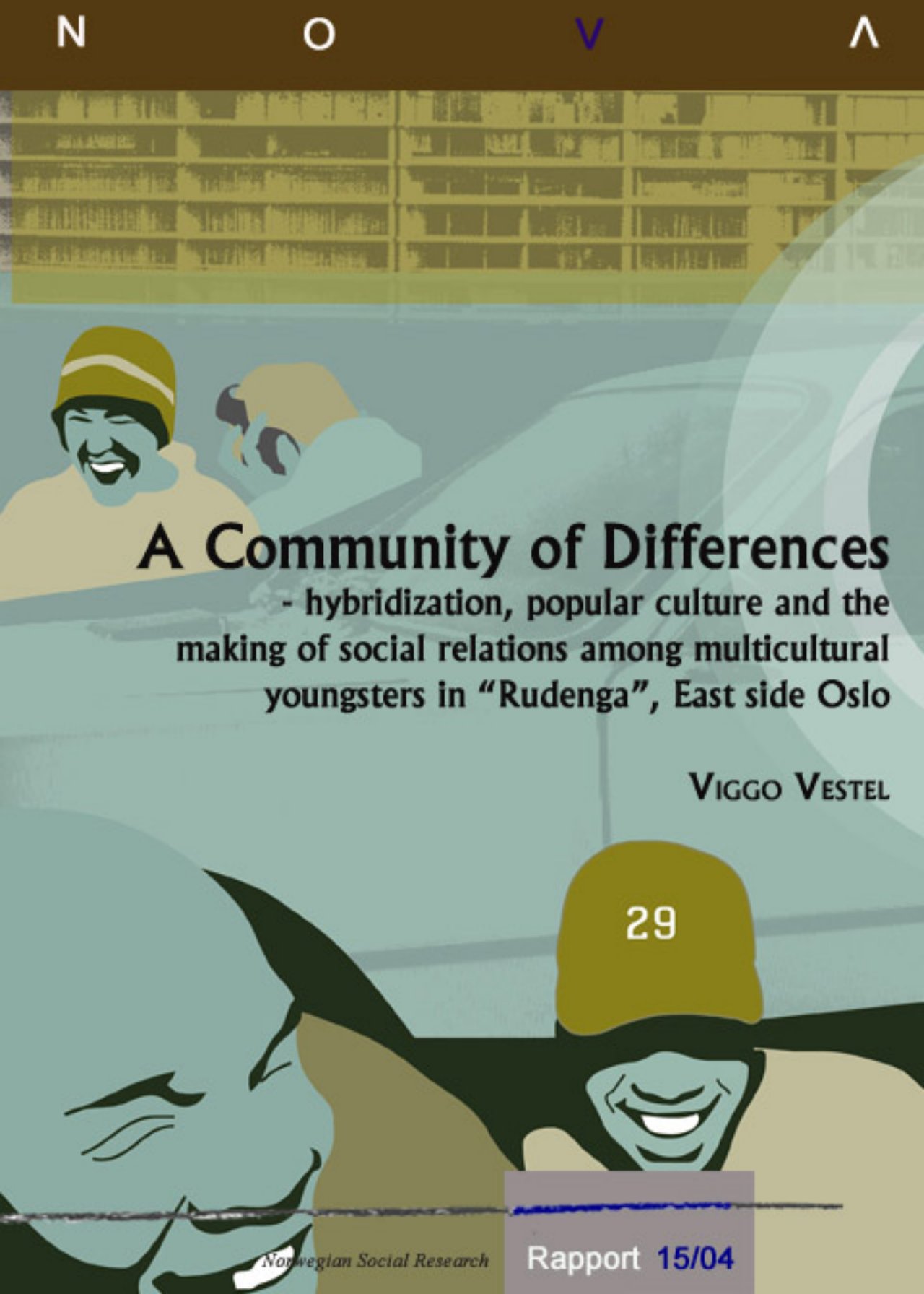


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A Community of Differences

- hybridization, popular culture and the making of social relations among multicultural youngsters in "Rudenga", East side Oslo

VIGGO VESTEL

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– hybridization, popular culture and the making of
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“Rudenga”, East side Oslo

VIGGO VESTEL

Doctoral dissertation
Institute of Social Anthropology
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Oslo

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Contents

Introduction	11
The setting	16
Oslo – a divided city?	18
Granlia – the township	20
Rudenga – a semi old suburb	21
The club, the anthropologist and his methods	21
Some theoretical points of departure – how to understand the multicultural situation?	30
The multicultural landscape: a possible map.....	31
Identification in the multicultural landscape: on orthodoxies, heterodoxies and rejection – a model.....	33
Positions in the multicultural landscape: experience and subjectivity.....	37
Actions in the multicultural landscape: on signs, emotions and cognition	39
The chapters	46
RUDENGA 1993–94: SOME INTRODUCTORY CONTEXTUALISATIONS: “CITY STROLLERS” AND “BLACK METALLERS”	51
1 Inclusion and resonance in the present: two boys and an Arabian guitar line. Omar’s story Part. I	54
Entering the club	54
On resonance – tracking the phenomenology of the social meeting	59
The kitchen scene: resonance in the present	67
Creating the mutually known – the role of repetition	70
Expectation and uncertainty	71
The role of the new	74
Creating symmetry: handling the power flow	75
Summing up: resonance in the present –pointing to semiosis?	76
2 Inclusion, resonance and semiosis: the Arabian guitar line, friendship and youth cultures. Omar`s story Part II	80
Resonance and semiosis: exploring the past in the present	80
Omars early years	84
Breakdance & Hip Hop – the first wave of a transnational youth culture	90
“Beat Street” and breakdance hits Rudenga: seeing oneself in the sign	94
Transforming the place: The Hot Rockers	97
“When we were Kings” – knowledge, style and bodily practices in “the golden age”....	99
A variety of mediums for knowledge	101
Various backgrounds	103
Three stages in the development of the semiotics of resonance/relevance: Breakdance & Hip Hop as interpretant and new sign for young users.....	105
Omar and Ola: the experience of being experts and the semiotics of their social relations.....	108

3 Hostile signs – dissonant signs: Heavy Metal, Black Metal, racism and the thorny paths of fandom. Omar’s story part III	109
Some remarks on the Heavy Metal tradition	109
“Running with the devil”	110
The sub genre: Black Metal	113
Black Metal hits Rudenga: the thorny paths of fandom for Knut and Helge.....	116
Eight points on the core messages of the orthodoxies of Black Metal.....	118
1. Romanticism.....	119
2. Transgression.....	120
3. Nostalgia.....	121
4. Hierarchy	121
5. Cult of the strongest	124
6. Purity	124
7. The preference for the imagined to the real	125
8. Authenticity	126
The thorny paths of fandom – positions of heterodoxies and rejection.....	127
Omar and Metal: orthodoxies, heterodoxies and their limits	129
4 Subjectivity, self and identification: youth culture, friendship and an Arabian guitarline. Omar’s story part IV	132
Some remarks on the conceptualisation of identity.....	135
A short story on the semiotics of getting acquainted.....	141
Skateboard	144
“Clubtime” and “city strolling”	147
House/Techno.....	150
The moving force: investment, illusio, concerns	151
Ambiguity and identity	161
The “spiral”	167
Summing up: subjectivity, self and identification	168
Postlude I. The musical conversation and the odd note revisited: a meeting place in the grey zone	169
Postlude II. Ola on jobs, parties, music and ‘the foreigners national anthem’.....	172
RUDENGA 1998–99: SOME FEATURES OF THE MEDIA CONTEXT: OSLO, YOUTH AND IMMIGRANTS	176
5 The club 1998: a community of differences	179
“Habitus”, globalisation, experience and Peircean “habits”	183
A heterogeneity of backgrounds – but a coherence of cultural expressions?.....	186
The semiotics of the external “fact” – the experienced resistance of “reality”	187
Greeting rituals.....	194
Summing up: greeting rituals as responses, messages and their semiotic sources.....	198
Language: “Kebab Norwegian”... ..	201
...and plain Norwegian	206
Tahar’s story: Learning to walk on ice. The pain of conflicting habituses.....	207
Language use outside the club	213

Summing up: language practices as responses and messages, and their semiotic sources.....	215
Summing up: greeting rituals and language practices – selective responses to salient common conditions of living?.....	217
Habitus, identification and the levels of the self	220
6 The message of dress: expressivity, habitus and identification in clothing..	224
Dressing codes in 1993 – the importance of not dressing like the Westenders	228
Dressing codes in 1998 – the importance of dressing expensive	231
Westend style for Eastend youngsters?	234
Gangsta rap – as ethos and street fashion	235
Some further complexities.....	240
Producers and users: “Napapijri – geographic” and the Norwegian flag.....	243
The producers... ..	243
... and the users.....	247
The anthropologist’s suggestions	249
Attitudes towards traditional clothing.....	252
Dressing style – temporarily summing up	254
“Gangsta” expensiveness for House music fans?.....	255
On masculinity and dress: Hip Hop versus Techno attitudes of dressing	256
A synthesis: the “wolla style”	258
The riddle not yet answered.....	259
The message of dress – non-verbal explicitness and low leveled semiosis	260
The “Thirdness of living”	265
Napapijri and the “wolla style”: semiotic creativity or an anthropological fantasy?.....	268
On the allocation of knowledge and expressivity	269
Why dress? Sketches of the medium specific	271
7 Music: threads of continuity, identification and stories of motivation	274
Music and identity in 1993: the secret life of “the foreigners”	277
Music in 1998: no more “silent lives” – musical genres in a continuum of signs for identification.....	279
I. Older musical traditions from the areas of origin.....	283
Pakistan: Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan and the Qawwali tradition	284
... the fans.....	286
Kurdistan: Sivan Perwer	289
...the fans:.....	290
Other examples	292
Summing up	292
II. Recent popular music associated with/pointing to the areas of origin.....	293
Pakistan: Bhangra, remixes & “the New Asian scene”	293
...the fans?.....	296
Turkey & Kurdistan: Arabesk and pop.....	302
...the fans:.....	303
North Africa: Rai, Gnawa, Chaabi	304
...the fans.....	305
Other pop-music of immigrant background:	309
Summing up:	311

III. Music associated with youth cultural traditions of Western origin	311
On the uneven allocation of taste and knowledge in youth cultures: the core, the followers and the mainstream.....	312
Rap, Hip Hop, Soul and R & B: the fans.....	315
...the male fans.....	315
...the female fans: Soul and R&B.....	321
House and Techno	323
...the fans.....	324
Music: summing up	329
IV. Six suggested steps of semiotic creativity: concerns, resonance and the cognitive mechanics of sign-types	335
V. Illustrating the model: Amjat's case	338
VI. Why music? – Sketches of the medium-specific	344
8 Love and gender: ideals, experience, stereotypes and a multitude of positions	348
“The pure relationship” – an ideal on its rise?	354
The club: the boys and the girls	360
Two decent boys: a conservative position.....	360
Some years later.....	366
Alternative positions: some contrasting views from a near distance	371
Aisha: freedom and ambivalence – more alternative positions	374
Mohamed and Anita : love as a possible bridge – versus stereotypes and critical events.....	377
Some salient signs for generalisations: food taboos, popular stories and physical appearance	383
The use of stereotypes – reasoning with a “disqualified guess”	387
Gender relations, media images and a variety of positions: an innocence of experience – versus the insensitivity of stereotypes	392
More alternative voices:	397
9 The power of dissonance. Part I. Semiotic attention, emotional arousal and “standing up for your place”	400
Dissonance, probability, semiosis and the concept of information.....	401
The rise and fall of “The Mafia Gang”: announcing one's existence to the world	409
Breaking the norm – gaining semiotic attention – charging the sign by deviance.....	415
After TMG: increasing integration	417
On the role of the staff	418
Further events of dissonance: shooting	419
”Foreigners” versus racists: standing up for your friends and the primacy of the place	421
Three ways of gaining social respect and recognition	426
10 The power of dissonance. Part II: Exclusion – Mokthar's story	428
Italy	429
To Norway	430
“The walls”	432
Rudenga	436
At school – fighting and being ridiculed.....	439

“Like-minded folks”	440
“The gap” between the young and the old	442
Dilemmas of identity – the labelling of difference	445
Frustration – striking back – violence and revenge	447
Connection points: Gangsta Rap and films	451
The parents sensing danger	453
Turning points – being in limbo	454
Education – a way out	457
Rediscovering the Eritrean: back to the starting point?	459
Summing up: the quest for community – finding inclusion among the excluded	463
Revising the image of Rudenga?	467
11 Identification in the multicultural area of Rudenga: reativity, hybridity and anti-schismogenesis	469
On hybridity: critiques and potentials	470
Rudenga: tools of identity, hybridisation, desire and the multitude of subjective identification	472
Tools of identification: the memorizing of childhood experiences?	473
Tools of identification: music	475
Tools of identification: films	475
Tools of identification: love, language and the attributes of the individual	476
Tools of identification: clothes and food – and a little more about language	479
Tools of identification: single aspects – gender relations	480
Tools of identity: situational frames, physical attributes and friendship among former “enemies”:	481
Tools of identity: football and fighting	483
Tools of identity: religion versus football	488
Hybridity and the multitude of identificational positions	489
The mechanisms of resonance/dissonance: points of connectivity and the “syllogisms of practice”	494
Some elementary syllogisms of practice	497
Further examples: memory, creativity, metaphor and magic	504
12 Summing up and concluding remarks: subjectivity, experience and culture – the anti-schismogenesis of the Rudenga youngsters	512
APPENDIX 1. Clothing prizes per 6/9 1999, from the shops	
“Ferner Jacobsen” (F.J.), “Paragon”, “Flava”	529
APPENDIX 2: Some statistics. Core members of the club 1998-99 – and some older informants	531
References	535

Introduction

“Globalization of biography means that the world’s oppositions occur not only out there but also in the centre of people’s lives, in multicultural marriages and families, at work, in the circles of friends, at school, in the cinema, at the supermarket cheese counter, in listening to music, eating the evening meal, making love and so on. Although people do not will it and are not even aware of it, we all live more and more in a ‘glocal’ manner.” (Ulrich Beck 1998:73)

In the recent decades, especially two words seem to have been playing the role of some sorts of “magic incantations” (as Bauman selfconsciously puts it) used to encircle the most salient characteristics of the time period they were assumed to cover (Bauman 1998:1). In the 80s and the first half of the 90s the word was “*postmodernity*” (also known under the varieties “late modernity”, “high modernity”, “second modernity” and even “liquid modernity”, see, for example, Featherstone 1992; Bauman 1993, 1998, 2000; Giddens 1992a; Beck 1998). In the latter half of the 90s the word that has gradually replaced the latter, and that still seems to be on its rise after having passed the threshold into the new millennium, is, of course, “*globalization*”.

But even if they both seem to qualify as characterisations of intellectual fashions, we may also underline that like all fashions (even the most apparently silly ones), they at least express something about the social conditions of the time periods from which they have sprung. And as concepts designed especially to capture the salient social processes of their times, some brief sketches of their content should serve as a suitable starting point, to frame and contextualize the research questions of this book.

More concretely: one of the purposes of the present text will be to investigate some central aspects of social interaction, in a situation where some of the tensions and phenomena of the social “realities” assumed to be captured by these two concepts are being juxtaposed. These possibly function as an overall double frame that encompasses and gives direction to everyday life, unfolding in the social microprocesses in a multicultural milieu of youngsters in a low class suburb outside Oslo.

On the basis of the suggestions of several writers, the following traits can be briefly summed up as somehow characteristic for the “post-modern”

condition (see, for example, Ziehe 1983, Featherstone (ed.) 1992; Giddens 1992a, 1992b; Bauman 1993):

The overall master narratives (such as the belief in progress, the orientations of one dominant religion, the ordering forces of science and its accompanying rationality, political utopias like communism, the possibility to regulate economical markets, etcetera.) lose their grip (but with market liberalism as one, but immensely important exception). A multitude of different lifestyles, aesthetics and orientations occur and operate more or less simultaneously within approximately the same localities; these are supplied, confirmed and further developed in interaction with the media. Aspects of these processes, in turn, seem to be leading to a heightened aesthetisation of living, whereas self-presentation gains in importance. Stimulated by an overall relativisation, different forms of self-reflexivity grow forth. The importance of the older, formalized aspects and hierarchies of social life is reduced and is accompanied by a so called “de-controlling of emotions”: this points in the direction of what Sennett terms “intimisation” and the phenomena encircled by Giddens as “pure relationships” (Wouters in Featherstone 1992; Sennett 1974; Giddens 1992b). An overall scepticism to external regulations which limit individual freedom grows forth. The external forms and old traditions become drained of force and authority, and one is presented a wide variety of alternative axes of orientations and traditions (Ziehe 1983). In such a situation the burden is increasingly laid upon the individual to “create” oneself, furthering an overall emphasis on individualism (see also Vestel 1995). Paradoxically, the need for participation in various ad-hoc flavoured communities, seems to increase (see, for example, Maffessoli’s theories on so called “neo-tribes”, 1996).

Like the case of “postmodernity”, more precise definitions of “globalisation” vary with different authors. For Beck, globalization is understood as:

“...the processes through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks.” (Beck 1998:11)

Bauman underlines the feeling of confusion due to the lack of control that accompanies the phenomenon:

“The deepest meaning conveyed by the idea of globalization is that of the indeterminate, unruly and self-propelled character of world affairs; the absence of a centre, of a controlling desk, of a board of directors, of a managerial office. Globalisation is Jowitts’ ‘new world disorder’ under another name.” (Bauman 1998:59)

This seems also in line with what Lash and Urry, as well as Beck, term a globally “*disorganized capitalism*” (Lash and Urry 1994:269; Beck 1998).

It follows that globalization has a wide variety of aspects – political, informational, economic, technologic, cultural, ecological – that all have reached such a scale and complexity that even a moderately satisfactorily understanding of their consequences, as seem to be the case for so many social phenomena, may easily be felt to be out of reach (see, for example, Beck 1998; Bauman 1998; Held & McGrew (eds.) 1999)

It may, of course, be discussed if and to what extent the various characteristics attributed to this phenomenon should be regarded as truly new (see, for example, Beck 1998). Most researchers nevertheless seem to agree that the scale, the speed and the technology involved in these processes must be regarded as new. But it may surely be more. As Beck writes:

“What is new is not only the everyday life and interaction across national frontiers, in dense networks with a high degree of mutual dependence and obligation. New, too, is the self-perception of this transnationality (in the mass media, consumption or tourism); new is the ‘placelessness’ of community, labour and capital; new are the awareness of global ecological dangers and the corresponding arenas of action; new is the inescapable perception of transcultural Others in ones’ own life, with all the contradictory certainties resulting from it; new is the level at which ‘global culture industries’ circulate (...); new are the rise of an European structure of states, and the number and power of transnational actors’ institutions and agreements; and new, finally, is the degree of economic concentration, which is nevertheless slowed down by the cross-frontier competition in the world market.” (Beck 1998:12-13)

Globalisation may thus be seen as conceptualizing the processes wherein a wide range of cultural impulses – in the shape of commodities, capital, technologies, labour force, images, aesthetics, signs and not least people – are moving from one corner of the world to another, in a hitherto unparalleled speed and density, and in ways that seem to cross, question and challenge a variety of borders that until this point have existed in what has seemed to have been a relative stability.

There are, of course, several ways of writing about the phenomena hidden under these two headings. But often the books of academia that frontally address these grand issues do just that; they undertake their analysis on very general and macro oriented levels. This, of course, has the advantage of letting the authors relate to exactly the wide range of dimensions and aspects that these headings encompass, and this can be done

in a distanced and overall manner that may be highly useful for their understanding.

While it is be difficult enough to analyse the material aspects of the mobility implied by globalisation, several further dimensions are added when the cultural impulses, signs and messages from afar in fact become *alive* in the shape of human beings – as immigrants – who settle next door to the inhabitants in certain areas of the countries to which they move, and where both parts have to relate to each other in direct face-to-face relationships in everyday life. What is often lacking in various discussions about issues like postmodernity and globalization is a focus upon the relationship of these phenomena to concrete, personal and collective experience, situated in everyday living: the very *globalisation of biography* as it unfolds right in the centre of people's lives, as Beck puts it.

On the one hand – and in so far as the diagnosis of the post modern is approximately correct – this implies a situation where an overarching *ethos* has developed. In its more caricatured manifestations, this ethos is held to have a series of traits, such as: a tendency towards aesthetized, self-reflexive, self-centred and often highly media-concerned life styles; scepticism towards external authority and regulations; a concern with consumerism and material and experiential hedonism; a distance to religion as well as the belief in scientific or political solutions. Old traditional attitudes towards gender roles and age hierarchies are contested; individualism and the accompanying ideal of freedom for the individual along a wide range of dimensions, are being adored on most levels. These values are also at least having *some* repercussive echoes in the areas where the immigrant families settle. In Norway the overall social and political situation has been decisively peaceful since the Second World War, as no strong political or economical tumults have occurred. The country is one of the world's richest as a result of the enormous oil resources in the North Sea. And due to the strong position of the political traditions of social democracy, it has had a well developed and relatively generous welfare system throughout the years. In other words, the levels of poverty, social problems and class difference have been low.

On the other hand, a relatively large number of the immigrant families – including the refugees – arrive from areas often characterized by poverty, lack of welfare systems, political and social turbulence, including war, and where religion and strong orientations towards the family and various collectivities (that often include more hierarchic relations of age and gender) may be seen as institutions through which central concerns may be handled.

When a wide variety of people, with backgrounds from relatively distant corners of the world, and with a wide variety of different *experiences* behind them – collectively sedimented as “culture”, and individually sedimented as personal biography (also including the collective) – settle densely in the same area in a new country, it is not unlikely to assume that the mutual exposure of these very differences in the everyday life of such a group of actors – creating a possible *clash of disparate habituses*, to speak in Bourdieuan terminology – would render social life difficult and filled with strong and salient *tensions*.

On two occasions, one in 1993/94, the second in 1998/99 I carried out anthropological fieldworks centred in a multicultural youth club, in a suburb I have called “Rudenga”, situated on the outskirts of Oslo. The place was chosen because of its high percentage of youth of immigrant background. Rudenga has been heavily stigmatized earlier on, and this stigma still has some actuality, especially as the number of immigrant families has grown (for more precise figures and contextualisations see below). Thus, along certain lines, Rudenga shows a series of traits that would make the presence of a not inconsiderable amount of problems and social tensions highly likely, not least among its large number of youths from families of widely different cultural and geographical backgrounds.

But as both fieldworks unfolded, it became clear that this was only to a very small degree the case. In contrast to the picture of youths of immigrant background figuring in the headlines of the various media, where violence, crime and gang formation often dominates, the fieldworks uncovered a relatively different picture. On the contrary, this youth milieu reflected a low level of conflicts and relatively peaceful, positive and tolerant social relations (even with rough ways of interacting). Moreover, in these social relations, impulses from various aspects of popular culture – in the shape of film, dance, music and other aesthetic expressions – seemed to play an important role as providing these milieus with a common “*cultural stuff*”, so to speak, for building platforms and meeting places for interaction, as well as for reflections about positions of identity and their general situation as youngsters in a multicultural area (see also Featherstone 1992; Hannerz 1996). Similar practices anchored to elements of popular culture in multicultural youth milieus are also known from recent research in England and Scandinavia (see, for example Bauman 1996; Back 1996; Sernhede 2001; Røgils 1995; Ålund 1997; Fock 1999 and 2000; Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma 1996; Huq 2003; Andersson 2000).

On such a basis, the two main goals of the project may be formulated:

I.

To explore how cultural differences are handled and take part in an ongoing construction of identity, social relations and life phase among youth in a dense, multicultural suburb in the Grorud valley situated in East Side Oslo, with a special focus upon the role of transnational youth cultural expressions as a possible “third” medium, in local processes of conflict and integration. This means to explore how cultural differences are being handled and related to while being criss-crossed by the concrete experience of growing up together, in a highly media influenced public sphere.

II.

To seek to develop an adequate theoretical model, to understand the social processes in such a complex, multicultural situation of relations between majority and minority, that captures at least some of the most salient consequences of this situation for the understanding of the phenomenon of culture.

The eventual tensions between the possible ethos of postmodernity on the one hand, and the consequences of the processes of globalisation in the shape of the presence of large varieties of groups of immigrants, on the other, may thus be seen as the overarching frame within which these aims are pursued.

The setting

In 1998 Norway had 4 417 599 inhabitants, of which 244 705 are characterised as “immigrants” by the Central Bureau for Statistics (in Norwegian abbreviated “SSB”). According to SSB’s definition an “immigrant” is “*a person with two foreign born parents*” (Bjertnæs 2000:10). The figures thus imply 5.5 % of the total population. If we also include persons with only one foreign born parent, as well as persons born abroad, the number of people with some sort of foreign background will, of course, increase (Bjertnæs 2000).

In 1970 the category of immigrants, according to the criteria set by SSB, comprised only 1.5 % of the total number of inhabitants. The recent five year net rate of immigration – from 1996 - 2000 – to Norway (that is immigration minus emigration) is 0,26 %. This implies that Norway, compared to thirty three other European countries, has the third largest rate of immigration, where Luxembourg is number one, and Ireland is number two (Vassenden 2001:39). In other words, immigration to Norway – on a

larger scale – is relatively recent, but it has increased relatively fast during the last thirty years.

In the latter half of the 60s, the number of immigrants from Italy, Spain and Yugoslavia was considerably higher than immigration from Africa and Asia, but these latter groups were nevertheless steadily increasing (for an analysis of the flows of immigration and development in the Norwegian immigrant policy from 1967 – 1980, see Carling 1999). In 1971 the three groups – Moroccans, Turks and Pakistanis – dominated, and comprised 45 % of all immigrants to Norway. The main reason for their coming is held to be the need for work (Carling 1999). The Pakistanis were already then, as they are today, the largest immigrant group. And for all the main immigrant groups in this early phase, the majority were men (ibid).

Carling characterizes the policy towards immigration in the years 1957-1971 as “*very liberal*”. Nearly all foreigners who applied were granted a work permission without being judged in relation to the work market (Carling 1999:4). Nevertheless, politicians, relevant organisations and various public actors expressed worries for a variety of “problems” this increasing wave of immigration had brought forth. Problems included the social conditions under which the immigrants lived, the limited access to work as the conjunctures varied, the risk for lowering the status of certain occupations and working conditions – as a result of the immigrants being willing to accept poorer conditions of work – the possibility for lowering status of certain areas of living as a result of a high number of immigrants, the accusations that the immigrants were “parasites” on the welfare system fought for by Norwegian workers, and so on (Carling 1999).

In 1975 immigration to Norway for the purpose of work application was provisionally stopped, and in 1976 this decision was prolonged for a non-specified time, that continues to the present. From 1976, family reunification became the main possibility to immigrate to Norway, in addition to being a refugee. An increase in the number of females and spouses was also a result of this policy (ibid).

Of the refugees, Chileans, fleeing from the tumults of the coup in 1973, were prominent in the 70s, even though some had also come earlier in search of work (ibid). The arrival of Vietnamese refugees increased throughout the 80s and the 90s (Oslo Kommune 1999). Through this period also refugees from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan arrived. In the 90s the Somalians came, as one of the most recent groups due to the Somalian civil war. In the 90s the developments on the Balkan Peninsula also resulted in a large number of refugees from Bosnia-Hercegovina. The latter and the Vietnamese are the largest groups of refugees living in Norway today (Bjertnæs 2000).

Oslo – a divided city?

One third (that is 85 550 persons) of the whole “immigrant” population of the country, including as much as 41 % of the “immigrants from non-Western countries”, were living in Oslo in 1998 (Bjertnæs 2000:17). This implies that 17 % of the population of the capital were “immigrants”, a category that here also includes refugees, which make up 3.8 % (around 19 000 persons) of the population in Oslo at this point in time.

SSB underlines a series of important differences between what they term “immigrants of Western background” (which imply the Nordic countries, Western Europe – except Turkey -, North-America and Oceania), on the one hand, and “immigrants of non-Western background” (including Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, South- and Central America, and Turkey), on the other (Bjertnæs 2000:12).

Immigrants of Western background are in several ways considerably closer to the overall Norwegian population along several important social variables. The *average income* after taxation for households where the main provider is an immigrant of Western background, was in 1998 288 000 NOK. The figures for households of nonWestern background is 223 000 NOK, and for households of solely Norwegian background it is 320 000. For the latter this implies 11 % and 43 % higher income than the households of Western- and non-Western immigrant background respectively (Kirkeberg 2001:61).

These considerable differences regarding income also seem to be reflected in the *patterns of habitation* for these two groups of immigrant families in Oslo. Traditionally, Oslo has in several ways been divided in two halves, spoken of as the *East Side* on the one hand and the *West Side*, on the other, more or less demarcated by the Aker River that flows right through the city. The West Side is associated with the affluency and wealth of the bourgeoisie. Its outer parts are dominated by larger private residences as well as semi-detached houses, where the most attractive are situated high above the city with a far view over the Oslo Fjord. The East Side, by contrast, has traditionally been dominated by working-class residents. Here small rentable flats in modest conditions have been dominant in the inner city. And in the outer parts of the East Side we find both old and more recent suburbs (satellite towns) dominated by large blocks run by various cooperatives. In several of the worlds’ larger cities we find the similar phenomena, where certain areas or townships are dominated by various minority groups as well as groups of a certain social position (Blom 2001).

Around half of the Western immigrants are, revealingly, living in the inner and outer Western parts of the city. The fewest live in the inner East and the more recently built suburbs (ibid).

The solely Norwegian households are more evenly distributed in the various parts of town, East and West, but in the period from 1988 until 1998 (continuing to 2000) there has been a slight tendency to move out from the old and the new suburbs (on the East Side, ibid), as more immigrant families move in.

In contrast to the two groups dealt with above, more than half of the non-Western immigrants are settled in the inner Eastern parts of Oslo and in the more recent suburbs: one fourth of them are living in the inner Eastern part, and one third in these suburbs. From 1988 until 1998 the number of non-Western immigrants has been reduced by 6 % in the inner and outer Western part of Oslo, while the number of families in this category has increased with 8 % in the inner and outer Eastern parts (ibid:72). These patterns of habitation to a large extent seems to reflect differences in access to economic resources (as indicated above).

In other words: the number of non-Western immigrants – who have considerably lower incomes than their Western counterparts, as well as the average all Norwegian households – are increasing in the country as a whole. The increase is largest in the Eastern parts of Oslo – that traditionally have been dominated by working classes and citizens of low income – and in recent years this increase has been especially noticeable in the old and the new suburbs.

In so far as some areas of the city have more than 50 % of their inhabitants coming from non-Western areas, this may be seen as a tendency towards “ghettoization”. This is reflected, for example, in nicknames given to certain areas of the town where, for example, areas in the inner Eastern parts are called “Little Karachi”, and the lower part of the street “Tøyengata” is called “Little Pakistan”, reflecting the high number of Pakistani inhabitants and shops in these locations (see, for example *Aftenposten* 19/4 2001). Primary and lower secondary schools in the inner city areas may have from 60 % to more than 90 % (the Vahl School) pupils of immigrant background (in these statistics termed “foreign languaged”, see Oslo Kommune 1999:187).

Nevertheless, it is more usual that such “immigrant” areas are characterised by a blend of several different groups of immigrants, than by being areas where one ethnic group dominates (see also Vassenden 1997). The term “ghettoization” thus does not seem to be adequate, in so far as it implies a slum-like area where one ethnic group dominates and where the

rule of civil authorities is being reduced (see Wacquant 1998; Bauman 2000: 154-169). Such terms are nevertheless used and related to among some inhabitants and their surrounding milieus in certain areas, as we will also see exemplified in the Rudenga area in the following chapters.

Granlia – the township

The site of the fieldwork lies within a township in the larger Grorud Valley, I have called “Granlia”¹, that in 1992 had around 21 000 inhabitants, of which around 20 % have immigrant background, and among whom more than eighty different nationalities are represented.

The following socio-economic data for the township of Granlia differ from the average of Oslo:

1992 (see Oslo Kommune 1994)

63 % more “immigrants”

28 % more children between 7-17

28% fewer inhabitants with an income (before taxation) larger than 250.000 NOK

55 % fewer inhabitants aged 30-66 with higher education

In 1997 the main difference from the situation five years earlier was an increase in the number of immigrants compared to the average for Oslo (to 75 % compared to the average), and an increase (reaching 80 %, compared to the average) in the number of inhabitants aged 30-66 without higher education (*Oslo statistikken* 1999). At this time 23 % of the population in Granlia had immigrant background . If we rank the twenty-five townships in Oslo according to the percentage of immigrants among their inhabitants, Granlia will be around number five.

As a whole, the township has had a bad reputation in public opinion, especially in its early years. Crime, drugs and social problems have long since been associated with the area, but they seem, at least to some extent, to be in a process of loosening their grip in more recent times. Working counter to this is the accelerating attention directed at the “immigrant problems” in various media, in so far as both the township as a whole, and the area of Rudenga more specifically, are increasingly seen as “immigrant” areas.

¹ The city of Oslo has since 1988 been divided into twenty-five townships; each has its own administration and enjoys a relative autonomy under the City Council, where representatives from all the townships participate.

Rudenga – a semi old suburb

Situated within the larger area of the Granlia township, some fifteen minutes ride eastward on public transportation from the centre of Oslo, we find Rudenga, which may be characterised as a semi-old suburban area. As one of the older areas in the township, it was built in the latter half of the 60s. As already mentioned, the inhabitants earlier consisted mostly of working-class families. Recently it has been tendency for some of these all-Norwegian working-class families to move out, whereas immigrant families to a larger extent move in. In Rudenga the number of immigrants is the highest in the township. The headman of the Rudenga Housing Cooperatives estimates that the number of its immigrant families have increased from around 25 % in 1993 to around 45-50 % in 1998.

At this time the Rudenga municipal primary school had around 56 % “minority languaged” pupils, whereas the lower secondary had around 45 % (Oslo Kommune 1999).

Rudenga may, in other words, be seen as exemplifying one of the semi-old suburbs that in recent times have gotten an increasing number of immigrant families among its inhabitants; in terms of social prestige it has long since been the probably lowest-ranked local area in the township as a whole. This was also the case *before* the immigrant families moved in, and it was probably a main reason for the increase in such families, because of lower prices.

The club, the anthropologist and his methods

The first fieldwork, was carried out in 1993-1994, and was part of a project commissioned and financed by the Norwegian Department for Children and Family Affairs (see Vestel 1995, 1999, 2001). At that time Norway had gone through a period of relatively high unemployment, not least among youth (Hammer 1994). According to the original design of the project, the site of fieldwork was assumed to be both the youth club as well as an informal self driven club for older, unemployed youngsters in the area. After a frustrating period of waiting for the latter group to show up, it became clear that their club turned out not to be active at that time. Instead, the youth club, therefore, become the main site of the fieldwork (even if the “old timers” were also spotted as informants after some time).

The main aim of this original project was to investigate how the situation of high unemployment may have influenced the youngsters’ self- images, their future plans, their internal relations, their attitudes towards work and work ethic, as well as their overall life situation. And as the milieu in Rudenga, even

at that period, was also characterised by a relatively high amount of youth of immigrant background, it was reasonable to assume that hostile attitudes towards such groups would have fertile soil in which to develop. Several youth cultural traditions were also present in the public sphere of the Rudenga youngsters. A central question was thus to explore if and in what ways the ethos and aesthetics in these youth cultures were integrated into the practices of local youth, and shaped according to their overall situation.

The first fieldwork implied following the social events among the members and the staff of the youth club as closely as possible during opening hours – two to three evenings per week – also participating in parties and gatherings, observing and doing interviews with the participants, for a one-year period.

According to the then existing membership lists, the club had at this time around 350 members. Some 50 of these had immigrant background, that is around 18-20 % of the members. Almost all of these were boys, a tendency that was repeated 5 years later (see below). Although the number of visitors could vary between 20, on the lowest days, to 100-150 on top days, there existed a core of around 50-60 members that especially considered the club as “theirs”. My approximately 40 informants among the members from the first fieldwork primarily belong to this core. If we add the staff, representatives from the child-care team, representatives from the police and some local pensioners the number of informants reached around 50-55 individuals.

The relations between the staff and the members turned out to be very positive, and the staff, therefore, became important door openers to the development of further contact with the members.

The first fieldwork produced a large amount of data, of which only *a small fraction* is in fact used in this book. They are far more extensively used in the report published in Norwegian in 1995 (Vestel 1995). The present project has benefitted from this with highly important data as it has been possible to compare the situation among the Rudenga youngsters at two different points in time. The importance of this *longitudinal dimension* will hopefully be revealed more explicitly in the comparisons undertaken in part II, circling around the data from the second fieldwork. But also in part I this perspective will be of importance, as it made it possible to have informants commenting upon their own development over this time span.

During the *intermediate years* between the two larger fieldworks, I also had some contact with the club and the area. One member of the staff has become a personal friend, as we both share a common interest in a wide

range of musical genres. I was provided with news about the milieu from this source, until he quit as leader of the club in 1996.

In the same year I did some interviews with the then existing staff as a preparation for the work on the application for the financing of the present doctorate project. These were undertaken during the times when the so called “TMG” gang (see chapter 9 “The power of dissonance Part. I”) was active and provided further information about the milieu in Rudenga at that period. I also did further interviews, as part of a project lead by sociologist Annick Prieur, on the theme of marginalisation among youth of immigrant background, of which some central informants were youngsters from various parts of the Grorud Valley (see, for example, Prieur 2002). In 1997 I participated in another project evaluating youth-related projects initiated by the municipalities of another township in the larger area of the valley (see Isachsen et al. 1999). All these smaller projects and incidents have nevertheless been important points of contact that have provided a modest, but continual growth of data and contextualisations for the larger fieldwork initiated five years after the first.

The second fieldwork was then carried out in 1998-1999, within the frames of a doctorate project financed by the Research Council of Norway, under the Program for Cultural Studies.

Also at this time the relations between the staff and the members, were in general very positive. Of special importance was a leader that I have named “Simon” (then twenty-eight years old) who had eight years of practice in the Rudenga clubs (also on junior level) behind him, and that I already knew from the earlier fieldwork (see also chapter 9 “The power of dissonance. Part I”). Simon thus provided me with his own recommendations as “someone it could be alright to talk to”, which greatly eased the contact with the youngsters, especially in the initiating period. As he had worked several years in the junior club, several of the older members had known him since they were primary school kids and had much confidence in him.

In 1998, the small youth club membership fee that had existed five years earlier, was now skipped, because the staff recognized that youth of immigrant background simply did not show up (first in the junior club) as long as the fee existed. Even if it was very modest (around 150 Norwegian kroner per half year), the absence of these youngsters was interpreted by the staff as having to do with the stricter economic regime run by the immigrant parents vis a vis their offspring. When the fee was dropped, it implied also that the membership to the club became more open, and that an exact number of members was not known. Nevertheless, still, as five years earlier, a core of between 30-40 youngsters were the main attendants of the club,

and are also my core informants (see appendix 1). For the reasons stated above, an exact number of members could not be stated. In collaboration with the staff, it has nevertheless been estimated that the number of members of immigrant background now has reached around 65–70 percent, which thus means a significant increase in this group of members at the time of the second fieldwork period.

Also during the second fieldwork, females with immigrant background were few, and the absence was especially noticeable for the girls from conservative Muslim families (see chapter 8 “Gender relations: ideals, experience, stereotypes and the multitude of positions”). Four ex-members from the first fieldwork were also contacted and became informants of great importance. In addition I, of course, had formal and informal interviews with all staff members.

Early in the second fieldwork period I tried to get a flat in the Rudenga area. This turned out to be difficult, as pressure on the housing market in Oslo at that time was very strong; even in a low class area such as Rudenga, it was almost impossible to rent even a modest flat. I finally managed to get a flat in an area adjacent to Rudenga in the last half year of the fieldwork. The block I lived in was unfortunately almost solely inhabited by pensioners, so the desired closeness to youth and families with youngsters was not well achieved. Nevertheless, living in the area and taking part in actual everyday activities provided me with a perspective and a grasp of the very atmosphere of this multicultural suburb area (remember more than eighty different nationalities are represented). I consider this highly valuable for acquiring a more personal and “embodied” experience of what it was like to live there, even if the activities were somehow restricted to things such as shopping for food, taking public transport and moving around in the area, on my way to meetings with informants and others. Nevertheless, in these ways I met some of the youngsters in various situations outside the club, where the angle and the situation to some extent must be regarded as relatively different from the dense and peer-oriented social climate inside the youth club. But even so, it was the club that became the undisputed centre area of the fieldwork. This implies that only to a relatively small degree I could observe the youngsters outside the arena of the club.

I tried to compensate, at least to some degree, for this obvious limitation by undertaking several interviews with the teachers at the local school, with some religious leaders, and some parents both of Norwegian as well as of immigrant background. These were, however, not the parents of the youngsters of the club for reasons to be given below. I also interviewed members, as well as the chairman, of the committee of the Rudenga Housing Cooperative.

The main focus of the dissertation is directed to the very public sphere of these youth and the youth cultural traditions and practices as they unfolded among the members. I will argue that several of the attitudes, norms and ways of being that were revealed to be more or less common in the club may be seen as expressing the sharing of a *common habitus* there and then, on the one hand (the core contents of the varieties of habituses will, of course, be discussed more thoroughly as the chapters unfold). At the same time several of the expressions in this public sphere are, of course, necessarily also closely connected to *differences in the habituses* of the youngsters, on the other, that is to the backgrounds of their families.

To explore both these directions of orientation I have chosen to concentrate my attention on the youngsters and have had minimal contact with their parents. Information about their families, their backgrounds and experiences have, thus, primarily been collected through interviews, observations and socialising with the youths themselves.

These youngsters were in a situation where they were about to liberate themselves, at least to varying degrees, from parental control, and I considered it likely that I could run the risk of being too closely associated with their parents if I also was present in their homes. As some (not many) of the young informants were somehow involved in either minor “delinquent” activities, or even in what must be judged as crime, these experiences were, of course, seen by the informants as important to keep hidden from both parents as well as other authorities (see especially chapter 9 “The power of dissonance Part I. Standing up for your place” and 10 “The Power of dissonance Part II. Mokhar’s story”). In addition, some experimenting with drugs, alcohol, exploration of the opposite gender (that tended to be restricted by some of the immigrant parents) and other “oppositional” behaviour of various kinds play a salient part in the lives of most youngsters. Knowledge about some of these aspects seemed even more important for the youngsters of immigrant background to keep hidden for various “grown up” or public spheres of their families. I thus tried to develop a role as a good dialogue partner, while strongly underlining my professional secrecy, to establish a positive and confident space for dialogue with the members. As the relationship between the members and to Simon, in particular, was already well established along similar lines, this seemed to be of great help to me in these processes.

In accordance with my agreement with the authorities of the township, as well as with all my informants, *all names of persons and places are fictional*.

I chose deliberately (and it also of course felt natural), at least to a certain degree, to become associated to the staff of the club. Club workers

may, under favourable circumstances, have a relatively unique role in the public sphere of the youngsters. They are not a parent, a teacher, childcare representative or a police officer; they may therefore adopt a considerably more *neutral* position than such authorities that are expected to intervene to the larger degree associated with their professional roles. If the personal chemistry is working, a club worker may be the grown up that, at least partly, is often felt as much easier to speak to, because of the structural position he or she occupies. And as the relations between most members and the staff during both fieldworks were predominantly positive, I considered this a useful strategy.

The members knew, however, that the staff were obliged to intervene if, for example, cases of drug use or criminal activities were known to them, and on at least two occasions members were temporarily excluded because of drug use. Such obligations the anthropologist was to a degree excepted from, depending on the seriousness of the eventual crime. Fortunately I was never confronted with such dilemmas. My social gestalt was probably, for these as well as for other reasons, perceived by the members as more neutral than the club workers'. This may be illustrated by the following example.

On one occasion one of the girls had severe problems because of an unhappy love relationship. She was obviously very sad and explicitly mentioned thoughts of suicide. The staff offered her to get someone to speak to. She refused to speak more personally to the staff and was reluctant to speak to a psychologist. She nevertheless preferred the anthropologist, a suggestion made by Simon after conferring with me, even though she had not been interviewed and we had spoken very little together beforehand. We had two longer conversations, leading to her being willing to see a psychologist. I interpret this incident as an expression of the relative neutrality (and, hopefully, also some dialogical attractiveness and skill) I had achieved among the members.

Contact with the youngsters was, of course, limited by *differences in age* (I was thirty-eight years old in 1993), and my degree of participation therefore had obviously relatively definite limits. In 1998 I was nevertheless in a position where I could draw upon my seven year long experience as a youth researcher, a process through which I had also systematically tried to acquire a wider knowledge about the larger youth cultures of various origins. In many ways these were transnational in the sense that they were well known from the media, and they were often related to, incorporated, mimicked, used or even reinvented by smaller groups of local youths. This was certainly also the case in Rudenga (see several of the chapters below). Right from the start of my career as a youth researcher I intentionally

attended concerts within different genres, listened to CDs, read magazines as well as did interviews with artists and fans in relevant research projects. I also read academic literature dealing with these ever changing landscapes of transnational media-anchored, and commercially exploited youth cultural expressions. Youth cultures have, in other words, long been a salient part of my professional interests.

