés, friends, and fun': affective labor and the cultural industry of girlhood," *Journal of consumer culture* (2018): 1-18.

Cremades, Roberto, Oswaldo Lorenzo and Ioana Ruxandra Turcu. "Raï music as a generator of cultural identity among young Maghrebies source," *International review of the aesthetics and sociology of music* 46, no. 1 (2015): 175-84.

Danesi, Marcel. *Messages, signs and meaning*. 3rd ed. Toronto: Canadian scholars, 2004.

Danielson, Virginia, Scott Marcus and Dwight Reynolds. "The Middle East," *The garland encyclopaedia of world music*, vol. 6. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Daoudi, Miliani and Hadj Miliani. *L'aventure du raï: Musique et société.* Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1996.

Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford university press, 1976.

Deen, Noor Hana al-. "The evolution of rai music," *Journal of black studies* 35, no. 5 (2005): 597-611.

Deeb, Lara and Mona Harb. *Leisurely Islam*. Princeton: Princeton university press, 2013.

Douglas, Mary and Baron Isherwood. *The world of goods: towards an anthropology of consumption*. New York: Basic books, 1979.

Du, Xin, Toni Liechty, Carla Santos and Jeongeun Park. "'I want to record and share my wonderful journey': Chinese millenials' production and sharing of short-form travel videos on TikTok or Douyin." *Current issues in tourism*, (2020): 1-13.

Duffy, Michelle, Gordon Waitt, Andrew Gorman-Murray and Chris Gibson. "Bodily rhythms: corporeal capacities to engage with festival spaces," *Emotion, space and society* 4, no. 1 (2011): 17-24.

Eisenlohr, Patrick. S*ounding Islam: voice, media, and sonic atmospheres in an Indian Ocean world*. Oakland: University of California, 2018.

Ergin, Nina. "The soundscape of the 16th-century Istanbul mosques: architecture and qur'an recital." *Journal of the society of architectural historians* 67, no. 2 (2008): 204-21.

Evans, Martin and John Phillips. *Algeria: anger of the dispossessed.* Yale university press, 2008.

Fahmy, Ziad. *Street sounds: Listening to everyday life in modern Egypt.* Standford university press, 2020.

Farnell, Brenda and Laura Graham. "Discourse-centered methods," in *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* eds. Russell Bernard and Clarence Gravlee. Rowman & Littlefield publishers, 2014.

Faruqi, Lois Ibsen al-. “Musicians and Muslim law,” *Asian music* 18, no. 1 (1985): 3-36.

Faudree, Paja. “Music, language, and texts: sound and semiotic ethnography,” *Annual review of anthropology* 41, no. 1 (2012): 519-36.

Feld, Steven. *Sound and sentiment: birds, weeping, poetics and song in Kaluli expression.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press, 1982.

___. “Waterfalls of song: an acoustemology of place sesounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea,” in *Senses of place* eds. Steven Feld and Ketih Basso, pp. 91–136, School of American research press, 1996.

Geertz, Clifford “Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture”. In *The interpretation of cultures*, pp. 3-30. London: Fontana press, 1973.

Gennep, Arnold van. *The rites of passage*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965.

Goldhaber, Michael. “The attention economy and the net,” *First monday* 2, no. 4 (1997).

Goodman, Steve. *Sonic warfare: Sound, affect, and the ecology of fear*. London: MIT Press, 2010.

Graham, Laura and Brenda Farnell. “Discourse-centred methods,” in *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* eds. Russell Bernard and Clarence Gravlee, pp. 391-328. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

Ġazālī, -al. *Music and singing*, trans. Duncan Macdonald. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic book trust, 2009.

Harris, Anna. “Embodiment,” in *Oxford bibliographies*. Last modified August 30, 2016, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0151.xml

Harris, Rachel. “The changing Uyghur religious soundscape,” *Performing Islam* 3, no. 1&2 (2014): 93-114.

