Tara Semple

Hipsterism

A Paradigm for Modernity

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Kultur und gesellschaftliche Praxis

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In den letzten Jahrzehnten hat es in der deutschsprachigen wie internationalen Soziologie nicht nur einen massiven Anstieg von Studien zu mannigfaltigen Kulturerscheinungen und verschiedenartigen Formen gesellschaftlicher Praxis gegeben. Es ist sowohl von einem practical turn als auch von einem cultural turn in den Sozial-, Kultur- und Geisteswissenschaften die Rede. Die Reihe „Kultur und gesellschaftliche Praxis" hat sich den Anspruch gesetzt, die Vielfalt theoretischer und empirischer Untersuchungen im Feld der Kultur- und Gesellschaftsforschung miteinander zu verbinden. Die Reihe nimmt deshalb solche Arbeiten auf, die kultur- und praxisanalytische Zugänge systematisch verknüpfen, um darüber die symbolisch-praktische Erzeugung sozialer Welten in ihren konstitutiven Mechanismen zu rekonstruieren. Die in dieser Reihe versammelten Studien widmen sich der Rekonstruktion von historischen, kulturellen und praktischen Bedingungen der Entstehung einzelner gesellschaftlicher Symptome und der Analyse der Gegenwartsgesellschaft als Ganzer.

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Abstract

Young adults and their conceptions and reactions to modernity, capitalism and consumerism constitute a fundamental building block to understanding society. Little sociological work has been done in the field of Hipsterism, although it can function as a paradigm for western, affluent societies. Drawing on qualitative research from two subsequent field stays in Berlin, this work utilizes Hipsterism to demonstrate contradictions of modernity, progress and counterculture in highly individualised societies, analysed through the lens of Modernity (Bauman/Giddens), Consumerism (Bauman), the New Spirit of Capitalism (Boltanski/Chiapello), and shows contradictions of urban space in reference to Lefebvre.

Hipsterism demonstrates modes of identity, conceptions and a whole spectrum of activities with varying degrees of commitment. With tools such as conscious consumption, conversations and ethical or creative work within an intentional lifestyle, Hipsterism emerges as an attempt to navigate between individualism and collectivity and thus forms a kind of citizenship based on an imagined global community that individuals empathize with and feel solidarity towards. Resulting from these circumstances are a variety of forms of action, while searching for better ways to contribute and engage at the same time. Attempts to try to construct spaces where milieus dissolve might fail in spatial practice, but the practices in sum still leave a trace in (consumer) culture. All these activities hint at the potential of transformative and negotiating power that Hipsterism could have.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep gratitude for the close accompaniment by my first supervisor Prof. Andreas Langenohl. His thorough critique, his extensive knowledge and constructive encouragement in helping me find my own line of argumentation was invaluable. I continue to cherish the memories of our conversations as a genuine and exciting exploration of reality and social constructs. It were these explorations that helped me delve ever more deeply into my environment, and fall in love with being a scientist.

I am particularly grateful for PD Dr. habil. Jürgen Schraten's advice that was indispensable in the writing of this thesis. His constructive suggestions and willingness to give his time so generously has been very much appreciated. His constant encouragement and belief in my capacity ever since my Bachelors' degree shaped every step of my path.

I would like to thank the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture in Giessen for the stipend that enabled the writing of this thesis.

Further thanks goes to Louise, Emily and Michael Semple, Nelli Newport, Giulia Colella, Behnaz and Mahyar Nicoubin, Neysan Khabirpour, Hannes Widmoser and Shadi Toloui-Wallace for their efficient editing and moral support, even while they were busy with contributing to the progress of society through their grassroots efforts.

Finally, I wish to thank my family for their support, my parents Flora and Shahriar, my sisters Iliana and Nika, and my patient husband Alexis Semple.

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Overview

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1.1 Introduction

> Well, I think hipster is just a fashionable term, like generation golf or millenial. It doesn't really mean anything.

This was the first comment I heard after I presented my proposal to the institute. The term hipster at times seems like an empty signifier. The first obstacle when trying to identify what and who is hipster and why, is that no one admits to being one, and everyone that *does* have an opinion on what being hipster means, starts listing everything a Hipster is *not*.

The aim of this dissertation thesis is to analyse the phenomenon of hipsterism with a cultural sociological approach, as an example of new forms of conceptions and cultural practice within recent modernity.

Hipsterism is especially distinguished by the strong desire for individualism. This makes it a phenomenon that is exceptionally significant for a cultural sociological analysis of modern society. The influences of a capitalistic, affluent society on the development of forms of alternative lifestyle and the development of identity and building of groups can be derived by a deeper understanding of hipsterism. By understanding hipsterism is meant understanding both the practices of hipsterism and the manner in which Hipsters interact within societal circumstances. Hipsterism is shaped through a conceptual framework that also is significant for capitalist, globalised and consumerist societies at large.

Defining hipsterism had a few challenges that I encountered, such as the one I quoted above. One especially interesting challenge is that hipsterism is a very current phenomenon that is subject to frequent change and also is strongly associated with individualism, which makes it difficult to categorise and define Hipsters as a

group, or to objectify them under this label in any way. Furthermore, the defensive attitude against labelling and stereotyped thinking supplemented with an almost fierce yearning for individualism causes many to deny they are Hipsters and requires precise observation to develop to a definition. A particularly interesting factor is that Hipsters create hipsterism themselves - not by defining hipsterism, but by their practices, and paradoxically by distancing themselves from the label Hipster. The concept of hipsterism is based on a refusal of a categorisation and defence against any attempts at a definition. This constant avoidance and resistance, supplemented with recurrent change in order to distance from the ordinary or conventional, is a main characteristic of hipsterism.

Because it is in a fluid state and its features are vague, the objectification of the concept of hipsterism is a major difficulty. Moreover, hipsterism is associated with youth culture and is mainly founded in consumption patterns. Hipsterism could be interpreted as a mere consumption of commercial fashion and Hipsters could be defined as mere imitators of a collective fashion style. If Hipsters are merely fashionable imitators, no underlying connection to the social structure and conflicts of society should be found. These factors, as well as the notion of extreme individualism and the actors' refusal of a definition, could lead to the presumption that hipsterism as a concept has only very little influence on the development of identity. Under such circumstances, one could even doubt any definition of hipsterism as a sociologically identifiable social form is possible.

However, the observation of the social milieu associated with it raises the assumption that in our globalised and digitalised modern age, hipsterism demonstrates a specific mode of identity typical for our fluid, modern society.

This is the focal point of my work.

Why did I want to explore this phenomenon in a practical way? Why not just do discourse analysis on the labelling process and the denial of the categorisation?

In my immediate surroundings, I observed people with all the cultural capital that (Bourdieu, 2012) said they needed to be distinguished, with creative jobs and successful businesses in the sense of Boltanski et al. (2018) and Reckwitz (2014), but my hipster friends still rolled their eyes at them, as soon as they started speaking about it. What were they doing wrong? There seemed to be something more subtle about hipsterism. Something more political and moral. There was a quiet judgement of someone who was too convinced of his work, even though it seemed that Do-What-You-Love was so important in hipsterism.

My work explores these contradictions that I observed. From the beginning, my research was a kind of a follow up of these confusing dichotomies. I observed that it seems to be important in this milieu to do something you are passionate about, but the slogan "Do-What-You-Love" is embarrassing. I had noticed that there was constant

adaption of hipster fashion trends, but being called hipster was an accusation or an embarrassing act of labelling. The act of belonging together, by distancing, seemed to work in practice, even though I could not explain it through the theories I knew. I also observed strong criticism of consumption, even though the milieu described as hipster was consuming in an identity shaping way. The respondents denied the label Hipster, but identified as vegans or ethical or low-waste consumers. The way they spoke still expressed collectivity. I observed highly politicised statements being made, but a distancing to politics happening at the same time. Generally there were many discrepancies between what was being said, how it was being portrayed, and what was being done.

This is where my research comes from, a place of genuine curiousity about the people around me and the subtle art of being cool. Being hipster was navigated by many balance acts and could not be merely explained away by distinction.

Because it became clear that *the Hipster* as an idealtype does not exist in a sociologically identifiable way but is rather a descriptive term for various cultural practices, designated as *hipster*, in this work the term is mostly used as an adjective and not a noun. When referring to a a possible ideal type, a Hipster will be capitalised. *hipsterism* in turn describes the social milieu that I observed and the practices undergone in this milieu collectively in a holistic way.

My procedure was along an emergent design, which allows for the story of hipsterism to gradually unfold along participant observation complemented by self-reflection throughout this work, taking you on a journey of how recognising that hipsterism was more than merely a distinction mechanism made it worthy of a serious sociological consideration. Hipsterism emerged slowly and gradually as a model for the development of agency in a complex, liquid, consumerist and globalised world. Actions within hipsterism did not stem from a lack of understanding how to contribute to progress in the world, but rather emerged as young people searched for ways of effective engagement, expressing their solidarity towards an imagined global community, and raising conscious consumption to a politically intended lifestyle.

We will begin with some historical considerations and theories about counterculture that shape the understanding of hipster and hip through different ages. This will lead us to the research on hipsterism so far, and the questions about this phenomenon that remain unanswered. These questions lead to the theoretical framework of this study that constitute an analysis of contemporary society from the perspective of modernity, consumerism and capitalism.

After this overview we will delve into a fickle area that already requires reflections on the label Hipster: methods and methodology. These are comprised of an emergent design and data collection with an ethnographic imaginary and a self-reflective

element. Further the lens of space will be introduced, by which hipsterism can be utilised to show the contradictions of current, western, consumerist society.

The analysis and argumentation consist of two general parts: the first addresses the question *what?* answered as a social milieu with underlying practices in a liquid, capitalist and consumerist society and with the help of the concept of space. It explores the various facets of the contradictions in the field of hipsterism with the help of the theories introduced in the theoretical framework. The data will be analysed through the lens of hipsterism as space, and thus make the implicit contradictions of urban space in contemporary society explicit.

The second part explores the question *why?* that results from the conclusions of the chapter before. As a countercultural tendency in contemporary society hipsterism demonstrates young adults' reading of their social reality as a conceptual framework and their reaction to this reading, expressed in a pattern of action. Hipsterism turns out to be a paradigm for young people and their attempts to contribute to progress in modern, western societies. It also demonstrates how they are hindered by developments in modernity or their own framework in doing so, and how that results in contradictions in their behaviour and their ideals.

As an example of developments in western, globalised modernity, I conclude by answering the question whether hipsterism can be associated with counterculture in a highly individualised society. The results can give us an idea about one of the most important questions of a comprehensive analysis of the present: how does change happen in society and what enables or hinders progress?

My data consists of what is marked in this work as extracts from my *field diary*, *logbook* entries that stem from my self-reflection, pictures taken in the field, and *extracts from narrative interviews* that are all labelled as such in the text. Some data is also shared as *Conversation Notes* that are spontanouesly jotted down in the field during a longer conversation and sometimes contain direct quotes of the respondents or summaries of points they shared. Sometimes single words used often by the respondents are built into the text, with quotation marks to signify that this is a word not chosen by the author of this work, but used in the discourse, such as the signifier of Berlin being "colourful". All the names of the respondents have been changed.

1.2   Hipsters and (other) Countercultures Through the Ages

In the following chapter the history of the Hipster and questions relating to current hipsterism will be raised.

First we will examine the Hipsters of the Jazz and Bebop era of the 1950s and the beat generation as forerunners of contemporary hipsterism. We will analyse them in the light of refections of counterculture made by classic theorists (Yinger, 1977). These classic models of counterculture will be supplemented with more recent studies of modernity (Bourdieu, 2012) (Giddens, 2013) to base our study on a holistic understanding of how counterculture relates to modernity.

The example of the hippie counterculture of the 1970s will help us analyse the influence of consumerism on countercultural tendencies in society. This leads us ultimately to the contemprary counterculture according to Schwartz (1987) understood as an indicator of what is going on in society at large, rather than a serious opposition to conformity. The influence of consumerism will be described to reference to Bauman (2008) and remains an afterthought in the following chapter, where we will look at the backdrop of the emergence of hipsterism in contemporary modern western societies.

Tracing back the term of the Hipster, roots that can be found in the era of Jazz beginning in the Roaring Twenties. As a movement that expressed the fusion of European and African music styles, Jazz as an art form represented a progressive transformation, a break with traditions of the past and leap towards modernism—still relevant for the Hipsters' self-narrative today. However, this leap was not unconventional enough yet, to associate it with the anti-commercial Hipsters of the Jazz era.

In the early 1940s a younger generation of professional musicians developed a more radical modernist posture. Improvisation and nonconformity became their trademark. A high art ideology stemming from elements of Jazz culture was then carried over into the swing era. The disdain for whatever popular audiences enjoy, similar to the contemporary Hipster practice, of *liking things before they become cool*, was understood as a rejection of the dictate of conventional popular Jazz. (Lopes, 2002)

Dizzy Gillespie who together with Charlie Parker exemplified the development of further complexity, layers and anti-commercialism of Jazz music, looked very similar to how the Hipster of today is portrayed—at least in terms of edgy fashion style and his apathetic posture whilst performing. First and foremost the Hipsters, following their leader Dizzy Gillespie, had to distinguish themselves from what was labelled "square", the popular, yet dull and conventional musician, who was a slave to the establishment. (ibid., pp. 204–216)

The late 50s then gave rise to what has come to be known as the *Beat Generation*, which cannot be seriously named a generation at all, consisting of only a few (albeit influential) writers and poets.

As Jack Kerouac described:

> The Beat Generation, that was a vision that we had, John Clellon Holmes and I, and Allen Ginsberg in an even wilder way, in the late forties, of a generation of crazy, illuminated hipsters suddenly rising and roaming America, serious, bumming and hitchhiking everywhere, ragged, beatific, beautiful in an ugly graceful new way (Kerouac, 1958)

He described the concept of beat as something run down, as in beaten, but still so intense that it included passion and conviction.

Kerouac was a writer who applied the concepts of Bebop Jazz, the improvisation and spontaneity, to his writing. The same way Hemingway's distinctive, controlled and nuanced voice captured the *Lost Generation* a few years prior, Kerouacs intuitive, inconsistent and volatile narration mirrors the fluidity and distancing of the Hipsters from any conformity, their desperate urge and desire to distance themselves from labels that would reduce them to anything other than individual and authentic.

Another of the key figures of the Beat Generation was John Clellon Holmes, who explains the notion of Beat as follows:

> The origins of the word "beat" are obscure, but the meaning is only too clear to most Americans. More than mere weariness, it implies having been used, of being raw. It involves a sort of nakedness of mind, and, ultimately, of soul; a feeling of being reduced to the bedrock of consciousness. (Holmes, 1952)

He explains the backdrop of his generation as follows:

> The burden of my generation was the knowledge that something rational had caused all this (the feeling that something had gotten dreadfully, dangerously out of hand in our world–this vast maelstrom of death...the concentration camps that proved too real) and that nothing rational could end it....The bombs had gotten bigger, but the politics had stayed the same. The burden of my generation was to carry this in utter helplessness—the genocide, the overkill–and still seek love in the underground where all living things hide if they are to survive our century. (ibid.)

The indivuals of the Beat Generation wanted to distinguish themselves from this rationality, the politics and the status quo. Holmes describes a feeling of helplessness, that can be found in today's Hipster as well (see 3.3.1).

In the late 50s Mailer (1957) describes these 'beat' Hipsters in his provocative and controversial but topical essay "The White Negro", as the prototype of the American Existentialist. He explains that the environment for the development of the Hipster—the only extreme nonconformist of that time—is the psychological mayhem caused

by the second world war and the atomic bomb. The setting is crippling anxiety, caused by the awareness of the frailty of life, and that death and as much as life also, was meaningless. Conformity was seen as just another death, though slower and more stifling, with every creative and rebellious instinct destroyed. The only solution, the only way to give life some sort of meaning, is for the modern American Existentialist to become a Hipster, "to accept the terms of death, to live with death as immediate danger, to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots, to set out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self". (Mailer, 1957, p. II)

With their attitude that science, rationality and logics cannot encompass all of human experience the Hipsters of the 1950s are reminiscent of American existentialism. Mailer emphasises the Hipsters' mistrust of formal institutions, but still a belief that a different better world is possible, by power of example and through a spontaneous revolution. (ibid.) As early as in the 50s this reflection by Mailer associates hipster practice with a reaction to the stresses in society and mistrust in institutions that we will detect in hipsterism too (4).

Mailer explains his thoughts on the racial dimensions of the "Hip" also in relation to Jazz culture. With this dangerous backdrop the existentialist, looking to give his life a radical meaning and expose himself to danger, turns to African American culture. From Mailer's point of view, seeing as politically the African American has to live in a state of constant danger and never enjoys the privilege of security, any kind of unconventional action takes disproportionate courage, which make him the source for any hipness in his situation. He "has been living on the margin between totalitarianism and democracy for two centuries." (Burdick, 1969) Mailer goes on to describe the position of the African American population, who as such is free from the conventional pressure of fitting in, at the forefront of experimenting new lifestyles and questioning conventional norms, as they explore the moral wildernesses of life, which contrasts them to the "Square", who condemns these behaviours from the outset, rendering them immoral, evil, immature, etc.

Thus, the Hipster can be described as a "White Negro", as he turns to this hipness and tries to oppose conventional society by imitating a "black" lifestyle, living primitively for the present and for the satisfaction of physical pleasure.

Mailer emphasises the emancipating power of the unconventional and the rebellious, especially in terms of sexuality and violence, and reinforces the racist myth of black sexuality. He glosses over Freudian theory to justify his arguments, but also angered the beat generation individuals. They did not reflect the racism and criticise it, but rather disagreed with his underlying cultural and psychological assumptions.

Mailer distinguishes between state violence that is stifling and dangerous, and individual violence that can be freeing. He imagines a revolution in society from its

conventions, through a radically individualised rebellion. However, the potential he sees, is not reduced to the subcultural phenomenon he describes, but rather insinuates the possibility and potential of counterculture in western society.

Kerouac himself, as the example and model of the Beat-Hipster distanced himself from Mailer's theory. He denied trying to distinguish himself through violence and to gain freedom through delinquency as an act of rebellion against conformity. He emphasised that the "beaten down" implication of the beat generation was never supposed to mean to engage in youthful and meaningless acts of crime, but rather evoking a state of consciousness, something akin to spirituality even, calling it a "holy new feeling out there in the streets" (Kerouac, 1958)

Kerouac describes that they felt solidarity with the French youth who, inspired by Sartre, were uprising against conformity and had a political agenda and an aim to transform society. The modern day Hipsters also negotiate ways of being political in their current circumstances.

In the 1970's awareness of the notion and potency of countercultures rose, especially through further social movements in addition to the marginal Beat generation described above. The Bohemian Movement of the late 1800's that had preceded the beat generation and the more globalised hippie movement of the 1960's that followed the Hipsters of that time prompted thinkers to analyse the meaning of groups that had values or norms counter to their respective societies.

John Milton Yinger (1977) emphasised the role of normative systems, which are in sharp contrast to the prevailing culture. Yinger defined these as groups and individuals that are proponents and carriers of an oppositional culture. He linked these systems with what is commonly called *counterculture*, but dismissed the term itself as too blurry, because it is often not a counterculture, but a emphcounter group or *counter society*. Yinger refers to Westhues and explains that one can define countercultures ideologically or behaviourally. In an ideological sense, a counterculture is based on a set of beliefs and values, which reject those of the dominant culture. In a behavioural sense countercultures behave in a radical non-conformist way. While Westhues insists that behavioural counterculture must conclude in a dropping out of society, Yinger explains that this is a problematic claim and while some members of the counterculture do in fact drop out, others stay engaged hoping to influence and transform society, but they do not leave it. The behavioural countercultures are similar to the way Mailer described the Hipster, as a nonconformist dropping out of society and living his most radical self. However, many Hipsters did not drop out, but merely had a nonconformist attitude, and avoided criminal or deviant behaviour.

While ideals can be expressed by the contemporary Hipsters, these ideals could also be seen merely as a non-conformist attitude. The attitude might be fashionable

to adopt in the sense of Georg Simmel (1957), who would argue that this behaviour is not really relevant or embedded with the potency that Yinger sees.

Yinger (1977) however provides a reasonable approach. He explains that counter-cultures are a continuing part of human experience and are rooted in social constants, so they should be found, in one form or another, in all societies. Yinger explains that there is a tendency, especially in illustrative descriptions of counterculture, to stereotype and exaggerate both the dominant and the counterculture, with the aim of drawing the sharpest possible contrast. Mailer's essay is ample proof of this. The way he describes the fears and horrors that the individuals are subjected to, the way he describes the conformist square—as something to eschew from under any circumstance—and his description of an ultimate aspiration to live on the margins of society, demonstrates his tendency to exaggerate these circumstances, maybe in his own terms searching for a revolutionary, society-transforming idea.

Especially in comparison to the way these individuals described themselves, such as Kerouac or Ginsberg, his descriptions seem less inspired by the movement itself, but rather by his own ideas on the duality of man, his conception of an individual as saintly or psychotic.

Instead of describing the tensions between the Beats' drive for individualism, he opts for a provocative sexualisation and describes the ultimate goal as the rise of one's full potential, rather than describing nuances of the New Left movement and the subtleties of the emergence of a counterculture in the United States.

With more distance and from a sociological point of view Yinger (ibid.) describes that while there are unique elements in every counterculture, these should not be the central focus of attention when defining a counterculture. The term should be used, whenever the normative system of a group primarily contains a theme of conflict with the values of society at large. Another indicator of counterculture would be when personality variables are directly involved in the development and mainte-nance of the group's values and system and these values are only understood with reference to the group's surrounding dominant culture. Hipsters do not portray this tendency exactly. As mentioned before, the only thing the descriptions of Hipsters all have in common is that they distance themself from this label. The distancing process from society has yet to be analysed through the lens of indivdualism and distinction. However a constant renegotiation of who one is *in relation to others* has become a standard in modernity (Giddens, 2013). This might make contemporary counterculture more difficult to detect, because it is the dominant culture that is developing a tendency of distancing for the sake of distinction.

To overcome this hurdle, it is interesting to look at how Yinger differentiates mere deviant from real countercultural behaviour. Yinger explains that we must differentiate between the two. Deviation, he claims, is merely nonconformist indi-

vidual behaviour, while countercultural behaviour is supported and framed by the values and system of the group. Although these two may appear similar from the outside, they differ in cause and consequence (Yinger, 1977, p. 837).

Following Yinger, one could interpret the cause of deviant behaviour as something that is not backed by group values. The intention with deviant behaviour is to be nonconforming at any price. Relating it to current hipsterism, this responds to fashion in the sense of Simmel (1957), who describes the dynamics of fashion as flight and chase. He describes fashionable practices develop when individuals are trying to distinguish themselves and frequently changing in order to keep a distinction between themselves or their group and others. This is of course much less radical than behaving nonconformist to the extreme of deviant behaviour with very different consequences. However, in its cause this deviant behaviour can be likened to a sense of fashion according to Simmel. Indicators of this kind of behaviour could be erratic and inconsistent actions and positions, without group values becoming clear in participant observation or conversation. The notion of countercultural rather than deviant or fashionable behaviour the way Yinger describes it (as a value-based distinction between the norms of the group and those of wider society) could be related to lifestyle in accordance with Bourdieu (2012) or Giddens (2013). In this case it is tied closley to social practices that often derive through taste that also position individuals in a field. The notion of countercultural behaviour can thus be seen in modernity as connected with the habitus and include consensual values, which are contradictory to the values of society, within the group. As such they position the individuals in distinction to the wider society. Also, as Giddens (ibid., p. 81) describes, lifestyle includes practices that an individual embraces because they form a particluar narrative of self-identity.

Furthermore Yinger (1977, 845 ff.) explains that countercultures are often engines and/ or results of social change. Countercultural movements are an indicator that a society is experiencing extreme stress. Especially considering the historical backdrop of the Beat Generation and late Jazz Avant-garde, it is clear that there was stress generated by the circumstances. The backdrop of the original Hipsters was a post-World War II insecurity and the threat of the cold war looming over their heads. The horrors of the concentration camps had shown young people what societies are capable of and led them to question how they were living their lives, and whether adaption to the mainstream was not only "square" as in "not cool", but could also even be dangerous. Living life and unfolding one's own potential in an artistic and creative way became a key imperative for that generation. Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac had nothing good to say about Norman Mailer or his article, they felt offended and misunderstood. They criticised its lack of heart and

of neglecting the spirituality that the Beats intended to practice and express. As one of the Beat's members said in an interview:

> I don't mean to be presumptuous, but I thought the essay was very square, and Kerouac thought that Norman was being an intellectual fool. The whole point of [Kerouac's novel capturing the beat generation's lifestyle] *On the Road*, plus his fifteen or twenty other books, as well as all of Burroughs' writing, all of mine, and everything going on with the Beat thing had to do with American tenderheartedness. Norman's notion of the Hipster as being cool and psychopaths and cutting his way through society with jujitsu was a kind of macho folly that we giggled at. We giggled at it because it's silly and misses the point. [...] what I'm trying to say is that Kerouac's take on "The White Negro" was that it was well-intentioned but poisonous, in the sense that it encouraged an image of violence. Mailer still saw some element of Dostoevskian heroism in juvenile delinquents stomping an old man to death. Kerouac hated that. He thought it was laying a violent trip on his scene, which had never been any violence. I agreed with him, except that he was too puritanical, too proud and rejectful of people he thought were not his equals, were not Shakespearean in terms of tongue and mind. (Manso, 2008, p. 257).

The Beats insisted not only on their tenderheartedness, but on their spirituality. They felt holy and they claimed their experience of life was holy. The Beats work is full of tension, between the misery of life and its ultimate joy and happiness—often associated with religiousness and a holy, spiritual beauty. Allen Ginsberg (2015) describes his experience in his most well-known poem:

> I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,
>
> dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,
>
> Angel-headed hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night

The 'Angel-headed hipsters' Ginsberg describes are looking for a heavenly connection and claimed to be inspired by Buddha, Moses and Christ. They turned to drugs, sexuality and anything intense enough to hope to evoke a spiritual awakening from within. Religious scholar Stephen Prothero (1991) went as far as claiming they deserve a place in the history of American Religion.

A counter-cultural movement aimed to transform religiousness to such a degree, religion that was often associated with the more conform—or "square"—societal segments, demonstrates a cultural appropriation that Mailer failed to capture. To create a holy and spiritual experience of life, "heaven" in society, on the margins of society, in a radically alternative kind of way, hints at the potential of a transformative and negotiating power that countercultures could have fulfilled. This raises the

question about hipsterism in contemporary society and whether it has this potential as well (see 3.2)

Tripold (2012, 256 f.) explains that the 1960s and 1970s can be categorised into two main countercultural movements, which can also be understood in light of Yingers theories: the rather sober political activism of the new radical left student movements, and the colourful hippie lifestyle movement. The Hippies' criticism of society was confined to a drastic rejection of capitalism in the form of an alternative lifestyle, rather than a serious political action with an alternative concept of government. As Willis describes in his work on subversive culture, the hippies saw themselves as an overthrowing power that chipped away at the roots of conventional society. While their rejection of capitalism and conventionalism, hand in hand with their drug consumption and ideals of sexual liberation, brought them together as a group (Willis, 2014, p. 146), their implied criticism of society was not based on a political analysis (ibid., p. 161).

Their lifestyle however was characterised by a set of ideals, which rebelled against capitalism and a planned, authoritarian way of life. Hippies emphasised the promotion of individualism. The Hippie movement was hostile towards a collective perception of society, they believed that every individual was responsible for her- or himself and that self-realisation and the spiritual experience of the self was extremely important. In reference to Marianne Weber, Tripold (2012) describes the youth countercultural movement of this era as a carrier of modern individualism. As Tripold describes, the Hippie movement made use of specific practices to forward their ideals. These practices, including the consumption of drugs, sexual liberation, ecstatic music, and spiritual practices, all aimed to develop an authentic self and unique individuality.

The Hippies did not want a redistribution of wealth or a more just system, they rather saw the material aspects of life as random and coincidental. Every disadvantage was interpreted as the fate of an individual that he must deal with and treat as an opportunity to grow. Instead of establishing equity, not only in a material sense, but even between the sexes, Hippies believed in accepting the differences and criticised the development of society from a pompously hierarchical order to a standardised, affluent, democratic dullness.

This raises the question of how Hipsters in contemporary society would interpret inequality. To different degrees, but all to some extent, the social milieu I observed did engage in reflecting the material aspects of life and did not interpret them as random or coincidental. The degree of understanding the root causes of distinction varied, but the denial of wanting to be labelled and the discomfort of talking about practices that are milieu forming, might reflect an implicit criticism of such an order (see 3.4.2).

Work was seen by Hippies as something every individual should do for his or her well-being. It should not be boring and must fulfil the individual. This explains their dislike and reluctance towards communism. In the sense of Hippie ideals, any form of equality and standardisation suffocated the development and freedom of the self. This notion can be associated with the attitude of Do-What-You-Love in modernity (see 3.3.1).

As Tripold (ibid.) describes, the end of the Hippie era and the subversion of their ideals were executed by mechanisms of capitalistic culture. Hippies were discovered as potent consumers, especially with their passionate urge to express themselves, and thus established a new market for specific consumer goods. This new market was developed with commodities that satisfied the needs of hippies for authentic goods, such as records, clothing etc. In this context, expressive advertising was developed, aimed at the hippies and their need for the accentuation of their personality as the target consumers. These forms of advertising spread the idea that consumer goods are the means for self-expression and influenced society as a whole. Eventually, the cultural movement lost its subversive and countercultural power. Through the character of capitalism this movement became a small cog in the big wheel of capitalism. Has this happened to hipsterism in modernity, or is consumption a pattern of action that has subversive power itself (see 4.3)?

After observing the Hippie movement fizzle out and become increasingly commercialised, Gary Schwartz (1987) understood the counterculture as an indicator of what is going on in society at large, rather than a serious opposition to conformity. In his studies on rebellion, youth and conformity he uses the example of a variety of communities in the 70s and 80s and youth culture in America, explaining that the actual situation of youth in such groups is more fluid and ambiguous than radical and conservative positions claim they are:

> What is significant for the culture at large is going on within the youth culture. The ways in which young people define themselves in relation to their peers and adult authorities illuminates as much about the conflicts implicit in their parents' aspirations as it does about the meaning of youth culture identities and styles. Instead of thinking of youth as a force for conserving or changing societal institutions, we shall look at them as people who are working their way through tensions that exist in the environing culture. (ibid., p. 3)

Since the 90s a new figure has emerged, the contemporary Hipster. Any form of countercultural tendency works its way through the tensions of society and contains themes of conflict with the values of society at large as Schwartz (ibid.) described. More recent studies on counter- and subcultures will help position the contemporary Hipster idealtype as it has been defined in literature so far.

In a more recent approach, Kipnis (2001) explains in his article on countercultures and subcultures that student subcultures and counterculture have a lot in common in wealthy, western nations. In his text he tries to clarify the differences between the concepts of counterculture in contrast to student resistance, or polarised student subcultures. Kipnis defines student subcultures as student groupings formed around particular expressive values, while he defines countercultures as subcultures whose expressive values critically dismiss values of a specific kind. While Kipnis names school countercultures as ones that dismiss school and academic values, Hipsters would counter other societal and political principles that influence their social reality, more specifically consumerism and capitalism (3).

Just over a decade ago Marciniak (2008) describes counterculture in the context of humour and politics in a greater sense. He explains that while the term counterculture is often used in a tiresome way, with many thinking merely of a generalised, ambiguous and commercialised term for cliché groups, such as hippies and Woodstock, it is in fact closely associated with contemporary pop culture and lip service to drugs and sexual liberation (ibid., p. 13). Another factor Marciniak describes is the close association between countercultures, politics and creativity, especially with regards to music. Slogans, songs and logos play an important role for the aesthetics of political activism (ibid., 16 f.).

To gain a holistic understanding of Hipsters as a group that could belong to a contemporary counterculture, it is necessary to understand the environment and dominant culture. Because hipsterism combines issues of labelling and distancing, modernity and capitalism, it makes sense to observe the milieu and ask questions from all of these philosophical and social perspectives. We need to see how they are socially embedded, which tensions characterise their environment, and how they react to stresses of society. Countercultural tendencies, however strong and radical or moderate and subtle, can function as a paradigm to understand modernity.

Hipsterism as a practice and a continuation of the practices of the Hipsters of the past, reacts to a different backdrop. The social environment for such social developments determines their meaning. How does a distancing process work in a society like this, and does this backdrop allow for the potency to actively transform, rather than conform? What are channels of engagement within the specifics of the given surrounding culture—are they political? What role does spirituality play in the dominant culture and how does it express itself in this counterculture? How is criticism expressed in such a society and when does it turn into more than just ideological, but behavioural (implicit or explicit) criticism towards norms and conformity? What do individuals and groups engage in, influence, and transform, or distance themselves from? If countercultures have a normative system that conflicts with the values of

society, the development and maintenance of these can only be understood from the starting point of the dominant culture.

Ultimately the question is whether countercultures in the classical sense cease to exist in highly individualised societies. If anything akin to a contemporary counter-culture exists, it will surely differ from all the countercultures of the past, because it has evolved in a society that is shaped strongly by individualism, distinction and distancing. In any case, this milieu can give us a unique insight about these processes.

The process of identity-building within the surrounding dominant culture can explain how personality variables and the narrative of life choices could be more than mere distinction mechanisms, but a reaction to social stress and anxieties. Because countercultures of some form exist in every society, their differences can acclaim for the development of the wider population. By understanding the environment that hipsterism developed in, we can analyse the tendencies specific to the development of society beyond modernity, that offers a deeper understanding of western and central European culture.

1.3   Research So Far

An early academic perspective on contemporary hipsterism is offered by the anthropologist Daniel Rosenblatt (2013) who in an article analyses the success an extremely popular book "Stuff White People Like". The book describes a variety of cultural practices and tastes, such as engaging in religions that your parents don't belong to, or buying organic food at farmers' markets. Rosenblatt (ibid.) attempts to define the class of people described in this book and explains that there is a new type of class workers in the various culture industries, such as artists, writers, journalists, people in advertising or entertainment etc. He defines this class as having work that shapes culture. While Rosenblatt (ibid.) does not go into detail about the hipster ascription and how it is used, he claims it is an obvious fact that a lot of what is described in the book "Stuff White People Like" is about the taste of what we call "Hipsters", but the whole phenomena of Hipsters needs to be understood within the cultural history of the middle class. Rosenblatt associates Hipsters with casual, nonconformist, diversity-loving, creative individuals.

Hipsters are often also mentioned in the context of gentrification (Lin, 2019), meaning the process of young, affluent and artistic individuals moving to working class areas and increasing the areas desirabilty and thus prices.

Generally, Hipsters are often associated with art, culture and aesthetics, but also mentioned in the context of sustainability and glocal considerations. Often the context in which Hipsters are mentioned is consumption. In an anthology about

consumption of food and specifically eating out, Joe Hardin (2016) mentions two fundamental ideologies of hipsterism: sustainability and a glocal perspective (ibid., p. 45).

Attempts to capture this contradictory and volatile phenomenon have so far been mainly limited to conceptual considerations rather than empirical field work. There are some portrayals of Hipsters as thoughtful, reflective individuals, concerned with their environment and sustainabilty, but others that reduce them to affluent millenials whose main concern is self-fulfillment and finding a creative job.

In 2009 a conference took place in New York under the title "What was the hipster? A Sociological Investigation". The conference was organised by *n+1* magazine. Various writers and journalists (what Greif calls a idiosyncratic group with collective knowledge (Greif, 2010b, p. viii)) were invited to discuss and debate the theme of hipsterism. The script of the discussion, the conclusions and essays submitted in the context of this conference were published as the first work on the subject of hipsterism.

As Mark Greif (ibid.), the main editor of the book and co-editor of *n+1* magazine emphasised, it is truly difficult to analyse a subcultural formation while it is still taking form (ibid., p. viii). He admits that this culture is one that is still forming, so the title of the conference and book "What *was* the Hipster?" are somewhat misleading. He claims that hipsterism is the dangerous thing that can happen to middle class whites, if they focus on struggles for own pleasure and luxury, instead of asking why their kind of people are entitled to these and who might suffer on the other side (ibid., p. xvii). Another definition he offers is that hipsterism is a specific type of subculture that is generated under neoliberalism, as we live in a society that privatises goods and causes an upward distribution of wealth (ibid., p. xvii).

Greif (ibid.) offers many initial attempts at a definition, which can be helpful to analyse the picture of society has of hipsterism today. All the articles in Greif's book rise questions that have yet to be answered, but are significant starting points of a debate on hipsterism. He claims that Hipsters must belong to middle class whites, which one could define as a specific social and economic class.

Bourdieu (2012)'s work on lifestyle and distinction can be a helpful tool to analyse the standing of Hipsters and whether their common features can be attributed to one specific class. Their constant renegotiation with society and the perpetual distinction from any groups or categories could contradict such a notion.

Greif (2010b) raises the interesting theory that Hipsters could be a feature exclusive to neoliberalism. The analysis of hipsterism in context with a new spirit of capitalism could determine this theory. If so, structures of neoliberal consumption and principles must be integral to hipsterism. If neoliberal structures are essen-

tial and rudimentary to the trend, the consequence of their actions must accord to neoliberal thought.

Greif claims that hipsterism is a new form of subculture, without the radicalism of subcultures as they have shown before (e.g, Punks, Grunge). According to Greif they have abandoned the claims of counterculture, while merely retaining the "coolness" of subcultures (ibid., p. xvii). The question that rises here is whether the unquestionability of neoliberal and capitalist society lead to this detachment of serious political reaction. In a sense, an analysis of hipsterism could demonstrate that underlying problems and structures of society have become self-evident and unquestionable to all subcultural groups in modernity and therefore they have detached themselves from any political reaction.

In a symposium during the conference Greif (ibid.) explains that hipsterism has developed from the 1990s onwards starting in Chicagos Wicker Park, as a movement originally known as "neo-bohemia", a culture of artists working primarily in bars, cafés and clubs. He also mentions the influence of the '90s culture of Indie. Greif claims that since the 1980s a "subculturalisation" of consumer capitalism has taken place, resulting from a diffusion of the ethos of Punk. So while contemporary hipsterism developed out of many youth subcultures, which have tried to remain independent from—or at least alternative to—consumer culture, they cannot be considered a real subculture and have been destroyed by the circumstances of society (ibid., pp. 5–6). He does not explain what means have destroyed the Hipsters' intention of staying independent of consumerism, but likely the pattern of consumerism itself as described by Bauman (2009).

Concerning the historic origin of the term hipsterism, Greif puts forward the notion of race. He explains that the first mention of a Hipster was a black subcultural figure of the 1940s, then turning into a white subcultural figure in the 1950s, defined by a desire of whites to detach themselves from whiteness and achieve the attributes of black Americans that seemed exotic to them (Greif, 2010b, p. 7). This corresponds to the description of Mailer (1957) mentioned above in the context of the historical background of hipsterism 1.2.

In various definitions, Greif offers possible descriptions of a Hipster, the first of which is closely associated to what he calls "nostalgic suburban whiteness" (Greif, 2010b, p. 10). This prototype of a Hipster fetishises the rebelliousness, violence and instinctiveness of the lower suburban middle-class. Greif associates Hipsters with whiteness, but as Rosenblatt (2013) describes in his anthropological article on the habits, likes and dislikes of specific groups of people, it is important to challenge the theoretical frames of thought we use to think about race and class. Rosenblatt (ibid.) argues that often a *racing* of class takes place, which shows that race is closely intertwined with class in the United States and that a competitive

consumerism saturates all aspects of life. As such, the concept of race will not play a large role in my study of hipsterism. We will rather look at the differences in cultural consumption, religion and language that comprise the neighbourhood identified.

Class plays an important role for Hipsters in Greif (2010b)'s definition. As he goes on to describe two further possible definitions, he explains that one can also associate hipsterism merely by people who belong to hipster culture, which he defines as a radicalisation and aestheticisation of the mode of pastiche. As this mode of creating art includes immitating others this can be related to classic fashion behaviour according to Simmel (1957). He does not further explain what determines hipster culture specifically, and the explanation he gives does not define Hipsters' existence as a sociologically identifiable social form.

His last possible definition is based on modes of consumption. In reference to Tom Frank's notion of *rebel consumerism*, Greif explains that a Hipster is by this definition someone who does not create art or artistic fashion, but merely consumes it in the "right" and "hip" way (Greif, 2010b, p. 12). This definition can be closely linked to Bourdieu's theory of taste and distinction, in the sense that choosing hipster clothing, listening to hipster music, and having the hipster taste in food, is seen as a form of art and difficult to achieve. Greif explains that this radicalisation of the display of taste, especially being avant-garde and picking up trends and hipster fashion items and habits before anyone else has, stems from the new form of capitalism, where it is extremely hard to pick up tiny changes in consumer distinction before everyone else, since mass media, such as the internet, makes it very hard to keep these developments hidden.

This mode of distinction can be especially interesting to study as a paradigm for identity in modern society. It can be associated to the notion of individualisation as a task and the fluidity of modernity in the the sense that Hipsters do not rely on a firm identity, but rather renegotiate themselves in the context of the society at large by constant distinction. In reference to Giddens (1991) and Bauman (2001) we will explore this in the next chapters.