In some cases the anthropologist was, thus, at times more informed than the youngsters themselves, I would dare say. And as an old counterculturalist, I could also provide answers when some of the Rudenga youngsters asked me to tell them more about “the times of the hippies”, like an old grandfather telling about adventures of his past. Such interest on the part of the youngsters were actual in 93/94, but they hardly existed in 98/99. The reason for this shift I assume to be connected with declining interest in the electric guitar and guitar-based musical forms that were popular during the crest of youth rebellion of the 60s and 70s. As we will see in the chapter on music (chapter 7 “Music: threads of continuity and low leveled semiosis”), in 1998 all guitar-oriented genres were considered out, while five years earlier they were extremely popular.

Even though I tried to cultivate my abilities to discuss music (see below), artists and youth culture on a sufficiently authentic level (bluffing would be very embarrassing if they were able to catch me!) , it seemed important not to be competing in any way with my informants in being “youthful”. I presented myself as a researcher who was to write a book about the club and the members. Several of the youngsters seemed to appreciate this attention as a little flattering. Some also expressed frustration about the media images of the youngsters of immigrant background, as well as of immigrants in general, and they were clearly eager to discuss such matters with me. Very few refused to be interviewed. And the more members who had experienced an interview, the easier it seemed for their more reluctant friends to be willing.

I strongly wish to underline the fact that important parts of the competence required to carry out anthropological fieldwork are not taught at the university. Whether one works in New Guinea or in a suburb in East Side Oslo, the fieldwork is a meeting with “whole” persons, where personal experiences, attitudes, ways and interests often acquire central importance as a point of departure for contact and development of “*resonance*” (see chapter 1 “Inclusion and resonance in the present.”, Wikan 1990, 1992) with the milieu one studies. In both fieldworks my knowledge of and fascination with *music* in different forms and varieties – also from several non-Western parts of the world – have been of great importance. And as music related

activities play a prominent role within this youth milieu, such knowledge has been an especially useful methodological asset to make contact, to unlock the processes of making social relations with the informants and, thereby, to gain access to relevant data. This methodological “tool” has probably given the project a stronger orientation towards music-related practices than if I, for example, instead had more developed knowledge about sports as a personal and methodological starting point. Because of my background, the strong fascinations on the part of several of the actors towards music-related activities that is visible – and indeed audible – to me, might easily be less salient for a researcher with a different point of departure. In such fieldworks, probably to a larger degree than in other methods of the social sciences, it is perhaps especially obvious that the personal orientations, appearance and social skills (or lack of such skills) of the researcher necessarily are inescapable “instruments” for the generation of data, in addition to being both a part of the questions of research as well as of the results that are presented (see, for example, Sivert Nielsen 1996).

In addition to playing an important role in the public sphere of the Rudenga youngsters, there are also certain semiotic qualities to the phenomenon of music that may make it a fruitful core around which to build social relations. As a powerful but non-verbal medium, it addresses itself in several ways to the undeniably unspoken but nevertheless often strong and immediate felt experiences of its listeners. A foremost quality of much popular music is more precisely its’ “feel”, the more exact content of which is often almost impossible to communicate through words. I judge it to be necessary to be able to communicate meaningfully about the relevant musical genres, the sense for the “feel” of these genres, and some appreciation of them. To some extent this implies that the ability to participate in exactly these more verbally indescribable characteristics of the genres in question, and the often non-verbal ways of communicating this participation, seem to be highly important in the *use of music as such a point of contact* (see also the discussion of “the medium-specific” in the end of the chapter on music). As confidence in your dialogue partner to a strong degree is dependent on much more than strictly verbal communication, I consider a successful establishing of music as a contact point – perhaps especially when dealing with such youth milieus as exemplified here – as being a potentially fertile platform from which to proceed further.

Whether this author has succeeded or not methodologically – in both this or in other salient respects – is of course up to the reader to decide as the following chapters unfold.

As will become clear below, a central aim *according to the approach to the research questions* will be to focus strongly upon the *subjective experiences* of the various actors. Such a focus will necessarily also become reflected in the style of writing, where much effort is laid down in *referring the voices of the informants through extensive use of quotations*. This experiment, with the literary form and structure of the text, has regrettably resulted in far more pages than I would normally prefer (300-400 pages should be more acceptable). Such an experiment thus obviously has had its price, and it is, of course, an open question if the written result can be considered worth the effort of its length.

In this way – paraphrasing Levi-Strauss’ famous term – the project aims at being a “science of the concrete”, in the sense of *attempting to anchor the arguments to concrete and specified actors there and then*.

I have chosen to speak about the informants as youth “*of immigrant background*” (often specified by area or country) or in hyphenated terms. To speak of them as “Pakistanis”, “Moroccans” or the like – as they do themselves – may easily petrify and reify their backgrounds. And as such a reification is what the empirical evidence, as I hope to show, strongly seems to contradict, I have sought to avoid such a terminology. This is of course not unproblematic. The question this raises is more specifically: how long must a person live in Norway for him- or herself, to be, or his or her surroundings to term that person nothing but “Norwegian”? Such a question will, of course, be relevant in all areas where people of immigrant background have been present for some time. Nevertheless, as most of the youngsters saw themselves as “both and”, the alternatives mentioned seem at least provisionally to be in accordance with the experiences of the actors.

If the anthropologist and his appearance must be considered the primary “tool” of any anthropological fieldwork, there is also a more cognitively anchored aspect of his approach to be described. Thus, before we dive further into an exploration of the research questions, through the analysis of the descriptions of the more concrete lives and the “*globalized biographies*” (Beck 1998) of the Rudenga youngsters, what we may term our theoretical starting points shall have to be clarified.

Some theoretical points of departure – how to understand the multicultural situation?

The following theoretical suggestions may be experienced as somewhat abstract, as no specified empirical material is *explicitly* integrated in the arguments. This may, of course, be seen as a paradox, regarding the previously announced aim of attempting to be anchored in the concrete. The core of the arguments was, nevertheless, written just after the end of the second fieldwork and was used as a point of departure and as a provisionally ordering model to guide the work of bringing the empirical data into mutual and hopefully fertile growth with these theoretical suggestions. They are, of course, now re-written and more or less adjusted to the content of the chapters. I hope to satisfy the need for more empirical “meat on the bone” in the chapters that follow.

The empirical base, in fact, does exist implicitly, but it will not be made available to the reader until the further chapters are read, for the sake of reaching some clarity in these theoretical points of departure. I therefore beg the reader for some *patience* while reading the following pages.

These theoretical assumptions may perhaps be experienced as almost too painstakingly formulated, even verging on the brink of the obvious. This must nevertheless be seen as reflecting an attempt to re-think some of these “obviousnesses”. I believe that a furthered understanding may often stem from attempts to approach the seemingly obvious from a new angle or within a new frame of understanding. Whether I succeed or not in this attempt is, of course, also for the reader to decide.

Some of the points will only briefly be addressed in the following chapters; some will have to wait until the last ones to be more explicitly addressed. Nevertheless, *the theoretical framework presented below will make up the skeletal backbone of the succeeding analysis of the empirical cases.*

To be able to investigate our research questions, we need, a basic theoretical understanding and conceptualisation of the nature of the multicultural situation and the most salient cultural traditions, to which the youngsters in Rudenga relate in their various practices. “*Practice*” is here understood as the processes whereby cultural orientations, messages and signs – as *units that orient behaviour* – are used: judged, manipulated, modified, further developed, re-interpreted, adhered to or refused, changed or reproduced, avoided or escaped from, on the basis of what actors in different positions (conscious or not) perceive as *relevant*, in the continual confrontation with

concrete events in their life-worlds (see, for example, Ortner 1984; Bourdieu 1989, 1990; Barth's 1994; and Wikan's 1990 focus on "concerns").

The multicultural landscape: a possible map

Roughly speaking, the following four main groups of cultural traditions are constituting the salient parts of the multicultural landscape to which these youngsters relate:

1. *Traditions associated with origins and family outside Norway.* These are often named after areas (including national states), ethnic groups, etcetera, with which the informants (and/or their families) associate. In line with this, one is "Spanish", "Moroccan" or "Kurd" (that do not relate to an existing national state). Such traditions may, of course, exist both within or across the borders of the national state.
2. *Traditions associated with the "Norwegian".* This is in principle the same type of traditions outlined above, but these are nevertheless different in so far as they are associated with the majority and the national state whose territory the immigrants and their descendants are occupying. It will of course be a core question if, under what circumstances and to what extent the youth of immigrant background (also) identify with the "Norwegian".
3. *Transnational youth cultural traditions.* These usually (but not always¹) have their origin in urban, Western youth milieus. They are often centred around the cultivation of certain activities (especially various musical genres, phenomena like skateboard/snowboard and the like) and are upheld in ways that more or less exclude other age categories. Such traditions are often positioned in opposition towards other age categories; their signs and messages are broadcasted through a series of international media, and they often use strong aesthetical expressions as markers of identity and as their common focus (see, for example, Berkaak 1994).
4. *Other cultural traditions/communities.* There also exist groups that are assembled around different categories/phenomena as points of orientation and communal base. These may exist in the shape of transnational religious communities, which claim to represent a more or less universal version of the dogmas, and in which national or subnational variations explicitly are dismissed and counteracted. Others

¹ The music form "reggae", for instance, originated in Jamaica in the 1970s and gained wide popularity in the Western world throughout the 80s.

may be more microlocal traditions where for example a strong ethos of loyalty is anchored in local bonds to a certain place that is seen as superior to the differences represented in the cultural origins of the actors. It will be an empirical task to reveal such communities/traditions in so far as they can be seen as relevant to our questions. As we will see throughout the chapters, the youth milieu in the Rudenga club seem to exemplify this latter type of community.

What I here have termed “*the multicultural landscape*” must be understood as *the empirical constellation of the various categories of cultural traditions described above, as seen from the different positions of the actors in question.*

Starting from the recent critique of the concept of culture, the content of the concept “cultural traditions” must be further defined (see, for example, Hannerz 1992; Hylland-Eriksen 1993; a series of articles in Borofsky (ed.) 1994; Moore 1994; Brightman 1995; Shore 1996; Dirks (ed.) 1998; Moore 1999 (ed.); Geertz 2000; Kuper 2000; Barth 2002). In line with this critique, one might say that culture – in the most fundamental sense as “*something that a group of human beings share*” – has always been “multicultural” in the sense that the related knowledge and resources are always unevenly distributed according to different positions related, to for example, gender, age, class, occupations, power, experience, interests etcetera. Both on the individual as well as collective level, actors will be participants in several “cultures”, whose content and interests at times may be severely antagonistic to each other, within the social areas (that not necessarily correspond to the physical) they cover. With such an understanding, a “cultural tradition” will here denote the bundle of various communities, in so far as they share some common features that make them identifiable and recognizable to relevant actors. In line with Barth’s conceptualisation of “cultural streams”, the main criteria will be:

“that such traditions show a degree of coherence over time, and remain recognizable in various contexts of co-existence with other streams (...)” (Barth 1994:116-117, my translation)

In areas where the number of immigrants from a wide spectrum of geographic and cultural areas is high, the situation will be accordingly complex. The need to develop models of understanding that explicitly focus upon cultural complexity, and that reflect a more dynamic and non-reifying concept of culture, has been underlined by a series of recent researchers (see again, for example, Hannerz 1992; Hylland-Eriksen 1993; a series of articles in Borofsky (ed.) 1994; Moore 1994; Brightman 1995; Shore 1996; Dirks

(ed.) 1998; Moore 1999(ed.); Geertz 2000; Kuper 2000; Barth 2002) Some central parts of such a model are attempted sketched out below, and they are here designed to illuminate how youth, both with and without immigrant background, take part in the development of social relations and meaning-producing processes in a complex, multicultural situation, as exemplified in the social processes on the micro level among the Rudenga youngsters.

Identification in the multicultural landscape: on orthodoxies, heterodoxies and rejection – a model

I suggest that a further understanding of the practices of youth in a multicultural landscape must take the role of the *parents* as its point of departure. While reading the following chapters, one might raise the objection that the parents of the youngsters are relatively invisible. As points of reference they are, nevertheless, of decisive importance to their offspring, but in the cases to be described, they will primarily be related to mainly as seen from the positions of their children. Cases that address the relationship to the parents more explicitly are presented in chapter 2 (“Inclusion, resonance and semiosis”), 4 (“Subjectivity, self and identification”), and 10 (“The power of dissonance. Part II”).

Several of the immigrant parents have their origin in the lower classes of peasant villages; they may be more anchored in older traditions than, for example, parents who are representatives of higher classes from urban areas. According to, for example, the research of Lien (1997), the dichotomy “tradition bound” versus “modernised” (implying more recent traditions) will sometimes manifest itself, and may be seen as related to a continuum of different degrees of belonging within each actual tradition. Here the concepts “*orthodoxy*”, “*heterodoxy*” and “*rejection*” may illuminate important positions.

The cultivation of imaginations, ways of being, customs, values, aesthetics, for example, as associated to the area of origin, and the eventual insistence upon the importance of living according to what one sees as the “correct” ways according to such a cultivation, may be regarded as local “orthodoxy” (see, for example, Bourdieu 1989:169). The orthodoxies are often maintained by recognized authorities (that we may term “*guardians*”), which in less secularised traditions may be anchored to religion and are often accompanied by a demand for leading a lifestyle in accordance with these teachings. The orthodoxies will therefore form strong imaginations about what it implies, at a certain point of time, to be a “Pakistani”, “Kurd”, “Norwegian”, a “good Muslim”, or even a “true Hip Hop’er” etcetera, and these become what we may term the “*hard cores*” of order within the various cultural traditions.

In so far as the cultural traditions may be said to carry features/signs/messages/ways of being that *attract* or feel *repulsive* to the actors that belong or are exposed to them, the orthodoxies will function as polar centres in what we may compare to the “*magnetical fields*” (of *signs* and *power*, see below) of the various traditions. These orthodoxies will especially be associated to the use of certain markers of identity (signs) used to mark their difference from other traditions in the coexisting cultural landscape (see Hylland Eriksen 1994, 1996 for similar metaphors).

In many cases there exist alternative and competing views about the content of the orthodoxies (represented by alternative orthodoxies); these are the main ingredients in the ongoing games of power (of definition) and this provide the orthodoxies with a potential for change and adaption. The orthodoxies are, therefore, not to be regarded as final or static but as social phenomena that take part, to varying degrees and speed, in processes of continual revision.

A magnetic field is characterised by the fact that *its orienting forces take part in a continuum that is stronger the closer they are to the core* (here: the orthodoxies) and that, accordingly, is thinned out as the distance to the core is increased. So, even if the orthodoxies – in line with this metaphor – offer community and provide direction to the practices of the various groups of associated actors, often relatively few of them will tend to “live” in full accordance with the orthodoxies. This have special actuality for actors who, for example, associate with more modern ways of being. In the case of the dichotomy “tradition bound – modern”, the latter in its turn may be representing an alternative cultural tradition with its’ own orthodoxies. In other words, there will be a tendency to live in accordance with the content of the orthodoxies, mostly in various *degrees of dilution*.

Such cases may, in accordance with the terms of Bourdieu, be said to form heterodoxies, that here imply that one takes part in processes of mingling/hybridisation with the other cultural traditions available in the surroundings. A more thorough discussion of the problem and conceptualisation of hybridisation will be undertaken in chapter 11. (“Identification in the multicultural”).

The various cultural traditions will, according to this model, be conceptualised as being without clear borders; at the same time, they can definitely be identified, both as relevant units (or as “streams”, as Barth has suggested) from the actor’s points of view, as well as working social facts in an analysis (see Friedman, in Featherstone and Lash (eds.) 1999). The quest for the actor’s own *subjective expressions* that eventually signify belonging/identifying with more than one cultural tradition will here be central to encircle and discuss the phenomenon of hybridity.

I suggest that the orthodoxies make up one end of a continuum, whereas a more explicit *rejection* of cultural traditions represented by the orthodoxies makes up the other. In its utmost consequence, this rejection implies that one associates in a more totalizing way (than the heterodox position) to “something else”. In such a continuum the heterodoxy will then be in the middle. The actor’s positions upon this scale will, of course, vary greatly for both parents and children, depending on an interplay between a series of factors, such as time spent in the country of immigration, belonging to social class, personal and collective history, and so on.

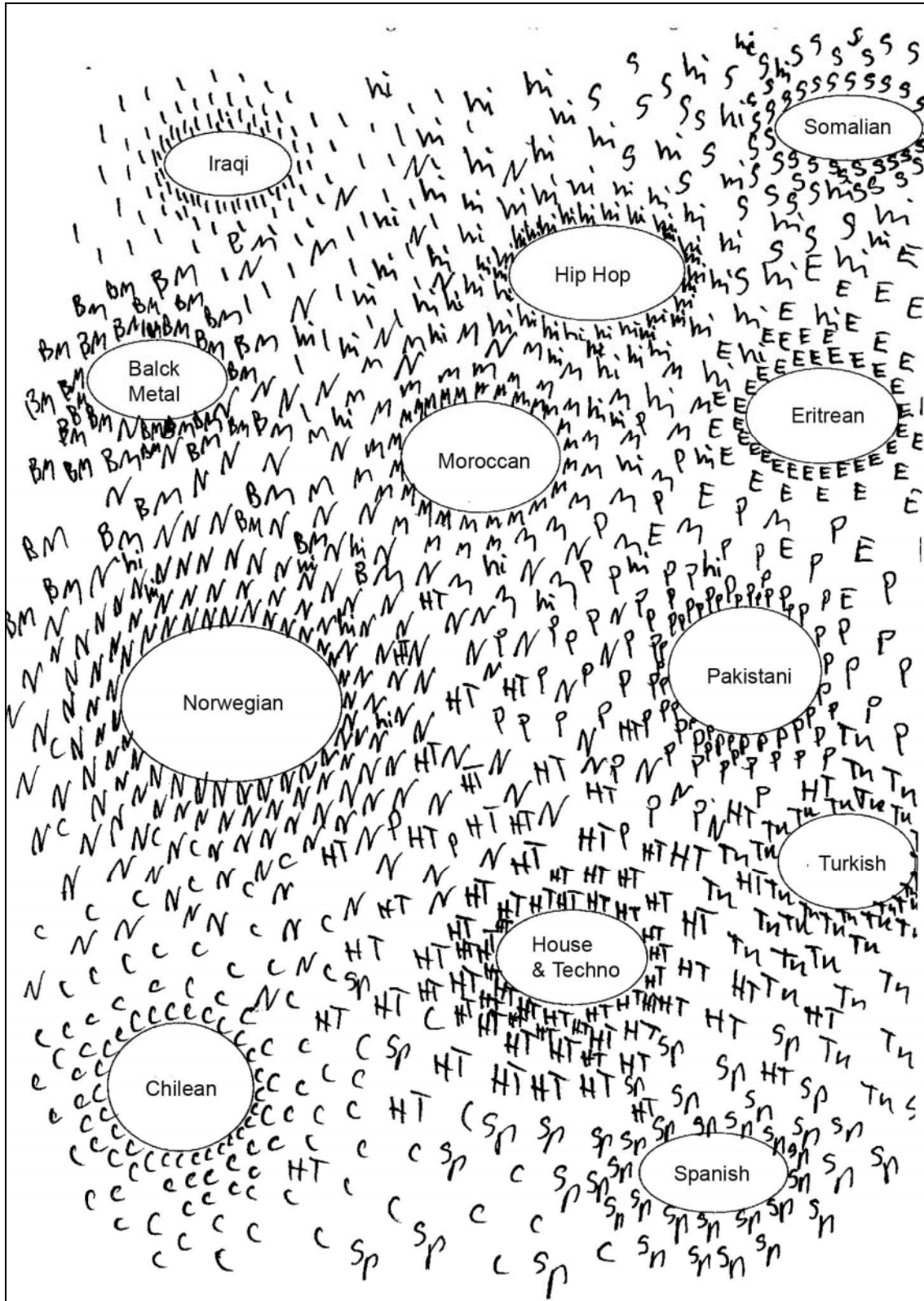
It will be important to illuminate the *movements* of the youngsters both *outwards* and *inwards* along these continua, as well as eventual *transitions* from associating oneself *from one such continuum to another*. Each continuum is here identified by actors in various positions on the basis of the central signs and messages (see below) that are associated to the actual continuum. The movements of the offspring within and across such continua must ideally be seen in relation to where on these scales the parents at any point in time may be found. It will be important to illuminate the tensions and dilemmas caused by eventual discrepancies, that will present themselves as generational conflicts between the positions of the parents and the children. Cases that especially address these sketches will be presented throughout the chapters 2 (“Inclusion, resonance and semiosis”), 4 (“Subjectivity and identification”) and 10 (“The power of dissonance. Part. II”).

Such a model for understanding is meant to approach the experience of identity/the processes of identification and cultural belonging more as a question about various *degrees, proportions and blendings* than as either-or relations to given and reified “cultures” of clearly defined borders and contents of meaning. At the same time, cases of strongly reified versions, that for some actors will be the basis for more explicit we-them relations (something that probably will be especially implied for the actors living closer to the orthodoxies) are not excluded. These continua seem to match Barth’s characteristics of “cultural streams” (1994), but are here, to a stronger degree, designed to underline various degrees of cultural belonging.

To sum up: each cultural tradition in the multicultural landscape, according to this model, is likened to a magnetic field, that manifests as a continuum between orthodoxy and rejection, where the orthodoxies are seen as powerful cores that radiate associated complexes of signs and messages, like fragments of iron in a magnetic field, that serve as vehicles for identification but that lose their power to orient the actors as they approach the point of rejection.

This model is visualised in figure 1.

Figure 1. The multicultural landscape: a constellation of semiotic continua (cores radiating with signs in gradual degrees of dilution), that will change according to the positions of the actors.



In the present project of contemporary anthropology, it may be taken for granted that the researcher seeks to avoid reifying the cultural practices under study. At the same time it will be important to develop an apparatus of concepts that embraces how the actors themselves, on the one hand, reify and naturalise social constructions, while they, on the other side, may be developing a more open relationship, both to the existing cultural points of orientation as well as to new experiences of their own and others identity, or even oscillate between these two modes. I emphasise that there is no assumption about chronology regarding the movements along these continua and that the model includes the possibilities to pass from one position to another, without this necessarily being understood as a gradual development.

This model will also be applicable for the understanding of more specific youth cultural traditions. Here it is important to underline that the traditions of origin to varying degrees naturally will tend to show much more weight, firmness and resistance to change and movement than the youth cultural traditions, which, on their side, tend to change relatively rapidly (sometimes approaching the phenomenon of fashion, see Vestel 1995; Vestel et.al 1997). Nevertheless, the orthodoxies of the latter may also contain considerable imperative power. This is strongly underlined by informants who tell about severe demands for correct behaviour within various youth cultural traditions (ibid). The latter point will be especially salient in chapter 3 (“Hostile signs...”).

Positions in the multicultural landscape: experience and subjectivity

The multitude of cultural traditions that at a given time make up the multicultural landscape – with all the variations of degrees and proportions of mixing that this landscape contains – will overlap in various constellations, and be brought into contact with each other in the social positions of concrete actors. According to Barth, each person is:

“(...) ‘positioned’ according to the special constellations of elements from several cultural streams that are brought together in exactly this person, as well as by virtue of the special experiences the person herself has been going through. (...) the various ways by which these parts are implemented in the complexity of the persons, remain a basic fact of life. Positioning thus provides a way through which we may be able to make a meeting of the ends that we have earlier separated and reconnect the persons to the many traditions that they comprise, and that are moving them.” (Barth 1994:126, my translation)

In line with Barth's inclusions of "the special experiences the person herself has been going through", a position will relate to both *collective forms* as well as more *idiosyncratic/individual/personal experiences*. Several researchers have recently underlined the necessity of taking this doubleness into consideration if we are to understand the actions of the social actor (see, for example, Strauss in D'Andrade & Strauss 1995:6; Shore 1996; Cohen 1994). Shore writes, for example, that:

"... the processes that govern the variability of mental models (exist) along a continuum, from the idiosyncratic to the conventional." (Shore 1996:48)

In accordance with this view on positioning, emphasis will be placed on discovering the constellation of traditions that are relevant for the actors, and the ways these traditions are present in the *subjective experience* of this landscape (where the idiosyncratic and the collective meet). "Practice" may here be seen as something that unfolds exactly in this field of *tension between the idiosyncratic and the collective*, in the continual interaction between the actors and their life situation. Understood in such a way, the project could be seen as exploring the social lives of the actors as actions in what Barth terms a "*disordered system*" (notes from a colloquium with Barth and Wikan 1999) where culture – understood as the relative order represented by the collective/the shared – is continually challenged in the *frictioning* (as well as being confirmed and reproduced) against the disorder and unpredictability in the continual flow of experience, events of personal biographies, and the changes resulting from such encounters.

The Rudenga youngsters find themselves in a situation where their identification and their feeling of belonging to a preexisting and more or less unquestioned cultural tradition (for example that of their parents) can *not* be taken for granted. Their cultural practices on the collective levels may be seen as *creative solutions* to the dilemmas of such a situation. Some salient characteristics of these new and hybrid cultural (collective) forms will be presented over several chapters but will be especially seen in chapter 5 ("The club 1998: a community of difference – habitus and cultural expressions"), 6 ("The messages of dress"), 7 ("Music: threads of continuity, identification and low level semiosis") and 8 ("Gender relations: ideals, experience, stereotypes and the multitude of positions").

As a structural category, youth occupy a position in a process of gradual loosening from the parental authority, and will, therefore, have the possibility to experience a relative freedom from the cultural orientations represented by the family, as well as from the distributions of power and

authority of the actual hierarchies of age and gender. The youngster tends to experiment and challenge such authority in ongoing negotiations about these relational aspects. And the potentialities of such a relative freedom (and its forces of attraction) will be even larger in a multicultural situation, where often widely different alternative ways of living exist next door.

Youth are, therefore, also likely to be more *receptive* and *vulnerable* to the tensions and antagonisms in the multitude of cultural impulses and influences they are exposed to, with all the problems and potentialities such a situation implies. They are also likely to exhibit a corresponding openness to global expressions of popular culture that often address themselves especially towards youth. A focus upon youth – as a category of age in such a precarious structural position – will therefore be especially fit to explore movements, transitions and cultural *creativity* in the multicultural landscape.

A visualisation of a model to understand such creativity (Figure 6. “The expressive utterance: six steps of subjective semiotic creativity”), is put forth in chapter 7 (“Music: threads of continuity and low level semiosis”).

In the contexts of the critique of the concept of culture in the recent decade, it is reasonable to believe that an exploration of the practices of youth in such a dense, multicultural situation may have special potential for developing ways of understanding that challenge a concept of culture as something static, homogenous, coherent and clearly bordered. Such an understanding is especially necessary to understand the role of the global expressions of popular culture in the processes of conflict or integration, that in an urban multicultural situation such as Rudengas, where tensions and antagonism both within or between the various groups of cultural traditions, are likely to exist.

Actions in the multicultural landscape: on signs, emotions and cognition

The practices of the Rudenga youngsters can be seen as movements in different positions within this complex and interpenetrating web of various cultural traditions.

To get a better grip upon the more processual and dynamic aspects of their social life, it seems necessary to focus more explicitly upon some aspects of action theory: what is an action? What initiates it? What is its motivation? How is it related to the collective and individual background of its actor, to the actual constellations of power, and to the possibilities and limitations to realize the actual concerns in the social field in which it is embedded?

An action may be seen as an *interpreting reaction to the landscape of signs and events in the situations and histories in which it unfolds*. To each of the traditions in the multicultural landscape and their corresponding positions within the actual constellation, there will be associated a set of ways of being, norms, attitudes, messages, aesthetics, markers of identity, etcetera, that are expressed and represented by various *signs* (that become denser and more homologous the closer they exist to the orthodoxies, in accordance with our metaphor of the magnetic field). In line with the role of the orthodoxies as radiating centres in the “magnetic fields” stemming from the various traditions, these packages and fragments of radiating signs will *attract* or *repulse*, according to the concerns manifest in each specified social position.

To explore the moving forces and the movements (attractions/repulsions) in this landscape of signs (or “semioscape”) and persons (that themselves may be interpreted as complex signs, according to Peircean semiotics, see below), it seems to be fertile to focus upon the *motivations* for their use. Several researchers argue for the necessity of a more explicit focus upon motivation (see for example D’Andrade & Strauss (eds.) 1995; Strauss & Quinn 1997).

This focus will thus imply to *reveal the concerns* that are of special importance to the actor and to *clarify the points of connections* between an action, its directions and the concerns of the lifeworld from which it was initiated.

The more precise concerns of youngsters will naturally be manifest in a series of concrete tasks that relate to the phase of living in which they find themselves: they are about to form a community among their peers, get education and work, find a suitable partner, loosen the grip of their parents authority, develop and explore a gender identity. Some will need to reach some clarity in certain existential/religious matters, and so on. All these tasks will be coloured by the cultural traditions (and the accompanying proportions of blending) to which the youngsters associate, and will reflect the interpretation of the situation in which they find themselves.

If the parents judgement of the right course for their children, is based too heavily on traditions in their area of origin, this may be distant to the concerns of the youngsters here and now, and may easily complicate relations. To the youngsters themselves, this discrepancy *may* become the very motor behind the movements towards increasing heterodoxy, cultural hybridisation, and possibly rejection of the ways of the parents. This may happen if the parents ways are felt as imposed orientations that do not match the situation of youngsters growing up under circumstances that differ too

widely from those of their parents. Large discrepancies may thus enhance a larger potential for conflict. Accordingly, a low discrepancy between the relevance spheres of the parents and of their offspring, may perhaps enhance integration (see also Wikan 1995a).

Here, different positions upon these continua may be indicated by various markers of identity (such as practices around clothing, food preferences, use of musical genres, language, etcetera). To a youngster, a pair of FUBU-trousers (in 1999), a tiny Michael Jackson button (in 1994), or a pair of Buffalo shoes (in 1999), may play an important role in signifying with which community one associates, and to what degree one identifies with it.

In the social condition known as the post-, high-, late- or liquid (!) modernity, use or rejection of such markers may be salient expressions of the creative work of identity that is said to characterise such a condition (see, for example, Ziehe & Stubenrauch 1983; Giddens 1992a; Hall in Hall & du Gay 1997; Bauman 2000a and 2000b). More precisely, *how* this work unfolds, and which role the expressions and signs of transnational popular culture play in social relations and practices among these youth, can only be explored through empirical investigations. An analysis of the use of such identity markers and the various positions of identification to which they correspond will be the focus of several of the following chapters, but they will especially be addressed in chapter 6 (“The message of dress”) and chapter 7 (“Music”).

I will thus argue for an approach to *action as signs-in-use*. This implies that actions primarily are seen as motivated along a continuum where a more or less explicit and conscious intention (for the selection of signs) makes up the one pole, and where more unclear, hunched or unconscious motivations make up the other (see, for example, Lakoff & Johnson 1999; Bourdieu 1990). Such an approach sees the *motivating points of gravity* of actions as related to the following phenomena, that are internally connected to each other but nevertheless represent separable aspects of motivation:

- I. Power relations
 - II. Desire/attraction
 - III. The production of meaning - semiosis.
- These points are further explained below.

I. Power relations

As salient in, for example, the theories of Bourdieu, phenomena connected to power and dominance must be considered central aspects of the understanding of action in any social field (Bourdieu 1989, 1990). For youth in a multicultural milieu this will have relevance in several ways. The

immigrant families occupy a situation where they comprise a *minority* in relation to their larger surroundings. Their cultural traditions will in several cases be associated with signs, ways of being and cultural orientations which are unknown and, therefore, experienced as strange by the majority, which occupies a hegemonic position. In any process of socialisation – also that of which several immigrant families are part – the establishment of a minimum of respect and dignity will be a central concern, something that may be painful in an asymmetric position. In the fields of tension created between the various cultural traditions in the landscape, there will exist considerable potentials for struggle and competition for power and prestige, both inside and outside the families. Not least this concerns gender relations, generational relations, relations between various groups of youth, and between peers.

The young person (especially one with immigrant background), finds herself in a landscape where parents, siblings, friends, representatives for the school, for the civil authorities, the media and various significant others may compete and pull in various directions. Often, youth cultural practices may be seen as expressions of rebellion against various authorities or as attempts to handle a cross pressure by developing an alternative community. Participation in various forms of power related social games may, in other words, be seen as a strategy for achieving an elementary mastery of living. In chapter 9 the analysis of the rise and fall of a gang of youngsters of Pakistani background will explore the more problematic aspects of such processes, as will chapter 10 where social exclusion and some questions of racism will be addressed more directly.

A strong orientation towards competition and power may, nevertheless, be antagonistic to the development of mutually positive social relations, that in many cases presuppose the experience of *equality* in one form or another. The need to be *included* among relevant others – that is to experience a certain community – is, of course, of central importance and may here be met through acquisition of both material markers of status, and the social/cultural resources in the shape of knowledge (various forms of “social/cultural capital” in the terminology of Bourdieu, 1989, 1990). But parts of the situation are also characterised by modes where the explicit focus upon power relations is less central, and where the motivating centre of gravity of the action has shifted, towards:

II. Desire/attraction

A central part in both individual and collective concerns is the cultivation and experience of various forms of desire and attraction and the competence required for generating these qualities. The importance of “having fun”, and

the search for related experiences, is especially salient in the studies of children and youth (see Vestel 1992, 1995). The development of the competence required to generate such experiences may provide both prestige and power, but it will most often be motivated by the need for such experiences *per se*. These are phenomena (that Loic Waquant has termed “the social construction of pleasure”, notes from a lecture given in Oslo in 1997) that are rarely handled explicitly in social theory, despite their indisputable centrality in a wide range of behavioural categories (see for example Csikszentmihalyi on so-called “flow” and “autotelic actions”, 1982; Bourdieu on “*illusio*” 1990; Game 1993:9; Moore on “desire” 1994).

Throughout the analysis of action as a semiotic process (see below) there will, in line with Peircean semiotics, be underlined the often neglected fact that any communication necessarily happens solely via signs that expose materiality in one way or another; meaning is always communicated through some sort of *medium* that is exclusively accessible through the *senses*. Such an underlining of the sign as a difference that can only be conveyed through a material medium will, therefore, point more clearly to the role of the senses in semiotic processes. This underlines the fact that important parts of semiosis are going on outside the domain of the verbal.

Such a point will be of importance to understand the *aesthetic* and *expressive* dimensions of an action, as will be central to the project in so far as several versions of youth cultural communities appropriate strong non-verbal aesthetical expressions (in the shape of music, dance, dress, bodily language, hairdos, etcetera) that both mark identity, and also function as important sources for desire, as well as being interspersed with joyful experiences of community and prestige. These aspects will be addressed more specifically in chapter 4 (“Subjectivity, self and identification”) and chapter 6 (“The message of dress”).

III. The production of meaning: generating emotional and cognitive relations

The search for meaning through the interpretation of events and situations may be understood as expressions of a need to create *order*, on the one hand, or to *disturb* it, on the other – emotionally and/or cognitively – by seeking to understand and transform ones surroundings to realise central concerns (without implying that this necessarily should be seen as consciously motivated).

If meaning is to be understood as “...*the interpretation evoked in a person by an object or an event at a given time*” (Strauss & Quinn 1997:82), this process of interpretation will deal with how that object or event (the sign) may be brought into use or be rejected in relation to the concerns of the

life-world of the subject. Such an approach will be in line with the basic understanding of the sign, as put forth by the founding father of modern semiotics, Charles S. Peirce:

“A sign or a representamen is something, that to someone stands for something else, in some respect or capacity” (Peirce, quoted in Colapietro 1989:5)

Some elementary assumptions of Peircean semiotics will form a central part of the theoretical approach throughout most of the following chapters but will first be introduced in chapter 2 (“Inclusion, resonance and semiosis”).

In contrast to an approach that to a lesser degree focuses on the relation of the sign to an acting subject (that is use/utterance), it is Peirce’s underlining of the sign as something that is related to a *user* (“something that to *someone* stands for something else...”) that makes his definition so applicable for gluing our attention to the practices of concrete social actors, and focusing more sharply upon the development of various *subjectivities* (see also, Bakhtin’s/Voloshinov’s critique of Saussure in Morris (ed.) 1994:30-31)¹. Such a focus will be of special importance in understanding the varieties of positions in the multicultural landscape. If a social position is to be understood as the sum of collective and subjective experiences – the very point where the various traditions meet, in line with Barth’s suggestions – semiosis and interpretation may be seen, first and foremost, as manifestations of how actors, as instances of semiosis, create *connections* (conscious or sub conscious) between these experiences (the past) and the possibilities and limitations (the present and the future) that are registered/perceived in the surroundings/the situations of the actors (see also the so called “connectionism” referred to by D’Andrade & Strauss 1995, as well as Strauss & Quinn 1997; consider Bateson 1979:8 on what he terms “the pattern which connects”).

Even if it seems possible and perhaps also fruitful to explore further the theoretical similarities between the “connectionists” and the approach that will be pursued here, such an exploration will not be attempted for the sake of the need to develop sufficient clarity in the directions that here are intended.

¹ Even if this citation clearly points to a user, in the sense of a concrete actor, this is held to be a somehow simplifying expression of what its author “really” means. The correct understanding of “the interpretant”, is rather to see it as implying a processual instance in the process of semiosis, that sometimes, but not necessarily, is manifested through a concrete interpreter (notes from a seminar with V. Colapietro 13/8-2002).

Using Wikan's term as a starting point, the subjective formation of such connections, and its accompanying experiential qualities, may be seen as a form of "*resonance*", that also has its counterpart in the shape of what I have termed "dissonance" (Wikan 1990, 1992).

Further developed with the help of a Peircean understanding of the sign, we may say that the phenomenon of resonance manifests the moment the sign is related to the life-world of the subject: that is, when the connections between the experiences of the subject and the available landscape of signs are drawn and brought into use. In chapter 1, I will argue that the phenomenon of resonance, that makes up the one end, and its opposite, dissonance, that makes up the other end of a first continuum, may be manifested along a second and cross-parallel continuum where we find a pole of emotions, in the one end, and a more neutral cognitive pole in the other (see Figure 2, chapter 1). A focus upon the phenomenon of resonance/dissonance, therefore, seems to have potentials for illuminating both the emotional processes within the formation of, for example, social relations and the cognitive mechanisms that form the basis for more neutral understanding of the surroundings. Such a perspective will emphasize the fact that semiotic processes contain both these aspects: the forming of meaningful *emotional relations*, on the one hand, and the forming of meaningful *cognitive relations*, associated to "understanding", "orientation" and cognitive order or disorder, on the other (see also Featherstone and Lash in Featherstone and Lash 1995:21; Halton in Featherstone and Lash 1995; Game in Featherstone and Lash 1995).

A composite multicultural situation will supply further complexity to the semiotic – the emotional/cognitive – processes that become actualised in the social meeting between actors of different cultural origin. Central themes will therefore be to explore how the actors – emotionally and cognitively – draw connections to the signs (including persons) in their surroundings; this means exploring processes that lead to resonance and the building of positive relations, as well as to what leads to hindrances and dissonance in their relations.

The red threads of the analysis, throughout the succeeding chapters, seem all to point towards a mode of knowledge that to a large degree applies so called "*primary process*" thinking, with the logics of association as its core (see Freud 1969 (1908); Arieti 1976). Such a framework will also be more explicitly addressed in chapter 11.

The models and the theoretical approaches that are sketched above will, in the following chapters, be confronted and explored in varying degrees in interaction with data from the concrete empirical field.

In contrast to the more abstract style of the theoretical sketches above, a rule of conduct for the writing of the following pages will be to place *people* (that is concrete cases and practices) in the centre of the analysis.

The chapters

The dissertation will have two parts. Part I will primarily deal with data from the milieu in 1994/95, supported with data about some central actors from that period that also was generated in the last fieldwork. Part II will mostly be based on empirical material from the second fieldwork carried out in 1998/99, and will seek to illuminate the differences between these two time periods by comparison.

Chapter 1 will start by taking the analysis of a small, seemingly trivial, nonverbal and music-based dialogue that involved two old friends – one of immigrant, the other of non-immigrant background – as the point of departure. This begins the exploration of the previously mentioned phenomena – in the shape of what have been termed “*resonance*” and “*dissonance*” respectively – that represent some basic mechanisms in social life and that seem to have immense importance for understanding of the processes through which these youngsters, especially in a multicultural area such as Rudenga, build social relations and emotional ties to each other. These phenomena, their conceptualisations and attempts to understand them will play a key role throughout the whole book. The chapters that make up the rest of Part I may also be seen as an overall attempt to understand further what was happening in this “primary scene” which was the starting point in chapter 1.

In the whole of Part I, the developments of *one single informant* – here called “Omar”, who has been primarily brought up in Norway in his family of Iraqi origin – and some of his most central social relations through various phases of life, will be followed, focusing especially upon processes through which the phenomena of resonance and dissonance have been manifested.

If the first chapter is primarily about what happened in a few minutes of dialogue unfolding in the immediate present, then chapter 2 will focus upon a *recapitulation of what was going on before that event*; it will focus upon *the past* that our two buddies have had together, in the shape of some crucial experiences they have shared while growing up in Rudenga. Some of these

were especially connected to their both becoming highly successful in the practices known as “breakdance” stemming from the so called “Hip Hop” tradition. In the start of the chapter some basic features of Peircean semiotics will be introduced, and the binarity of resonance/dissonance will be related more explicitly to Peirces conceptualisation of “*the interpretant*” (Peirce 1992, 1998). In line with such a relation we will try to capture how the resonance of the microsocial processes that occurred in the primary event in the present seems to have had its sources embedded in the resonance of the past shared by these two friends, making them part of a mutual semiotic process whereby they have become *growing signs* to each other. Here, the collective interpretations that their fellow youth have ascribed to these two boys seems to have strongly linked their success to the process of changing the stigma of the place, where they all have been growing up. This will also focus upon some of the most salient motivations of the young actors for engaging in the sign complex of Hip Hop.

In chapter 3 we follow Omar and some of his friends in their processes of developing relationships to a new sign on its rise, the musically based youth culture growing out of the Heavy Metal tradition, that is known as “*Black Metal*”. Here we will see that embedded in the core messages of this sign complex there are hostile attitudes towards immigrants that make it impossible for Omar to engage further into such a “*hostile*” *sign* and its related aesthetics.

In chapter 4 we will follow Omar further in his various *phases of identification* with different youth cultural traditions such as skateboard, then returning to the later developments in Hip Hop, and lastly house and techno. The moving forces behind this fluxus of discernible phases of identifications will be related to certain important *concerns* that are embedded in characteristics of the actual life-worlds of our informants, both in their individual and their collective manifestations. In line with some recent suggestions within Peircean semiotics the varieties of these experiences – as exemplified in the case of Omar – may be seen as processes of identifications that become successively sedimented in the self. Two central concepts termed “*the focal self*” and “*the matrix self*” and their dynamic interaction (Colapietro 1989) that Peircean philosopher Vincent Colapietro has suggested, help to capture these dynamics. These conceptualisations will also play a central role throughout the further chapters.

In chapter 5 the club as it appeared in the second fieldwork will be presented. Here we will investigate the nature and the semiotic sources of two of the most salient practices – *greeting rituals* and *language use* – among the members of this time period. I suggest that these practices

exemplify what may be termed *selective responses to salient conditions of living*. This may be understood as being in agreement with the conceptualisation of “*habitus*” by Bourdieu; this is seen as strongly matching Peirce’s conceptualisation of what he has termed “*habits*”. Both these theoretical assumptions may then be clearly placed within the conceptualisation of the levels of the self, as suggested in chapter 4.

Chapter 6 will deal mainly with the expressivity and identifications reflected in the various *practices of dressing* among the Rudenga youngsters. Important differences have occurred in the timespan of five years that has passed between the two fieldworks. Differences along the dimensions of class (“East enders versus West enders”), youth cultural affinity, gender, the immigrant status and the actual varieties of geographical backgrounds will be discerned and analysed; this includes the creative use of the national symbol of the majority, in shape of the Norwegian flag, by a group of youth of primarily Pakistani background. The central enigma of the chapter will be how to understand dressing practices that, on the one hand, may be interpreted as exemplifying clear and relatively precise and developed messages that the actors, on the other hand and at the same time, do not seem to be able to explicate in words. With the help of some core aspects of the phenomenology of experience as suggested by Peirce, this question of *the preciseness and conclusiveness of nonverbal messages* will be explored. In the final part of the chapter some of the expressive qualities that may be held to be *specific for the medium of dressing* will be fleshed out.

In chapter 7, the varieties of *musical practices* among the Rudenga youth will be dealt with. To the unfamiliar reader this large chapter may be hard to digest, as the landscapes of large varieties of different musical genres within the social horizons of these youngsters are complex and composite, and as the relevant ethnographical frames include a variety of contextualisations that have not been found simultaneously in the ethnographical accounts that this writer has been able to find. The chapter tracks *threads of continuity* between varieties of musical preferences, on the one hand, and the life worlds, concerns and transnational connections of their users, on the other. This search is based upon the assumption that music has a special ability to satisfy deep emotional concerns and to be used for continual reflection about oneself and one’s directions of orientation in the world. In addition it is an extremely suitable medium for immersion in experiences of *community* with one’s fellow fans. The analysis of the musical practices among these youngsters will also help sketch out some central steps of *semiotic creativity* where concerns, resonance and what have been termed the cognitive mechanics of sign types will be placed within a more

systematized model. As in the analyses of dressing in chapter 6, some of the most salient expressive qualities that may be held to be *specific for the medium of music* will be identified at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 8 will deal with the phenomena of ideals, experience, stereotypes and the multitudes of positions concerning the theme of *love and gender* that, of course, have immense importance for any ethnographic study of youth. This theme will be related to an overall frame consisting of the individualistic and approximately gender egalitarian ideal, presumably on its rise, that Anthony Giddens has termed "*the pure relationship*", on the one hand, and a more conservative, collectively oriented and often explicitly male-dominated axis of orientation, on the other. The aim is to see where within such extremes, the gender related practices of the Rudenga youngsters may be situated or/and moving. The analysis of the tension and interaction between the caricatures of *stereotyping* – as enlightened by Peircean theory – and the youngsters own *experiences* will play a central part, as will the role of critical events within such a relational field.