Heller, Monica. “Introduction,” In *Codeswitching: anthropological and sociolinguistic perspectives*, eds Erica McClure, Malcom McClure, Kathryn Woolard et al. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 1988.

Hine, Christine. *Virtual ethnography*. California: Sage publications, 2000.

___. *Ethnography for the Internet: embedded, embodied and everyday*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.

Hirschkind, Charles. *The ethical soundscape*. Columbia university press, 2006.

Holstein, James and Jaber Gubrium. *The self we live by: narrative identity in a postmodern world*. New York: Oxford university press, 2000.

Homme algerien. “Dance eye y a Alger 2014 *way way*,” December 6, 2014, https://youtu.be/GimapMQQ8dA.

Horst, Heather and Daniel Miller. *Digital anthropology.* London: Routledge, 2012.

Iqbal, Mansoor. “TikTok revenue and usage statistics (2021),” *Business of apps*, May 6, 2021, https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tik-tok-statistics/. Last accessed 12 July 2021.

Jouili, Jeanette, and Annelies Moors. "Introduction: Islamic sounds and the politics of listening." *Anthropological Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (2014): 977-88.

Kagan, Jerome. *The three cultures*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Kapchan, Deborah. "The promise of sonic translation: performing the festive sacred in Morocco" *American anthropologist* 10, no. 4 (2008): 467-83.

___. "Listening acts, secular and sacred: sound knowledge among Sufi Muslims in secular France," In *Islam and popular culture* eds. Karin van Nieuwkerk, Mark Levine and Martin Stokes. Austin: University of Texas press, 2016.

___. "Body," in *Keywords in sound* eds. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny, pp. 33-44, London: Duke university press, 2020.

Kaufmann, Katja and Corinna Peil. "The mobile instant messaging interview (MIMI): using WhatsApp to enhance self-reporting and explore media usage in situ," *Mobile media & communication* 8, no. 2 (2020): 229-46.

Kemp, Simon. "Digital 2021: Algeria," *Datareportal* [Online], February 11, 2021: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-algeria.

Kennedy, Melanie. "'If the rise of the TikTok dance and e-girl aesthetic has taught us anything, it's that teenage girls rule the internet right now': TikTok celebrity, girls and the Coronavirus crisis." *European journal of cultural studies*, (2020): 1-8.

Kesselring, Rita. "Moments of dislocation: why the body matters in ethnographic research," *Basel papers on political transformations*, no. 8 (2015): 1-25.

Knoch, Carsten. "Ethnography in/of the pandemic, follow-up session 3: methods and tools," *Ethnography lab* [online], July 7, 2020: https://ethnographylab.ca/2020/07/07/ethnography-in-of-the-pandemic-follow-up-session-3-methods-and-tools/. Last accessed 1 March 2021.

Koskoff, Ellen. *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. New York: Greenwood press, 1987

Krause, Peter and Golnar Nikpour. "Field research in the Middle East during and after the pandemic." Seminar at *Brandeis university* October 7, 2020, https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/events/2020/oct-7.html. Last accessed 12 July 2021.

Labed, Zohra. "Drug nicknaming in Western Algeria." Paper presented at *7th international congress of human sciences, Barcelona, November, 2018,* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333670389_Drug_Nicknaming_in_Western_Algeria. Last accessed 12 July 2021.

Lalami, Feriel. *Les Algériennes contre le code de la famille. La lutte pour l'égalité*. Paris: Les presses de sciences po, 2012.

Lange, Patricia. "Learning by lip-synching," in *The Oxford handbook of social media and music learning*, ed. Janice Waldron, Stephanie Horsley and Kari Veblen. Oxford university press, 2020.

Langer, Robert and Udo Simon. "Die welt des Islams," *New series* 48, no. ¾ (2008): 273-88.

Lefebvre, Nicholson-Smith and Donald Nicholson-Smith. *The production of space.* Oxford: Cambridge, 1991.

Madianou, Mirca. "Smartphones as polymedia," *Journal of computer-mediated communication,* 19 (2014): 667-80.