Clayton, another contributor to the symposium, argues however that purchasing power has very little to do with the Hipster when observed as a global phenomenon. By example of the Mexican Hipster, he explains that he only realised through accumulation what the signs of Mexican Hipsterism were. As an American, he did not detect the Hipsters, because they looked different than the ones he knew from home, with influences of the retro-coolness of the '70s (Clayton, 2010, p. 25). He goes on to explain that Northern European Hipsters, as well as those from Dubai for example, that have more purchasing power, look similar, while those from less affluent societies look different. However, it is still possible to detect them (ibid., p. 28).

Unfortunately Clayton does not offer any explanation or indicators of how to detect Hipsters apart from what they are dressed in, which would be an accumulation of randomly exchangeable signs in the sense of Georg Simmel (1957)'s fashion style. The only information we can gather from this, is that for Clayton it is not necessary for a Hipster to be part of a very affluent western society. The question he brings up with his theory, is whether the signs of hipsterism are randomly exchangeable because they are merely following a commercial fashion that is founded in setting trends that others follow, or whether these signs are interchangeable because they are founded in constant distinction and renegotiation of individuality that bases on ideals. These ideals could even be politically intended. This question can only be answered by participant observation of everyday practices and of the self-constitution of Hipsters.

According to Clayton, Hipsters are often associated with negative movements in society, such as gentrification, where Hipsters move to more urban and ethnic neighbourhoods and make these more popular, while also more expensive to live in. He criticises that other groups that are more neutral and less polarising than the Hipster, do not have to own up to this claim (Clayton, 2010, p. 29).

Horning (2010), who also contributed to this collection, advocates the theory that it is only outsider groups that make it possible for new forms of cultural capital to develop (ibid., p. 79). He explains that Hipsters are a type of "permanent cultural middleman" in mediated late capitalism. They sell out alternative sources of social power that are originally developed by outsider groups. These outsider groups look for new modes of unification, pride, power and resistance through social expression, much like today's Hipsters' predecessor, the black Hipster from the '50s (ibid.). According to Horning, Hipsters could merely be a group that takes these social expressions from outsider groups to appropriate new cultural capital forms and delivers them to the mainstream media, thereby stripping the glory, resistance and unification from these outsiders (ibid.). Horning goes on to say that there is no way we can objectively find out, as the distance to hipsterism is not given. As soon as researchers are concerned enough to deal with this matter, to analyse and discuss it, they are already in the continuum of hipsterism and trying to rid themselves of the danger of being called hipster themselves (ibid., pp. 80–81). He ultimatley implicitely reduces the definition of Hipsters to everyone taking part at the symposium. If you are interested in art, Hipsters, culture and events of such kind, you are Hipster. My respondents, however, would disagree. Negotiations of hipsterism show that there are right and wrong ways of being hipster, mostly related to authenticity, this will be explored in 3. However, the necessary distance that Horning describes is missing, can be established by a thorough methodology, including vigilant self-reflection that enriches the data, and an inductive approach. Instead

of observing Hipsters as an ideal type, one can observe the cultural practices that actually occur. Apart from various forms of consumption, the denial of the label Hipster is one of these practices.

The thoughts on hipsterism in this anthology of ideas collected by Greif interpret hipsterism as a practice of consumption and fashion. While western affluence does not necessarily play an immense role, following all of these lines of thought, Hipsters are defined as a part of mainstream capitalism with mass products and marketing. With regard to Bourdieu, one could define them as middle and upper class youth, affluent with economic, social and cultural capital. With regard to Simmel (1957), we can qualify all symbols of distinction as randomly exchangeable, as the global comparison according to Clayton (2010) shows. All in all, Hipsters could demonstrate the development of a subculture under neoliberal circumstances.

Some of the questions brought up start a debate on hipsterism that can be answered by fieldwork, which does not only capture the medial attention of hipsterism, but observes the everyday practices of those active in this milieu and their self-constitution.

Whether they question their entitlement to the luxuries brought forth by capitalism, whether their practices are associated with their class, and whether neoliberal consumption patterns are integral to hipsterism, are questions that can be answered in the analysis of hipsterism in the light of neoliberal tendencies in society. Greif's theory that consumer culture has destroyed the Hipsters' intention of staying independent from consumerism must be observed in light of Bauman's theories on consumer culture. Furthermore the way in which premises of society can disable subcultures is of interest here.

As mentioned before, another interesting aspect is whether hipsterism is merely a consumption of commercial fashion. As Greif (2010b) describes, one could interpret the Hipster as a highly fashionable individual—in the sense of Georg Simmel—who possesses the ability to consume the "right" and "hip" way. My initial observations have shown however, that it appears hipsterism contains more than this. If we observe that this phenomenon only consists of interchangeable signs of fashion, then Greif could be right.

Youth researcher Philipp Ikrath (2015) attempts a defintion of the Hipster as a subculture and idealtype from a subjective point of view. He starts with a definition based on fashion symbols and creativity that I assume stem from his reading of media discourse on the subject. Ikrath's understanding of Hipsters is a specific demographic, for example male, of a high class, highly educated and elitist. It is difficult to comprehend how he draws these conclusion that are the premise of his book. However, he argues that because they are highly influential on the rest of society, because of their specific demographic, it is interesting and important to

observe them. He makes explicit that he assumes the Hipster exists as a sociologically identifiable form, even though he admits it maybe does not, for the sake of exploring the phenomenon. This is the opposite of the approach I have taken in my research. By assuming the Hipster does not exist, I can rid myself of assumptions of the discourse that dictate the attributes of the Hipster, and observe what is happening in those spaces that are labelled as hipster from within. Then the practices that are actually happening in their entirety—the lifestyles, the modes of consumption and cultural practices—can be observed and a true inductive approach.

An interesting hypothesis that Ikrath (ibid.) puts forward is that Hipsters portray extreme individualism under the danger of a risk society (Beck, 1992) and relates it thus to (Mailer, 1957)'s definition under different circumstances. The dangers and fears of contemporary Hipsters are not as immediate, they will likely not experience the worst consequences of climate change personally. He also explores the image of the Hipster as an apolitical, ironic individual and explains that his attitude should be quite political because of this demographic. However, the Hipster is portrayed as resigned from and bored of politics. All in all, Philipp Ikraths image of the Hipster is exploring it from a youth researchers perspective. He puts forward an ethnography of the Hipster based on his impressions from the discourse.

Examined through the lens of art history Wes Hill (2017) describes that Hipsters express a creative hype of neoliberalism. This can be related to Reckwitz (2014)' creativity dispositive (see chapter 3). Hill (2017) explains that Hipsters reappeared in the 2000s and portray a generic form of individualism that has become an insult. The fact that it has become an insult makes it harder for those expressing it, because it gives the impression they are deflecting and being inauthentic.

> My intuition is that the logic of the hipster entails more than just a style connected to middle- and upper-class privilege. Rather, it is a more complex mode of disidentification that embodies the very dynamics of distinction, its paradoxical logic found just as easily in the critical review or sociological study, wherever an outside status is intimated in matters of discerning the cultural value of alternative, creative, innovative or ethical things.(ibid., p. 41)

None of the works above base on empirical ethnographic research or participant observation in neigbourhoods labelled as hipster.

Questions that remain unanswered by any exploration so far is whether hipsterism shows integrated patterns of neoliberal thought and whether it expresses in the hipster self-narrative. Is there no political reaction within hipsterism, even though Hipsters are often negatively portrayed as "warriors for social justice" in popular media platforms? What different cultures and classes does the social milieu engage with, if any? Are the symbols of hipsterism constantly changing because of fashion

and distinction from the masses, or are there ideals behind the distinction that are related to their reading of society and can thus be understood as countercultural?

Completely disregarded in any of these analyses is the question: what is the meaning of the denial of the Hipster label? Why does this deflection, that Hill (2017) so aptly describes, happen? In no time in history has a counterculture or counter group, vehemently denied being mainstream, but still denied being labelled as such.

In an attempt to truly explore this phenomenon, I chose a purely inductive approach, by entering the space whilst assuming Hipsters did not exist. It was observed in reference to Bourdieu (2012) as a social milieu. The practices associated with Hipsters and the narratives of individuals in this social milieu will clarify stratification processes through lifestyle and everyday practice. Based on my initial observations and the questions I had, I decided to shed light on hipsterism from different theoretical perspectives: modernity, consumption and capitalism.

1.4 Backdrop of Hipsterism Today—A Theoretical Framework

In the following sections we will set the framework for the analysis of the phenomenon of hipsterism. Hipsterism involves defining cultural practices of distancing and denying labels. In the context of theories of modernity, this expresses tensions and pressure to position oneself in a liquid society. Also lifestyle studies and narratives of the self have exceeding importance in positioning in modernity.

As mentioned before, hipsterism is closely associated to consumption, at times as a mere fashion practice, at times also ethically and consciously. However, respondents deny not just the label, but also criticise consumption itself. As such, it is reasonable to include consumption theories in the framework of studying hipsterism.

Often described as young creative professionals, hipster practice may or may not be infused with a spirit of capitalism. This would imply the milieu criticising capitalism, but at the same time stabilising it through there actions. It will be helpful to shed the light of modern theories of capitalism on this phenomenon.

1.4.1 Hipsterism as Modernity

Recent developments, especially the spread of the internet since the 1970s, the increase of mass communication, mobilisation, digitalisation, and fragmentation of

the elements of life, led to what Bauman (2015) called liquid modernity. This has had immense influences on the construction of identity and the process of positioning oneself in this age. Liquid modernity is the result of a shift from 'solid' societies where individuals try to establish order and stability, to a 'liquid' society in which the highest value is the flexibility and changeability of networks, order and positioning. Even those stable orientation points that individuals could adhere to quite loosely in the past, have slowly vanished, leaving the identity and decision-making entirely up to a free set of personal norms, that are most importantly flexible and up for change. Bauman (ibid.) compares modernisation to a psychological disease, in which this renegotiation and change becomes a compulsive obsessive disorder. There is no ideal state to aspire to.

Clearly, however imperfect their fantasy was, the countercultures of the past were striving towards some ideally imagined state of society, or of themselves. The Beats wished for freedom from conformity and the ability to express their tenderheartedness, to create a holy and spiritual experience of life, an independent concept of "heaven" on the margins of society. Before they were appropriated by the mechanisms of capitalist culture, the Hippies yearned for a state of perfect individualism: above all they rebelled against a planned, authoritarian way of life. Ideally every individual would be responsible to develop their expression of themselves, to build an authentic self and demonstrate a unique personality. Various countercultures throughout history have had an idealistic aim. Liquid modernity however, according to Bauman (ibid.), does not lend itself to a state of ideal, however far away. The way Bauman describes modernity, the act of modernisation is embedded into everyday life, and has no end or ideal state. Whilst in the past "being modern" meant striving to renew and perfect, in contemporary society "being modern" is a state of modernisation and constant renewal.

In Bauman's analysis of the present nature of society that hipsterism emerges in, he describes the impacts of a society in which social movement is less constrained and social networks are disintegrating, for example through the speed, elusiveness, and physical independence of electronic signals. Life patterns are no longer given, according to Bauman (2015), but rather shaped and reshaped through individual's life choices.

Giddens (1991) also describes this new flexibility. He emphasises lifestyle choices as a feature exclusive to modernity. The existence of lifestyles imply choice and various options. It means that patterns of choices are adopted at a certain stage of life, rather than being handed down from earlier generations. The notion of lifestyle according to Giddens includes habits of dress, eating, acting, milieux, practices etc. routinised and incorporated into self-identity. Giddens associates lifestyle not merely with consumption, even though it may seem that way at first. He explains that

lifestyle is attributed to character and the choice of decisions within a lifestyle represent a cluster of habits and orientations. This also allows others to detect if things are "off" or "out of character" (ibid., 81 f.). He further explains that different lifestyle variations between groups are elementary structuring features of stratification and not only the results of class differences (ibid., p. 82).

According to Giddens, in a modern world of various options and choice, strategic life-planning has become important. Giddens explains that through the variety of choices, we have developed a politics of life decisions. These decisions affect self-identity, while self-identity in modernity is a reflexive achievement. As a pattern of living, self-identity is shaped, altered and reflexively sustained in the course of life. Preparing a biography in the sense of planned future actions is a conclusion of post-traditional life forms (ibid., p. 85).

Giddens (ibid.) claims that lifestyle choices are not just a part of day-to-day life, but rather form an institutional setting which helps the social agent shape his actions. Lifestyle seems to give everyday practices consistency and even predictability.

Countercultures in a liquid society have not yet been seen before and therefore we have such difficulty objectifying and defining them.

In a society in which everyones' choices are elements of developing a unique self, the story of who they are, and where the ultimate norm of society is developing an own, unique and authentic narrative of how you make your choices, what does a counterculture look like? If countercultures are based on norms and values that are opposed to those of the dominant society, but in contemporary society there is a myth of uniqueness, it is difficult to define any counter group to society. Hipsterism could reflect practices of constant distinction and renogotiation of identites, but with the addition that their core values and behaviour express attempts to counter their reading of society. Ultimately we will have to observe what they are doing (3) and why (4).

Hipsterism appears to demonstrate the fluidity of modernity in the sense of Bauman (2015), especially in terms of a globalised, digitalised society. Bauman describes that modern society exists in a constant state of individualisation and that individuals lives consist of daily renegotiation of their relationship to the society. These individualisation processes turn the identity into an activity. Thus, much like we can observe in hipsterism, rather than basing life choices on an identity—or character that can change, as Giddens (1991) describes in his work on the self-identity in the modern age—fluid society causes individuals to renegotiate their relationship to the network of society and reshape their lives as such, in a constant state of individualisation as a task.

This notion of the authentic self in a constant state of *becoming* rather than actually *being*, is discernible in hipsterism. While the first and immediate sign

of hipsterism is clothing, it is associated with certain ideology and mind set and criticism towards consumerism, capitalism, the upward distribution of wealth, the neoliberal tendencies in society, etc. I have observed the distinction being made between so-called want-to-be Hipsters, who merely dress a specific way and the real Hipsters, who try to be unconventional, claim a critical stance towards society, are concerned with the environment and the issues of a throw-away-society, and question the distribution of wealth. This is especially interesting in the context of Bauman's claims in Liquid Modernity Bauman (2015).

The label Hipster is shoved back and forth, in demonstration of this liquidness, never meaning a static thing or specific elements, but used first and foremost as an (albeit not completely empty) elastic and fickle category.

As such it makes most sense to look at the practices associated with this notion that can be summed up as the practices of hipsterism. These can be behaviourally associated with a counterculture, as they include norms, do's and don'ts of hipsterism, that are opposed to some elements of society that cause stress. The practices can be the expression of norms and values that construct identities on the one hand and show how these identities are built by distancing in modern societies. On the other hand, they also exemplify the stress of society at large, as a reaction to the anxieties caused by it.

In the following chapter 3, we will analyse the data and explore how hipsterism shows us a mode of identity, like unto a magnifying glass. We will determine the subject of research and set the references to the sociological literature that is relevant to western affluent society. Hipsterism will emerge as a space marked by contradictions caused by the following circumstances of modernity.

1.4.2   Hipsterism as Consumption

Philosopher Georg Simmel (1957) explains that an individual's fashion style is of dual nature, in the sense that it consists of two different—while complementary—processes. There is a social aspect, concerning blending and merging on the one hand, and an individual differentiating aspect on the other. Simmel explains that all life forms have a tendency to social equalisation in turn with individual differentiation. Fashion is a good example of how these two tendencies are merged together in a unified action.

In a social sense of belonging, fashion is influenced by imitation, psychological heredity and the transformation of group life into individual life. The individuals are reassured that they are not alone, and feel a strong sense of belonging. Simmel (ibid.) explains that this has to do with practicality and it enables individuals to act

without having to think every single decision through. They are also freed from the pain and agony of choice. By the repetition and imitation of actions, they not only acting in concert, but also has a strong foundation—a vessel of social content (ibid., p. 10).

Conversely, there is individual differentiation, in which the individuals aim to stand out and be special, setting themselves apart from the rest of society, usually by adhering to a specific group. He defines fashion as an expression of this twofold desire of humans: imitation as well as the tendency to differentiate by changing the contents. He explains that the fashion of the higher classes has to be different than that of the lower classes. As soon as the fashion of the lower classes starts to adjust and match up to that of the higher classes, the fashion of the higher classes must change by definition. Changing fashion can only exist, when there are different classes to belong to and respectively to differentiate from.

Concerning the distinctive function of fashion, Simmel (ibid., 13 ff.) emphasises its hunting character: While lower classes imitate and *hunt* the fashion of the higher classes, the higher classes try to *escape*, by constantly changing and distinguishing their fashion. The monetary economy accelerates this process, because it is merely money that is needed to accomplish equality with the higher classes. As money is accessible to all, the process of hunting and escaping speeds up immensely. According to Simmel, fashion is more than just buying the right goods, but there are also actions and practices that can be fashionable.

Concerning the speeding up of the chase of fashion as Simmel describes it here, it is interesting to find out whether it is possible to buy yourself access to hipster spaces. Hipsterism is associated with cultural capital and fashion, and is also very much a culture of access, so the strategies used by the resondents and by the researcher herself to enter the field in the participation observation must be closely observed. They will answer the question whether it is possible to gain access by consuming the right or hip way. This will be explored in chapter 3.4.

Bauman (2009) explains that while consumption is and always has been an integral, continuous and practised part of society, there has been a development in recent history that has caused what he calls consumerism. He distinguishes consumerism from mere consumption by stating that this process has caused consumption to be the foundation not only of the economy, but of the society and the relationships between people in general. When consumption is not merely important in a society, but the raison d'être, that controls all the desires, wants, yearnings and needs, then we can speak of a consumeristic society according to Bauman (ibid., 37 f.).

Bauman (ibid.) offers three concepts to explain the subjectivity of consumers, how consumers fit into society as a whole, as well as the interaction between one another. He differentiates three ideal types, the first of which is consumerism, which

he defines as a type of social arrangement that results from everyday, continuous, permanent, "neutral" human wishes, desires, and longings that result in the principal drive and operating force of society. He describes this as a force that coordinates systemic reproduction, societal integration, social stratification, and the formation of individuals. Furthermore this process is important in the development of the individual and group self-identification and in the choices concerning the life politics of an individual. He contrasts this to consumption, by stating that the consumption is associated with the activities of an individual, while consumerism is an attribute of society as a whole. For consumerism to take place, the yearning and longings of the individuals have to be estranged from the individual as such and instead recycled and reified to an external force. (Bauman, 2009, 41)

Bauman (ibid., 61 ff.) explains that the characteristic value of consumerist society is happiness. It is a promise of consumerism, that one can attain happiness and content in the here and now. Growing consumption claims the status of making individuals happier, while never ending. This means that consumption has to be the state in which each individual finds him or herself in. In this context he introduces the unfulfilled desire as the main motivation in consumer society.

The second ideal type he speaks about is the society of consumers, in which he explains that the individuals are connected to each other in society mainly through their role as consumers. This means that by consuming they invest not only in their individuality, by "becoming" a person, but also in their social membership (ibid., 71 ff.). Festivals are a good example Bauman uses to substantiate his theory: these offer the chance to enjoy individual freedom, while having a feeling of fellowship with the others that are also consuming (ibid., p. 100). In this respect, one can assume that the society of consumers is not a cohesive whole, but rather merely a group of random individuals, that have consumption in common. Especially in regard to fashion and trends, Bauman explains that it is not only the pursuit of happiness that leads to consumption in such a society, but there is also a necessity for it. Consumer goods have become a means to fulfil the obligation of the development of an individual identity (ibid., p. 81).

The third ideal type Bauman refers to is consumer culture. Bauman (ibid., 108 ff.) explains that ties in consumerist society are defined through specific consumer goods and self-identification is achieved through distinction from the masses. With the help of signs of belonging that one can buy in shops, an individual obtains his individual identity. He goes on to explain that this fashion is very temporary in consumerist society; as fashion changes so the individual must keep in pace and keep redefining and re-differentiating himor herself. In order to sustain this kind of approval a lot of effort is necessary. One has to spend money constantly and has the responsibility towards oneself to make the "right" decision for one's identity (ibid., 122 ff.).

This can be associated with Simmel's definition of fashion, in which the individual also shows his belonging to a group and the distinction from other groups through his clothing and style, which he generally changes then, when it becomes unfashionable or when the masses adapt this specific item or style in general.

Ultimately, it can be assumed that hipsterism demonstrates this development of society. This perspective will help identify if hipsterism has potential to seriously counter contemporary culture, not inspite the fact that it is closely related to fashion, but rather *because* it has so much to do with consumption.

1.4.3 Hipster Capitalism

One of the very interesting dynamics in modern capitalistic societies is that despite a great deal of criticism, the individuals' participation and engagement remains stable. The societal conditions being criticised are simultaneously being reproduced with surprising ease. The historical development of critique and capitalism over the last decades provides very interesting explanations for this. Boltanski et al. (2018) describe all these developments aptly; from the more efficient and subtle form of exploitation through a new and updated type of entrepreneur—a dressed down, laid back, casual, fun and "empowering" individual—to a freedom and autonomy of workers that comes at the cost of security and ease.

The late 60s to the 80s were marked by social movements, active trade unions, security-enhancing social legislation, etc; while product quality and productivity gains decreased. According to Boltanski et al. (2005) the employers' and corporate leaders' inability to control the labour force contributed greatly to the decrease of productivity and product quality.

Since the 80s however, there is an absence of social movements. While Boltanski et al. (ibid.) fail to mention some more recent movements—such as Occupy—they describe quite aptly that the unions are disoriented and merely reactive, employment relationships are increasingly precarious and there is greater disparity in incomes. They describe that while there was a great reduction in strikes and social conflicts, the quality of goods and productivity have increased.

Trying to find explanations for this development, they started an investigative enquiry aiming

> [...] to understand the waning critique over the last fifteen years, and its corollary:
> the currently dominant fatalism, whether recent changes are presented as inevitable
> but ultimately beneficial mutations, or as the product of systematic constraints whose

results are never more disastrous, but without it being possible to predict a change in trends (Boltanski et al., 2018, p. IV).

By analysing the management discourse of the 90s and the various forms of critique, they try to find explanations for this development.

Boltanski and Chiapello argue that a new spirit of capitalism has emerged. They understand this spirit as an ideology that justifies commitment to capitalism. They explain that capitalism in modernity possesses the unique capacity to integrate its critiques not only by absorbing them, but also by gaining ideological justifications from them. The origin of the current ineffective criticism developed from a new artistic critique of the late 60s, attacking capitalism for its inflexibility, lack of artistic expression etc. According to Chiapello and Boltanski, the

> [...] changes in the spirit of capitalism has revealed a major re-organisation in dominant value systems [...] this provides a very interesting explanation for the absence of any critical resistance throughout the 1980s, and at least until the mid-1990s, to the capitalist sphere. If we consider that criticisms are usually made in the name of values that are deemed to have been betrayed by the capitalist process, any major transformation of a value system serving as a justification for a capitalist world is apt, at least temporarily, to disorient critical activities. (Boltanski et al., 2005, p. 162)

The spirit of capitalism as described by Chiapello and Boltanski is an ideology in which people's commitment to capitalism becomes unquestionable and is shaped by a stable set of arguments that stem from economic theory. According to Boltanski et al. (ibid.), these arguments are too general in nature and too static over time to be deconstructed. They do not take into consideration the various and unique constellations of an individual's life and how they might have to take on a particular kind of lifestyle or profession in order to be able to benefit well from these three arguments. Furthermore these very general arguments cannot enable individuals to react to any of their own personal circumstantial criticisms or challenges (ibid., p. 163).

Interestingly, capitalism itself, as they explain, has no moral foundation. It requires commitment from very many people, even though only very few actually profit or benefit substantially. So the quality of the commitment itself cannot only come from economic benefits, because many of the people shy away from actually adopting the kind of lifestyle that would make them benefit substantially from the said system. Many will not want to get involved, because the risk is high and the realistic attainment of major success seems unlikely. Managers and entrepreneurs are expected to adopt lifestyles, that some even find very unattractive. Many indi-

viduals also end up developing adverse feelings towards taking those risks to be successful.

What Boltanski et al. (ibid.) argue is that the criticism is actually the catalyst for the changes in the spirit of capitalism and thus provides its morality, as capitalism itself is amoral. The idea that it is somehow oriented towards the common good is one of the main factors in peoples commitment thereto. Capitalism's only innate capacity is that of accumulation. So its morality is actually added through its enemies and what they incorporate to enhance justice. These "justice-enhancing mechanisms", as Boltanski and Chiapello name them, are the road to capitalism's salvation and thus the moral foundation that it lacks, is developed. This means that capitalism is unique in its capacity to turn criticism into justification thereof, and these justifications can be understood as the current spirit of capitalism, the ideology to commit.

They refer to three dimensions that have played a particular role in providing the arguments for capitalism that have led to this spirit. The first aspect is the excitement through the involvement in capitalism, which stem from the liberation it seems to provide. An ideal is generated in which capitalism helps individuals to blossom and succeed. The second aspect is the notion of security, and the argument that capitalism offers a safety net for all those involved—which is of course especially relevant for those families with children. Ultimately, further arguments invoke the idea of fairness, justice and how capitalism contributes to the common good (Boltanski et al., 2005, p. 164).

This spirit is the breeding ground for a new kind of counterculture. If all serious critical activity is disoriented, how are individuals seeking and imagining appropriate forms of civic engagement? How does the framework of this spirit of capitalism influence the way countercultural values of society develop? How does the avant-garde react to this posed framework? If individuals are still seeking appropriate forms to criticise and to engage, hoping to transform some elements of capitalist society that they find critical, how does this develop under such circumstances? How is hipsterism framed and constricted by these contradictions of capitalism? Answering such questions through fieldwork can tell us not only about how the spirit has developed, but how it expresses itself in action. As the avant-garde's reaction to such entanglements, hipsterism can help us understand more deeply the spirit of capitalism in itself and its influence on behaviour. An analysis can ultimately answer the question, whether hipsterism offers forms of engagement that challenge the capitalist framework itself, or whether it merely reproduces the given order, stabilising it through the criticism itself, the way Boltanski and Chiapello describe. Understanding hipsterism may confirm, complement or even contradict the theory of the new spirit of capitalism, as the return of the hipster is historically simultaneous with the current wave of the spirit of capitalism that Boltanski and Chiapello describe.

In this context it is fundamental to look at the values that define this current—the third—spirit of capitalism that Boltanski and Chiapello describe. They do this by comparing the spirits of the end of the 19th century, with those of the second spirit from the 40s to the 70s, and then ultimately the contemporary spirit which has existed since the 80s. They compare various factors, such as the forms of capital accumulation process, the excitement and where it stems from, the fairness that it implies, and the security which it seems to provide. One very interesting example is job security, which was very important in the 60s as well as today. However in the 60s it involved paternalism, a high importance of personal relationships and personal property. Now job security is reframed through the concept of employability. This employability re-assigns the job of gaining and maintaining security to the individual worker, who develops their own employability as they gain experience. Another interesting example is the argument of fairness in capitalism. While the first spirit of capitalism at the end of the 19th century included a mix of domestic and market fairness, it moved to a meritocracy valuing effectiveness during the period of the 40s to the 70s. Currently there is much more emphasis on innovation and creativity, as well as permanent change. This can be seen as a new form of meritocracy valuing mobility and the ability to nourish networks. (ibid., p. 166)

The notion of fairness characterises the emergence of a new value system, that justifies this commitment to capitalism. A theoretical construct that has helped explain notions of fairness as they exist in different societal contexts was established by Boltanski and Thévenot as a "justificatory regime". These regimes based on different approaches, filters and categorisation. Boltanski and Chiapello's study showed that one can recognise a new justificatory regime that is increasingly influential. This regime is different from all those of the past and should thus be observed in hipsterism too. Hipsterism can function as a prism for understanding the new spirit of capitalism, by demonstrating these justifications and how they have developed since the 2000s. This new justificatory regime emphasises activity, project initiation, the ability to get involved, adaptability and flexibility. Furthermore, emphasis on the ability to communicate with others and the ability to generate enthusiasm. An important factor is that within this regime, which they call the "project-oriented justificatory regime", is that the readiness to sacrifice all that curtail one's availability and the readiness to give up lifelong plans, is seen as a investment that is necessary to become 'great'. If one does not wish to sacrifice these, one can stay a 'small' person, and heighten one's employability and trustworthiness, through enthusiasm for project work. The 'great' persons help with this through their ability to spread the benefits of social connections and to generate enthusiasm. (ibid., pp. 168–169)

Hipsterism could possibly be a collection of 'great' practices that demonstrates the effect of these values on the younger generation of adults in this context.

Boltanski and Chiapello conclude that the changes in the types of organisations have been closely accompanied by changes in values for the assessment of people, things and situations and changed behavioural norms. In this re-ordering changes have not only been made to the values themselves, but of course also in the mechanisms that are intended to ensure fairness, and ultimately the testing systems of fairness have changed. (Boltanski et al., 2005, p. 171)

In trying to find why and how this reorganisation of values and change of assessment system took place, they looked at France between 1968 and 1995. Fundamental here is how criticism functions within the system. They identified two different types of criticism that have developed during the 19th century. The first is a social criticism that dives into the root challenges of capitalism. It is an assessment of the inequality and exploitation in capitalism and values solidarity rather than individualism. The second form of criticism developed in small artistic and intellectual circles in the 60s, criticised oppression, mass culture, standardisation and pervasive commodification. Furthermore the artistic critique demanded self-management, enhanced personal autonomy, and more creativity. At the height of criticism in that time period, which was 1968 according to the authors, verbal criticism translated into actual waves of strike and demonstrations, and genuinely threatened to generate a major crisis for capitalism. In this time period, both artistic critique (that had been thus far only expressed in exclusive and intellectual circles) and social critique came together.

Especially the artistic critique that was somewhat new in this context was triggered through the engagement of students in the protests. There was not only a huge increase of the number of students in the 1960s, but their role in the capitalistic process of production increased. This explains how the artistic critique stepped out from the shadows. Students that took part in the protests caused this kind of criticism to move from the obscure circles of intellectuals and creatives, to gain momentum and visibility. Students possessed a high amount of cultural capital and influenced these protests in the way of artistic critique. (ibid., pp. 175–176)

As analysed by Boltanski and Chiapello, French employer organisations had two strategies to detract the 1968 crisis: the first phase from 1968 to 1973 ignored the artistic criticism and remained attentive to the social criticism. They negotiated within a collective bargaining network, and at the national level under state control and increased the country's lowest wages, decreased wage disparities and strengthened job security; as well as developing tests that were closer to the meritocratic ideal. This accounts for Boltanski and Chiapello's observation: the decrease of productivity, but the betterment of working conditions. In the second phase around 1975, the criticism remained acute and the employer organisations developed a new strategy which abandoned the established tests that were expressing social criticism. They now concentrated on the artistic criticism and started to 'improve

working conditions', a general slogan that developed in the late 70s and has been implemented until today. Addressing these artistic concerns has focused on the demand for autonomy and creativity. Many changes were made, such as smaller units with more independence, temporary work, subcontracting, outsourcing activities etc. These developments made it more difficult for social criticism which was usually voiced by labour unions, to attack and criticise the organisation of work. Without a large integrated firm to oppose, these changes disoriented the unions' attempts and confused the relationship between them and the employers. The artistic critique also fell silent, largely because those who had been criticising at that time had become satisfied with the changes and with their own position in society. (ibid.)

> The history of the years following the events of May 1968 demonstrate the real but sometimes paradoxical impact of the critique on capitalism. [...] What we have observed of the role of critique in the improvement, but also the displacements and transformations, of capitalism— which are not conducive to greater social well-being—leads us to underscore the inadequacies of critical activity, as well as the incredible flexibility for the capitalist process. This process is capable of conforming to societies with aspirations that vary greatly overtime [...] and of recuperating the ideas of those who were its enemies in a previous phase. (Boltanski et al., 2018, pp. 200–201)

Boltanski et al. (ibid.) define the first kind of criticism, the social criticism, as what is expressed in the labour movement, but it would be interesting to look at the criticism voiced within hipsterism. It is questionable, whether it can really be reduced to artistic criticism, or maybe even social criticism to some extent. It could be a new form of criticism entirely, one expressed through consumption choices and consumer pressures on the production process. Especially movements around the responsibility towards the environment and towards fellow human beings through fair trade and sustainable consumption, it could maybe express a criticism of the incessant individuality propagated in capitalism. One could even go as far as to understand this as behavioural criticism, expressed in modes of consumption, as an individual exit strategy, to not adhere to current norms. This could express counter-cultural values. If Hipsters are willing to sacrifice their own comfort and the security and autonomy granted to them by capitalism, in order to make decisions expressing values of equality and solidarity, one can see traces of the remnant of social criticism. It can express itself not just through the mode of consumption, but also in the career path and biographic decisions they make, their self narrative, and the politics of their life choices. These will be closely associated with their identity. However, the way

they go about their everyday practices will express the values that stimulate their behaviour.

To understand the verbal and behavioural expressions of criticism in hipsterism will explain the effects and the development of the new spirit of capitalism.

However, another interesting aspect is to observe the model of the laid back and down-to-earth capitalist within this scene. This entrepreneur, who very subtly or even subconsciously exploits his workers, and the Do-What-You-Love motto prevalent in hipsterism are very much interlinked. Artistic critique is based on self-expression and the ability to exist as a unique and authentic self, also expressed through the autonomy and the flexibility of your workplace. Outlook and attitude within hipsterism could be, akin to something one of these laid-back and cool entrepreneurs would say: if you manage to do something that you are very passionate about, it will not only be less like work, but also express your individual identity. To understand these notions, to "buy into" this myth, one must be of the types willing to sacrifice traditional work security and safety, ease of mind, leisure time etc. and must have a "taste" for this idea and get excited about the general possibilities that capitalism offers, in the right context.

Methodology and Methods

2

2.1   Methodology

The Hipster as an ideal type does not exist as a sociologically identifiable form, but much rather as a discursive, vague and diffuse term. It is a typological term used in social and medial discourse to describe ideal types that differ greatly across various geographic and demographic discourses, and that have subtle but significant differences in meaning. One option is to look at what these definitions have in common, which would be difficult to achieve as there are so many discourses taking place and the term itself is indefinite. The most striking observation is that the main thing these definitions have in common, is that Hipsters deny that they are Hipsters and that they live in a state of constant distinction.

My predominant experience of asking about Hipsters directly, within the social milieu associated with hipsterism, is a play with an empty signifier. Those referred to as Hipsters react with amusement and an ironic approach; or otherwise, anger and frustration. What is especially interesting in an analysis of contemporary, western society is that they seem to be a unique example of a group in a fluid society, which defines itself by distancing itself. The binding element of hipsterism is to deny that you identify with this label, this is binding by distancing that we have not seen before and therefore have such difficulty objectifying and defining.

Rather than firmly relying on the concept of an identity, their practices and general lifestyle attitude seem to base on constant distinction. Any attempt at defining Hipsters as a sociologically identifiable form is bound to, and has up to date, failed. Anyone can tell you that the "real Hipsters" are now doing very different things, than what is described in these books and articles. What exactly they are engaging in currently however, is hotly debated, in all discourses at any given time.

> Sara looks at Hannah, irritated and interrupts
> her: "Oh no, [a mutual friend] is way too
> serious to be a Hipster, he actually takes yoga
> seriously." They start a dispute on whether
> Hipsters have to do everything ironically or not,
> and how serious a Hipster should take what he's
> doing. I ask Sara about how she is constantly
> called a Hipster and whether it bothers her. She
> answers "Well, my friends mean it as a compliment
> I guess, I am not offended by it. The Hipster
> is misunderstood I think. They mean well, they
> just, I guess it's just important to them, the
> aesthetics of everything, and then people think
> they are superficial. But of course, I don't
> really know. I'm not a Hipster." Sara says the
> last sentence with a laugh. Hannah says, also
> laughing, "That's what a Hipster would say
> isn't it?" Sara shrugs and there is a moment of
> discomfort. The subject is changed.
>
> *Field Diary, Summer 2015*

This observation shows a moment of discomfort when the implicit labelling of Sara as a Hipster becomes explicit. My overwhelming experience was that the labelling is considered impolite. Those being labelled as such either feel embarrassed, angry or annoyed. Depending on their sense of humour, they laugh and ironically distance themselves from it.

There is difficulty in capturing a phenomenon that is so contested, and in this sense sociology and other sciences have either deemed it unfit for sociological analysis or merely irrelevant. In this however, sociology has failed to acknowledge the benefits of understanding such a phenomenon in a historical sense, as a tool to derive a deeper understanding of contemporary society and as such the building of identity and groups in a fluid society infused by a new spirit of capitalism.

2.1.1   Ethnographic Approach

To gain insight to the self-understanding in hipsterism, to be able to give a detailed account of the practices of everyday life, and to identify the underlying assumptions and narrative identity of the individuals, an ethnographic approach is necessary.

When analysing such a phenomenon, the struggle for individualism and the defiance against labelling and stereotyping, require creative forms of investigation. In the process of trying to understand one another, one aim is to reduce symbolic power relations that can occur in a strict interview situation. In the context of hipsterism, there is an especially high risk of asking questions that influence individuals in their answer, because the aspiration for individualism and a unique narrative of the self and authenticity are central values that structure the space. To collect data in this context, the main method of inquiry was observing everyday practices and taking part. To understand the narrative of the repondents, it made sense to allow a more natural discourse to evolve over time and in various sessions. Observations and casual and ongoing conversations with narration-generating, opening questions allowed for a naturally developed conversation on the subject of hipsterism to evolve and for my respondents themselves to recount their everyday decisions and practices, and the context they set them in.

Some casual conversation were then also followed up with narrative interviews that were held in informal settings in the spaces of hipsterism, such as the many coffeehouses in the identified area of Berlin. In these narrative interviews, it was reasonable to have a general plan of inquiry, rather than having a set of questions to ask in a specific order. Interviews were more akin to a flowing conversation, which helped reduce the influence of posed questions and power dynamics in the data.

```
Noam and I have had lots of informal chats at the
store, I have told him about my work very briefly,
but mostly our conversations have been casual
conversations about books, art, culture…I asked
if we could have a coffee outside of the store at
some point, so I could ask him more questions and
take some notes. He agrees and I offer to buy him
lunch one day. He suggests meeting at a new café
on the corner of Sonnenallee and Hobrechtstrasse.


                                Field Diary,Summer 2016
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It is important in this context that the social space of hipsterism and their community are captured holistically. Participant observation, combining direct participation, observations and introspection supplemented narrative interviews in order to understand the social action from within. Participation in the activities of hipsterism would intensify that which is not explicitly stated concerning the self-understanding of the respondents, as well as reveal contradictions that are not immediately perceptible.

Furthermore, objectified media reports can complement the participant observation and qualitative interviews by providing a more transnational perspective on this global phenomenon. In a highly individualised social group, the analysis of media can help provide consistency to the individual observations and limits of collecting qualitative data under given circumstances.

2.1.2 Emergent Design and Emerging Methods

Combining these methods can provide data on a phenomenon that can only be experienced in practice and over time. Engaging in the everyday life itself and through participatory observation it is possible to specify, improve and enhance the questions and observed practices, whilst describing the social reality of hipsterism. Working with an emergent design, including phases of reflection, was crucial to keep up with new developments.

In an emergent design the investigator collects and analyses data, identifies phenomena of interest and progressively narrows down the investigation. As the investigator is immersed in the field, it allows for a personal experience and thus rich description, understanding and introspection. While these insights are being collected, the emergent design unfolds. This results in a cyclical and flexible process that allows for more precise data to be collected and the collection of data itself to be specified.(Campbellet al., 2014)

Emerging design allows for a shorter stay in the field, and still to gain insight, because a kind of interim evaluation and self-reflection helps narrow down the phenomenon of interest. This can provide a deep and focused reading of the social reality, while still maintaining the holistic experience provided by the field.

Subsequently I spent two periods of about 3 months immersed in the field in Berlin, building on the findings of my MA thesis which took place in the small student city of Giessen. In Berlin I narrowed down the research geographically, and specified and identified tools within the ethnographic palette which helped me gain better access and achieve a more precise investigation of hipsterism.

By moving the research from a smaller student city, to a highly urbanised setting in Berlin, it allowed me to tease out the subtle differences of hipsterism in a city—an

institution that depicts a stable fixation of the social arrangements in the sense of Robert E. Park—where for example the hipster milieu inhabits an area together with other populations, with various socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Characteristic of the city as Park describes is the meeting and mingling of peoples, that do not necessarily comprehend one another, that "touch elbows on the street, [and] still live in totally different worlds"(Park, 1915, p. 595). Further geographical determination, by scouting a few boroughs, consulting blogs and having conversation with locals, finally brought me to the level of the neighbourhood, as the simplest and most elementary form of association in a city's organisation. Neighbourhoods are especially interesting units of the city life as they exist without formal organisation, but express local sentiments and an individual character (Park, 1915, p. 580).

The area called "Kreuzkölln" was identified as an area characteristic of hipsterism. Located on the overlapping border between the boroughs Neukölln and Kreuzberg—Kreuzberg the largely gentrified area and Neukölln the area broadly still inhabited mostly by people of a lower socioeconomic background—it has gained recognition in media reports and within the local discourse as the home of the hipster milieu. This area, once described by the newspaper *The Guardian* as the "epicentre of cool" (Dyckhoff, 2011), finds its epiphany in the Weserstrasse, a street peppered with cafés, restaurants, galleries, shared working spaces, and concept stores combining them.

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Access to the Field and Self-reflection

In the case of research that takes place in the researcher's own field and their familiar local setting, the subjectivity of participant observation is particularly challenging. The familiarity with and adaption to the field pose a very practical challenge, and thus provide an opportunity for new ideas and the development of new strategies for field work of the researcher's own social spaces. Most connections I had within the field were built through preexisting friendship, or friendships that developed through the work I was doing. For months at a time I engaged with methods of ethnography, immersed in a field in which the volatility of the significant "Hipster" was a defining feature, and thus represented the biggest challenge. It is a field, indeed a whole social milieu, in which the question what Hipsters actually are, is met frequently with distancing and self-reflective amusement. Whether one is a Hipster, is sometimes met with indignation, but mostly with irony, that constitutes

yet another affirming characteristic of the ideal type as described across various discourses.

In the sense of Bauman (2015)'s liquid society, the textbook Hipster is in a state of constant distinction: unsatisfied, he permanently discards his old self, and then redefines himself, through further distinction.

The exciting ethnographic challenge for research in familiar and home settings is especially obvious in this milieu, though not at all unique to it. Every field of research, but especially field work at home, in the researcher's domestic environment, requires the repositioning and a critical self-reflection. This positioning process must be reflected in the data.

While it is ethnographic in its essence, I realised after some initial research, that this kind of research in a setting that is not foreign to us, has other challenges, than those described in classical ethnographic works. As Forsey (2010, p. 558) describes, observation often consists of what we hear in the field, rather than what we see. While all the aesthetic elements of hipsterism are observable, the most revealing insights came from the ethnographic self-consciousness of the observed. Forsey argues that we should be aware of this. Ethnographers tend to ignore that most of their observation, when it takes place in a homey environment, is casual conversation.

Most of my observations consist of casual conversations I was having within specific spaces, or just me listening very closely while a group of friends conversed. I decided very naturally against recording any of these conversations, but would jot them down quickly on my mobile device and write them down in my field diary shortly after, or even later, so as not to make the naturally evolving conversation unnatural, or evoke some sort of power relationship between the speaker and the listener. Most informative was actually listening to other people converse during the coffee breaks, or engaging in casual small talk whilst making coffee. More insightful conversations then emerged when the relationships were deeper and existed for a longer time. Emerged in the everyday life and practices of hipsterism, it was these things I heard that helped me access the consciousness and attitudes within this field.

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Was having a really interesting conversation with
Finn, the shop manager, I asked if I could take
some notes during our conversation, rather than
recording everything, that would have seemed quite
unnatural and weird in the situation. I turned the
notes into proper sentences below. Single
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statements that were especially interesting have
been noted as direct quotes in quotation marks.

                            Field Diary, Summer 2017
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Within this work, such casual conversations are marked as "Conversation Notes".

Forsey (2010) explains that there are major links between the personality of the researcher and the methodology, but this link has not been explored enough. He challenges us to compare what we think we are doing, with what we are actually doing. Many of the questions that were asked of me during my field work was how I was gaining an insider status and able to collect so much data, with a group that is associated with such exclusivity.