In chapter 9 and 10, the *phenomenon of dissonance* will be pursued more explicitly. In chapter 9 this will be explored with the help of a discussion of the concept of information and its relation to the processes of semiosis. Empirically this will be anchored in three stories: the first deals with the rise and fall of a local gang of youngsters of Pakistani background; the second an incident of shooting where some of the youngsters were inadvertently involved; the last concerns an incident of a racist-motivated fight at a private party. Some of these actions will be interpreted as ways of generating *semiotic attention* through relations to the phenomenon of dissonance.

Chapter 10 will be based solely upon the analysis of a story of one informant, here called Mokthar. Throughout his period of growing up he has gone through a series of experiences and circumstances in which he has felt himself to be excluded – as "*the other*"- from the various social fields of "the Norwegians". He has thus experienced a dissonating semiotic attention that has been *imposed upon him* from his surroundings since he arrived as a refugee from Eritrea when he was eight years old, resulting in something like a continual crisis of identity throughout his youth. As he grows up he reacts to this exclusion by developing strategies of what we may call "*counter dissonance*" in the shape of expressive crime and violence. After this development reached its peak in some harsh and ultimately critical events, he at last managed to break away from this destructive development while, among other things, returning to an identity as an "Eritrean".

Chapter 11 joins several of the lines in the previous chapters while focusing more explicitly upon the phenomenon of *identification* and a variety of its actual “*tools*” (following Hannerz’ conceptualisation) as they were brought into use by the Rudenga youngsters (Hannerz 1983). This empirical recapitulation will be framed within *a discussion of the concept of hybridity*, as criticized recently by, for example, Jonathan Friedman and Dick Pels (Friedman 1997; 1999; Pels 1999). Our empirical evidence here strongly points to conclusions that reject Friedman’s and Pels’ suggestions in these questions.

In the same chapter there is explicit focus upon one more phenomenon that has been manifesting throughout most of our chapters, in the shape of the very *cognitive mechanisms* of resonance/dissonance – that seem to correspond to the first two elementary sign types in Peircean semiotics – through an analysis of what we have termed “*the syllogisms of practice*”. Such syllogisms are in several cases characterized by a relatively “sloppy logic” that nevertheless seems to be a salient characteristic of the human mind and of utmost importance in social and cognitive life. This assumption is further strengthened by seeing the activation of such mechanisms as manifest in a series of fundamental mental phenomena such as memory, creativity, metaphor and magic, and also (in a distorted form) in more dysfunctional cases such as schizophrenia.

Chapter 12 contains our concluding remarks on the *anti-schismogenesis* reflected in the practices of the Rudenga youngsters, that I understand as a kind of *competence*, whose working principles seem to have the potential of being of salient importance for handling cultural differences in an age of globalisation.

RUDENGA 1993–94: SOME INTRODUCTORY CONTEXTUALISATIONS: “CITY STROLLERS” AND “BLACK METALLERS”

Two youth cultural phenomena were especially salient at the beginning of the first fieldwork in 1993.

In the latter part of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s, the media images of young people in Oslo had gradually become centred around a certain group or conglomerate of groups of youngsters commonly known as “city strollers” (in Norwegian “byvankere”, see, for example, Krange and Strandbu 1996 and Andersson 2000 for a more explicit focus upon these groups). Distinctive groups of young people hanging around in certain parts of the city – be it “gangs” or more loosely composed groups – were, of course, far from being a new phenomenon in Oslo.¹ The new thing about the city strollers was the fact that the youngsters that most typically were covered by this term had immigrant background. During the later part of the 80s, some more or less homogenous groups had become recognised as gangs within the inner city areas, especially “The Young Guns”, whose members were mostly of Pakistani background, and “Killers” where youth of Filipino origin were central. But while the Young Guns and the Killers were commonly recognised as gangs, the youngsters who were becoming a common sight in the inner city centre streets of Oslo were a more loosely composed group in which a wide variety of backgrounds were represented. They often clustered in and outside the large mall/shopping centre called Oslo City, situated next to Oslo Central Station, and with much assistance from the media the city strollers soon became a well-known phenomenon in the public spheres of Oslo in this time period. They were mostly young males of immigrant backgrounds, primarily from the East end areas, together with girls often of solely Norwegian background, covering an age span from around thirteen to the early twenties. They were associated with Hip Hop, anti-racist attitudes, fighting and shoplifting, often quarrelling with the civil guards in the shopping centres and displaying a strong preference for

¹ The newspaper Aftenposten mentions several different gangs that were active in Oslo in the timespan from the 50s to the 70s. Some names of the most well known were: “Blackiegjengen”, “Stripagjengen”, “Vibesgjengen”, “Frognerbanden”, “Bølerbanden”, “Lambertsetergjengen”, “Haugenstuabanden”, “Årvollgjengen”, all from different townships in Oslo (Aftenposten 20/1 1999).

expensive clothing. As a phenomenon, the city strollers may probably be regarded as one of the earliest manifestations of a group of youngsters, most of immigrant background, that had acquired considerable prestige in several youth based public spheres of Oslo, for being cool, tough, street-clever and for having “style”.

A *second* youth cultural phenomenon that was given huge amounts of attention in the media in the beginning of the 90s, and that also had a strong centre in Oslo, were the so called “Black Metal” milieus, that probably represent no less than the very first youth cultural musical tradition that has become recognised as having its centre in Norway. It has reached a noticeable artistic success on an international level, within its larger tradition of Heavy Metal (see, for example, Søderlind and Moynihan 1998; Vestel 1999; Bennett 2000). To the overall Norwegian public, the Black Metallers were associated with a series of spectacular practices, of which the burning of a considerable number of churches were especially salient. Since 1992 more than thirty churches and chapels in Norway have been burnt down. Some of these have been very old, (ca.1100–1500 a.d.) so called Stave-churches, that are regarded as national treasures representing historical data concerning the transition from heathendom to Christianity in Norwegian history. Many of these buildings are actually known to have been set on fire, or are assumed to be set on fire by Black Metallers/associates/artists. Tombstones in churchyards in various places in Norway have been pushed down – known or assumed to have been done by Black Metallers – as inverted crosses and pentagrams are found at the sites. Similar examples exist from England and Sweden, and probably other countries as well. Two murders have been committed by two, now convicted, Black Metallers. Reports of satanism, cults of evil, rituals, and peculiar practices such as cutting oneself with knives, burning of upside down crosses into one’s forearms, etc, have been flourishing in the media. Norwegian bands such as Darkthrone, Mayhem, Burzum, Emperor, Enslaved, Immortal, Satyricon, Covenant and Dimmu Borgir have become considered top Black Metal groups on the international scene. Norway has, in other words, from the beginning of the nineties been regarded as the very centre of Black Metal music. On the records and advertising items you can often find the expression «Real Norwegian Black Metal», as an underlining of this position.

Within the Black Metal genre relatively early there occurred a shift in the focus of interest, from common horror and satanistic images to Vikings, Nordic folklore and nationalism – all put into a frame of cultivating “evil”, which seems to be a leitmotif through all these events. This has in turn led to

explicit hostility to immigrants and some reported contact with neo-nazi groups.

In this way, the at times extreme individualism and cult of the strongest that has been manifesting as ideological expressions within Black Metal – and that could be understood as something like a caricature of some salient tendencies of post-modernity – are encountering the very real presence of an increasing immigrant population, representing one of the most salient feature of globalization.

At the time of writing – in 2002 – the referred activities among the Black Metallers have in many ways calmed down, but in 1993 these developments were strongly on the rise, and occupied much space in Norwegian media.

These two sketches of youth related cultural manifestations are a salient background to an examination of the youngsters in the Rudenga area in the same year. As will become clearer throughout the chapters, both these phenomena had salient reverberations in the lives of these youth.

1 Inclusion and resonance in the present: two boys and an Arabian guitar line. Omar's story Part. I

Entering the club

May 1993. Rudenga. Going off the red subway train, I encounter a group of huge grey blocks spread in several small clusters, in an almost geometrical pattern that is distributed over a large flat area, where the green, not too well kept lawns are interspersed between the buildings and small public footpaths. Old pensioners, young women with prams, small children and some youngsters are walking in various speeds and directions to reach some unknown destination. A small football field can be spotted behind one of the blocks. Around the first corner, the not especially colourful Rudenga centre appears. A postal office, a kiosk, a grocery store and a few less easily definable shops surround the larger open space, where a not very successful attempt to grow plants that are supposed to become some ornamental shrubs seems to be one of the few traces of a wish for adding something that may turn out to be beautiful – at least in the future – in this public space.

A little behind the centre, I enter the well-used locale of the Rudenga club. I have already met some of the staff during daytime to make further appointments for starting the project. This evening, I am wished welcome by Ragnar (38) who, with his eight years experience as a club worker, is the one who has known the Rudenga youth the longest. He sits in the doorway of the club registering the members in a book as they arrive, and invites me to join him. He becomes eager when he discovers the anthropologist's personal interest in music of various kinds.

Ragnar: If you're interested in music that is a little bit outside the usual formats, there is a lot to be found here in Rudenga.

While we are talking a stream of youngsters come strolling before our table, even on a warm evening in May like this. They exchange a few words with Ragnar, as they are registered on the old respatex table in the dreary entrance. One of them, a tall, dark youth, around seventeen year old, arrives, and sends a hardly noticeable glance, that nevertheless also expresses old-time relations, to Ragnar who immediately reacts:

Ragnar: Here is Omar, for example (nods to Omar), who is from Iraq. His father plays the “oud” (a lute-like instrument common in most Arabian influenced areas). Hey, Omar, does he like Munir Bachir (a legendary Iraqi oud player), your father, or...?

Omar: Haven’t a clue! Haven’t asked him either...

Ragnar: Oh no, so it’s only rap for you nowadays, I guess. You ought to listen a little bit more to the music that your father listens to also (smiles).

Omar is already on his way further inside the locale, as he hastily shouts at Ragnar that he prefers “Gunshot” (an English Gangsta Rap group, well known to “connoisseurs”). Ragnar is commenting on the musical tastes of almost all of the youngsters as they arrive. Frank, a tall, long-haired youth with a t-shirt that reads “KISS” (a famous Heavy Metal band) in glamorous letters sits down beside us. He comments humourously on Ragnar’s musical speech. “If it’s not rock’n’roll, you can keep it for yourself!” Knut, a slender longhaired youth, dressed in black, sits down beside Frank. Ragnar tells me about the Death Metal band Knut used to play in some time ago, and starts to discuss the latest news about the church burnings of the Black Metallers with Knut and Frank, a milieu that Knut obviously has more than superficial knowledge of. Two young girls arrive. One is wearing a gigantic green knit cap; the other is carrying something that must be an electric guitar in a bag on her back.

Ragnar: Good afternoon, girls. How is it going with the “grunge” (a guitar-based musical genre popular in the first half of the nineties, see also chapter 7 on music)? Have you listened to the Sonic Youth records Mona borrowed from me yet?

Both girls nod enthusiastically and tell that they also play Sonic Youths’ “Youth against fascism” in their band. They ask us if we would like to hear a recent joke about the nazis they have just heard from some acquaintance in an anti-nazi band: “Yes, we are now going to play a tune about some nazis who have very little hair. But they at least have more hair than brains!” They chuckle loudly and hasten away to their band rehearsals.

As time passes I am introduced to Rashcied (of Pakistani background) who, like Ragnar and the anthropologist, is a fan of the famous Pakistani singer of so called “qawwali music” Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan, then to a group of youngsters of Kurdic background who all love Siwan Perver (a famous Kurdic singer), to Ola who has been one of Rudenga’s most well known break dancers, and more. All the while Ragnar exchanges greetings, comments, small musical discussions with the members as they nodding, joking and sometimes simply ignoring pass before us, and continue into the into well used, dark but somehow friendly locale of the Rudenga club.

In this confusing, noisy, pulsing swarm of youngsters, that through Ragnar's highly skilled comments are presented through his knowledge of their musical preferences, a variety of family backgrounds, as well as youth cultural associations, are represented through a wilderness of signs. The need for fleshing out some sort of ordering mechanisms – at least for an anthropologist – is strongly felt.

While studying social life in an area where actors who associate themselves with several different cultural traditions are living in the same neighbourhood, and especially while studying youth in such contexts, one of the core questions is, of course: if and how do people in such areas build social relations to each other?

It may be assumed that such areas will contain a densification of culturally originated differences; these are likely to be perceived as so unfamiliar (not sufficiently known, understood, or regarded as acceptable) by the various groups of inhabitants that the development of more positive and personal relations may be assumed to be especially difficult. The endless varieties of xenophobia and racism are, of course, expressions of this *fear of difference* that seems to be so heavily buried in the conditions of human existence. But even if this is so, there are also examples where such fear is being overcome, as descriptions of some of the youngsters in the club soon will show.

I suggest that we start the process of finding some answers to the seemingly simple question posed above by looking more closely at some *basic social mechanisms*, as they manifest in a story of friendship and the accompanying steps in the building of social relations between two boys from Rudenga.

More concretely, I will start this exploration of what is going on in this youth club by considering a small scene I observed in 1993, after the fieldwork had lasted for around half a year; this may be seen as a very concrete manifestation of some elementary mechanisms within such a relationship.

(It may here perhaps be useful for the reader to have it underlined that the following chapter – even if anchored very closely in a concrete social event – will be strongly aimed at exploring some deeply theoretical questions related to a phenomenon of fundamental importance to our further explorations. For those who await a more thick and fleshy description of the lives of the involved, as well as of the Rudenga milieu in general, this will gradually unfold in the subsequent chapters.)

At first glance our first empirical case and our core point of departure seemed to be quite a trivial event that took place one lazy evening, while I was lending an ear to two old friends playing guitars:

Omar (seventeen, Iraqi parents) and Ola (sixteen, Norwegian parents) are sitting in the kitchen of the youth club, picking lazily on two well used guitars. Ola strikes a few unpretentious chords that could have been used in any old pop or rock song, without seeming to have any clear direction or purpose for the tones he presents. Both seem to enjoy this atmosphere of slow non-doing, resembling two cats lying drowsily in the sun.

After a little while – almost a little late, as Ola’s chords were long since faded out – Omar sends out what seems to be something like an answer on his instrument that partly repeats Ola’s first line.

Then almost silence.

Ola is now glancing at Omar a little bit more attentively, while striking a more distinct major chord.

Omar giggles silently to himself, and then presents a more peculiar row of tones, that the anthropologist recognises as a scale frequently used in Arabian music. He is demonstratively looking in an opposite direction, with a deliberately deadpan face, as if he wanted to check out if his friend really is able to perceive the message...

Ola, on his side, looks a little bit confused. He nevertheless fumbles his fingers on the frets. And after a few attempts, he succeeds in hitting the intervals from Omar’s last ‘sentence’. He sends his buddy an awaiting glance...

Omar then starts out with the same major chord that Ola recently struck, while once more ending up with the Arabian scale.

Ola is now smiling widely back, while opening with a small variation on the Arabian line. He then plays a big major chord, but ends the sequence with a deliberately dissonant tone as a kind of question mark at the end. He chuckles aloud.

Omar follows up by repeating the major chord, then the Arabian line, that he ends with a similar dissonant tone as Ola just did, while both boys unite in a heartfelt, loud laughter, ending this wordless, musical dialogue they both have been participating in.

Half a year later I once more recognize the intervals from the Arabian scale as the musical centre of one of the tunes Ola’s band is performing on one of the club’s concerts.

How is such an event to be interpreted?

How come a sixteen year old Norwegian working class boy, that lives in this more or less stigmatized suburb, is sitting with his old time friend Omar, whose family is from Iraq, and play Arabian guitar lines, later to be put into the repertoire of his rock band?

And why is an analysis of such an event selected as being of core importance to our research questions?

I will suggest that in this interaction it is possible to identify some basic mechanisms that may provide some very useful insights into the dynamics of social relations in a multicultural landscape such as the Rudenga area.

Rudenga has strong traditions for being what informants term “a guitar area” where Heavy Metal and other predominantly “white” genres (see also chapter 3. “Hostile signs...”, 7, “Music...”) long have been part of the musical hegemony, only contested by Hip Hop in recent years. When Ola hints at rock’n’roll, it is not the musical genres that are known to be the most open to non-Western influences. And even if the number of members with immigrant background at this time has reached some twenty percent, it is still not possible to play music of immigrant (non-Western) background on the clubs disco or in any public room without protests or even some small scale sabotage (as then suddenly “something is wrong with the disco”). So why this openness on Ola’s part? And how come Omar is taking the chance of exposing such strangeness, presumably knowing very well that such tones are usually both considered and acted upon as an equivalent of “matter out of place”, among his fellow youths.

The friendship between these two boys has been built up over a large time span, and the scene, of course, only exemplifies one of the myriads of ways in which friendship may manifest itself. I suggest, attending such event (even from only the corner of an anthropologists eye), the most noticeable thing, is the *atmosphere*: the drowsy and positive emotional “feel” of it; the small, but gradual sharpening of attention; the laid back tone of kidding that ends up in common laughter.

How is it to be understood?

To reach a more developed understanding of this concrete event, and of such events in a more generalized sense, we need to know more about the phenomenology of the social meeting, of the nature and the making of social relations, as this must be considered a core theme, both in the social processes among such multicultural youths and in our research project. Our exploration will thus start with the most basic question: *how is a social relation formed?*

To pursue this aim I suggest the investigation of a phenomenon that is conceptualized as “resonance”. But such a concept needs some further introduction.

On resonance – tracking the phenomenology of the social meeting

The study of emotions has in many ways been neglected in the social sciences. And the history of anthropology– with some exceptions – has showed much scepticism against “psychological” problems, and against focuses on the more individual and idiosyncratic aspects of social life (see, for example, Bruner’s introduction in Shore 1996; Cohen 1994; Carrithers 1992). In the last 10–15 years, it seems this tendency is turning, as the discipline has manifested more attention to psychologically oriented research and theoretical developments within the anthropology of cognition (D’Andrade & Strauss (eds.) 1995; D’Andrade 1995; Shore 1996). In the wake of this development there has also been given legitimacy to focusing on themes like “emotions” and “experience” (for example, Lutz 1988, Wikan 1990). The reasons such fields of research have been met with scepticism could be well worth a dissertation in itself, but will not be commented further upon here. The breaking down of the historical barriers against focusing upon more emotion-related themes, might perhaps – with a little charity – be seen as an expression of a growing admittance that a further development of our understanding of social life will hardly have chances to develop without a theory of emotions/experience. The subjective experience of being connected/identified to a group of other human beings can hardly be understood as anything else than one of the central building blocks of the phenomenon of culture. Community is primarily something that is experienced and felt, in other words it is affectively charged. And in the core of community we find the social relation – and the positively emotionally charged meeting that makes up the basic units for building this bond among the individuals. As in the scene described above, the emotional tinge in these very small scale events, seems to play a salient part.

In recent times, Unni Wikan, among others, has contributed to turn attention towards the mystery of social relations by focusing upon the phenomenon she terms “resonance” (Wikan 1992). The concept was originally proposed by Wikans Balinese informants as a term for what they saw as the ideal condition to understand the lifeforms of the Balinese, as well as others: the anthropologist was advised to develop resonance towards the social field to be studied. Resonance was here regarded as “what fosters empathy and

compassion” (ibid: 463). This implies the use of both thought and feeling, even if feeling is given some precedence by the Balinese. Wikan writes:

“Resonance demands something of both parties to communication, of both reader and author: an effort of feeling-thought, a willingness to engage with another world, life or idea; an ability to use ones experience (...) to try to grasp, or convey meanings that reside neither in words, “facts” nor text, but are evoked in the meeting of one experiencing subject with another or with a text.” (ibid, my underlining)

Wikan argues that resonance can come into being “beyond words” (an expression that one also finds in the title of her article), and in its most basic form intuition is probably the foremost vehicle for resonance.

It seems, nevertheless, too narrow to limit the concept exclusively into the intuitive aspect of social meetings – even if this comprises a basic ingredient. In addition there are a number of signals and experiences that support or counteract intuition. The experience of the phenomenon of resonance, as this writer perceives it, ought therefore also to include the totality of experience, signs and impressions; intuitive impulses, hunches and understandings, both articulated and more vague, that work together and support the meeting and the overall understanding of “the other”.¹ Central for the experience of resonance is the ability to let *similarities* from the horizons of the interlocutors work as points (bridges) for contact:

“Resonance invokes shared human experience, what people across place and time can have in common. Where culture separates, resonance bridges (...) It does not deny difference (...) But it renders difference relatively insignificant in the face of that which counts more for certain purposes: shared human potential.” (ibid: 476)

Wikan has as her main focus the meeting between anthropologist and informant, and she underlines that the necessity of searching for such points of similarity (“shared human potential”) will be of special actuality when the anthropologist meets new and unknown informants. Here it may be said that the phenomenon of resonance necessarily has actuality far beyond this situation and will be a salient aspect of any human community. This seems to be in accordance with Wikan’s argument, at least somehow implicitly.

As I interpret Wikan, social resonance can be understood as a parallel to the phenomenon of resonance in physics; this comes into being when

¹ This reasoning does not conflict with Wikan’s arguments, but comprises a starting point for an effort of analytical development/widening of the understanding of the phenomenon she deals with.

oscillations in one physical medium release oscillations in another, for example, as when the oscillations in a string on a violin causes oscillations in the trunk of the instrument that then amplifies the sound. Translated to human relations this implies that resonance unfolds when a communicative gesture/utterance (that is not necessarily verbal) from a person (A) brings forth a more or less resembling “answer” in an other person (B); this is based upon something that the receiver perceives as a recognizable trait from his own life world. As when the violin string releases an “answering” oscillation in its trunk, social resonance will be perceived as “something you communicated that has something in common with something I know, that by this recognition is brought into our common field of attention”. In this way what Wikan terms “a shared space” (via a concept lent from the philosopher Donald Davidson, also used by Tambiah, Wikan 1990) is created (“a bridgehead for understanding”, “a base of agreement”, see Tambiah 1991:122); in other words, this is the room of the shared, where “something from the one, initiates a similar oscillation in the other”. As Wikan writes:

“...we must dip into the wellsprings of ourselves for something to use as a bridge to others. It does not come by an act of will, though will helps. Practical exposure to a world of “urgency, necessity” is required.”
(Wikan 1992:471)

This implies also the underlining of the necessity to take part in what the other perceives as important (urgent, necessary, that is relevant, see below). The experience of resonance will thus be closely connected with the ability to develop “empathy” and “compassion”, as Wikans Balinese informants proposed. The ability to experience resonance can thus be expressed more precisely as the ability “to take part in a similar oscillation”, and is possible when similarities in the participants horizons of experience are brought into contact with each other.

It is probably a similar phenomenon that lies behind popular expressions like “finding the wavelength”, “finding the common tone”, and experiencing “good vibrations”. These are all metaphors of experiences that are perceived as positive for the involved, as is more or less implicit in Wikan’s article. The feeling of resonance – of gaining contact – seems to be psychological and emotionally attractive for those involved. Understood primarily as a phenomenon concerning directly social relationships, it is, in other words, not neutral, but charged with positive affect. Thus it can be experienced in different degrees – from the relatively trivial registration of a confirming nod, to the experience of more existential feelings of unity, of being melted together and so forth. The phenomenon of resonance can therefore, on the one hand, help focusing upon such experience’s potential

for positive *emotional* charging. But in so far as resonance in social relations, is about the *subjective experience of finding (or creating) similarities as contact points between two interlocutors*, this experience also has a cognitive aspect, namely the very identification of such similarities. This implies the ability to understand, in a more cognitive sense, the other. In other words, it seems unlikely to find something like “pure emotions” without any trace of cognitive content.

On the other hand, I will suggest that the phenomenon of resonance can be seen as something that also contains a more emotionally neutral pole. To be more specific – it seems also to encompass phenomena that are primarily *cognitive*, as to some extent distinguishable from the emotional aspect emphasized above. This seems also to be implied (although not developed further) in Wikan’s article, as both she and her Balinese informants use the term “*keneh*” which is translated as “feeling-thought”. This underlines not only the emotional aspect but also a cognitive dimension in the phenomenon. The formulation of resonance as “*evoked in the meeting of one experiencing subject with another or with a text*” (my underlining, Wikan 1992:463) points in the same direction: resonance can also be evoked in a subject confronted with “something” that not necessarily (directly or indirectly) involves emotions or a relation to another human being. To be more precisely, it can be argued that the phenomenon of resonance can be evoked in a subject from any sense-impression (as a source of “a difference that makes a difference”, that is “information” as Bateson defined it, 1979:68), in so far as it brings forth a reaction/an interpretation in the subject (see the discussion of Peirce’s definition of a sign in chapter 2 “Inclusion, resonance and semiosis...”)

From the world of literature, perhaps the most well known example of resonance in the more cognitive sense is probably Marcel Proust’s famous description of how the combination of the madeleine cake dipped into limeleaf tea releases a series of memories from the author’s childhood, that until then have been forgotten (Proust 1968). In this case this external sense impression (something known) releases something more or less inaccessible (forgotten) that is brought into contact with the present and thereby made to resonate in the experiencing subject.¹ In the fullest sense, cognitive reso-

¹ (In chapter 11, “Identification in the multicultural” we will see how a memory from the Somalian civil war was brought up in/by one of my young Somalian informants when the anthropologist was telling him the story about Proust’s teacup. Here being exposed to a story about something in the present that releases an unaccessible memory from the past becomes something that releases a memory from the listener’s own past.

nance will mean the experience of profound insight/understanding, where everything seems to fit, to find its place.

But these phenomenological assumptions also seem to imply that resonance in its pure emotional, or pure cognitive, form probably does not exist. Everyone who has read Proust's description in the first book (*Combray*) in *Remembrance of things past* knows very well that his experience of the moment – when the taste of his cake in the teacup brings up the forgotten experiences of his past – in fact had a very strong emotional flavour (in this case an intense feeling of happiness). Another example of resonance, here in a rather extreme situation, is found in Arthur Koestler's description of his experiences in one of Franco's prisons, where he is waiting for his execution (Koestler in Marcus 1966:152-155). Here he writes about his intense feeling of beauty and harmony that occurred when he remembered nothing less than the Euclidian mathematical proof that says that the number of prime numbers are infinite. He writes:

“Nå, da jeg husket metoden og risset symbolene på veggen, følte jeg den samme fortryllesen. (...) De symbolene jeg hadde rablet på veggen, representerer et av de sjeldne tilfeller da man når fram til en formulering av det uendelige ved hjelp av presise og endelige midler (...) Forståelsen og betydningen av dette flommet over meg som en bølge. Bølgen hadde oppstått i en artikulert verbal innsikt, men denne dunstet straks bort og etterlot seg en ordløs essens, en duft av evigheten, en dirring av pilen i det blå.” (ibid:153)

“Now, as I remembered the method and sketched the symbols on the wall, I felt the same enchantment (...) Those symbols I had scribbled on the wall represent one of the rare occasions when one achieves a formulation of the eternal with the help of precise and final mediums (...) The understanding and the meaning of all this flowed throughout me as a wave. The wave had come into being in an articulated verbal insight, but this withered away immediately and left a wordless essence, a smell of eternity, a quivering from the arrow in the blue.” (my translation)

All this points in the same direction: what we have called cognitive resonance may also cause strong emotional response and what may be perceived as “pure” cognitive mechanisms – in Proust's case a remembrance released by an action that encompassed a composite sense impression, in Koestler's the remembrance of a mathematical proof, coming to him in an extreme situation – may also enhance strong emotions. Both examples can, of course, be regarded as “special cases” as they are both descriptions by well-known writers who are experts in articulating and communicating their experiences. But because of this they are perhaps especially suitable to

illuminate these points. They both exemplify strong experiences of connections where the cognitive (ideas/thoughts entering the field of attention) and the emotional are tightly interrelated and simultaneous. But even the registration of more prosaic connections/resonance seem to be endowed with a similar doubleness: solving a simple mathematical problem, finding the right word to express a message, or noticing changes in the traffic lights – all these quite trivial experiences of cognitive connections will have at least some amount of emotional charging.

This leads to the following suggestions: all ideas (understood as cognitive “facts”) can be regarded as having some emotional aspect to varying degrees; they are more or less embedded in and surrounded by emotions depending upon actors and contexts. In the same way, all emotions probably have some cognitive aspect, as they are connected and embedded in ideas in various degrees, again according to positioned actors in specific contexts.

But resonance, I will argue, both in its emotional and its cognitive aspect, also has a flip side. It can only be considered as one of the poles in the meeting between persons, between a person and ideas, and between persons and the material world. The other pole will necessarily consist of the experience of the opposite: the negation of contact. This is refusal, inaccessibility, lack of understanding, etcetera, that will be accompanied by negative affect or by lack of cognitive connections. If the theory of resonance is to be seen as a building block for social and cognitive meetings, it has to be supplemented by integrating this other aspect (that is not discussed by Wikan) in the form of what we – with a certain conceptual symmetry – can term “dissonance”.

Dissonance will, therefore, be the opposite pole of the phenomenon of resonance, characterized by a lack of emotional or cognitive meeting points. Also dissonance can exist in different degrees, from being minimal – as a consequence of difficulties in finding contact points, simple misunderstandings, moderate disregard of the other – to more intentional rejection, in the emotional aspect, that on extreme occasions will culminate in explicit execution of power/disregard/denial of the other’s interests and persona; in its utmost consequence this can be in the form of using physical force or explicit violence.

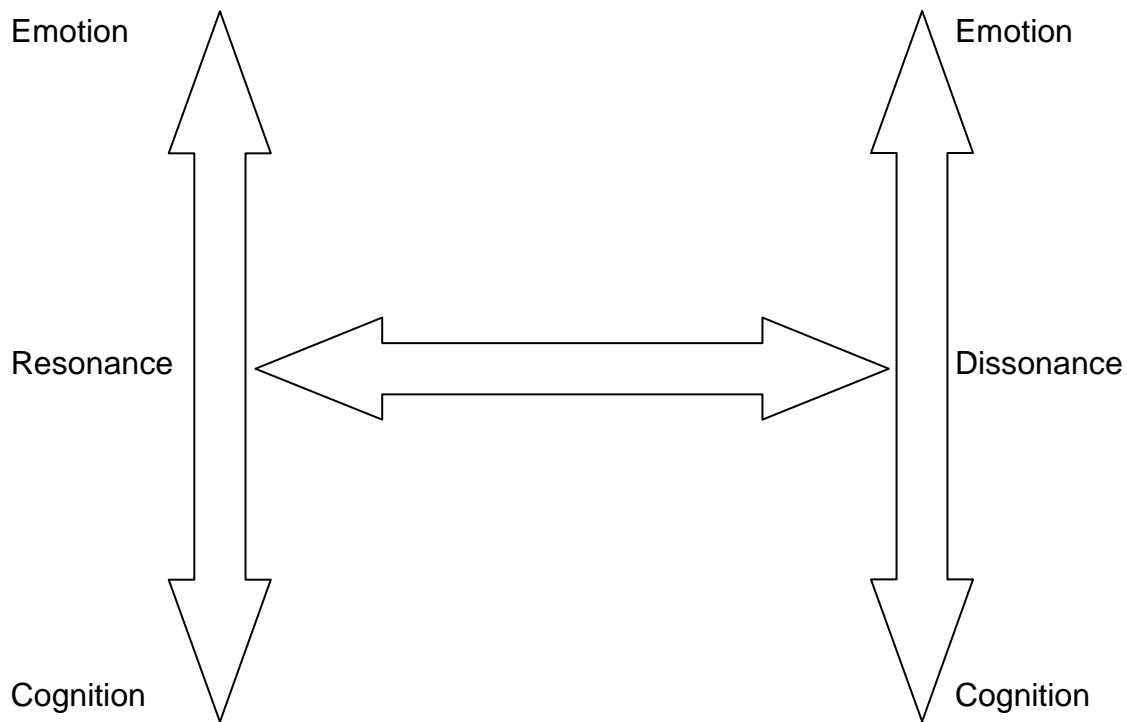
Cognitively this implies the existence of different degrees of understanding, of a feeling of how different ideas “fit”, and of the possibilities of making connections between two or more signs or “signscapes” (the “semiospheres”). If the utmost version of cognitive resonance is an experience of profound insight where everything seems to fit, the dissonance

pole will be the experience of the opposite, that is, of not understanding, and at the extreme end of not finding any thread of connection at all.

The experience of dissonance can thus be both provoking and disturbing. In his celebrated biography about the highly innovative jazz saxophonist and composer Ornette Coleman, John Litweiler describes a dance hall gig in Baton Rouge, Louisiana where the nineteen year old Ornette played in a rhythm and blues band. In the middle of his blues tenor solo Ornette “injected some of his modern ideas”, where upon the solo immediately caused the crowd to stop dancing (Litweiler 1994:37). He was called to meet some musicians outside. He did, meeting six-seven black guys who in anger harassed and beat him, his saxophone being thrown deliberately down the street, leaving Ornette lying bleeding and blacked out on the street. His “modern ideas” had been too much, dissonating too strongly to this audience. For jazz devotees in other positions, he was, of course, also hailed as the big new “thing” within this tradition. In other words: challenging conventions, breaking rules, doing something else (“Something else” is in fact the name of one of Ornette’s early ground breaking records) than is expected, are also important examples where both cognitive and emotional arousal may balance on a knife edge of dissonance, on the one side, and resonance, on the other, depending of the positions of an audience. Modern art, in both high and low varieties provides us with uncountable examples of this, from the musical atonality of Schoenberg and freetonal experiments of Ives, the paintings of Italian Futurism, Andy Warhol’s Pop art, to long haired youngsters in the 60s, and the Gangsta rappers of the late 90s. Different customs of the world’s immigrants, and skin colours one is not used to are further examples of differences (information) that in various cultural constellations may release experiences along a continuum of dissonance and resonance.

To sum up: the phenomenon of resonance can not be understood without relating it to its negative pole as expressed in the phenomenon of dissonance. The continuum that constitutes these poles is itself (vertically) related to another continuum where an emotional aspect makes up the one end and a cognitive aspect the other. This can be illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 2. The continuum of “resonance – dissonance” as related to the continuum of “emotion – cognition”



Against such a background our purposes for this chapter will be twofold:

1. To undertake an exploration of the event described above, including the social processes that have led up to it. In the present chapter the analyses will be restricted to consider the event as it occurred in the *immediate present*. The next chapter will deal with selected events that occurred in the more distant past and that are assumed to have special relevance for understanding the present event, understood as a manifestation of the friendship between the two boys.
2. To use our exploration of the event and the processes in which it is embedded to explore and develop a further understanding of the phenomenon of resonance.

In the following we will see that several of the small micro-level events, that comprise the sequence of action we here consider, also point beyond the immediate present situation and into the past that these boys have experienced together. But before we investigate this larger timespan and undertake the task of bringing to light how the past is manifested and connected in the immediate present, we will confine the analysis to what is

happening here and now. The rationale for separating the time levels in such a way is that this strategy will be helpful in bringing forth both a clearer picture of the dynamics of the immediate moment and the nature of the relationship between these levels. Thus even though it is neither possible nor desirable to avoid an analysis of the presence of the past, in this first part the past will have to be handled as mere background. The difficulties of the meticulous task of bringing both time levels into sufficient detail, lie, of course, in not losing sight of “lived life” of the scene itself and its actors’ being-in-the-world (jfr. Geertz on the twinkle, 1973). Drawing on Geertz’ famous analysis, the kitchen scene can perhaps be regarded as a “twinkle” in the lives of the two boys.

With these purposes in mind let us return to our “primordial” scene in the club’s kitchen.

The kitchen scene: resonance in the present

At first glance the scene seem to lack any information of interest: two lazy young boys sitting in the same room fumbling with some old guitars. To many “common sense ridden” grown ups, this is just plain “doing nothing”, as we all have noticed on street corners, in school yards, outside the local petrol station – youth just “hanging around”. We tend to demand some sort of “doing something” for this to be seen as legitimate. To strangers such an absence of more clear and discernible actions may, of course, be frustrating, making the persons involved feel embarrassed, not knowing what to do or how to respond, simply because “nothing happens”. For Omar and Ola this seems not to be any problem at all.

As the proverb says; “friends can keep silent”, meaning something like: friends have been through a series of shared experiences that mutually have been interpreted in such ways that the other is felt as worthy of trust. In this way friendship is always somehow pointing towards its past, building on it so to speak, so that the past becomes like a *plateau for support*, in at least some senses, working as a starting point for acting in the present.

Relaxing on this plateau of their shared past is exactly what these boys seem to do. It is from this very base that Ola sends out his chords into their common space. His chords seem to be close to the unclear, undirected and seemingly ambivalent, as they somehow emerge from the directionless fluid of sheer “being” (“doing nothing”) into something that may or may not be seen as having some sort of contour.

When Omar picks up some of the distinct parts of Ola’s line, he creates such direction by turning their common attention to what Ola just uttered.

While making an answer to the utterance of his friend, combining it with some tones of his own, he transforms the originally unclear act of Ola into a question, pointing backwards in time so to speak, creating a commented return of the given and thereby making an invitation to continue.

In his classic book *“The Gift”*, Marcel Mauss writes that according to the Maori of New Zealand all objects contain “hau”, a kind of spirit, and that this spirit also contains the spirit of the one who gives (Mauss 1970). In this context, giving an object to someone, means giving a piece of oneself. According to the conventions of the Maori, receiving the gift demands giving something back, that is to return the “hau”, because *“the hau wants to return to the place of its birth”* (*ibid:9*). This means that any gift demands that the receiver accepts an obligation towards the giver. Accepting the object means accepting the relation; one accepts, so to speak, contact with the giver indirectly by receiving a part of him in the shape of “hau”.

The moment Omar picks up Ola’s utterance by repeating parts of it, he thereby expresses that “this is something we can talk about”. He confirms it and shows acceptance and attention for the theme. And by doing this – accepting “the gift”, or more precisely choosing to respond to it as an utterance to talk about – he expresses exactly what Mauss writes about the gift in Maori relationships; he confirms it and shows his acceptance of the giver by receiving a part of him, represented by something that he has uttered. In other words, he confirms the relation to Ola and is thus creating a proposed version of what may be “a shared space”, as if asking “Are we having a dialogue?” A direction for their not yet executed actions is thereby put forth as a possibility. Through this answer – that at the same time is a question asking for a confirmation of the possibility to continue – Omar invests/marks his *interest* in what his friend just uttered. In this way he returns “the gift” while sticking something of himself (in the exposition of his interest) to it, exactly as the parallel to Mauss analysis indicates.

Had they met as strangers, then such repeating, acting upon, pointing to something that the other just said or did and thereby confirming that one relates (positively) to an utterance performed by the other; could work as the first and precarious step in a process possibly leading to a relationship. But even if Omar and Ola have known each other for a long time (as we shall see below) and this process has developed into friendship, and even if this plateau of shared past experiences obviously can be assumed to give their relationship a firm base – and thus a much larger tolerance for disagreement, misunderstandings – friendship is nevertheless something that has to be confirmed, at least once in a while, to be kept alive. This can, of course, be done at “critical events” (see below), that is events containing situations

when things really are at stake for the persons involved. But it can also occur at events of considerably less acute or immediate critical importance. In that sense such “small drops” in the seemingly more trivial streams of everyday life are not to be underestimated. The present scene can perhaps be interpreted as such an example of a small “drop” confirming that the shared space of old friendship is still alive.

When Ola continues the dialogue by striking a more distinct chord, he seems to be saying “that (at least some of) Omar’s reception of what I originally uttered is accepted as something we talk about”. The dialogue is thus confirmed and established. In this way a plateau of shared space has been renewed on the very micro level of this concrete event, of what is – and has immediately been – going on here and now, giving Omar a confirming answer to his “question”.

From this base – now with the renewed firmness from these immediate previous moments – Omar takes the chance of presenting the Arabian line. His now demonstratively deadpan face underlines the presentation of the line even more in the direction of a question. As Omar’s Iraqi origin suggests, one intuits that there is no coincidence in these being tones from an Arabian scale. In other words, Omar has brought up an utterance that stands for definitely more than what can be discerned from the present. Once more the past is brought up as connected to the flow of events, here in the shape of an explicit reference to his background in Arabian cultural traditions (this will be discussed more explicitly in the following chapter). Will his companion be able to take it?

The puzzlement on Ola’s face is expressing that “This is quite an odd thing to say”. The tones are obviously unfamiliar to him, something he is not used to handle. He struggles to repeat the line, but he manages to get it through. He then awaits the reaction of his friend, as if he says “Even this we can share. But did I succeed in getting my uttered version of your utterance correct?”

Once again Omar repeats Ola’s chords, then his own Arabian line, thereby confirming and approving his friend’s effort as if now it is his turn to say “I confirm and accept that your reception of my utterance, which I admit must have felt odd to you, is correct and is something we both talk about”. This new extension of their shared space is thus mutually confirmed – first in Ola’s struggling to reproduce Omar’s line, and, secondly, in Omar’s confirmation of Ola’s “interpretation” of what Omar just had uttered, this time with an object/theme stemming from Omar’s foreign origin.

Ola once more repeats the hitherto negotiated common ingredients of the “talk”: his major chord and the Arabian line. Once again he extends it

further, this time by adding the deliberately dissonant tone as a question mark at the end, as if saying to Omar: “Would you agree to even this?”

When Omar does approximately the same thing, although with his own little twist on his “sentence”, his action embodies the principles that have been underlying the previous steps. He repeats the common stock of ingredients, but with a special emphasis on the new element that Ola just introduced in the shape of this peculiar dissonant tone. Thus he obviously agrees with Ola’s proposal, as they both end in the unifying laughter that ends the whole sequence.

Creating the mutually known – the role of repetition

We notice the role of repetition in the sequence. With the exception of the last sequence that ends the event, each step in what we may term the oscillation of impulses from one participant to the other seemed to exhibit the following pattern: X sends out an utterance that is in one way or another repeated by Y. Then it is again repeated by X, as a confirmation of Y’s effort to follow up what X just uttered (the final sequence – the presentation of the dissonant tone – lacks this last step, see below). At this point in the pattern there seems to be a point of rest, from which new themes can be introduced. But before exploring the continuation from this point, we have to look further into the dynamics of this seemingly simple, cyclic sequence.

Creating repetition – in the sense of making something that resembles (that is similar) – can probably be seen as one of the most elementary ways of establishing something that is mutually acknowledged as *known* to the interlocutors in a relationship. To put it more precisely: to repeat emphatically what the other has uttered, by making an effort as if saying “Is this what you meant” and waiting for the other to confirm or deny the proposed assumption, seems to be one of the most direct ways of establishing a shared space, a commonality, a common denominator between the participants. As a core phenomenon in resonance, repetition – the making of resemblances (discovering them, bringing them up, pointing to them, creating them) – is always relational, in the sense that repetition/the creating of resemblance necessarily points to something previous, to what it actually resembles. In a social dialogue the repetition/the resemblance we are focusing upon here is always performed in relation to the others utterance. The sequence can thus be regarded as an almost stylized example of the basic dynamic in the building of a social relation: each utterance from the one releases an utterance in the other, bringing forth a direct resonating “answer” in the elementary form of repetition. *Like the oscillations in the violin string that puts the wood in*

the instrument to vibrate and thus amplify the sound, the mutual finding of such points of resonance – more precisely things the dialogue partners have, know or experience in common – will amplify and excite (“lift”) the emotional dimension/the emotional “tone” among the participants, and thus enhance the experience of resonance.

It is here interesting to notice that, according to Wikan, the closest Indonesian translation of the Balinese term for resonance is “timbang rasa”, that is translated as “a sense of rhythm; balance; reasonableness” (Wikan 1992:477; “a balanced feeling” is suggested by Ingrid Rudie who also has done fieldwork in a relevant region for a considerable amount of time. Personal communication, see also Rudie 1994). The basis of all rhythm is, of course, exactly repetition. Sharing rhythm, that is to be a part of the same frame of repetition – both musically and in a more extended sense – is an experience that has strong potentials for the generation of community and social resonance, as any observation of the audience in a good musical concert will confirm. This is reflected in popular expressions speaking of the necessity of “finding the rhythm” in a relationship, and so on. To extend the metaphor of music as a means to shed light on the phenomena of social relations, it may be suggested that resonance in this sense can be seen as the phenomenon that creates a central aspect of “the music of social life”. The competence required to navigate properly in the various fields of social relations could thus be described as a form of “social musicality”.

In social relations the feel for rhythm and for creative development towards (creating, discovering, pointing to) the common known seems to be closely connected to the generation of mutual expectations.