Liu, Roseann, Elizabeth Lewis and Amand Snellinger. "Curated collection: youth," *Cultural anthropology* (2011).

Lynch, Julian Anthony. "Festival "noise" and soundscape politics in Mumbai, India," *Sound studies* 5, no. 1 (2019): 37-51.

Malinowski, Branoslaw. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific an account of native enterprise and adventure in the archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea.* Long Grove Island: Waveland press, 1984[1922].

Masquelier, Adeline. "Securing futures: youth, generation and Muslim identities in Niger," in *Being young and Muslim: new cultural politics in the global South and North*, ed. By Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera. Oxford: Oxford university press, 2010.

Mauss, Marcel. "Techniques of the body," trans. by Ben Brewster, *Economy and society* 2 (1973 [1936]): 70–88.

McDougall, James. *A history of Algeria.* Cambridge university press, 2017.

Mead, Margaret. *Coming of age in Samoa: a psychological study of primitive youth for Western civilization*. New York: Perennial, 2001[1928].

Mertz, Elizabeth. "Semiotic anthropology," *Annual review of anthropology*, 36, no. 1 (2007): 337-53.

Morgan, Andy and Chris Nickson. "Algeria: Rai: rocking the casbah," In *The rough guide to world music: Africa & Middle East*, edited by Simon Broughton, Mark Ellingham and Jon Lusk. London: Penguin group, 2006.

Moussa, Ibrahim. "*Tik Tok.. al-ʾiftaʾ tuwaḍḍiḥ ḥukm istikhdāmhu bi-ġaraḍ al-taslīyya*," Bawaba al-Qahira, April 2, 2020. https://wp.me/p9Wzbn-8Yj. Last accessed 12 July 2021.

Moussaoui, Abderrahmane. "La mosquée en Algérie. Figures nouvelles et pratiques reconstituées," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* [Online], 125 (2009). Last accessed 1 March 2021.

Nieuwkerk, van Karin. "Introduction: artistic developments in the muslim cultural sphere: ethics, aesthetics, and the performing arts." In *Muslim rap, halal soaps, and revolutionary theater*, edited by Karin van Nieuwkerk. The university of Texas press, 2011.

Ochoa Gautier, Ana Maria. *Aurality: listening and knowledge in nineteenth-century Colombia*. Duke University press, 2014.

Ouchiha, Taher. "Les réseaux sociaux et la participation politique en Algérie," *Communication* 35, no. 2 (2018), https://doi.org/10.4000/communication.8846. Last accessed 1 March 2021.

Peirce, Charles Sanders. *Collected papers*, Vol. II, ed. by Chales Hartshorne and Paul Weiss. Cambridge: Harvard university press, 1974.

Peterson, Marina and Vicki Brennan. "A sonic ethnography: Listening to and with climate change," *Resonance: the journal of sound and culture* 1, no. 4

(2021): 371-5.

Pink, Sarah. *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London: SAGE publications ltd, 2009.

Piranha, Khalil. "Rai 2020- Cheb Imad Japoni –diri TikTok," January 30, 2020, https://youtu.be/zgwSNimlosw.

Porcello, Thomas. "Afterword," in *Wired for sound: engineering and technologies in sonic cultures*, ed. by Thomas Porcello and Paul Greene, pp. 269–81. Middletown: Wesleyan university press, 2005.

Pratt, Nicola. *Democracy & authoritarianism in the Arab world*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner publishers, 2007.

Rachidi, Ilhem. "Algeria's hirak: defenders of freedom and expression 2021," *Carnegie*, January 19, 2021, https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/83682. Last accessed 1 March 2021.

Rietbroek, Pim. "Brill's simple Arabic transliteration system," *Brill online*, 2010.

Rennie, Tullis. Socio-sonic: an ethnographic methodology for electroacoustic composition. *Organised sound: an international journal of music technology* 19, no. 2 (2014): 117-24.

Rushkoff, Douglas. *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. New York: Ballantine, 1994.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage books, 1994 [1978].