```
Talking in the car with my colleague – also
sociologist doing a phd – he asks me how I can
bear working with Hipsters (he specifically means
those described as Hipsters in Giessen, a group of
young, creative students, studying Applied Theatre
Studies, very engaged, organising some festivals
and creative use of spaces, that I observed for my
MA thesis). "They are such snobs", he says. I say
"I experienced it very differently, they are quite
nice and inclusive to me. Maybe you also haven't
really tried to approach them. They even let me
join in all the organisational meetings of the
discourse festival …" He answers something along
the lines of that they are only like that to me,
and not to him, because I offer something, I am
somehow interesting because I am doing this study.
I don't find this explanation very convincing, but
also not sure why our experiences with the same
people are different. It must have to do with our
approaching them, me and this friend are quite
similar I feel. He is also quite extroverted and
open.

                     Fieldnotes from Giessen Summer 2015
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As one can see from this very early experience, just before starting the PhD research, I always assumed this had to do with my personality, I am able and willing to adapt to this field, I am just lucky to have found a research object so willing to cooperate with me and open up to me etc. However, I realised with reading and reflecting on notes such as these, that what I am defining here as personality traits, these are not inherent but express a habitual expression of my incorporated cultural capital.

Park (1915) explains in his essay about the city as an environment to observe human behaviour, that one aspect of interest is what he calls the social ritual. By social ritual he means the cultural practices one must undertake in a neighbourhood "not to arouse suspicion or be looked upon as peculiar" (Park, 1915, p. 584). Another observation that was collected later shows that this process plays a significant role in this social milieu as well.

Reflecting on some observations from the first research phase in Berlin, it became clear that the researcher's own access to the field and fitting in included practices that were part of hipsterism too. Reflecting in my logbook I realised that there are some moment of embarrassment when I ask specific questions, which means there is implicit knowledge that it important for the formation of the milieu. It is often assumed everyone knows what it being implicitly talked about and my asking for that implicitness to be made explicit is uncomfortable. Reflecting on my own position, it is a partial fitting in, because I am only a researcher and observer. My success and failure to fit in can help to map out the field of hipsterism.

Thus in the sense of my emergent design, I decided to collect such self-observation as a basis of my reflection within the field. This is why I include the very personal experiences and impressions in a logbook, as an addition to my observations. These reflections helped to further refine my understanding and supplemented the data greatly. They are marked as "Logbook" entries throughout the entire study.

I also identified key people within the social milieu and had conversations with them in an interview-like setting, however with a general plan of inquiry, rather than determined questions. Spontaneously asked narrative-generating questions encouraged them to explain their understanding of everyday practices and their attitudes. Extracts from these narrative interviews can be found in this work as well.

2.2.2   Ethnographic Imaginary and Mapping the Field

As stated before, in an emergent design the narrowing down does not only take place geographically, but also in the realm of specifying and identifying tools within the ethnographic palette that help gain better access and attain a more precise investigation.

While the researcher's proximity to the field through occuring friendships, a similar age and life phase, and similar lifestyles greatly simplifies access to the field and reduces the disturbance of the field through the researcher's presence, the hazard of closeness also increases. It is difficult to see what is all too visible and to notice things that have always been in the researcher's sight. Things are usually perceived only when they disappear or shy away from routine. It is the unpleasant and impractical, unfamiliar and otherwise frustrating things that sociologists notice, that attracts them.

If, despite the challenges of proximity to the field, we want to examine and analyse our present society, we must learn to deal with the challenges, develop methods, and overcome these hurdles.

While the possible creeping, unconscious assumption of the group's self-understanding could be perceived as a challenge to the epistemological process, the proximity to the research subjects helped me in my field of research immensely. Rather than restricting the data, careful self-reflection enriched the data to an extent that could not have been anticipated beforehand.

Parallel to the *actual* research, meaning the observations of these spaces with the lens of the theories with which I entered the field, I observed that in the discourses that were concerned with them, the respondents were often underestimated. The work in the field is only made more difficult, if the artificial boundaries between the knowing, understanding sociologists—in this case the researcher—and the incomprehensing actors—the respondents in this study—are artificially emphasized.

Sociologists often assume that individuals are deluded, naive and unaware of their privilege and their constraints. But the proximity to my field of research, the bonds of friendship based on reciprocity and the open and intimate exchange showed quickly that the actors in this milieu are indeed aware of the web they are in. There is a moment of irritation that furthers the research, when I see the unexpected: when the theories with which I enter the field are not sufficient to explain my respondents' grin about the label they are expected to deny vehemently.

Those referred to as Hipsters do not only notice how empty the signifier is, but observation and permanent presence in the field shows that they actually enjoy it, or find it amusing.

Only through intimate familiarity with the field, it becomes clear that the hipster scene is so 'post-structuralised' that this play with the empty significant has become completely conscious and akin to a lifestyle. However, the field is also marked by criticism and justifications and thus provides a complex web of relations, positions and practices that can be explored and understood by participation and proximity to the field alone. When referred to themselves the respondents' can laugh about the

label, but the process of labelling others is no laughing matter to them. This could show an implicit understanding that milieu formation os problematic.

However, for the researcher, closeness, familiarity and even friendship, must be freed from the hazards of an unconscious assumption of the group's self-understanding, through permanent and rigorous self-reflection.

In the following section I will define some elements for a conceptual framework of ethnographic research in a familiar setting that will allow a meaningful collection of data and a holistic result.

I will argue that what is perceived as a stumbling block, can indeed turn into a stepping stone for a deeper understanding of our contemporary society. Dealing with these challenges in my field has led to two approaches in particular, which shed a new light on my findings, that not only counteracted the challenges, but enriched the data and even added new knowledge.

These are on the one hand research with an ethnographic imaginary (Forsey, 2010), which can be combined with the somewhat romanticised ethnographic approach of friendship as a method (Owton et al., 2013).

The other approach is to use the access barriers of the field as a mapping of the field, based on narrative interviews with an ethnographic imaginary. To lead an interview with an ethnographic imaginary means to ask questions that are not necessarily related to the immediate concerns of the research question, and they can help to comprehend the self-narrative of the individuals. The following quote by Forsey describes the ethnographic imaginary in relation to his own research on educational pursuits in contemporary Australia:

> To conduct interviews with an ethnographic imaginary is to ask questions beyond the immediate concerns of the research question. They sample biography, seeking to locate the cultural influences on a person's life, looking later to link this to the been pursued question, or, in the inductive spirit of ethnography, to even change the question. […] We asked about the work the adults did, the work their parents did and their various aspirations. We wanted to know about the individual's experiences of formal education, their philosophies of life and education, how they viewed contemporary Australia in terms of equity and choice, and so on. In other words, listening beyond the immediate experience of locating a school as parent, student or teacher, we wanted to know about a person's social milieu, their cultural influences, in order that we might be able to make links with previous and current decision-making about schooling. Participant Observation would not have allowed us to get to this sort of ethnographic information.(Forsey, 2010)

A natural, free flowing conversation about everyday practices was not possible without at least a degree of friendship—a relationship of reciprocity, solidarity and

trust—that built an environment that allowed the individual to open up and share their concerns, cultural influences, philosophies of life and aspirations with me.

The foundation of this trust was built through my own openness: in nearly all cases the participants knew, or were quickly informed that I was undertaking a PHD thesis about precisely this milieu that they are part of and they were informed that I was collecting observations and keeping a field diary. Furthermore this element of friendship implied that I would not exploit or portray vulnerability or insecurities in a bad light, although my work would be critical. Making abundantly clear that I am more interested in the societal structures and spaces that shape this milieu, their practices and narrative, rather than the individual itself, expanded this open and honest environment.

Mostly the consent to my observation and note-taking was implicit, which is demonstrated by the following extract:

> Katherine, Lara, and Lara's sister enter the coffee shop. Lara introduces me to her sister saying "This is Tara, she's always here because she is analysing Hipsters." Lara's sister looks at me and asks who I am observing here. I say "I am just drinking coffee. Or at least trying to just drink coffee." We laugh. Lara points to her friends and explains that all her friends are being observed. I jokingly pretend to take out a notepad and take notes. Katherine says "Lara is the biggest Hipster of all, because she denies it. And calls all of us Hipsters instead." They start a conversation on how the fancy types of coffee and the aesthetics of the coffee shop make it Hipster. I pull out my laptop seriously this time and take these notes.
>
> *Field Diary, Winter 2016*

This observation demonstrates the light-hearted, unserious and unanxious way of how the respondents dealt with the label, but how they also take the practices seriously, demonstrated by the conversation following about the types of coffee and the practices of hipsterism. It also shows how access to the field has been very easy in

a place with slightly longer standing relationships, through regular participation in hipster practices and within a group of friends, who also find the research interesting. While I am partially in this group, the role was always also that of an observer. It shows that taking notes does not have to be explicit, but the consent is implicit. Taking out a laptop and starting to take notes on what they are mentioning is okay for all the respondents.

In many cases the respondents and I feel comfortable with each other. We do not harbour feelings of unease, even when we share insecurities. Social desirability no longer plays a large role in our relationships. Under these circumstances, I am able to develop this ethnographic imaginary with these respondents. I know who they are, what narrative they have of their own life, I know about their attitudes and habits, about their relationships to their family.

This friendship approach challenges the power imbalance that normally arises between researchers and research subject, just as Owton et al. (2014) describe in their paper "Close But Not Too Close. Friendship as Method(ology) in Ethnographic Research Encounters" (Owton et al., 2014, p. 4).

My experience confirmed that the relationship between me as a researcher and the circle of people engaged in the milieu I was exploring was very dialogical instead of a hierarchical separation—with a constant exchange and a mutual feeling, rather than being in a position of "wanting something from them."

Since we are well acquainted and I participate in a broad spectrum of activities, it becomes natural to talk about and recount practices of everyday life, share and constructively discuss challenges, to debate ideas about what it means to live a good life.

The following example shows this comfort and familiarity that allowed for difficult or embarrassing themes to emerge in conversations:

```
Sam and I had a conversation with me about "what
constitutes a good life". He implied that he is
often jealous of others, especially of his room
mate, because he sees on instagram and facebook
what everyone is doing, traveling, and especially
working creatively. All their jobs are creative
and fun, and this makes him a bit envious.

                                  Field Diary, Winter 2016
```

The friendship and reciprocal relationship led to new insights that helped specify research questions. It became clear for example that the divide between private and professional life is theoretically very blurry and as an ideal united, but does not always manifest in reality (see section 3.3.5).

A friendly, reciprocal relationship, the ethnographic imaginary and participant listening as I described here have been useful elements of my research approach, and integral elements of my toolbox for research in a familiar setting. In each situation it was assessed what approach could be helpful, and often intuitively the relationship and my actions within the field took shape. This made access easy, but as explained before, the proximity to the field bears the hazard of unconscious assumption of the group's self-understanding. Logbooking, as an expression of permanent and rigorous self-reflection, was thus later supplemented to observations, to enable a deeper understanding of the various layers of interaction.

This method of Logbooking is useful to reflect the researchers own incorporated habitus and thus to make implicit adaption and belonging to the field.

Another interesting factor is when access is denied. It became clear that while it is difficult to pinpoint the moment where access is granted and friendships materialise, it can help to map out the field by looking at social closure in the sense of Bourdieu. Friendship as a method is strongest when friendships do not materialise, because the feeling of not belonging or not being fully accepted demonstrates barriers in the field. Moments of awkwardness, embarrassment and hesitation demonstrate elements of the field and are clear markers and distinguishing features of hipsterism, rather than the more vague and blurry elements of belonging that one often can not quite pinpoint.

The use of these reflections whilst collecting data became indispensable. Through constant self-reflection by posing questions about where is access denied, where the researcher does not understand or know of something, and where situations become unpleasant, makes the self-understanding in the field more visible. It can make explicit what is implied and seemingly self-evident in this milieu.

2.3   Data Analysis: The Conceptual Triad

2.3.1   Space as a Tool

To understand hipsterism as an element of contemporary society the question of the analysis of data and the conceptualisation of hipsterism is of tremendous importance. Some of the challenges include going beyond a mere list of accumulated cultural practices and fashion symbols, or an artificial ideal type of "the Hipster" that is

purely discursive and varies across different milieus and is too transitory to have sociological substance.

The approach of understanding hipsterism not only as a set of cultural practices, but as a sociological space that can be understood as various dimensions of dialectically connected moments, helped to conceptualise hipsterism in the phase of analysis.

As a geographic and material space that is infused with meaning and imagination, conceptually conceived and also materially perceived, Hipsterism is socially produced and modified over time. The spaces are invested with meaning, real and imagined.

Foucault (2019) described that since the end of the Middle Ages and the realisation of indefinite and open space influenced by Galileo's discoveries, the hierarchy of spaces is crumbling, the divide between sacred and profane space, protected and exposed, urban and rural. However, Foucault describes that in modernity the theoretical desanctification of space has not found its practical expression yet. There are still divides upheld by institutions and practices—private as opposed to public space, family as opposed to social space, cultural versus useful, and opposing spaces of leisure and work ibid.

Hipsterism could also challenge these oppositions further and show a continuity of the development as described by Foucault into contemporary society, as their spaces are often ambiguous in these respects (see chapter 3). In order to analyse the space that Foucault describes we live in, we must take into account that we live in a set of relations and that the space also influences and tears at us Foucault (2019).

However, one cannot epistemologically start with the space, as it is not something that exists by itself, but rather is produced materially, socially and mentally over time. Both space and time are not purely material or conceptual, but rather social products—as well as society's precondition. They are elements of social practice, that enter relations with one another through said practice and activity. This is to say that, space is not just relational, but also historic, in the sense that its production can only be understood in the context of the society (Schmid, 2008).

As such, hipsterism understood with this relation to time and space, and its history, can function as a concept and structural form that is culturally significant and corresponds to social reality in a way that preserves unique elements but still provides utility for our purpose—a better understanding of social reality.

In the sense of Henri Lefebvre (1991) as read by Stuart Elden (2007) or Christian Schmid (2008), we can analyse hipsterism in three dialectically connected moments, as a three dimensional figure of social reality.

Lefebvre's dialectic figure combines three approaches that can be understood as a reconciliation of certain contradictions that mark social reality, in this case

materialism—inspired by the Marxist approach—and idealism—the Hegelian approach (Lefebvre, 1991, 68 ff).

The approach that Lefebvre supplements is the poetic, creative act of a space of representation. It refers to an, as Schmid (2008) refers to it, a "divine" realm of symbolic interaction, which conveys meaning and connects it to the material space. This third dimension expresses and evokes social norms that can map the space, they are connected to a human experience of said space.

To be more specific about these three moments of space, which can offer a conceptual tool to map hipsterism, it is interesting to look at the development of urbanism and how Lefebvre (2014)'s *Critique of everyday life* led him to this model. In an explanation by Elden (2007), Lefebvre wondered how structures, codes and signs of the everyday life integrated with biographical life. By thinking of the rural and the urban together, he was able to analyse towns and cities, and realised they were planned rather than the result of organic development. The effects of industrialisation on a superficially modified capitalist society of production and property, and the disintegration of the traditional town and the expansion of urban space, resulted in a programmed everyday life in its appropriate urban setting (Elden, 2007, p. 103).

Urbanism can be described as the ideology and rational practice of the state—such as the state's active involvement in housing construction, urbanisation, planning etc. In such an urbanised environment, everyday life is organised, subdivided and programmed; it submits to fit a controlled and exact timetable (Elden, 2007, p. 105).

As such a city can be "read", if the everyday life is decoded. One cannot just observe the negation of the traditional town, but also understand the organisation of everyday life as a social inscription, a code of control over leisure time. According to Elden (2007), Lefebvres notion of everyday life suggests that the capitalist mode of production, which has controlled working life, has now expanded its control over the private life and over leisure. This often functions through the organisation of space.

Lefebvre explains that while the ancient city appropriated its space in two dimensions: the social relations of production – the organisation of the relations within the family – and the relations of production – the organisation of the divisions of labour, hierarchal and societal functions etc. modern capitalist space is more complex in as much as it is reproduced in three ways:

> The advent of capitalism, and more particularly 'modern' neocapitalism, has rendered this state of affairs considerably more complex. Here three interrelated levels must be taken into account: (1) biological reproduction (the family); (2) the reproduction of labour power (the working class per se); and (3) the reproduction of the social relations of production—that is, of those relations which are constitutive of capitalism

and which are increasingly (and increasingly effectively) sought and imposed as such. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 32)

Lefebvre (ibid., p. 33) goes on to explain that this reproduction is then further complicated in modern spaces, because it contains symbolic representations of these modes of reproduction, and their intersections. These representations serve to maintain social relations cohesive. They are overt and public and coded, or covert and repressed.

All these elements are encompassed in his understanding of space and his contemplations led Lefebvre to a conceptual triad of space. As the elements subsume power relations, if broken down, they can demonstrate how capitalism is being reproduced and maintained.

Capitalism's flexibility in constructing and reconstructing relations of space in this way, stabilises it greatly. Space is shaped and folded by historical (imperialistic e.g.) and natural elements, and political processes, and thus is a social and political product. Space is a medium of struggle, its shaped by historical and natural elements, and also by political processes. If space is produced in such a way, the mode of production in capitalism has an influence on it. Elden explains that this is not a strict correspondence, but that sometimes spaces are produced by the contradictions in the capitalist mode of production.

David Harvey (2006, pp. 70–116) explains that space is of utmost importance in the functioning of capitalism, as the whole history of territorial organisation, colonialism, imperialism, urban and rural contradictions, etc. demonstrates.

This is also evident in the attempts of hipsters to occupy spaces, as well as the struggles caused by them through gentrification for example (see section 3.4).

2.3.2 Lefebvres Triad

Lefebvre realised that this element of space was missing in Marxism, as Marx's elaborate theory was fixed around time. Marx's historical dialectic did not respond to the stability of capitalism through its flexibility in constructing and reconstructing space and its relations to economy. Lefebvre wanted to dispel a false dichotomy between time and space, by analysing not only how space is produced but also how it is experienced. So while space and time manifest themselves differently, they are inseparable and are experienced within history, and as such are historical. With this new critical understanding, by analysing how space is produced and how it is experienced, Lefebvre examined the modern world, his contemporary society. (Elden, 2007)

In analysing how space is produced and how it is experienced, he realised that while space is produced in two ways, it is then experienced in a third. Lefebvre describes the two ways space is being produced corresponding to first, Marxist thinking, and second, to the Hegelian thinking and Heideggers idealist approach. Space is produced first as a social formation through the means of production, and second is as a mental construction. These two dimensions of the becoming of space are spatial practice and the representations of space. Lefebvre differentiates between the latter, as the way space is conceived, idealistically, and mentally imagined, and the former, the actual perception of space, the practical, materialistic, concrete and physical.

The spatial practice is perceived space, that corresponds to Marx's reading of reality is produced has a physical form and is generated and used. It should not be misunderstood as a mere material dimension, even though it corresponds to Marx's materialism. It designates the material and physical aspects to the social activities and interactions. Spatial practice links daily routine and everyday activities to the urban reality, for example the various spaces designated for work and leisure. Lefebvre explains that it "embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation." (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). It corresponds the biological reproduction, the reproduction of labour power and the reproduction of social relations, described above. Spatial practice can be understood as the way space is produced by society and in turn how space appropriates, controls and shapes society (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38).

The second dimension of space is the representation of space, which refers to what we Lefebvre associated with symbolism, and overt, frontal and public and as such coded relations. Representations of space are conceived, rather than perceived. These representations take place within the realm of knowledge and are conceptualised. Often scientific in nature, numbers and verbal codes are used to describe this. The codes and signs are often intellectually worked out, by urban planners, social engineers, scientists etc. These representations of space are dominant in society and the conceptions especially demonstrate the mode of production in society. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33, 38)

Schmid interprets this dimension as linguistically defined and as an "organising schema or reference for communication, which permits a (spatial) orientation and thus co-determines activity at the same time" (Schmid, 2008, p. 37).

To complete this triad, Lefebvre extends the perceived spatial practice and the conceived representation of space, with spaces of representation (Lefebvre, 1991, 39f.). This is the lived space that is experienced at the moment of intersection between physical space, the use and interaction with said space, its conceptualisation and symbolism. It's socially produced, rather than mentally (conceived space) or

physically experienced (perceived space). Space is shaped and modified by historical and natural elements, as through political process. During all this time it is invested meaning and sometimes codes. These codes are, as Lefebvre describes, more covert hidden meanings and complex symbolisms (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). It is where Lefebvre reconciles the materialism and idealism. Elden describes that this third moment is

> space as produced and modified over time and through its use, spaces invested with symbolism and meaning, the space of *connaissance* (less formal or more local forms of knowledge), space as *real-and-imagined*. (Elden, 2007, p. 105)

Schmid describes that this third dimension describes the emergence of a symbolism or order that becomes a vehicle that conveys meaning. Thus, the third dimension expresses social norms and values. (Schmid, 2008, p. 37)

The important thing to note is that Lefebvre never sees these three dimensions or moments of space as separate spaces that can be unequal. It is rather that the space is at once perceived, conceived and lived, and as such, needs to be understood with all three of these aspects.

Lefebvre uses the example of a human body to explain the triad. One can consider the body as an example, and how it can be understood within these three moments as a whole. The first moment of spatial practice would be the use of the body, which can be perceived. We can perceive the use of sensory organs, limbs, gestures, activities of work and leisure, etc. The second moment is the representation of space, encompassing what can be known and conceived mentally, but also the ideology of it: the understanding of the body with its functions, ailments and cures, how its physiology and anatomy work, the body's relationship with its surroundings, etc. However, everyone would agree that the actual lived experience of the body goes beyond that, not only because it is highly complex, but because culture intervenes with the experience. It is laden with symbols, for example the heart, which is lived more complexly than it is mere bodily function, or the scientific or religious and cultural knowledge of which it is thought and perceived. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 40)

Elden uses the simple example of a park, to explain that it is ideologically and scientifically conceived at some point (by urban planners, architects, etc.) and produced through labour, institutions and technology. It is then however perceived and adapted with all its everyday practices and materiality. And the lived experience of the park is then attributed to how its socially constructed and modified over time, and imposed with symbolism and meaning. (Elden, 2007, p. 112)

The space of hipsterism can thus be analysed in relation to these three dimensions and then serve as an expression of social norms, values and experiences in contemporary western, affluent society.

While the initial idea and collection of data rather focused on the self-understanding of my respondents, and thus observed their everyday practices and self-narration with an ethnographic imaginary, the analysis went beyond the personal experience but analysed the structure of space and the symbolic reproduction and representation of societal power relations. The theoretical framework initially considered and described in the previous chapter helped the entry into the field, but the findings showed that the data can be utilised not just to understand these elements of hipster consumption, capitalism, and consumerism, but also show contradictions in the material, conceived and practical space. Ultimately, these two approaches complimented each other and allowed for the development of hipsterism functioning as a paradigm for its society.

The Space of Hipsterism—The Paradox of Being and Doing

3

> By now I am quite confused about who is a Hipster, and who isn't and why this is such a big deal. I should stop making the labelling process a theme of our conversations but focus on the practices themselves. It seems more and more as if it is an empty signifier that has no meaning?
>
> *Logbook, Summer 2016*

One of the most interesting discourses I came upon in my research was also one of the biggest challenges for the research itself. It was on the labelling of Hipsters.

Especially at the beginning of my research it left me quite confused as to whether the Hipster was objectifiable at all. The fact was that there were various signs of hipsterism, but of all the symbols the main one that every conversation, joke or article seemed to have in common was that those designated as Hipsters did not identify with the label, or joked about it in an ironic way. A typical statement from Hipsters is denying being hipster.

It became clear that the explicit mention of the label Hipster itself was a taboo with my respondents, even though implicitly many things were expressed.

> Today my friend Gina asked Franz "Would you consider yourself a Hipster?" Everyone burst out laughing and Joelle said "You can't just ask

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that?!" [...] He clarified then [...] he is not
superficial or does things because he wants to be
cool, he [does things because he] actually likes
them and believes in them.
                Fieldnote from Giessen, Winter 2015
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The act of collective laughter showed that there was something uncomfortable or funny about that question. There was a long pause before Franz answered. Implicitly everyone knew that there was no right answer to this question. Denying it would be so cliché of a Hipster, that one would not put a friend in the situation of having to answer. Hence "You can't just ask that!", which was exclaimed in obvious indignation. It seems to be considered rude to ask about this label.

As mentioned in chapter 2, a method of understanding a phenomenon is to analyse the hurdles of entry into the field, as they are encountered by the researcher. Any hurdle is simultaneously a feature of the field and determines the phenomenon itself. In the field of hipsterism, the first hurdle of entry I encountered was whether Hipsters existed at all. To research the practices of a discursive ideal type that seems to have no sociologically sound determination and to gain access to a field that was defined by a negation of its own existence was not only the first but also a recurring challenge.

The main feature of my inductive approach was to enter the field with a paradox ontology, to assume that the hipster does not exist but still to observe what was happening in those spaces that were labelled as hipster.

To overcome the challenge of entry and interact with my respondents with the explicit purpose of analysing what is labelled as hipster practice, I entered the field in various ways. Identifying what areas are labelled as hipster and narrowing the area down geographically was easier, because individuals had no issue telling me what spaces were considered hipster, as long as it was not related to them personally. The most successful entryway was to start by using alternative terms that are not as polarised as "the Hipster" when I entered into conversation with my respondents. Then in further conversation I made the research more explicit and asked questions of how respondents feel when they hear this term, or how they identify with it.

Awareness of this puts those labelled as Hipsters in a awkward situation, because indeed they do not want to be labelled at all. Authenticity is more important than any ascription from the outside. Which means that in order to avoid the ascription process, one must try to make the decisions independent of such labelling. My respondents were not only trying to undo whatever is mainstream but also tried not to avoid the label, but not too vehemently, as not to confirm the cliché.

In the summer of 2016 one contact made a comment that made me realise there was a right and wrong way to be a Hipster, and as such, hipsterism was not just a volatile term pushed around with no meaning. The individuals in these scenes had opinions, strong ones, about right and wrong and especially authenticity. This contact said to me that

> [...] the Hipsters that he knows do not really understand, that Hipsters should go to a flea market because then they are not supporting monopolies. [...] they want to be unique and find clothes in the flea markets that others don't have.
>
> *Field Diary, Summer 2016*

In this statement the individual distances himself from the Hipsters that he knows, so those that he would define as Hipsters. He explains that there is a right reason to go to a flea market: so one does not support monopolies, and a wrong way: to express individualism through unique clothing. The reasoning and self-narrative was very important. The idea of right and wrong generally will be discussed later, in the context of a conceptual framework of hipsterism (4.1, but for now the focus is the practice and dialogue of these individuals.

A concept that became clearer and more defined with time, authenticity seemed to be a defining moment for the Hipster. If Hipsters are authentic and real, if they do things mindfully and with intention, or even with conscious irony, it is being hipster. Nevertheless, discomfort with the term was addressed repeatedly. When asked about her friends calling her Hipster one contact said "I know people mean it well, but I don't want to be associated with someone superficial".

In the observed milieu authenticity is conceptualised differently to individualism. Important in this context is not to do things *just* to be individual or unique. Individualism is not seen as important as to have a set of justifications that are oftentimes not unique at all, but ended up being quite similar. This does not seem to be the issue, Hipsters appeared to be uncomfortable with the label Hipster, but had no intention of fleeing the practices that were labelled as such, because this would be deemed unauthentic.

Within the media discourse it became clear that the Hipster ideal type is a fully functioning contradiction that we have difficulty objectifying. There are elements to distinguish Hipsters from the mainstream, but these are also things they have

in common with others who are designated as not hipster. In the media discourse Hipsters are accused of doing things just because they want to be cool. In reality they also do not quit them just because they become mainstream. That would be unauthentic and also influenced by what others say. They are also attacked for their political or social attitude.

Within the milieu, my respondents seemed very cautious and authenticity seemed to complement individualism, giving it a deeper meaning and causality. While individualism is conceptualised as distinction from the mainstream, authenticity was used in hipster discourses among the respondents to validate the justification of each cultural practice and choice. Choosing a particular place to live, decideing whether to become a vegan or riding a fixed gear bicycle just because it is cool, is not an option. The do's and don't's of being hipster were associated with the reasoning and narratives of choices and practices, rather than the practices themselves.

All observable cultural practices of hipsterism can easily just be reduced fashion items. This means that to justify one's own authenticity is a challenge. When any denial of the label Hipster is met with laughter and statements such as "Well, that's what a Hipster would say, isn't it?", it can be a mistake for any researcher to pay too much attention to the label. It takes away the possibility of actually exploring the cultural practices themselves and their effect, one of many of these practices being the deflection of the label. Within the discourse, demarcation and distinction between what is hipster and what is not is frequent. While there is a lot of ambiguity about what *is* hipster, what is surely *not hipster* is clearer.

Authenticity as a concept will be reccurring throughout this chapter. It will explore becoming *hipster* as an adjective, not a noun.

To begin with the descriptions will initially sketch out the important elements of hipsterism. These mainly include descriptions of others about the Hipster, rather than self-descriptions, because of this labelling and identification challenge. Media and online content play and important role in this section and will supplement the observations and give them more consistency. We will then go into the fashion symbols and demarcation of hipsterism, which will include the essential element of creativity and its associated cultural capital.

Then some anti-capitalist and spiritual tendencies will be described and an anti-type of the Hipster will emerge.

The process of transition within hipsterism, from a young adult exploring different work avenues to the (un-)successful Hipster will demonstrate an adaption to society towards the antitype or the successful functioning Hipster.

All these findings will then be set in the context of the urban space of hipsterism in Berlin and will help map out hipsterism. This includes some thoughts on the element of gentrification and we will explore access boundaries to becoming hipster. We will

analyse the labelling process and the expressed embarrassment of individuals of this milieu, that they criticise milieu formation and aware of the problematics, but still engage and reinforce such practices in their everyday lives.

Ultimately these will lead to understanding hipsterism as a space that is marked by some contradictions and leave us with questions about the hurdles to expressing their ideals in spatial practice.

3.1 Cultural Capital and Hipsterism as Creativity

Hipsterism is a culture of access. So much of what is happening in this scene is closely connected to what Bourdieu (2012) called cultural capital that individuals use in a field. In his theory that has been shaping sociological investigation for decades, he explains the notion of a field, akin to the playing field. In this field the actors have a hand that is derived from their habitus. Similar to good playing cards, individuals have better or worse cards, by the way they have been socialised and have adapted subconsciously to society. This playing hand is comprised of economic, social and cultural capital. According to Bourdieu (2012) cultural capital is of the greatest significance. While all three types of capital can also be transformed into some other kind, through what he calls symbolic capital, it is the cultural capital that is the most difficult to recreate. Bourdieu would say it is an impossible task, as this subconscious adaption includes the way we speak and our taste. This leads to the fine distinctions between people that are very difficult to compensate. Cultural capital includes whether we have a more refined taste for music, foods or travelling, whether we enjoy going to museums or not, and the way we express ourselves. Language is a very important factor in this context, and according to Bourdieu it strongly influences the way we can act and the power we have in a field.

According to Bourdieu the motivation for any action is distinguishing ourselves from the masses and gaining influence and power. Ultimately we want to gain access to advantages in the field. He explains that this field is full of power struggle, with individuals trying their best to gain such advantages.

As early as in the 1900s Simmel (1957) explained that fashion symbols have the aim of distinction as well. Within societies that have class distinction, fashionable clothing and fashionable practices develop along a continuum of flight and chase. A small number of individuals adopts a new trend, such as an item of clothing or a new café to frequently visit, this then slowly is "chased" by the masses and thus becomes mainstream or current. The adoption of such practices of flight can be observed to require what Bourdieu much later defined as cultural capital, or good taste. The chase leads the fashionable individuals to have to distinguish themselves
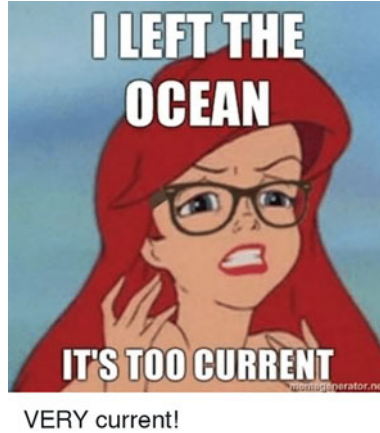
Figure 3.1 "Hipster Ariel". (Anonymous online creator, 2016a)

yet again from the masses, and slight adoptations of fashion emerge. This continues and is an expression of class society.

In the context of hipsterism, this is very interesting. My respondents very concretely use cultural capital, in order to access where the next "place to be" is, or what the newest trends are. They are often associated with a very superficial coolness, and they are criticised for this immensely. Content analysis of media blogs, articles and posts about Hipsters shows that they are often ridiculed. Many jokes circulate, often around the topic of this superficial coolness.

One fashionable practice and aspect of hipsterism is an opposition against modernisation. It is seen in many objects that Hipsters are portrayed as using. They are said to prefer to listen to music on records. Items like record players as well as typewriters, for example, are considered hipster items.

Meanwhile, modern equipment is often used to produce items that look as if they were produced by much older equipment. The macbook provides various applications with a minimal layout, which greatly simplify word processing and make texts typed on the computer look as if they were typed on a typewriter. The iPhone provides one very popular application called Instagram. Before it became popular, it was known as a "hipster-tool", which allows you to upload pictures and videos to share on a profile, after putting a filter on them. The aim of the filters is to make the pictures look like they are a Polaroid and have been taken by an old analogue camera, or as if they were developed at home. Concerning this matter, various jokes have circulated, such as "How much does a Hipster weigh? An instagram". This

affinity to older equipment, items and products became immensely popular very fast, and Instagram for example, launched in 2010, now has over hundreds of millions of users. So simultaneously the Hipster is associated with being avant-garde.

> ```
> Today I was speaking with a guy at [a café]
> about my thesis, and he told me this joke: "Why
> did the Hipster burn his tongue? He drank his
> tea before it was cool." He also ridiculed my
> research and said that Hipsters were just a bunch
> of privileged kids who had too much money to spare
> for fashionable items.
> ```
>
> *Field Diary, Autumn 2016*

While there is some ridicule in the statement above, Hipsters are known to be familiar with societal trends, implied by the statement "before it was cool". They are said to be quite sophisticated and avant-garde about societal trends. As such, this is a repeated joke, which can be found in different variations all over popular online platforms and social media websites, often in combination with popular culture tropes. Many internet memes based the figure of the Hipster can be found that were especially popular in the 2010s. Memes often have a theme or repeated catchphrase. One meme that became quite popular around 2011 is the so-called "Hipster Ariel" based on a picture of *Ariel the Little Mermaid* augmented with glasses that are often associated with the Hipster, from the animated Disney movie of 1989. The image 3.1 shows this cultural trope with the statement "I left the ocean, it was too current". In the story of Ariel, she leaves the ocean to live among the people. This fact is used as a joke here, with the wordplay on the ocean being too "current", so too popular to be there. The word "current" also means the movement of a large body of water through forces of nature. It implies that hipsters are very much part of the flight and what Simmel (1957) described in his essay as the flight and chase of fashion.

These memes and other jokes became more critical over time. Underlying the criticism that I observed repeatedly is the assumption the hipsters are hypocritical. One example of an accusation found in various spaces is that hipsters portray themselves as being against capitalism, but only because it is fashionable to be against capitalism. The meme depicted in the image 3.2 showing Karl Marx demonstrates this. The catchphrase reads that he blamed capitalism before it was fashionable to blame capitalism. An image of Karl Marx in black and white, as a critic of capitalism, is used and the title "Hipster Marx" was given to this meme, uploaded to a popular meme website. This implies that being critical of capitalism has now

become a "cool" thing to do, rather than a serious political attitude, but something that is fashionable in contemporary society.

It remained pertinent to observe for myself those individuals in the milieu being described as hipster. In preparation for my field work, I asked some questions and explored options in the city I was studying in, Giessen, which is a town of about 80000 inhabitants. I asked some of my contacts in the field about these jokes and the criticism implied in them. In this context the discussion about the distinction between a real and a "want-to-be" Hipster arose.

```
... [I wanted]to ask where they think I should
start to look for Hipsters to interview them. The
answer was "Forget it, there are no real Hipsters
here. You have to go to Berlin." I have heard this
a lot, that I should go to Berlin and there are no
real Hipsters here.
                    Fieldnote from Giessen, Summer 2015
```
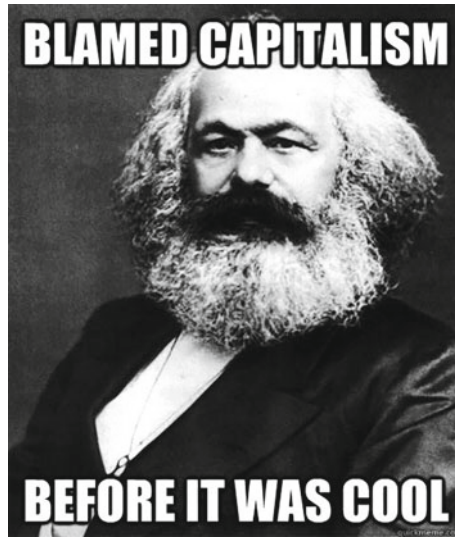

Figure 3.2 "Hipster Marx". (Anonymous online creator, 2016b)

The statement "There are no real Hipsters here. You have to go to Berlin." implies that in a town those labelled as Hipsters are not "real" Hipsters, but that the "real" ones are in Berlin. In a later conversations, a friend told me "Here everyone is a wannabe". "Wannabes", as people who try to be like others or to fit in with a particular group of people. The true Hipster seemed to be an urban, big-city phenomenon.

In another instance, whilst teaching a class about the phenomenon of hipsterism for BA Teaching Students, one student mentioned that the real, authentic Hipsters aren't in Berlin anymore, they would be in Tokyo now. This loop continued for some time, and I realised that the labelling process is problematic, because no one identifies with the term Hipster, and it is a very elusive term.