Expectation and uncertainty

From research on newborn infants, it seems the mutual repetition of a message is the central axis of what have been termed “protodialogues” between child and parent (Bråten 1994). Here a simple sound, a movement (for example, the opening of the mouth, the protruding of the tongue) is sent back and forth between the participants, in a process where the child and its dialogue partner alternate in taking turns/taking the initiative (see, for example, Bråten 1994; Kugiumutzakis 1994; Kugiumutzakis in Bråten 1998; Bruner and Sherwood 1975). Kugiumutzakis argues that such (turntaking) dialogues can be realized with babies only a few hours old. Bråten interprets this as an evidence that the baby is born with “a virtual other” which once more underlines that orientation towards an other, towards dialogue, so to speak, seems to be one of the most fundamental inborn

inclinations of human beings (Kugiumutzakis 1994; Bråten 1994). In the right contexts and situations, small children seem to be able to enjoy repetition over considerable lengths of time, both while, for example, playing alone with toys, and when involved in different kinds of games with a human dialogue partner, as Bruner and Sherwood have shown in their close up studies of the game known as “peekaboo”. Here their youngest player was no more than fifteen months old (Bruner and Sherwood in Bruner et al (eds.)1975). In playing “peekaboo” one player hides either her body or just her face for the playing partner, then says a relieving “boo” when the face or body reappears. The second players amplifies the excitement in several ways, for example by asking repeatedly and in excited emotional expressions where the first player is hiding, building up the arousal of the “enigma” of when and eventually how she will reappear. When the first player has done the hiding, then it’s the partners turn to take this role. Thus the game continues with both partners mutually exchanging their different roles and agency as the game unfolds (see comments on “power flow” below).

The peekaboo parallel brings us to another striking feature of the resonance phenomenon as it manifests itself in social dialogue, namely the role of *expectation* and the corresponding phenomenon of *uncertainty*. In so far as dialogue is a mutual exchange of impulses from one participant to another, the role of expectations must be crucial. A characteristic feature of the playing of peekaboo with small children is the excitement that such dialogues generate. And this *excitement* is only possible within the dialectics of uncertainty and confirmation created by expectations. A focus upon the role of expectations in social life is found in Carrithers (also referring to recent research on infants). He directs attention to what he, with a concept borrowed from Andrew Whiten, terms “mind reading” or “higher order intentionality” (Carrithers 1992:58-60; see also Whiten and Brown in Bråten (ed.) 1999). “Mind reading” may be explained as the ability to assume (to anticipate, “read”, predict, guess) the others intentions. But these can only be “read” on the basis of previous experience that makes it possible to the reader to assume that her interlocutor, given some recognizable contexts, will do X, and vice versa. “*Mind reading*” may thus be defined as the ability to produce reasonable founded (that might as well be completely intuitive) expectations of the others intentions on the basis of previous experience.

As noticed earlier, Ola does not seem to expect an answer to his first utterance. This is underlined by the characteristic lack of direction that the act exhibits. But the moment Omar picks it up, expectation is introduced, as the very “something” that gives Omar’s utterance direction towards his dialogue partner. We have interpreted his act as posing a question saying:

“This is something we could talk about. Are we having a dialogue?” Any question may be understood as an expectation of response or answer, in one way or another, from the one to whom it is directed. Showing his reception of Ola’s utterance as a “gift” – in Mauss’ sense of being something that generates a demand (that is an expectation) for something in return – becomes an invitation to Ola to continue the dialogue. If a dialogue (that creates a social relation and makes it persist) consists of the mutual exchange of messages that can somehow be interpreted as a confirmation of the other and what he just said, as our examples indicate, there is always a possibility for the expectations *not* to be fulfilled: to be avoided, manipulated, transformed, misunderstood, or even deliberately refused. In other words, these instances represent the ever present possibility for experiencing dissonance.

As dissonance should be viewed as an intrinsic and necessary possibility in all social relations, this brings in uncertainty as a crucial point. The moment one is drawn into a dialogue there will, at each step of the exchange, be an uncertainty concerning *if* the other will respond at all, *what* the message will be, *how* he will respond and *when*. This is what gives games like peekaboo their ability to excite. Even though it is the rule of the game that the other is to fulfil the expectation created, the emotionally expressed emphasis of if, what, how and when amplifies the expectation and plays directly on the uncertainty concerning these simple questions. The frame of the game (settled by some initiating signs) provides the players with the understanding of what is to be expected, that is the clues to what the other has in mind. Without this expectation, the ability/will to anticipate, uncertainty and therefore excitement can not be realized (As we shall see below, excitement can also be generated by the unexpected/the new).

But, of course, also outside such strict ritualistic frames the uncertainty of what the response will be necessarily plays a fundamental part of any social interaction.

The social atmosphere in the beginning of the scene under consideration was, as earlier mentioned, characterized by the loose and relaxed drowsiness of two good friends just “doing nothing” together (note the paradox!). Then, as the event gradually develops, the atmosphere grows similarly more attentive. As the “questions” are posed both boys are gradually drawn into a field of mutual expectations. The role of the uncertainty generated by the mutual flow of expectations is, of course, also to heighten not only the excitement but also the attention to what is going on.

After the pattern of the small cycle had been realized (X sends out an utterance that is, in one way or another, repeated by Y. Then it is again

repeated by X, as a confirmation of Y's effort to follow up what X just uttered), we observed a point of rest. This resting point, I suggest, is exactly the point where the uncertainty of the response gets its answer – its relief – in the shape of confirmation, especially on behalf of X, the “leader”/the asker of the “question” that initiated the sequence. *The dialogue thus seems to consist of small cycles of events where expectations are raised and then put to rest by their fulfillment.*

The direction of the dialogue so far seems to have been mainly the mutual confirmation of the relation. So far in the cycle, no new message has been brought up. It seems to be no coincidence that it is exactly from this very point – of temporary rest (of relief from uncertainty) – that new themes can be introduced¹. So far the dialogue has dealt with the mutual establishment of the known, and from the known the participants can proceed further to the unknown.

The role of the new

From their position in this newly reached point of rest, perhaps in line with this youthful need for a little further excitement, Omar introduces a genuinely new element in the shape of the Arabian line. While doing this he seems to be flinging out something quite unexpected, judging from the puzzlement in Ola's face. In the sequence (the scene) as a whole this is a critical moment, as the excitement created by the introduction of the radical new – not least in such microlevel interaction – seems to be heightened proportionally, by the unexpectedness of the “message”. *The more unexpected, that is the less it is possible to anticipate (to “mind read”, in Carrither's terminology) the response, the more uncertain the utterer will tend to be concerning how it will be received, and the more puzzled/surprised the receiver will be.* To Omar (and to the anthropologist) this is easily noticeable in Ola's puzzlement, but also in his struggling to formulate his answer/confirmation. The expectation and the corresponding uncertainty on Omar's part, as well as the attention and uncertainty about whether he will be able to make it right on Ola's part, seem to be core ingredients in heightening the excitement. While Carrithers may be right in his pointing to anticipation/mind reading as a foundational phenomenon in social interaction, the opposite also seems to play an important role; as the present

¹ Small children seem to be able to experience great joy in continuing repetition games like, for example, peekaboo over longer time periods. When they have reached the stage and status of youth, the demand for the new, for rougher action and more brute excitement seems to be considerably further developed.

analysis indicates, that the occurrence of the unanticipated must be regarded as a necessary element, representing an amount of newness and unpredictability it is hard to imagine any social relation doing/being without.

The puzzlement on Ola's face and the struggle to get it right may also perhaps be read as indicating that if the new and unfamiliar is perceived as too new and unfamiliar (that is not fitting any known or acceptable cognitive category), the message will be refused; communication breaks down, and dissonance will occur.

When Ola at last succeeds and Omar once more confirms his friend's willingness, effort and ability to show acceptance of the new, a new resting point is reached.

Now it is Ola's turn to bring in the new, this time in the shape of the odd and dissonant note, in line with the pattern of the new just outlined.

Creating symmetry: handling the power flow

We notice the role of symmetry in the sequences. In the peekaboo game the partners change roles as the "leader" in the game, thus mutually exchanging their different roles and agency as the game unfolds. This is also in line with the underlying pattern in Omar and Ola's dialogue: when the sequence starts anew it is the participant that followed in the previous sequence that leads (and initiates) the new, thus creating symmetry in the "power flow" of the dialogue.

We notice that in his finale the pattern in the basic cycle we have discerned is not completely fulfilled, as Ola does not seem to confirm Omar's version of the dissonant tone. Such confirmation has occurred twice in the two previous cycles, and it should not be unreasonable to assume that a mutual expectation has been generated that this will also occur in the last sequence. A possible interpretation of this observance is that such confirmation is no longer needed, exactly as a result of the mutual confidence that has been generated at this point. We have suggested an interpretation of Ola's introduction of the dissonant tone as an amplified continuation of the direction suggested by Omar's introduction of "oddness" in the shape of the Arabian row. If this is correct, the new and amplified puzzleness created by the dissonant tone may be seen as a comment to the Arabian row, as if saying: "If you dare introduce such an oddity, I may introduce something even odder, being utterly at odds with both the Arabian and the more normal scales we until now have been exposing". The very oddity of the tone creates the comic effect that releases the laughter of both participants, in this way making them both meet, uniting in what we may term the "small

transcendence” of laughter. This participation and giving in to the unity and simultaneity of common laughter may represent a transformation of what we previously have seen as acts of confirmation, exemplifying both the creativity of the event as a developing process, and the utmost importance of the emotional aspect in the phenomenon of resonance. Through this mutual acceptance and celebration of the messages – both the new and the known that the other has presented, culminating in the phenomenon of laughter that, according to Bakhtin, has an egalizing effect – symmetry and equality in the power flow of their relationship is once more underlined (Bakhtin 1984).

Summing up: resonance in the present –pointing to semiosis?

The phenomenon of resonance, as manifested in the scene/the dialogue analysed, seems to be closely connected with the following:

1. The search for the mutually known. The scene has analytically been deconstructed into a basic cycle of events that showed the tendency to repeat itself: X sends out an utterance from which a salient element is selected and repeated by Y. Then it is again repeated by X as a confirmation of Y’s effort to follow up what X just uttered. This has been understood as a search for points of resemblance and similarity, creating the *mutually known* and agreed upon by means of confirming repetition. If such similarities cannot be found, or their qualities are not appropriate (that is if they are experienced as irrelevant), dissonance will occur.

2. The generation of expectations and uncertainty. The dialogue was established and developed through utterances that generated an expectation of some response. This response was necessarily accompanied by uncertainty, in one way or another, concerning *if* the directed utterance would get its response, *what* it would contain, when it would occur, and, supposedly, also *how*. The uncertainty thus created seemed to have at least two main functions:

- A). To create excitement and thus *lust/joy* in so far as the dynamics of the dialogue contained an exchange of confirmation and uncertainty in sufficient proportions.
- B). To reveal and bring out the participants’ investments and excitement to each other, thus making this very *uncertainty a focal point of what is shared*.

The event oscillates between the raising of *excitement*, on the one hand, and the putting of excitement to *rest* by the occurrence of confirmation on the other, then building new excitement, thus starting the process anew. This oscillation seems to be central in generating the very energy (the *moving force*, so to speak) and dynamics in the event. This rhythm may stop the moment the expectations are not fulfilled to a sufficient degree, thus creating dissonance.

3. *Reaching the unknown from the known.* From the resting points of the process – in the shape of the achievement of a mutual experience of the known – the unknown could be introduced. This underlines that shared space is something that is created. From the points of resonance already reached, the new can be introduced to the sphere of the common known.

Resonance in social dialogue thus contains uncertainty in several aspects: On the one hand we have the uncertainty of the repeated, of finding similarities on the basis of previous experience (the “*old*” so to speak), that when realized means order, agreement, sharing and recognition. This corresponds largely to the participants’ ability to “mind read” each others responses, in Carrither’s terminology. If no such similarities can be found, resonance is not likely to occur and communication may break down.

On the other we find the uncertainty/excitement of the *new*, of discrepancy, disorder and the personal twist, that seems to have a special role in driving the dialogue forward. This will comprise messages, proposals, utterances that cannot be “mind read”, are not possible to anticipate, and that in their immediacy represent the opposite of repetition. If the amount and quality of newness is too large or too unfamiliar, and/or the amount and quality of similarity cannot be reached, dissonance will occur.

4. *Balancing the power flow.* Resonance seems to imply some sort of balance in the flow of power between participants. This manifests itself for example in the phenomenon of turn-taking found in dialogues ranging from the protodialogues analysed by recent research on newly born infants, as well as the present case. This balance in the *power* flow seems to provide the interlocutors with the minimum of mutual respect and feeling of safety and confidence that is required for the process of generating the enjoyment of the shared, and for the social meeting to acquire a positive emotional tone. If this balance is sufficiently upset/disturbed the result will be dissonance, working against the continuation of the relationship.

The event in the club's kitchen in the shape of the musical conversation between the two friends has been analysed as an almost primary example of the phenomenon of resonance in social dialogue; as we have seen a continual oscillation of utterances interpreted by the utterers in the dialogic movements between expectation and confirmation, leading to a corresponding shift between states of uncertainty, on the one hand, and of rest, on the other. But although we have focused in detail upon the generated psychological and social dynamics of the dialogue, there is nevertheless one aspect of the event that for our purposes is not adequately covered. This aspect, more precisely, concerns the social generation of meaning. While we have focused upon and discussed the "ifs", "hows" and "whens" of the web of social dynamics in the dialogue, we have not adequately investigated the "whats" – that is, the composite contents and meanings of the messages exchanged between the two boys. This requires a deeper consideration of what lies behind these messages. In other words: how did they become friends? What did that friendship mean to them? What did the messages, in a wider sense, mean to Omar and Ola in the shape of the power chords, the Arabian line, the dissonant tone, the laughter at the end?

To undertake such a task it may be fruitful to approach and explore their conversation as well as the past development of their friendship, as an example of semiosis. And according to the founding father of modern semiotics – the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), this would be a suitable task. As one of the foremost present experts on Peirce, Vincent Colapietro, has written, the phenomenon of the dialogue can be considered of primary importance to Peirce:

"In fact dialogue appears to be not only the telos but also the arche of Peirce's semiotic. In what is perhaps the most obvious example of semiotic activity (an ordinary conversation, what Peirce calls "a wonderfully perfect kind of sign-functioning") (...), there is unquestionably an exchange of signs. At any moment in such a conversation, the signs are uttered by someone and interpreted by someone else. The speaker is the source from which the signs arise and the listener is the place to which the signs are addressed. This appears to have been Peirce's paradigm of semiosis (...)" (Colapietro 1989:22)

Colapietro also emphasizes the possibilities for mutual transformation that such dialogic semiosis – that is communication – imply:

At the centre of communication there is a give-and-take, a process of mutual influence. By virtue of this form of semiosis, we are always already thrown beyond ourselves, beyond the actual here-and-now of our immediate situation and unique perspective. Hence, communication

is the process by which diverse perspectives fuse into more inclusive ones, but this fusion does not involve the obliteration of diversity. I respond as I to the other as other, but my response incorporates within itself the perspective of the other. (Colapietro 1995:36)

In other words *dialogue is a transformative practice by which the participants are mutually modified and modify themselves and their relationship to the external world by the exchange of the perspectives (impulses, messages) of the other* (see also Bakhtin in Morris 1994). Such openness to the perspectives of the other, we might add, will occur as far as the phenomenon of resonance is generated in the dialogue to a sufficient degree (we may perhaps say that without it the dialogue will not occur at all). And if such social resonance occurs over a larger timespan, the conditions for developing a more lasting social relation among the participants will exist. In this way, *dialogic resonance* may not only make the participants undergo a mutual transformation in a momentary present event; when resonance is sufficiently achieved over a larger span of time, the relation may as well transform into friendship, as in Omar's and Ola's case.

The five points summarised above, as analytical extracts of the phenomenon of social resonance, are primarily focused upon the dynamics of emotions, psychological states and messages that concern the immediate social relationship between the participants, as manifested in the described scene.

To acquire a fuller understanding of that scene and of the semiotic transformations in the relationship between the two boys – that also develop a stronger focus on the cognitive aspects of these processes – it is necessary, as previously noticed, to have a closer look upon the past that preceded it, that is “*to go beyond the actual here-and now of our immediate situation*”, as Colapietro put it. This is our task for the next chapter.

2 Inclusion, resonance and semiosis: the Arabian guitar line, friendship and youth cultures. Omar`s story Part II

In this chapter we will continue our analysis of “the kitchen scene” by exploring a series of events that preceded it. This will enable us to approach the relationship (friendship) between Omar and Ola as a process of semiosis. We will also explore further the role of resonance in such phenomena.

Resonance and semiosis: exploring the past in the present

We will start this exploration by considering three concepts – *the sign*, *the object* and *the interpretant* – that according to Peirce are of fundamental importance to understand the nature of semiosis. To understand these concepts we may start from his most elementary definition of the sign, as previously introduced:

“A sign, or a representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity.” (Peirce quoted in Colapietro 1989:5)

The sign in itself is simply regarded as the *medium* through which something – what he calls the object – is represented to somebody or to another sign (both covered by the term ‘interpretant’). According to Peirce`s theory, any difference/any sense impression (“that makes a difference”, according to Bateson`s definition of information) can function as a sign. These elements form the basic triad: sign – object – interpretant. It is especially the concept of the *interpretant* that seems to infuse Peirce`s approach to semiosis with so much analytical power and that some theorists have regarded as the most important part of his theory (see, for example, Colapietro 1989:107). In contrast to more semiological (de Saussurean) approaches – that primarily see the sign (the signifier) as something that stands for something else (the signified), implying that the relation to the interpreter and its role in semiosis is weakly related to – Peirce`s definition puts central weight upon this third element (see, for example, Barthes 1969; Bakthin/Voloshinov in Morris 1994; Colapietro on Eco 1989:31). It may also be regarded as the most multifunctional unit of the triad.

For an actor being exposed to a sign in a context (referred to by the expression “*in some respects or capacity*”), the interpretant can be understood as what Peirce termed a *judgement* of what (the object) the sign (the medium) represents in that context, that is the interpretation of it.¹ The sign addresses someone; that is, it releases/produces some sort of *reaction* in the actor that is exposed to it: “*The interpretant is the impact of the sign on some other; it is that which the sign qua sign generates.*” (Colapietro 1989:57). This reaction (the interpretation) as well may bring forth a new and perhaps more developed sign that is drawn into use to understand the first sign. In this way the interpretant can call forth a new sign that in turn becomes a new interpretant. The reactions to the first sign may, in complex cases of semiosis, in fact release a whole series of signs that, in so far they are used to understand/interpret the previous row of signs, can be regarded as interpretants. This means that any sign that is released by the first sign may function as an interpretant. A sign has thus a double function: it may both represent an object and generate an interpretant. Or, more precisely, in the process of interpretation new signs that represents new objects may be called into use in a more or less continual process. And in so far as the phenomenon of resonance/dissonance is to be understood as something that is brought forth (a reaction) while being exposed to a sign (or a complex of signs) – be it in the shape of a text, a situation, or a human being – it may be seen as being right in the centre of what Peirce has termed “the interpretant” (see below).

While Peirce introduced a variety of different types of interpretants, for our purposes at this stage it will be sufficient to briefly consider the following three (see Colapietro 1989:107; Dines Johansen & Larsen (eds.) 1994; Peirce 1994):

1. *The emotional interpretant.* This is the emotions the sign release, and may, in one way or another, be regarded as the emotional aspect of any interpretant.
2. *The energetic interpretant.* This is the (physical or mental) action the sign releases: for example, when a red traffic light mobilizes the driver to make the effort needed to use the brakes, or the mental efforts that are put into motion to search for the settling of the interpreting process (that may be reached temporarily or more permanently in the next stage 3, below, see Peirce quoted in Daniel 1984:293).

¹ Even though the capability to semiosis (to generate meaning), for Peirce, was not restricted to human beings, his approach will be applied here as a pool of conceptual tools for analyzing human semiosis (see Deely 1990:89-90).

3. *The logical interpretant.* This is the new sign or row of signs the first sign releases. Although the process of interpretation in theory may continue eternally, for human beings it tends to stop when the process of interpretation has become *a habit*. This habit is what Peirce terms *the ultimate logical interpretant*. “*The ultimate logical interpretant is some general pattern of coping that emerges out of some actual series of struggles; this interpretant is, in a word, a habit*” (Colapietro 1989:58). Such habits can thus be regarded as dispositions to react to certain situations in certain contexts in a certain way (this seems to correspond to Bourdieu’s conceptualization of “habitus”, as a “system of dispositions”, Bourdieu 1990). It is here important to notice that the logical interpretant may contain both emotional and energetic interpretants as well, in so far as they are brought up to participate as new signs in the process of interpretation. The logical interpretant will thus cover a wide range of reactions, including the emotional, physical and cognitive aspects of these.

These categories may be illustrated by applying them to a small sequence from the dialogue analysed in the previous chapter:

When Omar plays the Arabian row of tones they become a sign (or a sequence of signs, a sentence) addressed at Ola; this brings forth a series of reactions in its addressee. The puzzledness that Ola exhibits may be interpreted as an expression of his emotional interpretant; this seems to be a visual sign of the emotions aroused as a consequence of being exposed to the sign. The physical and mental effort we notice when he struggles to “answer the question” by repeating the line is the energetic interpretant. What we know the least about is the logical interpretant of this act, the sign or eventually the row of signs that are involved in the more developed and positioned interpretations undertaken by our two subjects. This underlines the most important difficulty with studying semiosis in human behaviour in general – that is the problem of understanding and getting access to *the subjective experiences* of our informants. This difficulty is, of course, also linked to the fact that, from the viewpoint of Peirce’s theories, the person is one of the most complex signs in the semiosphere. In our analysis of Omar’s and Olan relationship, one of the most interesting questions is:

What do they mean (signify) to each other? Which are the chains of signs that are evoked in Ola when his friend presents a sign that obviously seems to be closely connected with his identity as Iraqi? And what does such a statement (sign) mean to its utterer (Omar)?

The phenomenon of resonance, as previously mentioned, seems to be very closely connected to the processes that are implied in Peirces concept of the interpretant. Resonance unfolds when a communicative gesture/utterance/message from a source (for example a person) brings forth a more or less resembling answer in another person; such “bringing forth” may be seen as the “impact of the sign on some other”, which is the very definition of the interpretant. This impact, as covered in the concepts of both “interpretant” and “resonance”, has both an emotional (the emotional interpretant) and a cognitive (the logical interpretant) pole, that in both instances can be assumed to be matters of degree. And in so far as the expression of resonance can also be manifested in bodily gestures (as certainly was the case in Omar`s and Olas guitar playing dialogue), the energetic interpretant will also have its possible equivalent in the phenomenon of resonance. This brings up the question:

What is the relationship between Peircean theory of the interpretant and the theory of resonance as we here have presented and developed it from the starting point in Wikans suggestions? In what ways can the phenomena that these theories encircle be seen as different or alike? And, most important: in what ways may or may not the juxtaposition of these theories be developed as a tool that will enable us to understand the manifestations of social life under consideration?

In the following we will explore these questions. I will argue that a focus on resonance will be especially helpful for us to examine *the experiential aspects of semiosis* more closely.

If the dialogue we explore here – as a “piece of the present” – also should be seen as a result of the transformative practices of the boys` dialogues and experiences, that have been transformed into a relationship deserving the label “friendship”, and if *friendship can be regarded as a plateau of trust, stemming from past experiences that reverberate into the present*, then an exploration of these past experiences will be necessary to get a more developed understanding of the scene. If the past can be compared to an iceberg, it is such events – like the one that took place in the club`s kitchen that lazy afternoon – that at any given moment make up the top of this iceberg. To achieve a more thorough understanding of what is going on at this top, it is necessary to focus attention upon what has been going on underneath it, that are brought into resonance, so to speak, in the present of a social relationship.

On this background this chapter will have the following two purposes:

1. To continue our analysis of the “kitchen event” by exploring the relationship and the life worlds of the participants as these have developed in some salient events that took place in their more distant past.
2. To use the exploration of these events (both past and present) to develop tools to understand these empirical processes by investigating the relationship between the theory of resonance and the theory of Peircean semiotics.

But before we consider the nature of Omar`s and Ola`s common experiences, we will have a closer look at some events that have been especially important for Omar, who is our story`s main character.

Ola, a not yet introduced Black Metal fan named Knut, and the broader context they all participated in will be presented later on. Only after this has been done, will we be equipped to undertake a more thorough analysis of what this musical dialogue – as an expression of Omar`s and Ola`s relationship – perhaps was ‘really’ all about.

Omars early years

Five years after I observed the guitar twangs of the two friends, I am meeting Omar anew for an interview. Here I get to know more about his growing up in Rudenga.

Omar arrived with his family from Iraq in 1980 when he was four. His father is a refugee from the regime of Saddam Hussein. The family lived for some years in a country in the Middle East, but this also turned out to be impossible. I asked Omar how his parents reacted when they arrived in Norway:

My father disliked being in Norway from the start. But he had to get away, otherwise he would end up in jail, and Norway was simply the most suitable country to come to due to its refugee politics at that time. He felt it was very different cultures. Here you work and give half of your earnings to the state. He still thinks this is rubbish (in Norwegian: “tull”). And in Norway material matters are always in the centre. He didn`t like that. In the beginning he was also very concerned with racism. He was sure Norwegians were saying racist things to him. Probably because he didn`t know the language. But it was kind of his whole attitude... I mean, if you come to a new country and you don`t want to integrate... You`re just sitting doing your own thing, your own time, your own religion, your own way... I think he was confused because he felt he was interrupted in the life he had led and the things he had to do in Iraq. It was like something he couldn`t continue to the end. Then they suddenly arrived in a new country. He didn`t know what to do or how to make a living.

It is easy to forget that the situation as a refugee implies that force, involuntariness and accidents are decisive for the process that leads to moving to another country; by comparison; migration tends to be motivated from a wish for better possibilities for work, education, and so on. It is likely to assume that, in a situation as a refugee, confusion and despair will much more easily develop. Perhaps it was such things that caused the confusion and resistance Omar observed that his father felt – against ways of being and differences in the new country where the family found itself, – and that their son reacted against.

For immigrant families, and especially for refugees, the very act of moving to a new place of residence will often be experienced as what we may term a “critical event”. This term is also used by Veena Das to conceptualise certain historical events in the history of contemporary India, such as the partition of the country, into one Muslim (Pakistan) and one Hindu (India) part, and the industrial disaster in Bhopal (gas leakage that killed and crippled several thousand people). Such events, of course, had huge consequences for the nations and peoples involved. For Das these are events in which “*new modes of action came into being which redefined traditional categories*” (Das 1995:6). A related but somehow more moderate concept can be found in what Giddens has termed “fateful moments”:

“Fateful moments are those when individuals are called on to take decisions that are particularly consequential for their ambitions, or more generally for their future lives. (...) Fateful moments are times when events come together in such a way that an individual stands, as it were, at a crossroads in his existence; or where a person learns of informations with fateful consequences.” (Giddens 1992a:112-113)

Giddens uses the concept to cover, for example, deciding to get married or to separate, taking examinations, going on strike, deciding to opt for a particular apprenticeship or course of study, winning a large sum of money in a lottery, and so on (ibid). He seems to be more concerned with individual choices than Das, who seems to be primarily concerned with events produced by external circumstances. For our purposes I will include both these aspects. I here prefer to use the term ‘critical events’ to cover *events that seem to have been of special importance in the lives of certain actors, for example in bringing forth new directions, experiences, knowledge or points of view to the ones involved. It includes both events initiated primarily by the individual actor himself and events put into motion by forces external to the experiencing actors (see also Falk Moore on events in Borofsky (ed.) 1994:362- 374).*

Both leaving the country of residence as refugees, and being exposed to the often new and unfamiliar ways in a new country, can, of course, in most families, be experienced as such critical events, bringing forth great changes to the ones involved, not least to the young. Being in such a situation will also, of course, require intense activity to make sense of the world.

The term *semiosis* is often applied to conceptualize the creation of meaning in what seems to be a relatively narrow or ‘technical’ sense – in terms of concerning the relationships between signified and signifier in the Saussurean version, or, as in Peirce’s version, between sign, object and interpretant. I will strongly argue that processes of *semiosis can also be understood in a much wider sense, that is as no less than the process whereby man makes meaning of his existence and his relationship to the world.*¹ As previously noted, refugee or immigrant families that have just moved to a new country are in acute need of making sense of their new situation: finding work; coming to terms with the memories of what they have left behind; finding appropriate ways of communicating with the new neighbours; relating to new ways of being; raising their children in an appropriate way, etcetera. It is also in this wider sense that the story below can be approached as a process of semiosis.

From Omar’s position in his family’s continually and evolving interplay with actors and circumstances in their new situation, his parents, and especially his father, played a central role.

As we will see later on, Omar several times underlines that he feels ‘most Norwegian’. The process that oriented him in this direction seemed to have started quite early. I asked him if he felt his father’s negative attitudes as problematic, because it seemed like this would become a significant source for opposition on behalf of the son:

¹ Daniel defines semiosis as follows: ”The universe is perfused with signs and the activity of signs in what we call semeiosis - with a nod to of deference to the Greek semeiosis, “sign”. Semeiosis describes the activity of giving, the receiving, the transforming and the disseminating of signs. What differentiates anthroposemeiosis from semeiosis in general is that it is involving human beings` knowledge or awareness of the relation of signification (...). In fact, it defines what it is to be human.” (Daniel 1996:121). One of Peirces definitions reads as follows: ”All dynamical action, or action of brute force, physical or psychical, either takes place between two subjects... or at any rate is a resultant of such actions between pairs. But by ‘semiosis’ I mean, on the contrary, an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs.” (Peirce in Colapietro 1989:1)

Yes, he had strong influence upon me. I still feel that I do and think much like him, even if I don't want it. It's not that he wanted me to be religious. The most important was that he wanted me to follow Arabian ways of life. It is a bit hard to say what this is since it was happening so long ago... The pressure upon me had to do with not eating pork, not being together with my mates; he rather wanted me to have Arabian friends. That's the way it was in the beginning. But I thought it was a very bad proposal. He knew it didn't work after a while. Then it became more like the ordinary ways: coming home at the right times, not being with the wrong folks. (...)

Even if it is easier for Omar in retrospect to see his parent's demands for 'following Arabian ways of life' as a 'bad proposal' and to see his rejection of this as a 'rebellion' against his father, it still seems he has experienced this as a contradiction, even while he was quite young:

I'm not curious about the country of my parents. It's not as if I was adopted... I really have integrated myself. That's the way it has been since I was quite young. I wanted to become as Norwegian as possible. I wanted to get away from the religion and all that. (...) My father is not religious, but he is not against religion either. I don't care much for religion, though. It is something that guides your life, something that tells you how to live. But the thing is also that Islam, our religion, is very hard to live in accordance with here. And as far as I'm concerned, when you arrive at a foreign country, you have to learn the right rules to live by in that country, and live by them. I have never seen any proof of God's existence. It is just living your life for some things that perhaps are coming in your 'next' life (...) It was a period I wanted to counteract my father as much as possible. It sure was a rebellion against him. (...)

A: You wanted to go against the religion?

I remember when I came here, I prayed each night. 'The superstition' was very strong when I was a little boy. I had the faith of my childhood until I was seven or eight. But then I saw the differences. I saw people managing quite well even if they did not follow the rules of Islam. Why should I then follow them? When it is that obvious that you didn't need them? I remember I read the Koran each night to avoid nightmares. If I didn't do that, the Koran said, something bad would happen to me. But then one night I tried without the Koran. And it turned out quite well. I understood then that nothing would happen at all. So that's when it all started... After a while I avoided it completely.

In spite of his father's rather relaxed relationship to religion, his orientation away from what his parents represented seems to be connected with his relation to his faith. At this point in Omar's story we have a hunch that his rejection of the religion was the start of important changes in his orientation

in the cultural landscape he inhabited. For a small child moving to another country with his parents, the religious practices and beliefs embedded in the areas of their origin – in so far they here do play an important role – will tend to be inscribed in the body as a source of identity and not least continuity with attitudes and ways of being that were practiced in the country left behind. Even if Omar`s parents were not especially religious, we may assume that religion nevertheless could be perceived as a sign representing these ways of being – in line with the corrections of the orthodoxy of this continuum of signs – that the parents wished their son to follow. But while it would be much easier for both children and parents to read ‘proofs’ (for example in the shape of signs of what might be conceived as “punishment”) and confirmations of what happens to persons that break important religious rules in countries where Islam plays an important part, it is much more difficult to show and ‘point to’ such proofs and confirmations in places marked by other religious or profane orientations. Here it is, on the contrary, the absence of such confirmations that the young Omar registers in his environment. And the situation of his family provides favourable possibilities to question the truth of religion. He sees ‘people managing quite well without following the rules of Islam’, and he perceives this as a sign that says that something is not right. So, as a seven or eight year old one night, as a more or less deliberate experiment, he avoids reading the Koran, as a kind of personal ‘reality test’ of the religion. The punishment, in the shape of a nightmare or other terrible things, does not occur, as it (according to the grown-ups) should. This can be understood as a critical event in Omar`s early years in the new country, in so far as it seemed to make up a personally generated challenge to Omar`s faith, and, as the event became important in the larger process that culminated in his refusal of the religion, and that points further towards his inclination to reject the continuum of signs represented by salient parts of his parent`s orientations.

But such critical events in his development must also be seen as connected with other parts of Omar`s life at the time, where contact with other children in the environment seemed to play an important role. He attended the kindergarten in Rudenga at a very early age. Here he met Ola, his future friend, for the first time:

Ola was in fact the first person I got to know in Rudenga. We were not old when we first met. I think it must have been the first or the second year in kindergarten. He hadn’t started yet. We were just shitty kids (in Norwegian: “drittunger”). We were bicycling or something, I remember. Then we met, started to talk, and after that started to play with each other. Something like that, I think. Later on Ola attended the same kindergarten as myself.

Ola was born and raised in Rudenga where his family had already lived for several years. Both his parents have working class jobs and represent a group of inhabitants that has traditionally been strongly represented in the area. The relationship that Omar initiated with Ola represents in other words the participation in another public sphere than his parents. He did what most kids do when you place them close to each other; they start to play, do things together, developing friendships. And when I ask if they sometimes talked about the fact that Omar had his background in another country, the answer is no. Their friendship developed without the differences in their respective family background (the continuum of signs they were associated to) being brought up as relevant in the relations between them, at least as Omar sees this afterwards. This public sphere of the children could probably add an important possibility of comparison that contributed to his 'discovery' (his interpretation of his surroundings, so to speak) that it was in fact possible to live outside the orders and directions of Islam without it having consequences for the implied as it should have had according to the teachings of Islam and eventually his parents. Breaking away from religion is, of course, not a necessary result of such 'discoveries'. These could have been explained with the help of the often remarkable creativity that exists within a religious frame or practice. But for Omar this was not the case. For him, his 'discovery' seemed to work as a sort of opening that made it easier to give in to ways of being, points of interest and communities that, among others, 'the Norwegians' had to offer. A new world was opening up, and Omar's 'unveiling' of the lack of consequences for the ones who did not live according to the rules of Islam, seemed to have become central in unlocking this process of associating himself with an alternative continuum of signs.

By participating in the public sphere of the children, and possibly especially through the friendship he developed with Ola, Omar got strong impulses from the worlds outside the sheltered sphere of his family. At a very early stage of his growing up, it seems like Omar was experiencing the tension between, on the one hand, the parents orientations, and the public sphere of the children, perhaps felt as representing 'the Norwegian', on the other, as strongly present. Contrary to the dissatisfaction of his parents, and their partly negative attitudes towards the family's situation as refugees in a foreign country, their explicit scepticism against their son being too much together with his friends and their preference for him to be with 'Arabian' friends exclusively, Omar decided early 'to become Norwegian'. He thus was inclined to refuse the orthodoxies of his father and to move further towards a rejection of this axis of orientation. Thus he associated more explicitly with the Norwegians. The force in the axis of orientation – its

point of gravity, so to speak – shifted from one such continuum to the other. For Omar the identification with this newly discovered world outside the family was obviously stronger – at least at that time – than the identification with what his father and his mother represented.

These developments seem to indicate the building up of certain chains of associations that cluster around two different continua of signs. I term these elements ‘chains of associations’, because the cognitive looseness that this expression implies seems to be more adequate for the phenomenon as it is reasonably assumed to be experienced subjectively by the actors involved (see below, and chapter 11 “Identification in the multicultural...”). The first of these continua (or complex of signs, chains of associations) seems to be associated with the parents, the country of origin (Iraq), the Arabian ways of living, Arabian friends, the Arabian language (as we shall see below), Islam, the Koran, the custom of not eating pork, night prayers, his father’s negative attitudes towards the new country, a certain exclusivity etcetera. On the other hand, Omar seemed to experience a contrasting continuum of signs associated with the world outside his family, where the Koran did not work, where people could live without regard for the rules of Islam without any visible consequences, where several of his young friends lived, and among whom his most popular playmate, Ola, in fact was the one he knew the best. And even though there were also some other Muslim families in the area, with children of Omars age, it was, to my knowledge, Ola that was his preferred playmate.

Thus, it is in the direction of this second continuum of signs that Omar gradually seemed to identify, even from a very early age.

This process of identification was greatly strengthened when the milieu among the young Rudenga dwellers was lit by a new and fascinating (“third”) continuum of signs, a source for appealing and useable signs and interpretations, for community and expressivity, more specifically; the phenomenon called ‘breakdance’.

To develop a better understanding of the situation seen from Omars position, as well as the development of his relationship to Ola, it is necessary to have a closer look into what these new youth cultural tradition was all about.

Breakdance & Hip Hop – the first wave of a transnational youth culture

The style of dancing known as “breakdance” was closely connected with the youth cultural communities that subsumed under the name of Hip Hop, and emanated from the inhabitants in the ghettos of New York in the 70s (see for

example Rose 1994; Fernando Jr. 1994; George 1998; Ogg & Upshal 1999). Hip Hop was here often considered as an attempt to change the attitudes in areas where gang wars, violence, crime and drug problems were occurring daily. One of the founding fathers of Hip Hop (in addition to the Jamaican born immigrant DJ Clive Campbell, also known as Kool Herc) is said to be a former gang member that took 'Afrika Bambaataa' as his artist name (Ogg & Upshal 1999). According to interviews with Bambaataa, he got the idea to form an organization he named "The Universal Zulu Nation" that was to be open to all people regardless of culture, religion or skin color, after having seen the film "Zulu" from 1964 (directed by Michael Caine), about the African "Zulu tribe" (*The Source*, no. 50, 1993; Ogg & Upshal 1999:24). Bambaataa wanted the inhabitants of the ghetto to stop fighting, and to work for the improvement of relations between the dwellers, and to counteract violence and racism. Not only African Americans, but also youth with origins in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and several other actual groups of immigrants, would here be offered an opportunity to work for their common rights, and especially against white racism.

According to the ideological fundamentals of the Zulu Nation, the Bible, the Koran and all prophetic books should be considered equal, and the different religions were seen as vehicles for "Freedom, Justice and Equality for all", which is the expressed goal of the organization. It is said that several of the big artists of early Hip Hop were members of this organization. This is only one example of antiracism and collaboration across cultural and religious orientations, that was part of the ideas that accompanied and were central to early Hip Hop (see *The Source* 1993:49).

Both music, the talk-song style known as "rapping", breakdance and graffiti comprised the core activities that in various ways commented upon and became a counterforce to crime and the social problems in these areas.¹ It is said that Bambaataa's Zulu Nation has been of great importance in assembling the different expressions of these cultural practices under the youth cultural tradition that was called Hip Hop (see *the Source* no. 50, 1993; Fernando Jr. 1994; Ogg and Upshal 1999).

In accordance with this story of origin, it was not uncommon to focus upon the social problems of these inner city areas in the 'talk-singing' of the

¹ This is reflected in a quote from one of the early breakdancers, Kid Freeze " *You choose your weapon – either the microphone, the turntables, the spray can or the floor as a B-boy.*" (Ogg and Upshal 1999) . The reference to turntables refers to the practice of 'scratching', that is making rhythmic noises by manipulating turntables of vinyl recordplayers, as well as DJ-ing – selecting and composing elements from different vinyl records into new artistic expressions. B-boying is another word for breakdancing.

new rap-music that grew up. Unemployment, poor housing, unstable families, crime, etcetera, were themes that were often commented upon in the early phase. Around 1982 this tendency to perform politicized and critical comments became more explicit, especially as manifested in the song called “The Message” performed by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. Here is an excerpt from the words:

*Broken glass everywhere
People pissing on the stairs
You know they just don't care
I can't take the smell, can't take the noise
Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice
Rats in the front room, roaches in the back
Junkies in the alley with a baseball hat
I tried to get away but I couldn't get far
'Cause the man with the tow truck repossessed my car
Don't push me 'cause I'm close to the edge
I'm trying not to loose my head
Ah hu hu hu hu
It's like a jungle sometimes, it makes me wonder
How I keep from going under*

“*The Source*” comments the publishing of “The Message” as follows:

“From this point it was clear that Rap could be used as a powerful medium from which social concerns could be addressed. (...) A virtual laundry list of problems plaguing the ghetto (apathy, despair, black-on-black violence, police harassment, unemployment), “The Message” served as a political blueprint for a Hip Hop Nation just coming of age.”

(The Source no 50, 1993:55)

Instead of the gangs fighting against each other, using violence and criminal actions, it is said that in this early period one rather challenged the antagonist by dancing competitions, graffiti or rap. In one of the earliest articles about the breakdance phenomenon in 1981, Sally Banes writes in *The Village Voice*:

“Breaking is a public arena for the flamboyant triumph of virility, wit and skill. In short, of style. Breaking is a way of using your body to inscribe your identity on streets and trains, in parks and high school gyms. It is the physical version of two favourite forms of street rhetoric, the taunt and the boast.”

(Cited in Fernando Jr. 1994:17-18)

Competition, boasting and what Norwegian Hip Hop'ers call 'dissing' (from the English expression for putting someone into dis-respect) were also salient features of the profile of Hip Hop in Norway. (According to storytellers among both Norwegian and American representatives of this youth culture, there was also a strong and critical attitude towards both alcohol and drugs in the early period. The problems that this had created for the ghetto were considered as one of white America's ways of suppressing coloured people of all kinds.)

In the first half of the 80s Hip Hop was discovered by commercial interests, resulting in this youth cultural tradition becoming a big transnational trend.

At this time the wave also reached Norway. According to informants among early Norwegian Hip Hop'ers, this development was strongly stimulated by the film "*Beat Street*" (look below) that in the after time has achieved cult status within certain Hip Hop fans. Even if the film is criticized, by some hard core insiders, for being too much of a "Hollywood movie" and not authentic enough, especially concerning graffiti, it was nevertheless of great importance for creating interest for Hip Hop among a larger audience. It especially struck a chord among the younger age groups. In Norway at this time it was not uncommon seeing numerous 12-14 year-old boys who were attempting breakdance, wearing the obligatory cap with the brim pointing backwards.

I suggest that Hip Hop as a youth cultural tradition, when it reached our informants in Rudenga, thus should be considered as a new and important continuum of signs that gradually became a central element in the transnational cultural landscape to which youngsters, especially in many parts of the Western world, were exposed.

But if a sign is intrinsically linked to the reactions (the interpretants) it releases in the actors exposed to it, it becomes obvious that such 'reactions' (understood as expressions of various kinds of knowledge based on previous experiences) are differently and unequally distributed among different actors (see for example Barth 1994). For a person who has grown up in the ghettos of New York, where a variety of practices, messages, aesthetics and attitudes developed into this sign, it obviously stands for something other than what it means to a youngster in a country far from the context where it originated. In addition, as with all signs, *they are read by infusing the more collective readings with local perspectives, that in the extreme end also include the more or less unique, personal and even private perspectives from concrete positioned actors.* As the interpretant (the act of interpretation) in semiotic processes will vary strongly in different subjects and corresponding posi-

tions, this charges the process of semiosis not only with a necessary possibility of uncertainty, as Deely strongly underlines (error, misinterpretation, see Deely 1990:47; as we also have seen in our chapter on resonance/dissonance), but also, as we soon shall see, with *creativity*.

But by using the sign, its users are in several respects brought closer to it's history, as the association chains connected with the sign develop and are brought into life in the interplay between all these levels (history of origin, local uses on the basis of both collective and personal experience). In the following we will explore some of these processes as they were manifested in Rudenga.

“Beat Street” and breakdance hits Rudenga: seeing oneself in the sign

Omar and Ola were not older than nine or ten years old when this early breakdance wave reached the blocks at Rudenga in the later part of the 80s. When informants talk about this period, it is especially Ola they remember as the breakdancer with a capital B. This results probably from the fact that Omar, after a short period, moved from Rudenga and therefore became less visible in the neighbourhood. Most parts of this presentation will therefore primarily be based on Ola's telling. In the following we will explore the role this form of dancing played in Rudenga in this period, using Olan story as our starting point.

To understand the role of breakdance in the public sphere of youth in Rudenga, it is necessary to know more about the local history of the place.