Samuels, David, Louise Meintjes, Ana Maria Ochoa, & Thomas Porcello. Soundscapes: toward a sounded anthropology. *Annual review of anthropology* 39, no. 1 (2010): 329-45.

Sapir, Edward. *Language: an introduction to the study of speech*. New York: Harcourt, 1921.

___. "The status of linguistics as a science," *Language* 5, no. 4 (1929): 207-14. Accessed February 26, 2021.

Sayed, Nadine el-. "The rise of indie music from the heart of Tahrir Square," In *Routledge handbook on contemporary Egypt* edited by Robert Springborg et al., p. 457-66. New York: Routledge, 2021.

Schade-Poulsen, Marc. *The social significance of raï: men and popular music in Algeria*. Austin: University of Texas press, 1999.

Schafer, Murray. *The soundscape: our sonic environment and the tuning of the world*. Vermont: Destiny books, 1994.

Schielke, Samuli. "Being good in Ramadan: ambivalence, fragmentation and the moral self in the lives of young Egyptians," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, no. 1 (2009): S24-S40.

___. *The perils of joy: contesting mulid festivals in contemporary Egypt.* New York: Syracuse university press, 2012.

Schulze, Holger. *Sound works: a cultural theory of sound design.* New York: Bloomsbury academic, 2019.

Shankar, Shalini. "Youth culture," in *Oxford bibliographies*, 2015.

Silverstein, Shayna. "Public pleasures: Negotiating gender and morality through Syrian popular dance," In *Islam and popular culture, edited* by Karin

van Nieuwkerk, Martin Stokes and Mark LeVine, p. 278-95. Austin: University of Texas press, 2016.

Simon, Andrew. “Censuring sounds: Tapes, taste, and the creation of Egyptian culture,” *International journal of Middle East studies* 51, no. 2 (2019): 233-56.

Simsek, Burcu. “musical.ly and microcelebrity among girls.” In *Microcelebrity around the globe: approaches to cultures of internet fame*, edited by Crystal Abidin and Megan Brown, p. 47-56. Emerald publishing limited, 2018.

Souiah, Farida. “Les politiques migratoires restrictives: une fabrique de *harraga*,” *Hommes & migrations* 1304 (2013): 95-101.

Sprengel Darci. “Neoliberal expansion and aesthetic innovation: The Egyptian independent music scene ten years after,” *International journal of Middle East studie*s 52 (2020): 545–51.

Strava, Cristiana. “Dissenting poses: marginal youth, viral aesthetics, and affective politics in neoliberal Morocco,” *Focaal* (2020): 1-18.

Straw, Will. “Scenes and sensibilities,” *E-Compos* 6 (1970): 1-16.

___. “Systems of articulation, logics of change: communities and scenes in popular music,” *Cultural studies* 5, no. 3 (1991): 368-88.

Studio Abdoun. “Aymen parisien 2021 tik toki bel jalaba avec Seif Abdoun (clip studio),” December 15, 2020, https://youtu.be/A-lBiu8R8nM.

Sutton, Keith, Salah Zaimeche, Carl Brown and Abdel Kader Chanderli. “Algeria,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/place/Algeria. Last accessed 1 March 2021.

Swedenburg, Ted. “On the Origins of Pop Rai,” *Middle East journal of culture and communication* 12, no. 1 (2019): 7-34.

___. “Some myths and misconceptions about raï music (part one),” *Blogspot*, December 12, 2009, https://swedenburg.blogspot.com/2009/12/some-myths-and-misconceptions-about-rai.html. Last accessed 12 July 2021.

Tadros, Vicky. “Negotiating the private: car listening culture and Emirati values,” *BFRE student prize submission (unpublished)*, 1-6.

Tamburini, Francesco. “The ‘Islam of the government’: the Islamic high councils in Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunesia” *Journal of Asian and African studies* 55, no. 4 (2020): 492-508.

Tantawy, Nahed el- and Judy Isaksen. “Mona Haydar: Blending Islamic and hip-hop feminisms,” *Feminist media studies* 20, no. 6 (2020): 847-62.