After further and repeated conversations in various spaces, it became clear that while these contacts do not in anyway want to be identified with the label of Hipster, they do very much identify with specific practices that are implied in these jokes. Especially the idea of not being a follower of mainstream and consumerist capitalism and being somewhat critical towards capitalism in general, is fundamental to the expressed values. Furthermore, terms and concepts they identified with were living a creative and authentic life.

A number of extracts below portray some initial findings about authenticity and flight from the mainstream. Deep-reading my notes after the initial field work phase, I saw that some concepts and narratives kept reemerging.

```
Leo and his room mate live in the "Sonnenallee",
which I was told was "where everyone wants to
live". On asking people why, they say "authentic"
and "real" a lot.
————
...where we spent the whole evening in the
kitchen, discussing why The Hives sounded so much
better on vinyl.
————
Their slogan is: "Standard können wir nicht. Dafür
aber alles andere." which implies they don't offer
standard or mainstream products, but all things
outside of that. Whatever that means.
                              Field Diary, Various 2016
```

In my self reflexion, following a reading of my field diary, I realised that it was necessary to try to understand the practice and conception of a term like "authentic" or "not mainstream". As my annotation "Whatever that means" demonstrates, I was not sure what was meant by the authenticity or individuality that my respondents kept emphasising.

```
All those times when someone would say they
loved it so much, because it's colourful or
multicultural or authentic, I never asked anyone
what they meant...
                              Logbook, Summer 2016
```

If there was a narrative behind this term, it had to be closely connected to individualism. In the field authenticity was understood as having a set of justifications and values backing all personal decisions, rather than reasoning practices through fashion or individuality. As one respondent answered after being asked "Why do you live this sustainable, low waste lifestyle?":

```
From very early childhood, it started when I was
about seven, I always searched. At seven I became
a vegetarian.
    Extract from a narrative interview, Spring 2017
```

The statement above clearly demonstrates that the individual believes that the decisions they make in life and the lifestyle they have chosen, even at the tender age of seven, are based on personal search. So rather than being taught or socialised in a specific way, they believe in a path of search for ideals and values and in constructing their own framework of action.

The mentioned values also include the principle of authenticity in addition to the responsibility that the individual has. Authenticity in this context is defined by a unique narrative of one's own justifications and also one's inherent cultural capital.

The idea that the concrete use of cultural capital provides access to spaces, which can enhance advantages in a given field, is a fundamental element of Bourdieu (2012)'s Field Theory. However, it is interesting to look at how he describes that cultural capital comes about. Assuming his approach to the development of this

Figure 3.3 Seen near Sonnenallee, demonstrating that hipsterism prioritises affectivity and subjective involvement of the subject over rational advertising. (Semple, 2018b)

capital, we acquire it through our habitus. This poses the question whether those who have a lot of this cultural capital should all come from a similar socio-economic background. Assuming his theory, they should come from families with high (at least cultural) capital. If unique taste, distinction from the masses and the value of authenticity are part of their self narrative, it is interesting to analyse my respondents' biographies. Do individuals associated with this notion of a Hipster all come from similar backgrounds, are they all academics or artists? Analysing this as one dispersion in our prism of understanding modern, western societies, helps understand the workings of cultural capital in liquid societies, as described by Bauman (2015). Some of the the individuals I met came from working class background but had through some means or other acquired significant cultural capital.

In reference to the present-day analysis of cultural sociologist Andreas Reckwitz (2014), hipsterism demonstrates the movement of a "ends-rational" capitalism- in the sense of Max Weber- to an aesthetic capitalism and aestheticization of the social. Providing something new as in aesthetically appealing, not as a complete replacement or improvement and thus progression of the old, is a fundamental element of hipster everyday life. As such hipsterism expresses the social regime of the aesthetically new that Reckwitz (ibid.) describes. It being new and unseen aesthetically is

then wherein its worth lies, rather that it being aesthetically adhering to fashion or advertising.

Design becomes paradigmatic to advertising and fashion, but also to everyday life. The affect every action had was more important to my respondents than the rational effect. The creativity dispositive is demonstrated by preferring the creation of the aesthetically new in advertising for a shop, rather than rationally advertising. This can be seen in the picture I took in image 3.3. From this poster it is neither clear what the store exactly will provide, which services it offers, and when it will open. The idea is to involve the subject, making the audience curious and showing them aesthetically new "advertising" that they might not have seen before in this way. It also shows the affinity towards the undone, unprofessional and home-made within the scene.

My respondents often practised an expression of their distinction and creativity over rational and normative practices.

Again and again I meet individuals from the scene who might vary in their socio-economic background but have one thing in common: they express themselves and take pride in creativity. Similar to how Reckwitz (2014) describes the creativity dispositive, it is essential to hipsterism to constantly come up with a new aesthetic affect.

```
We sit in Two and Two, an interesting combination
of a French coffeehouse with croissants, coffee
and pastries, and stationary shop, specialised
in Japanese stationary. The shop counter is
cluttered with notebooks, pens and folders etc.
all with pretty Japanese lettering on them, as
well as coffee speciality equipment, all for
sale. The rest of the store is decorated in a more
minimalist style, a few vintage looking chairs and
tables in a tight space, lots of greenery.
                                Field Diary, Summer 2016
```

To combine two already quite popular things within this scene provides for the new aesthetic appeal, whilst not reinventing or progressing. Japanese stationary is already popular in this social milieu, companies like MUJI, a Japanese retail store,

express a minimalist, no brand strategy and hardly any money is spent on advertising or classical marketing, relying mainly on verbal propaganda and the simple, clean, unchaotic shopping experience. Coffee and pastry culture is also strong within hipsterism, so combining the minimalist ethic and the Japanese stationary in this establishment vouches for the owners' creativity in the sense of Reckwitz (ibid.).

Another example of this kind of creativity was a bookstore on Weserstrasse, which combined the trend of hashtags on the Internet with the concept of a bookstore. Hashtags are normally used to group together thematically some statements on social media platforms such as twitter. The statement will be followed by a hash and specific tag word, such as #hipster, for any posts pertaining to the theme of Hipsters. These have become increasingly popular.

Instead of sorting the books by author or genre or language, the books were sorted by subjects and into boxes, by having a common motive or subject. The shop manager who came up with the concept explained that the idea was to group together books according to a hashtag they might have. He explained to me that one of the reasons why they did this was to make the consumer surprised and amused that a classic like Wuthering Heights would be in the same category as a book like the soft pornographic novel Fifty Shades of Grey. They also have a category called Friday, and that will contain books that start on a Friday. In this context the consumer becomes the aesthetic audience and enjoys the aesthetically new way the shop is sorted, but also the conceptually new structure of the objects, that can also be aesthetic in nature.

As Reckwitz (ibid.) describes, the regime of the new also needs an institutional regulation, in addition to the subjects as creators (shop manager), the aesthetic audience (the consumers) and the aesthetic items (the arrangement of the books, offering a new affect). One could argue that without the institutional regulation of attention usually shaped by markets, media, politics or the state, that Reckwitz describes as a fourth element in the scaffold of the creative aesthetic regime, there is something missing. This may be the reason why the shop had to shut down during the writing of this thesis. The shop manager explained to me that they were often times struggling and he assumed: "The concept, however, does not come naturally to the people around somehow, if we were in New York or LA, it would work better, somewhere where there is more of a sense of humour. Also there is no money in Neukölln, so we don't sell loads of books"

However difficult to sustain, the creative act as such was very important to my respondents, more so than success in classic economic senses.

```
Sam is 27 [...] and moved to Berlin before
completing his degree. He works part time at
a refugee home, and is planning to finish MA
from here... We had a conversation about "what
constitutes a good life". He implied that he is
often jealous of others, especially of his room
mate, because he sees on instagram and facebook
what everyone is doing, that they are traveling,
and especially that they are working creatively.
All their jobs are creative and fun, and this
makes him a bit envious.
                              Field Diary, Winter 2016
```

Sam's flatmate is a young urban creative with a minimalist style and minimalist interior design aesthetic. When I asked him whether he could give me a tour of their cool Berlin apartment, he showed me his room. As I looked at his minimalist furniture, bed, lamps, clothes rack, he immediately started showing all the things he made himself and explaining how he made them. The self-narrative that this respondent communicated to me was that it is important to be well travelled and creative. He would not be tied to classic jobs, or conservative lines of work. This causes the jealousy of Sam towards his "cool hipster flatmate", as he calls him.

Others that I met through this connection and in this apartment were also all pursuing creative or artistic careers, such as a freelance fashion photographer, a student of fashion design at the university of applied sciences, a very quiet girl who worked at a gallery. Other careers I encountered included working as a make-up artist at the theatre, or a full time poetry slammer and an events curator. One young man was studying composition.

The following case example demonstrates an age of becoming within hipsterism and striving towards living a creative life.

```
At 26 he lives on a low-paid job and the support
of his parents. He is only works part-time at the
moment, even though he finished his BA in graphic
design several years ago. His parents support him
by paying the rent of his apartment, and he works
for a small café once a week. In his free
```

```
time he does art. He doesn't want to work in an
office environment, where he has to follow the
visions of someone else, thereby displaying the
Do-What-You-Love attitude. He has many ideas for
the future, but merely in theory. Becoming an
artist, or opening up a coffeehouse are some ideas
he has.
                              Field Diary, Summer 2016
```

Often the individuals I met were between studies and jobs, doing internships, or starting up a company. Some were owners or managers of coffeehouses and restaurants. They had the tendency to move to a bigger city after studying, or when starting a higher degree, in order to pursue further steps, such as finding a job or even starting up their own company. One group of three friends had started what they called a "Creative Office", comprised a photographer, a web designer and two graphic designers, who offered services to companies looking for "unique creative solutions".

Frequently reactions to questions and circumstances showed the desire, enthusiasm and satisfaction of being an independent creative individual. The respondents put forth this idea of a creative life in contrast with the boredom and lack of motivation of living life as a bureaucratic worker living an uneventful life in suburbia. Ultimately this led to the wish to turn life into art, similar to the radical modern aesthetics thinking and living subcultures of the Romantics, the Bohème and the Avant-Garde (Reckwitz, 2014, p. 35). However, my respondents lived this creative life, or life as art, with a stronger adaption to societal circumstances and in a less radical way.

Cultural capital has the purpose of enhancing and advancing the individual in a field. Within this social milieu the advantage is to be understood as a creative subject and to understand oneself as a creative subject. This is an idealistic state that Reckwitz also describes in his theory of a creativity dispositive. The hipster spaces are creative spaces that are arranged in a way that creative subjects can express themselves and also experience the aesthetic stimuli. In addition to Reckwitz's description, they are also meant to protect the individual: not just from boredom and lack of creativity, but also from commercialisation, as we will see in the following chapter.

3.2   Enslaved or Uninspired—the Hipster Antitype

Understanding how important creativity and authenticity are to the narrative of hipsterism leads to the question whether hipsterism is merely another form of distinction mechanism according to Bourdieu (2012). Or is the phenomenon of hipsterism captured and expressed as the creating individual that Reckwitz (2014) describes?

Observation showed that there is more to hipsterism that qualifies the individuals as hipster than mere creativity and authenticity. In this section there are various tendencies that I observed within hipsterism, which can be best understood as *what a Hipster is not*. The definition by distinction, so defining something as what it is not, will help us understand some of the more subtle elements that are reflected in statements such as: "A Hipster would never be a banker".

That a certain antitype to the Hipster exists became clear when I was speaking to some respondents about the Soho House, a private members' clubs for people working in the arts and media. The access to the club is by recommendation and a contact mentioned not wanting to recommend a "random" person as an applicant for the club. This idea of not wanting to be random or strange alluded to the antitypes described in this section. In order to conceptualise these antitypes within hipsterism I reflected on my own attempts of fitting in and strategies of not being a "random" person. As described in my methodology (chapter 2), personal reflections and self-analysis can strengthen the data by complementing it.

The tendencies described in this section include independence from monopolies and chains, aversion to neoliberalism, and intentional minimalism. Other tendencies that were observed included romanticising precarity or insecurity on the one hand, and the idea of building safe spaces to protect Hipsters from inclinations of wider society on the other. These tendencies led to the emergence of the Hipster antitype. This antitype can be understood as either an uninspired, consuming worker, who is "enslaved" as a respondent put it, or as a neoliberal, capitalist boss who exploits his or her workers.

As described in section 3.1 some of the respondents were entrepreneurs, often of startups that were still struggling to become viable businesses. However, many understood themselves to be in a transitional period, working towards some alternative goal in the long run. Many of them were between school and work, either studying or beginning to work. All my respondents had in common that they understood themselves as exploring options. They did not yet feel fully defined as social beings, because they had not found their respective job and as such fulfilment.

```
Kristin whom many describe as a Hipster has
moved from a small student town to Hamburg after
finishing her BA in German and Art studies. She
currently works at a burger restaurant in an
alternative, trendy neighbourhood of Hamburg, the
Schanzenviertel.
                              Field Diary, Winter 2016
```

Kristin was one of the trusting and hopeful, rather than cynical respondents (see section 3.3.4), who described her dreams of a career as a writer. Having finished her Bachelor's degree, she worked in a part-time job in the service sector, and expressed her creativity on instagram, by accompanying her pictures with lengthy and oftentimes humourous texts. She also wrote long speeches and letters for friends' events, such as birthdays or weddings. While she was light-hearted and carefree in everyday life, she expressed her worry to me, that she would be stuck in work that she would not enjoy, or would not allow her to express herself. Not long after the above fieldnote was gathered, she started an internship at a newspaper. She was given the opportunity to publish some articles on their website. While she was interning, she realised the exploitative nature of interships, but still was anxious about losing the opportunity to do creative work.

This anxiety was rarely expressed to me very explicitly, but it seemed to be a genuine underlying worry of many of my respondents. Kristin was able to express it so openly, because of the nature of our friendship and how it developed (see section 2.2.1).

Generally, the anxieties of the respondents and their personal aims in this transitional phase, yielded information on what my respondents were trying to avoid. This avoidance can clarify the Hipster antitype, which plays such an important role in the distancing process in the practice of identity-building.

```
Noam was talking about independent book stores
to his colleagues and they were very lovely and
offered me a coffee. I asked what "independent
bookstore" meant and they explained that they
```

```
are not part of a chain and they have their own
concept¹.
                                Field Diary, Summer 2016
```

Here, and in other casual conversation about their bookstore, Noam calls the book store "independent" every time. Emphasising their independence and the twist in the conceptualisation of their book store, Noam expresses that in addition to their creativity, independence and not belonging to chains or monopolies is very important. Many respondents emphasised that the places they worked at, as well as the stores, restaurants and cafés they frequented, were not part of chains. The companies I observed also supported independent artists and writers. Two bookstores had a corner dedicated to self-published authors. One of them offered events for struggling artists to read from their novels or share their poetry, or play their music.

One of the coffeehouse's owners had bought and showcased two of the barista's artworks in his coffeehouse. He tried to advertise for them and tell people about the art they could purchase from them.

Another important element is detachment and not being too focused on money or profit, as the statements below show:

```
He also explained "we don't earn money hahaha" and
I asked how it is sustainable. He said "It's not,
we will do this for another year or so and then we
will file bankruptcy" I asked why, they said it's
because they want to be able to do what they want
at least for some time and they are enjoying it.
                                Field Diary, Spring 2016
```

By emphasising that they wish to do what they want, for a while, even though it might not be profitable, the respondent expresses that doing what you love is more important than earning money. One can even risk becoming bankrupt and losing all the money, in exchange for engaging in work that you really enjoy. In another instance this individual laughed about probably dying poor. This again shows that attachment to material things is not as important as living a passionate and creative life.

---

[1] explains the concept described in section 3.1 with the hashtags

Another tendency that underlines this attitude is expressed in the following state-
ment from a narrative interview with a young woman named Olivia:

```
For example in my relationship it's the same now,
A. pays for more, or at least more than I do,
because he just has more money at the moment. I
think it's really terrible to try and split up and
break down the bills.
      Extract from narrative interview, Spring 2017
```

In this extract Olivia claims that it is "terrible" to split bills. She expresses that
relationships are more important than division of bills in an equal way. This under-
standing of justice or fairness will be explored further in section 4.1.1. For now it is
suffcent to say that the one who wants to split bills down the middle, without con-
sidering how much money each individual has, is "terrible". This can be undertood
as another attribute of the antitype. The individuals associated with this antitype are
frugal, want to split things down the middle, money is important to them, and they
have jobs they do not like.

The following extract from a Facebook Messenger Conversation demonstrates
the priority of friendship and meaningful conversation over the quality of products
being sold, or services rendered. In my second research phase, I asked this shop
owner, who I had met in the first research phase, how to get back in touch with him.
He answered:

```
hey dear!!! we were on vacation until the 1st of
sept.but now we back doing our shit. the shop
opens on Teusday. ill be there everyday from
15-20! yougotta come over. we got out lousy coffe
and a good conversation :)
        Facebook Messenger Conversation, Autumn 2016
```

The coffee is lousy and the work they do is described as their "shit" but the con-
versations one can have are good. This also emphasises the importance of human
connection and relationships taking priority over material things. It also shows the
contradiction between Doing-What-You-Love, but not taking work in general too
seriously, or showing that it is not the most important part of your life. My respon-
dent cannot admit that he takes his work seriously. This is demonstrated by calling

his work "doing our shit". If he shows that he does take his work seriously and emphasises it too much, he is in danger of being the antitype, the—as Noam once described it to me—enslaved one:

> He says he is scared of future, for when he is old
> or sick, so he wants to enjoy life while he can,
> just not to enslave himself. He was spoilt as a
> child and now he will probably die poor he says
> laughing.
>
> *Field Diary, Summer 2016*

The implication of the assumption that he will die poor expresses the idea that if one does not "enslave oneself" one must die poor. As Noam is fascinated by great literature he describes a grand narrative of his biography here: being spoilt as a child and then following his dreams and ultimately dying poor.

The respondents speak of lousy coffee, being poor and laughing about probably going bankrupt, show a kind of romanticising of failure within the given capitalist, neoliberal framework, which also works as an antithesis to enslaving oneself and becoming a knob in the works of capitalism.

A different picture, but also trying to distinguish from the dispassionate worker who sees no culture or deeper value or meaning in his work, was drawn by Finn. He shows this in the following notes I gathered from statements and practices of their group of collaborators from a vegan coffeehouse.

> They go to 'Cupping', a coffee festival, and that
> inspires them, reminds them why they are doing it,
> because sometimes it gets a bit dull / lose track,
> and then you go to these places. […Finn tells me
> that] If you go other places that are small [like
> his coffeehouse], people there are real, like a
> family. Populous [another small coffeehouse close
> by] emphasise their family business, they have a
> huge connection, it's blatantly obvious love and
> respect coffee culture/each other/ quality
>
> *Field Diary, Summer 2017*

Two things stand out especially in this summary. The first is the importance of the purposefulness of the work they are doing. By emphasizing that they have to remind themselves of why they are doing their work, he shows that working meaningfully is important. It is not just creativity that is important, there is a deeper meaning or a morality to it, expressed by the emphasis of a family business. The second is how he emphasizes the importance of people being "real, like family". In this context the social connection and love and respect for each other is associated with being real, so being authentic.

My respondents' nightmare was a stable office job. They would rather want to do something they love, something creative, however risky or unstable that might be. The concept of Do-What-You-Love and the world of work will be further explored in section 3.3. However, there was certain observable discomfort in speaking about doing what you love, or advertising it too much.

I noticed that the extracts in which the work is explored more deeply was in the context of me asking individuals to talk to me about their work, because it is a theme of my thesis. In casual conversation, even if it went on for hours, there seemed to be discomfort or disinterest in speaking about your work too much. This could be another indicator of the fear of falling into the antitype. It seems that there is an underlying worry that is harboured secretly, either to die poor as Noam described earlier, or to not be able to find a creative and fulfilling job, without becoming the antitype.

The slogans "Do What You Love" and "Follow Your Dreams" can be associated with the notion of work and are emphasised indirectly in this milieu. In image 3.4 you can see how a store on a side street of Weserstrasse sells reminders for Hipsters not to forget what they came to Berlin for. Reminiscent of how the hippies symbols were commercialised, this popularity of hipster symbols and slogans takes effect in Neukölln as well. In the 1960s Hippies were discovered as potent consumers, especially with their passionate urge to express themselves, and thus established a new market for specific consumer goods. This new market was developed with commodities that satisfied the needs of hippies for authentic goods, such as records, clothing etc. In this context, expressive advertising was developed, aiming the hippies and their need for the accentuation of their personality as the target consumers. These forms of advertising spread the idea that consumer goods are the means for self expression into society as a whole. The cultural movement lost its subversive and countercultural power. ((Tripold, 2012), (Willis, 2014))

However, as I observed the milieu, none of these items being sold as can be seen in 3.4 were actually in my respondents homes. Advertising that you have a job you love was just something they would not do. When conversations turned towards work, many individuals from this milieu felt uncomfortable or quickly changed the

Figure 3.4 Buying Do-What-You-Love. (Semple, 2016a)

topic. Again this seems to express a kind of secret worry of becoming the neoliberal antitype. As such, while hipster fashion or lifestyle can be commercialised very well, it is not the milieu I was observing that actually consumed those items. I visited the store depicted in 3.4, amongst a few others, various times and always just observed tourists there. As this area is becoming popular for tourists because of this milieu, my respondents feel more of an urge to distance themselves from such behaviour.

Multiple times I observed awkwardness and embarrassment about speaking too much about your work, and how successful you are. The following extract was noted down after a meeting with some contacts that had moved from a small student city in the north of Germany to Berlin. Realising that they were part of the milieu I was observing I met with them to learn more. One of the first questions I had was what they were doing, whether they were studying, interning, or working.

```
I was not sure entirely what exactly they were
doing when I visited Jenny and Thomas in Berlin.
When I asked they dodged the question joking
around and saying "this and that". And then
after some persistence Tim seemed awkward and
embarrassed and explained, "well we don't have a
real studio, but we kind of sort of have a film
```

```
studio". And I was like, "yea so what do you do
there?" Again with the this or that, and something
about music videos and advertising clips "and
anything that has to be designed basically". I
felt like I was being rude asking them. They
really didn't want to tell me, I don't know why.
Jenny then gave me their card, so I could take a
look at their webpage etc.
                                 Field Diary, Summer 2016
```

While the statement "anything that has to be designed basically" speak strongly for the creativity dispositive, there was embarrassment and discomfort speaking much about the work they are involved in. In this example it is especially clear, but also in another other interviews I conducted, or conversations I had, it seemed that no-one ever emphasised greatly that they did something creative, or exclaimed with pride that what he was doing was very cool. At some point I realised that it seemed improper to advertise, to take pride in the work you do, almost as if that would be too capitalist.

```
Lisa and I prepared the food together while she
told me about her life. She didn't say much about
her job, just that she studied fashion photography
and she is freelancing at the moment, and it is
going "well enough".
                                 Field Diary, Summer 2016
```

In the conversation with Lisa I noticed that it was difficult, much like with Jenny and Thomas, to find out more information on what her work actually entailed. The subject was quickly changed to a different more general topic.

In these cases, the respondents are free lancers or even entrepreneurs. An antitype of hipsterism seems to be an entrepreneur that takes pride in their work and talks about it a lot.

The embarassment of talking about one's work too much later appeared to be linked with the transition into becoming a capitalist or failed Hipster as described in section 3.3.

I also observed these antitypes in my own distancing process, by observing and analysing my own demarcation process as a means of access.

Within my self reflection, and in my meta observation notes, I noticed some mechanisms of my own adaption to the field. As a researcher, who only fits in partially, the mechanisms of trying to fit in are especially interesting, as described in section 2.2.1. The scene shows how I am adapting to the field and as such start to partially fit in with the attitudes of the milieu.

This specific case demonstrates the failure of building friendships within a coworking space and strategies to overcome this hurdle.

I joined a coworking space that was directly on Weserstrasse, a colourful, very green, yet minimalist space, with colourful origami cranes hanging from the ceiling. As such it expressed aesthetically my conception of a hipster coworking space. Coworking will be explored more deeply as a space of ambiguity between leisure and work in section 3.3.4. Here it is the setting of strategies of partially fitting in and as such amplifies the clarity of the Hipster antitype.

A first conversation with the manager of the coworking space was very telling, especially in the way that what she described did not materialise in my case.

```
When I arrive she tells me that there are
currently quite a few start-ups here and she
will introduce me. She also proposed that it
can be helpful to speak to [the boss], who the
project [of the coworking space] belongs too
and that had the inspiration for this first of
three coworking spaces in Neukoelln. (All in the
Weserstrasse I might add…). Friendship develops
by individuals engaging in activities together and
not just talking. All the individuals I engaged
within this social milieu have work that consists
of cooperation with friends. I ask her how to
join in these activities and collaborations. "Oh
most things we find out through small talk in
the kitchen. We cook together, that is great to
do some networking. Also just go outside. A lot
of people take cigarette breaks regularly, you
can converse with them easily then." All this
unfortunately hasn't really happened yet, I am
```

```
mostly ignored and they have only cooked together
once until today and no one asked anyone to join
in. I noticed when they were already eating.
                              Field Diary, Winter 2016
```

In this context I am asking a manager of a space how the service I am paying for will materialise. As advertised to me, the aim of coworking is that collaboration, friendship and cocreating naturally occurs. Reflecting on the initial disappointment also presented an excellent opportunity to reflect on my strategy of access, which was kind of buying myself in, through just paying the membership fee and working on my thesis there. However, since this strategy failed, other ways I pursued can be seen in the following extract.

```
I decide that I might need a more systematic
approach to show visibility and openness without
being a socially awkward weirdo that has no
friends. I decide to take ages making my coffee
in the morning and try to make small talk in the
kitchen, have all my meals at the working space
and have my coffee outside every time I have it,
so I can enjoy the sun and engage in small talk
with smokers. Making friends is so much easier as
a smoker.
                                 Logbook, Summer 2016
```

Thinking about these strategies and trying to implement ways of belonging shows the hurdles and boundaries of the field. It is nearly impossible to gain access through this work space in only three months time, which was my allocated time frame for the field work. In a space where values like openness, creativity and collaboration are formalised and turned into a business, only few ways of interacting worked, and I reflected on these. These reflections led to more attributes of the antitype that I am describing. Coworking as an ambiguous space that represents a mixture of work and leisure and a possible gradual adaption to the norms of wider society will be discussed in 3.3.5. But in terms of my own adaption to the field, the following observation of a successful connection in the coworking space was very telling.

The following scene is from outside the coworking space, where a man in an expensive looking shirt and shoes was talking to a soft-spoken young man who was dressed in hipster clothing. This young man turned out to be Matteo, an intern for the other man's startup company. They were on a break from work, sitting on a bench.

```
The two of them were speaking and Matteo mentioned
something he had planned after his internship
in Berlin that he "hoped" to do. His supervisor
got all neoliberal and annoying about it, and
said [...] "Why do you say you hope? Anyone
can do anything, they just have to believe in
themselves, you should say "I will" rather than "I
hope" because otherwise you will never amount to
anything." I couldn't help myself and interrupted,
explaining that I thought this was actually just
humility and just acknowledging that not everyone
is lucky enough to do what they want. [...] Matteo
took a great liking to my line of argumentation
and we became friends.
                                Field Diary, Autumn 2016
```

In these reflections, one can see that as a researcher I was annoyed and not objective in my description of the scene. I myself feel impatient with the supervisor and show my annoyance, which then evokes sympathy with Matteo and subsequently makes it easier to converse with him. The attitude of being able to have any job you want as long as you "believe", as expressed by the supervisor, is not shared by Matteo. He is unsure about the future as he expressed to me in that and also subsqent conversations. By criticising his supervisor's attitude I distance myself from a neoliberal mindset, which can be seen as an antitype within hipsterism.

While the understandings of the term neoliberal may vary, in this context I understood the antithesis as such: to idealise investing in your own capital and thus be able to economise and benefit from it in a free and privatised economy. Matteo takes great liking in my arguments. My statements may have influenced this particular conversation a lot, but the following conversation showed that he opened up to me. It is likely that my distancing from this neoliberal tendency affected our relationship and made him more open to talk to me.

The following self-reflection in the logbook demonstrates another very interesting element of access.

```
I am not really part of everything here [in the
co-working space], because I am not a cool,
hip start-up, but rather an observer. I am
worried people could perceive me as a pretentious
academic, much like A. did when he said I have
institutionalised power. So when Matteo [works
for a start-up at the co-working space] asked what
I was doing here, I explain hipsterism as a lens
and mentioned that I was now looking at hipsterism
as a space. He asked what kind of space, and I
answered "I don't have a clue. I'm supposed to
find stuff out about space. I think that's hip
in sociology now, so yea that's what I'm doing.
Help me!" We both laugh, I think because it made
it less official, down to earth, I think he liked
that. And he says a few things. I ask him if I can
write it down, because it is so helpful. He seems
pleased with himself he can help me, and we both
smile. We exchanged email addresses and will meet
up again.
                                Logbook, Summer 2016
```

I realised when reflecting on this situation that I would have answered very differently if a fellow PhD candidate or supervisor had asked me the same question of what space as a lens means. Without consciously realising, I overemphasised my insecurity about the lens of space. In reality, by this point I had read Lefebvre (1991) and knew that this would help me understand hipsterism. I was going to try to analyse the lived experience of the social milieu that I was interacting with, analyse how it had been ideologically conceived, perceived and adapted with all its everyday practices and materiality. Space provided a lens with which I could understand how hipsterism is socially constructed and modified over time, and how

it is invested with symbolism and meaning. Instead, I chose to say "I think that's hip in sociology now, so yea that's what I'm doing".

Coming back and looking at these notes, there is a striking similarity between my reaction when asked about academia as an academic and the reaction of those in the field, when asked if they are Hipsters. I realised that I have unconsciously adapted to this field, by the way I have likened my reactions to those of my observed Hipsters. In a sense, they react a bit clueless, with ironic distancing and humour. Explaining exactly what a Hipster does, then distancing yourself by adding a "oh but I wouldn't know, I am not a Hipster am I? Haha" is similar to explaining you are indeed an academic pursuing a PhD, but "Oh I wouldn't know, I am not a real academic".

I only became aware of this through self-reflection, deep reading and awareness of my own thoughts, as well as through the evaluation and comparison with other field notes. Only through this distance is one able to critically discern the difference between what I answered in the field, and what I answer myself when thinking about this, or what I have answered in the past, when my supervisor or PhD colleagues asked about the concept of space in my work.

This extract from the field notes shows an almost orchestrated-like adaption, and seems to evoke sympathy and empathy, as well as distancing from labels, such as "the academic" and bears similarity to the Do-What-You-Love movement. It mirrors statements as the one by Noam when asked about his career: He claimed laughing, that: "we don't earn money" and that it's not sustainable and they will keep going for a while until the file bankruptcy.

The insecurity that I echo within this milieu helps me gain access and reflects Matteo's own insecurity. It is similar to the romantisation of precariousness and unsureness in the statements of Noam, when he explains his work and purpose with irony and makes jokes about becoming bankrupt.

Ultimately, the antitype within hipsterism is not just an uninspired worker, but can also be the Do-What-You-Love entrepreneuer. Someone who really believes in his work or dream.

Furthermore, within the discourse on hipsterism and its lifestyle, I observed a constant practice of distinction from what I have so far described as the antitype of the Hipster. This antitype is attached to material belonging, is selfish, uncreative, and unoriginal. The antitype is unaware of their own privilege, is neoliberal and loves speaking about their job. In a conversation about ownership and belonging Olivia explained to me:

> "Of course we are very lucky, we are with
> people who believe in the same stuff. It's not
> self-evident, I also get to know people who are
> very different, where you have to start right from
> the beginning."
>
>   *Conversation notes, Spring 2017*

The idea of having to start "from the beginning" was explored further in a narrative interview and later showed the idea of having a general direction or progression in society (see chapter 4). But it was also used in distinction and expressed a kind of antitype. Someone who is attached to their belongings. Someone who is attached to success. Someone "terrible" as she put it once before.

In order to protect himself and others from the greed, consumerism and capitalism of the anti-hipster lifestyle, Finn manages a space that is safe. He describes that as a manager of a vegan café he provides healthy food and fair products and tries to distribute them with little waste. He explains to me that:

> The goal of the shop is to spread veganism and
> also to open up to everyone, it is a safe space
> for anyone who would like to have good organic
> food
>   *Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2017*

It is interesting that the safe space is also a space to connect to others, to be able to express yourself and thus express your authentic self and be creative. One individual expressed that they would use their coworking space to cook together, that it is a very homely atmosphere and that I would be welcome. She described it as the perfect place to connect with others. One of the reasons people came to this working space and worked here was to connect to other creatives. This might not manifest in reality, but it is clearly part of the idealism of such spaces.

Finn mentioned to me that he feels "very comfortable and balanced, especially gender wise", and emphasised that they try to avoid gender stereotypes in the shop as well. He describes the safety of the space as following:

```
No pressure for the staff, rules for a shop: if
someone is rude, you don't have to take it; gender
roles don't exist, bottom line: equality, we don't
apply gender, we speak about it a lot, to raise
awareness.
                          Conversation notes, Summer 2017
```

This concept of a safe space extends not only to coffeehouses, restaurants or art galleries, but to the whole city of Berlin:

As Finn stated: "In Berlin, finally, I found somewhere I am safe". Noam once said to me: "Being gay is a good reason to come to Berlin". Presumably he meant that there was less discrimination here, or more people to connect with and a greater sense of openness, as opposed to how he described the situation for people who are gay in other places.

Similarly, Matteo describes Berlin as a safe space too, but rather in terms of being yourself and being able to hold onto and fulfil your dreams without being ridiculed. He explains, after I asked him about space, that

```
"For me all of Berlin is a space, not just this
area. Because everyone who has a dream comes here.
That's why people make fun of us, you can come
here to fulfil your dream, for self-realisation.
Spaces also have walls, and this wall is that
everyone can be whoever they want here. It is
colourful and diverse, and no one will laugh at
your dreams here, because we all have them."
                          Conversation notes, Summer 2017
```

In the lifestyle of hipsterism and in the way they conduct their day to day life, the respondents distance themselves from this antitype by being minimalist, creative, and even spiritual, as the following examples show.

This minimalist attitude extends to wanting to be more, as opposed to being, as one respondent claimed, one of those "people who want it now, and cheap, to just press a button, because they haven't got time" Many of the individuals I encountered within this milieu were using words like spiritual or holy. It seems to be essential

to this lifestyle, as yet another way to distinguish yourself from the antitype: the capitalist, or the materialist.

In the context of solidarity and sharing, Olivia shared with me that she believed she was religious: "I live according to these values, exactly with what some people see as their religion, I am a deeply religious person, without God."

In another conversation she shared with me as follows:

```
I've always had this boredom, always looking
for meaning, but nothing satisfied me really,
and always/something, in my life. I took lots
of drugs and had a lot of men, always trying to
satisfy myself somehow- maybe don't write this
part down (laughs). I am joking, of course you
can put everything. I really believe in Freud, my
superego is just really strong. I really want to
live according to these values I have
     Extract from a narrative interview, Spring 2017
```

The idea of being a seeker and looking for meaning which goes beyond the antitype of just living for the material world, results in attempted, vague and ambiguous forms of spirituality. In this case, Olivia shows that while she is slightly uncomfortable sharing this (a reminder that she is aware that it might be frowned upon in the wider society) she has tried to find this by experimenting with drugs and sexual relations.

During my time in Berlin, Noam curated many events about occultism and paranormal societies, as the following extract from my field diary shows:

```
He believes in sublimated spirituality, he is
religious even though he doesn't believe in
God, calls himself a agnostic. He says he has a
very open mind. Interest in occultism: Alleister
Crowley in Berlin -> super popular, 1200 people
came, OTO do events in their shop. Events on UFOs,
paranormal society does events there as well (Noam
also claims to have seen a UFO and would love to
see a ghost, but also believes that the UFO was
```

> just in his head, which doesn't make it less real,
> mentions Carl Gustav Jung)
>   *Conversation notes, Summer 2016*

How he sees spirituality as a sublimation, as a defense mechanism to socially unaccepted urges or desires, was not entirely clear to me. However, Jung's theory of sublimation is mystical in nature. Noam understood his belief in irrational things, in the power of the mind, and occultism, as an expression of distancing himself to the homo economic rational man.

I encountered more or less serious forms of spirituality repeatedly in my observations, mostly as a mechanism to distance or to protect oneself from the antithesis of hipsterism described above.

The hipster Weserstrasse also advertises shamanic practices, holistic yoga healing and other forms of spirituality that can be associated with the New Age and with the practices of spirituality stemming from the 1960s and 1970s.

I observed many posters, post-its, and flyers advertising alternative healing practices and shamanic healing art, as well as more superstitious practices, such as Tarot. Image 3.5 shows some of these, again with the aesthetically new, creative advertising that might not be conscious in this case, but is reminiscent of the advertising of the tattoo studio that was mentioned in the context of creativity (3.3).
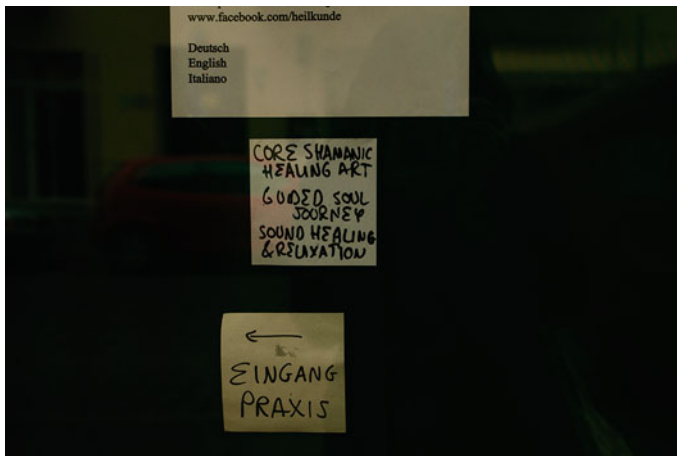
Figure 3.5 Seen near Weserstrasse, advertising alternative healing methods with sound work above and core shamanic healing below. (Semple, 2017a)
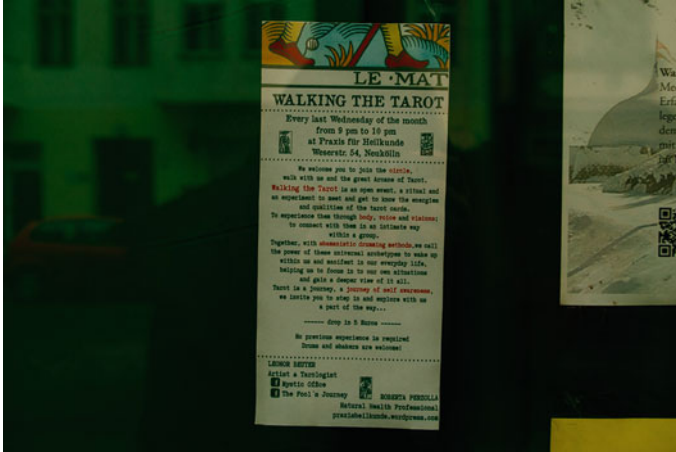
Figure 3.6 Also on Weserstrasse, an offer to a tarot seminar. (Semple, 2018d)

Though I did not meet any people actually using such forms of therapy, in one conversation a group of friends excitedly discussed the possibility of going to a session together, where the psychedelic drug ayahuasca, which stems from spiritual medicine of indigenous nations around the Amazon, would be used as a method to get rid of the self and ego and live in pure consciousness.

In this sense, the individuals that are associated with hipsterism that one can encounter today are strongly reminiscent of the 'Angel-headed hipsters' Ginsberg (2015) described in his poem about the beats, looking for a heavenly connection, and hoping to evoke a spiritual awakening from within.

There is also a basic awareness that the appropriation of such practices, such as in New Age spirituality, could be problematic Fig. 3.6.

```
Alternative book stores are mostly very new age,
like Buddhism – but for the western mind. Noam
doesn't like that.
                    Conversation notes, Summer 2016
```

While criticism of western cultural imperialism or cultural appropriation was not explicitly stated, my respondents did in some cases show awareness of this problem.

It would not be hipster if there was not also an example of this spirituality used ironically in a hipster coffee shop. Like weeds, coffeehouses with an minimalist hipster aesthetic that offer speciality coffee and vegan, organic foods, are sprouting on the Sonnenallee, such as "Holy Coffee", which suddenly showed up between a Turkish fast food restaurant and a cheap Chinese restaurant.

Image 3.7 shows the slogan is "In coffee we trust", a mockery of the motto "In God we trust".

Figure 3.7 "In Coffee we trust". (Semple, 2018c)

Generally, my impression remained that apart from curiosity and interest, my contacts in the field did not seriously engage in any of these practices with long term committment. These spiritual or alternative means of healing were rather to be understood within a larger sense of generally finding meaning in life:

```
I guess it's giving yourself a sense of purpose,
in the end, the eternal search for something.
I don't know for what I am living exactly, I am
still searching for meaning in this world, and my
only expectation from the life is to live a good
way.
    Extract from a narrative interview, Spring 2017
```

In addition to the construction and adaption of values, spiritual or moral in nature, some alternative ways to challenge the worlds problems were also mentioned, which we will analyse further in chapter 4.