In the last half of the eighties, Rudenga was a stigmatized area. The youth club had severe problems with drug use, both outside and inside the localities of the club, where a partly criminal and in many ways 'heavy' clientele were present. Many of the youth, from Rudenga itself and from the surrounding areas, tell me that their parents at this time forbid them to visit the center and the club itself because of this. (How it “really” was is of course hard to tell, but according to what grown-up Rudenga dwellers, social workers, school teachers and several youth both from and outside Rudenga say, there seems to be no reason to doubt this.) Several informants tell me that Rudenga at this time was labeled “the slum” by dwellers in the surrounding areas, and they express that this label was also strongly present for the Rudenga dwellers themselves. But this stigma also implied a certain ambivalence, as is probably the case for many similar areas; on the one hand, the place and its inhabitants were looked down upon; on the other hand, they also enjoyed a certain respect as “the tough guys”.

Around 1985-86, the afore mentioned film, *Beat Street* (published in 1984, see Fernando JR 1994), was immensely popular at Rudenga. The film portrays a group of African American and Latin youth that have breakdance and graffiti as central activities. One of the older Rudenga boys, Jens (twenty three, Norwegian born parents, interviewed in 1994), who was a faithful club member during the first breakdance-wave, tells how he reacted to the film:

‘I think it really struck here on the East end because the environment in the film resembles the environment here, the large, grey blocks, the red train that rolled through the valley – it was like the Bronx; you could recognize it... It was a glorification of working class culture sort of; that’s why I liked it when I first saw it, I guess. I felt it was a realistic film... where I could identify on several levels. (...) The only problem was that the persons in the film were blacks, or Puerto Ricans or something, but we looked at ourselves like blacks too, a little bit like in Ingvar Ambjørnsens book *‘White Niggers’*...

Anthropologist: ...you mean because Rudenga had this negative stamp, and you were some sort of “outcasts” or something...?

Jens: Yes, exactly. Because, you know, we are very proud of it too...

Ambjørnsen is a popular writer among Norwegian youth, and the book, to which Jens refers deals with a group of young social outcasts in urban Norway. The romanticism around being outcasts on the fringe of society, for example in the form of hobos, gypsies, drifters, and also reflected in expressions like ‘rock’n roll niggers’ is of course in line with a long tradition in rock’n’roll as noted by, among others, Berkaak 1993, Walser 1993. Similar themes are also found in Rap and Hip Hop, especially in the more recent genre called Gangsta Rap (from around 1990) where the celebration of gangster mythology and criminal “geto boys” teasing the police are important ingredients. While Jens might romanticize around this ‘White nigger’ concept, and is probably more explicit in his identification than others, there is no doubt that this film and the whole breakdance wave really hit the young inhabitants here (see also Sernhede 2001; Røgils 2001 i *Social Kritik* 2001 no.74). According to informants, the dancing, the clothes, the music and the general style was something almost ‘everyone’ at a certain age was involved in at the time.

The film seemed to work like a mirror, offering practices that the youth of Rudenga could explore and use, especially because the place and milieu in the film resembled and therefore could be perceived as ‘pointing’ to their place, resonating with their experiences. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility for other areas that in no way resemble the places in the film

to be inspired by it. But this case of such strong resemblances probably made Rudenga youth particularly receptive to it, and constituted the '*pores*', so to speak, that helped channel the images and the 'aura' of the film into the concrete life-world of the young dwellers. In this way Rudenga can be said to be perceived as 'impregnated' with the images of the film. Having made this connection, stimulated by the breakdance wave in general (for example on Sky Channel shows of that time), and the recognizing of these resemblances, the young inhabitants of the place were supplied with a repertoire of possible practices to develop further. Picking up a commodity (a sign) and using it as vehicle for exploring identity is, of course, not a passive act, and in this 'empowered' use of a sign, as Fiske would have termed it, lies also the possibility of re-constructing the place in different directions, for example, as we shall see below, by the practice of dancing (Fiske 1990).

The finding of these '*pores of resemblance*', are, of course, nothing else than the result of the experience of resonance, as the film was used to interpret their own situation. "Use" in this sense must be understood as a reaction to the sign (an impact being produced/released by being exposed to it), which pulled the young dwellers into it, so to speak, by the power of resonance.

Bourdieu's term "illusio" (also explained as "investment") seems to cover the encompassment of such a sign continuum, here approached as the process of acknowledging significance to a 'social game' (Bourdieu 1998, for a more thorough discussion, see chapter 4 "Subjectivity, self and identification").

To get a grasp of how the illusio of breakdance and Hip Hop became so strong as it hit the young inhabitants in Rudenga, the correct question will of course be:

What made these youngsters acknowledge so much significance in this social game? Why did they seem to feel so strongly that it was worthwhile and deserved playing? Why was so much invested into it?

The answers to these questions are found, nowhere else than in the mechanisms of the phenomenon of resonance. The red tube, the grey blocks, the working-class based and multiethnic milieu: in short – the reasons for their investment were the recognition of these very resemblances. In addition there was the more *emotionally charged burden of living in a stigmatized area, labeled "the slum" by the surroundings*. When the film presents the "cool" dancers, dj's and grafittimakers of such a neighbourhood, their presence, joys, skills and attitudes also point to the very possibility of transforming, not only the places presented in the film, but also to similar possibilities for the place where the young audiences in Rudenga spent their

lives. The film as a medium for interpretation (for *reacting/connecting by resemblances*, so to speak) thus provided the youngsters with an alternative way of seeing and interpreting themselves, of presenting themselves and transforming the image of their own dwelling place to the outside world. An important part of this composite picture for identification was, as we soon shall see, not least the joys that we now will explore through the reported experiences of our young actors – more specifically: the joys of dancing.

Transforming the place: The Hot Rockers

Ola's and Omar's dancing group was started in the wake of the attraction of this film, the new dance, the visual practice of graffiti and the music. Ola tells us about how their dancing group was formed:

We already knew each other. But Omar attended a class above me, and at that time we were not as much together as we had been when we were smaller. I had just about started to try dancing. I noticed that Omar also was dancing in the breaks in the corridors at school. I started to rehearse more seriously myself. And you know, he had so much good music. He had the largest transportable “roarer” (cassette player) in Rudenga. So that was it! We started to dance together and became really good friends. Then we formed the Hot Rockers.

When I ask him if there is some special incident he remembers from this period, he describes the following episode from one of the earliest competitions he and his young breakdance trio were participating in:

‘We came from Rudenga; we came from the “slum”, and we lived in the blocks. Everyone looked down on us. In the beginning we had only simple training clothes, and everyone else were dancing with alike dresses and shoes and everything. We were meeting them; we were only tiny kids – I was youngest. We were standing there, and everyone looked at us laughing. Then we started to dance, and soon everyone was completely shocked; you see, they thought we simply were the best. That was great, that was really great’

Anthropologist ... so the fact that when you who both came from this place with a bad reputation and succeeded, that was especially important?

Ola: Oh yes, that was really great. Sort of “see the slum in action”, you know. You got lots of respect from that. When I was walking the streets in the city (Oslo), people knew about me, asking how the dancing was going. (...) Na, that was really a golden age...

This is, of course, also an example of nostalgia for this “golden age”, the times ‘when we were really kings’, as Ola himself put it later in the interview. But if one accepts some truth in it, it is possible to see that for Ola and his breakdance group, getting approval for their dancing was a way of getting prestige for the boys from ‘the slum’. They were showing their skills to the outside world, and in this way, gaining respect both for themselves and for the place they came from. The practice centred on a musical genre was, in other words, challenging the stigma, and thereby, having the potential to contribute to re-constructing and to some degree changing the public image and values attributed to the place and its inhabitants. A place is a social space, a sign loaded with memories, and with association chains that are triggered when you are exposed to it. Being from a bad place and being good at something can, in some instances, be one step towards giving that place a new ‘aura’ that is prestigious, or at least, carrying the satisfaction of surprise, as when the “boys from the slum” turn out to be best. Such *critical events* (as the winning of the competition referred by Ola) would be of great importance for the young actors that had experienced the stigma present at Rudenga at that time, strongly resonating with the need to change that stigma, that was also transmitted to themselves.

Seen in connection with the reactions to the *Beat Street* film, and the receptivity to practices and ethos provided by the film that Jens exemplifies, this key story of Omar and Ola can be seen as another example of how expressions of a cultural tradition can be used in processes of transforming semiosis; their dancing team exemplifies a practice that uses the *poetic force of expression* in this transnational genre, to counteract the negative stigma of the place. Dick Hebdige termed the use of signs by the punks as a “semiotic guerilla war” (a term lent from Umberto Eco), where exactly a redefinition of existing signs played a significant role (Hebdige 1993:105). The breakdance milieu in Rudenga can be said to have had a similar function; breakdance was not only about the empowered use of a transnational youth cultural genre and the development of a new symbolic language, but also about reconstructing the place itself. Like in guerilla warfare they took advantage of features in the environment, in the shape of the existing stigma, that were turned by being connected with symbolic practices that had positive connotations to a larger youth audience. In this way such events and the according practices became points of orientation that turned the attitudes of the surrounding areas in the direction of more respect and prestige for the place and its young inhabitants.

This use of dance and music to transform social stigma has obvious parallels in the role of the early breakdance in the milieus of immigrant- and

African American youngsters where it had its origins. Artists like The Sugarhill Gang, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Afrika Bambaataa, Kool Herc, LL Kool J among others, were the sign producers of the original Hip Hop, that in resonance and dialogue with youth in these city parts put the whole thing into motion. When the (complex of) signs in this way literally were sent out to the world, so to speak, the recipients could continue the production (the semiosis) and incorporate it (or reject it, modify it) and in different ways connect it to what had relevance in both the private and social universes of the users, as this example show.

But the use of this interpretant was not strictly limited to the cognitive aspects of recognition – even if this played an important part. As we have seen, it was also fused with strong emotional reactions and joys, especially as it was taken further by the success of Omar’s and Ola’s dancing team. In the wake of these developments the practice of dancing must be regarded as a cardinal example of what Peirce would term an “energetic interpretant” that had emerged from the larger sign of Hip Hop. The involvement in this process of semiosis included a whole “package” of signs and actions in the shape of terminology, clothing, training, grafitti, especially on the expert level that Omar and Ola exemplified, as we will see below. In the larger continuum of signs, the content of the term “package” seems to represent the densification of signs that often tend to cluster around the position of the orthodoxies.

“When we were Kings” – knowledge, style and bodily practices in “the golden age”

After having won both larger and more local “breakdance battles” (that is competitions between two antagonists -individuals or groups; see, for example, Ogg& Upshal 1999) that took place at schools, discotheques, clubs and street corners, one of the bigger breakdance stars (in Oslo) joined the group. Earlier on he had been a member of a group that was sponsored by a well-known manufacturer of training clothes. When he joined, Hot Rockers got a similar deal:

We got everything for free, clothes, shoes, everything. We could just call any sport shop and tell them that we were from Hot Rockers, and that we would like to have some clothes, then it was like ...Oh yes, just come over and fetch them, ... things like that. We were really kings at that time, you know...

The training gear was only one part of a more encompassing style that also found expression in words and specialist terms. Much of this was terms for exercises of different degrees of difficulties that Ola compares to the systems of judging for gymnastics where the exercises have different “moments”. In the following we get some glimpses into this world of specialist knowledge about style, dance, language and bodily discipline used by the experts of this tradition. Even though there are strong elements of direct copying of the elements of style broadcasted by the media, it is also clear that these were used creatively in local practices:

We tried to dance in similar outfits. The language was quite normal, except for the names of the movements in the dancing... like windmill, headspin, helicopter, handplant, turtle, backspin... (all terms in English). We picked up words we heard in songs, from films and those kinds of things that became popular. “Bits” and “spit”, for example, and instead of saying “let’s go” (in Norwegian: vi stikker) we just said “spit”. And at the dancing floor there was always someone that yelled something in English, you know, even if we didn’t know what it meant. Things like “Yo, bust his head!”. We crammed both dancing and talk from Beat Street. And we borrowed videos and copied from Sky Channel to learn the latest tricks, you know. Then it was out to battle against anyone that wanted.

Anthropologist: Why did you have special breakdance names?

Ola: We took names after the trick we had as a specialty. There were lots of such names. Finger Go Crazy, Helicopter Chief, Pony... I was called Rollin Headspin because I could do a headspin straight on the asphalt. I never dared to do it on an ordinary floor. I felt so much safer outside. One period I didn’t have any hair on a certain spot on top of my head because of the headspin. It was just me and another guy that was good at it. He was called Maniac. Earlier he was called Turtle Master because he could do the turtle with straight legs. He never cared if he hurt himself; he did anything even if it hurt. If he broke his neck he would have done it once more. We were the two nuts in the group. We could do the headspin on top of a table like the one we are sitting at. You should be as crazy as possible, you know, while you danced. (...) Some time ago they showed some programs on MTV about break and soul and some good old music. There you got information about accidents and things like that. The girl called “Baby” from Rock Steady Crew (one of Ola’s personal heroes, and probably the most celebrated dancing crew in the history of Hip Hop, consisting mostly of youth with a Puerto Rican background), she broke her neck while doing headspin...two hundred times on her head became too much pressure. It’s all about control and balance. But you learn much faster when you’re young; you’re almost like Superman. I am able to do the tricks today,

but not as easy as when I was younger. If I do helicopter ten times today I 'll stretch my groin. It was not that way before. Then I was a tiny “rubber man”, you know... But now I’m starting training again with two other guys that know what they’re doing. One dances like I do, but the other one does a dance called “electric boogie”, just moving the upper body very mechanical. If you’re good it’s very nice to look at. Every group had someone that specialized in electric boogie. Nearly everybody knew the same tricks, but we all had some specialty, you know.

Ola’s relationship to the old style in what he held as the golden age, becomes quite clear when he distance himself in nostalgic terms from the Hip Hop dance that was common after that early period, and that his friend Omar was into when this interview was carried out in 1994. Here the sixteen-year-old Ola reveals himself as a quivering purist:

Nowadays, you’ve got these modern things, taking a little breakdance and a little Hip Hop and just... and they’ve started doing headspin with helmets because its faster and gives better balance and things like that. But it’s surely ruining the old style, I think. It’s a special group from Australia doing that. Five guys in line doing headspin in helmets! I don’t like that...

Here we get a glimpse of an orthodoxy represented by Ola himself, who has very definite opinions of how correct breakdance should be in this continuum of signs. This is a clear reminder that competing orthodoxies are not only characteristic for the larger traditions, for example, as represented by the position of Omar’s father who emphasised the need for living correctly as an Arab or Iraqi. Similar positions are also detectable within much more short lived social phenomena like youth cultural traditions.

Ola’s own way of doing the breakdance seems to have become a habit, in the Peircean sense, that were put to rest in his own internalised attitudes, and awakened, so to speak, when spotting alternative ways that provokes his own acquired orthodoxy, as a local “veteran”.

A variety of mediums for knowledge

But even if Ola experienced that breakdancing could provide status for the “boys from the slum”, the resemblances between the tableaux in *Beat Street* and Rudenga were not always present. In contrast to Jens, who more explicitly recognized Rudenga as similar to the milieu in the film, this visual similarity was not as explicit for Ola, something we’ll see in a dialogue about graffiti. For Ola it is more about realizing ideas and images from the film without consciously connecting to similarities in his real neighborhood:

Anthropologist: You did some graffiti also...?

Yes, we did. 'Twas not much of it at that time, but it was tough. Maybe you just had one box of spraypaint and you wrote simply "Hip Hop"...

Anthropologist: No big pieces?

Yes, we did that too. There is one right across the corner here. It's called "Squeeze". Immediately after we made it, the caretaker in one of the blocks tried to destroy it by throwing a bucket of yellow paint on it. But he didn't succeed. You can still see the piece underneath it.

Anthropologist: You named the pieces?

Yes. And one of the main points was to paint those skyscrapers in behind, because it should be similar to the ones in Beat Street. Everybody wanted to have them in their paintings. Ours is one with "Squeeze" written in big letters, with skyscrapers behind.

Anthropologist: Do you think it was important that it should resemble the blocks in Rudenga in those ways or...?

(hesitating a little bit)... no, I don't think we thought about that at all. We only thought about the dancing and the things and motives from Beat Street.

When I ask Omar later on, if he saw some similarities between the milieu in Rudenga and the scenes from Beat Street, and if his involvement in Hip Hop could be connected to the fact that it has strong traditions for involving youth with a wide variety of backgrounds, Omar also denied that these connections were something he paid attention to in this period. It was the dance, the music, and the style in itself that was "cool" and that provided the immediate motivation for his participation.

Maybe it was easier for the five- year older Jens to see these connections. Probably these similarities for many of the youth involved worked as an *unarticulated and unconscious cause* for the film to evoke such response in Rudenga, just as Hebdige suggests that the semiotic guerilla war" may be:

"...conducted at a level beneath the consciousness of the individual members of a spectacular subculture ..." (Hebdige 1993 (1979):105).

Maybe this can be seen as a parallel to the fact that Ola today is able to understand the messages in the words that he earlier knew by heart without understanding their meaning:

Anthropologist: Did you think about what the words meant or...?

No, we never thought about it. But now...you know I have lots of old breakdance music at home, and when I listen to those records nowadays, I hear they're all about the streets down in Bronx, New York and such things, about special groups that are battling each other. But when we dug that music at that time, we knew the words, but we didn't know the meaning of them...

Knowledge and dramatic appeal are of course much more than verbal or written expressions. Many messages are conveyed by the *ways* things are said, in addition to being danced, worn, painted, walked, played, etcetera. And messages expressed in these varieties of mediums can often be very hard to formulate verbally. This is underlined in the answer given by the world famous ballet dancer, Isadora Duncan, when she was asked why she was dancing:

“If I could talk about it, there would be no point in dancing it”

(Cited in Tambiah 1991:95)

This means that certain types of knowledge, meaning and ethos are almost impossible to communicate verbally, *without the messages being less important or less clear for that reason* (see also chapter 6 “The message of dress...”, for further discussions of this theme). The similarities between their own place and the stigmatized areas of black urban ghettos can have been such a message for the Rudenga youth at that time. The ethos and aesthetics of *Beat Street* may, in line with this, just as well have spoken to the young Rudenga breakers and hit them more at “gut level” than between their ears, so to speak. In this case the experienced resonance surely was a phenomenon “beyond words”, as the title of Wikan's article says (Wikan 1990). For Omar and Ola, the bodily practices were thus just one way to associate themselves with these messages, among a wide range of possibilities for communicating such an affinity.

Various backgrounds

An important similarity between Rudenga and the breakdance/Hip Hop tradition, as it developed, is the central role youth with immigrant background – along with African Americans – play in both the *Beat Street* film and in the Hip Hop tradition itself. This was especially expressed in Bambaataa's Zulu Nation. Ogg and Upshal write about Bambaataa's role in this development, not only for young African Americans but also for youth with other backgrounds as well:

“By founding the Zulu Nation enclave – a loose community of street kids – ‘Bam’ helped transform New York’s gang culture into something creative, empowering and, most importantly, inclusive. Crazy Legs, a Puerto Rican breakdancer, recalls that Bambaataa’s interest in African history and black legitimacy was deep rooted, he felt equal kinship with all the urban poor of New York. ‘Bambaataa taught me more about myself than I ever learned in school. Just how to be a proud Latino.’” (Ogg and Upshal 1999:23)

To my knowledge Zulu Nation was not known by the Rudenga youngsters.¹ Nevertheless, the multiethnic and the antiracist overtones were clearly present. As Ola says:

Omar was in the group. But when you saw it on television it was mostly Negroes (in Norwegian: “negra”). Those were the best. But I didn’t see any Negro dancing here in Rudenga. It was always someone that was half-Moroccan or something. But two of the best breakdancers in Norway were blacks, and one of them taught the leader of our group to dance.

As we have seen earlier, the large variation in ethnic background is one of the most salient traits in this youth milieu. In large parts of the youth-based musical genres as they were previously presented on Sky Channel, and as they increasingly figure today on MTV, the presence of artists of many different cultural and geographical backgrounds is a salient characteristic. This is underlined not only by the growing audiences for so called “world music” (that mostly have had middle class background), but also within Techno and mainstream pop, in addition to Hip Hop that is probably more popular than ever. And even if the number of members with immigrant background in 1994 was not more than 20 percent, their presence must still be considered a salient feature of the milieu in Rudenga at the time. This was a characteristic that was directly reflected (repeated) in the Hip Hop-sign, and must be seen as a characteristic that became an important part of the basis for resonance and interpretation; of what in the life worlds of these youngsters that was touched, activated, put into motion and made meaningful in their practical interaction with that sign. And as we shall see in part II, the percentage of youth with immigrant background had grown considerably by 1999, which underlines strongly that the milieu, as described and analysed on these pages, was in the midst of an important state of change and development; that is, of being ‘in the making’.

¹ This organisation did also for a period have a branch in Norway.

Three stages in the development of the semiotics of resonance/relevance: Breakdance & Hip Hop as interpretant and new sign for young users

The semiotic interaction – or more precisely, the process of interpretation – activated when the youngsters in Rudenga were exposed to various expressions of the Hip Hop tradition (the continuum of sign) seems to have occurred in several interrelated stages through which the sign was brought into more developed use:

1. *The immediate reaction to the sign.* This first stage is assumed to imply the experience of enjoyment/dismissal and understanding of what the sign is about, in an immediate like-dislike sense, that is without relating (associating) it to the interpreter's life world in any significant degree. The reactions often reported by informants describing, for example, the first time they watched the *Beat Street* film, is an experience of what is termed a "kick", that is an attention-enhancing experience of the film as being "a cool story", showing "cool dancing" etcetera. Several signs are interpreted on this level: they are noticed, one may even enjoy or dismiss them, but they primarily leave the interpreter unaffected on the more personal level. In other words; youngsters watch and enjoy a lot of films, listen to a variety of records, and experience a lot of events and situations, but only a few of them become important to their users/interpreters to the degree of being points of orientation/reflexivity in their life worlds, which is reserved to the next stage.
2. *Developing resonance/dissonance.* This stage implies the development of what the previous stage lacked, namely the relating/associating of the sign, explicitly or implicitly, to the interpreter's life-world. In Rudenga the background for the experiences of several of the youngsters evolving into this stage (the processes of interpretation) is to be found in the central characteristics of the socio-geographical milieu where they were living: a traditionally urban, working-class area that in recent decades has been populated by an increasing number of immigrant families, and has a reputation for problems with drug addicts, crime and a stigmatized image as 'the slum'. In addition, the area of Rudenga is visually dominated by what we may term "similarity cues" in the shape of the large, grey blocks, and the red suburban trains running through the valley. When its young dwellers were exposed to this new youth cultural tradition that labeled itself Hip Hop, especially as it was presented in the film *Beat Street*, they identified with it, as both the social and the visual milieus salient in that tradition (the sign)

showed a row of *similarities* with their own life world. We have seen several examples of how these points of resemblance (that is points of resonance) in their social settings, activated/released/ brought up/pointed to similar traits to the young actors, in their various acts of interpretation. To the youth in Rudenga, Hip Hop as a sign thus had *two semiotic objects* (or object complexes). On the one hand, it (was perceived as it) pointed to the background and environment of poor, urban areas in New York where the tradition had its origin. On the other hand, because of the very resemblances between these two areas, it also was perceived as pointing to (resonating with) the Rudenga youngsters' own homestead. Like participants in a dialogue who are searching for and attempting to create something they have in common (as our analysis of Omar and Olas dialogue in the kitchen showed), the interpretation of this larger, more complex sign, consisted in a similar search for similarities, for things to recognize. Those recognizable things later became a starting point from which to continue the further communicative process (see point 3, below). Just as finding such similarities in Omar's and Ola's musical conversation worked as bridges for contact and the generation of the experience of social resonance, finding such similarities for a more collective audience, like the Rudenga youth, worked as a similar bridge of resonance for identification, for contact with the virtual others of the Hip Hop tradition. Here Hip Hop, as a complex of signs, was acquired as a *medium* to reflect upon their own life worlds (the second object). The interpretation, therefore, seemed to have two directions. *Their own life situation was used to understand/relate to the Hip Hop'ers situation, while the Hip Hop'ers situation (as presented through various media) was used to understand their own life situation*, oscillating (reflecting) back and forth in both directions. But the experience of recognition made possible by these resemblances was just one part of what this sign had to offer. In addition to such similarities (see "*Point 1. The search for the mutually known*", in the discussion of resonance), there were the joys and the intense excitement of the new, that found their expression in a whole package of new youth cultural aesthetics, in the shape of music, bodily movements, dancing styles, language, clothes and attitudes (see "*Point 3. Reaching the unknown from the known*", *ibid*). Seen in context with how the interaction with the sign developed further on, this recognition – in whatever mode of consciousness it seemed to have happened (see below) combined with the excitement of the new – can be regarded as a critical event in the history of the youth

at Rudenga. Resonance can here be understood as a core phenomenon in the making of *a second, especially invested object* to the sign, that is in bringing forth an object of special importance/relevance to the interpreter, as he/she becomes emerged in the interpretative process. This second stage was characterized by a process of *creative internalization* whereby salient traits in the sign were recognized (that is more or less “judged”, as Peirce could have termed it) as similarities. We can thus define resonance more precisely as *a form of interpretation that is especially invested with personal concern*. One pole of this investment obviously occurred through the recognition of similarities. But there also seemed to be another pole that appealed more to the new, not least in the shape of bodily excitement, the “catchyness” of the music, the aesthetics of graffiti and the contagious fun of breakdancing. The interaction between these two resonating poles (where the scope from cognition to emotion makes up that continuum) seemed to be inviting the users into the next stage:

3. *Using/acting/developing the sign*. Because resonance developed through recognition and enjoyment of the accompanying aesthetics of Hip Hop, the most devoted of its interpreters soon developed a more deliberate *externalization* of the associated practices. In this stage the sign complex is brought into concrete use in local practice, bringing the sign out and into the relevant public sphere of the life worlds of the youngsters. Through this the users developed several forms of *competence*; when mastered appropriately these could be used to acquire prestige for the place and its inhabitants, entering into the powerplay/contests (also literally in the shape of the competitions – “the battles”) with the surrounding world. The sign was thus used to change the semiotic content of the place at the same time as the sign itself was transformed and given new meaning through its grounding in the lifeworlds of the local users (in line with “*Point 4. Balancing the power flow*”, *ibid*). These processes may be seen as steps in the process by which a sign *grows*, in accordance with Peircean theory, when it is used creatively, developed and given new meaning by the stream of actors (resonating with it and) bringing it into use.

It also goes without saying that the various steps in these processes were continually accompanied by the generating of expectations and uncertainty (in line with “*Point 2. The generation of expectations and uncertainties*”, *ibid*)

Omar and Ola: the experience of being experts and the semiotics of their social relations

Especially in the processes of generating competence, the expertise of Omar and Ola played a central role. Both were known as the best breakdancers of the area, and through the winning of several contests (breakdance battles) where they beat well-known teams from the outside world, they became local heroes that to a special degree bore forth the concerns of their fellow youth in Rudenga. As spearheads in the more collective process of fighting against an outside world, that previously had been stigmatizing their place of residence as ‘the slum’ and as a bad place in general – thus addressing very real relations of power – it is reasonable to believe that their success in the contests – where thus much more was at stake than the dancing skills itself – must have been of considerable importance for them both, as Ola’s description of one of their early victories strongly indicates. As experts bearing forth important concerns of their fellow youth, they experienced on the one hand, the fighting together against an external “enemy” that looked down upon the place and its inhabitants. This was done by mastering practices and knowledges whose prestige were utterly amplified and supported by its presence in transnational commercial media (television, radio, music industry, magazines). In addition, and on the more personal level, they experienced the intricate webs developing in the dialogic and oscillating exchange of impulses, expectations, unexpectedness, confirmations or lacks thereof, power negotiations, joys and disappointments, all unfolding on the more personal levels where the pole of resonance necessarily must have been stronger than its opposite (dissonance). The experience of resonance on both these levels, the collective and the personal – must be regarded as central elements in the processes of generating and amplifying the relation of friendship between the two, thus these are mutually interpreted as signs to each other that represented, among other things, exactly these experiences they both have shared. These layers upon layers of common experiences seem to be the building blocks of their “*plateau of trust*”, resonating through the timespan they have known each other and manifesting on the very *surface of time* (the present), in such acts as the musical conversation in the kitchen that introduced our two protagonists. Thus the resonance of their personal relationship seems to be strongly interwoven with the semiotic processes they had participated in, on both personal and collective levels, in the past.

3 Hostile signs – dissonant signs: Heavy Metal, Black Metal, racism and the thorny paths of fandom. Omar’s story part III

Omar also had other friends in Rudenga. While Ola was the first person he got acquainted with, the heavyrocker Knut was the second. Both Ola and Omar enjoyed Heavy Metal. Especially in the 9th grade they listened a lot to popular bands like Kiss and Metallica, Omar says. For some period, before the forming of Omar’s new dancing group (see the next chapter), the three boys also tried to form a Heavy Metal band, where they all played guitars. Omar and Ola soon quit the band, while Knut continued into the depths of recent genres like “Death Metal” and later on “Black Metal”. If Ola was the most well-known breakdancer in Rudenga’s Hip Hop days, Knut hereafter became one of the most profiled Metal fans and musicians. Once more we will shift our attention from Omar to one of his friends, this time Knut, to explore the meaning of these youth cultural traditions among some of the youngsters in Rudenga. These three boys’ interest in heavy rock, and especially Knut’s involvement in the more extreme genres (of which Ola also was a fan), relates to our exploration, because this tradition – contrary to Hip Hop – is almost exclusively associated with white youngsters; this tendency has been amplified in the recent Black Metal genre to the extent that some artists within this continuum of signs have been associated with explicitly racist attitudes and declared hostility to immigrants.

But to understand how the sign continua of these genres partly *resonates*, partly *dissonates*, in the relationships of our young friends, it is necessary – as with Hip Hop – to have a closer look into the histories, messages and attitudes originally associated with these traditions. Some central points in their semiotic transformation into their more recent expressions must be considered as well.

Some remarks on the Heavy Metal tradition

Unlike Hip Hops’ strong identity stemming from its origins in the African American and multicultural milieus and inner city areas in the US, the history of Heavy Metal has never had strong links to certain types of places and social groups and such links have not been any explicit part of the

stories and themes associated with the overall tradition¹. Neither the origin of the genre, as it is known to the fans, nor the social or economic background of the fans or the artists seems to be as closely related to relatively distinct social groups as Hip Hop². Like several other central rock groups of the 60s and 70s, there is the usual and often unclear mixture of middle-class and working-class background to be found both among artists and fans. Walser refers to Billboard Magazine, who characterizes the US Metal fan as “*most concentrated in ‘the blue collar industrial cities of the continental US.’*”, and to a study from 1985 that “*concluded that the Metal audience lived in ‘upscale family suburbs’*” (Walser 1993:16-17). But if this musical genre nevertheless has a salient trait, apart from its more explicit content, it will have to be its character of being primarily associated with white youngsters. Despite the fact that its musical expressions rely perhaps most heavily on the blue notes and sound aesthetics of urban, electric Blues, Metal musicians (and fans) of non-Western or African American origin hardly exist, as also Walser points out³. And even as the previously mentioned author writes: “*A Heavy Metal genealogy ought to trace the music back to African-American Blues*”, he adds that this is seldom done (Walser 1992:8). Of the musical genres that have been popular in Rudenga within the timespan covered here, it is Heavy Metal and its subsequent subgenres that seem to be most alien, and even excluding, to impulses and fans from a non-white audience.

The hostility to immigrants, and the more or less racist attitudes that are expressed in the more recent genre of Black Metal, must be regarded as a result of a creative semiotic process that has developed in continuity with the horror theme salient in this tradition from its very start. Some central points in this process will be explicitly focused upon below.

“Running with the devil”

The most central group in the forming of the Heavy Metal tradition was Black Sabbath which was formed in 1969. In rock music it is this tradition

¹ The Blues is strongly embedded in the history of the African slaves, Reggae has its well known origins among the rastafaris in Jamaica, for example.

² Even though the origin of Hip Hop has been tightly related to inner city areas in the US, the social background of the fans has become considerably more complex as the genre has grown more popular.

³ One exception is the American Metal band “Living Color” where most members are African Americans. The band name perhaps hints at this dimension (see also Walser 1993).

that most strongly has taken inspiration from the horror aesthetic developed in the aftercurrents of romanticism and the gothic novel of the 19th century (Campbell 1990; see also Vestel 1999; Moynihan and Söderlind 1998). And as the very name of this group indicates, the history of Heavy Metal has from its start been strongly characterized by a fascination for what is held to be the darker forces and phenomena of the world. In contexts heavily tinged by Christian influences this especially implies a fascination with the symbolic power radiating from the mythologic figure of the devil.¹ The English group Led Zeppelin, that played a central role in the early days of Heavy Metal, as well as groups of lesser fame, such as Black Widow and Coven, are strongly associated with this symbol (Moynihan and Söderlind 1988). But while traces of this fascination are found throughout the tradition from its very start, it was not until the last half of the 80s that this aspect was amplified further. To Omar, Knut and Ola the central traits in the history of Heavy Metal are well known, and both Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin are their old time favourites.

The amplification of interest in the symbol of the devil in the latter half of the eighties must be seen in context with the commercial breakthrough of Heavy Metal in the 80s as Walser notices (Walser 1993). This breakthrough led probably to a certain draining of the genres power to arouse the feelings of the more hardcore, stimulus-seeking fans. This is a well known dynamic, when particular types of youth cultures move from relative exclusiveness – from underground to an overground existence – to a more “flattened out” commercial mainstream acceptance (see also Berkaak 1993). The need to counteract such “flattening out” seems to lie behind the introduction of the more extreme themes, which took place during the middle of the eighties. The development of new genres like “Death Metal”, that has death as its core theme, and the even more extreme “Black Metal” that is strongly associated with so-called “satanism”, can be seen as attempts to make the tradition regain its power to arouse and renew the stamp of being “underground”, that for many fans is conceived as an especially attractive quality (see also Vestel 1999). This use of the devil as a powerful symbol also has a considerable role within the wider history of popular music. There are several examples of this.

In Norwegian folk music we find the well known tune called “Fanitullen” which means “the devils tune”. It is said to have been taught to the fiddler by the devil himself, who occasionally turns up at feasts, when

¹ It is no coincidence that the musicologist Robert Walser has named his well known book about heavy Metal “*Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*” (1993).

playing and drinking is at its height, to bring the partying even higher. He is, of course, known, by his goat leg that keeps the time with the music while he is playing. As Norwegian folk music, in certain historical periods, was regarded as “the devil’s music” by the church, especially when played on the hardanger fiddle, this is not surprising; it is of course also in line with the role of the devil in “the carnivalesque” as described by Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1984), as a popular “counterpoint” to the rules, the seriousness and stiffness associated with the church.

The so-called “Delta Blues king”, and probably the most played and celebrated Bluesman ever – Roberts Johnson – a great hero of both the Blues tradition and rock’n’roll- is said, by his legend, to have sold his soul to the devil to be able to make the music better (see, for example, Moynihan and Søderlind 1998).

Rolling Stones entitled their 1967 album “Their Satanic Majesty’s Request”, and on their following lp “Beggars Banquet” from 1968, we find the famous song “Sympathy for the Devil”. It is probably no coincidence that the French avant garde film maker, Jean Luc Godard, used this song and movie cuts of the Stones rehearsing over and over again in his film called “Sympathy for the Devil – One plus one” (see, for example, Stam 1992). In the song the devil is presented as a being/a spirit who is specifically active during times of intense social change, for example, the Russian Revolution, the Second World War and social events of great importance as the murder of president Kennedy e.t.c., and therefore as “someone” who deserves some “respect and politesse “ according to the Stones. The film can serve as an example of the use of the devil as a symbol connected with artistic and political radicalism, revolutions, aesthetic rebellion and so on, criticizing the social order and power relations (Godard was a radical maoist at that time), again pointing to the more subversive role of the devil in the carnivals, as described by Bakhtin. A further investigation of the words in the songs on the “Beggars Banquet” lp by the Rolling Stones will amplify this argument.

Another rock group whose members have exposed a special interest in related themes and more explicit occultism is the previously mentioned Led Zeppelin, which attracted attention by their well known fascination for a figure named Aleister Crowley. At the end of the 18th century, strong romantic currents were also important ingredients in the tradition of Western magic/occultism, drawing, for instance, on the qabbalah; this tradition found expression in, for example, the founding of what is called “The Order of the Golden Dawn” in 1888, whose traces still exist. In these circles the well known occultist, Aleister Crowley, played an important role. He later associated himself with the number 666 (the number of the beast from the

apocalypse of St. John), and led the organization called OTO (Ordo Templis Orientis – supposedly latin, meaning “The order of the oriental templars”, founded in 1895, practicing so called “tantric/sexual magic”, derived from Indian tantrism). OTO still exists today. It has an active branch in Norway and is not infrequently mentioned in media comments on Black Metal. In these esoteric circles of Western magic, accusations of black magic were quite common. And Crowley – being the very “enfant terrible” of this tradition – is probably the one who most often received such accusations. He also is the best known figure from those circles and has fascinated several rock artists, among others. Whether he really deserves the label “black magician”, “satan worshipper” or whatever, is, nevertheless debated (see also Walser 1993:148). Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page bought Crowley’s House and the remnants of his belongings in the 70s. Ozzy Osborne from Black Sabbath made a song called “Mr. Crowley”, etcetera.

Crowley is also portrayed on the cover of the Beatles SGT. Pepper album, from 1967. Both Stones’ and Beatles’ albums were released at the height of what we afterwards have termed “the youth rebellion” and have played an important role in that second grand wave of youth cultural activity (the first one being the rock’n roll of the fifties).

The list of examples of the use of images of the devil in both old and new popular music could probably be made much longer, and underlines strongly that such use in the recent genres of Heavy Metal belongs to a much larger tradition, of which rock’n roll is only one. As one of the most powerful and charged “grand signs” in a Christian context, the devil in myriads of ways can be seen as representing hostility, negation, rebellion, counteraction in various ways, directed against established and unquestioned social institutions and ideas such as Christianity, authorities of any kind, law and order, love, and ultimately against life itself.

On the background of this historical context we now examine the sub genre Black Metal that especially in its early phases made this theme the very centre of its continuity of signs.

The sub genre: Black Metal

In 1984 the Birmingham based Heavy Metal band named Venom released an album called “Black Metal”. Characterized by heavy use of satanistic symbols, such as the goat’s head, the inverted cross, the inverted pentagram, e.t.c., Venom was well-known for their spectacular live shows. With this group the potency of the images of so called satanism and the evilworship theme were more explicitly introduced into the heavy rock tradition. The early Venom records, still revered by recent leading Black Metal artists, are

accordingly regarded as the very beginning of the new subgenre which – after that album – was labeled “Black Metal”.

Then followed several bands associated with this new orientation: the Swiss group called Celtic Frost (that later changed its name to Hellhammer); the Swedish group Bathory, reportedly named after a Hungarian female mass killer called Elisabeth Bathory (heroine in the Venom song “Countess Bathory” on the Black Metal album); the American group Deicide among others.

All these older groups have been more or less mentioned as sources for inspiration by the Norwegian groups that later took a leading role in the development of the genre. The group that introduced the genre to the Norwegian public was Mayhem, founded in 1984 and led by a youth who called himself Euronymous (supposedly meaning “the death prince”).

In 1988 Bathory released an album called “Blood Fire Death” in which an important and creative connection was made when the usual horror themes of the genre were fused with themes relating to the Vikings of old Nordic mythology. As Moynihan and Söderlind write:

“At this point came a remarkable shift of focus which, like their early primitivity, would also greatly influence the Black Metal scene of the future. Instead of B-grade horror cover art of the previous album, an entirely different image greeted them: a swarming, airborne army of Valkyries on black horses, spurred on by the Nordic god Thor, hammer held aloft in the righteous defiance as a wolfskin-cloaked warrior drags a naked girl up from the scorched earth below. This remarkable painting by Norwegian artist Peter Nicolai Arbo, depicting the infamous “Wild Hunt” or Oskorsrei of Scandinavian and Teutonic folklore, was the ideal entryway into Bathory’s new sound which lay on vinyl inside it.” (Moynihan and Söderlind 1998:18)

This creative connection that was drawn by Bathory, between the already existing horror aesthetic of Metal and the assumed horror of the mythology of the Vikings, was soon to be further amplified by the Norwegian groups that during the 90s made Black Metal further known to a wider public. Soon Norway was established as a centre of the whole genre. According to my informants, the Norwegian band Darkthrone, with their LP from 1990 – *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*, was of special importance; it took this connection further in the Black Metal scene and in this way managed to shift attention to Norway. The popular cliché of the Vikings, as strong, plundering and raping villains spreading terror and fear around the countries they visited, is referred to as an explanation for this fusion. Just like the scenario of the film *Beat Street* to some extent was “fitting”, that is it resembled, the scenario of *Rudenga*, so the rudimentary knowledge of the Vikings was fitting with the

themes of horror, evil and terrifying monsters already existing in the mythology of Heavy Metal and of Black Metal in particular. By focussing on this conceived *similarity*, Norwegian Black Metal has connected this tradition to a different kind of locality: *to the mythical past and heathen Norway*. Black Metal was thus suddenly fused with a strange kind of nationalism, for example, reflected in the fans of the Norwegian band called Satyricon who wore T-shirts with “Norway” written on the back in types that hint to prehistoric runes (observation at a concert with the artist Diamanda Galas in 1994, see below). As a consequence of this nationalistic ideology, many fans in this period were expressing racist views, saying they wanted Norway to be for true Norwegians, that is white, strong, Aryan and, of course, non-Christian. From the fascination with horror, the devil and then the Vikings, the next step in their anti-Christian “crusade” was the cultivation of “national roots”, that is the heathendom of the mythological past, fused with a corresponding scepticism towards immigrants and people perceived as alien to the authentic “Norwegian”.

A series of spectacular events and extreme actions accompanied this development, as listed in the introduction to Part I¹.

The most well known case in the history of this tradition is the story of the Black Metal artist, Kristian Vikernes, that named himself “Count Grishnact” after an evil being in Tolkien’s famous book *The Lord of the Rings*. He later changed his forename from “Kristian” (which of course means “Christian”) to “Varg” (meaning “wolf” in Norwegian), underlining the messages consistent with our topic. He was convicted and put to jail on a twenty-one-years sentence – the most severe punishment in Norwegian law – for killing his former friend and fellow musician, the previously mentioned “Euronymous”. A little later on, a boy who had taken the artist name name “Bård Faust”, drummer in another famous Black Metal band, Emperor, was found guilty of killing a homosexual man who had tried to have intercourse with him in Lillehammer in August 1992.

In the Count’s apartment in Bergen, there was also found 150 kilos of dynamite which according to fellow Black Metallers, was planned to be used to blow up the 920 year-old cathedral Nidarosdomen, built in the Middle Ages – probably the most famous and visited cathedral in Norway, and a landmark for the city of Trondheim. He was also convicted for burning down three churches. On one of these fires, he had collaborated with his future victim, Euronymous, and the afore mentioned Bård Faust two days after he had killed his victim in Lillehammer.

¹ See also Moynihan and Söderlind 1998 for a journalistic report on the scene.

“Varg” Vikernes declared himself ‘the son of Odin’ as well of Satan, and as soon would be ‘King of Hordaland’ – the area of Norway of which his home, Bergen, is the centre. This romanticizing of a mythical past, is combined with history, constructing of the country of Norway as the land of the Vikings, who are now present in the guise of Black Metal fans (!!). The well known tendency in Heavy Metal to romanticize the past, especially the gothic scenarios of the classic horror tales – like for example the remote Transylvania in the vampire tales, is in this version located to the ‘land of the Vikings’. The burning of the churches is, by them, explained as a way of spreading fear, and *cleaning the country of Christian influence* in a cult of the ‘strong’ versus the weak. Similar attitudes, deliberately expressing contempt for weakness, are also well known from the writings of Anton LaVey, founder of the so called ‘Church of Satan’, by which several of the Norwegian Black Metallers were inspired (see also Moynihan & Söderlind 1998).

Black Metal hits Rudenga: the thorny paths of fandom for Knut and Helge

While the Hip Hop continuum of signs was activated through use when the youngsters at Rudenga recognized similarities between their neighbourhood and the stigmatized areas in New York, the Black Metal sign presented the mythical heathen Norway as an imaginary place to enter, as a resonance point for the youth who were inclined to be positively aroused by this sign.

But while Hip Hop in one way or another seemed to resonate strongly with a large group of youth in Rudenga – probably because of the multitude of points of resonance – Black Metal was, on the contrary, a youth culture for the few. Several of the older youngsters in the area enjoyed the older heavy bands, and also the softer varieties, like Bon Jovi and the Norwegian pop-heavy group Europe, were popular. Rudenga thus had a strong tradition for enjoying various genres of Heavy Metal. For Knut, Omar and Ola it was the new groups, like Metallica and the founding fathers (Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin), that had the strongest appeal. Their inclination to Heavy Metal music can thus be seen as a continuation of traditions already existing in the area (see also Berkaak and Ruud 1994).

Knut was seventeen at the time, working on the House of which the youth club is a part after dropping out of college. For him, as for his companion Helge, Heavy Metal was the first musical genre that really fascinated him. He played several instruments while growing up, but he got fed up with taking lessons while he was around fourteen, when he started to listen to Kiss, now guitar was his main instrument. After the splitting of the

band that Knut had with Omar and Ola, he got acquainted with Helge, who is into what he terms a “harder form of music”, namely Death Metal. Knut then discovered the so called “trash Metal” group Slayer, the Brazilian Death Metal group Sepultura, and the group Carcass, also in Death Metal genre. Helge, Knut and two other guys then formed a Death Metal band, that later developed in the direction of Black Metal.