Taussig, Michael. *Mimesis and alterity*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

The Islamic information. “Is making TikTok haram in Islam or for Muslims?” August 12, 2020, https://theislamicinformation.com/tiktok-haram-in-islam/.

The Music Network. “Warner Music signs with TikTok as more record companies jump on social media bandwagon,” January 7, 2021, https://themusicnetwork.com/warner-music-tiktok-deal/. Last accessed 12 July 2021.

Truax, Barry. *Handbook for acoustic ecology.* Vancouver: A.R.C. publications, 1999 [1978].

Turner, Victor. *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure*. London: Aldine publication company, 1969.

Virolle, Marie. “Le Raï entre résistances et récupération,” *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 51 (1989): 47-62.

___. “Raï, norme sociale et reference religieuse,” *Anthropologie et sociétés* 20, no. 2 (1996): 111-128.

Voegelin, Salomé. “Sonic methodologies of sound,” in *The Bloomsbury handbook of sonic methodologies* eds. Michael Bull and Marcel Cobussen. New York: Bloomsbury academic, 2021.

Volpi, Frédéric. “Algeria: when elections hurt democracy,” *Journal of democracy* 31, no. 2 (2020): 152-65.

Weimann, Gabriel and Natalie Masri. “Research note: spreading hate on TikTok.” *Studies in conflict & terrorism*, (2020): 1-14.

Wheeler, Kayla Renée. “The ethics of conducting virtual ethnography on visual platforms,” *Fieldwork in religion* 12, no. 2 (2018): 163-78.

Whorf, Benjamin Lee. “Science and linguistics,” *Technology review* 42, no. 6 (1940): 229-231, 247-248.

Yahoo finance. “TikTok signs deal with Sony Music to expand music library,” November 11, 2021, https://finance.yahoo.com/news/tiktok-signs-deal-sony-music-170116348.html. Last accessed 12 July 2021.

Yom, Sean, Marc Lynch and Wael al-Khatib. “Introduction,” in *Youth politics in the Middle East and North Africa, Pomeps studies* 36 (2019): 3-6.

Zhu, Chengyan, Xiaolin Xu, Wei Zhang, Jianmin Chen and Richard Evans. “How health communication via Tik Tok makes a difference: a content analysis of Tik Tok accounts run by Chinese provincial health committees.” *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17 (2019): 1-13.

Appendix

Translations figures
Figure I.2
Third comment: I miss you.
Answer: (I miss you) too.

Figure I.5
Oh female dancers on TikTok. You know that there is no difference between you and the female dancers in cabarets. Only that she dancers for an audience and you dance for the world. May Allah guide us and you.

Figure I.6
"The sanctity of stringed instruments" Ibn Qadama Rahma-tallah said: "Entertaining instruments, like the tanbour (a string instrument), the mizmar (a double reed wind instrumtn), and the shababa (a reed flute) are instruments of sin according to Islamic consensus."

Figure I.7
"Two women who do not resemble one another". A woman whose rolemodels are her friends and a woman whose rolemodels are artists and singers. A woman whose abaya is covering and decent and a woman whose dresses are ornamented and tempting. A woman who cries about the conditions of Muslim women and a woman who cries about the happenings in TV-series. Oh Allah, insist on the souls of our sisters, daughters and mothers, to serve your obedience.

Figure 2.3
Profile description: Lyrics of raï songs.

Figure 2.5
First comment: The song on Tuesday at 4 o'clock.
Second comment: Give me your (plural) opinion on this song.
Third comment: The song will, if God wills, be available on Youtube on Tuesday at 16:00.
Fourth comment: Yes.

Figure 2.7
Second comment: Yes our sister.
Third comment: I love this song. My heart is broken and most of the youth are like that.