The discourse often revolved around how a response of love to hatred, as well as mindfulness in actions, can have an effect. Love, spirituality and mindfulness are seen as an antidote within the safe spaces to protect the respondents. Finn explained to me that if one of his employees was not working well, he would not be worried about the customers or the impact on the income, but rather how to spread love.

```
If someone is not working well/ impolite to
customers etc, he constantly thinks about how to
deal with this, how to do the best thing. (He uses
the example of Trump) "If you treat someone with
hate, it only creates hate, if you treat everyone
with love, love spreads."
                        Conversation notes, Summer 2017
```

Amongst all these values, it is most interesting that the milieu has great issues with capitalism and consumption, but engage very explicitly in a specific kind of consumption collectively. One respondent described this antitype as the person who wants everything immediately. Thoughtless consumption and directly wanting to fulfil your desire to consume by ordering at online shops such as Amazon are criticised repeatedly. However, the milieu engages in constant consumption of a specific kind. Whether it is minimalism (consuming very little in an aesthtically pleasing way), consuming spiritual good (specific drugs or engaging in shamanic practices), or consuming fair trade and vegan all are practices that are very much defined by consumption. Consumption becomes a stratifying element, just like Bauman (2008) describes. The effect and potential of consumption will be explored further in section 4.3.2. But for now it is interesting to see that the antitypes are understood as capitalist and slaves to consumption and production, but the respondents engage and occupy their minds at length with these processes.

3.3 Do-What-You-Love—A Process of Transition

As an antitype to the enslaved or uninspired worker, and being as creative as they aspire to be, my respondents demonstrated a cross section of various stages in

the process of the becoming of hipster. This process can be described along two simultaneous narratives.

Observed along a linear process of life course, the respondents demonstrated becoming self-sufficient working adults, from being part-time workers, students or interns. My respondents demonstrated various stages of this process.

From a spatial perspective, my respondents interacted with space and constructed spaces for the use of work or leisure, often interchangeably. This spatial dimension demonstrates the process of transformation of leisure into work and vice versa. The objects that occupy these spaces are also of importance. They demonstrate a fetishisation that facilitates this transformation process along with the physical space.

The spaces that were involved not only facilitated the linear process of individuals described above and ambiguity of spaces of work and leisure, but also a transformation of awareness about one's own privilege and the structures of capitalism—and how they enable or hinder the growth process of becoming a Hipster.

These two narratives, the linear process of becoming and the spatial perspective, interlace in the attitude of Do-What-You-Love. This motto articulates the attitude that young adults are encouraged to pursue work that is enjoyable or pleasurable to them. Thus Do-What-You-Love expresses the first perspective- finding work and becoming a self-sufficient adult- and the second—transitions and interchangeability of work and leisure.

In the following chapter I will introduce the concepts of Do-What-You-Love and the fetishisation of commodities by means of coffee culture. Then we will turn to the question of having freedom to choose work you love and implications of the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski et al., 2005) and the dimensions of capital and advantages in the field (Bourdieu, 2012). My respondents partly demonstrate a sense of security that is elicited by capitalism to undergo risks. This sense of security stabilises capitalism itself.

Following this description of the social milieu on the basis of my observations, the idea of hipsterism as a process of becoming an adult, and the life courses with various stages along these lines will be described. Ultimately the analysis of their life course showed that my respondents demonstrate the different stages of the process, and especially two different results of this process that I will describe: the heroic failure of Do-What-You-Love, framed as a flaw of capitalism, and the successfully established and adapted adult Hipster.

The process described is facilitated by spaces of ambiguity that demonstrate obstacles and barriers of hipsterism, as well as a growing awareness and consciousness of the dynamics of capitalism at play. The context of spaces that represent this process will be introduced, in reference to Lefebvre (1991).

Conclusively, the coworking space shall be introduced as one manifestation of contradictions that result between the lived, conceived and perceived or practised space. It emerges as a space facilitating the adaption to the reality of a economy dominated by capital, profit and competition, whilst trying to maintain a creative, collaborative and friendly atmosphere.

3.3.1   Do-What-You-Love

The first and foremost choice within a lifestyle remains what one chooses to do to earn a living. As a more fundamental choice, rather than the day to day decisions that also give life consistency, this choice is slightly more ultimate. All my respondents had work that directly or indirectly shaped culture—again showing the importance of creativity (Reckwitz, 2014) and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2012) in this social milieu.

Considering work life, according to Giddens (1991) lifestyles in modern societies usually impact the choice of work. My respondents emphasised choosing a job based not only on their strengths or talents, but rather one that they are passionate and joyous about. This can be associated with the Do-What-You-Love attitude. Giddens (ibid., 82 f.) explains that an individual's lifestyle forms an institutional setting that helps the individuals shape their everyday actions, and also their strategic life-planning and life politics. The life-planning and life politics express their emancipated decision-making and directing of their own biography. This includes the important aspect of what to do for a living.

My respondents showed strong identification with the work they were doing–or trying to do. However, unlike what is typical in western, modern individuals of higher class, it was not necessarily the work that they earned a living for. They often understood themselves as creating individuals, still finding out how to make it sustainable.

My respondents spoke of doing what they love repeatedly. Some aware of the fact that it probably will not be sustainable, others with the idea that there might come a breakthrough. The idea of Do-What-You-Love is closely associated with hipsterism and youth culture in general.

```
His parents support him by paying the rent of his
apartment and he works for a small coffeehouse
once a week. In his free time he does art. He
```

```
doesn't want to work in an office environment,
where he has to follow the visions of someone
else, thereby displaying the Do-What-You-Love
attitude. He has many ideas for the future, but
merely in theory. Becoming an artist, or opening
up a coffeehouse are some ideas he has.
                                   Field Diary, Summer 2016
```

The above observation is a typical example for many conversations pertaining to work. Respondents expressed their wish to do some work they are passionate about, often a combination of something creative and ethical. One of the startups that I encountered in the observations within a coworking space was a company that produced organic tampons, which were biodegradable. One respondent had made his hobby of writing poetry slams his full-time career. He was touring around German speaking countries with shows of his own, publishing books, giving workshops and was being commissioned by various companies to write texts for them. He also had a project with the elderly with Alzheimer's, writing and reciting poetry with them.

The idea of working for someone else, or on a dream that is not one's own, is looked down upon. As the respondent above explained to me, he doesn't want to work for an office job or for someone else, thus expressing the importance not only of creativity, but also of independence and authenticity. One is again reminded of the anti-type of the uninspired, or even enslaved and exploited worker, who would have to work for someone else. However, in the example above the individual agrees to work for someone else part time, thus possibly enabling himself to fulfil his dream of becoming an artist, or opening up his own coffeehouse in the future.

While various respondents demonstrate different stages of the process of Doing-What-You-Love, especially divergent stages of being able to earn a living with it, the transition of leisure to work often included a fetishisation of the products that individuals deal with in their work, most present in my data in the example of coffee culture.

In the following I will demonstrate this fetishisation of the work and the objects surrounding it, as an example of Do-What-You-Love in the baristas that work in cafés and coffee shop owners.

3.3.2   Coffee Culture and the Practice of Fetishisation

Coffee, as a commodity, is not just sold, but also ritualised and served in the setting of a coffeehouse, which is a highly frequented space in the hipster scene.

As early as in the 17th century, the coffeehouse stood for a space where intellectuals would meet and engage in political and public discourses. As Manzo (2010, 141–142) explains, public sociality and social interaction are closely connected with the commodification of coffee and the sites of its consumption.

Modern sociability is closely connected to coffee consumption today, and thus it also includes an important role in spatially organising encounters and discourse. Manzo (ibid.) explains that "among a subculture of certain coffee connoisseurs, the coffee itself is a topic that is an organizing focus of, and for, that sociability".

Some of my respondents spoke of their work the way Benjamin did. He was slightly older than the rest of my respondents at 35, and describes aspects of his work below.

```
There is this movement called third wave coffee
or speciality coffee and it's like a different
view on coffee as a beverage, and you have to
have a certain mindset on coffee and what it is
as a product. And I look for cafés that have this
special mindset. This means that I choose cafés
that share this mindset. They see more in coffee
than just a bitter drink that makes you awake.
       Extract from narrative interview, Summer 2016
```

Third wave coffee consumption as my respondents mentioned, is described by Manzo (ibid.) in the context of the first two waves. He describes this historical perspective of what he calls the coffee geek culture.

> The "first wave," according to the coffee geeks' timeline, refers to how coffee was prepared and consumed in, say, the 1950s until, say, the early 1990s, when coffee was a "caffeine delivery system" prepared in percolators or massive urns in offices and banquet halls. (Manzo, 2010, p. 143)

This pertains to the description of my respondent, explaining that he sees more in coffee than "just a bitter drink that keeps you awake".

The "second wave" refers to that period, starting in the early 1990s, when coffeehouse chains (Starbucks, Gloria Jean's, The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf, Second Cup, etc.) were founded and became common features in urban storefronts and suburban malls. The "second wave" purveyors, this history claims, laid the groundwork for the "third wave," which comprises small-batch artisanal coffee roasters and independent or smallchain coffeehouses that are themselves part of a supply chain including a collection of field-to-cup actors starting with direct-trade growers with whom the coffee brokers, roasters, and coffeehouse owners are understood to have a relationship. (ibid., p. 143)

My respondents repeatedly criticised what turned out to be second wave coffee, either explicitly or implicitly and through distinction. Statements were made about how the trends being described here as *third wave* are then imitated by coffeehouse chains such as Starbucks or McCafé, and "are then capitalised again and again, so you lose faith" as one respondent described.

To identify with a product you are selling to the extent of calling it a mindset or attitude, as Benjamin does in the statement above, demonstrates the fetishisation of coffee and the process of drinking it. In current coffee culture, the taste of the coffee and gentle processing of the coffee bean are extremely important. As one respondent explained, the aim is to keep the original taste that one can find in the cherry and sustain it through the entire coffee-making process.

One element of this fetishisation is then learning or acquiring a taste for what is considered good coffee. In reference to Bourdieu (2012), coffee becomes one taste in a palette of distinction. Bourdieu (ibid., p. 441) explains that by their taste, individuals position themselves in society and this bears testimony to their unique personality and indicates their position in the social space they find themselves in.

However, while Bourdieu (ibid.) explains consumption patterns as a result of societal circumstances and habitus, my respondents saw themselves as if they were on a mission to civilise and educate the masses about the true value and taste of coffee, and they saw an effect through their behaviour. They framed it, much like in the case of veganism, as an attempt to help others see and widen their horizon. Benjamin once mentioned how he is proud of showing others what coffee can be.

In addition to being able to differentiate good and bad coffee, and detecting "the different nuances of taste that can be found in the original bean", as one respondent put it, third wave is identified as a transformation of the production of coffee. It involves communication and transparency during the whole process of commodification. This means including every party in the communication, from the coffee farmers to the preparation of the drink itself, "in order to get the best flavour", as one respondent explained.

This has various supposed side benefits that the respondents emphasise, such as better conditions for the farmers.

Framed as a positive side effect, one respondent explained:

```
(...) there are different ways, and it has a
huge effect and makes a big difference also
in the taste at the end. And then there is
also the aspect of the trading between farmers
and roasters. Usually there is a market that
determines the price and availability. In the
third wave approach, roasters try to engage
directly with the farmers, without a middleman,
there is a direct approach. Direct trade is
what it's called. (...) The idea is that if you
have a direct relationship between farmers and
roasters, it benefits all: there is an exchange
of knowledge and everyone benefits and can earn
more. What happens is that the roasters then have
a big impact on how the how farming is done, the
farmer can implement the recommendations, and the
roaster gets higher quality raw coffee. So this
cooperation is developed and the farmers can earn
more, for example through having a better product,
or having less waste. All in all, you get a higher
quality product, we get better coffee and the
customer, and the farmers have a higher yield when
they harvest the coffee, because they get tips
from experienced roasters.
     Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2016
```

What stands out is the "huge effect" and "big difference" that this mindset is supposed to make. While the difference in the taste of the coffee is likely minimal, described in terms as "subtle" and "nuanced", the infrastructure around it is given the biggest importance according to this statement.

In this context the respondent emphasises that a direct relationship between himself and coffee farmers has various advantages that benefit all. It is understandable that a greater influence on the farming process is an advantage for the roaster who will receive beans that have been farmed in a way that enables him to sell a better product to his customers. According to this respondent, the farmer is benefitting

from the expertise of the roaster. I could not find out whether this advantage for the farmers is an actual benefit that can be measured, for example whether they are able to charge more for the beans or something similar.

However, one aim of this third wave process is to uncover hidden information about the commodification process and reveal the conditions of production, also to inform consumers about their relevance. Some coffeehouses offer seminars, courses and workshops about these subjects and teach how to process the coffee yourself in this gentle way. This information can then also influence consumers, allowing them also to make ethical decisions about their consumption, which is important to them. Within the social milieu, buying fair trade coffee is emphasised as important. Most of the coffee houses also have a low waste policy, or offer incentives to customers to take away food and drinks in their own containers that they had brought from home.

Nevertheless, in my experience, having spoken to established entrepreneurs and roasters in this social milieu, the positive effects for the coffee farmers or environment for example, are understood as a "side benefit" as Benjamin also once called it. This distinguishes it significantly from veganism or vegetarianism, which is often framed by my respondents as a clear ethical decision, in support of sustainability, the environment and animal rights (see also 4.3.2). The first and foremost priority in the third wave movement seems to be having a great product and to educate the masses on how important the quality and preparation of the coffee are.

My respondents' moral and ethical choices and solidarity played a larger role in their consumption behaviour (see also 4.3.2) rather than for the production or sale of products. For an established entrepreneur and owner of a coffeehouse, the product itself and how to sell it played a larger role. What can be seen here is the transformation along their life course, but also the movement from an idealistic consumer of goods who wants to buy ethical products, towards a salesperson who will have to ensure that his business can survive in the economy. This process is facilitated by spaces such as the coffeehouse itself.

3.3.3   Freedom and Choices to Do-What-You-Love

The freedom of choice to not only consume such goods, but even to pursue a kind of work that one loves, is enhanced by the privileges that the respondents enjoyed, for example high economic and inherent cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2012), as well as security nets through their families. They also demonstrated a belief in the security that capitalism offers, even if they did not have a family or economic safety net to fall back on in case of failure. While some respondents had not studied but had

rather done an apprenticeship, many came from high socioeconomic backgrounds, and benefited from higher education, either through themselves or through their parents.

At 26 Marvin identifies himself as an artist, and only works part-time at the moment, even though he finished his BA in graphic design several years ago. His parents support him by paying the rent of his apartment, and he works as a barista a few days a week.

Marvin is able to work a part-time job and to do art at the same time, with its cost of time-consumption and the expense of materials and a studio. Amongst others, this example demonstrated how interdependent the areas of work, leisure, identity and privileges are—such as having supportive parents and high economic capital.

In this context it is essential to look at the various areas of work and leisure, the construction of identity and the spaces of hipsterism as a coherent whole.

While it seems to be an uplifting piece of advice, Do-What-You-Love can be associated with a very privileged and elitist world-view and is closely related to the idea of neoliberalism, in which individuals are urged to invest in their own human capital (Harvey, 2005), in order to be able to earn a lot of money, whilst doing something they really enjoy.

Here a contradiction emerges, as being neoliberal is also an antitype to hipsterism.

Do-What-You-Love does not take social inequity, unfair conditions and circumstances of capitalistic society into consideration. The ideology of Do-What-You-Love can be used to justify a discrimination of labour workers, as opposed to successful entrepreneurs and self-employed individuals. This discrimination stems from an understanding that failing to work for yourself or have a job you really love if your own fault. The reason for their failure to get a high paying and excellent job that makes labour workers happy and inspired is that they were not inspired enough or worked hard enough to do something for a living that they love. In other cases from among my respondents, labour is regarded merely as a stepping stone for a "real", "fulfilling" career. As the following extract shows, Benjamin, the owner of the coffeeshop, emphasises that he understands that working for him is merely a stopover, and not an employer's "life" yet. This also emphasises that once you find a fulfilling job and can Do-What-You-Love, this work becomes your life.

```
...most of my employees are in a situation where
they are studying. So they work for me to get them
through school. And I myself worked jobs like that
during my studies [...]I try to always remember
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> that people who are working for me, it's not their
> life. Those who work in my cafe as baristas or
> servers, it's not their life or main focus. [...]
> I always try to help and support, and make things
> easier for them, as this job is not their entire
> focus, and I understand that and try to make it
> work.
>   *Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2016*

Individuals who are not so successful in finding such a job that they love longterm could be held responsible for their failure themselves. This takes the prerequisite of capital in all its facets according to Bourdieu (2012) for example, out of the equation.

To start up a new company based on an idea, or to seek ones fulfilment as an artist while working as a barista, requires safety in an economic sense, through substantial economic capital, or a safety net of a materially comfortable family. But even those who didn't have such a financial safety net, such as Noam, demonstrated the belief that capitalism stabilises society. Even though the respondents were critical of capitalism, when explored more deeply in conversations, they demonstrated the belief that on some level capitalism gives you freedom to do what you wish. Another understanding that was very common in older respondents was that capitalism is just. This did not at all reflect younger respondents' attitudes. Benjamin, one of the oldest respondents, once stated that he also has all the risk, so it is only fair if he earns more than his workers. While his workers are in a safe position, he has invested all his savings into this coffeeshop, as well as the financial help he was getting from his parents. His workers however are still young, and carry none of the risk, which is why they are not paid as well.

Another example portrays a belief in the security net of a welfare system. Noam believed that he risks becoming bankrupt and can take that risk, because of the system he acts in. He also appreciates that the laws make it possible for him to Do-What-He-Loves.

> Noam explained more about his work situation for
> me today. He explains that it is special to Berlin
> that there aren't many chain stores but rather
> small stores. "In the US and Israel and with

> amazon, so you have no chance. Here there are laws
> of how much a book can cost, big chains and us,
> we sell at the same prices, but we have a better
> selection of special books."
>
>   *Field Diary, Summer 2016*

Noam is explaining here that he appreciates the laws on how much a book cost, which make it possible for a small independent store to compete with large scale online ones. At a later time he emphasised how lucky he felt to be in Germany, and how little understanding he had for people who complain a lot. He claimed that while he does not like capitalism and he also sees major problems in market economy, there is at least safety, "you will always have a roof over your head at least".

However, both Noam and Benjamin explained that they risk becoming bankrupt and losing all their investments, whether financial or personal.

Being able to live such in a way, risking to fail or become bankrupt, demonstrates what Boltanski et al. (2005) explain as the assumed security which capitalism seems to provide in the new spirit of capitalism. One very interesting example is job security, which was very important in the 1960s as well as in current societies. However, in the 60s it involved paternalism, a high importance of personal relationships and personal property. Now job security is reframed through the concept of employability. This employability re-assigns the job of gaining and maintaining security to the individual workers, who develop their own employability as they gain experience.

We also see a third tendency amongst these respondents: they believe that capitalism allows them to have a job they do not enjoy, for now, and enables them thus to Do-What-They-Love in the future. Or vice versa. This is demonstrated in Noam's statement about always having a roof over his head at least. It is also demonstrated in the idea of doing another job for now so you can Do-What-You-Love in the future, the way Benjamin describes it and Matteo lives it.

To believe that there is a safety net and thus to get involved in capitalism, corresponds to the general arguments in favour of capitalism outlined by Boltanski et al. (ibid.). As mentioned in 1.4.3, when individuals believe that generally involvement in capitalism is exciting, because it provides liberation for those involved to pursue a career they enjoy, that capitalism offers security and safety for all involved, and that capitalism ultimately leads to the common good, it becomes stable against criticism.

However, the main problem that Boltanski et al. (ibid., 163 ff.) describe, is that these arguments do not take into consideration various or unique constitutions of an individual's life, and how these factors might benefit or hinder them.

In spite of this dynamic that Boltanski et al. (2018) describe, my respondents, without exception, showed awareness and understanding that the unique circumstances, often framed as "luck" in the discourse, give them privilege and allow them to pursue options. They expressed their understanding that others, who live in a society with the same economic circumstances, are not able to pursue such an option.

In practice, this understanding and awareness expresses itself in two models of thought, which can also be understood along the lines of a linear life course.

On the one hand it can express itself by understanding that these social differences are present, and there is not much that can be done about them. This feeling of helplessness thus leads to a cynical attitude towards societal structure.

On the other hand, I have observed in my respondents a feeling of obligation towards society and thus to try and shape the little factors that lie in one's power to compensate for this injustice. This is portrayed by the generous and "cool" boss, described in section 3.3.4.

Which of these reactions comes into being is closely connected to the implicit anthropology that underlines the thought of the individual (discussed in 4.1.4), and also the success or failure of the individual to use circumstances and conditions to pursue a Do-What-You-Love career, as will be discussed in the next section.

3.3.4   The Process of Transition—Life Course in Hipsterism and Success and Failure

The process of becoming within hipsterism can be narrated along three different stages. These stages correspond to different levels of not only increasing economic independence and self-sufficiency, but also along the awareness of—and adaption to—the dynamics of capitalism.

Another element that detectably decreased in the process of my respondents is the level of idealism and the hopefulness to be able to contribute meaningfully to society.

In order to demonstrate this process and its subsequent stages, we will distinguish three very simplified ideal types in the following, illustrated by examples from the field.

In the first stage, the individual in this social milieu is a young adult, who was either studying or recently finished school or university and was starting to work or starting an internship.

The following statement is by an intern who was working for a startup in a
coworking space.

> "That's why people make fun of us, you can
> come here [Berlin] to fulfil your dream, for
> self-realisation. ...It is colourful and diverse,
> and nobody will laugh at your dreams here, because
> we all have them."
>   *Conversation notes, Winter 2016*

The respondent moved to Berlin in the hope of finding fulfilment. There is a sense of
collectivity expressed here by using the word "us" and "we". Berlin is romanticised
as a place where those who have not yet lost hope, or those are young and full
of enthusiasm and dreams are welcome. It resonates with the safe space that is
described in section 3.2.

Within this stage, the respondents are also aware that their dreams are sometimes
unrealisable. They emphasise that they just want to try. The understanding that it is
unlikely is a subtle indicator that there is an awareness of privilege and capital as
determinating factors for Do-What-You-Love. In no conversation did I meet anyone
who met the criteria of hipsterism but that emphasised that Doing-What-You-Love
is easy or merely takes determination and will-power.

Characteristics of this stage are hopefulness and idealism, but also an awareness
that there are contradictory dynamics of capitalism that might stand in the way of
fulfilling one's dreams.

Noam was an especially interesting case study in my field, because I encountered
him right at the beginning of my first research phase and kept in touch with him
until the writing of the thesis now. The progression along this linear process was
very visible, in one of the first conversations he said the following:

> I ask about the sustainability of their company
> and Noam explains that after the first year they
> kind of covered cost, but barely. But they haven't
> made profit yet, but his colleague, the owner, has
> money to spare. "The salary I make is very low, so
> hopefully soon we can make it work to survive, and
> keep it going as long as we can."
>   *Field Diary, Summer 2016*

As a young man starting to work as a manager of an independent book store, Noam represents this early stage. While he is aware that the success of his shop might be difficult in the age of Amazon and other internet stores, as well as big chain book stores with a higher variety of choices, he is hopeful. He shows an awareness that sustaining a shop with these aims does not come without its challenges. Two years later, the store has gone bankrupt and has closed.

The general attitude of Do-What-You-Love might lead one to believe these individuals are just naive and privileged individuals that do not understand that it requires a lot of privilege. This is how Hipsters are also often portrayed in the media and across internet platforms. They show however that even in the earliest stages they are aware of the social discrepancy and disparity in some areas.

My respondents expressed their awareness that it is problematic, either explicitly, or through ironic self-distancing. Their awareness of their own privilege can be seen in the following extracts.

```
The biggest and most basic thing is that I always
know that I have the support of my family in my
decisions. And I always knew my family has my
back. Unless it is a really stupid decision, I can
always count on their support.
    Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2016
```

In the following case the individual, who was one of the few respondents who hadn't studied, was from abroad. He maintains an awareness of the privileges he enjoyed, and he distinguishes himself from political refugees or people who have left the country because of economic challenges.

```
He says it is hard for him to say that he left for
political reasons in the classic sense, because he
is not a refugee, "I'm not even an immigrant, but
a citizen here." He also had a family to help and
support him home. Also he is not the one suffering
from the regime. He describes that it's more the
"middle class I'm sick of all this shit"- reason
and because the political system there is so
```

```
 "intense" it took a toll on him, he was angry and
 sad and depressed all the time.
                               Field Diary, Spring 2016
```

In this case the individual distinguishes himself from refugees who have to flee for political and economic reasons. He explains that he has a support system, as opposed to many refugees who also come from abroad. The reason for coming to Berlin is mostly because there was political turmoil in his country, and he needed to escape from that. He frames this as a privilege that many other refugees do not have. The awareness that one enjoys certain privileges seems to be fundamental to my respondent's sense of authenticity. As mentioned before, authenticity is an important element of being hipster. This earliest stage shows that from the beginning, there are important elements of awareness and authenticity within this social milieu.

The second stage can be understood as the gateway or entry into the job market. Characteristics of this stage are the decrease of financial support from parents or institutions and thus increasing economic independence, insecurity and a practical experience of the dynamics at play in capitalist societies.

This practical experience in turn has a twofold effect. The first effect is the growing disillusionment as regards the opportunities or possibilities to contribute meaningfully and change social and economic structures, all while having and keeping a job one enjoys. A typical statement might be something along the lines of "I have been working for a while now, and the company I work for does not earn so much money. Our product is a niche-type product, and we can't keep up with Starbucks / Amazon / McCafé".

The second possible effect of this entry into the market derives from a direct experience of the imagined or real benefits of capitalism. This experience leads to decreasing idealism and reduces hope to find creative and ethical work.

Of course, with hipsterism being a transition phase between education and pursuing a career as a means of becoming the imagined self-sufficient, creative individual, the respondents are actually confronted with the real necessity to finance yourself and provide for the material means of living. One respondent, for example, explained that he had not gone to university, but if he had, he would have studied "something with humanities" and it would not have made a difference to his current situation, because "with that you don't get a job anyway".

This demonstrates the increasing disillusionment and decreasing idealism, that one can actually earn a good living with things one is passionate about. It also reflects an increasing understanding within the milieu that work security has decreased in

modern society, and it is up to the individuals to stay active and make themselves attractive enough for the work market.

In another instance a respondent explained that they do not make money and that their business is not sustainable and doomed to fail. All they want to do is to be able to work in a field that they find interesting—at least for a little time—before they inevitably fail and move on. This is portrayed by a later stage with Noam and his explanation that he is basically waiting until he becomes bankrupt and that he is trying to enjoy the job as long as he can.

In the following example the respondent demonstrates a subtle but growing doubt about his Do-What-You-Love career and whether it is sustainable.

```
I think that people are happier now, that they
used to be. People used to be sad, just working
for money. I grew up in a family where I was
told that I can do whatever I want, I could just
pick my studies and so on. And I think that these
decisions I made were shaped by these freedoms.
Even though it might be that I am fooled by
capitalism, I pressed myself into this shape. I
work so much, and I hardly ever go on holiday.
    Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2016
```

In the above case the respondent links the mere working for money to unhappiness. However, he expresses the feeling that while the decisions he makes seem to be shaped by his freedoms, he may be "fooled by capitalism". He feels as if he pressed himself into a shape, because he hardly ever goes on holiday and works a great deal. This implies knowledge, or at least growing awareness that Do-What-You-Love also leads to individuals working much more than they might do otherwise. It resonates with the New Spirit of Capitalism (Boltanski et al., 2005), in which exploitation is more subtle and freedom to do what you love comes at a high cost. These observations complement Boltanski et al. (ibid.)'s theory, by the subjects' growing awareness of issues affected by the New Spirit of Capitalism, without understanding the underlying structures that shape them.

Benjamin described his attitude and his work with coffee as a special mindset. When I first met him, he was looking for collaborators and other coffeehouses that have a similar attitude. While it started out as passion-driven and creative work, with the progression of the business, Benjamin, like any other entrepreneur, was faced with the need to sustain his coffeehouse. To be able to survive and sustain your business you need customers and increasing sales. With this realisation come techniques and ideas one might have to conform to, to be able to sell. One being the example Benjamin shared was the possibility of getting his coffeehouse on a special map to advertise the mindset that attracts customers who are interested in the specific product.

```
And there is a kind of service in quotations marks
that's called third wave coffee map, and then the
coffeehouses are listed. People apply for a marker
on this map and then they check your sources and
website and Instagram and Facebook account, to
see if you are like-minded with their ideas and if
they think you fit in their profile of shops, they
put a marker for your coffeehouse on their map.
     Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2016
```

This also implies a growing awareness that to be like-minded and idealistic is not enough, but one needs to be visible and attractive to customers. His description is a very technical and rational one, and as such distances it from other statements I heard from him. In this case he matter-of-factly states that he needs to be on the map, because that is where specific clients can find your business and buy your products.

The third and final stage along this continuum marks the success or failure in the process of Do-What-You-Love. While the stages of this process do not necessarily end in a climax or complete and utter failure, there are two narratives that one can hear from the respondents.

The clearest forms of recognising the advantages of a supportive and economically stable background are visible in this stage, as the following extract shows:

```
My family, my background is typical German upper
middle class. Both my parents work since I was
little, three siblings. Overall I lived in a
family where I can more or less freely express
myself and it was never a problem that I wanted
to quit a secure and safe job, but instead take a
risky unsecure route of starting my own business.
     Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2016
```

One young respondent, Caroline, who was described by her friends as "a Hipster by the book", exemplifies this stage. During the fieldwork done in the summer of 2016, she broke up with her boyfriend, while she was working at the city theatre as a successful make-up artist.

```
Her reason for breaking up with him is that he
is not driven enough and does nothing. It seems
she also prefers to hang out with her colleagues,
who also happen to be Hipsters, working at the
theatre [...] She shows no serious interest in
keeping up and hanging out with their mutual
friends. Questionably, this could be a problem
of hipsterism, in which Caroline wishes to live
her life as a Hipster and a contributing, artistic
member of society, and wants to isolate herself
from those that are holding her back, or it
could be a common lifestyle problem that isn't
hipster-related, but rather has to do with taking
responsibility as an adult and being independent.
                          Field Diary, Summer 2016
```

The struggle that she has with her boyfriend is described that he is doing "nothing", whereas in reality they seem to be at different stages within their life course. He is still in the phase of having a temporary job, whilst she was moving on to become successful in her artistic work and wished to live a lifestyle that reflected that success. Within a few months she became the managing make-up artist. He is still working

part time at a coffee house. In my observation at that time I asked myself the question of whether this is a problem of hipsterism, or whether it is a natural progression along a continuum in life with the step of taking responsibility as an adult and wanting to become financially independent. It seems that a question that then seemed to be "either or" turned out to be a false dichotomy. Hipsterism progresses along this exact continuum.

Her advantage in this case is that she works for a state-funded cultural institution and does not have to worry about her own business. Thus she can still express hipsterism by distancing herself a little from neoliberalism and businesses in general, but can still continue to make a living in a creative way.

However, there were also individuals with their own business who were not working for the public sector, who went on to become successful. They show a more drastic adaption to elements that they had criticised in an earlier life course stage.

An example for this successful creative ideal type is the poetry slammer Tom, who describes himself as a roaming poet. He has managed to turn his hobby of writing and performing poetry slams and hosting his own competitions into a career that can sustain him very well. After going from renting to buying his own apartment, he performed a slam text about being called a "square" by some of his friends. In the text he attacks his imagined opposite "Martin" and defends himself as a square. He allowed me to translate and use some of his text that will demonstrate the transition to a successful entrepreneur and the distinction he felt towards the younger generation of Hipsters.

```
But if your parents do not own their living space,
ask them how shit it is to soon have to pay the
rent from their pension. And to leave you to only
inherit the money from a savings account that has
shrunk slowly in the course of your lifetime, or
was flushed down the toilet in an equity fund.
Maybe they have no property because they wanted
to finance your communication design studies and
they had to suck on crispbread and participate in
illegal elderly battles, because while the other
communication design students loved your designer
I-phone cases made from upcycled children's
braces, no one wanted to buy them. And do you
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```
actually know that by law you have to be held
liable with your assets for the care of your
parents when their own fortune is exhausted?
 Performed Poetry Slam—Reprinted with permission of
author, Autumn 2016
```

The text implies that owning property, while it may be designated "square", is a reasonable and sensible choice in an age of financial insecurity. He implies the existence of financial insecurity through the example of his parents' shrinking savings account and the lost money of the equity fund. The text also criticises the financial dependence of the individuals in creative scenes on their parents, using the example of communication design as a typical course of studies and the upcycled I-Phone cases as a startup idea that failed.

Tom goes on later in the text to explain that the reason he is no longer interested in parties and loud music is because he is busy and successful.

```
I wonder, Martin, who also called me a Square when
I told you that I complained about the loud music
in the bar underneath my apartment, what you would
do if your crowdfunding project became successful
and you suddenly had to stop playing morning table
football in your company at 10, but had to be
at a project presentation with investors by 8,
and would realise that the dream you always had,
is about to be fulfilled. And whether the word
fulfilment would not get a whole new meaning. The
feeling that you have because something that was
important to you, now becomes something generally
important.
 Performed Poetry Slam—Reprinted with permission of
author, Autumn 2016
```

His imagined opposite Martin has criticised Tom that he gets up early and complains about music if it is played too loudly late in the evening. Tom's own success and his meetings with investors and presenting projects early in the morning is con-

trasted with the attempts and dreams that individuals have, whose dreams are not yet "important" to anyone except themselves. This again demonstrates the adaption and the celebration of being able to live square, as opposed to living a hip life. The hip idea of making a living off poetry slams is implemented and adapted to make a square lifestyle possible. This is reminiscent of the concepts of square and hip like the designations of Hipsters of the Bebop generation 1.2.

Further examples of the ideal type of the successful adult Hipster are those entrepreneurs who can be closely associated with the hip, casual entrepreneurs of the New Spirit of Capitalism (Boltanski et al., 2005).

```
I had the opportunity to join two friends of mine
who already had a Burger joint, and since my job
at the time was kind of boring and I always played
with the idea to be self employed, I just took the
chance. [...The job I had before] was a typical
nine to five office job and it was a medium size
company where the sales department has all the
power, and they dictated how the marketing work
should be done. Either way, I felt a little bit
like I couldn't do the work like I wanted to, and
I didn't have much freedom, and I felt stuck and I
played with the idea to leave for a long time, so
when the opportunity came I took it.
    Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2016
```

The ideal type of an entrepreneur within the New Spirit of Capitalism (ibid.) combines a few elements that can be closely associated to a "successful" Hipster in this narrative. One is that the respondents which were successful were dressed very casually. They also communicated a very casual attitude and spoke in informal ways. All the employees call them by their first name.

One of these exemplary entrepreneurs explained the relationship with his employees as follows.

```
First of all it makes it more enjoyable if you
feel like you are working with peers, or people
that you are on one level with, rather than a boss
```

and employee situation, where one is subordinate.
I made a lot of really good friends with my
employees. It's more often I feel like working
with friends, than being a boss that manages
employees. We also hang out in our free time after
work. We have a semi-regular meeting at work. You
don't have to come, it's not paid, but we have
games night or watch a movie. And it's sometimes
also work-related, like we meet to try new menu
items. It's always a good time for me. I think for
the employees it's similar too.
    Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2016

It seems interesting that the lines between leisure and workplace are becoming further blurred in the above example. This is depicted not just by the large companies which are forerunners of this model, such as Google and Ben and Jerry's, but also but also by the small, independent, unfranchised, local coffeehouse.

Another example of this success is Finn, who manages a vegan café.

Finn explains that bigger places try to come and
use their success to sell their goods, many times
companies like coca cola want to collaborate
with them, but "We have that power, Coca Cola
comes knocking, and we say no thank you, that's
empowering, that you have the power to say no"
                              Field Diary, Summer 2017

Success is framed here as the ability to say no to or refuse collaboration with companies that are bigger and more successful, even if it might be financially beneficial to both sides. Finn describes his position as an empowered one, because they are so successful with their business, their café, that they are able to say no and be independent of companies bigger and more powerful than theirs.

Another point is the conception of being a nice or good employer who is a team player. Here Benjamin describes what kind of a boss he tries to be:

```
...I myself worked jobs like that during my
studies and I had very cool bosses and I had very
shitty bosses, and I try to be like the cool ones
I had. ...I try to remember this and put myself
in their [the employee's] shoes and try to be
a good boss. Not just on a pure professional
level, but especially on a personal level. I
think it's important to communicate with your
employees, to understand and realise if they are
having struggles, whether it is work-related or
study-related. I always try to help and support,
and make things easier for them.
     Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2016
```

To assume and to try to understand and accept, as an entrepreneur, that the people who are working for you have another life purpose, seems aligned with the privilege within this scene. While the individuals working in this hipster coffeehouse might need a bit of extra money to keep them afloat while they are pursuing their studies, for example, they are not as dependent on it as someone whose whole livelihood is based on this job. The employer tries to make it fun for them, also understanding that these individuals will move on to their own careers in life, probably when they, too, open up a coffeehouse or begin a start-up company.

In the context of being a good boss, Finn also shared:

```
There are tons of other stuff I believe in, for
example treating ourselves and how we treat staff,
to take breaks, them to step outside if they feel
too pressured, because we are human, we are not
robots, everyone is allowed to be themselves
     Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2017
```

The statement that Finn believes in "treating ourselves" can be associated with a mentality of regularly partaking in activities that ones enjoys. This idea of being the nice entrepreneur, who is hip and trendy but also helpful and kind and treats himself with the other employees is completely aligned with the entrepreneur described by

Boltanski et al. (2005), who use this conception to explain that a new more subtle kind of exploitation is taking place.

Their workers just work temporarily and part time and thus do not demand the job security they would if they were employed properly. Perhaps a more subtle exploitation is possible, because they are working with a short-term vision that is reframed as enabling them to Do-What-They-Love in the future.

In this case, the implication that labour work is not really worthwhile becomes more apparent. It is implied that this work, (in the case of my respondents: cooking, baking, waiting tables and making speciality coffee beverages) is not a career or long term job. It is just a little stop over, before you find fulfilling work and can Do-What-You-Love.

However, if one fails to find this fulfilling work after trying, the narrative is a bit different.

As someone with little capital, who was unable to start his own shop or coffee-house, the manager of an events space explained to me that his friend is the owner, because the friend is the one who has the economic capital. The respondent works for him and manages the space and organises events there. He shared that he wanted to become a writer, but that did not work out and he would not be able to live off it. He described that he had "grown out of that dream".

This example explains why he has forsaken his dream, in this case the dream of becoming a writer, implying that it is not possible to survive on writing. It is quite possible to make a living on a career as a writer, just not very likely. It is implied that not many manage to successfully navigate a writing career, and thus a more sensible choice is to curate an event space, as an employee. It is interesting that this manager also implies this linear progression by saying that he has outgrown the dream rather than given up.

Similar to what Boltanski et al. (2018) describe in their profile of the project-oriented justificatory regime, this respondent has sacrificed dreams and no longer wants to be a writer. He demonstrates activeness, project initiation, his ability to get involved, adaptability, and flexibility, and with those attributes he curates the event space. He demonstrates the regime, by necessarily giving up plans as an investment to be 'great' someday, but for now, he uses his abilities to benefit him and his friend's idea, but without much hope that it will become successful.

In his explanation of what he "brings to the table", he narrates his contribution with emphasis on his ability to communicate with others and the ability to generate enthusiasm.

This narrative is often supplemented by a criticism of capitalism that appears to be a contemporary equivalent of the artistic critique of the late 60s (ibid., 419 f.). It attacks capitalism for the lack of opportunity to live a creative and artistic life.

In another statement a further respondent described the process of becoming successful as "pressing himself into the shape", which is incompatible with the idea of living an authentic life.

Respondents formulated their frustration about not being able to get a job they love, but rather to pursue seemingly more secure work, as a heroic failure. In my conversations this heroic failure appeared as a coping strategy to explain the lack of success in pursuing a dream. Statements such as "Capitalism simply does not allow...", followed by various ideas of what they had originally planned to do, were frequent. They also shared the idea of not wanting to press themselves into a shape that was set by capitalism.

An interesting example of this stage was another couple, Marvin and Anna. After a few years of Marvin trying to become a successful artist and working part time in sales, Anna complained in one instant, jokingly:

> "Marvin doesn't get that if work felt like
> leisure, it wouldn't be work, it would be
> leisure. Work isn't supposed to be super exciting,
> meaningful, and varied all the time. That's what
> your free time is for."
>
> *Conversation notes, Winter 2018*

The frustration implied in this instance is supplemented by the heroic acceptance of having to live a very simple life, with little money. Anna explains to me that she studied art, but will work at a job that is not amazing or fulfilling, but rather standard. Instead of finding that fulfilling Do-What-You-Love job, the two of them try to work part-time and never full-time. Anna explained to me that they "don't need much to live off, I don't need fancy things or holidays. We have our minibus and we buy very little." She explained that they would prefer that than to become "one of those crazy uptight workaholics that we would have to be to become successful".

In this instance one can see how the failure to become successful in this area is reframed as a distinction mechanism. To live a simple life is living an authentic life, because you have not as Noam once put it, "enslaved yourself", which you should avoid at all costs.

3.3.5   Spaces of Ambiguity

The influence of Do-What-You-Love and the process of transition leads to the emergence of ambiguous spaces that were once clearly designated to work or leisure. Thus, the social milieu of hipsterism offers various spaces that demonstrate the melting point of leisure and work activities. The development of such spaces and their effects on the individuals that frequent them, serve as examples for the all-round capitalisation of space and individuals.

An example of this is the emergence of the Soho House, an establishment that some of my respondents frequented. As a private membership-based club that targets people who are in the creative industries, it offers a space that some of my respondents explained was useful to connect to established artists or curators.

As will be explored in Section 3.4, it is embarrassing for individuals to be part of these practices of exclusivity, especially the admittance by nomination and recommendation. This demonstrates an understanding that such practices of exclusivity are problematic, but that they are also perceived by the individuals as unfortunately necessary to succeed within the creative industries.

When trying to start up a company, individuals are faced with the need for a clientele and advertising to be able to compete and succeed. These ambiguous spaces seem to facilitate the process of transmuting an idea or startup into a livelihood, in an atmosphere that conveys values that contradict this idea of exclusivity in a paradox way. Soho House employers mention time and again that their aim is to shake up the way the industry works, not to admit members merely because of their fame or celebrity status, but to merit their creativity instead. Another factor is that they claim that they do not allow sponsors to support their events and that they guard the secret of who and how individuals are invited to events of the houses, as was mentioned to me. As a vague denominator, "creativity" seemingly replaces economic with social and cultural capital.

While the Soho House in Berlin was still called a "Hipster Hangout", my respondents felt the need to justify their membership, and also emphasised the exclusive practices as a "necessary evil" quite explicitly. The resignation seems to grow with the respondents' exposure to the need of becoming successful and maintaining and sustaining their business or freelance work.

Another trend that is observable in Kreuzkoelln is the increase of so called coworking spaces. Various definitions for coworking space can be found, many emphasising that it is a community work space. In the broadest sense, coworking spaces are offices that vary greatly in their set up and interior design. Coworking in Kreuzkölln can generally be understood as a mode of working that is associated with collaboration and mutualism, rather than competition. Especially for those who are

not bound to working in an office, but miss the day-to-day interactions and small talk that happens around an office space, coworking is a model that allows them to work alongside others. Coworking spaces usually consist of some desks in one area dedicated to working in a focused way, so one can dedicate time to concentrate and accomplish tasks. Conversations between the coworkers are encouraged, and there are often other areas besides the desk area, such as lounges, kitchens, outside areas, or meeting rooms, which provide environments to chat and collaborate.

Coworking spaces are not specific to the hipster milieu, but the idea of creative collaboration that is meant to take place there resonates in the milieu strongly. The idea is that if artistic and creative people have an open and collaborative mindset in the right material conditions, creativity and cooperation will occur.

Coworking is meant to enhance the connections, collaboration and social relations between freelancers, independent contractors, telecommuters etc. By spending a considerable amount of time in a coworking space in the heart of Kreuzkölln, I observed many dynamics and contradictions in the idea of a coworking Space and how this one specifically ran. The manager proudly told me that this was one of the first coworking spaces in all of Berlin, and the first in this area of Kreuzkölln (three others followed). The manager told me about their principles of coworking, cocreating and collaborating; and also about the leisure time and casual activities that the coworkers enjoy. However, my ongoing efforts to converse or befriend anyone in the coworking space failed.

Friendship as a method (2.2.2) seems strongest when friendships do not materialise. So, the access boundary that hindered me from taking part in the coworking, cocreating and collaborating, as advertised, demonstrates a stratifying element of the space.

The coworking space is a place where conscious efforts are made to maintain a friendly, social and inspiring atmosphere. Managers and users of such spaces strongly emphasised the image of a space in which one collaboratively creates. The aim is to provide the spatial practice, through a generated physical form that is used and thus conceptualised to that image.

However, it is not socially produced in the described way. There is a paradox relationship between the intention of the space, which can be associated with the materialism and the idealism of the space in reference to Lefebvre (1991), and the actually lived space. While the intention is to provide that space where social relations and "longlasting friendships" naturally occur, the spatial practice does not manifest these casual encounters, or any easy-going spontaneous creative collaboration. The coworking space is a business and one has to pay to rent a temporary or permanent desk there. As such the space has to deliver on its promise to provide the collaborative, cocreative atmosphere and the creative friendships that are supposed

to result in new ideas. As this does not happen, as far as I observed, the space tries to compensate for the reality of it being difficult to realise this image. They attempt the compensation by organising cooking evenings, members-only events such as Christmas parties, workshops, yoga lessons etc. These events often feel forced or superficial with no significant lasting relationships developing.

It seems that these spaces function as if to turn the Do-What-You-Love attitude into an understanding of the dynamics of a capitalist market economy. These spaces are an environment in which these young adults turn into success-oriented individuals, responsible for their own material wellbeing and success. They are faced with real demands of the industries.

While it may appear cynical, one can imagine the coworking space as an emptying machine. The dream or illusion of becoming a co-creating, non-neoliberal and collaborative individual that is not a workaholic and is not influenced by the culture of competition turns out to be impossible in a profit-driven economy that is dominated by supply and demand. This impression was amplified by assuming the working, adult Hipsters are in the coworking space, after the first research phase. I entered and spent time in the coworking space, but did not see anything resembling what the collective imaginary of hipsterism should be. It echoed the idea that Hipsters do not exist.

3.4   Access and Boundaries—Mapping Hipsterism

In the following chapter the attributes, practices and antitypes of hipsterism come together as a space marked by various contradictions. In this chapter we will attempt to map hipsterism as a space which is geographic and material, as well as the way it is conceived as a mental space, and how it is lived and socially produced. In reference to Lefebvre (1991) this triad will show that hipsterism expresses contradictions that were not necessarily an issue in Lefebvre's time. Lefebvre conceptualised space as a coherent model with these three moments and demonstrated how space is perceived, conceived and ultimately lived. These moments of space were not seperate, but rather dimensions or perspectives of the same space. My observation, however, showed that in the space of hipsterism these three dimensions did not coherently and holisitically come together as could be expected from Lefebvre's perspective.

My experience of the space during the fieldwork was participant observation. I encountered the lived and socially produced space. This first hand experience with its symbolism and order conveyed a meaning that was irritating. It expressed values but was marked by contradiction. Lived hipsterism expresses the contradictions

because it is real *and* imagined; it combines the materialism of the spatial practice and the idealism of representation of space.

By rereading and analysing the field notes and identifying the other two dimensions of space, its materiality and its conception, the contradictions that were felt and expressed in my logbook could be made explicit. We will see based on specific examples that the conception of hipsterism includes many idealistic (in refence to Lefebvre (ibid.) conceived) elements that do not necessarily materialise. In this chapter we will see how perceived and conceived space contradict one another.

I will begin by describing the spatial practice and how the physical form is produced concretely and how it is generated and used materialistically. This represents the spatial practice in reference to Lefebvre (ibid.). It will be portrayed in the geographic narrowing down process undergone in the research. This observation includes the first contradiction: a value placed on a *colourful* area with a diversity of cultures and ethnicities, in how the space is respresented in reference to Lefebvre (ibid.), but without any long-term interactions or friendships between the various cultures in spatial practice.

Another contradiction is the denial of the labelling as a "Hipster" and the implicit criticism of distinction processes that is expressed through embarrasment of distinction practices, whilst still engaging in these practices and engaging in milieu formation. This goes hand in hand with the wish that others join specific practices, because of the intention of the practice, for example in vegetarianism.

The third contradiction is the wish to experience authenticity, but doing it in an area that has nothing to do with your own heritage or reality. This can also be read as a contradiction, in which respondents express their awareness that these dynamics are problematic, exemplified by gentrification.

3.4.1   Narrowing Down Hipsterism—A "colourful" Kreuzkölln

I will begin by describing the spatial practice, how the physical form is produced concretely and how it is generated and used materialistically. It will be portrayed in the geographic narrowing down process undergone in the research. This observation includes the first contradiction: a value placed on a *colourful* area with a diversity of cultures and ethnicities, but without any long-term interactions or friendships between the various cultures.

In 2015 while I was researching for my Master Thesis, repeatedly I was told that I would have to go to Berlin.

And so I went to Berlin in search of what was being labelled there as hipster.

A question I had in mind to investigate during this process, was why the Hipsters specifically wanted to be in Berlin? The respondents I encountered were from all over the world. I asked them what led them to Berlin and one example for a reason was that it was easier to be vegan in Berlin. This individual came from south England and explained how he had kept trying to be vegan in south England, "but it was a crap life". To reason moving to another country, because a specific mode of consumption is in itself a sign for the importance of consumption in the milieu, and whether modes of consumption actually qualify as lifestyles shaping the place individuals live, their work and ultimately their relationships will be explored further in chapter 4. In any case, as a reason to move to Berlin, the acceptance of diverse lifestyles and ease was often mentioned.

Another individual stated in a conversation "Being gay is a good reason to come to Berlin", possibly referring to the long history of the gay rights movement and LGBQTI+ neighbourhoods in Berlin.

After the first research phase, following many conversations and research on lifestyle blogs, I narrowed Berlin down to the district of Neukölln, bordering Kreuzberg. Kreuzberg was described to me as the former hipster, now heavily gentrified, area. Neukölln was still "authentic". The part of Neukölln immediately bordering Kreuzberg was called Kreuzkölln.

In conversations about this area the factor of authenticity and that of multiculturalism was often mentioned. Neukölln is "colourful" and that is what makes it attractive. This concept of multiculturalism is not just mentioned but also advertised visually in many places, also public spaces, such as youth centres or government buildings that draw attention to this fact, as one can see in figure 3.8. It shows a statue of a frog in front of a state-owned building with a youth centre for the district. The frog is colourfully decorated and the slogan reads "Berlin bleibt bunt" meaning "Berlin will stay colourful". This message was conveyed materially on this statue, however it contains a conception. The concept of Berlin being colourful is a mentally produced and imaging fact, that can be asscoiated with idealism, rather than the spatial practice. Spatial practice is not only about the materiality but also about the use of the space.

Further examples of the conception of the space from the statements and imaginings of the respondents include the idea of Berlin being a safe space for all who have dreams and hopes and do not want to be ridiculed. Acceptance for ones authenticity seemed to make Berlin an attractive place to be.

I continued through research phases to narrow the geographic area down, by speaking to many individuals and asking where the Hipster could be found. I ended up living on a street connecting the parallel streets Sonnenallee and Weserstrasse.

Figure 3.8 Youth Centre on Weserstrasse. (Semple, 2016d)

After understanding this conception of Kreuzkölln as a colourful space and celebrated as such, I perceived the space in its materiality. So, what is physically happening, how is the space used, what can we see?

When observing the spatial practice at a very initial phase I was having difficulty finding anyone who could be labelled a Hipster in that area. Thankfully, a friend that I knew from before the research phase, Anna, also lived in Berlin and had just moved to that area. At 23, she was born and raised in Berlin and studied computer science.

The following extract shows my initial impressions and our exchange.

```
I told my friend Anna who lives in Neukölln too,
that I don't get the deal with Neukölln being
described as the hipster area on the internet and
on various blogs etc. It seems more like the Arab
territory to me and I am happy I can get all my
Persian goods here, before I came to Berlin they
were really hard to find. The whole Sonnenallee,
which I was told was the "place to be" is peppered
with the odd hipster coffeehouse, but really still
dominated by colourful Shisha teahouses, Arab
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halal butcheries, Syrian restaurants, falafel
places and super markets with goods specialising
on afro hair or asian and middle eastern foods.
                                Field Diary, Spring 2016
```

As a first stop after their often long and arduous journey, Sonnenallee provides a first kind of safe haven to the many immigrants coming to Berlin. Refugees from all over the Arab world, but especially Syria since the war began, frequent this area. The space is peppered with familiar cultural centres, such as Quran schools or mosques.

What would attract them is obvious: having a concentration of shops whose shopkeepers speak their language and sell their native products and feeling safer in an environment that feels familiar. As one can detect in the pictures, the shop signs are often in arabic. Oftentimes the signs are not translated into german (see figure: 3.9)

The reasons for creative young adults wanting to move to this area of Neukölln specifically were not quite as clear. However the explanations I heard echoed those one could imagine hearing from the migrants: "this area is safe", "one can dream here", "it is easier to be your authentic self here".

Anna, the Berlin local, who is mentioned in the field note above, showed me Weserstrasse and said that this street is what people actually mean when they say

Figure 3.9 Bakery and Restaurant on Sonnenallee (Semple, 2018a)

that Neukölln is hipster and that it is specifically called the "hipster street". Anna said, "it is where the hipsters come out of their holes", as if they were hiding like mice. As the parallel street of the Sonnenallee, Weserstrasse is full of art galleries, tattoo parlours, independent fashion designers, book stores, coffeehouses etc.

In such close proximity to eachother, these two streets and a few others connecting them comprised the neighbourhood that was described as Kreuzkölln. Weserstrasse opens up a space right by the colourful Sonnenallee that caters to the Hipsters' perceived needs, mirroring the way the Sonnenallee answers to the real needs of the refugees. It accumulates the elements of creativity, minimalism, (western) notions of new age spirituality, and conscious and ecological consumption. It is comprised of restaurants and coffeehouses that sell organic whole foods, vegan pasteries and speciality coffee, merely a few hundred meters from the halal butcheries of Sonnenallee.

Within the discourse, diversity and multiculturalism play an important role in hipsterism. This area is the epicentre of the hipster scene, at least in the discourse on Weserstrasse. One coffeehouse in the Weserstrasse is named "K-Fetish", which is the café with a yellow sign on the right in picture 3.11. I was told that the name of the café "K-Fetish" stands for Kollektiv-Fetishismus, expressing the fetishism of working in a collective. Sayings, such as "Fight Patriarchy" decorate the walls; and they also host feminist and antifascict events in their café. They promote their model of solidarily sharing all the work with one another. The politics of hipsterism will be discussed in chapter 4. It is interesting to note however that the café advertised "Refugees welcome" and "No place for Nazis" in Turkish, expressing solidarity towards migrants from Turkish background. The image 3.11 also shows a bar on the left advertising the slogan "no border. no nation". It expresses a decidedly anti-nationalist political stance.

Many explained that they loved this area so much because it is "colourful" or "multicultural" or "authentic". I wondered about this however, realising quite quickly that the crossovers between the hipster population and the migrants are not observable. I never saw any one with a hijab in one of the hipster coffeehouses or shops, even though on the street itself there were always so many individuals wearing this expression of their faith.

Park (1915) writes that one of the first questions we should ask ourselves if we want to observe a neighbourhood is what constitutes the individuality of the neighbourhood—including a description of the populations that live there.

Hipsterism is obviously a certain social milieu, comprised of specifically young adults and demonstrating the thirst for creativity Reckwitz (2014) describes. However, with a milieu that expresses notions of solidarity; what effect does it have, that so many migrant families live right next door? Does the conceptualisation of

Figure 3.10 Often seen around Kreuzkölln, the sign "No Place for Nazis" in a copy shop. (Semple, 2017b)

Figure 3.11 On Weserstrassse: K-Fetish café on the right and a bar on the left. (Semple, 2016c)

Kreuzkölln as a multicultural space that goes beyond nation borders materialise in spatial practice? It appeared not to.

However, before we get to deeper reflections to the materialisation of this concept, it might be helpful to look at the process of gentrification and its reasons here.

The neighbourhood of Kreuzkölln offers migrants many opportunities to maintain their culture. On a street connecting the Sonnenallee and Weserstrasse was an Islamic cultural and educational centre, offering Arabic lessons and Qurán classes for children and youth (3.12).

As mentioned before many supermarkets and businesses, for example offering muslim weddings, are located in this area. While looking for an apartment in this specific neighbourhood I realised how expensive rents were and people mentioned again and again how difficult it is to find an affordable place and that rents had become extremely high recently. However, generally Neukölln is understood as a working-class neighbourhood.

Understanding how and why the young, affluent and educated demographic is attracted to this area is essential, because their choices are the ones that have most

Figure 3.12 Islamic cultural and educational centre. (Semple, 2016b)

significantly changed it from a typical working class neighbourhood densely populated and shaped by migrants, to a more hipster area.

In an attempt to explain this phenomenon, one popular narrative (White, 2015), (Carroll, 2017) follows this logic: In urban centres, young university graduates from an affluent background move into lower-income neighbourhoods. They are followed by coffee shops and hip boutiques that start to replace older stores. The narrative indicates that new residents move there because it is affordable and conveniently located. Shortly after, real estate developers and agents follow, and the rents increase dramatically. This narrative is derived from cities such as New York City, where population growth is far exceeding the housing supply, and eventually all neighbourhoods are changing and rents become exorbitant, mostly due to wealthy incomers.

The narrative is described by Hertz (2018) in his social commentary on gentrification and the irritation it evokes as follows:

> Part of what many people find so irritating -or dangerous, depending on how much you have at stake -about upwardly mobile young people moving to working-class city neighborhoods is the sense of frivolity, of flightiness, they carry with them. In this story, communities, social networks built over generations, give way to trend-chasing bars and twentysomethings who move on after a few years of renting, passing from neighborhood to neighborhood (and maybe out of the city entirely) with each new life event: a 9-to-5 job, marriage, kids.

The irony did not escape me during my observations: many young, affluent creatives were moving to Neukölln, opening up cafés and putting up signs saying "Refugees Welcome", while this whole process was making rents so high, it was impossible for refugees with an asylum status to find apartments they could afford there. The question that arises in discourses about gentrification is why educated, artistic young adults—that once might have favoured more affluent urban neighbourhoods—are moving to low-income areas also labelled as working-class areas.

Reasons for moving are often cited as cheaper housing costs. The population moving to low-income minority neighbourhoods is educated, but their higher wages are still outpaced by rising housing costs (Hyra, 2016). However, as demonstrated by my respondents they move to such areas not because of lower housing prices, but desire to live there *in spite of high* housing costs. This is expressed in the sentiments such as "He lives on Sonnenallee, where everyone wants to live" or "the place to be".

As a matter of fact, many authors emphasise the role of young adults in gentrification. However, the forces that drive gentrification stem from multiple levels, and are

often too complex to reduce to an argumentation as described above. They include government policies and investment, increased racial tolerance, or even trends such as wanting to live in an edgy or hip area (ibid.).

One explanation found by some authors has been that many of these young adults desire to be perceived as choosing an edgy and hip neighbourhood, as a mere fashion choice (ibid.). While the purpose of my study on hipsterism was not to understand how this trend evolved and what it can tell us about gentrification, the observations offer some insight on how to gain a deeper understanding to why a low-income neighbourhood like Neukölln becomes trendy and popular, as opposed to other working class neighbourhoods—however more research would be needed in this respect.

In this context, it is pertinent to reexamine the description of the desirabilty of the neighbourhood. In the case of my respondents, many used words such as "real" or "authentic".

```
He lives on Sonnenallee, which I was told was
"where everyone wants to live". On asking people
why, they say "authentic" and "real" a lot. I
don't really understand how so many immigrants
that don't come from the same place as you, makes
it authentic to you, but oh well.
                                    Logbook, Spring 2016
```

Authenticity is often associated to a life lived independent of cultural norms. In the context of countercultures of the west (see section 1.2) living authentically is an opportunity to oppose the values of wider society in a behavioural and idealogical sense. There is generally a close link between being authentic and being real, the same way it was used in the discourse. Being fake as opposed to real can be associated with not only being unauthentic, but also with being capitalist. In music culture for example, unauthentic musicians are those who have sold themselves out and become commercialised. This was criticised in the conversations I observed.

This might lead to the impression that the respondents' attraction to areas such as Kreuzkölln stem from their appreciation of the uncommercial small hipster cafés and the independent book stores and galleries. However, through their attempts to invite and interact with other populations and especially with migrants, however unsuccessful, could be identified their appreciation of the cultural diversity. My impression from being part of the field is a high appreciation of refugee popula-

tions. Even though the interactions are held to a minimum, the colourfulness of Kreuzkölln was also always mentioned in the context of authenticity. The respondents emphasised that they love shopping in the ethnic stores, that they liked the cultural diversity, that the shisha bars with their tables outside and smoking on the streets were authentic etc. My respondents frequented the arabic falafel vendours just as often as the hipster vegan cafés.

This appreciation was also addressed partially in the cinema Wolf that opened on Weserstrasse during the research phase in 2016. As a crowdfunded cinema that shows many foreign films, also farsi and arabic ones, it is inviting to my respondents and shows their attraction to foreign films and a respect for the cultures that inhabit the neighbourhood, in addition to the hipster milieu.

If authenticity is associated with refugees, migrants and foreign culture, and authenticity stands for nonconformity and being true to your self, gentrification could reflect the admiration of my respondents for the populations that do not conform. As such the attraction to such areas could reflect trying to live amongst populations that seem more authentic and real, because they are not only less privileged, but actually do not adapt to their surroundings and do not conform to society. They keep their culture and language to a certain extent. This could be an expression of authenticity that makes this neighbourhood popular in the hipster milieu.

However, this does not lead to interactions or crossovers between the hipster population and the migrants. Some obstacles became clear to me in retrospect, through my own behaviour and self-reflection.

During my field research I was out and about in our neighbourhood taking pictures. There was a family living on Weserstrasse in a small apartment. They came from Syria and had lived in Berlin for five years. One of the younger daughters of the family was fascinated by my single lens reflex camera and asked to borrow it. She took many pictures. I had absolutely no access boundaries (real or imagined) to befriend this family. In my logbook I reflected this as a true and coincidental friendship, rather than all the processes that had to happen to gain access to the hipster spaces. Gaining access to hipster spaces was a partial fitting in with many hurdles I felt I had to overcome.

> During my time in Neukölln, I made friends with a family from Syria. The Sonnenallee where "everyone wants to live no", is still littered with Arab shops, which clearly dominate the odd hipster café, oddly reminiscent of weeds germinating and

```
driving prices up. I go shopping in the
Sonnenallee, I appreciate the oriental
supermarkets with the Persian goods I had missed
in my old student town, and naturally built
relationships.
Initially, I felt that had nothing to do with the
hipsters. But for the least part: I was living
in exactly the same neighbourhood geographically.
And the hipsters claim they love it here "because
it's so colourful". But none of those observed
had a real relationship with anyone who actually
identified as a foreigner there. [...]
Personally, I fell in love with this area in my
second research phase: I get my Persian food here
and have many Arabic speaking populations around
me, with whom I feel I share a some cultural
heritage. At the same time, there are the hip
student bars and many vegan, healthy restaurants.
                            Logbook, Spring 2017
```

While geographically this area comprises a specific intersection of the gentrification process, I myself whilst contributing to that process, identified with many migrants around me. I only have a second generation experience of being a migrant and an upbringing with all the comforts and privileges of national citizenship of European countries. Nevertheless, being a daughter of religious refugees connected me to this family and made a friendship easily possible. I helped with homework and after school activities. The friendship continued through and beyond my research phases, until I moved away from Berlin completely. I was not able to establish a genuine friendship within the milieu of hipsterism with such ease. Furthermore, I slowly noticed during the research and my reflexions that none of my respondents from the hipster milieu had a genuine friendship with anyone from migrant populations like this.

As mentioned in 2.1.1 friendship does not need to become a blind spot for the researcher if it is constantly reflected. It can rather support the research process and complement the data. As such, through diligent self-reflection I realised that I eased with much less effort into the friendship with this local family than the intended fitting in with hipsterism.

The hipster milieu had many hurdles that I had to overcome. In this manner, I started observing all my processes of adaption to the field closely, especially what I did to feel welcome and comfortable in the hipster coffeehouses and galleries. But in comparison to the ease of adaption and building of a friendship with this family demonstrated that friendship as a method within hipsterism is strongest, when friendships do not materialise. In an ongoing process I observed where awkward or uncomfortable moments occured within the hipster spaces that significantly differed from the feelings that I described in the logbook entry above. I started to analyse those incidents when I defer from the social ritual, in a way that arises suspicion and looks peculiar, the way Park (1915, p. 584) describes. This description can map boundaries of hipsterism. These deferals and the discomfort analysed will feed into the next chapter on labelling, distancing and embarassment within the milieu.

In the logbook entry below, I reflect on the friendships between another friend, Zahra, who fled from Afghanistan with her husband, and Dennis, a composer with whom I had some conversations about islamophobia and tolerance.

```
Dennis insists on tolerance and accepting new
cultures and other values, that we should question
our belief systems, especially in the west, but
he swallows considerably when I tell him [about]
Zahras culture of having to ask for permission
from her husband when she wants to meet with me.
As well as [him] always asking if other men will
be there. I told Dennis today that I love having
such different friends with different cultures,
but it's sometimes hard for me to support and
respect her culture, as it is foreign to me
sometimes. Dennis doesn't know what to say. I
realise that I maybe understand Zahra better,
because of my familiarity with this culture on a
personal level, as opposed to Dennis. I have some
things in common with her, I love her culture of
hosting so lovingly, her great respect for family
ties. We cook the same food. The only thing Dennis
has in common with her seems to be me.
                            Logbook, Summer 2017
```

The advantage of having some things in common with Zahra helps me build a relationship with her, despite the things I might politically and personally disagree with. Dennis however is overwhelmed by the conversation. His inability to contribute speaks for his lack of experience in being friends with anyone so foreign to his own culture. He cannot relate to what I am describing and from that a moment of silence and awkwardness results. It is a further example of how the conceptions of acceptance and tolerance and the slogans such as "Refugees Welcome" and "no border. no nation." can not materialise in spatial practice. How would someone like Dennis, who is against mongamous relationships and sees himself as questioning the norms of society by living in "free love", build a relationship with someone like Zahra? This point is not to stereotype or draw extreme contrasts between these lifestyles. In some senses Dennis and Zahra have a lot in common. However it is the relational aspect to eachother that shows no manifestation in a practical way. The cafés can hang up signs reading "refugees welcome" as much as they want, but the refugees addressed here do not feel invited and neither Zahra, nor the family I befriended on Weserstrasse, sees the point in paying so much for a cup of coffee drink that they could theoretically make at home.

One can conclude that the spatial practice showed physical forms of culturally diverse milieus. However, in the practice of how it is used, the impression remained that these groups are very much characteristic of the big city as Park describes it: the meeting and mingling of peoples that do not necessarily comprehend one another and that "touch elbows on the street, [and] still live in totally different worlds" (Park, 1915, p. 595).

How then, can posting signs and the verbal expressions of solidarity be interpreted? Possibly, these acts of solidarity express the respondents' underlying and implicit understanding of milieu formation, and an attempt to overcome this. Even if they are unsuccessful in spatial practice they have to be taken seriously as attempts to overcome these divides and this milieu formation in a neighbourhood that is, in fact, diverse.

3.4.2 Labelling, Distinction and Implicit Criticism—An Embarrassing Affair

In my experience observing the practices and the narrative of self within the hipster scene, individualism and the mere fact of being a very fashionable individual are not as important as the posts and media discussions on the topic might suggest. However, the respondents are often aware of the labelling process and deny to belong to any

category. At the same time they are active in many practices that make others label them Hipsters and are reluctant to change.

This media portrayal however, does put pressure on anyone living this lifestyle or frequenting these spaces, resulting is a functioning contradiction, as the individual denies the label, but explicitly acts and dresses in a way that would be associated with that label. As such, the denial of the label also belongs to the categorisation. Any attempt at conceptualising hipsterism, has to include an analysis of the labelling process.

Hipsters are often portrayed in a derogatory manner, as shown in picture 3.13 below, as extremely sensitive towards political issues and are labelled "Social Justice Warriors". The picture is a meme, which is a humourous image accompanied by text that is copied and spread rapidly on the Internet. "Social Justice Warrior" is a derogatory label for individuals with progressive views that express anger or sensitivity towards racism, sexism, homophobia and various other forms of oppression.

The idealtypes labeled as "social justice warrior" and "Hipster", are often depicted very similarly in discourses on popular social media platforms such as Reddit, Facebook and 9gag. The image chosen to accompany this petition is just one example of portrayals of "social justice warriors" with temporarily trending hipster fashion symbols, such as the micro-bangs (a hairstyle with a very short fringe) and round, transparent glasses. This is one of many examples of how Hipsters and "social justice warriors" are portrayed similarly in social media and also shows an ironic stance against them and what they stand for.

Figure 3.13 Image from a petition to remove SJW from the Internet. (Anonymous online creator, 2017)

The image 3.13 is taken from an online petition asking to remove "Social Justice Warriors" from the popular social networking site tumblr. While it is not clear in this posting who they actually identify as "Social Justice Warriors", the petition asks to remove them from the website. This would mean that they would not be able to post anything on this social networking site anymore. This is not really possible, because the label "Social justice warrior" is an ascription and not something one identifies as, but is rather used soley to criticise or ridicule others. This online petition can this be understood as a humorous attempt to show how many people disapprove of "social justice warriors", who often earn this title, by posting statements against oppression. It portrays, as one example amongst many, how Internet users think that Hipsters or Social Justice Warriors are being "too sensitive", which is also portrayed by the caption.

The woman portrayed in the image 3.13 is not just portrayed as a hipster; the image also includes the heading "I'm triggered". This is a play on so-called trigger warnings. Trigger Warnings are often depicted at the beginning of material (videos, texts, images) on the Internet, that might cause distress to the audience. This is especially done on sensitive material that might portray domestic abuse, violence, or similar content that might psychologically trigger and distress those who have experienced trauma in this area, or anyone that does not wish to be exposed to such content.

While it is very much contested whether trigger warnings actually have a positive or helpful effect for traumatised individuals (Sanson et al., 2019), in this case it is being used as a humourous device, making fun of people who are easily offended. In this image and also in other jokes circulating various popular social media sites and plattforms, to be "triggered" and to be "offended" by something are used interchangeably. Hipsters are portrayed as very sensitive and easily upset or offended by many things.

Another statement heard in the field demonstrated a negative portrayal of wanting to be tolerant. A student was talking about her flatmate who was considered a Hipster. The student complained in an annoyed tone that her flatmate identified as heterosexual man and still engaged in homosexual acts.

```
"It seems to be cool for Hipsters now to be
bisexual or something. He makes out with guys
every time we go out, but I think he's supposed
to be straight. You know how Hipsters are, always
```

> having to show how tolerant and open they are".
> She did air quotes on saying the word "tolerant".
> *Field Diary, Summer 2017*

While this statement seems very much to be an unreasonable deduction, many negotiations around labels and actions of this kind took place. In this expression of annoyance, the individual's irritation stems from the assumption that having sexual relations with other men, whilst identifying as a heterosexual, is a disingenuous expression of tolerance. Again in this case labelling as either a homo- or hetero- or bisexual is implicitly criticised by the flatmate through this act. He irritates his flatmate by not labelling himself as homosexual, but openly engaging in these acts. This is either a successful irritation of the norms of sexuality, or an expression of an indiviuals sexuality. In any case, it seems to express a cultural sensitivity towards contemporary issues, such as in this case criticism towards the often binary norm of sexuality.

Generally one can conclude that it is negatively portrayed from the outside, the milieu is ridiculed for their attempt to be tolerant and to challenge norms they perceive as oppressive.

The main criticism across all plattforms is that Hipsters are not authentic and all their practices are based on distinction. Another statement that expresses this was when I told a guest in a café that I was working on the practices of hipsterism and he answered "Hipsters are just trying to be cool".

The expressed appreciation of cultural diversity, as well as sensitivity towards delicate cultural matters, such as homosexuality, spirituality, etc., however erratic or inconsistent, are demonstrated in chapter above and are negatively portrayed by others. This is interesting, because the tendencies shown by my respondents by and large are not portrayed as good or fashionable across social and other media, but rather as negative, for example as insincere or hypocritical. If such practices are portrayed negatively, it can show that the respondents act a certain way, even though they do not benefit from it in the sense of Simmels conception of fashion (Simmel, 1957) or as cultural capital in the sense of Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 2012). If respondents still continue to act a certain way, even though it is ridiculed, we can assume it is—at least to some extent- intrinsically motivated, whether individually or by the norms of the group.

Nevertheless they defy this label most aggresively. One respondent got very angry when i mentioned hipsterism, explaining that:

> "Hipster is just a stupid label thrown around to
> not take people and their lives seriously"
>   *Conversation notes, Summer 2016*

The general denial and refusal of identifying with the label Hipster, shows an implicit awareness that such labelling and distinction processes are problematic. They do not criticise the content of the label itself, but rather the act of labelling as such.

Another way that this awareness shows itself is when the borders of the milieu are teased out.

The borders of the milieu, so where hipsterism begins and ends, can be teased out by mapping the field of the Hipster: seeing how to gain access to the hipster spaces and experiencing obstacles to access. Fundamental in this respect are self reflection and observation of own practices of gaining access and becoming one with the field. Especially within my own position as a researcher, the edges of observations are especially insightful and help gain a deeper understanding of the field.

One of the spaces where I encountered hurdles in the mapping process was the moment of awkwardness, when I did not know about the existence and meaning of the Soho House. Soho House is membership club that allows members to invite two of their friends at a time to join them there for dinner for example. In the following observation, Jenny and Thomas ask within a group of friends who wants to join them for dinner at the soho house. As soon as they ask there is silence for a few moments.

> Nobody reacted for quite a while and then I asked
> what Soho House is. A bit embarrassed Jenny and
> Thomas explained, that it was a club you have to
> be a member of to eat there, but only Jenny was
> a member, and just because of the fitness Studio,
> which was good and cheap. You pay 50e a month and
> they have courses, she goes especially for Yoga.
> The place is great according to them, but it is
> a bit dodgy and criticised that it has such a
> policy of exclusivity. Jenny was nearly apologetic
> because of it.
>   *Field Diary, Spring 2016*

There is a moment of embarrassment when I ask about the Soho House, because implicitly everyone in this conversation knows what it is and how it works. However, it is not just an uncomfortable moment for me, but when Jenny invites her group of friends, no one answers for a while. Presumably because the club is very exclusive and from the whole group of friends only two can join them. Jenny answers my question and also explains that she is a member there only because of the fitness studio, because it is good and cheap. She explained this further in nearly a justificatory manner. She also mentions that it is quite exclusive. There is an awareness that this is not in accordance with her ideals. By justifying and explaining herself, she is reiterating her own framework of values that is strictly against exclusivity and anything related to class or distinction. I ask her to tell me more about the policy of the Soho House and how you can become a member there. This is the exact thing she is uncomfortable with and she seems that way in her explanation.

```
You have to apply for membership, which means
you have to explain what you do and what you can
contribute, especially creatively, because its
main purpose is networking. Also famous people
are there, so they want to be sure you are not
weird and won't stalk them. Cameras and phones are
forbidden. Also two people who are already members
have to write you a kind of recommendation.
One of Jennys friends also wanted to become a
member, so Jenny asked the friend who gave her the
recommendation to write her friend one as well.
Her friend wanted to meet with the "applicant" for
coffee first. "To check if she's cool enough" I
remarked. Jenny laughed awkwardly and said "Yea,
well, that was super annoying, but I guess she
wanted to make sure she wasn't recommending some
random" I failed to ask what the consequences
would be, if she did "recommend some random" but
I am pretty sure social stigmatisation and not
really any serious consequence. It sounded like
a country club for Hipsters.
                                Field Diary, Spring 2016
```

The same network orientations that apply to this group of friends, do not apply to me, as for me meeting important or famous people that help you network and connect to other creatives is not as relevant. In this case lack of knowledge about such places becomes a failure of me trying to fit it, or be hipster. Jenny explains the situation of her friend wanting to become a member and needing a recommendation letter with annoyance and embarassment. My interruption of her implying that the other member wanted to meet with her friend for coffee before writing her an application to "check if she's cool enough" makes the exclusivity and milieu forming practices explicit and makes it more uncomfortable.

Only I agreed to join them that evening, the other two of the three spots they had left stayed unoccupied. Jenny gave me the handbook with the rules that she got when she was accepted and got her card.

This starting point of reflection led to observation of strategies to not be considered "random", the first of being the knowledge about such places, that demonstrates good taste and inherent cultural capital. When I actually went to the Soho House, Jenny gave me the handbook, which included various rules. I analysed my strategies, conscious that I didn't want to embarrass them when I was there. This handbook is especially interesting, as it seems to make explicit the implicit norms and rules that young urban creatives should adhere to.

Soho House members' handbook explains that one should not take pictures or post anything about the events on social media. As a distinction to tendencies of wider society, to photograph and upload pictures of everything one does, this is emphasised a few times in the handbook. Further more the handbook points out that the guests one brings should "behave themselves".

```
I went it very confidently and said I was expected
upstairs. I prepared myself before mentally,
because I had to go by myself, they said they
would meet me there…I found it a bit daunting,
because I don't have a member card or anything,
I would have to tell them I am meeting someone
at the restaurant. She had told them when she
arrived that there would be an extra following. I
changed clothes beforehand, and decided to sum up
my courage and be super confident when I arrived,
so as to make sure there would be no doubts of my
belonging there. Indeed, they were friendly and
immediately led the way.
                                    Logbook, Spring 2016
```

These notes show distinction mechanisms that are clear demonstrations of classic formation of milieus. However, this group seemed conscious of the dynamics of the exclusivity practices and also was embarrassed by them. It was obvious that of the group of friends only three could join, even though there were many more present. I was the only one who ended up joining them with the explicit purpose of wanting to observe for my thesis. Jenny felt the need to justify herself for being a member, she emphasises that she is only a member for the yoga and the good quality and reasonably priced food. This shows that there is a discrepancy between the actions: going to such places, being a member etc., and the condoning of exclusivity and labelling. The same group of friends does not wish to be called Hipsters, even though they dress and act as such.

Another hurdle of entry I analysed was the popular techno club Berghain, which is known for its exclusive door policy. Berghain is associated with decadence and hedonism and breaking with the norms of society. One respondent mentioned "It is where night becomes day and day becomes night and everything is allowed". The club has no mirrors or reflecting surfaces that can be interpreted as a means to lose yourself or forget your identity.

Berghain is one of the most famous and popular clubs in the world, rather than an independent, unknown club that one would assume Hipsters would prefer. But the exclusive door policy makes it very difficult to get in. I was told that if I want to meet Hipsters in an informal setting, Berghain would be a great address. I started asking everyone I knew, and people they knew, why they like it there. The answers I got were surprising to me, because I associated them with a very different notion: all the answers I got had nothing to do with the hedonism, the decandence, the freedom it seemed to provide or even the music—Berghain being known for hosting some of the best DJs in the world. All the answers I got were more or less connected to one feeling: the feeling of unity. They included: "It just feels like we are all connected." "Its a break from the harsh reality of the world out there" "Everyone is connected by their love for each other and the love for the music" "There is an indescribable feeling of unity". It seemed to be a good place to undergo participant observation and I wondered if the hurdles would tell me more about hipsterism.

```
I informed myself before I went online of "how to
get in". The internet is full with all this stuff,
and I got very anxious. I decided to follow the
advice and wear black. In Berlin you can't really
go wrong with wearing black. I guess because it
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isn't a colour. So a friend helped me, by asking
her boyfriend, who works as a bouncer/doorman
at the club to put me on the guest list. I was
nervous, but went with a friend. I was nervous
because its super hard to get in, and there was a
200m queue, even though it was a sunday afternoon.
I still felt triumphant though, walking past the
queue and just getting in. It felt satisfying. It
was impossible to speak to anyone inside though. I
spoke to three people but they were drunk or high
and didn't really want to talk.
                                Field Diary, Summer 2016
```

While this observation did little in fulfilling what I hoped it would, it did show my process of trying to overcome boundaries into the hipster milieu. The self reflection of my process of trying not to draw attention to myself or be suspicious as shared in the field diary entry above helps map out hipsterism. The moment of overcoming a hurdle can be compared to, as Park (1915) describes, incidents when one defers from the social ritual somehow, as arises suspicion and looks peculiar. The attempts to avoid such an arousal of suspicion or feeling out of place are incidental. The reflective notes are especially interesting, because they portray attempts to inform myself about the social rituals and mode of behaviour, even though I already knew that I would not have to overcome this hurdle of getting in. I was on the guest list and as such knew that I would get in to the club. However, looking at my field notes from that time with some distance, I see that I was attempting not to arise suspicion, feel out of place, or look peculiar.

The following extract from my reflexion show that while some attempts were made through the dress code and the act of being on the guest list to feel "united" as it was described, failed.