Both Knut and Helge are fans that later formed a band that thereafter split, and both somehow more or less dismissed the whole genre as a consequence of some dilemmas and difficulties that must be regarded as connected with the position of being both a fan and of being at least would-be artists within the Black Metal genre. On Knut's part, these dilemmas were also sharpened as a consequence of his experiences of growing up and making friends with youngsters of immigrant background, of whom Omar was his closest.

Knut's friend Helge, nineteen, is also a school dropout working in a youth club. In the following he tells us about the very lustful shock of seeing the bands Slayer and Venom on video for the first time, after mostly having listened to his parents more laidback records by J.J.Cale, Mark Knopfler and so on, and later just occasionally to Thin Lizzy and Kiss.

What was his primary move in the direction of the more extreme genres? Helge describes the very moment when he discovered some of the tougher bands of Heavy Metal – an experience from which there runs a continuing thread that later leads to Black Metal:

I remember the day very clearly. I was round thirteen. I was sitting watching Sky Channel, and then they showed Venoms video “Nightmare”. Then followed Slayer with “Hell awaits”. I don't know how to explain it. It was a drive, it was.... I then found out that I was attracted to more...heavy music, and the atmospheres that surrounded it, you know. (...) It was terrible and gloomy, and I've always liked it since that time. Its rougher, more edge to it, with a clear negative message. (...) And it was dangerous in a way. I got a total kick from it. I immediately got some money and rushed out to the stores to buy the records. (...) Maybe it's because one experiences so little of it in everyday life. So when you listen to Slayer or Darkthrone, or groups like that, you can dream yourself into the dangerous, the gloomy, the evil – in a way. It is, if not exactly “nice”, but nevertheless a comfortable way of getting out of everyday life, at least in my opinion”.

For Knut the interest in Black Metal seems to be a logical consequence of the need for “something harder and darker”, as he put it, in addition to the more strictly musical challenges and attractions that played an important part

to him as a musician. In these early stages the dilemmas and tension that he was later to experience, especially concerning the hierarchy, elitism and the developing racism (see below), seemed not yet to be sufficiently known or experienced to be felt as problematic. As the genre developed, and Knut got more involved with it, these traits gradually revealed themselves as something like a straight jacket, as we soon shall see.

In the following I will suggest eight main themes that seem to sum up more systematically what Black Metal is about. These themes seem to be experienced in various ways as what we might call *essences* or core messages of this continuum of signs and are to be understood as something like the “official version” of the orthodoxy, promoted by the strata within Black Metal that are in a more or less hegemonic position. The empirical evidence for this version, consists of interviews and comments from various media, such as newspapers, fanzines, tv-reports, and also the book by the journalists Moynihan and Søderlind (1998). I also use data from interviews with the Rudenga youth who supply these data with their own experiences within or at the fringe of the Black Metal milieu.

But such a picture is, of course, just half of the story. The other half, that are often missing in studies more narrowly concerned with a genre in itself, is simply “practice” – that is how concrete people relate to, dismiss, approve, change, manipulate or disagree with those very “essences”. I will therefore try to relate the practices of Knut and Helge to these eight points, and investigate what implications being or almost being a Black Metaller have for these two fans.

I will argue that the hostility towards immigrants must be seen in the larger context of attitudes, messages and aesthetics that are associated with the genre and that are summed up in the points below. Hostility, danger, fear, negativity, death, evil, etcetera, are all phenomena that can be enjoyed as long as they remain virtual, and do not threaten to become real. When such a limit is passed, major problems tend to arise. Such an ambivalence seems to be the red thread in the core themes of Black Metal, as we shall see below.

Eight points on the core messages of the orthodoxies of Black Metal

Helge’s story of how he first experienced the early videos of Slayer and Venom gives us the hint to the first key themes in the core messages – the orthodoxies – of Black Metal:

1. Romanticism

Black Metal is heavily tinged with romanticism in the sense that certain emotions play a salient role. More concretely, the emotional kick is triggered by fear, gloom, horror, danger, and evil.

In the beginning of the first fieldwork a public meeting was planned in which some prominent Black Metal musicians were to be invited to the club to discuss death threats in the milieu, as some of the fans at Rudenga naturally felt nervous because of this. The musicians confirmed that the flourishing of death threats within these circles, reported from several papers, in fact was quite true. This enjoyment of the emotional kick of fear – as one primary version of the hostility of the sign – was in other words also extended to practices and relations between the Black Metallers themselves. Both Knut and Helge were acquainted with such threats. And when the actual murder of Euronymous took place, these fears were of course amplified.

To this inventory of emotions, concerning darkness, fear and evil, we could add the ideal of elimination of empathy as a second trait. This is shown in some quotes from Euronymous commenting on the death of Mayhem's vocalist, who appropriately named himself "Dead" and who committed suicide in 1991. Within the Black Metal scene this is held to be an important event and is said to have "lifted" the scene in various ways. He is known, in line with his artist name and his own way of dying, to have recommended suicide in the songs he wrote for the band. Euronymous commented on his death like this in an article in the well known British Heavy Metal magazine *Kerrang*:

"Dead was a very special person with an extreme personality, not even we knew him fully. He was always in the forest, and he just left a letter saying he belonged there (on "the forest", see below). He believed that he was not of this world). He did a great promotion for Mayhem. When he killed himself, he became a great cult, a legend. I don't care if people die, even within my own circle. I have no feelings left. He was a great vocalist, but vocalists can be replaced. What he did was the greatest sacrifice, and Mayhem only gained from it." (Kerrang, March 93:45)

The (at least pretended) ideal of lack of empathy as reflected in these quotations indicates its central part in this ethos. This may also be seen as connected with the contempt for weakness, as discussed further below.

But in addition to this horror aesthetic – and practice – oriented to the fascination with death, horror and gloom, we also find – perhaps a little surprisingly, but quite fitting with traditional romanticism – a devotedness to more common experiences of beauty associated to nature.

Knut says:

“Some of the Black Metal songs are quite beautiful, not brutal at all, with acoustic guitars and sounds of the wind in the background. Then you lean back and dream yourself away into the forest and.... the atmosphere is really strong. And all bands are pictured out in the forest, preferably at night...probably because Norway is known to have a lot of forests, you are drawing upon very old roots, you know....”

For both our fans, this attraction to nature seem to be one of the more unproblematic yet strongly cherished themes of the genre. Black Metal's romanticism and emotional inclinations are thus filled with an ambivalence. On the one hand, we find fascination with the horrors of death, evil and so on, and, on the other, the enjoying of the beauty of nature. As the fascination with nature, and especially the forest, is heavily coloured by an interest in supernatural beings and monsters, the common issue of both these poles seems to be the attraction to the unknown, to the things we cannot understand, the irrational. This leads up to theme number 2.

2. Transgression

As both Walser and Berkaak point out, the theme of transgression has in many ways been central to rock and roll (Walser 1992; Berkaak 1993). In Heavy Metal, and in Death Metal and Black Metal especially, we face this themes in some of the most developed versions. We notice that in the careers of our two fans every step seems to be motivated by the urge for something tougher, more edgy and more extreme. And, as previously remarked, in a Christian culture the symbol of the deliberately evil, and of satan as the diametrical opposite of a good and almighty God, will of course have the ability to arouse very strong emotions, especially because of the moral indignation and taboos connected with it. In social theory many scientists, from Philippe Aries, to Howard Becker and more recently Giddens, have underlined the taboo concerning death in Western cultures (Aries 1997; Giddens 1991). And, of course, death represents the ultimate unknown, which is probably the main orientation point in every form of the entertainment of horror. Knut explicitly says that Death Metal is about passing a border, which underlines this fascination for transgression.

Many Black Metallers mention the well known Norwegian artist Theodor Kittelsen, who died in 1914. He is widely known to the Norwegian public for his drawings of the supernaturals that according to old Norwegian folklore and fairytales, are existing in the forest. This attraction might be seen as a further development of Heavy Metal's interest in fantastic

monsters and the supernatural in general, in other words beings that sum up and give concrete form to this theme of transgression.

This longing for mysteries, for supernaturals and a more enchanted world leads us to the next point:

3. Nostalgia

Lots of traits within Black Metal reflect a strong longing and concern for what is conceived as a mysterious and enchanted past. This is, of course, very well in accordance with the aesthetics of romanticism. Especially the medieval age seem to be attractive to the Black Metallers. One of Satyricon's records is, for example, entitled "Dark medieval times". In interviews there are reports of Black Metallers wearing medieval-like costumes doing fake fencing battles in the forest. The mythological and heathen past is, of course, also the time when "Norway" was assumed to be "pure" and not mixed with "alien" people from other parts of the world.

Several sources express the wish to have what they term "an ancient" mood in the music. Knut sees this longing for a mysterious past as one of the motives for bringing Nordic mythology and the Viking theme into Black Metal.

Helge, on his side, distances himself from what he terms the "Viking thing", which he finds somehow far from heavy rock (see below; see also Vestel 1999).

The cult of the ancient is also reflected in the attitude surrounding church burning. During the trials some of the church burners explained that the older the church, the more power is transmitted to the one who puts it on fire (VG 6/5-94).

4. Hierarchy

An overall characteristic of Black Metal is elitism. Black Metallers look upon themselves as a strong, musical and ideological elite that do not mingle with other kinds of milieus and audiences. Within the scene, at least according to my informants, and told to other interviewers, in 1993 there existed what might be called the "core of power" within Norwegian Black Metal which – at least after the imprisonment of Count Grishnact – seemed to consist of members of Mayhem, Darkthrone and Satyricon. The late Euronymous is said to have been the indisputable boss within this pyramid; it was he who was "sitting on the throne" as my informants would put it. Helge says:

“If you want to play in a Black Metal band you have to be respected by that core, if not they could put obstacles in our way – if we do not lead the “right” lifestyle and have the right attitudes. That core has a lot to say if you want to be a real Black Metal band.”

Helge seemed to be a little uncomfortable in relation to this fact, and he let me know that lots of younger hangarounds were trying very hard to figure out and to perform acts that they believe are the right actions, and to communicate the right attitudes that will please this core – sometimes spoken of as “the inner circle of satanist terrorists”. According to informants within the police it has been a problem that youngsters who wanted to please the older ones – presumably this core – have been willing to commit extreme actions to attain acceptance (see, for example, Østlandets blad 20/8-93). Youths aged as low as fourteen have confessed to church burning with this motive (Dagbladet 3/9-93). A fifteen year old Swedish girl also confessed to setting a church on fire in Uppsala as a celebration of the Count (Aftenposten 14/9-93).

This Black Metal elitism has found many other expressions, including, for instance, a willingness to listen to music that is considered to be quite “difficult”, and attractive in quite different circles. For example, when the annual famous Norwegian festival for contemporary music, the Ultima Festival – which has its core audience among very “high brow” oriented groups of contemporary composers and representatives of cultural elites – invited the Greek/American female experimental singer, Diamanda Galas, to give a concert, lots of Norwegian Black Metallers attended. Some of my informants have shown an amazingly wide musical horizon, including several contemporary composers as sources of inspiration. One of Galas’ first records, very popular among Black Metallers, was, in fact, based on a text by Charles Baudelaire called “The Litanies of Satan”. Baudelaire has been called a “totem of modernism”, as he represents a connection between romanticism and modernism in literature. His famous book, “*The flowers of evil*” (from 1857), contains parts (“Revolte”) described as “traditional romantic satanism” (Verdens litteratur historie, bind 9:76).

But the elitism of Black Metal also has other more problematic results for the bands. Knut says:

“When, for example, Darkthrone decided to become a Black Metal band, they ended up not wanting to play concerts. They got lots of chances and fat offers, also worldwide; they are probably both the best and the most widely known Black Metal band in the world (that is, in 1993). But they would not play concerts because, in their opinion, they didn’t reach the right audience. There were always too many posers, in their eyes. They cut out big deals and said no to a lot of contracts,

stopped giving interviews, locked themselves up. It became a completely idealistic way of living for the band. A lot of bands do not have any problems with getting contracts, but this is not accepted (by the core); it is not music to be used for the outside.”

This attitude also leads to problems for bands and musicians that want to play and was one of the reasons that lead Knut to quit his association to the Black Metal genre. He says:

“That’s one of the reasons why I just wanted to play rock’n’roll. Its got so much more possibilities to play for an audience. You’ll have people listening to you live, and it’s a lot more fun than just to sit there moping.”

This will of course also be problematic for the fans, who are simply not getting possibilities to hear their favourites live.

But this is, of course, also a kind of paradox and a dilemma for the musicians themselves. And sometimes the pressure seems to get too strong. So in August 1996, a rock festival in Oslo managed to get Mayhem to give a concert. A member of the band who called himself “Necrobutcher” enthusiastically declared to a journalist:

“We’re going to make a show that is completely insane and raw. We will be like a compact monster that attacks the audience. We won’t hold back on anything. I can say this much; we have ordered something from the Butcher’s Cooperative (in Norwegian: “Fellesslakteriet”).” (Dagbladet 10 august 1996)

But because of the bands reputation, and protests from authorities, the concert was in fact cancelled. From his imprisonment the Count comments on this concert and the music that he now says he dismisses:

“By ordering goods from the Butcher’s Cooperative they reveal that they want to appeal to young boys. All Metal music is partly of negroid origin. I have raised myself to a purer level, where not only the words but also the music is Germanic.” (ibid)

Thus the fun of having some real gore ordered from the Butcher’s Cooperative was clearly too much for the Count and was seen as a sign of not being serious enough, in his eyes too childish, in agreement with the previous quotes where he termed some followers as just “silly children”. We also notice his dismissal of the whole Metal genre, as being of “negroid” origin, and his new, purer “germanic” music, which clearly states his development in the direction of racism and neo-nazi sympathies.

5. Cult of the strongest

If the starting point was the attractive emotional kick connected with fear and horror, maybe the line that connects this with the cult of the strongest is the ability to stand the most horrible fear. (The Vikings were said not to fear death because they had such a strong belief in the pleasures of Valhall, which is where every man who died in battle was going, see Bæksted 1978). In accord with this popular image, the Vikings are regarded as especially tough by the Black Metallers. One may ask whether this weight on strength and toughness simply can be seen as a kind of boys' room version of masculinity, a kind of virility test derived from competing on how much horror, splatter or gore one can stand? This is hard to answer. Judging from several sources there seem to exist a strong emphasis on hierarchy, at least concerning the core; where it is approved that the one above – that is the stronger – has the right to treat the one that is under him any way he pleases. This is also said to be a core message in the declared satanism of, for example, Anton La Vey's so called Church of Satan, that has been popular among younger "hangarounds" within Black Metal, but which is dismissed as "too soft" by many of the elder. In other words, explicit and ideological contempt for weakness seems to be an important trait, which is also amplified by the ethos of excluding empathy.

This reaches some sad and realistic proportions when the Count explained about the murdering of his old bandmate Euronymous; he pointed out that he got more angry at his victim when Euronymous screamed and in this way showed weakness. The Count has said that he does not regret what he has done and that he, was in fact proud of having done it, because he simply proved to be the strongest (Bergens Tidene 26/4 1994).

He is also reported to have said that he did not consider it honourable to die in his underpants as his victim had done (Dagbladet 27 april 1994). This emphasize the importance put on strength and the corresponding contempt for weakness.

6. Purity

All the references to the past – Vikings, to Nordic folklore and nationalism – underlines the attraction to what are held to be cultural roots, a trait we find in many phenomena in contemporary society. The hostility against immigrants, and the corresponding connections with neo-nazis must be seen as expressions of the wish to cultivate the purity of the race and its presumable origin.

This demand for purity, and the racism that followed, was difficult to handle for both Knut and Helge who had grown up in a suburb with many

immigrant youths as neighbours. This added one more to the reasons why Knut left the scene (as we shall discuss later).

But demand for purity is also valid for the music and the corresponding way of life:

As Knut put it:

“But it is also important that Black Metal is to be kept Black Metal, you know, and is not to be played in other ways than Black Metal. If you mixed it with Hip Hop, for instance – then it would have been a quite different form of music, you know. It is a form of music that are to be kept. It is also a way of life, you are to live like a Black Metaller.”

7. The preference for the imagined to the real

In many ways this sums up many of the tendencies we have dealt with so far; Black Metal seems to express a disregard (a hostility) for the here and now of reality, as, for example, when Helge says that the extreme Metal music is a way of escaping – of dreaming oneself away from everyday life. Both Euronymous and the Count cite Venom and Bathory as early influences. Although they are aware that neither bands were seriously involved in satanism in practice, they are reported to have said that “they choose to believe otherwise” (*Kerrang* March 1993:43). They both avoid “reality tests”, so to speak. Same sort of expressions are uttered concerning Kittelsen, who surely did not regard the trolls and supernaturals that he drew as “evil beings”, as the Black Metallers like to have it (see Koefoed 1999). In their cult of nostalgia and the quest for an “ancient” atmosphere in their music, as we have seen, they prefer the ancient to the modern. All this points to the fact that the Black Metallers tend to disregard reality as it is; instead they are inclined to adjust it in accordance with their own romantic longings for an imaginary, enchanted and mysterious world of evil, the ancient, the Vikings, the medieval times and so on, where they are to be treated as the potent and ruling kings. Such a trait can, of course, also be seen as the very “essence” of romanticism, where imagination and emotional life are given primacy over more prosaic reality. For Helge this seems to be in resonance with some of his attitudes. For Knut, on the contrary, the expression “down to earth”, seems more fitting as we soon shall see. But as the Black Metallers are putting so much attention to their own, inner constructs, and the demand that the world should obey them, so to speak, this leads us to our last theme.

8. *Authenticity*

During the interviews with Knut and Helge, an ever returning theme was the demand to be real, the dismissal of “posers” and so on. This is also expressed when members of the band Emperor is reported to have said:

“The older bands sang about it – todays bands do it!” (Kerrang march 1993:42)

This statement expresses the demand to make the fantasy real, so to speak. This credo/announcement comes to mind when some very real acts of horror in fact were committed when this band’s drummer- the previously mentioned Bård Faust – killed the gay man in Lillehammer in 1992.

The underlining that Black Metal is not supposed to be any form of “childrens play” – that is an “as if” thing – is also an expression found in other sources.

I asked Knut why it is so important to be “real”. He answers:

“Lots of people have compared Black Metal to Blues. Many people are technically able to play Blues-music, but there are not many that really have it in them, so to speak. Blues is the music of the Negroes, you know, they have a reason to sing it. The Blues are music for mourning and.....Then you have people who have lots of money and...they have no reason to mourn, you know. That’s one reason”.

In other words you have to stand 100% behind the music; it’s got to be in your spine, so to speak, – just like the Blues, which here are referred to as a kind of archetype of music in which authenticity plays a foremost role.

Helge answers the same question:

“Its important to be real. In these genres, Black Metal and Death Metal, its not only the music that counts. Its the ideology around the band, what kind of feelings one puts into the music, and what kind of realness (in Norwegian: “ekthet”) the band has. For example, there’s a band called Carpathian Forest somewhere in Norway, and another one called Carpathian Full Moon. It is supposed to have something to do with Transylvania, this vampire thing you know. In addition they have taken up that Viking theme, and I mean Vikings and vampires are two things that really don’t go very well together, you know. (...) They mix things that don’t fit. It’s just clones. (...) And you know when Napalm Death sings about politics and are wearing Bermuda shorts on stage, then it’s absolutely not the right atmosphere that should exist in that kind of music; that’s my opinion. They sang their political words through the wrong kind of music, I think. (...) And even though Black Metal is somehow simpler than Death Metal, it is much more from the inside; it’s

absolutely a much more sincere music. Words and ideology are much more important.”

For Helge, music, message and genre are closely connected, and the demand for realness and authenticity also leads to a demand for originality and uniqueness. He respects Darkthrone, considered the first Norwegian band to introduce the theme of the Vikings and Nordic folklore, but has only contempt for all the bands that followed in this vein, repeating it, and therefore to be dismissed as clones.

The importance of matching ones inner life and conviction with the music is further emphasized in the following example.

I once attended a concert with a young, unknown Black Metal band. I noticed that the bass player really behaved like he was having a good time, smiling and dancing a little while he played. After the concert I overheard the vocalist and the guitar player discussing this behaviour. They were explicitly stating that smiling was not considered acceptable. In other words: a smile in this context can be interpreted as an expression of joy and happiness which, of course, is quite the opposite of what “real” Black Metal is about. And as Knut and Helge state over and over, there is a strong demand that you mean what you say. Consequently, a smile in a Black Metal concert is an indication of not being real, not being devoted to the message.

The thorny paths of fandom – positions of heterodoxies and rejection

When expressions of joy and positive feelings are viewed as signs of “posing”, this might be difficult for both fans and musicians. As Knut remarks:

“It was a time when you shouldn’t be glad. You had to be,.. “serious” all the time. It was kinda painful to be evil... they were “glad” when they were evil or... they shouldn’t be glad, so therefore they were evil, you know,... so it was quite... (shakes his head)...it was lots of silliness, ...it was so important to be evil, you know (...) When I was into that scene, it was also always so important to be accepted or not. If you were not accepted, it was not ok, but if you were accepted, that wasn’t especially fun either, because then there were so many expectations about what you should be like.... For example, you shouldn’t be too “kind”, you know, you should have the same image all the time, wearing black clothes and not wear... for example Nike shoes, yellow jackets, and so on...

Anthropologist: So it got too narrow, in a way, having to act in accordance with these expectations...too little freedom?

Yes. because...I only liked the music, I didn't like the whole package, you know...and I didn't give up my old friends either, I had friends that were outside that scene. I felt "is it ok that I'm with my old friends?", "is it ok that I go to the disco?," "is it ok that I listen to rock'n' roll?," or this and that..." You know all those expectations. And some of them are racists. And I've never been. I've grown up with people from other cultures all around me all my life, you know. It was kinda difficult to defend oneself against all those expectations, cause you had that pressure on yourself all the time to try to get accepted and all that – and that I got completely fed up with, so I decided to quit!

To sum up: the Black Metal genre is characterized as being – among other things – a cult of fear, death and evil; by death threats among its adherents; by idealizing suicide; by exclusive elitism; by an ideal of lack of empathy; by contempt for weakness; by elitism, where audiences outside the community's own circle are shunned; by an ethos where humour, laughter and joy are forbidden and dismissed; by promotion of racist calls for purity; by commission of quite real acts of horror, and by insistence on authenticity and being real. These characteristics seem to lead to heavy pressure and almost straitjacketing, as its devotees are expected to live in accordance with these ideals of so much hostility. In such a youth cultural community, life as a fan cannot be easy. Despite the resonance and attraction the fan may feel towards the sign, dissonance became – to some – more or less unbearable.

As result of these very problematic aspects of being a Black Metal fan, of which especially the recent racism associated with the genre represents too much dissonance for Knut, he quits the scene, and starts a new band with some of the friends outside the Black Metal community; they specialize on covers of old Kiss, Rolling Stones and also some Prince tunes that make up the repertoire which he labels "straight rock'n' roll". These preferences of Knut underline his explicitly stated longing for the more "down to earth" versions of popular rock'n' roll where "having fun" is the primary goal. Thus Knut more or less reaches the point of *rejection* in the continuum of signs of the Black Metal traditions and instead associates to "something else", in the shape of more straightforward rock'n'roll.

Helge moves in yet another direction, concentrating more on musical experiments, citing both Norwegian folk music and contemporary music from the classic tradition as his inspirational sources. His path is more in line with the *creative ego* of experimentation within the high arts and the sources of inspiration from the Faust-figure, where connections with the "satanic" make him an agent for creativity in a more "modernist" musical vein (this accords with the ideas proposed in Thomas Manns famous book *Dr. Faustus*

where the father of modernist atonal music, Arnold Schoenberg, is the model for its main character).

Fandom, as these stories show, is obviously an active and creative thing, contesting, disagreeing with, struggling, sometimes accepting and sometimes refusing the more or less hegemonic versions of the orthodoxies – here of being a Black Metaller – as expressed by an influential core. Such struggles also go on within those cores – as we can detect from the competition for power and influence that seems to lie behind some of the more dramatic events we have described.

And when a former girlfriend of the Count, who witnessed against him in the trial, and who still insists that she is a satanist; when she publicly dismisses him, accusing him for liking what she contemptuously terms “Viking pop”, we intuit that also struggles between the sexes are not to be forgotten within such stories (Arbeiderbladet 6/5 1994).

Omar and Metal: orthodoxies, heterodoxies and their limits

While antiracism and openness for youth with a variety of backgrounds characterized Hip-hop, the tradition of Heavy Metal, in general, and Black Metal, in particular, has mostly pointed in the very opposite direction. In 1999 I ask Omar if he agrees to these characteristics:

Yes, hip-hop is definitely more mixed. I haven't thought about the thing that Metal has been mostly what whites are doing. But as you mention it I am quite sure you are right. It is true!

Anthropologist: But wasn't it problematic being friends with Knut when he was so deeply into that Black Metal thing?

It is true that Black Metal is very white. And the extreme parts of it are extremely nationalist. But I have never been into doing all the same thing as my friends. To me it has been more about what we could give each other. Just as Ola and me we have been quite alike. Both were digging both hip-hop and heavy. (...) Knut and I attended the same class at school. At first it was Kiss, then Metallica, then he took off on Death Metal and Black Metal. He acquired just black clothes and the whole package of style. His recent band has nearly made its own genre. It's extreme Metal, quite special. I like it, I must admit. But those things have never been troublesome for our friendship. I think Knut and I will always be good friends in the future too. We see each other quite often even now, and...

Anthropologist: But at the club nowadays (1999) noone is interested in heavy rock or any music that has anything to do with guitars?

You are quite right. Nowadays it's zero guitars and heavy rock. They have grown up with electronic music (House, Techno and to some extent Hip Hop, author's remark). When I have visited them and put on let's say a Led Zeppelin record, "Stairway to heaven" for instance – that one was very good when we were young – it's obvious that they haven't even heard about it (shaking his head). It's the development, you know...

That the interest in heavy rock at the club in 1999 was completely absent, has to be seen as connected with exactly its primarily "white" character. In a milieu where the majority now consists of youth with immigrant background, this is no surprise (see chapter 7 "Music..."). With his interest in heavyrock Omar is distancing himself from those who have Hip Hop as a more homologous style:

Anthropologist: You don't exactly look like a typical Hip Hop'er?

There are many people that don't "go" hip-hop with clothes and the whole thing. I made pieces (grafitti, author's remark) and I danced, but I didn't use the clothes; then it's more lifestyle...

Anthropologist: But you also enjoy different styles, like Metallica, Pantera and such groups. Many think that those that like Hip Hop do not like anything else...?

That's right. I know several hip-hop'ers for whom I had to hide away my heavy records when they visited me. I was quite fed up with listening to just one type of music when I was with them. When we were in the discos and they played something that wasn't rap or hip-hop, they said "hell, let's go, they don't play nothing but fucking dub" (parodying).

Here, Omar points to the representatives of the orthodoxies within the Hip Hop traditions, from whom he distances himself. This underlines, of course, that the position of the orthodoxies is not necessarily acceptable for the more creative actors within the various traditions, as exemplified by Omar himself as a well known breakdancer. In other words, the centre of creativity may perhaps exist at a certain distance from the orthodoxies of the various continua, as these tend to be characterized by a certain stiffness.

Omar's openness to Heavy Metal was still not unproblematic. This is indicated as he tells me he never visited the cafes or places in town frequented the Heavy Metal fans frequented, and that were also visited by both Knut and Ola:

No, I never went there. It's only heavy rockers there, leather jacket folks. Heavy and trash-diggers; those aren't my places, even if I like the music.

As a result of Heavy Metal traditions being oriented towards a mainly white audience and the explicit racist ideology in the recent genre of Black Metal, it is no surprise that a Hip Hop'er with immigrant background, like Omar did not feel at home in places predominantly frequented by Metal fans; these caused a certain dissonance. When he, despite this, appreciates the music itself, he rises above the ideological tendencies connected with these genres. And despite the recent use of musical ingredients from Heavy Metal within Hip Hop, their long term use in some of the more experimental genres of Funk (for example the milieu around highly celebrated black American Funk groups such as Parliament and Funkadelic), and the existence of the all black experimental Metal influenced band Living Color, it still seems to be some time until the old ideological fences between Hip Hop/rap and Heavy Metal are torn down.

In other words, the cores of orthodoxy within the two continua were clearly dissonating with each other. Nevertheless, the fact that, for example, both Omar and Ola despite this could be both well-respected breakdancers, and Metal fans as well, shows that such “hybrid” positions are perfectly possible, as long as they exist at a sufficient distance to the orthodoxies.

But when Omar avoided locations that were too strongly associated with the core milieus of the Metal fans, this also points to the fact that such hybridisation nevertheless does have some limits.

The history of the Heavy Metal traditions, especially in the more recent development in the extreme Metal genres, may also be seen as continua of signs that deliberately play on the themes of strong cultural dissonance (such as horror, death, evil) in their surroundings. Such a deliberate provoking of cultural norms and attitudes, that their practices create, also seem to have strong potentials to arouse what we later will introduce as “*semiotic attention*” (see chapter 12 and 13 “The power of dissonance” Part I and II) in their own as well as their surrounding social environments.

4 Subjectivity, self and identification: youth culture, friendship and an Arabian guitarline. Omar's story part IV

“Identity and difference are not so much about categorical groupings as about processes of identification and differentiation. These processes are engaged for all of us, in different ways, with desire to belong, to be part of some community, however provisional. Belonging invokes desire, and it is in this desire that much of the passion for difference resides.”
(Henrietta Moore 1994:2)

In the previous chapters the theme of *identity* has been present in several ways.

In chapter 1 (“Inclusion and resonance in the present...”) we noticed Omar's introduction of the Arabian guitar line hinting at Omars Iraqi background in the small scale and somehow “private” musical conversation between himself and Ola. We interpreted the further utterings made by Ola as comments on this statement, among other things, leading to the introduction of the odd note, summing up the quality of their conversation in the closing, common laughter. (“Postlude I” of the present chapter will contain some concluding comments to the analysis of that whole event.) Through the analysis of this fine grained, face to face relationship of non verbal conversation between these two friends of different cultural/geographical origins, we started our exploration of the phenomenon conceptualized as ‘resonance’. Resonance is here understood as a personally invested experience of ‘having things in common’; in social interaction the handling of identity must be seen as an ever present underlying theme in any such relationship. When the dialogue partners exchange messages, they also exchange ‘bits and pieces’ of themselves, so to speak, in so far as our invocation of Mauss’ “*The Gift*” in this analysis was right. The utterings, the generating of expectations and the corresponding need for confirmation in this dialogue can, in other words, be seen as an implicit *exchange of ‘identity-items’*. Here, the Arabian guitar line can, of course, be seen as an exception to this implicitness, as this statement more explicitly refers to (identify) a significant difference in the background of the utterer.

In chapter 2 (“Inclusion, resonance and semiosis”) we analyzed some processes presumably lying behind this conversation, in which the theme of

identity became even more manifest. We started by analyzing some points in the process whereby Omar, in his childhood, shifted his weight of orientation from the Iraqi/Arabian ways represented by his family, towards “something else” in the shape of the world outside the family, as he came to participate in the public sphere of the other children in Rudenga, in which the friendship with Ola was a salient feature. Here the “Norwegian” seemed to be the label that Omar found most appropriate to describe the groups to which he now associated himself. Through these shifts, his identification seemed somehow to move from one such point (that is a continuum of signs) to another.

His next critical step was his involvement in the breakdancing of the first wave of Hip Hop, participating in events and processes whereby the youth in Rudenga, on a more collective level, responded to and acquired the Hip Hop sign in their more or less reflexive (conscious) struggle for changing/counteracting the stigma of the place. In this process, Omar and Ola played central roles as signs that generated prestige and were part in the transformation of the place, using impulses from a transnational youth cultural tradition. Here the phenomenon of identity played a central part in at least three ways:

1. Youth whose immigrant or African American backgrounds were part of their identity played a salient part in the origin of a youth cultural tradition (Hip Hop) that was brought into use locally.
2. Large numbers of the youngsters in Rudenga (among them Omar and Ola) seemed to identify with (and use) this sign on the basis of salient similarities between the contexts and practices of the Hip Hop tradition, on the one hand, and their own life situation and characteristics of their neighborhood, on the other. This use included both youth of solely Norwegian origin, as well as youth from immigrant families.
3. As successful breakdancers Omar and Ola were strongly identified, both by themselves and by others, as spearheads of these processes. For Omar and Ola their personal investments and skills thus became transformed into collective signs for these processes, in which their identity (as Rudenga dwellers and as Hip Hop’ers) played a salient part.

In chapter 3 (“Hostile signs-dissonating signs...”) we saw how Omar (as well as some of his close friends) was fascinated by another sign-complex, in the shape of some recent genres within Heavy Metal, that – especially in the most extreme versions to which his friend Knut was associated – were characterized by a more or less explicit hostility towards “foreigners”. In

spite of his fascination (musical and probably also related to the excitement of horror), this trait seemed to make Omar keep a certain distance to the sign, as such hostility was sensed to be directed against his immigrant related identity. The associated hostility towards foreigners also dissonated with Knut's friendship with Omar (among others) and was a significant part of Knut's decision to at least partly dissociate himself from that continuum of signs.

Throughout all these examples the phenomenon of identity seems to be more adequately described as an active, elastic and ongoing process of shifting *identifications* than as something given, static, coherent and stable. It seems to be a phenomenon of movement and active navigation directed into, through, within or away from some various positions in a complex landscape of identity-signs and associated social relations, than whatever else. For these youth cultural communities both popular music and dance, as well as "ethnic" identity in a more traditional, family bound sense, seem to play important parts.

How are such processes of identity-handling to be understood in a multicultural arena like Rudenga?

To reach an understanding of these processes three central questions need to be explored:

1. *With what* do the actors in question identify? In Omar's story, as told until the present, there are several such points of identification. In the following we will try to complete this "list" up to the time of the second fieldwork. In so far as there seem to be several such points of identification, what consequences does this multiplicity have for the understanding of the "self" as the possible red thread in these processes?
2. *Why* does our actor identify with the sign complexes in question? More specifically: what can be identified as the *urge* – the motivating and moving force – behind such shifts of identification?
3. Youth cultural communities, both in the more spectacular and transnational versions (Hip Hop, Heavy Metal, etcetera), and in varieties of more local origin, strongly tend to be relatively spurious and transitional by nature. In contrast, cultural communities related to the family and its area of origin are often held to have a heavier and longer lasting impact as a directing force working upon the individual. In so far as these assumptions can be supported: *in what ways will such differences between these various sources of identity be discernable in the lives and experiences of the youth in question?*

To answer some of these questions the concept of identity needs some further exploration.

Some remarks on the conceptualisation of identity

The concept of identity, and a corresponding critique of it, has been an intensely debated topic within social sciences as well as in the humanities in recent years (see, for example, Ewing 1990; Giddens 1991; Moore 1994; Wikan 1995; Back 1996; Hall and du Gay (eds.) 1996; Mørck 1998; Joseph 1999; Moore in Moore (ed.) 1999; Battaglia in Moore (ed.) 1999; Archetti 1999). While this topic has long been one of the core themes within social anthropology, the heightened attention given it in recent debates in various related disciplines must be seen as especially actualized by the processes of globalization and the need to understand the myriads of local manifestations concerning the theme of identity triggered by this phenomenon.

For anthropologists a recurrent theme within these debates has been a discussion of the cultural specificity of what is conceived as a primarily “Western” version of the self (see also Moore 1994; Wikan 1995). As Ewing writes:

“As a foil to their studies of self in other cultures, anthropologists have tended to identify the concept of an autonomous, cohesive, bounded self as the Western concept of self, suggesting that this idea of a cohesive self is merely the outcome of our Western spatial categories and individualism.” (Ewing 1990:256)

Ewing sees this concept of self, (that she also likens to the psychologist Kohut’s concept of self) as a parallel to, and closely connected with, the recently strongly criticized concept of culture:

“This assumption of a single culturally constituted concept of self rests on a further assumption that, until very recently, has been the prevailing paradigm in cultural anthropology: that “cultures” themselves are coherent systems. Anthropologists have understood cultures to be organized systems, resting on distinctive underlying principles and constituting global reality for those raised in a particular cultural tradition. From this perspective, culture itself is perceived as a timeless whole, which changes only if impinged upon by external force. A common procedure for anthropologists (...) has been to identify basic organizing, cultural principles and then to explain how the culture’s concept of the person also rests on these principles.”(ibid:258)

For Ewing the recent decades of questioning and criticizing notions of culture as a coherent, clearly bounded and homogenous whole seems to have made way for a similar questioning of the notions of self and identity as a coherent and unitary center (as well as for criticizing and avoiding “*assumptions of symbolic anthropologists who have searched for a particular culture’s ‘concept of self’*”) (ibid). Up against the presumed monolithic notion of a coherent culture, as well as of a corresponding overarching “concept of self”, she directs attention towards the *personal experience of the self*, the environment and significant others, in other words, towards practice, as the present author conceives it, in the shape of the subtle interplay between subjective (individual/idiosyncratic/personal) experience and agency on the one hand, and the collective forms of tradition (old and new) on the other.

A concept of culture that focuses mainly on coherence and the monolithic will, in several ways, tend to reduce attention to variation, resistance, irregularity and creativity; this is, for example, underlined by Barth (see for example Barth 1987, 1994). In much the same vein, Foucaults concept of “discourse” has been criticized for leaving little place for anything else than hegemonic power¹.

Hall requires instead:

“(…) a theory of what the mechanisms are by which individuals as subjects identify (or do not identify) with the ‘positions’ to which they are summoned; as well as how they fashion, stylize, produce and ‘perform’ these positions, and why they never do so completely, for once and all time, and some never do, or are in a constant, agonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating the normative or regulative rules with which they confront and regulate themselves.” (Hall, in Hall (ed.) 1996:14, my underlining)

In other words both Ewing and Hall criticize what they hold to be an earlier concept of “culture” and the more recent concept of “discourse”, respectively, for conveying images of social life as more or less homogenized and one-sidedly “produced” by some misconceptualized coherent and monolithic whole, leaving too little attention to variation, irregularity, fluidity, contingency, resistance, transformation, creativity or ambiguity on the part of social actors.

¹ As Hall also notices, there exist several attempts, especially on the basis of the late works of Foucault, to develop a theoretical framework where also the problems of resistance and counter-power are adressed more thoroughly Hall in Hall and duGay 1997). It is, of course, far beyond the intention of our argument to discuss more closely if such a critique of Foucault’s oeuvre should be considered correct or not.

A concept of identity that is more adjusted to these critiques, I suggest, is supported by the following row of arguments:

1. Traditions of knowledge (culture) may be viewed as a continuum where the largest relevant unit of collectivity is at the one end. This may be parted into a range of different collectivities that often share traits, attitudes, norms, aesthetics and so on, that may or may not conflict on the basis of, for example, gender, age, class, occupations etcetera. These collectivities may be further reduced into gradually smaller units (collectivities), ending in the individual who, at the other end of this continuum, exhibits traits that are strictly personal, unique and idiosyncratic (see also Shore 1996; Moore 1994; Strauss and Quinn 1997). Social life will thus occur within a continuum that consist of various *degrees of sharedness (collectivity)* on the one hand, and various *degrees of uniqueness/idiosyncrasy (traits that are not shared, possibly tending to escape, resist or at least cause friction against the modeling power of the collectivities in question)*, on the other. A viable concept of identity must, therefore take into consideration both these dimensions – the collective *and* the personal – as central sources for processes of identification. As these two aspects are solely *united in subjective experience*, the study of identity requires this analytical level as its focal core. On all these levels, as well as between them, there will be a possible contest about power – including the relations between the various “selves” (of identification) *within* the individual.
2. In an urban multicultural situation – brought about by processes of globalization, which result in a densification of representatives (collectives as well as individuals) of a variety of different cultural traditions, often concentrated in the same areas – the noticeable range of alternative collectivities will be great. When alternatives to one’s own ways of living are strongly present next door (as in Omar’s case), the taken-for-grantedness (doxa) of the ways of one’s own family (whether immigrant or not) may be continually challenged. *As individuals within the same family may develop quite different strategies to cope with the multicultural situation, according to for example gender, age or personal experience, the need to focus on the subjectivities of concrete actors emerge as especially important.* If culture or discourse were as determining as these concepts – in their monolithic (and perhaps caricatured) versions – respectively suggest, there could be no movement, no possible loosening of the feeling of identity with one such tradition (discourse), and no development of identification with another. Neither would there be much room for creation of traditions

(including communities) that were genuinely new, eventually deserving the term “hybrids”, being neither the one nor the other but built on recombinations of impulses/fragments/parts from both. In other words, the presumably overdetermining power of such concepts as “culture” or “discourse” seems to be especially challenged in such an empirical situation. The nature of such a challenge can only be detected through the careful, empirical investigation of actors maneuvering in such a landscape on the basis of subjective experience.

To these arguments a third point regarding the diagnosis of the present historical epoch that seem to be of special relevance for our topic, must be added:

3. In the situation labeled late-, high- post-, or liquid- modernity – labels that mostly seem to apply to urban Western post-industrialized areas – the theorists arguing about the content of these concepts at least seem to somehow converge in the agreement of the presence of one characteristic of great importance to the theme of identity; this is, namely, the loosening grip of tradition and pre-given trajectories, and the corresponding demand on the individual to “create” ones own identity on various levels (see for example Giddens 1991; Beck 1998; Featherstone 1991; Bauman 1998, 2000). As a large number of the families who have immigrated to these areas have their origin in areas of the world where quite different traditions are held to have a stronger grip on people’s lives (especially in rural areas), it is reasonable to believe that the confrontation between family background and an ethos putting strong weight on the individual responsibility for creating one’s own identity (and life-career), may heighten an experience of tension and dilemmas on the individual level.

In other words, the critique of the monolithic models of social life, the most salient characteristics of the recent multicultural situation, and the assumed characteristics of the recent versions of modernity, all point to the necessity of approaching identity/self as an aspect of concrete *personal experience*. (The recognition of such a need may of course itself be a product of the condition of post-, high-, late-, or liquid-modernity, as theoretical concerns within the social sciences often seem to reflect the very “zeitgeist” in which they occurs.)

As Bataglia puts it, criticizing both Foucault and Bourdieu, for overemphasizing “*the subject as constructed by and within external social*

forces of sociality” (Bataglia, in Moore (ed.) 1999:143; see also Moore 1994 for a critique of Bourdieu on similar lines):

“Rather, selves are from the start an open question: subject to the constraints and manipulations of cultural forces, on the one hand, and on the other hand capable, upon reflection, of breaking with and transforming the situation in which they are formed.” (Bataglia in Moore (ed.) 1999:115)

As long as there is a tendency to see subjectivity (identity, self) as passively modeled by “external forces of sociality”, be it in the name of “culture” or “discourse”, it is no wonder why agency (resistance, creativity etcetera) becomes difficult to handle. Bataglia’s suggestion, as a countermove to these tendencies, is to underline the necessity of focusing upon the *ambiguity* of the subjectivities under study (ibid), while Ewing stresses the need for the anthropologist to focus sharply on *personal experience* to discover the assumed shiftings and composite inconsistencies of the selves (even though the self, according to the latter author, paradoxically tends to be experienced subjectively as exactly the opposite, that is as a more or less coherent whole, Ewing 1990).

And in so far as the self and its subjective experience of identity are to be regarded as a phenomenon developed and transformed in social relations to a variety of significant others, their points of orientation/identification also serve, of course, as demarcations, to some degree, of both “who I am” and the “we” one identifies with, as well as their negation – the one I am not, the “we” I do not identify with – underlining, in other words, that “self” and “identity” are most of all *relational* phenomena.

From a semiotic perspective, the feeling of identity in the present can largely be seen as a *creative result based on sedimented experiences from the past*. Past experience implies constellations of differences stemming from interpretations of past events, relationships and situations that through time will be more or less continually sedimented in the person as layers upon layers; these become an ever increasing, cognitively and emotionally charged *pool of potentialities* (dispositions/habits/signs) to be activated as interpretants in the variety of situations in the present. This seems to be in accordance with Colapietro’s suggestion based on Peirce’s account of the self as a complex of habits (understood as a basis for improvisation, Colapietro 1989). Here Colapietro draws upon DeWitt Parker’s distinction between what the latter termed “*the matrix self*” as a base and background for what he, on the other hand, suggests as “*a focal self*”, understood as the activity of the self occurring on the surface, that is, in the continual flow of

events in the present. This conceptual distinction is suggested to enlighten some important aspects of Peirce's account of the self (Colapietro 1989:93-95; see also Parker 1941):

“The matrix self is that complex of habits that represents both a summation of the past and an orientation toward the future. It is a summation of the past because the habits that constitute the matrix self are largely the ultimate logical interpretants of prior semiotic processes – that is, they are largely the final products of our own interpretive efforts.” (Colapietro 1989:94)

Here, it is important to add that habits – in the Peircean sense – as the sedimented provisional end result of past semiotic processes, may also *conflict with each other*, giving rise to a more multifaceted and composite notion of self than a more superficial understanding of Peirce seems to suggest.