Figure 2.13
Description: My sweet brother

Figure 3.5
Fifth comment: What do you mean (wdym).
Eleventh comment: I am Algerian, so you don't have to explain me anything kid.
Fifteenth comment: *ʿamīq* means the young who dress in black and watch a lot of anime. The meaning is social and it derived from schools and youth. It means a girl or a boy and it has another meaning, beautiful youth.
Seventeenth comment: Haha what?
Eighteenth comment: C'est très gentil (It's very nice).

Figure 3.11
Eighth comment: Use the old songs, because their words are respectful to some extend, such as weddings (Tlemcen, Algiers, Setif).

Translations TikToks
TikTok I.1
I will hurt myself a while
You touched me in my honour
You hurt my heart
Give me a bottle of JB
Tonight I will get drunk

TikTok 2.1
Bless you, oh messenger of God (the prophet Mohammed) x4
TikTok 2.2
Hey friend!

That one, drop it in Explore
Do it, do it!
Come, come!
Hey, TikTok in a jalaba
The charmers will multiply around you
Her following will rise

TikTok 2.6
By God, I swear I did not enchant you
Ha, from my heart I love you
I have a crush on you, only on you
Why?
Oh my god!

TikTok 2.8
My luck and I know it
Oh oh
We fought these two days
I tried to call her, but it was switched off
She deactivated her account
If she does not return I will die
She deactivated her account
If she does not return I will die

TikTok 2.9
When I wake up in the morning
I tell them: where did my love go?
Oh oh oh
You're on my mind
Your heart is desired

TikTok 2.10
I stepped on my heart
I swear I will not return
How do you want me to drive?
When I am dying on drugs

TikTok 2.11
I stepped on my heart
I swear I will not return
How do you want me to drive?
When I am dying on drugs

TikTok 2.13
I stepped on my heart
I swear I will not return
How do you want me to drive?
When I am dying on drugs

TikTok 2.15
Line (of drugs), line (of drugs)
My mind is lost
Give me the medicine

TikTok 2.16
Let go of the XTC
I will kill you with cocaine
Let go of the XTC
I will kill you with cocaine
Give it to me, I will smoke hashish

TikTok 2.17
Dead exists and will always exist
I will not let him be complicated
When he will be with me it will be clear
I turn him into a bug
From every direction
What is their problem?
They eat me
Shame, oh my God

TikTok 3.1
She likes to get whipped
She likes to get whipped
Don't whip her
Don't show her mercy
She likes to get whipped
She likes to get whipped

TikTok 3.2
She likes to get whipped
She likes to get whipped
Don't whip her
Don't show her mercy
She likes to get whipped
She likes to get whipped

TikTok 3.4
You are an *ʿamīq*, a weirdo hahaha
And *ʿamīqīn* they are the ones who
watch Naruto, weirdos
You appear to us with Miki's, oh brother
what a weirdo
Oh youth, oh *al-ʿamīq*, oh ya BAM x2
That's very nice

TikTok 3.8
The dangerous one, the dangerous one
Since early on a *meryūl*
Ah it is known what he does
A gentle guy who has authority
He gets drunk and he attacks

TikTok 3.10
Good evening, after many people asked me and answered on that video about the lyrics, I want to give clarification about the topic. When I made the video, I did not completely understand the meaning of the lyrics. But now I understand and I want to say that I am of course against hitting and of course against the abuse of women. In my opinion these lyrics are problematic. Firstly, because it normalises domestic violence against women. Secondly, because it is an example of a bigger problem, namely the problem of sexism and misogyny around the whole world. If you have questions, I am here in the chat or the comment section.

TikTok 3.13
Good morning, this video is for people on alt TikTok who love to watch videos by comedians who make fun of raï music and way way dancing. I am searching for more videos on TikTok like the following examples. It would help me a lot if you could send me those.

TikTok 3.14
Oh the lagmy
Givem e some lagmy
I will get drunk on lagmy
I will complete it on lagmy

TikTok 3.15
You like to play as-sikla[26]
How nice is that

26 A game often played by youth during Ramadan night.

TikTok 3.16
You like to play as-sikla
How nice is that

TikTok 3.17
You like to play as-sikla
How nice is that