```
I am not sure. I didn't properly get in, but
just through a friend, and even though I felt
triumphant while I walked passed the queue, I
didn't feel together. Maybe it's because I don't
drink or take drugs, I felt very apart from
everyone, even though everyone was very friendly
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and in a good mood and smiled a lot. Most of the
time I thought it is Sunday afternoon, what the
hell am I doing with my life.
                                   Logbook, Summer 2016
```

It seems that with the milieu formation more than just physical access should be granted. It demonstrates it is a hurdle that stems from lifestyle patterns that are not shared, rather than things that can be easily adapted, like a sense of fashion.

After my visit to Berghain, I interviewed the visited the doorperson who had put me on the guest list and talked to him about the door policy over a cup of coffee. He explained that the system of letting people in is not like in other clubs. He claimed that in other places they often check whether the guests are too intoxicated or too young or too aggressive to enter the club. At a club like Berghain the doorperson has a double function. In addition to what is done in a classical club, he has to ensure a "unique configuration of people in the audience that night".

There was an air of mystery around how he spoke of it, using phrases like "nobody knows why you get in", "there is just a feeling", "you can't describe who gets in and who won't". He emphasised that the exact same person could get in on one night and not get in on another. But the reason the club was always so full was that people loved it there, was because of the audience. The audience is a perfect mixture of people and a great balance and that is why people love it.

I critically asked whether the unified feeling and that togetherness is not evoked by the strictness of the door itself. He denies it.

All in all it is very interesting that exclusivity policies and milieu formation is implicitly and sometimes even explicitly criticised amongst my respondents. At the same time many such practices are undergoing. In some cases this is critically reflected through moments of embarrassment when having to talk about such practices.

3.5   Interim Conclusion

The phenomenon 'Hipster' expresses a contradictory order of urban space: it demonstrates elements of classical milieu formation and distinction, as well as an (implicit) awareness that this milieu formation is problematic and exclusive. The individuals criticise this with their refusal to accept the categorisation—however without effectively addressing it in everyday practice.

All in all, by analysing the hurdles of entry to hipster spaces and the practices undergone in self reflection: the embarrassment of belonging to an exclusive club as the Soho house, the mystery of who gets in to the Berghain, the ironic self-distancing of one's own capitalist aspirations as an entrance strategy, all express a contradiction of urban space.

Generally, sometimes my respondents were very explicit about their awareness of power dynamics that demarcate social milieus and create boundaries, as you can see in the following example:

```
He mentions right at the end, when he speaks
with academics (me) he feels they have
institutionalised power, and he does not have the
language, and sometimes there is an element of
misuse of terms
                            Field Diary, Summer 2017
```

As these examples show, while hipsterism explicitly expresses a dislike for practices of exclusivity and labelling, and embraces the idea of multiculturalism and diversity, they fail to address this problem in practice. The spaces are not generated and used in a way that dissolves these real and imagined boundaries, in a material sense.

Another attempt to challenge classic societal structures and forming new more inclusive relationships, is the attempt of my respondents to embrace all lifestyles. Again and again an attitude of non-judgement is portrayed and the acceptance of all lifestyles that are outside the norm is expressed, which one can observe in the expressions of new age spirituality, the use of drugs and practices of polyamory, etc. In the following example a young man had expressed his avid appreciation of starting a polyamorous relationship with his boyfriend, but when this was implemented, was seemingly less happy about it.

```
However he has had bouts of jealousy recently. He
feels a strong desire to want to be detached, he
expresses this to me. He wants to just be happy
for his partner and the new addition this partner
has been having a physical relationship with. I
discussed with him, that I don't really think that
he can ever reach a state where he doesn't feel
```

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pain because his partner wants to be with someone
else instead of him in that moment. But if he
wants to continue this lifestyle, he has to accept
that pain, or just decide he doesn't want to.
Because if it doesn't hurt and he doesn't care,
it's the opposite of love- is it not? I ask him.
He seems very conflicted about this, but still
adamant about his values.
                            Field Diary, Summer 2016
```

Much like in the example of Dennis in section 3.4.1, these individuals express difficulty of putting the conceptions and convictions that they express and cling to into practice. Not necessarily for lack of trying, but rather for lack of finding ways to overcome the hurdles they encounter.

Repeatedly I observe this contradiction in the milieu of hipsterism: attempts to counteract the existing conditions of modernity, but failing to address them consequentially.

To gain a more profound understanding of this contradiction of urban space, it is helpful to analyse given data through the lens of Lefebvre. His triad can help us understand how hipsterism as a space demonstrates contradictions of capitalism that Lefebvre in his time did not see.

Lefebvres' triad assumes a concurrence of the three interconnected moments of space. If we examine the circumstances of hipsterism through the triad that is offered to us by Lefebvre, my respondents seem to demonstrate the simultaneous existence of at least two of his dialectically connected dimensions of space. On the one hand they mentally produce the conception of Kreuzkölln (specifically Weserstrasse and Sonnenallee area) as idealistically colourful and tolerant. As an instrument to idealise the space, the representation of the hipster space includes the idea and knowledge that there is a mix of cultures in this area in social discourse. In the second dimension, it is socially produced, reproduced and modified over time. Kreuzkölln is invested with real and imagined meaning, as a space that expresses these fundamental values of authenticity, creativity and multiculturalism. By aggressively going against this labelling processes, implicitly and explicitly demonstrating how it is overly simplified, and by hanging signs in the coffeehouses and shops and bars that express these conceptions (as seen in figures 3.11 and 3.10), they invest this area with these concepts and meanings.

However, the spatial practice itself, the perceived, physical, real space, that is concretely generated and used in a material sense, expresses no such crossovers.

The 'denial' of the term hipster, and the awkwardness at the empirical evidence of exclusivity—such as in the case of the Soho House club and the Berghain—may be an indirect, but empirical reflection of my respondents that these milieu formations are problematic. On the one hand, they still engage in very classical milieu formation and demarcation, on the other hand they seem to have an at least implicit awareness that this milieu formation could be problematic, exclusive, etc. With the refusal to accept the categorisation, they seem to indirectly criticise this formation and exclusion within the dynamics of urban space, but without effectively addressing them in everyday practice.

From Individuality to Imagined Global Citizenship

<div style="text-align:right">**4**</div>

Thus far we have understood the space of hipsterism within societal developments of the capitalist west, such as aesthetic capitalism and creativity (Reckwitz, 2014), individualisation and tendencies such as Do What You Love in the New Spirit of Capitalism (Boltanski et al., 2018). The life course within hipsterism ultimately demonstrated the progression into more far reaching neoliberalism. We were able to map out hipsterism as a space shaped by some contradictions. One such contradiction is the respondents' engagement in classic milieu formation and distinction, whilst showing that they find this very formation problematic and exclusive, but without effectively addressing it in everyday practice. Another contradiction is criticising modes of consumption, but engaging in very specific types of consumption as a distinctive feature of their milieu.

The question arose why the expressed criticism of specific tendencies in society was not, or could not, be put into practice consistently. Why are the problems brought up within practices of hipsterism, such as exclusion and milieu formation, as demonstrated by the lack of diversity in many hipster spaces, not addressed practically? How are issues like exploitation of labour throughout the world or climate change to be addressed in practice?

In a second research phase with these questions in mind, I went back into the field, observed, ethnographically listened and also explored some of these topics in narrative interviews.

By deepening the analysis of the field notes and the everyday practices of the individuals in these spaces, a lifestyle consisting of some fundamental beliefs, conceptions and approaches to action emerged. A space consists of values and cultural practices that are political (Elden, 2007). In this chapter we will analyse some of the conceptions within the field as interlinked concepts to utilise hipsterism as a paradigm for the development of culture in western societies. These underlying fundamental conceptions have been shaped by and in turn influence culture. The

effects of these conceptions on their pattern of action can help further explain the inconsistencies within the field.

These elements can be seen as a framework that shapes everyday actions and lifestyle. Understanding this framework can provide explanations for the contradictions in chapter 3. Some elements of this framework have already been discussed in the first chapter within a spatial approach. Important distinctive elements of hipsterism are authenticity and creativity for example. However, underlying these elements are some other conceptions, and approaches to action. These are shaped by, and reinforce tendencies, such as individualism and globalisation in society. They express a negotiation of paradoxes of individualisation, for example between the collective and the individual (4.1.2), or the paradoxes in the attempt to eliminate inequality from a position of power and privilege (4.1.1).

Further challenges of the field are a general mistrust in the ability of the institutions of contemporary society (4.1.3) to address challenges that are more far-reaching than those that national institutions can effectively handle. So conceptions of institutions and actors within politics shape the pattern of action distinctly.

Another conception that shapes engagement in society in this milieu is the understanding of human nature, discussed in 4.1.4. It reinforces the impression of the normativity of the actors' decisions and the consistency of their actions.

Fundamentally, all actions have an underlying normative understanding of a good or just society that emerges from the challenges that face society as a whole, such as climate change, racism, sexism, etc. This will be the starting point of this exploration in section 4.1.1, because it portrays the possible direction that the respondents want society to develop to and shapes their attempt to get there.

As they navigate through the vast field of paradoxes, this milieu emerges as one searching for appropriate forms of engagement in the framework described in 4.1 without falling back on traditional forms of engagement they have deemed inappropriate or unfit to challenge society's condition.

The conceptions within these categories (individualism, collectivity, mistrust of institutions, the concept of human nature) are at times contradictory, leading to various approaches to action, or even paralysing in their effect. Ultimately they will demonstrate however, that hipsterism offers the individuals in this milieu a way to deal with difficulties to navigate in a consumerist and globalised culture, whilst wanting to change it to a sustainable and just society.

4.1 Conceptual Framework within Hipsterism

To find a common framework of fundamental conceptions might be seen as a difficult task in a highly individualised society, with an apparent decline of traditional ties to community. Especially in hipsterism, the self seems to be the centre and axis of the variation of lifestyles. However, authenticity and identity have a strong relational quality, and thus, as demonstrated in Section 3.2, also portray some countercultural tendencies in an individualised society.

As explored in Section 1.2 countercultures are a part of human experience and society, and can be found, in one form or another, in all societies (Yinger, 1977). However, the tendency to stereotype and exaggerate both dominant and counter culture, with the aim of drawing the sharpest possible contrast, has made this exploration difficult in the past, as Yinger describes. In a highly individualised society, the conceptual framework of hipsterism, including the fundamental conceptions and beliefs that shape engagement, will help us understand the actors beyond their narrative of their self as individual creatives. It will explore the elements that shape the paradox of being and doing analysed in chapter 3 and help explore the everyday actions that could be politically intended. Ultimately it will answer the questions why the respondents fail to translate the conceptions and beliefs in action, or whether that is at all possible.

These conceptions will partly demonstrate countercultural values, but also beliefs that are shaped by western, capitalist society. The resulting approaches to counter the culture that my respondents find themselves in, are shaped by these conceptions and will be discussed in section 4.3

4.1.1 Beliefs—or the Idea of a "Good" or "Just" Society

Various statements about the progress of society and its direction were made in the discourse in which I participated and to which I listened ethnographically (Forsey, 2010).

As described by Bauman (2015), liquid modernity does not lend itself to a state of ideal, being "modern" is embedded in everyday life and is an act of constant renewal.

Interestingly, a lot of the dialogue within the hipster scene, does not circulate around the self and individual biographies. Especially in the narrative interviews I conducted in the field the conversations quickly turned to issues of society and the world at large, such as environmental issues, gender issues, questions of privilege, working conditions, etc. Many questions I posed were answered by addressing

structural issues and globalised challenges, that politics were seemingly hopeless to face within the framework of a profit-oriented society. In the sense of a liquid society, they were striving for betterment rather than putting forward an ideal state. Hipsterism appeared to be about progress rather than a negotiation of a possible utopia.

In various extracts, the individuals express gratitude and hope of the movement of society in a specific direction: towards more veganism for example. The attempts to transform society through conscious and ethical consumption shall be discussed in a following chapter, but for now it is important to note the wish that more people join, rather than wanting to be exclusive and individual.

One respondent expressed their gratitude and joy that more people were becoming vegetarian. This respondent explained that it was always difficult to find vegetarian items on many restaurant menues, but now that is becoming normal. Another respondent angrily explained that it would be wonderful if everyone became vegan, but that will never happen, because the corporations follow these trends and commercialise them.

The difficulty being portrayed here is not the mainstream masses following. They do not show the flight and chase attitude that is described by Simmel (1957). They express a desire or wish for others to follow. The enemies are not the masses chasing their trends, but the issue lies in the fact that they do not, or that the attempts to make fair trade or vegan consumption more popular are perverted by mechanisms of capitalism. It is reminiscent of the hippie generation, where political ideals were used for companies to sell more products, by recognising these trends and using them to market their products (see 1.2). However, in this case the Hipsters seem to be aware of this dynamic.

One respondent, the manager of a vegan café, mentioned to me explaining their low waste policy: "The purpose is having impact, even if it's the tiniest impact, environmentally". The statement shows that the purpose of actions is not necessarily connected to the identity, but more often than not it is framed as having a positive impact on the world.

Most expressions of individualism or distinction were evoked by a question or other form of intervention through myself. The answers that were given often reflected a value rationality, expressing the belief of the worth of the action detached from their actual practical effect. Similar to the description of Weber (2016), the action itself was deemed worthwhile, and even necessary, independant of the success or impact of the actions.

Generally, when asked about why they were upholding certain standards it was explained as "the right thing to do" or the "only way to live", one respondent even expressed "it is like living a religion without God".

In many conversations it was emphasised or implied that western, capitalist society did not just need to be criticised and the structures of society need not just be deemed unacceptable. It was further necessary that some sort of transformation had to take place. This transformation, while vague and ambiguous in its scope, can be seen within two opposing tendencies that give it impetus.

The first tendency I observed was the intent to counteract a consumerist, throw-away society with conservative modes of consumption, for example to buy higher quality, more expensive goods that one hopes will last. This tendency is portrayed further in the use of analog cameras and the popularity of analog photography and film making, the use of type writers, etc. These can be interpreted as a classical form of conservatism in trying to uphold practices and norms of the past as opposed to following newer trends.

Another factor that portrays this notion is the opposition against modernisation seen in the vintage equipment and technologies that are popular within this scene, such as Volkswagen buses, old bicycles, walkmans, record players, type writers etc.

Instagram, a social media application, has become exceedingly popular in very many milieus. However at the beginning of researching this thesis it was known as a hipster application. The application allows one to share pictures with connected friends, and also add a filter to make them look like they have been photographed with an old camera and have been self-developed. Ironically, one needs a very modern phone to run this application. But it shows the affinity and romanticism of the past. The aesthetic still shows a tendancy that can be associated with an inclination towards conservative photography. Of course many in this milieu also engage in analog photography and developing pictures themselves.

Furthermore, there is an discernable DIY-mentality that expresses itself in efforts to establish the provenance of items, understand how they were produced and how they can be repaired, rather than replaced. It can also be associated with such a notion of conservative modes of consumption.

One example is the Fjällräven Kånken Backpack. Produced by a 60 year old company that is known for it's outdoor and trekking gear. It became popular not just because of its simple and durable design, but because of the spread of a conservative message. The backpacks are quite expensive, for such a simple canvas item. But their durability and simpleness gives them a "timeless" look. As such the message they send is one of sustainability, a statement I heard countless times was that its better to buy something that is more expensive, but will last longer, in such a throwaway and consumerist society. Many of my respondents had a single-speed, fixed gear bicycle, which is a racing bicycle that has a sleek and minimalist look, because it doesn't have gears. These bicycle parts are very expensive and often higher quality than average bicycles, especially in respect to the material. One respondent explained to me that

it is important to them to spend a lot of money on their bicycles, because they are of high quality and have a higher durability. Instead of buying a new bicycle because the other has broken, they would rather spend the money and effort to have one that lasts them longer. This also implies that the amount of money spent reflects the quality, ergo that a more expensive product will last longer than a cheaper product. This can also be associated with classical conservatism. In many spaces the reason for being willing to spend more money on items was also associated with the cost of labour in an ethical sense, however in the context of buying equipment, such a backpacks or bicycles or technical equipment, the quality of the material and durability was emphasised. The act of spending money in a specific way is thus rationally purposeful, as well as value rational (Weber, 2016).

To conclude, within the milieu there is a tendency to counter act a consumerist, throw-away society with conservative modes of consumption. One can identify a focus on the maintenance and preservation of past convictions, such as wanting to know about the origins of objects they obtain as well as promoting ideals and ethical values associated with classical conservatism.

This is the first of the two tendencies that gives the development of society impetus. The second however can be seen as a more powerful and political tendency.

On a political spectrum, hipsterism might be more closely associated with the left, as often solidarity, social justice and tolerance are elements this scene identifies with, or is often associated with.

The fundamental belief at the core of the discourses about progress in society in hipster spaces is justice. This is also portrayed by the signs welcoming refugees in the cafes, and strong statements on such matters.

My respondents were also very vocal about feminism, abolishing extremes between rich and poor and the one per cent, LGBTQI+ rights, etc.

One respondent explained that "the socialist ideals were much closer to his own than the capitalist ones". In an individualistic sense he did not identify merely with socialist ideals. He much rather defined his own individual and unique ideals as "closer" to socialism than capitalism. Generally a tenedency to identify with the left wing of the political spectrum can be observed in the whole milieu. They criticise the milieu formation and distinction mechanisms, by distancing themselves verbally from all exclusivity policies, even if they still engage in them (see section 3.3.5). They emphasise abstinence from belongings, ownership and especially greed. At the same time, in addition to this decidedly anti-consumerist attitude, they also engage in various forms of consumption. They despise the throw away society that is perpetuated by what they call "greed" and "selfishness". This also expresses itself in highly moralised statements.

Even though these questions are highly politicised in society, they do not organise themselves in traditional forms of political action.

As a possible counterculture of contemporary society, the normative system of hipsterism should contain some themes of conflict with the values of society at large. As portrayed in Chapter 3, within hipsterism, there is an understanding of distancing onself from mainstream culture and identifying with a group that counters mainstream lifestyles. From this perspective it is also interesting to see how these values are portrayed or perceived from a standpoint of mainstream culture.

Hipsters' supposed sensitivity and knowledge about injustices influences their everyday life. This understanding possibly leads to changes in the behaviour of the individuals, demonstrated by the fact that my respondents possibly understand their denial of labels and their dialogue and conversations about injustices as a mechanism to transform societal circumstances slowly and from within. I observed how values were negotiated in dialogue and practice, which will be explored further in 4.3.

Another respondent, an independent documentary filmmaker, who had previously studied anthropology, spoke to me about the challenge of wanting to make the world aware of social and cultural problems from a position of privilege.

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It just seems really ridiculous to me [he laughs],
me, a white privileged male sitting there,
researching issues of indigenous populations on my
laptop and trying to help them through awareness.
The irony of it. But there isn't anything else I
could do.
        Extract from narrative interview, Spring 2018
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In this example a respondent is making his awareness of problematic distinction mechanisms explicit, in his pursuit of justice. It also expresses the helplessness felt by the individual to engage in the progress of society, implying that the reason he as a "privileged white male" can help raise awareness to indigenous issues, is because of the very privilege he is criticising. Dealing with this paradox, by still acting the way he thinks is right, expresses the normativity of his actions.

Another individual emphasised, that "alternative book stores are mostly very new age, like buddhism – but for the western mind" and that he doesn't "like that". This implies an awareness of the milieu's cultural appropriation of spiritual practices that are not dominant in the west. The respondent expresses a discomfort with that dynamic.

While such very explicit reflections and conclusions were rather scarce, most individuals within this milieu seem to have an implicit understanding that milieu formations are problematic and also paradoxical and difficult to change. They stay firm in specific stances and stand by their statements, even though they are often ridiculed and not taken seriously and criticised as ingenuine.

It is not just within the realm of social media that Hipsters are criticised and not taken seriously. The research on hipsterism has thus far also been negative and accused Hipsters of abandoning the claims of counterculture, while merely retaining the "coolness" of subcultures (1.3), implying that they have forsaken any political or idealogical stance.

Generally the idea of "doing good" or civic engagement is often limited to very specific acts. A great deal of research has been conducted about civil engagement and participation outside the realms of associations, parties and unions in Germany. Especially in the wake of the refugee increase around 2015 it was confirmed that civil social engagement is increasing, while the number of members among associations, parties and unions is dwindling (cf. Haumann et al. (2018)). In these cases however, civil engagement is often associated with voluntary work.

In the context of the field I have observed, the idea of altruism or doing what is good seems to have developed a little further. It is no longer limited to the engagement or helping a distanced or unknown "other", in a way that tends to reinforce unbalanced power relations. There seems to be an attempt to expand this "doing good" to one's own environment somehow, because there is an understanding that there is much to be done, and traditional engagement might not suffice to address the issues as will be explored in the following sections.

4.1.2 Individualism and Collective Action

In late modernity, family and community ties are no longer as permanent as they used to be and leave more choices for each individual. There are more flexible and less stable relationships, and blended and patchwork families have become common. Changes in family composition, household structure, and work-life balance are influenced by tendencies of individualism and narratives of self-fulfillment. Individuals in western society are more likely to move and less likely to be connected to their neighbourhoods or communities.

This development can be seen in a large cross-section of society (Economic Co-operation et al., 2011), and also among my respondents.

None of the respondents had children, some were in long-term romantic partnerships, however most were single. In relationships, respondents were often testing out and negotiating boundaries.

This reflects a tendency that is typical in recent modernity. Generally, boundaries are constantly tested out and negotiated. This tendency includes spheres of "Us" and "Others", but also between social spheres, between knowledge and superstition, between science and politics, etc.

These tensions express themselves in a field that spans the collective and the individual.

In my observations I also experienced this tangible negotiation and tension between individualism and a feeling of collectivity. Within discourses of hipsterism a dichotomy between collective and individual action was implicitly questioned.

In various situations, single decisions that an individual makes in their life, were reframed in the conversations as a collective movement. One statement for example was: "We don't believe in gender roles and oppose them". In this context it was not clear who this "we" includes. In another situation one respondent explained that his bicycle parts were more expensive, because he preferred higher quality, but his statement was: "We spend a lot of money on our bicycles, because they are of high quality and have a higher durability." Again in this case it was not clear who "we" is.

In one case, a respondent was asked various biographic and individual questions. He often responded with "we"-statements, even when questions were posed directly to him.

This demonstrated a collective horizon and at one point in the interview I asked who "we" includes. He explained they are "a very diverse group, they don't have typical image things, some of them you never would guess that they are vegan". From this statement it became clear that he understood himself and his friends, all of whom were vegan as a collective. While they are portrayed by him as very diverse, he still sees them as a group, because of this binding element of veganism.

All in all my impressions confirmed again and again that many individual decisions are framed as collective actions. Acting against the exploitation of workers, animals and the environment, for example, binds together these groups. These actions are not less collectivist, just because they are not organised in a traditional collective way.

At the same time, he often corrected himself in the interview when he expressed things as generalisations. Statements along the lines of "gender roles don't exist" were often followed by "but also we try not to push people, and we are focused on our own problems". He also emphasised that no one is perfect.

In his own narrative he explains that he is very self-focused. He explained to me that while there is lots of activism in his network, they also try not to push people, but try to focus on their own problems.

This showed that there is a tension between having a very individualistic narrative, including being non-judgemental of other people, and this notion of collectivity.

The individual actions of my respondents included an assumption that various people are moving in this direction all over the world.

This attitude of a collective movement is still complemented by a strong sense of individualism. Individualism is a central, possibly a foundational feature of the hipster paradigm of thought or master narrative—and so these worldwide movements are then understood or imagined as also bearing a kind of individualistic grounding. This could be understood as an imaginary, similar to a social imaginary as Taylor (2002) describes: as the way ordinary people imagine their social surroundings, seemingly shared by a fairly large group of people.

Taylor explains that this imaginary includes

> the normal expectations that we have of one another, the kind of common understanding which enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life. This incorporates some sense of how we all fit together in carrying out the common practice. This understanding is both factual and "normative"; that is, we have a sense of how things usually go, but this is interwoven with an idea of how they ought to go, of what missteps would invalidate the practice. (ibid., p. 118)

This can be applied to veganism, but also to hipsterism in general. Encompassing the whole milieu are those elements that are included in this chapter. They describe the social imaginary shared by hipsters.

One of the pinnacles of the hipster imaginary is individualism, as a foundational tenet. However it also encompasses the expectation of the progress of society and how every individual that is part of this understanding is moving to better themselves. Underlying this is also a clear understanding of what one ought to do, for example to try and reduce waste as much as possible or to slowly transition to a vegan lifestyle. To counteract gender stereotypes is another element of the "ought to go" that Taylor describes. These developments are seen in an individualistic way, however, as individualism is a grounding tenet of the narrative of my respondents.

When asked why he became not only a vegan, but also an entrepreneur in this area, the vegan café owner explained:

> It all started with him being part of a group of
> conscious people / just being friends, and then
> there was a switch in his mind, he felt guilty,
> every single day he tries to better himself, to
> become a better person.
>   *Conversation notes, Summer 2016*

However, the same individual commented later, in a conversation where he was quite uncompromising about his values and expressing them very clearly, that everyone should respect each other and make up their own minds, as shown also in the statement below:

> Everyone in the café works as individuals, they
> respect each others feelings, everyone has their
> own mind, if you feel someone is overstepping,
> you have to deal compassion. No one can say "you
> shouldn't wear…./ you aren't feminist enough"
>   *Extract from narrative interview, Summer 2017*

It was repeatedly emphasised that there shouldn't be judgement, but self-development and how you try to "better yourself every single day" is really important. One respondent emphasised that he personally does a lot of things other than just being vegan and tries to impact every indivdual, regardless of who they are.

While autonomy and individualism take a lot of space in the discourse, as seen above, young people in this milieu did not see their personal development and decisions as independent and autonomous. They saw their decisions as impacting the world, in whatever small way, akin to a movement.

Mass individualisation does not mean that groups or communities cease to exist or even lose any importance. The energies and efforts formerly exerted with the intention to belong, have now turned into flexibility and delimitation and distinction processes. These processes facilitate the negotiation of identity in contemporary societies, that is shaped by an often normative, constructed and reflective lifestyle, that gives it consistency. In observing and being part of some of these practices, I realised that while responsibility is reassigned to the individual level, most of these decisions and reflections have a collective horizon.

My respondents had an underlying belief, that traditional forms of collective action organised in contemporary society are not a viable option for civil engagement. This does not necessarily lead young people into uncertainty and disorientation, but rather to understand their own actions more in the light of collective individualised action, which will be explored further in the resulting approaches 4.3.

4.1.3   Mistrust in Institutions and Politics

While individualism can be traced back to the beginnings of modernity, a collective horizon seemed to me to be a more recent development. Where was it coming from?

The respondents seem to have realised that problems that encompass the whole world, need a world embracing space of action. The lack and need for such a space of engagement is demonstrated by some developments in modernity. These developments that seem world-embracing were talked about frequently. Amongst others, climate change, the exploitation of labour and abuse of animals around the world are interesting examples.

In these areas, the actions of few nations and organisations can impact the environment of all. Furthermore, the consumption of one product can be traced back globally and we can find out whether it was treated with pesticides, whether it was farmed ethically, how it was transported etc. These themes were frequent in my conversations in the field. It seems to be possible to rate the act of the consumption of even a single product according to its influence on society and the world at large.

To demonstrate, climate change was one area that my respondents were very worried about. They expressed their mistrust that institutions could answer the needs to counteract it.

Climate is a sphere where the slightest changes influence the world environment, irrespective of nation. The developments demonstrate that nations cannot protect themselves independantly, and that the consequences of actions of one nation, affect the environment of all. Actions within some technological, industrial and agricultural systems influence the whole global sphere of society.

There was a mistrust detectable in my respondents towards institutions, especially of their efficiency to be able to address such world-embracing problems, such as climate change.

This worry that the actors that have an effect on climate change are nations, and as such insufficient to address global issues, is also evident in international spaces. In my milieu complaints about spaces such as the World Economic Forum or even

the UN were deemed insufficient, with diminishing remarks such as: "They can't do anything anyway" or "We all know that is not where the change is going to happen."

These events have in common, that the parties involved in the discourse identify and decide as as organisations or nations, and implement as nations too, evident in the national action plans that are then adopted.

However, these world-embracing issues need to be solved at a global level, and thus need a space of action that is also world embracing, and where all individuals can take part. This understanding leads my respondents to the question where that stage of action can be. Either it can lead to hopelessness, or to finding alternative ways of engagement that feel like they can have an effect.

Another issue is that many of these world embracing challenges are closely connected and cannot be solved in a fragmented way. My respondents demonstrated an understanding that, while the exploitation of animals is often perceived as an ethical issue, there is growing belief that the animal industry is one of the leading causes of climate change.

To recognize that the issues the world is facing might be too encompassing for actors such as nations to address is an understandable reading of reality. My respondents might feel the solidarity and sympathy for animals, exploited workers and the environment, but realistically recognize that the institutions that are trying to solve these issues are limited in their scope.

It is indicative of this milieu, when searching for explanations for the failure of attempts to better society, to turn to the individual.

This is not because they lack criticism for institutions and the government. When asked about the responsibility of the government or institutions, respondents answered with "It's no use" or "They are hierchical" or something along the lines of "I don't like politics". The explanations for failure to transform society is reassigned to the individual, because institutions and government have already been implicitly declared unfit to address these issues.

It is interesting in this context, that while the respondents do have very clear sociopolitical attitudes as described above, leaning towards the left, they do not identify as political. They consiously distance themselves and reintepret their contribution as apolitical, because it does not respond to classic forms of political engagement.

One respondent, Olivia, explained to me that our individual actions have a huge effect on global issues. One example she mentioned is the positive effect of the vegetarian lifestyle on the environment, as a strategy to counter act climate change. When asked about the effectiveness of this and how it's limited unless very many people joined in, Olivia explains to me that she acted this out on principle.

> Interviewer: With vegetarianism for example, its
> actual effect doesn't happen unless everyone joins
> in, right? And if some people keep eating meat,
> then isn't it a bit useless just on the level of
> effect?
> Olivia: I live this way because I feel that this
> is the right way to live, and I feel if I didn't
> live that way, I just couldn't.
>   *Extract from narrative interview, Summer 2017*

 The extract above from a longer interview about her lifestyle and the narrative of her choices demonstrates that being vegetarian is a normative decision, even though her narrative before this statement, framed it as a politically intended action. Beck (2008) explains that it is specific to late modernity that the developments have a normative tendency. He explains that the individual has control over the way he constructs his life, how he defines his social and biographic identity, and again according to Beck has no institutional check pattern to regulate and control his actions. Individuals have to develop the abilities needed to create a biographical narrative; they have to create abstract principles to explain and justify their decisions. When individuals are de-traditionalised, they hereby become the craftsmen of their identities and live in worlds where nothing is excluded and everything has to be decided by own thought out principles and justifications.

However, while these decisions read as normative, individualistic life choices, there is an imagined community that makes their everyday decisions seem politically intended.

In this context it is interesting to consider what politics are engaging in and how it relates to individuals, and especially young adults. My respondents found politics cannot exert the necessary changes, and thus could turn to either apathy or engagement in other ways. This reaction expressed itself in attempts at finding realistic alternatives of engagement in a constrained framework.

My respondents all harboured a general mistrust and insecurity towards traditional forms of engagement, as demonstrated by these statements of Olivia below:

> I really don't like hierarchies and I feel that
> these parties and also the state in general is
> very hierarchical. I think submission is very

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dangerous, what is way more useful and effective
is dialogue and exchange, dialogue and speaking
to each other about these issues is so much
more helpful than politics. Another problem is
neoliberalism is so strong, all these parties
are influenced by neoliberalism, and the whole
way everything is done, no one can actually make
independent decisions any more. You can see that
people are hopeless about this by the way they go
on the street. Politics cannot work, because there
isn't a perfect solution, there is no utopian
ideals that we can follow, everything has to
develop slowly.
    For example look at our friend P., he is really
a good guy and wants to do good by everyone who
works for him, but he is bound to the system.
        Extract from narrative interview, Spring 2017
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 P. is an entrepreneur, who owns an independent café. In using the expression "he is bound to the system" Olivia explains in this abstract that she does not believe in any system changing from within. While it is not entirely clear, which system she means, her explanations before hint that hers is indeed the lack of trust in politics and hierarchical systems that prompt her to search for other avenues of engagement.

Another system that is criticised in this milieu frequently is capitalism.mShe criticises politics for being neoliberal, which could stem from an understanding of the social disparity caused by a profit oriented and self-regulating market. It could also be a slogan-like statement ("neoliberalism is bad") very popular in the hipster milieu. This criticism of neoliberalism seems to be founded on a more intuitive concern that the structures of capitalism are resistant against change, similar to how Boltanski et al. (2018) describe them in the New Spirit of Capitalism.

Another type of mistrust of classical forms of engagement through institutions or politcs comes from the assumption or observation that humans are gullible about or ignorant of the certain challenges, such as capitalist modes of production. Positive trends can therefore be manipulated by large-scaled corporations, as seen in the extract below.

> "I hope it becomes popular, all fairtrade, I would
> love it if that happened, realistically we all
> know that's not gonna happen" I ask him about the
> increase of vegan consumption and he says some
> people are waking up, but then money, ignorance,
> hate, and fear stops people, for example then this
> trend is imitated by Starbucks/McCafe, speciality
> coffees like Starbucks, with their quirky hip lay
> out. He says they are nice and beautiful, so then
> the trend is capitalised again and again, so you
> lose faith.
>
> *Conversation notes, Summer 2016*

It seems as though, in a society where decisions and impact of the nations seem paralysed from the outset, because of the global issues and the risks pertaining to everyone of climate change for example, these individuals reassign their contribution as a citizen (see also section 4.2) to the individual level. Anything organised that one would traditionally associate with engagement is deemed too hierarchial or neoliberal, as was emphasised in statements by my respondents. The lack of trust and possibly also a lack of understanding how traditional ways of engaging, such as involvement in trade unions, or demonstrations, or petitions could contribute to effective change, is conducive to this development.

4.1.4   Implicit Understanding of Human Nature

Another fundamental assumption that shapes the world view and the approaches to action that my respondents in the field take, is their conception of human nature. Sometimes expressed implicitly, but in some situations asserted rhetorically, various representations of an anthropology of human kind were stated. To reconstruct this reflection on the human condition in my field, I analysed the interviews and statements and found some patterns that also shape the respondents' behaviour.

While details of the ontological considerations of anthropology remain unstated in the milieu, generally two tendencies were predominant. One was the perception that humans are incorrigibly egoistic, competetive or conflictual creatures, that are motivated primarily by self-interested pursuits, and as such cannot function as agents

of change. Within this notion ones own moral or normative behaviour was often
interpreted as an exception.

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On his own political nature: He is disillusioned,
he doesn't believe that anything can change, and
not a fan of humanity. Groups are always evil, he
likes individuals. Interested in corruption, who
is the worst.
                        Conversation notes, Summer 2016
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Noam in the above example mentioned to me and emphasised his underlying belief
that groups are fundamentally evil, implying that while individuals may be be lik-
able, when humans come together it is always problematic. He implied in other
situations that the majority of humankind is bad, and that only few indivuals are
kind-hearted or able to show sacrifice and gratefulness, expressing for example
that "people are always complaining" and that he wishes there were more of the
"kind-hearted" or "sacrifical kind of people".

   Another respondent, Tom, a successful poetry slammer, who also commits his
time to helping the elderly with alzheimers by writing poetry with them, explained
his idealistic mindset and his attitude.

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Went to Cuba and explained that the socialist
ideas were much closer to his ideals, but he
realised there more than ever, that "in the end
the human nature is capitalist and there is no
possibility to build a different, better world,
because humans are selfish and a**holes".
                        Conversation notes, Summer 2017
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Tom explicitly states that human nature is capitalist. His interpretation can be asso-
ciated with the classical model of the "economic man" who pursues his self-interests
in a rational, calculated and self-maximizing manner within an arena of competi-
tion over scarce resources. While in anthropological theory scientists acknowledge
that behaviours are more complex and multi faceted, it remains a popular thought,

demonstrated also by my respondents, to render human beings to such a simplistic models.

> "it is capitalism's fault people are like this,
> people are their habits/ routines, the whole team
> and café stand very strong against this. For us,
> compassion and understanding is more important
> […]" Finn describes his attitude towards humanity
> with a quote by Henry Rollins, he explains to
> me that Rollins is a singer in black flag, and
> a writer / poet, writes speeches, and he talks
> about his travels, and how he's done with "we",
> "you" exists and he likes "you", but there is not
> "we", C. thinks "we" are pretty much f***ed. I
> looked up the quote and it's from an article in
> the Guardian, where Rollins says: "I like you but
> not us." Finn explains that there are only pockets
> of powerful energy, as a collective we are pretty
> messed up
>
> *Conversation notes, Summer 2017*

While Finn, quoted in the above extract, blames capitalism and its mechanisms for individual behaviour, he defines people as their habits or routines. He expresses that for their team however, compassion and understanding are more important than capitalism, or capitalist habits or routines. He frames the team as an exception, that is countering the norms of society.

Interestingly, those with this first tendency, whilst being quite firm and steadfast in their own stance, do not believe that the advancement of society is possible. This hinders them from being engaged in any collective or more serious way, and constrains their actions within a framework of their own realm of influence (see also 4.3), and mere consumption choices (see 4.3.2). The lofty ideals described in 4.1.1 give way to resignation, negativity, and frustration. It's interesting that Finn still frames their little group as a "pocket full of powerful energy", because it goes beyond the mere individualism.

> He has a stronger connection to animals than
> people, because humans are vile and animals are
> great. You never see an animal hit another animal,
> cause it does not come from hatred. It's only to
> survive. There is something about nature which is
> beautiful, because there is no hatred.
> *Conversation notes, Summer 2017*

This anthropology seen in the extracts above, describes humans being "selfish", "vile" or "capitalist". This describes an anthropology akin to the homo economicus, but with a great deal of contempt.

However, opposing this is a second tendency that suggests human beings are influenced by their environment and that they can develop or change according to their circumstances and the conversations that one can have with them.

> For example at work it's very different. There
> I get to know people who are very different, you
> have to start right from the beginning.
> *Extract from a narrative interview, Spring 2017*

This distinction people "who are very different", is associated with the idea of having to start right at the beginning. It implies again this direction of society, and that all have to move that way.

> Like, I just remember the last 20 years I was all
> alone being a veggie [vegetarian], and I've always
> felt alone with this, and there were, so many
> annoying discussions. I have had to justify myself
> so often for it! People were really not accepting
> and when you are asked for a vegetarian meal they
> would look at you funny but now it's different,
> finally I feel so much better, it used to be so
> difficult
> *Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2016*

The personal experience that Olivia describes above sets the tone for her hopeful outlook to the development of humanity. She, and some others, see dialogue as a tool to transform. Conversations about important issues can be seen as an action towards the progress of humanity. In another context she explained: "The most important thing is the conversation, it's something collective, when you have the feeling that you doing good".

These conversations are embedded in an understanding of oneself as a part of a collective that encompasses the evolvement of humanity towards a more just and ethical future as described in 4.1.1. Its further embedded in an understanding of oneself also as a transforming individual that is trying to learn through friendships and conversations.

> ...my only expectation from the life is to live a
> good way. Again and again I discuss and negotiate
> how I can be a better person, where is there still
> room for improvement, what am I still doing wrong,
> these conversations are beautiful and I love
> having them with my friends. It really permeates
> our friendships.
>   *Extract from a narrative interview, Summer 2017*

These friendships and conversations are not only an expression of self development or cultural practice, but also seen as a tool to change other peoples' behaviour. A salesperson in a low waste, vegan shop told me once that "the customer, and talking to the customer is the most important, even more important than food".

The following statement also reflects this attitude of being able to influence people, and the idea that the obstacle for change is not the incorrigible nature of humans, but rather lack of education or love.

> ...it is important to maintain that everyone
> is welcome, and show love, for everyone in the
> line ... if you treat someone with hate, it only
> creates hate, if you treat everyone with love,
> love spreads, we respect each others feelings,

> everyone has their own mind, if you feel someone
> is overstepping, you have to deal compassion.
>   *Conversation notes, Summer 2017*

 Many theories might suggest to analyse these attitudes in light of sociological theories of consumerism and individualism, which means the main motivation for actions is to gain advantages in a field, or to mark one's identity.

However, the data shows how contradictory the statements can be. While these individuals dream of a just world, where people and animals are treated fairly, where the environment is saved and the challenges that mass consumption and consumerism are overcome, they sometimes seem paralysed by the image of the individual as self-interested and egoistic. Their own steadfastness can be interpreted as a normative stance and in some cases even hopefulness that society could move in this direction.

4.2   Individualism and Citizenship: Two Analytical Categories

In analysing the mindset and narrative of the respondents that is described above, two analytical categories emerge. In contributing to the progress of society it seems my respondents' self-understanding can be associated with citizenship, complimented by indvidualism.

Economic behaviour is often inadequately interpreted within the scene of hipsterism because distinction is such an important factor of authenticity (see 3.1). But even further, those who study economic behaviour professionally are strongly committed to specific theories of action. Especially distinction theory (Bourdieu, 2012) has influenced this field, and while this considers the network of interpersonal relationships that shape consumption behaviour, the behaviour is reduced to having merely distinctive purposes.

Analysing this behaviour through the lens of individualism, fashion in the sense of Simmel (1957) and distinction in the sense of Bourdieu (2012) led to entanglement. In this milieu the individuals have the unique challenge of being very opposed to being labelled and put strong emphasis on individualism. They find milieu formation problematic, but still engage in ways that cause distinction. They criticise consumption, but still identify with specific modes of consumption. The narrative of the self and the actions associated with distinction showed many contradictions.

However, seeing the actions through the narrative and perspective of the milieu itself allowed for the category of citizenship to emerge.

Evidently, participating in the actitivites and conversing with the respondents demonstrated their implicit understanding of their responsibilty and duties, as well as an expansion of the citizenship from a national to a broader, global level.