Thus, if past experiences, either as a result of repetition (“a series of struggles”) or of importance (like traumas in extreme cases), we may add, make up a pool of signs to be activated in the present, then we may propose that such a pool will also provide fundamental sources for the subjective experience of identity, of the feeling of self. This is also relatively coherent with the view upon the self as put forth by the Freudian tradition, where past social relationships, especially to the parents, play a central role (see for example Weiner in Moore (ed.) 1999).

To sum up: we will approach the problem of identity in the multicultural situation by focusing upon the subjective experience of social relations, especially as manifested through the experiences of events of special importance to the actors. In these analyses we will direct our attention towards the *compositeness*, the *ambiguity* and the *shifts* in the various aspects of the self in the processes of identification. In the last part of the chapter, we will confront the spuriousness of these various shifts of youth cultural identification with the re-emergence of a concern with the ways, practices and traditions associated with the family and its areas of origin, as our protégée reaches a new phase of life in his early twenties.

Such a view of the self, as we hope to show empirically, can also be seen to be in accordance with the emphasis put upon self-creation as a central characteristic of the condition of high-, late- or post modernity.

Equipped with these conceptual tools and lenses, how are we to understand the phenomenon of identity as it unfolds in the stories we have presented from Rudenga?

In our description of Omar's story so far, we have identified several examples of what we here have termed critical events in the processes of identification, understood as personally invested moves in which the handling of identity in one way or another is undertaken. Some have covered longer time spans that he speaks of as different "periods", "times" or "phases", and seem to match the various and shifting "presents" of the focal self.

The first one was the period when he was feeling more or less unreflexively associated with his family as a child. The second is characterized more or less by a shift from an identification with his family's ways towards the community of the local children, associated with the Norwegian. The third, the first period Omar himself more clearly identifies, is the time of being a breakdancer together with Ola. The next one was his short career as Heavy Metal fan. All these must be considered as answers to the question: *with what* – that is which continuum of signs – he has identified through time. But there were more to come. In 1999 as a youth in his early twenties, Omar discerns at least three more such "periods". And before our analysis of his story up to the point in time of that conversation can be concluded, we must have a closer look at some of these other phases.

Through the investigation of these, it becomes clear that Omar's mastering of youth cultural skills and distinctions did not end after his "breakdance-period". In fact, while being heavily involved in these activities, he was also in contact with a new youth cultural community, a new sign continuum on its rise, whose center was the mastering of its core item and key sign: the skateboard.

But Omar's discovery of the skateboard nevertheless had a small *prelude* providing his discovery to come with an important continuity with the skills and identity he already had acquired. This step in his story is presented below.

A short story on the semiotics of getting acquainted

As mentioned earlier, Omar and his family moved away from Rudenga to a smaller place only some hours travel away, for a short period of time. He was at this time around twelve years old. As the only "foreigner" in the place he was received with scepticism and even hostility at first. Being an unknown and a newcomer in such a situation made him necessarily an ambiguous person to his surroundings. By the fact that he, in addition to this, had an immigrant background in a local milieu where no other of such a "kind" was known; this ambiguous strangeness, this *undecided potentiality* of who and what he would turn out to be was probably amplified. According to Peircean

phenomenology, such potentiality belongs to the first stages of the semiotic process; one encircles the sign, reacting to it through the immediate interpretants (reactions), looking for some recognizable traits to be used in the judgments to come. Especially, we may add, when the sign is noticed as unfamiliar, uncertain and as having some saliency, the urge to decide and to settle an interpretation is likely to be strongly felt. A major “concern” (as Wikan would have termed it, see below) for the local youth when exposed to a new boy arriving in their neighborhood, will, in short, be the *urge to decide* “*who he is*” and thus establish (interpret) the newcomer as a (more familiar) sign.

From Omar’s position the situation was perhaps even more urgent. But despite the hostility that met him on arrival, he gradually became more accepted. It also happened that Ola visited his old friend to do some dancing together, something that also probably contributed to Omar soon becoming a profiled figure in his new neighborhood. When arriving at a new place and a new social setting, the concern on a newcomer’s part will be to make new friends and to find a meaningful social position in the local milieu of youngsters. Putting it in more relational terms, the need to signify each other – to settle and decide, at least provisionally, the mutual reactions (interpretations) of who the other is – becomes a mutual concern. The process of making acquaintances, friends (or the opposite), driven by the *urge* to show oneself – that is; to be identified – as an acceptable, respect-deserving and even enjoyable social persona, can in other words be regarded as a semiotic process.

And in this process Omar naturally draws on his already acquired assets (experiences) brought with him from his previous neighborhood in Rudenga. More concretely: he dances – offering a quite concrete “proof of the pudding”, so to speak. Through this he reveals his skills as a breakdancer and as something of an expert in the cultural codes of the recent wave of Hip Hop, that at the time was well known and, to many youngsters, a prestigious style. By bringing these attractive skills into the light of the real – exposing them so that his fellow youngsters fond themselves in a situation to judge – he was decided, that is identified, to be “cool”.

This process of becoming known and judged as “acceptable”, and even “enjoyable”, can be seen as a semiotic process that largely follows the similar phases, originally identified by Peirce, as we discerned during our analysis of the encounter with the Hip Hop sign in chapter 2 (“Inclusion, resonance and semiosis...”), referring to the triad of the emotional, the energetic and the logical interpretant.

The first reaction to the new boy in the neighborhood is the rise of some sort of emotions, soon resulting in (action, in the shape of) thoughts,

anticipations, speculations about the “content”, so to speak (energetic interpretants), ending in some provisional judgement (the logical interpretant) whereas a similar process would start anew, until the significations (impressions, images, experiences) that he elicits in his surroundings more or less – but never fully – “calm” down, and the impression of him as a sign (that is his identification in the glances of the others) becomes settled and reaches some degree of permanence. Peirce compares the process of thinking (that is perhaps the most advanced activity of semiosis) to the playing of a melody. As he puts it:

“Thought is a thread of melody running through the succession of our sensations.” (Peirce 1992:129)

He further regards the purpose of thinking to be the reaching of what he terms “*a belief*”:

“And what, then, is a belief? It is the demi-cadence which closes a musical phrase in the symphony of our intellectual life.” (ibid)

A cadence is, more precisely, the release of the musical tension that has been built through a series of musical events. The initiating stages in the process of getting acquainted can metaphorically be likened to such building up of musical tension, through questions of who the acquaintances “are” to each other. As a parallel to our suggestions in the analysis of the dialogue between Ola and Omar, getting acquainted, in other words, evolves around an exchange of reactions from the utterers, in the shape of questions, expectations and confirmations. There is always a possibility of experiencing or even deliberately activating dissonance; this, of course, creates tension and excitement, through the *constant possibility of breaking down the relationship*. There is, in other words, a mutual urge to identify each other – as equals or as non equals – to speak in terms of the possible directions of the actualised power flow. And in a situation such as Omar’s, where he is the newcomer and “they” are the majority that through its sheer numbers has the initiating “right” to know and decide who the newcomer “is”, much tension is likely to be raised. On Omar’s part, the big question is, of course, *if* he will be accepted (including *how* and *when*), and to what degree. When he then reveals his dancing capacities, and through this is decided (that is, confirmed) to be “cool”, both parts experience exactly such a “*demi-cadence*” that Peirce is writing about. It is the reaching of some point where the tension is released, and the activity of interpreting each other reaches the first, and provisional, rest. And it is a “*demi-cadence*” as opposed to a complete cadence, exactly in this provisional sense. The process never fully stops; it always tends to have to start anew, as it has to be confirmed or not

confirmed, or developed into new directions, that is as a process that continually has to be negotiated – just as the “kitchen scene” could be considered as just a “drop of confirmation” in Omar’s and Ola’s ongoing process of friendship – through the almost never ending processes of semiosis.

Thus, in such a complex semiotic process as getting to “know” a person or a phenomenon, these steps are likely to occur many times on different levels, building up in clusters and also in repetitions, regarding various aspects of the person/phenomenon under consideration. But also on a more overarching level, such a process of signification seems to be reflected in the phenomena encircled by Peirce. The prestige and revering attitudes accompanying it from his surroundings would, become an experience also to Omar himself; these would strongly support, amplify and add to his own feeling of identity, as such positive “*mirroring*” from ones fellow youth underlines identity as a truly relational phenomenon, created in the interaction of self and others.

In other words; in the dialogic process where Omar, on the one hand, was revealing himself as a skillful breakdancer, and where, on the other, his fellow youth reacted to this with acts of confirmation and even admiration, they both engaged in the search for points of *resonance*, points for meeting each other, for the experience of community, which is exactly what the most rewarding aspects of the process of “becoming acquainted” are all about. As previously suggested in the analysis of his dialogue with Ola – where they were both exchanging mutual confirmations of each other on the conversational face to face level, as well as the confirmation on their skills as breakdancers that they experienced from the collectivities of local youth at that period – ; he experienced once more a positive confirmation of himself in this new setting. This became an important accommodating foundation for his further steps in the social surroundings of his new neighborhood, as “who he was” was so strongly associated with such attractive skills. In this way, *sedimented experiences from the past are brought up, exposed to the world, and made relevant in the continual negotiation of identity in the present.*

This surface of time is, as previously mentioned, also where the focal self resides. When this aspect of the self experiences such an important event as a *settling of the identity* of the newcomer, this positive event of resonance may sink into the deeper layers of the matrix self, adding one more positive experience to Omar’s well-conditioned repertoire of self esteem.

Skateboard

Such process of experiencing positive confirmation in the new situation continued even further into the future, as he got to try a *skateboard* from one

of his new local friends. And for a young boy that already had developed the bodily mastering required for such a complex of expressive movements as breakdance, it did not take much time until he was “*hooked on the board*” as he put it. Again we encounter a transnational youth cultural tradition that is picked up by local youth, thus becoming the “stuff” (the medium) for resonance that new communities are built upon.¹

This new phase in Omar’s story will, once more, be contextualized by supplementing it with empirical data from the expertise of the actual youth cultural tradition into which our protagonist now have entered.

A central figure within the relative recent milieu of Norwegian skaters is “Henrik”, whom I had the opportunity to meet in 1996 (Vestel et.al. 1997). He was then twenty one, had a degree from a college of sport and answered as follows when I asked him why skateboard attracted his attention:

I got to try a board from a friend in 88 and I immediately knew this was the thing for me: it was exciting, and you had to practice decently to be able to manage it. I was doing several types of sport beforehand. Hockey, soccer, skiing. But there you always had those trainers and grown ups that told you what to do. It was quite different in skating. Noone else decided. Skating is much more an individualist thing. You have to have your own style when you’re skating, it isn’t really something to be taught. You just have to do it your own way. It’s also dangerous. That’s part of the fun. It simply isn’t fun if it’s not dangerous. The kicks of adrenaline, you know. You also have to push yourself to take new chances. Not always, of course. You always have to keep up the basics. The thing is always mastering your board.

Some of the central concerns for Henrik are, in other words, the feeling of autonomy and detachment from the contrasted fields of sport, where trainers and grown ups told him what to do. In addition, the joys and excitements of mastering the board, not surprisingly seemed to be a main point of motivation.

¹ Historically, surfers in California made the first skateboards in the sixties (see Brooke 1999). Informants tell that the first skateboard was developed when the surfers put wheels on the board to get to the beach. Accordingly, it is said that San Francisco still is the center of the skateboard cultural tradition, the city to which the professionals move half of the year to skate. All throughout the eighties and the nineties there have been existing skateboarders in Norway (that also formed their own organization called NORB – Norsk Organisasjon for Rullebrett – The Norwegian Skateboard Organization). Skateboard was illegal in Norway until 1989. After the prohibition ended a new commercial boom for skateboard arose.

Competitions are held two or three times a year and are important events in the milieu. Despite this it is underlined that skaters are not concerned with competing with each other. To develop ones personal style is regarded as more important. The main function of the competitions is the social, meeting other skateboarders for common activities. Several of the skaters do not wish to see skateboard as just another kind of sport, and very few wish to become part of the official Norwegian milieu of sports. Henrik says:

Skating is more about style, underground culture, music and something alternative.

Also here we can register a dismissal of commercialization and trendiness, that are regarded as a threat against the more or less oppositional underground-stamp of the community (as we soon shall see such a quest for an underground-quality in the activities was also a salient to Omar in some of his subsequent phases). One also finds some Norwegian skateboarders in the world elite. Among these are Adhil Dhyani who, as his name indicates, has immigrant background. I ask Henrik if there are many with such a background among the Norwegian skaters:

It's not many. But I have several good friends with immigrant background that I'm skating with. Noone has anything against them. One thing is important here. All skaters are anti-racist. Skaters are open-minded. Our concern is to skate all countries. We respect all people and nationalities. Many of us go abroad on the interrail with the board under our arm. Then you will never have any problem getting to know people. And you'll always have a place to stay. That's the way it is in Norway too. You may skate in almost any town in the whole country and you'll meet other skaters that will help you. (...) There are very good relationships amongst us. (My underlinings.)

Here Henrik reveals his experience of the skateboard tradition as a truly transnational community, characterized by an explicit openness and tolerance towards different "people" and nationalities. Such transnationality is also to some extent underlined through the enjoyment of various musical genres like new and old punk as well as Hip Hop. Omar also mentions "Grunge" as a type of music that was popular among the skaters he hung out with. And some of the older skateboarders – like Omar – have earlier experiences with breakdance. Again we glimpse another youth cultural tradition that to some makes up a lifestyle that includes music, attitudes and a general style.

Omar tells me it was mainly "Norwegians" he was skating with, even though some with immigrant background also did participate. Was this important to Omar?

Anthropologist: Skaters I've been interviewing say that skaters are antiracist. And in Norway you have Adhil Dhyani who has Moroccan, or is it Palestinian... background who has been quite successful. Was this something that was important for you or your skateboard friends?

No, we were only in it for the skating itself. We never thought about such things. It was more about learning the tricks and doing things right. I spent months just learning to do it (...). It was a hell of a lot of fun; that was the most important.

Again we notice that the motivation, the way skateboarding was subjectively perceived, was not connected with its traditions for openness towards youth with immigrant background. As with Omar's fascination with and participation in the communities of breakdancing, in this case, it was also primarily style; the movements, the development of technical skills and perhaps most importantly, the sheer *joy* of it, that was central to his subjectively experienced motivation.

Omar talks warmly about this period in his life, where working to learn new tricks and the experience of community amongst the like-minded were experienced as "*a big kick*". All this adds skateboarding to the row of discernible periods of identification, and to the series of experiences of getting positive confirmation from some significant others, flowing from the focal self to the sedimented repertoire of the matrix self of interpenetrating habits and possible dispositions for things to come.

Nevertheless, after a few years his family moved back to Rudenga. At this point in time his interest in skateboard gradually decreased, and was taken over by new forms of action in the shape of dancing. Once again Hip Hop caught his interest

"Clubtime" and "city strolling"

Omar discerns this next phase as "clubtime" or "Hip Hop time". He now becomes a member of the core of the youth club in Rudenga. At this time, that is in the beginning of the nineties, Hip Hop once more is a new, up-coming wave, strongly stimulated by the new, emerging sub genre, the so called "Gangsta Rap", at this time making a big commercial breakthrough (see also chapter 7 "Music..."). Omar is now starting a new dancing group together with three friends, all of different immigrant background. I ask him why Hip Hop once again becomes so fascinating:

I already had the foundation with my experience with breakdancing and the Beat Street package. It was so incredibly cool dancing to that music. It was dancing, cool movements and it was connected to the youth club.

It was not Heavy and not rock music. Hip Hop was something new. It was a new time! (in Norwegian: “ei ny tid”). Of course it was a wave, just like skating. Everybody dug (in Norwegian: “digga”) it.

Here he underlines that the rising wave of Hip Hop was felt as something else than Heavy and rock, that had had a strong position in Rudenga for a long time. Though Omar distanced himself from these traditions, the new wave of Hip Hop had a special appeal as something new, resonating especially to his situation in time. This may possibly be seen as connected with his hunch of the hostility (dissonance) of the metal sign; perhaps it was a feeling of enjoying a return to the tradition in which he and Ola, some years earlier, were local heroes; all these were probably interwoven with an adolescent enthusiasm over “conquering” the world as prestigious dancers, not least useful as an asset in an activity of much importance for most boys of Omar’s age; for courting the girls:

It was like “YO! Some damned shit, man” (in English), language, cool rhythms and of course the music videos, first on Sky Channel, then on MTV. We watched them all the time and taught ourselves the tricks. We hung around the Rudenga club on Tuesday and Thursday. Then H on Wednesday. That was a quite “sossete” (more West-end and “well off”) place, but one of the members of our group had a girl there, so we just went there. Then at V and at F the other days. It was billiard, table tennis and dancing it was all about at that period when we had our time. We went from one disco to another to dance and check out the ladies. We had so much fun. If there were other folks that were good dancers, then we stayed to investigate them further. If they were bad, we had to show what we could do!

Omar and his friends also spent much time in the center of Oslo at that time, hanging around Oslo City (a large mall in the center of the city) and soon became part of the growing milieu of Hip Hop’ers in the city of Oslo, where graffiti, dancing and rap were the main ingredients. His new dancing group got several jobs at discoteques, clubs and various youth-oriented events where they also competed with other groups.

Frequenting the city of Oslo at that period, Omar and his friends soon came into closer contact with groups belonging to a larger milieu of multicultural youth that both in the media and amongst themselves, were labeled “citystrollers” (see “1993. Some introductory contextualisations”, see also chapter 10 “The power of dissonance. Pt.II. Mokthar’s story”):

Soon we became part of the “citystrollers”. Mostly foreigners were with us, but also some Norwegians. The most important thing was that the

“coolest” (in English) folks were there. Many of us were doing graffiti, as it was mostly Hip Hop’ers in our group. Strong feeling of community amongst us. We were quite “cool” (in English) and soon became a group consisting of around fifty people. But there also was some trouble at that time, mostly provoked by us, I must admit (...) Everybody had very little money, but we shared what we had. We were mostly outside in the summer and at the discos during winter. It lasted around one year. But even now, if I’m in some kind of trouble, it is no problem getting help. But most of the folks from that period have quit, I think.

As this quotation indicates, the citystrollers had an ambiguous reputation. On the one hand, some of them were engaged in petty crime (and sometimes more serious stuff) and were regarded as more or less dangerous troublemakers that were not reluctant to engage in violence. On the other hand, they also represented coolness, as several, like Omar, showed considerable expertise in mastering the codes of style, wearing the coolest clothes, some being skillful dancers, musicians, and so forth (even if the most dedicated “artistic” of these probably were quite few). At this time he was also involved in making computer-based music (much used in Hip Hop) together with friends that later on were to become members of some of the better known of the Norwegian Hip Hop groups.

Graffiti and tagging have periodically been focused upon in the media in Norway. In Oslo there was a large campaign against tagging initiated by the public transport Company in Oslo (“Oslo Sporveier”, see also Høigård 2002). Omar tells several stories about the excitement of graffiti painting at this time; that also became a salient part of the milieu he was involved in. All this, in combination with being associated with the “citystrollers”, provided them with a “street credibility” and high prestige among several groups of youth. This was further underlined as the previously mentioned new genre of Gangsta Rap was on its rise, in which exactly the ability to convincingly present oneself as somehow “being on the edge with the law” was explicitly searched for, in combination with more artistic and spectacular youth-cultural skills.

Around 1993, in the wake of the renewed interest in Hip Hop, Omar also took up the old breakdance together with Ola. And after a while, according to several sources, the two played a not unimportant part in the development of a new generation of breakers and young Hip Hop’ers that were to become salient in the youth milieu of The Grorud Valley. Here, the foundation for the growth of new bands and dancing teams was laid. Several of these, at the turn of the millenium, have become central actors in the growing milieu of Norwegian Hip Hop’ers.

This phase in Omar's story of developing prestigious skills and personal fascination with a whole row of widely popular and spectacular youth cultural communities was slowly emerging at the end of the first field-work in 1994, whereas a new music form started to gain attention among certain club members.

House/Techno

At that time Omar was seldom seen at the club but was once again on his way into this new transnational youth cultural tradition that had slowly grown forth since the mid-eighties, centered around the musical genres called "House" and "Techno".¹ As with breakdance, skateboard and Hip Hop dancing, the discovery and the early phases of involvement with a new youth cultural packet was once more a highly exciting experience. In his own words:

After the club period it was straight into House music. I remember the first time I attended a houseparty. It was like entering heaven, like discovering a brand new world. Deadly fun! Big pleasure! And when you first enter a New World, several things are accompanying it, like all the other packages; new ways of dancing, new music, new drugs, new styles.²

¹ These musical forms, and the tradition to which they belong will be further dealt with in a later chapter 7 "Music...").

² "House" has been characterized as "*the biggest musical revolution in the UK...*" (as well as in Europe, we may add) "*...since punk*" (Bidder 1999:vii). It originated in the early 80s by DJ's in gay Afro American milieus in Chicago and New York, and is an electronically anchored, dance oriented genre based on older musical forms of African American origins like Soul, disco and Funk (see Reynolds 2000). At approximately the same time, the purely instrumental, so called Techno-music was developed by Afro American middle-class youngsters in Detroit. Early Techno was especially inspired by the German, purely synthesizer based music by groups like Kraftwerk and Tangerine Dream (Reynolds 2000). House and Techno soon became closely associated with each other, and in the last half of the 80s, when these musical forms reached Europe, they became the core items in a rapidly growing youth culture. Especially in the early phases House was perceived as being somehow in opposition to the more violent and macho-like attitudes that to some extent were associated with contemporary Hip Hop. The messages that characterized this new youth cultural tradition and to some degrees remarkably though implicitly well into the 90ies, were various expressions of antisexism, "love", tolerance, antiracism and a relatively friendly attitude towards the world – these were all accompanied by enthusiasm for new (musical and visual) technology and the intense involvement in the so called "rave" parties where hedonistic pleasure, through drugs, music and ecstatic dancing, was salient (ibid).

Without going further into Omar's experiences within this tradition, we may conclude that, much in the same vein as Hip Hop and skateboard, also this last youth cultural tradition he got involved with, from its outset embedded in African American milieus in the USA, was characterized by an inclusive and tolerant attitude towards fans and artists of a multitude of cultural backgrounds. Once more we see this trait as a salient theme strongly associated to this last of the larger continua of signs that Omar, throughout his story, has been enjoying and identifying with.

And when I met him again in 1999 it was still the recent genres within House and Techno that occupied most of his musical attention, though raves and partying are now calmed down. Omar has gotten some education and a good job. And after this at times deep participation in several quite spectacular youth cultural traditions over the years, his dreams for the future are nevertheless quite traditional: housing, car and a girlfriend.

In the description and analysis of this story so far, we have explored the varieties of the phenomenon of identity through focusing upon the *subjectivity* of primarily one actor, as manifested in the various expressions available to the researcher. At the same time this exploration provides some insight into the ways the story of this actor necessarily is intertwined with those of other actors, on both personal and collective levels. As described here, all these events and phases that Omar has gone through can be understood as various points, angles, phases, steps and stages in the processes of active identification with a variety of different continua of signs. These processes can be understood as an intricate interplay between the various ways of being exposed, to both collective and personal sign complexes of extra-local origin, and the personal and collective use on the local level.

If the analysis of identity is more properly addressed as an analysis of processes of identification, we now have presented several answers to the first of what we have identified as core questions: *with what* has our actor identified. The second of these questions that demands a more explicit answer is of course: *why?* More precisely: what can be sketched out as *the forces that move the actor* (Omar) to identify with such a variety of sign complexes? This question will be explored more closely below.

The moving force: investment, *illusio*, concerns

Henrietta Moore engages with a similar question when she attempts to sketch out a theoretical framework for understanding subjectivity related to

the multiplicity of discourses actors engage in (use, resist or comply with) in various practices of gender (Moore 1994). The various continuities of signs we have identified can be understood as parallels (and more or less equivalents?) to the various discourses whose use and role in the practices of subjects are problematized by Moore. Drawing, among others, on the feminist theorist de Lauretis, Moore underlines that the more composite approach to identity comprises far more than just gender related dimensions, and that:

“What is emerging in feminist writing is, instead, the concept of a multiple, shifting, and often self-contradictory identity ... an identity made up of heterogenous and heteronomous representations of gender, race and class, and often indeed across languages and cultures.” (de Lauretis, cited in Moore 1994:58, my underlining)

To Moore, the suggested answer to the question of what makes people take up (we may say: identify with) a certain subject position, can be found by focusing upon what is entangled in the notion of “*investment*” (Moore 1994:64). Moore clarifies her use of the concept by proposing that it implies the expectation of some sort of *reward*, related to emotional, power-related, as well as social or material benefits; this is conceived of in terms of some sort of satisfaction that a particular subject position (the position he or she moves towards) promises to an actor. Bourdieu seems to encircle the same phenomenon with the concept “*illusio*”:

“...*illusio*, that is, the fact of attributing importance to a social game, the fact that what happens matters to those who are engaged in it, who are in the game. Interest is to “be there”, to participate, to admit that the game is worth playing and that the stakes created in and thorough the fact of playing are worth pursuing; it is to recognize the game and to recognize its stakes (Bourdieu 1998:77).

Our problem encircles, in other words, the motivational force behind such investment (“*illusio*”) in the “game”/“discourse”, or, as here; the various youth cultural traditions Omar has been involved in.

But, as noticed by Moore, Bourdieu is criticized for not showing in more detail how his theoretical concepts, in this case “*illusio*”, relate more directly to the life world of concrete actors (Moore 1994:79). To understand the subjectivity of actors related to this, I suggest that Wikan’s concept of “*concerns*” (as previously touched upon) may be of considerable help (Wikan 1990, see also Barth 1993). This concept, as I understand it, points exactly to the subjective experience of what is at stake, what is important/salient to the actors in question (Wikan also repeatedly writes about the need

to address “the world of *urgency, necessity*”, a quotation lent from Bourdieu, Wikan 1992:471). Thus, the question to be answered in Omar’s case can then be posed as follows: *how was his motivation for identifying with these different continua of signs related to what we may conceive as the salient concerns of his life world?*

And if, through all these events and phases, identity first and foremost must be seen as a process of multiplicity, of identification with a whole range of different positions and traditions (here in the shape of youth-cultural communities), and if positions can be identified as being more or less in opposition to each other – *how can these varying degrees of opposition, between the various sign complexes he identified with, be seen as related to these life world concerns?*

It is reasonable to believe that a youngster’s identifications are even less settled than those of an adult’s, in so far as age usually increases the repertoire of experiential sediments that orient, and thus contribute, to a more developed firmness in the actor’s present experience of who she or he is. This implies that youngsters, consequently are more inclined to the “flickerings” of the ego, so to speak, in the sense of being more disposed to *give in* to the shifting focuses of the focal self as they present themselves during this life phase. When the experiential base is more firmly established throughout time (in so far as it is without serious interruptions, such as traumata), it is reasonable to assume that it is *not as easily moved*, as it is in the case of youngsters.

Until now (including the last 3 chapters) roughly seven discernible phases of identification in the life of Omar have been identified, to which various concerns and oppositions can be attributed, and that seemed to have generated special resonance with the attentional directions on the level of his focal self. These can be outlined as follows:

1. The first was Omar’s non-questioned identification with his own family as a small child during the processes of primary socialization. He was thus *dwelling in the (more or less non-differentiated) signs of his parents*, so to speak. As explored in chapter 2 (“Inclusion, resonance and semiosis”), his father strongly wished his son to follow the Arabian-Iraqian ways of his family, preferring him to exclude non-Arab friends and so on. In this new situation it is likely to assume that his original identification with his family as a small child, was gradually *challenged* by his exposure to and contact with the local children and the overall local milieu; here it was obvious that for example the prohibitions of the Koran did not work – as the young Omar experienced it – and that there were other, alternative ways of living. The

most salient oppositions in Omar's early history are in other words most likely the opposition between his family's ways and its version of "the Arabian-Iraqian", on the one hand, and the ways associated with their new country of origin, on the other. In such a situation where there were a lack of both families and children of similar (enough) background, some of the most central concerns of a young child, naturally will be *the urge for contact, playmates and community* among the children "at hand". I assume this to be a salient motivation for this identificational move, pulling him into the next and second phase. Thus the force and urgency of such a concern, experienced from a specified social position – as a small child in an immigrant family settled in an area where families in the same situation and background were absent, – must be conceived as a major force that moves him towards an alternative point of identification with an alternative continuum of signs.

2. Through these processes Omar gradually seemed to become more associated with the local children that, to him, represented the "Norwegian". Adding to and amplifying this shift was probably also his growing friendship with Ola. A core quality for the growth of friendship seems to be the phenomenon of resonance, here to be understood as manifested in Ola, understood as an *emotionally charged person-sign* (a playmate to have fun with), so to speak, associated with the Norwegian. Perhaps especially for children, making close friends or experiencing other positively charged events with a person from a different cultural tradition, will, under certain circumstances, create an openness towards ways and attitudes associated with that Other. In Omar's situation this opening up seemed to be further underlined by his urge for playmates and friends. One may, of course, ask to what degree this suggestion matches Omar's own experiences. His "testing" of the Koran as an eight year old can at least be interpreted as indicating a felt difference between "the ones to whom the laws of the Koran mattered" and "those to whom it did not", thus pointing in a direction where such differences – however vaguely perceived – in fact did seem to have "made a difference".
3. From Omars position, he and Ola – as well as other Rudenga youngsters at that time – were discovering the Hip Hop sign complex, thus initiating the third phase of identification. Here the recognition of the *similarities* between Rudenga and the areas associated with these youth cultural practices seemed to be important. Such similarities may be seen as the very *mechanisms of resonance* that pulled the young Omar

into its influence (this will be further discussed in chapter 11 “Identification in the multicultural...”). The match between Rudenga, as a stigmatized, multicultural area, and the similar social and physical milieus of this tradition, made it possible both to fight and play upon the social stigma of their dwelling place; the development of skills and styles gave much prestige that grew even stronger as the sign continuum hit larger audiences through its commercial success. The identifiable *urge* could here be seen as a wish (existing somewhere on a continuum between the conscious and not-conscious) to counteract the burden of the stigma of their dwelling place, in addition to the enjoyment of the sheer fun and pleasure of these practices. On the personal level, getting confirmation and prestige was also an important “reward”. Hip Hop was also the very first of the transnational youth cultural traditions Omar got involved with and the first that was characterized by an openness and tolerance for youth of a variety of ethnic origins. Even if Omar himself did not experience this characteristic as a motivational force, such matching may be regarded as a primary point of resonance.

4. Chronologically, the fourth phase was his association with the skateboard tradition, partly overlapping the previous breakdancing period. This was also shown by the fact that one of Omar’s first moves when arriving at his new homestead, where he later would learn skateboarding, was to show himself as a skillful breakdancer; thus he drew upon his previous experiences as assets in the semiotic process of becoming acquainted in this new context. Here his concerns seemed primarily to be with the joys and pleasures of skateboarding itself, again in addition to the feeling of community and the positive confirmation he received as his skills developed. Like Hip Hop, this transnational youth cultural tradition was also characterized with openness and tolerance towards practitioners from a variety of ethnic origins, again without this being a trait subjectively experienced as related to his motivation for engagement with the sign. Nevertheless, this must be seen as a match, again on the basis of similarity, creating resonance between the sign-continuum and its user.
5. When the first wave of Hip Hop was decreasing, a next and relatively short fifth phase, overlapping with the two previous ones, as well as the sixth (below), was his more modest identification with the tradition of Heavy Metal. His initial enjoyment of this sign complex was probably mutually amplified by his two friends, Ola and Knut, who also engaged in this tradition that for years had been strong in Rudenga; the latter

(Knut) became actively involved with some of metal's most recent, and extreme genres. The most attractive feature of the larger genre of metal is, as we saw in chapter 3 ("Hostile signs – dissonating signs..."), the excitement of horror, the flirt with taboos connected with death and evil, and the darker dimensions of human life, in addition to the music itself. Omar's fascination with this more or less "white" tradition, seemed nevertheless to decrease as the corresponding hostility to "foreigners", for example, as connected to some of the more extreme genres, seemed to be intuited. This can be understood a case of dissonance, experienced vis a vis the sign, that counteracted further identification. It is also reasonable to believe that Omar's experience that his close friend Knuts dissociated himself from this sign, as a consequence (among other things) of this hostility conflicting with their friendship, must have added one more resonating angle to their relationship. Omar's relationship to Heavy Metal is probably the example in which he is closest to recognizing more explicitly and consciously, a possible connection between his immigrant background and his association with various youth cultural traditions; this emphasizes that such relations were an underlying concern.

6. The intuited dissonance towards the metal signs seems to have been strongly counterweighted by Omar's return to the Hip Hop tradition, comprising a sixth identifiable phase that resulted in the forming of the new Hip Hop dance trio, where all members were of immigrant background. Included into this phase was Omars one year long period as part of the so-called "citystroller" groups, a majority of which also consisted of youth with immigrant parents. Here, the primary concerns, as subjectively experienced, seemed once more to be the joys of dancing, of being cool, mastering the required styles and also being associated with some of the more creative parts of the growing Hip Hop milieus in Oslo.
7. The last and seventh of these phases of association/identification can be identified as Omar's involvement with the House/Techno traditions, enjoying what he termed "*a brand new world*", a "*heaven*" of the new tradition on its rise, that both to Omar as well as expressed through the history of the tradition itself, was more frontally oriented towards the direct experience of pleasure, partying and joyful hedonism. It also adds one more example to the row of traditions where openness and tolerance towards youth of a wide variety of backgrounds was an important feature, once again without this fact being of any noticeable salience to Omar.

As these various phases of identification have overlapped each other in Omar's biography, they clearly demonstrate that the self can be regarded as a multiplicity of such processes of identification *put into motion by the variety of concerns corresponding to the lifeworlds of the actors*, and drawn into use in so far as concrete points of resonance can be found, somewhere along the continuum from the conscious to the subconscious of the user. And when Omar, for example, tells about how he had to hide his Heavy Metal records when some of his Hip Hop friends were visiting him, it shows how different "identities" can be activated and downplayed in various contexts. It also underlines that the *degree* to which actors identify with one or several traditions may vary. "*Some buy the whole package; other people don't*", as Omar expressed it. Both he and Ola considered themselves as Hip Hop'ers that also enjoyed Heavy Metal, thus showing that even a status as experts is not necessarily the same as insistence on cultural "purity". Thus the nature of these sign complexes as continua between orthodoxies, on the one extreme and rejection on the other, seems to be strongly confirmed in these examples.

Moreover, all these phases, as well as the critical events they are associated with, are parts and parcels of Omar's life. These are all important "identities" – that grow while they sediment as traces and signs stemming from Omar's active involvement with the various sign continua we have outlined throughout his story. From that ever growing pool, these traces can be activated in and by the self in various situations; they emerge as identities of varying relevance, be it as being an "Iraqi", "Norwegian", "old time breakdancer", "skateboarder", "metal fan", "Hip Hop'er", "city stroller" or "Techno-fan". Several of these identities (especially the ones anchored primarily to youth cultural traditions) also represent "good memories" and, not least, "good stories", as for example told when speaking to "the researcher" five years after our first meeting. Nevertheless, these identities seem mostly to imply various sequences of the self passed through in time, as somehow contrasted to a more approximate simultaneity, that seems to be implied when theorists like Ewing (1990) and Moore (1994) write about the multiplicity of identity. We will return to this problem of the *approximate simultaneity* in the experience of the multiplicity of the self later.

In the descriptions above we have treated *a concern as a socially positioned urge of special importance to an actor, to which a suitable action (understood as signs in use) or experience may be appropriate to satisfy*.

The phenomenon of resonance can here be understood as the experience of a corresponding match between a concern and 1) either the action undertaken to realize it, or 2) an experience of something happening

(as a result of an external force) in the situation, that is felt as an answer/a realization of it.

A concern can, in other words, be understood as the urge that may move the actor within – or into or out of – the “*illusio*” (in Bourdieu’s sense) of a social game. It seems primarily to be inside the concerns of the actor we find “the passion for difference” that Moore refers to in the quotation that introduced the present chapter (Moore 1994:2).

We have here identified concerns on (at least) the following four different levels, all intricately interwoven with each other:

- I. *The immediate level of “hedonist” pleasure.* This imply the needs for pleasure and having fun. These can be regarded as salient needs, especially in the observation of children and youth, often connected with various forms of creative play, expressivity and aesthetics. This has been a salient dimension in all our descriptions of the critical events and phases that Omar has been going through, speaking eagerly about the “kicks”, the joys and fascinations of the signs (activities) he has engaged in. These “kicks” and fascinations, nevertheless, play an important role as motivational factors for Omar’s will to develop and rehearse the corresponding skills and abilities associated with various youth cultural communities; the mastering of these in turn generates a series of important assets that become important and prestigious parts of his identities, both to himself as well as in the eyes of others (see below).
- II. *The deeper, individual psychological level.* This includes the more socially anchored satisfaction connected to the prestige, here of being known as “cool”, on several levels as a result of Omar’s masterings of skills attached to various youth cultural codes and experiences. To this is added the experience of community and of the social sharing of both joys and identity with his fellow fans and friends; this is also manifested on the more personal level of receiving repeated positive confirmation from his surroundings. These motivations touch fundamental human needs for *self respect, social recognition and the experience of community.*
- III. *The level of the local community.* Here we can situate the concerns connected with the struggle to gain respect and prestige for their neighborhood of Rudenga. This was especially important for the local practices in the first wave of Hip Hop and can in some ways be seen as an extension of the concerns attributed to point II, as youth seem to have a special vulnerability for forces of stigmatization directed at their

neighborhood, in so far as they (at least in Rudenga) have identified strongly with the place itself.

IV. *The level of social and cultural origin.* For youngsters from immigrant families, this difference in origin seems, to varying degrees, to give rise to some important concerns. More or less involuntarily, such origin may mean a series of differences that may be discernible to the surroundings, related to, for example, skin colour, language/accent, religious obligations, food, gender roles, attitudes and so on. These differences tend to be more discernible as “different” the closer the relations between self and other turn out to be (though such closeness, of course, may also enhance the ability to see similarities as well).

This last level of concerns is perhaps the least visible dimension in Omar’s story so far; especially as the questions of being of “foreign” origin seems almost systematically to be absent from what he emphasizes in the telling about the various phases of his youth cultural involvement. Is it possible to discern a reason for such an absence?

And is it, despite this neglect, possible to argue for the existence of motives behind some of Omar’s identificational phases that nevertheless can be more directly related to important and “critical” concerns in his life-world as a youth of immigrant background?

The absence of this theme in Omar’s own tellings, can, of course, be seen as reflecting exactly the point that Omar, from a very early age, decided to and largely seemed to have succeeded in “becoming Norwegian”. This manifests again when I meet him anew in 1999, and I ask him once more if the tradition within Hip Hop for including youth with different backgrounds was important to Omar and his friends:

No, we never thought about it. I had mostly Norwegian friends, even if there were two other foreigners in the second dancing group. I’m quite mixed myself, you know... But at that time we didn’t think of what Hip Hop was about at all at that time. (...) The most important thing was what was “cool”.

The theme was also touched upon when I asked about the parents’ attitudes towards breakdancing and skateboard:

They knew very well that I was involved, and did not counteract it. I have also been quite open with my dad. He looked upon it as sport. I did not feel it was a rebellion against him. At that time I had already

integrated. I felt Norwegian. But I never thought that skating had anything to do with integration. I only did what the Norwegians did. (my underlinings)

I also asked Ola if Omar's background as an immigrant had ever been something they discussed or "thought" about:

We never talked about it. But he taught us four letter words in his language, you know. That was very nice. I mean you saw that he was black. But that was no hindrance for us becoming friends!

In other words differences that can be connected to Omar's immigrant background seemed only to be a minor theme to his closest friend, or to himself for most of the period while growing up in Rudenga, at least to judge from the way he has spoken about this topic until now.

But nevertheless, it is hard to avoid noticing various hints of *ambiguity* towards this theme in his story so far: his recognition of himself as "*quite mixed*"; his ambivalence towards his family that no matter what must have been a central point of reference throughout his childhood; his sharing of the four letter words of his mother tongue with his friends, and so on. In addition, his most intense involvement was in the various youth cultural traditions characterized by tolerance and openness towards youth of non-white background; some of them (Hip Hop) originated in multicultural milieus. All this strongly suggests that some differences connected to Omar's own background, at least in some ways, seem to have played some role as a motivational force in his identification with these various youth cultural communities. Moore emphasizes that the motivation behind an actor's relations towards various discourses and subject positions may also be subconscious (1994:66). On such an account we suggest, as previously hinted to, that the *similarity* between the fact that Omar has a non-white immigrant family background, and the openness and connection to youngsters of similar backgrounds that characterize most of the traditions he has actively identified with, can be regarded as an important *subconscious motivational moving force* lying behind his identification with these signs; and this must be seen as associated with the level of his matrix self. His final avoidance of getting further involved with the Heavy Metal signs, that exclude such backgrounds, seems to supply us with an important and telling contrast that supports such an interpretation even further. Thus, the matching of Omar's background as "a foreigner" with the positive attitudes to youth of similar backgrounds associated with the youth cultural traditions he identified with, seem to constitute a central underlying point of resonance to

his concerns on the personal level, though these are largely non-discursive to our actor.

In contrast to Omar's fascination and attention activated on the level of the focal self towards all these youth cultural traditions, his background as a person coming from an immigrant family seems at this point to be an experiential "fact", *slumbering in the realm of the level of the matrix self* of his subjective being-in-the-world.

Ambiguity and identity

Such an argument is further strengthened in light of my conversations with him five years after the first fieldwork, when we again touch these topics. I ask him if he now feels mostly Iraqi, Arabian, Norwegian as earlier, or as something else? His answer now becomes more nuanced and takes a different turn. What we have interpreted as a more implicit and non-discursive side of his earlier practices of identification now seems to have emerged to the surface of discursive consciousness, that is, to the level of the focal self:

I still feel mostly Norwegian, yes... But sometimes I feel it's been a long time since I've been in the country where I was born. I'm missing it. Not my family, I would say. But more the exciting, strange smells... the atmosphere... people being outside all the time... things like that.... I go there every second year. Now it's been a long time, and I notice it in my abilities in speaking Arabic. I try to keep it alive. I understand everything that's said, but I feel it's difficult speaking it myself. It's an advantage to be able to speak your own language, I think.

Anthropologist: You're saying "your own language"?

... I'm probably a little bit uncertain about that... My father has always said that Arabic is my own language; you are born in Iraq; that's where you come from; Arabic is your mother tongue. I somehow do not know if it's just because he has been saying it, or if it's because I feel it that way. It somehow feels like it's quite deep inside of me. And when I look at myself in the mirror, I can see that I'm black.... (...)

In spite of his intense participation in several transnational youth cultural communities while growing up, and in spite of him still feeling mostly Norwegian, there nevertheless seems to have developed an opening for "the Arabian", a longing for "the exciting smells", the people, the atmosphere and not least the language, associated with the origins of his family. And when Omar reflects over the experiences he has had, it still seems to be some differences perceived as relevant, felt and activated in different situations. I ask him more closely about this:

Anthropologist: Are there special situations when you feel more Iraqi or Arabian, than Norwegian?

Yes, quite often in fact. It's difficult to tell exactly how it is, but... I have been behaving Norwegian for quite a long time, spoke Norwegian and... But perhaps it has something to do with values. Perhaps about being loyal as a friend. There are several situations when I think: "I don't do that because that's typical Norwegian". It's something with their ways of being... Most Norwegians are "better" than others, in a way. They have themselves in the center all the time. But people around you are also to have things ok, I think. We are more social, it's the social things that are in the center. Several Norwegians are also that way, but most of them are not...

Here Omar explicitly opposes these two clusters of signs, represented as he speaks of "the Norwegians", on the one hand, and "we", implying some collectivity associated with his background (family, father, the Arabic), as well as more generally of being a "foreigner", on the other. In other words, the compositeness of the self here seems to manifest as something much more *simultaneous* than we have been able to detect earlier. He emphasizes that he "*still feels mostly Norwegian*" and that he has been identifying (behaving) with the Norwegian in several ways for along time, while in the next moment he speaks of – that is identifies with – a different "we", meaning the immigrant side of this multifaced "coin" that makes up his self, so to speak. In other words the phenomenon of *ambivalence* as pointed to by Battaglia, here seems to manifest with much force (Battaglia in Moore 1999). Through this example Battaglias suggestion of focusing upon ambiguity reveals itself as a powerful and necessary tool, especially for the exploration of the subjectivities in-the-making, that is in the very processes of identification. Such an approach seems especially fertile in a multicultural situation, as the experiential urge of identification clearly may include discernible sign clusters that to a significant degree oppose each other.

But these contradicting complexes of signs within such an experience of identity are, of course, also related to the *glance of the other*, which not seldom directly emphasizes these differences in various situations, often possibly founded on racist attitudes. He continues:

But it's also the fact that people look at you differently... old ladies and the like...

Anthropologist: Many of the young people with immigrant background that I have been interviewing say that old ladies are the worst ones...?

That's true. But I also remember once in my work, I was to talk to the boss in a firm. And while I asked for him I noticed the glance of the

woman in the reception. As if she thought “what the hell are you going to talk to him about, you stupid blackie”. I felt that she doubted everything I said. I, a blackie, came there in these Hip Hop clothes and all and wanted to talk to her boss, you know...