The idea that citizenship is bound to a legal status and has purely juridical implications has long been contested. But even within academic discourses that acknowledge citizenship as a practice, these are often associated with very specific practices that are defined beforehand.

Robins et al. (2008) explain that an "active citizen" has come to be a buzzword that disregards political agency that is embedded in everyday life. They argue that research on citizenship should function detached from normative convictions, but should rather analyse everyday experiences.

The actual experience of citizenship as a practice is of course bound not only to the reality of actors' particular social and cultural context, but also to their own conceptions of these. The understanding of society, human nature, institutions, politics, as well as the understanding of themselves as citizens shape this practice, and are closely connected to their perceived identity. As such they also influence their individuality. However, when duties and responsibilities toward an imagined global community become important, distinction practices take a backseat.

Citizenship is one category to analyse my respondents' approaches to action. National citizenship poses two challenges in contemporary society, that my respondents try to address.

The first is the challenge within the nation. A multitude of cultures and nationals live together in cities and neighbourhoods, as described in chapter 3. While these various cultures contribute to diversity, it becomes evident that results are distinction and milieu formation that my respondents observed to be problematic. Within the nation there are also individuals that do not have legal rights as a national, but are still perceived and attempted to be welcomed by my respondents, such as refugees. This is especially pertinent, as my respondents and their milieu was geographically in an area that is very dense with migrants.

A second challenge for national citizenship is that the afflictions of society, such as climate change, concern the whole world and not just single nations—as described in section 4.1.2 and 4.1.3—and that many institutions and traditional forms of collectivity have been deemed unfit or untrustworthy to address the challenges of a globalised world.

As Giddens (2013, p. 225) describes, modernity's referential systems are influenced by the expansion through globalisation. The world my respondents find themselves in, is unified by the creation of high-consequence risks, such as the collapse

of the eco system. They also demonstrate that they are affected by issues that do not concern them individually, but rather society as a whole, such as the injustices around exploitation of labour around the world. Thus, they demonstrate yet again their implicit understanding of themselves as part of a world community. Within this community they see themselves as politically motivated actors for the benefit of society, contributing to its progress through an imagined collective.

A tendency observable within hipsterism is an implicit understanding of one's own responsibility and duties towards a global entity that goes beyond the nation. The feeling of expressed solidarity went beyond the group my respondents belonged to. It also expanded national citizenship to global citizenship and is strengthened by my respondents' growing awareness of the connection throughout the world through capital and the distribution of goods, and impending climate change that will affect all. This also adds to the idea of an imagined community (Taylor, 2002) including all the peoples of the world.

Environmental issues and mass migration have brought on an understanding of society as a whole. A pressing call to answer to the needs of a growing, rapidly developing, but not yet united or peaceful global population has influenced these respondents. The world faces environmental and political challenges, such as pollution, global warming and the capitalist expectation of infinite growth despite finite resources. This has raised awareness in my respondents, that it is not sufficient to render quality of life to mindless consumption or mere voluntary work, but that the ways to engage need to be explored, reflected and reimagined. These forms take on a lot of mocking and ridicule in media and even the sciences, but need to be taken seriously at least as attempts of figuring out new ways of engaging for the progress of society in a new, digitalised, globalised world.

As evident in their narrative, the respondents do not associate their actions with distinction, but rather with global, individualised citizenship.

In a study in 2010 Myers (2010) had high school students construct their understanding of global citizenship. This understanding, whilst anaylsed in younger participants and in the US, includes elements that also seem implicit in my respondents' understanding. Even though they never used the term "citizenship" itself, they mentioned what is described in Myers study as the purpose of global citizenship: moral commitment that does not require any special legal status and that requires active efforts to address world problems.

While citizenship seems a better category to describe the conception of the self-understanding within hipsterism, a fundamental tenant is still individualism.

Individualism plays a large role, as can be seen in the attitude of non-judgement of other lifestyles, as many statements implied, and awareness of the power imbalances that occur when one tries to apply their moral reasonings to others. Furthermore, the

respondents' conception of human nature sometimes paralyses collective action in an organised way. Thus the desire to contribute to the progress of society develops in a normative, individual way, with an imagined community, rather than a practical one.

Hipsterism seems to be an attempt to navigate between individualism and collectivity and thus form a kind of citizenship based on an imagined global community that they empathise with and feel solidarity towards.

4.3   A Pattern of Action

As demonstrated in 3, it first seemed that the criticism expressed by the respondents does not influence their everyday practice in a perceivable way. One example is that distinction mechanisms and classic milieu formation are still apparent within the field (see 3.4). In searching for the conceptions that shape this lifestyle, a framework emerged. The question remains if the conceptions express themselves in tangible action.

4.3.1   Collective Individualised Action

Hipsters are attacked for not engaging in any serious way in social media as portrayed in 4.1.1, but also by social scientists that have explored their behaviour so far (1.3), stating that Hipsters have abandoned the claims of counterculture, while merely retaining the "coolness" of subcultures (Greif, 2010a).

One respondent shared with me his understanding why communism had failed, searching for answers in the lack of individuals' willingness to contribute to the common good, which was discussed in 4.1.4. However, my respondents do not feel hopeless or desperate, and these conceptions do not lead to becoming cynical or doing everything merely ironically, as the research of the past, and media discourse, so far suggest. Their attitude seems sober and realistic, and they emerge as individuals who understand their actions as part of a collective, searching for new ways of engagement.

In any case, my respondents identify with a collectivity in form of a sociality and solidarity that expresses itself globally and not just in neighbourhoods or in a form of classical community. This ultimately leads to an understanding of oneself and one's everyday actions as a lifestyle that takes place within an imagined community, with a strong individualistic element. As such it seems hipsterism offers an attempt to overcome the dichotomy between the individual and the collective, and also the

lack of a world embracing stage where they can act, by reassigning this responsibilty to the individual and imagining the community.

This means however, that the responsibility to transform or change the state of the world is reassigned to individuals and thus can only triumph if humankind is able to make a change on an individual level across a large scale.

Underlying this understanding of individual actions as collective actions can be traced back through a development in western societies, bearing in mind multiple processes that have occurred in recent modernity.

In this context I understand the term "action" as more than the distinction described in chapter 3, but rather as a politically intended or politically motivated everyday action. These actions will display a result of the conceptual framework described above in section 4.1. Furthermore, such actions, sustained over the course of life, can portray an intentional hipster lifestyle.

Leading to this section of the chapter, a framework of conceptions has been defined that shapes the way the respondents interact with and undertake measures to transform or better society. The direction of this transformation was described in section 4.1.1 and can be understood as politically progressive.

The measures to contribute to what Hipsters understand as a more just society are usually unrelated to classic political engagement. My respondents rather try to reimagine appropriate forms of engaging that fits to their understanding of the structures of society.

These conceptions, including that young people see no political global arena of engagement on which to act collectively, do not result in complete disengagement. Instead, new forms of engagement are being generated, in the form of such actions.

These actions can be attributed to citizenship as a category, rather than individualism, as explored in 4.2.

Self-determination and individual empowerment, and the values they are based on—such as creativity and innovation, allow my respondents to assess their own situation and to respond to their personal and the perceived societal circumstances, with appropriate action. Two types of responses can be identified here.

Firstly, they decide to try not to "join in", phrased as "not enslaving oneself" or "not becoming capitalist". This is more related to their work.

Second, they are attempting to find expressions of action in their lifestyle. The politically intended actions within hipsterism are a whole spectrum of activities that vary in degrees of committment. This spectrum includes the idea of conversation as a tool to transform societies. It also includes trying to construct spaces where different cultures, genders and ethnicities are welcome, such as their cafés with welcoming signs and events they organise. Another array of actions is sustainable living as

well as conscious consumption. This can be seen in the milieu being ecological, travelling sustainably, consuming vegan and no waste goods, etc.

The elements of the first, related to work, has already been discussed in 3.2 and 3.3. All respondents harbour antipathy towards any kind of job that supports big chains, within any financial or capitalised sector or the idea of becoming a "typical" entrepreneur. This can be attributed to a lifestyle that is dominant in this milieu. However, it is not a sustainable development and commitment to this idea weakens with time, because it evolves along an adaption to structures that were criticised initially, as portrayed in 3.3.4. Thus it is not necessarily sustained throughout the course of life, as a politically intended lifestyle.

The second response is to act in a politically intended or motivated way and expresses itself within the realm of consumption. Not only the consumption itself, but also conversations about it, reflection and self-criticism in consumption, and in groups of friends that are organised by their way of consumption. Consumerism, as the force that shapes the framework for action of my respondents, influences the understanding of my respondents on how they can contribute or engage in society, and shapes not only their identity, but also their relationships. Within the practice of consumption found in hipsterism, the pattern of ethical or conscious consumption stood out in my observations.

4.3.2   Conscious Consumption

It seems that globalisation is not just a cultural change, but might actually influence the political sphere and expand it through capital. Our global economy is one example of a world embracing sphere, as described above in 4.1.3. As we are politically connected by capital and the distribution of capital, this is where my respondents see the most likely way of engaging.

Andorfer (2013) investigated self-reported Fair Trade consumption in Germany, investigating the social function of ethical consumption. The findings of the conducted study lead to the conclusion that social status, attitude, general environmental concerns as well as solidarity and religiousness are important determinants. Atkinson (2012) published a qualitative study in which she discovered that socially conscious consumers found the cost of their consumption, such as inconvenience or limited choice, as pleasurable, because these sacrifices were reframed within the ideals of acting selflessly and working for a common good. According to Atkinson these socially conscious consumers embody an alternative concept of citizenship. Hudson et al. (2013) published an experiment in 2013 that investigated explanations for willingness to engage in ethical consumption in which individuals were asked

to choose between fair trade and regular coffee. They discovered that status and information provision did not significantly affect the decisions of consumption.

Generally the motivation for consuming consciously is bound within a framework of ideals, rather than information and knowledge.

One of my respondents described himself as "critical of consumption and plastic and he does think he is a minimalist". However explaining these themes in conversation often did not turn to the individual's narrative or themself or their personal lifestyle, unless I asked about it. Respondents were more interested in speaking about the issues as such. However, when respondents were asked about their identity and biography, there was noticably strong normativity in their understanding.

In 4.1 one can see one of the many shops on Weserstrasse. It had purely no waste cosmetics and organic products. The image in the window depicts a woman showering in twigs and leaves and feathers, demonstrating a bathing in nature. The image also portrays the woman with average porportions, as opposed to many advertisements in cosmetic shops that use skinny and photoshopped flawless models on the posters and pictures. While the image is purposefully simple in style, using only few brush strokes, there are lines on the legs emphasising unshaved legs. There seems to be special emphasis on the idea that the lady portrayed is not only connected closely to the nature, and has average proportions, but especially that her legs are not shaved. As such, she is not adhering to expectations of beauty pushed by commercial capitalism.

Figure 4.1 One of the shops close to Wesestreet selling organic cosmetics. (Semple, 2017c)

In many conversations respondents placed their consumption in a framework of politically progressive ideals. They shop in stores, that propagate a strong stance against objectification of women, chemicals in the cosmetic industry, and that condemn wastefulness and single use plastic. These are all portrayed as political choices and also as something they really identified with, in the context of a personal individualised lifestyle.

Other extremely predominant trends were minimalism, buying sustainable ethical goods, fair trade products etc. Many conversations in this social milieu rotate around what people no longer buy. These tendencies are also evident in many videos on the Internet platform Youtube, where videos with a distinctly hipster aesthetic are propagating movements towards living a more minimalist, less consumerist, and as such more fulfilling lifestyle.

Explanations for this behaviour are often not only politically framed, but also associated with conscience and feelings of guilt. The following extract from my field diary describes a very early conversation, revolving around the way my respondents felt, facing the fact that consumers are accustomed to purchasing goods that are either produced far away and have to be flown in, or that produce greenhouse gases, all with immense costs for the environment.

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Part of the convo with the girls was also about
all the foods they feel like having, but can't
have, because they feel guilty, because it's not
the season.
                              Field Diary, Summer 2016
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Buying regionally and seasonally was posed as an alternative to consumerism. The conscious consumer portrays an alternative to the classic consumer that my respondents' find problematic. The inherent problem of the market economy was often identified as a problem of consumers. The economy answers to the needs of the consumers that another respondent described as people that "just want to push a button and get what they want immediately, because they are in such a rush".

The challenges were not only ascribed to the consumers.

My respondents were also aware and discussed problems such as planned obsolescence, in which products are designed in a way that shortens their replacement time. These are all issues that they as individuals do not feel they can solve, except in addressing them through their own consumer behaviour.

Ultimately the question that remains is whether the respondents consume this way in an attempt to express an individualistic narrative of their biography and identification with certain values, or as a political reaction to the paralysis of possible engagement in any other way. Is it in fact the desire to act for the common good that is reduced to consumption, because it is understood as the only or most efficient way to influence and engage in an effective way? Or are the consumption patterns merely marking belonging and distinction, and, as Greif (2010a) put it, a "coolness" of subcultures devoid of any serious political intention?

To answer this question, it is interesting to observe that while there is a lot of denial within the scene whenever someone is labelled a "Hipster", the actual fashion symbols do express belonging to the group rather than a constant need for distinction. Even though specific items rapidly become extremely popular, they are still seen in hipster culture. This expresses authenticity (see also 3) and also poses many questions about fashion and how it has developed in contemporary society and evolved since Simmel's time.

If my respondents consume specific interchangeable items in order to escape from the mainstream, they portray a further evolution of Simmels fashion in a liquid society (Bauman, 2001). This can be associated with the developments of society in general and my respondents would merely illustrate the distinction mechanisms in contemporary society.

Between my respondents, consumption often plays a meaningful role in the shaping of not only identity, but also of relationships, as the following extract shows. In the interview quoted below Olivia had described to me her attitude towards consumption. When I asked which influence Olivia's consumption had in her life she said:

> It influences how and what kind people I'm friends
> with, it has a huge impact on friendship. The
> most important thing is the conversation, it's
> something collective, when you have the feeling
> that you're doing good. I guess it's giving
> yourself a sense of purpose, in the end, the
> eternal search for something. I don't know for
> what I am living exactly, I am still searching
> for meaning in this world, and my only expectation
> from the life is to live a good way. Again and
> again I discuss and negotiate how I can be a

> better person, where is there still room for
> improvement, what am I still doing wrong, these
> conversations are beautiful and I love having
> them with my friends. It really permeates our
> friendships.
>   *Extract from narrative interview, Summer 2017*

Here the respondent frames consumption patterns as something collective, while it is also deeply personal and individualistic. She frames these decisions within a commitment and responsibilty for the greater good of society, as well as personal development. The actions, such as consumption, could also be understood as politically intended, and thus portray citizenship.

Political Scientists Micheletti and Stolle have explored the notion of "sustainable citizenship" and studied it in the context of institutions, such as non-governmental organisations and corporations, and in the context of individuals, particularly those engaged in political consumerism and vegetarianism (Micheletti et al., 2012).

In the context of hipsterism, it is interesting to consider their empirical exploration and analysis of individuals involved in sustainable citizenship. They question whether being a good citizen has the potential to challenge structural causes of social injustices and environmental challenges. In their definition they expand citizenship beyond the bounds of a nation state and the sphere of politics, but refer to the values and practices to promote sustainable development. They explain that the discourse on citizenship has come to include lifestyles and routines, just as personal habits and choices.

In this context, citizenship can be seen as an expansion beyond the mere obeying of laws, serving of one's country and taking part in elections. Citizenship can include the responsibility to analyse and reassess one's own habits and the politics of day-to-day choices, as a means to object to inequality, human oppression, exploitation of nature, colonialism, et cetera.

One way in which citizens engage in activism is for example through boycotting some products, while specifically seeking out others.

> Consumers may, for instance, decide to purchase (buycott) certain goods as much as possible for sustainability reasons, to become vegetarians or vegans, or to live simply without many material possessions. (ibid., p. 93)

Through the lens of Bourdieu's taste as a matter of distinction (Bourdieu, 2012) the behaviour of my respondents could be reduced to markers for identity and individu-

alism. Through Simmel's lens of fashion, this consumption could be understood as an expression of the dualism of adaption and distinction, between flight and chase (Simmel, 1957).

However, a citizenship approach shows that consumption can be an expression of a felt responsibilty and as a politically intended action. Hipsters are often vegan or vegetarians and embrace ecological and environment-friendly lifestyles. They can be seen eating at vegan restaurants or cafés, and using fair trade products. They work for social or ethical organisations, or even own or startup such establishments themselves. Many startups that Hipsters find within the realm of consumption are organic, or have a feminist or otherwise ethical stance.

In this context my respondents often also reframed their consumption choices as a political decision, as seen below. The statement is an explanation to why the individual was a vegan rather than a vegetarian.

He explained that he

> ...met someone who really inspired him and said
> there is no such thing as being a vegetarian, you
> either support the animal industry, or you don't.
>   *Field Diary, Summer 2017*

In this context it can be understood as a political action to become vegan, as a vegetarian still supports the animal industry by consuming dairy, eggs or other animal products, like leather or wool.

Here it is important to differentiate between those practices that can be associated with flight and chase in the sense of Simmel, and an actual buy- or boycotting in the way it is described by Micheletti and Stolle. Following the notion of mass culture in a strict sense, hipsterism could be a practice that is defined by mere consumption. The question here is whether Hipsters merely consume, or whether they are 'acting' individuals. In this sense, acting is understood as defined earlier, as a politically intended everyday action.

Micheletti et al. (2012, p. 90) explain that

> Sustainable citizenship expects individuals and institutions to support and safeguard social justice and nature even if they do not receive a direct reward or payoff in return. It expects them to give serious consideration to how their beliefs, policies, and practices might reflect and reproduce social and environmental injustices of the past (e.g., from legacies of slavery and colonialism) and how their present practices and lifestyles may have a negative effect on the well being of other humans, nature, and animals

today and in the future. Sustainable citizenship includes responsibilities for economic, environmental, and equitable development that are to be practised daily. In this way, it expands and extends what is generally considered as necessary to be a good citizen. Moreover, it includes more actors as citizens and more arenas in which citizenship is practised. In particular, it stresses the responsibilities and practices of businesses and consumers and views both private and economic life as important centers in the making and performance of citizenship.

Criticism of this engagement often notes that a focus on consumption will foster more individualism and even further jeopardise the possibilities of collective action, rather than show a viable expression of engagement in an individualised, yet globalised, society.

However, the awareness of my respondents that affluent consumption has increasing negative effects on the environment and vulnerable people throughout the world was evident. If individuals assume, as demonstrated by my respondents, that classical engagement models and traditional politics are hindered to the point of paralysis from achieving effective change, they could demonstrate an attempt to find models of engaging as individuals across a large scale. Consumption is only one that they have found so far. They could be seen as a contemporary subculture, searching for adequate ways of being political, within their conception of reality.

4.3.3 Consistent Consumption as a Lifestyle—A New Form of Citizenship?

The same consumption behaviour of my respondents can be observed through two different analytical lenses.

Looking at the behaviour from a fashion perspective led to entanglements of labelling, distancing and classic flight and chase behaviour Simmel (1957). Looking at consumption choices from the perspective of lifestyle and citizenship, demonstrated consistency and commitment with a political motivation.

Through the analytical lens of fashion in the sense of Simmel (ibid.) this behaviour can be attributed to an attempt to distinguish oneself and to belong to a group. As a lens, distinction theory Bourdieu (2012) leads to understanding aspects of the respondents' behaviour as expressions of good taste, distinction and individualism in the field. The class has shifted to be a creative one, but there is still an underlying class mentality.

As demonstrated in this chapter however, the conceptions of Hipsters—individualism, collectivity, institutions, etc.– and the emerging actions, can por-

tray the emergence of a form of global citizenship in highly individualised, whilst globalised, society.

The reaction of conscious consumption is connected not only to mass culture and globalisation, but also to the individualistic narrative of the self, and its possible movement toward citizenship. It is important to acknowledge the effects of the framework of action that hipsterism is practiced within. If analysed deeply and precisely from within, we can observe a possible movement from individualism to citizenship as a model for sustainable (political?) engagement in an age lacking a global stage with inadequate institutions in globalisation. Both the individualistic narrative of the self and biography and identification with certain values, as well as the reaction to the paralysis of possible engagement and desire to act for the common good, might structure these decisions. All in all, we cannot merely reduce these cultural practices of hipsterism to either civic action for the common good, or as individualistic distinction driven mechanisms. It has been helpful to maintain a holistic approach to understanding what dynamics affect modern societies and how it poses questions about models of engagement on individuals within the global yet liquid environment infused by the new spirit of capitalism.

In the context of the conceptions expressed in 4.1 it seems likely that the realm of consumption is an area where actors feel they can influence society on a global scale, as opposed to other forms of engagement. When individuals look for ways to engage in problems that are global, not just national or transnational, such as massive migration, waste pollution through plastic, and climate change, which are some areas that my respondents were very passionate about, they realise that these world spanning challenges also need a global political stage to engage on. To my respondents, it seems most likely in the realm of consumption, where consumer choices seem to actually influence the global community.

The question is whether their behaviour is truly political in this scene, even though and maybe even especially because of the fact that it has a lot to do with consumption. The idea of active consumers has been discussed against the background of approaches to reflexive modernism (Beck, 1992), which generally pointed out that classical political institutions lose significance and politics of everyday life becomes more important.

The discussion about dicourses on and dissemination of moral consumption was thought by some authors such as Lamla (2013) and Hellmann (2013) to possibly result in a new social system, from the grass roots, first through the interconnectedness of consumers, then through the networking of associated organizations, ultimately resulting in a form of consumer communication.

> The most important thing is the conversation, it's
> something collective, when you have the feeling
> that you're doing good.
>   *Extract from narrative interview, Spring 2017*

Depending on their attitude towards wider society as described in 4.1.4, the relationship and actions towards others vary. Some within this milieu see it as their task and obligation to have conversations with friends outside of this milieu, with quite a normative approach, seeing it as their duty to spread their ideals.

After talking about the problem that not many people are yet engaging in sustainable or ethical consumption behaviour, one respondent explained that "we are all not perfect and consistent", and stated the following.

> But that's okay, because there's so many
> conversations that are helping motivate everyone,
> to become more and more consistent.
>   *Extract from narrative interview, Spring 2017*

In the extract above the respondent demonstrates another aspect: that she is not just aware that many substantial conversations and interactions are needed to change peoples' consumption behaviour. She also demonstrates that not everyone is or can be perfectly consistent, but what is needed for individual and collective progress is an ongoing process of action, reflection and consultation with friends and family and interactions with wider society.

Another respondent's greatest contact with the diverse populations of Neukölln was frequenting ethnic supermarkets. She was also living a low waste lifestyle. Many of the ethnic stores in Neukölln are prone to giving the buyer many plastic bags to store grocery items in. This individual explained that she still frequents these places and hopes that having her ecological, reusable fabric bag will make others in the supermarket aware and make them think. This way she hopes to have a positive impact through interactions there, and also does not have to stop frequenting those places, that offer her encounters with people of diverse cultures. She sees here presence there as a suggestion to others rather than telling them and thus imposing her values on others.

Another respondent explained:

> I had an interesting conversation with [my
> boyfriend] about this. You know it's about way
> more, it's about what is the right thing to do
> and how are people allowed to live. I don't live
> perfectly, and [my boyfriend] said "Really why are
> your expectations so high? if everyone lived the
> way you are, there would be no problems any more.
> Environmental and like other stuff too."
>   *Extract from narrative interview, Spring 2017*

This statement also emphasises that the conversation is important towards advancement, not only conversing with others, but also as a process of self-reflection and bettering oneself. Giddens explains that through the variety of choices, and because we are under pressure to choose in consumer society, all these decisions affect self-identity, while self-identity in modernity is a reflexive achievement. As a pattern of living, self-identity is shaped, altered and reflexively sustained in the course of life (Giddens, 1991, p. 215). Life patterns, can be altered and practices can be changed, while the general lifestyle provides consistency.

I observed in my respondents that a more or less consistent mode of consumption is placed in the context of not only a whole lifestyle, but a politically intended one at that.

> [I buy something on] Amazon, for example, and
> then I feel guilty, even though there so many
> conversations that motivate you to do the right
> thing. And then you become lazy and you think
> about it and then you realise that you've ordered
> on Amazon again, even though you know it's wrong,
> and you feel guilty.
>   *Extract from narrative interview, Summer 2017*

This respondent implies that buying something on Amazon is not consistent with her lifestyle, most likely because of the bad working conditions of warehouse workers

and their terrible contracts, that Amazon has been criticised for. To be highly critical and maybe boycott companies that are merely very good at modern-day capitalism and thus very successful, is of course a counter cultural stance. The struggle of this individual to lead a coherent life, which reflects her ideals, is exemplary for understanding lifestyle as participation. Generally, the respondents also gave the impression of collectivity.

So while many of these conversations circled around autonomy, non-judgement and making one's own decisions, these actions and practices were still being described or portrayed as movements or collective action. The respondents assume that people globally are also engaging and sharing these values.

Fragmentation of society and its institutions and individualisation did not affect my respondents' feeling of belonging to movements or causes. While they did not identify necessarily with groups, except for belonging to an imagined global community, they very well identified with causes, such as veganism and gender equality. Lifestyles usually express individual values and are shaped by the stress and pressure of the society. The reactions of my respondents express a movement from focusing on the individual to more global, ethical issues and assuming responsibility that can be described as citizenship.

Many attempts to challenge dominant mainstream values are expressed not only in the individual lifestyle, but also determine relationships within groups of friends.

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Olivia shares her wardrobe with F. In these 2
years I have known them now, I have only ever seen
them shop at flea markets for clothes. They buy
stuff together, and they seem completely detached
from who pays for what. I've never seen them
borrowing or lending money. Whoever has money in
that instance just pays. When I ask Olivua about
this, she says she loves the concept of a shared
wardrobe, because while it does sometimes- very
seldom she emphasised- lead to her not being able
to wear something, because F. is already wearing
it, it expresses the solidarity. She said: "In
that instance you have to decide whether you want
to get upset, that you wanted to wear that item
and you can't, or if you use it as an opportunity
to practice abstinence." I ask her to explain what
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she means by abstinence and she says she means
abstinence from ownership, greed and belongings. I
kept observing this and realised that they do the
same with food and cosmetics in their home.
Field Diary, Spring 2017

To frame the practice of sharing and abstaining from consumerism within one's lifestyle as an expression of solidarity is a reaction my respondents showed to complicating features of modernity.

Olivia also shared with me how she distrusts institutions or politics, because they do not stem from the grass roots. It seems to her a more genuine form of engagement to pay for whatever needs to be paid for in their home, whenever she has the money. This opposes the culture she lives in, which sees the need for calculating fair shares, with an economical understanding of fair being that all pay the same amount. This attitude also expresses an alternative, one could go as far as to call it counter-cultural, understanding of justice or fairness. To Olivia and her friends, the financial means that are earned are also spent for all, independent of a difference in wages or expenditure.

This lifestyle seems politically intended.

One could argue, that the urge to act in this way, is prompted merely by the urge to distance oneself from the masses and fulfil the task of building a more or less coherent identity with a set of authentic values that justify your life choices. But to do so would ignore that despite these individualistic tendencies, these norms of behaviour are shaped by the stress and anxiety within society. Thus the observation and analysis of the practices themselves, if looked at within this process of identity creation, but also as an end itself and not just a means to fulfil the call of individualism, can create a deeper understanding of society and counterculture in the current age.

My respondents framed their lifestyle as an engagement process with society and expressed politically intended action in an individualised society.

These attitudes demonstrate a countercultural posture: my respondents are trying to better society through ethical and conscious consumption, within a lifestyle based on countercultural values. So as a reaction to the stresses of society, they adapt the way they consume, and thus attempt to counter the prevalent mechanisms.

However, they limit the possibilities of challenging and countering norms of wider society, through merely another form of consumption, which is still constrained within a framework of the new spirit of capitalism. These actions are an engagement with society, but seem unlikely to challenge or even threaten function-

ing mechanisms of capitalism, unless many more people take part and they are taken
to the extreme.

While boycotting can be found in hipsterism, as a lot of products that express
exploitation will be avoided, engagement can also be more subtle. Not just by pun-
ishing those companies that individuals disagree with, but also in making consumer
choices that are less motivated by punitive or awarding concerns, but rather by a
desire to act in a way that benefits society as a whole. The conversational dynamics
also contribute to this.

In addition to exemplifying individualism as a task, the disintegration of tradi-
tional societal roles, and youth becoming adults that are engaged in a becoming of
their own, my respondents demonstrated the changes in participation and engage-
ment in recent modernity. Many of my respondents identified with a normative
lifestyle, for example with minimalism or veganism. However, in a constant pro-
cess of self reflection, they analyse their reasons, their justification patterns, whether
they are effective and whether they are authentic.

As a reaction to the stress of consumerism, mass culture and a throwaway soci-
ety, my respondents demonstrated the movement of individualism to citizenship. It
shows that individuals are imagining appropriate forms of engagement, posed by
their own framework and principles, such as their willingness to engage in specific
practices or engaging in dialogue about cultural and economical issues.

In a society in which they no longer trust the institutions to be able to address
world problems, they reassign the responsibilty to their own selves and engage
in politically intended lifestyles, whilst maintaining a individualistic stance. This
lifestyle is developing and unfolding while Hipsters search for the most efficient
and beneficial ways of engaging in a globalised society.

Conclusion

<div style="text-align:right">**5**</div>

This research aimed to identify self-understanding and practices within the social milieu labelled as hipster, but it emerged as a paradigm for western, capitalist, liquid societies. The contradictions in hipster spaces demonstrated tendencies in contemporary society that shape current modernity. Hipsterism amplifies these tendencies and as such can be utilised to analyse the development of recent modernity and indicate what challenges of identity and action are faced by young adults in the new spirit of capitalism.

It also aimed to answer the question whether hipsterism can be understood as a counterculture of contemporary society. Based on a participant observation, supplemented by media analysis and narrative interviews with key individuals, it can be concluded that hipsterism demonstrates contradictions of urban space and demonstrates key conceptions that shape engagement in a consumerist, liquid society shaped by a new spirit of capitalism. The results indicate that actions and statements in the sphere of hipsterism express implicit criticism of milieu formation. Their attempts to counter milieu formation, which they see as contributing to the progress of society, fail in practice. They cannot be seen as countercultural in the classic sense, but rather emerge as individuals searching for ways to contribute to the dissolvement of milieus they find problematic, through a lifestyle and politically intended everyday actions, mainly through consumption and conversation.

By entering the field and assuming Hipsters did not exist and working with an emergent design, this study focussed on the practices themselves and the meaning assigned to the labelling and distancing processes in general, rather than being stuck on the definition of a subculture, that doesn't see itself as such, and also avoids being associated with it, *because* it finds such processes of labelling and the milieu formation itself problematic.

It was possible to overcome challenges of observation and to work with and adapt the questions in an ethnographic and emergent way, enabling a purely inductive

approach. The emergent design allowed for a flexible development of the research, focussing first on what could be observed and then explaining its meaning and the conceptions behind it. As such hipsterism emerged as a paradigm for developments in modernity that are not unique to the hipster milieu, but express obstacles for countering milieu formation in general.

It was expected that the observation would show that while the label Hipster is a fickle and somewhat empty signifier, the practices undergone within hipsterism are invested with conceived meaning. Analysis through the lens of space made contradictions that were only felt, through self-reflexion and the logbook, and existed implicitly, explicit. By using an emergent design, the interim conclusions of these findings enabled a deeper analysis of conceptions in contemporary society that frame young adults' approaches to action.

To gain a holistic understanding of hipsterism, it was necessary to understand the environment and dominant culture. Because hipsterism combines issues of labelling and distancing, modernity and capitalism, the milieu was observed from various philosophical and social perspectives. By understanding how hipsterism is socially embedded, the tensions that characterise their environment became explicit.

The findings of this study show a number of conclusive insights, that are not only about hipsterism itself, but that also contribute to the body of knowledge on modernity.

By analysing the practices and self-narrative within the milieu, hipsterism demonstrated contradictions of the urban order in reference to Lefebvre, because it contains a mentally conceived and socially produced space, that does not show itself in spatial practice. Milieu formation is criticised and individuals attempt to counter this, but are unsuccessful in everyday practice.

The social milieu expresses a distance and even disgust with neoliberalism and capitalism, while many of them are engaged in building their own businesses.

Hipsterism is distancing yourself from politics, but expressing strong progressive views.

The social milieu has a clear antitype that they criticise and distance themselves from. This antitype is closely connected to mindless work and consumption and neoliberalism, while at the same time a very neoliberal attitude such as Do-What-You-Love can also be detected within hipsterism. Feelings of belonging and access to the space of hipsterism are evoked by distancing yourself from the antitypes. My respondents distanced themselves from consumerism. While fashion and distinction plays a role in hipsterism, the symbols of hipsterism are not constantly changing because of fashion and distinction towards the masses. There are ideals behind the distinction that are related to their reading of society and can thus be understood as idealogically countercultural. However, the strong identification with specific

modes of consumption, while distancing yourself from consumption, marks another contradiction.

The countercultural tendencies or ideals follow a process of transition into an adapted and conforming lifestyles. Hipsterism, observed as a progression of young, idealistic adults to entrepreneurs or workers, demonstrated this process. The ethical behaviour is more visible on the consumption side, rather than sales and production side of the economy. This demonstrates the difficulty to make purely ethical decisions in an economy that is based on supply-demand chains and profit orientation.

Access boundaries of hipsterism showed that the imagined space of hipsterism and Kreuzkölln is invested with meanings of tolerance, non-judgement and multiculturalism. However, as hipsterism has shown, the diffusion and ultimate dissappearance of milieu boundaries is not possible thus far. However many signs that refugees are welcome you hang up in a café, refugees do not necessarily enter. To observe how other milieus living within the same physical space react to these spaces and what obstacles they perceive and experience, remains a question still to be answered.

In the sense of an emergent design and an inductive approach, these observations led to the second part of the study and the question of what obstacles hinder the realisation of these conceived representations into spatial practice. The interviews conducted with key individuals identitified from the respondents led to a conceptual framework within hipsterism that seems to significantly shape engagement, self-narrative and action.

Generally, we can observe progressive values and political attitudes within hipsterism, but rather in a sociopolitical sense. The respondents identified themselves as apolitical, because of an implicit understanding of the obstacles to achieve their goals in traditional forms of political engagement. In reference to Lefebvre, we can say that while the space of hipsterism appears political, the action is not shaped or framed as such. This became clear because of the identification of the three moments of space: the conception is political, the spatial practice is not. The conception opposes distinction and promotes multiculturalism, but the spatial practice does not show generated or actually practiced crossover between different cultures, languages, ethnicities or classes. This contradiction irritates in the lived space. The invested meaning and the symbolism of hipsterism is not expressed in practice.

This contradiction does not go by unnoticed by the milieu itself, clear through the interceptions like "I love my job, it's great, but maybe I was fooled by capitalism, I pressed myself into the shape and never go on holiday". Another example is the statement "It's ironic, me a white male trying to do good for indigenous populations, but there you have it".

Their attempts to counter society, or to contribute to its progress, are shaped by a number of conceptions, the first of which is trying to transform society from a position of privilege. This challenge is a fundamental one and not just an issue for hipsterism. Hipsterism demonstrates a growing understanding of issues of power and domination that take place at the intersection of race, culture, class and progress.

As such hipsterism demonstrates negotiation between individuality and collectivity, that respond to individualism and citizenship. Individualism plays a large role, as can be seen in the attitude of non- judgement of other lifestyles as many statements implied, and awareness of the power imbalances that occur when one tries to apply personal moral reasonings to others. This results from the aforementioned understanding that there are issues of power and domination when concerned with questions of normativity, morality and progress.

Furthermore, the respondents' conception of human nature sometimes paralyses collective action in an organised way. Thus the desire to contribute to the progress of society develops in a normative, individual way, with an imagined community, rather than a practical one.

Hipsterism shows the conception of collective individualised action. It demonstrates that mass individualisation does not mean that groups or communities lose importance. The conceptions detected in the respondents hinder them from being involved in any traditional political or collective way. They also mistrust the institutions in the sense that they believe that these are unfit to address the problems they see and want to solve—at least in a manner that they would agree with. Decisions and the impact of the nation-states seem paralysed from the outset, because global issues, such as climate change for example, are influenced by and affect all nations and peoples.

The institutions are deemed unfit, too neoliberal, or too national, to adress these issues. Furthermore it is deemed problematic for the respondents to attempt to spread their own ideals from their position of privilege, because they are convinced of attitudes like non-judgement and radical indvidualism. Hipsterism demonstrates a response to this challenge, by reassigning the contribution as a citizen to the individual level.

Hipsterism shows that responsibility is reassigned to the individual level, but that most of these decisions and reflections still have a collective horizon. Hipsterism affirms an underlying belief, that traditional forms of collective action organised in contemporary society are not a viable option for engagement. This does not necessarily disorient or demotivate young people. Hipsterism has shown that individual actions are understood more in the light of collective individualised action based on solidarity towards an imagined global collective. The individuals engaged in hipsterism will likely not experience the worst impacts of climate change, but are still

making everyday decisions framed by the knowledge about it and assume there are others who do the same. They imagine or narrate themselves as part of a movement.

A breadth of underlying assumptions about human nature can be found in hipsterism, which show that while these individuals dream of a just world, where people and animals are treated fairly, where the environment is safe and the challenges of consumerism are overcome, they are sometimes frustrated by an image of the individual as self-interested and egoistic. However, an underlying assumption of humans as possible agents of change motivates some to try to spread the ideals through their behaviour or conversations. These conversations are reinterpreted and understood as political in nature.

All in all, hipsterism emerges as an attempt to navigate between individualism and collectivity and thus form a kind of citizenship based on an imagined global community that they empathise with and feel solidarity towards.

Resulting from these circumstances are a variety of forms of action, while searching for better ways to contribute and engage at the same time.

In the self-narrative, what Hipsters do for a living is reinterpreted as an attempt to counter capitalistic and consumerist tendencies. Through their work they try to express an anticapitalist lifestyle. However, it became clear that this is not sustainable long term, and the commitment to these ideals weakens with time, because it evolves along an adaption to structures that were criticised initially. Thus work is not necessarily sustained throughout the course of life as a politically intended element of their lifestyle.

However, there were other actions that could be understood as politically intended, and hipsterism shows that these activities can be raised to a level of lifestyle.

The politically intended actions within hipsterism are a whole spectrum of activities with varying degrees of commitment. From trying to create a holy and spiritual experience of life to expressions of creativity, from low waste and vegan consumption to conversations as a tool of spreading political ideals, all these activities hint at the potential of transformative and negotiating power that hipsterism could have. Attempts to try to construct spaces where different cultures, genders and ethnicities are welcome might fail in spatial practice, but their practices in sum still leave a trace in (consumer) culture.

Hipsterism expresses a response to act in a politically intended or motivated way within the realm of consumption. Not only in the act of consuming, but also conversations about it, reflection and self-criticism in consumption, and in groups of friends that are organised by their way of consumption.

The criticism that can be found in hipsterism can be related, but not reduced entirely, to a contemporary form of artistic criticism in reference to the new spirit of capitalism. It seems to express a new form of criticism, one expressed through consumption choices and consumer pressures on the production process. Especially movements around responsibility towards the environment and towards fellow human beings through fair trade consumption expresses a criticism of modes of production within capitalism.

Generally hipsterism seems countercultural, but not as a group, but rather as an expression of their possible wish for a transformation, stumbling over the obstacles for that change. The obstacles showed that they are not only hindered by their own theoretical framework, but also by a reading of reality, and thus are searching for different ways of engaging.

Hipsterism also showed that discussions and questions around power structures and milieu formation, formerly associated with a specific margin of society, like academics and political actors, are slowly seeping into a wider, albeit privileged, sector of society.

One challenge in countering milieu formation is that problems and disputes about tolerance and multiculturalism and morality often do not have a clear answer. This is exemplified by situations where an individual wants to be very open and friendly and welcoming towards refugees, but then stumbles over traditional forms of life in a segment of society where the genders have very clear and binary roles. This contradicts the wish for absolute openness and abolishment of gender roles and sexism. This is an obstacle that hipsterism demonstrates, but is not limited to.

In this respect, to continue this research, hipsterism is an exciting looking glass to modernity and where it is headed. An intial step could be to analyse in which instances and how ideas of imagined community and political action are taken further than the individual level, and can emerge as movements and communities, such as *Fridays for Future* or *Occupy Wall Street*.

To transform society to vibrant and diverse communities without problematic milieus, the way Berlin and Kreuzkölln are portrayed in the hipster discourse, there are still obstacles to be overcome. A beginning of such a conversation, could be taking practices of hipsterism seriously, because the actions also spread and effect the rest of the world, however erratic and inconsistent they may be. What remains to be studied is how the populations that are not considered hipster, but live in proximity of this neighbourhood, react to these attempts.

Hipsterism takes attempts to counteract milieu formation and consumption patterns to the level of a whole lifestyle to express solidarity towards an imagined community. With an (implicit and explicit) understanding as a privileged section of the world population hipsterism shows how individuals take their seemingly highest and most effective form of power—their purchasing power—and try to use it to contribute to the progress of society.

Hipsterism can be seen as a paradigm for adaption to society, while trying to contribute to its progress and navigate its obstacles—but not without leaving a mark on consumer culture, and culture in general.

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