Racism and xenophobia can express itself in many ways, and the sheer glance, as we all know, can play a subtle role as an expression of such attitudes. This clearly underlines that identification is also, of course, shaped in interaction with others. If Omar identified himself with the Norwegian for a long time, such experiences will surely become important points where his identification with the Norwegian will be strongly counteracted and challenged (as we will see more extreme examples of in Mokthars story in chapter 10).

But also counterstrategies and “counterglances” (that is *resistance*) from the “foreigners” develop in the ongoing relations between majority and minority, making an exemplary case for schismogenesis. This reveals itself when I ask Omar if he has experienced something he would call racism:

Never. I have never been mobbed. Well yes, from old ladies and so forth, from time to time. But not anything special...

Anthropologist: But in cafés, discos and such places?

Oh yes, that happens all the time. But I can understand it.

Anthropologist: How come?

Because foreigners are more noisy. It is a fact. And I have a feeling that the foreigners have become even worse nowadays. If some Norwegian is jostling me in town, they are almost on their knees at once. I think that foreigners are uncertain when they first arrive in Norway. They are sceptical towards things. But then they notice that Norwegians seem afraid when they see foreigners. Then the gap becomes increasingly widened. And they are sending these ugly glances at them, so that the foreigners gain advantages from that fear. For example when people are looking at me, I look tough. I ‘m sending them this “Don’t you mess with me” glance, you know. Many foreigners do it like that.

Here his affinity to the ways of “the foreigners” gives more weight to this dimension of Omar’s ambiguity. He expresses, on the one hand, some understanding for being denied access to the restaurants because of his foreign background, because he has experienced the noisiness of the “foreigners”. This may be interpreted as tinged with some critique against the “foreigner”, and may thus be interpreted as a result of his tendency to identify with the

Norwegians. On the other hand, at least as expressed in this conversational event, he, however, now seems to identify more strongly with the former category than before, as he admits that he engages in similar practices himself. When I ask him further about this, the gap between the “foreigners” and the Norwegian is further emphasized:

Anthropologist: How come it has developed that way, do you think?

Norwegians in general are just “chicken”. Most foreigners have had a hard time. They’re used to getting a slapp in the face (in Norwegian: “få seg en på trynet”). It’s costing them nothing to send one in return. Norwegians are not used to that. And there is very much solidarity amongst foreigners. We can easily get twenty people to help us within an hour. While Norwegians say, “No, I don’t care about helping you. I’d rather manage myself, thank you”, sort of. “Take care of yourself”; “It’s your own responsibility”. Like we talked about earlier, there’s more solidarity (in Norwegian: “samhold”) and less ego-orientation amongst foreigners. Perhaps because there have been too few conflicts in Norway. Of course you had the war and the period after the war; then there was probably solidarity. But that’s all over now! Norwegians are born with a silver spoon in their ass, if you ask me! There was not much of such things for us foreigners, I’ll promise. Here you have hospitals, schools and everything. That’s not at all the way it is in many of the countries where the foreigners come from...

Here he expresses an identification with “the foreigners” quite explicitly, and explains their “troublesomeness” as strongly anchored both to the difficulties many of the immigrants have gone through in their countries of origin, and to the social inequality between the immigrants and the majority of the Norwegians who are perceived as much better off in general, strikingly characterized as “*born with a silver spoon in their ass*”. These more anger-laden ways of expressions are probably also in line with his recently expressed longing for impulses from “the Arabian” and the country where he was born. We now can anticipate a parallel reconciliation, with more room for his father, his family and what they have represented.

In contrast to Ewing’s Pakistani informant who seemed to experience a noticeable and not especially troublesome continuity in her experience of self – despite the author’s revelation of several contrasting and opposing “selves” in her story – we intuit that Omar’s identification with both the Norwegian and the Arabian-Iraqian seem to be considerably more difficult and emotion-laden (Ewing 1990). Ewing’s informant presumably was living in an area of relatively more stable and continuously linked cultural oppositions and available discourses (the possible opposition between being “*a scholar striving for a Ph.D. and “progress”, a good wife, a good*

obedient and grateful daughter, a good Muslim, a disobedient child, (...) a clever “politician” and, implicitly, a son.”, *ibid*:253). For a child growing up in an immigrant family from distant areas of origin, both geographically, economically and cultural, the situation may perhaps present both larger, and more extreme contrasts between the available and likely sign complexes for identification. And although a more definite discussion of the possible contrasts between these two situations requires a more systematic comparing, it seems that Omar’s feeling of identity – that at present includes both the Norwegian and the Arabian/Iraqian – nevertheless is experienced as somehow more *discontinuous* than the subjective experience of self by Ewing’s informant.

But this discontinuity is also likely to be connected to the semiotics of *power relations* in the situation as being of immigrant and minority background, as can be discerned from the more recent turn in Omars story.

Because of his capacity to master prestigious youth cultural codes as he has been growing up, he has primarily been signified by significant others (especially in the shape of his peers) as a breakdancer, skateboarder, metal fan, Hip Hop dancer, city stroller and Techno-fan. But gradually – perhaps as these youth cultural communities lose some of his interest – he seems to experience and thereby turn his attention to the occurrence of repeatedly being *marked*, as “a foreigner” in more or less racist overtones, by his surrounding others (as exemplified by the receptionist-incident described above). Partly, because he is no longer carried as firmly as before on the crests of youth cultural prestige and enthusiasm, and partly because the concerns of this phase are being replaced with other (more “adult”) concerns such as job, housing and more permanent love relationships; such semiotic marking, of the exercise of power in a majority-minority relationship, seems to provoke and generate interpretants in himself. These can be assumed to *question* what he has been signifying to his surrounding others until now, that is, that strong parts of his identities are embedded in youth cultural practices and “*doing what the Norwegians did.*”. Correspondingly, experiencing such imbalances in the flow of power seems to turn (perhaps we should say: bend) his attention towards his foreign origin, – the origin of the difference pointed to, so to speak – his skin colour, his father’s ways, etcetera. These, in turn, lead him to focus upon and become more attentive to a more general feeling connected to these re-awakened parts, that seems to contain attitudes that somehow feel different from what he conceives of as attitudes of the native Norwegians he has met. Thus a schisma between the ways of his origin and the ways of the Norwegian is accentuated, resulting in a gradually stronger and more explicit identification with the former.

Let us now return to Colapietro's proposal of enlightening Peirce's concept of self with the model of a deeper "matrix self" (as the outcome of central logical interpretants of prior semiotic processes) being continuous with a "focal self" that manifests and "flickers", as I understand it, while following the continual flow and focal points of events in the present (Colapietro 1989:93-95). These concepts seem to be parallels to what Peirce has termed respectively "the soul" and "the ego" while dealing with the semiotics of the inner dialogue of thinking. Here the ego is metaphorically characterized as "*a wave on the surface of the soul*" (ibid:95); as I understand it, it is continually engaged in semiotic processes whose ultimate outcome – that is the ultimate logical interpretants – are soaked up and sedimented as habits in the deeper, matrix self. According to Colapietro:

"The ego to which he refers in this passage is the ego as a distinct phase in an inner dialogue. Such a phase floats upon the surface of a multilayered network of interpenetrating habits, a network that Peirce did not hesitate to call the 'soul'." (ibid)

I suggest that the various outcomes of Omar's series of identificational phases through his involvement in the various spectacular youth cultural communities – in accordance with his own description of them as "just doing what the Norwegians did" – built up a matrix self ("a multilayered network of interpenetrating habits") that expressed itself in a subjective feeling of "being Norwegian".

But in his more recent years, in the later phases of growing up, this feeling (as a manifestation of his youthful "habitus", so to speak) was challenged by encountering what we may call "brute resistance" – what Wikan, borrowing expressions from Bourdieu, would term the "world of necessity and urgency" – in the shape of his increased awareness that his surrounding others mark him as "a foreigner", as distinct from "the Norwegian" (Wikan 1992). Through this semiotic process, another hitherto slumbering part of his matrix self (the parts associated with his foreign origin), is *awakened*, and brought forth to amplify the hereby stimulated schisma.

For Ewing's informant, such an awakening of a deeper and alternative part of her matrix self seemed not to occur; correspondingly the discrepancies between her contested identities can be regarded as nothing more than conflicting "waves" – that is conflicting "egos" in the Peircean sense, or conflicting "focal selves" as Colapietro could have termed it – on the mere surface of the "soul"/of "the matrix self". While for a youth of immigrant background such as Omar's, the conflicts within his various layers of

identity run the risk of reaching the level of the matrix self (or selves), which imply that they are possibly experienced as more difficult.¹

This *friction* against the brute (external) forces of reality (the experiences of being negatively marked by part of his surroundings) thus leads to some heightening of Omar's attention (as all such friction does, see Colapietro 1989:57), bringing forth/creating the need/concern to handle it. This time the phenomenon of resonance is partly reached through his identification with an identity as "foreigner", which also implies an identification with at least some of the signs that were associated with his family.

This underlines once again that the phenomenon of *resonance* (as well as its counterpart, *dissonance*), can only manifest through acts of interpretation; they represent the positive or negative aspects of the feeling of personal relevance as activated in the effects/reactions that the actual sign (here a communicative action) creates in the interpreter. Throughout Omars story it is strongly underlined that the processes of identification must be understood as acts of signification/semiosis especially invested with salient subjective concerns. The phenomenon of *identification* can, in such respects, probably be regarded as one of the most "invested" – that is: of maximum personal relevance on the resonance/dissonance continuum – concern of them all.

The "spiral"

And as Omar's concern for his background now once more seems to awaken into consciousness, this can to some extent be regarded as a return to the point where he started from. Nevertheless this can not be seen as a moving in a circle, because what he presumably "returns" to is not the point of departure he had as a child. Between these two points in time lie exactly all the experiences he has had in the youth milieu in Norway. And in accordance with the self as conceived in Peircean terminology, to be regarded as sign characterized by growth and development, we have seen a variety of examples of such movements. But even if the provisional endpoint at this stage may resemble the starting point, a better metaphor than the circle will instead be to conceptualize this movement as a spiral. The grand question is, therefore, *how* and eventually to what *degree* Omar's experiences between these two (partly matching) points of the spiral will influence, be referred to and color Omar's life in the future.

This is a question that cannot be answered, at least at this stage.

¹ We will present a more extreme example of such a development in Mokthars story, in chapter 10 ("The power of dissonance. Pt II...").

Summing up: subjectivity, self and identification

Throughout the four chapters that comprise Part I, the red thread have been a special focus upon one single informant. We have followed him through a series of phases, starting from his childhood and into the present in his twenties. We have met some of his significant peers, and we have tried to direct our attention towards the *changes* in the varieties of identifications to a series of different continua of signs to which he has associated or distanced himself from. I have suggested that these phases be interpreted through the lenses of the concepts of “the focal self”, that represents the subjective focuses of the present, and “the matrix self”, that represents the sedimentation of these foci of the past; these have been developed on the basis in the semiotic theories of Peirce, as further modulated by Colapietro (1989). With the help of the Peircean term “interpretant”, by which central aspects have been attempted further amplified and nuanced by the development of the concepts of resonance/dissonance, I have tried to direct attention towards the dimensions of semiosis that are clearly anchored to the concrete and *subjective* experience of the landscape of signs. Such experiences are exemplified in all these changes in Omar’s associations and are necessarily closely embedded in the concerns and the corresponding instances of resonance/dissonance that spring from his position, as a youngster of Iraqi background growing up in this concrete, multicultural social environment in Rudenga. Through most of these different phases his focal self has tended – in so far as we can rely on the data generated – to be directed away from, and even to some degree *against*, the orientations (sign continua) associated with his family, and especially his father, thus exemplifying a position of rejection towards this continuum of signs. Nevertheless, as he has grown older, he seems to have become aware of some salient experiences, first of what he sees as a strong tendency toward self-centeredness and community-negating individualism in his fellow youth of solely Norwegian background. These attitudes can moreover be seen as being in accordance with the ethos and mentalities described by recent theorists as characteristic of the conditions of late- high- or post modernity (Giddens 1991; Bauman 1998, 2000; Beck 1998).

In addition Omar has had several experiences pointing in the direction of *exclusion* from some salient arenas of the majority of non-hyphenated Norwegians. Both these experiential categories seem to generate a renewal of his association with his background, represented by his family, that now, as it seems to emerge from the level of the matrix self, is acquiring a stronger resonance in his own subjectivity. Even though he felt inclusion (and even being celebrated for his cultural skills, as a dancer, skateboarder,

etcetera) from his various peer groups throughout his periods of growing up, Omar now encountered a larger and perhaps more generalized tendency of exclusion in his direct experiences with society at large, in the shape of being refused entrance to attractive public arenas, skepticism from work related significant others and so on.

To judge from the story of Omar and his Rudenga friends, the challenge for an eventually successful process of integration thus do not seem so much to lie within the social arenas of the youth based public sphere, as in the realms of society at large.

With the complexities of these phases in the story of Omar in mind, we are now perhaps sufficiently equipped to return to the starting point of all these stories, that is, to the scene that occurred that lazy afternoon in the club's kitchen where the two old friends were plucking messages to each other on the club's well used guitars...

Postlude I. The musical conversation and the odd note revisited: a meeting place in the grey zone

In the previously described musical conversation between Omar and Ola, in 1993, we saw an example of how they both, in a musical (as well as a gestural) medium, “spoke of “ cultural differences by using respectively a Western and an Arabian scale. Omar had long since learnt the more common rock music riffs. And, much of the time they have known each other, Ola has also visited Omar at home, where Omar's father not infrequently has played cassettes of Arabian music. Many of these have been by well known oud players like the Iraqi master Munir Bachir and others, I am told later. It also happened that Omar's father played a little bit himself, something that probably not failed to influence the atmosphere in the flat of Omar's family. Both the friendship with Omar, their common experiences and these more vague impressions, are not unlikely to have provided Ola with some openness and familiarity towards aesthetical expressions that otherwise would have been experienced as quite strange. Perhaps it is this openness that might be read from his face and the effort he shows in the attempt to understand the line that Omar, a little bit teasingly, presents; this gradually is established as another common experience, however small. Salient parts of this conversation seem to be about “tasting” these differences, and mutual recognition of something that has not been especially present in Omar's and Ola's common experiences until then.

Then, after both have demonstrated a certain mastering of the scales associated with the cultural background of the other, as we remember, they end up in a common laughter, accompanying each other's odd note, a foreign element, judged from the musical traditions of both interlocutors; this is neither acceptable within the Arabian scale, nor for the Western (perceived partly from the musicians accompanying gestures and facial expressions, partly from the anthropologists somehow fragmentary knowledge about Arabian music). They thus seemed, to a noticeable degree, to have met each other in exactly this odd tone, perhaps even more than in the other musical events that have occurred in the larger sequence of the event. Put in another way: while the contrasting scales marked cultural differences, the odd tone and the accompanying laughter created the micro-event that, on the other hand, especially seemed to underline the experience of community and equality. This can be seen as one more example of the reaching of a point of rest (or should we say *resolution* through their common laughter), of the "demi-cadence" of "belief", as Peirce would have termed it.

The Sky Channel of the eighties, and the following periods of breakdance, Hip Hop, Heavy Metal, skateboard, Techno and the music-based packages of style that today are broadcasted through MTV, are all examples of youth-based cultural traditions that in varying degrees represent *deviations* and even *provocations* vis à vis the cultural traditions and orientations represented by the parent generation. For Omar's Iraqi family breakdance and Sky Channel shows in many ways represent foreign Western cultural expressions that tended to be disapproved of as sources of influence. One has to assume that these genres were also regarded as quite strange to Ola's family when they first arrived; intense use and "digging" of music from the urban black ghetto areas in large American cities is not exactly what immediately would be associated with working class youth from the average Norwegian suburbs, as seen from their parent's points of view (even though developments in such directions probably started with the appeal of Elvis Presley using black rhythm's blues in combination with the new communication technology of the 50s). In much the same way as Omar and Ola in their unpretentious musical dialogue seem to meet each other in the odd tone that deviated from the musical-cultural anchorage of both, the transnational youth cultural trends also represent deviation from important parts of these youngsters' cultural habitus, and represent in this way a *doubleness*.

As youth cultural expressions deviate from the orientations of the older generation – and therefore are far from neutral vis à vis the parents – they nevertheless represent a more neutral "third" meeting ground for their offspring because of this deviation. It was probably easier for Omar and Ola

to meet as equals as breakdancers, Hip Hop'ers, metal fans, etcetera, than if it were "the Norwegian" versus "the Iraqi" parts of their respective identities that were made relevant in their relations to each other. Understood in this way the youth cultural communities represent something that can be characterized as "dissonating" vis à vis the orientations of their parents. Maybe it is this very *breach* that the odd tone can be said to represent, as underlined in the accompanying laughter that concludes and sums up the conversation, in line with the theories of Bakhtin about the equalizing effect of laughter (1984). Seen in this way Omar's and Ola's breakdance community must be regarded as an example of how youth cultural genres, in fact, might offer youngsters in multicultural milieus a common focus – a third alternative – in the shape of a more neutral arena of interaction; it provides a common *meeting ground in the grey zone*, so to speak, an *alternative medium* to be used for reflection upon themselves and upon their environment, thus contributing to their own growth as signs and selves in this multicultural environment.

And if one has already met each other here and experienced the community and the approximate equality that this zone may have to offer, it is probably easier to develop interest, openness and tolerance for the differences – as here represented by the Arabian line – as part of the process in the wake of such series of experiences.

In this way it seems their common experience with practices developed from transnational youth cultural impulses have worked as a *bridge* for Ola, enhancing a degree of interest in and recognition of the background of his friend. In other words, these processes and events (critical as well as a myriad of others) they have been experiencing together seem to have *widened their experience of each other as signs*. Thus the sharing of these experiences provided Omar with the confidence necessary to expose his Arabian background (represented by the line) to his friend, giving Ola access to this more or less hidden part of himself as a sign at this moment in their conversation. Perhaps this can be seen as a moment of voluntary exposure and reflexivity in the larger story of Omar, a glimpse into a hidden curriculum in its process of growth, so to speak, that five years later seemed to have grown into a more explicitly reflexive attention and to some extent a re-identification with his cultural roots.

But his melodical fragment had far from lost its signifying power after the concert where Ola's band made it the musical center of one of their tunes in

1993. This becomes clear when we look a little closer upon Ola's being-in-the-world some five – six years after that scene in the clubs kitchen.

Postlude II. Ola on jobs, parties, music and 'the foreigners national anthem'

After some years of living outside Oslo, Ola has returned to the area of his childhood and got himself a flat nearby Rudenga, he tells me when I meet him again in 1998. Is it possible to find some indications of how his growing up in this place, with friends of many different backgrounds, might have influenced him in later years? Could it be possible to detect any traces of his at times intense relationship with Omar in the present life of Ola, now in his early twenties? In looking for an answer to these questions, a brief sketch of Ola's last six years will be useful.

He was fed up after compulsory school; he quit and has never, at least so far, returned to any formal education. Instead he first got a so-called 'praksisplass' (literally: a place for practice) at the House (the building housing, among other things, the youth club). At that time this type of job, introduced by the government to cope with unemployment, represented a possibility for youth to get work for a very modest wage financed by the welfare budget. He then went into military service, worked in a grocery shop, and in several other workplaces, until he finally got a job in the national public service sector. He likes his workplace and emphasizes the great variety of people that are employed. I asked Ola if he ever talks about the different backgrounds of his friends:

Sometimes it happens. For instance, last Saturday, I and some friends of mine had a small party. It was me and my girlfriend (also a breakdancer! V.V.), another couple we know very well and some others. I also brought a Pakistani fellow that works in the same place as me. He came to Norway only two years ago, and this was the first time he participated in such a party with Norwegians. But the guy seemed to get a kind of shock. In his homeland the custom says that the one who is giving the party should provide all food and drink. And when we entered the house the only thing my friend Terje got was a bottle of whiskey. Ali had expected food and everything. And when he discovered the girls he was completely puzzled. You see according to his religion one cannot have girls at such a party. He was so shy, didn't know what to say to the girls. You might say he behaved just like all of us when we meet people we don't know, but... This was surely something he hadn't done before. He seemed so disappointed when there was nothing on the table. So I said 'just relax, have yourself a whiskey, it's gonna be alright', you know. He

is twenty two and this was the first time he ever tasted alcohol. Then I went out and bought some snacks and mineral water, that I stood, to make him feel better. So it turned out ok, but he surely was a little bit confused. He's a very nice guy. He has become very clever in speaking Norwegian. He asks a lot; he's curious. And he's a living proof of this being possible. Lots of foreigners have lived here for twenty-thirty years without having learnt the language. Now that's a bad thing!

Ola goes on telling about another workmate from Cape Verde, that even though he has been living in Norway for more than twenty years, is still hardly capable of speaking the language:

But nevertheless, he is one of the boys, real funny. He and I have two things in common: we both take snuff, and we both watch 'De syv søstre' (The seven sisters', a popular Norwegian soap opera shown on television on Sundays). Every Monday we meet and discuss what happened in the last episode. So he understands most of what happens. There are also several Turks, some Somalis, Moroccans too. It's a very nice workplace, you know.

Ola mention friends whose backgrounds cover a wide range of geographical diversity: Vietnam, Somalia, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, 'and God knows where', he adds, indicating both the number and the diversity. In other words: his experience of friendship and relationship with youth of different geographical background has far from diminished over the years. But he also complains hard and almost disgustful in rough expressions about "those fucking Pakistani families" in the area where he lives for making trouble in the backyard; their kids make too much noise; they destroy the football goals, expelling other kids from the playgrounds; there are bad smells from their kitchens, and several older Pakistani youth are involved in crime and 'raising hell' for the neighbors. But this does not at all seem to prevent him from making friends with his Pakistani workmate that got invited to the party together with his best friends. The tolerance and empathy that guides his various interventions to "take care of the guest" can be seen as one more example of Ola's ability to handle differences that at first glance seem quite far from the ethos usually associated with such working-class families as his. And the regular discussions of snuff and soap operas with his work mate from Cape Verde provides one more example of Ola's clearly non-pretentious expertise in finding points of contact ('things we have in common') – resonance points, so to speak – with people it is not obvious to share anything at all with. This might partly be due to the diversity of backgrounds that are represented at his current working place. But,

nevertheless, it seems reasonable to see in this strong continuity with the experiences of his childhood and youth, and the trajectories of orientation that these experiences are likely to have created, when, among other things, he and Omar were the local breakdance heroes.

In fact, quite concrete echoes of the event that took place in 1993 in the club's kitchen that we presented in the beginning of this exploration of friendship and popular culture, still seem to *reverberate* also in the present life of Ola. This became clear when I asked if he remembered the old tune that had the Arabian melody line as its central riff:

(smiling) Oh, yes. We still play that tune. It doesn't have a name, though. We have an old guitar at the job, you see, and sometimes, when the working day is over, we're sitting in the lounge and just play that guitar. And then, if some of the foreigners come in, whether from Somalia, Pakistan, Morocco or whatever, we say: 'Shall I play the Somalian national anthem for you?' Or the Moroccan, the Pakistani or the Turkish, if that's the country he is from. Then we play that tune. We just call it 'the national anthem' or 'the foreigners national anthem' (laughing loud). We still keep it going, you know. I think it was Omars father that inspired that tune...(still laughing).

In other words – as a sediment of the seemingly trivial scene that took place in the clubs kitchen in 1993, the Arabian line that Omar originally presented in their obviously low key musical conversation – almost on the brink of boredom – is here transformed to become the very sign, so to speak, in a humorous generalization of foreignness. From being associated with Omar, originating from his fathers cassettes of famous Arabian oud players like Munir Bachir and Mohammed Abdel Wahab, it is now, six years later, still alive and well and proclaimed no less than the 'national anthem' of all foreigners (see for example Broughton, et al 1999)! In other words, Omar's moment of self reflection and voluntary exposure of his background through the Arabian line, was also sedimented as a sign-moment to be further developed by Ola – here as the raw material for a musical sign of large and humourous applicability.

The humor in that statement concerns not only the juxtaposition of a 'homegrown' and unpretentious musical line and the pompous idea of an anthem; it also expresses the obviously impossible and paradoxically comic in the idea of a "generalized national anthem" for the wide range of nations and cultural differences that are represented, as here among his workmates. Ola seems to be saying: "I know that many people have attitudes expressing that 'all foreigners are the same'. While I am proposing to give 'the foreigners' this anthem, I ridicule such an attitude by exaggerating it."

It may, however, also be that Ola himself, in some ways has a similar tendency to generalize, as we find traces of both generalizing and insisting that “it all depends on the person” in Ola’s attitudes. This may be seen as an example of a combination of attitudes that Les Back – drawing on his research on multicultural youth within a suburb area in London – has termed “the metropolitan paradox”, and that is also well known from Gerd Bauman’s work in East London’s Southall area (Back 1996, Bauman 1996). In other words such doubleness does seem to be present, although for Ola it seems the emphasis is somehow heaviest in the latter position. The content of this story strongly suggests that his long time friendship with Omar and their common sharing of central concerns and experiences of great importance have been the central forces to orient Ola’s point of gravity in such direction.

RUDENGA 1998–99: SOME FEATURES OF THE MEDIA CONTEXT: OSLO, YOUTH AND IMMIGRANTS

In 1998 the media coverage of immigrant related themes in the capital of Oslo seemed to be infused by an increasing intensity. There were especially two issues that were heightening the temperature in the general public.

The first of these circled around violence and crime. Especially the conflicts between two gangs named the A-gang and the B-gang, whose members are mainly held to be of Pakistani background, were often used to cover the front pages of the main papers. Under the heading "*Immigrants in raw contest for power*" *Aftenposten* writes, for example:

"Guns are flourishing. Just now there is an agreement on peace between the two dominating violent gangs in Oslo. But peace is precarious. One of the gangs is called the A-gang and consists mainly of Pakistani men 20-35 years of age. The inner core numbers eleven "brothers". Most of the members belonged to the earlier notorious Young Guns gang, who became known all over the country after the so called Romsås killing in 1988. The other numbers around 30 young Pakistanis and is simply called the B-gang. Almost all members are relatives; several are brothers. The fighting in Oslo is about power, control and honour."
(29/1-1998, my translation)

The newspaper continues by describing violence and fights. A subheading reads: "*Tense before Muslim celebration tonight*" ; proclaims that there is reason to believe a larger fight will occur in connection with the celebration of ID, the feast that ends Ramadan. The article continues with the following quotes:

"You may call me a blackie (in Norwegian "svarting"), but if you say anything wrong about my family, I'll shoot, one of the two young men at the picture says (two young men are photographed from the back seat of a car, bringing strong associations to American gangster movies). The other joins: Of course! The feeling for the family overshadows everything else. One step over that border may lead to a violent reaction." (ibid)

Here, as in uncountable other examples we notice the weight put upon the *background* of those involved. The members of the gangs as simply termed

”Pakistani men” and ”young Pakistanis”. We find no willingness to state that several of these members, both men and youngsters, in fact have grown up in Norway, and may have much more nuanced experiences of their own identity than the simple terms used by the journalist. In most writings about crime in most papers at this time we find a strong tendency to underline the non-Norwegian background of those involved, either clearly specified as ”Pakistani”, ”Moroccan”, etcetera, or ”of alien culture” (in Norwegian ”fremmedkulturell”), ”of immigrant background”, etcetera. Hereby it is hinted that this is not something that solely concerns crime – it has also, explicitly or implicitly – to do with ”culture”.

In January 1999 *Dagbladet* presents statistics from the Oslo police showing that criminals with immigrant background are heavily represented in the registers of the police, under the headline: ”*Here is the truth*”.

4 of 10 violent men have alien cultural background. 6 of 10 robbers have alien cultural background. 8 of 10 robbers under 20 years of age have alien cultural background. 8 of 10 victims of violence have alien cultural background.” (Dagbladet 21/1, 1999, my translation)

In 1998 a well known young Norwegian filmmaker made a film named ”*Schpaa*” whose main milieu is a criminal youth gang where most of its members are of immigrant background (see *Dagbladet* 16/10 1998, *Aftenposten* 18/11 1998). The theme of the film connects to the series of media headlines dealing with so called ”child-robbers”, that since around 1996 had occurred very frequently in Norwegian media (in the electronic archives of one of the largest Norwegian newspaper, *Aftenposten*, the search word ”child robbers” got 180 hits as of 8/1 2001, see for example *Aftenposten*, 1/10 1996; *Aftenposten* 18/6 1997; *Aftenposten* 19/6 1998; *Dagbladet* 19/11 1998). These are children of immigrant background who, according to the media as well as the police, to an increasing degree are involved in different kinds of robbery against other children, where the use of violence or threats are salient.

The second issue associated to various immigrant groups, that in Norwegian media got much attention around 1998, was relations of love and gender as manifested in themes like forced marriages, the so called ”honour killings”, and female circumcision.

In 1997 there was a series of media focus upon the so called ”Nadia case”, where an eighteen year old girl from a Moroccan immigrant family living in Oslo was kidnapped by her father and her brother and transported to Morocco by force. There her family tried to get her married, supposedly because of fear of her becoming too Norwegian (search word ”the Nadia

case” got 106 hits per 8/1 2001 in the electronic archives of *Aftenposten*, see, for example, *Dagbladet* 6/10 1997; *Dagbladet* 9/101997; *Aftenposten* 17/10 1997; *Aftenposten* 27/10 1998; *Aftenposten* 14/8 1999; see also Wikan 2002).

In May 1999 a Norwegian belly dancer was found killed and molested. During the trial that led to the conviction of her Tunisian husband for the murder, it was held that his primary motive was jealousy because his wife was engaged in belly dancing, and because, prior to the murder, she had expressed a wish to be divorced (search word “the Zedini case” got 17 hits per 8/1 2001; see. for example, *Aftenposten* 29/5 1999; *VG* 19/5 1999; *VG* 25/2 2000; *Klassekampen* 11/4 2000; Wikan 2002). Both these motives have been found to be connected to her husbands embeddedness in Arab codes of honour. According to *Aftenposten*, the court underlined that the honour of the family under all circumstance may have been an important background for the murder (*Aftenposten* 28/3 2000).

In other words, the publicity in Norwegian was at this time, strongly focused upon a series of spectacular (that is, especially profitable for the tabloids) problems among the immigrants and their descendants: violent gangs; child robbers; forced marriages; parents kidnapping a “Westernized” daughter to get her married; jealous Muslim husbands killing their wives; Muslims being seemingly possessed by concerns for the honour of the family; female circumcision, especially among African families. These were, in addition to the common and less spectacular issues, like lack of language skills among immigrant families, parents not coming to their childrens’ school when needed, abuse of welfare, and so on.

I must strongly underline that I do not to wish to ridicule the attention rightfully given to several of the serious problems that undoubtedly are implied under these headlines. As this is being written in October 2002, more than five hundred youths of immigrant background in Oslo are reported to have applied for help – they fear being forced to marry by their family- thus clearly indicating that such conflicts definitely do exist (*Aftenposten* 26/10 2002).

Nevertheless it can hardly be denied that the overall media exposure seems to be providing an *extremely unbalanced picture* of what is going on, not least in multicultural youth milieus in Oslo. And as some of these issues will be directly or indirectly addressed in our analysis of the Rudenga youngsters throughout the following chapters, it will hopefully contribute to a further *nuancing* of these images.

5 The club 1998: a community of differences

“The social world, the site of the ‘hybrid’ compromises between thing and meaning that define ‘objective meaning’ as meaning-made-thing and dispositions as meaning-made-body, is a real challenge for someone who can breathe only in the pure universe of consciousness and ‘praxis’.”¹ (Bourdieu 1990:43)

Autumn 1998. Five years have passed since my first fieldwork in Rudenga. I walk through the still grey and now even more weary space of the Rudenga centre. On the surface it seems like very little has changed since last time. The buildings are more in decay, a window in one of the shops is broken, only provisionally repaired; spots of spraypaint from removed graffiti make up the background for new tags; these, however, bear witness that things are not quite the same after all. Several of the more recent ones with the initials “TMG” glow at me at salient spots. The still ongoing attempt to grow some ornamental shrubs in front of the few shops does not seem to be more successful now than before. But as I look more attentively, I see some differences. The clothes shown in the shop where the window is broken: a glowing pink dress with white laces for children; the large shawl in black and gold; a colourful silk-k’mise (Pakistani female cloth) – all hints that this shop now must be run by immigrants. I walk around the corner of the house. A Turkish grocery shop has popped up in the old building at its left side. Yes, Rudenga seems to have changed, at least a little bit in the five years that have passed, I guess, while approaching the locale of the youth club.

Supplied with the knowledge I had obtained throughout the year of my fieldwork, the first impression of the club, that day in late September 1998, could be described as follows:

¹ I understand the concept of ‘praxis’ (as opposed to Bourdieu’s own conception of “practice”), here referred to and used in a critique of the theory of action as proposed by Sartre, to denote “*strategies explicitly oriented by reference to ends explicitly defined by a free project or even, with some interactionists, by reference to the anticipated reactions of other agents. Thus refusing to recognize anything resembling durable dispositions or probable eventualities, Sartre makes each action a kind of antecedent-less confrontation between the subject and the world.*” (Bourdieu 1990:42)

Loud house music – Ibiza style – is thundering out from the open window in the disco, as if the bass was imposing the message that forty four year olds, researchers, and whoever else, simply ought to stay away from such places. The volume and the sheer force in the beats of its soundings convey new meaning to the old warnings from the counterculture of the sixties/seventies : “Don’t trust anyone over thirty”.

Some 10–12 youngsters are hanging around outside the doors when I arrive. At the worn out bench outside the entrance three young girls, Maria (17) of Chilean origin, Nicola (17) of Eritrean background and Trine (17) of Norwegian origin, are sitting, quietly nodding to the music, watching the newcomers as they turn up. On the concrete fence behind the bench Mohammed (19, Pakistani parents) and his girlfriend Anita (16, Norwegian parents) are sitting , holding hands, exchanging youthful love-laden glances at each other, in between smalltalk with Tommy (17, Norwegian parents). They all laugh about some joke in the warm, midautumn evening.

Farukh, a tall, slender boy (16, Pakistani parents) arrives. His dark, almost shiny, geled hair is carefully combed backwards, cut sharply under the ears. A dark blue college sweater with a large (20 x 10cm) worn Norwegian flag printed on his chest, catches my curious attention. He has slim and spotless white Diesel jeans, and a thick, silver-like necklace around his neck. Before he sits down beside the three, he shakes hands with both Mohammed and Tommy. He demonstratively puts forward his long legs, smiling proudly while calling attention to his new shoes. A tall, enormous rubber sole appears under the thick, heavy, black leather, double- stitched sheets that end in three, large metal buckles on each side. The brand name “Art” can momentarily be glimpsed underneath. “Wow, look at those shoes! Schpaa!”, Tommy bursts out. “Schpaa!”, Mohammed accompanies. Some of the other young males gather to look at the shoes, with nods and acclaims of appraisal. Several of them wear quite similar shoes themselves, but of another brand, it seems. I notice small logos on their T-shirts and sweaters: Polo Sport, Calvin Klein. Farukh’s friend and classmate Imre, (16) of Kurdish origin, arrives on someone’s old worn-out bicycle. He parks the vehicle, then starts to shake hand with almost every male present before he joins the group, commenting on the shoes. “1400 kroner”, Farukh smiles, nodding at his shoes.

The music streaming out from the disco suddenly changes. The voice of premium Gangsta Rapper, the late Tupac Shakur, cuts the air. Yusuf and Mahmoud (16, 17, Somalian parents) who are on their way in, clearly appreciate the new sounds, suddenly undertaking a few swaying movements, almost imperceptibly, in their wide FUBU trousers, marking the shift to a new and different rhythmic accent in the music.

A little later I sit down strategically by the entrance door beside Anoar, (23, Moroccan parents) an earlier informant now working as a leader at the club, who is chatting with Amjat (18, Pakistani parents). Amjat is telling about some vacations when he and some friends were in Mallorca some months ago. He wants to return sometime, to dance in the enormous discoteque where he got to know some of the guards who let him in for free. “Just for the dancing”, he emphasizes, “not to drink or to take any other silly substance”. “I don’t believe you”, Anoar replies half jokingly. “Even people who are very, very Muslim, who say they don’t drink – even a bunch of Pakistanis, I’m sure... after just a couple of days in such places they are just as drunk as anyone else... Well, not as bad as the Norwegians, of course. They are definitely the worst. When I was in Ibiza once, where they have the worlds largest discotheque, two planes of mad Norwegians and some Swedes arrived each week. And they were surely the worst. I remember one Norwegian. He wore a silver shorts, pink shirt and had a big Norwegian flag painted on his forehead. He was plain drunk. He just walked straight up to a girl and started to finger her, rubbing himself between his legs (shaking his head)...” Amjat shakes his head too. “And you know”, Amjat continued, partly addressed to me, “to some Muslims, if a girl has been sleeping with someone, she is just nothing, to everybody else, plain nothing” Anoar: “Just garbage”. Hussein (17, of Moroccan origin) joins “..she’s nothing!”

The club is slowly being filled with some 35-40 youngsters. The last remarks in the conversation above make me notice the definite majority of boys among the people present. Not a single girl of Muslim background is to be seen, as Simon (28, Norwegian parents) – the boss of the club, with more than eight years’ experience as a leader – confirms later on.

From the videoroom come screams, shouts and dramatic sound effects. They accompany one of martial art film star Jacky Chan’s wild but personally (as “everyone” knows) executed stunts, or, later that evening, Jean Claude van Damme’s intense kickboxer scenes. These noises interferes now and then with the thumping bass from a new, and to me more peculiar kind of music pouring out from the disco. Tupac has now been replaced with a musical genre that is quite different from both House and Hip Hop, but that nevertheless relates to both in its version of the late nineties. The fast hitting rhythms of Punjabi (Indian?) bhangra star Daler Mehndi hits the puzzled ears of the mildly confused anthropologist.

The feeling of the club of 1998 as being different from what it was like five years earlier is strong and puzzling, even after the very first hours. And throughout the course of the fieldwork, this first impression is strongly confirmed.

The more or less new and salient youth cultural expressions in Rudenga 1998-1999 – that in various ways are hinted at in the description above – are characterized by the emergence of the following traits that, in several ways, are in contrast to the situation five years earlier:

- a noticeable imbalance regarding gender, seen in the small number of female members
- new and elaborate rituals for greeting, especially as practiced among the boys
- new practices of language, manifesting in a common stock of words and expressions originating from the variety of cultural backgrounds that are represented
- new and more homogenous styles of clothing, as well as high prestige attached to the expensiveness of the clothes
- changes in musical practices, meaning that music of immigrant origin is now known and included, along with the main popular genres
- sports, especially football and basketball have been given a more elaborate role
- the place itself is given increased importance as a basis for identification and inclusion in the local community of youth

I suggest that the emergence of these new cultural expressions must be understood as connected to the most obvious change, that is the much larger number of youth with immigrant background that now are being members of the club. From comprising a little more than 20 percent five years earlier, the number of members of immigrant background has now increased to around 65–70 percent in 1998.

As will be seen in several examples in the following chapters, such connections seem to be traceable in several of the collective forms developed among the Rudenga youngsters. Here impulses from commercially supported/exploited transnational and youth cultural expressions are used, and to some extent transformed and combined, with strong traces of influence from sources stemming from immigrant families, as a base for local practices.¹ In this respect it seems like the story of the Arabian guitarline – that first occurred in the kitchen scene of Omar and Ola (in 1993) and that later became interwoven in the relationship between them

¹ The phenomenon of *cultural hybridity* may thus be taken as a salient dimension in our exploration. This dimension will be dealt with more explicitly in chapter 11.

(as analysed in the previous chapters) – can be regarded as something like a metaphorical *seed*, that in 1998 seems to have grown into a more elaborate and collective being, as manifested in the cultural expressions sketched out above.

In the pages and chapters below, the following questions will be addressed:

- I. Of what do these newly emerged cultural expressions more precisely consist? What are their contents and the “messages” they convey?
- II. What can be discerned as the social/cultural sources (“the stuff”) they are made from?
- III. What experiential concerns, and what social processes can be discerned as the motivations behind the semiotics of these composite cultural expressions – emotionally and cognitively?
- IV. In what ways do these changes influence the handling of the “self” and identity among the members as compared to the situation five years earlier?

To address these questions, it seems relevant to relate them to some basic theoretical assumptions.

“Habitus”, globalisation, experience and Peircean “habits”

In the theoretical framework suggested by Bourdieu, cultural expressions are to be seen as primarily anchored in the *habitus* of the bearers; this itself is embedded and in subtle ways conditioned by/in the concrete life-situation of the actors:

“The conditioning associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aim at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.” (Bourdieu 1990:53, my underlinings)

The habitus is, in other words, a set of dispositions that generate and re-produce cultural expressions (“practices and representations”) that to some extent is endowed with “relative autonomy” (ibid). These dispositions reflect

the *life-situation* (conditions of existence) of their bearers, in so far as they are anchored to social position of the bearers, in a broad sense. The “generative principles” that constitute the habitus, are seen as derived from:

“*the social structure (the structure of relations between groups, the sexes or the generations, or between the social classes) of which they are the product and by which they tend to reproduce in a transformed, misrecognizable form, by inserting them into the structure of a system of symbolic relations*” (ibid:95)

In accordance with these suggestions, the social position that generates the habitus – that in turn generates and reproduces the various symbolic forms of a group – are thus composed according to the *class*, the *gender*, the *age* and the *class* that the individual are associated with.

A rarely emphasized and somehow implicit aspect of this theory, is that the core of the life-situations (the social position and its conditions of existence) that generate the habitus must necessarily be embedded in some (more or less) primary *experiences* that stems from such a situation, sedimenting as “structures”, that orient the further fluxus of ongoing experiences, as well as the agency of the individual.¹ These experiences will be sedimented throughout time, as we have seen in earlier chapters, to build a more encompassing, subjectively experienced, sense/feeling of identity, of who one “is”. This will be generated by the “habits”, in the Peircean sense, that form the relative continuity of “the matrix self” (see chapter 4 “Subjectivity, self and identification...”) and orient the person to associate with certain collectivities. This is also in line with Bourdieu, who emphasises the habitus as the collective past (experiences), sedimented in the body:

“The habitus – embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the presence of the whole past of which it is the product.” (ibid:56)

As also noticed by Colapietro, the Peircean understanding and conceptualisation of “*habits*” as the provisionally final and necessarily growing (interpretative) outcome of past semiotic processes, seems to be fully compatible with the more collectively weighted concept of *habitus* suggested by Bourdieu (Colapietro 2001, seminar notes).

But in times of increased globalisation, the more collectively encapsulating phenomena conceptualised by the term “habitus”, and here suggested

¹ In fact, Bourdieu’s theoretical framework has been criticized exactly for lacking a sufficient focus upon concrete actors and the corresponding experiential dimension (see, for example, More 1994).

as further sharpened by the Peircean semiotics of “habits”, is nevertheless complicated and challenged in at least three important ways.

The *first* relates to the fact that, in a situation as immigrants, the social position of the individual is made more complex by the influences from the habitus generated by the position(s) occupied in the context(s) of origin, as well as experiences of eventual traumas and crucial events related to the migration itself, we may add. Such changes in habitus that the phenomenon of immigration necessarily implies, will also provide possibilities for the development of important differences and tensions, especially between generations; this was seen in the relationship between Omar and his father in the previous chapters. For a youngster growing up in an immigrant family, these may arise in the possible tension between the ways of the elder members of the family as manifest expressions of the habitus and the personal experiences derived from the larger amount of time spent in their contexts of origin, on the one hand, and the ways of the host country, more specifically of the primary influences of the “*new significant others*”, not least including his/her fellow youngsters in the new environment where he or she grows up, on the other.

It is important to notice that the possibility for experiencing a generation gap is also ever present in non-immigrant families as well, as the habitus (the past) of parents, of course, is always, at least somehow different from the habitus of their offspring. And in societies that go through big changes within relatively small periods of time, this gap may possibly be experienced as correspondingly larger. In other words, *the more extreme the discrepancy between the experiential core (the basis for their habitus) of the parents and experiential core of the offspring (especially if combined with lack of flexibility/mutual adaption on behalf of those involved), the greater the challenge for both parts to handle the situation in the ongoing life of the families*. This is probably due to the tendency for “petrification”, becoming less flexible with age, as experiences from the formative years of childhood and youth are held to have special importance as one gets older (as suggested by most traditions within psychology since Freud).

Secondly, as touched in previous chapters, in so far as the immigrant family settles in areas where also other immigrant families of different origins are living, there may be an increased reflexivity upon ones own ways of being, challenging the “doxa” one is associated with.

Thirdly, in accordance with the arguments of Appadurai, the assumption of firmness and coherence in the habitus, that one may detect more or less implicitly in the works of Bourdieu (1977, especially 1990:95), is further challenged in “deterritorialized” groups by the growing importance

of *imagination* stimulated by (among other factors) the increased availability of various media. The variety of different *mediascapes*, in Appadurai's terms, produces a series of alternative images for identification and desire; these are endowed with the potentiality to utterly distort the taken-for-granted-ness (*doxa* – in Bourdieu's term) attributed to the habitus of more encapsulated societal forms; they can also becoming building “material” to create new cultural expressions, as we soon shall see (Appadurai 1995:35).¹

In other words, in the life situation of immigrants settling in the complex urban landscape of mediascapes and ethnoscapes in areas with a large number of immigrant families with a wide variety of origins, in addition to families of origins in the majority; in such a setting their life-situation undergoes deep changes as their habitus must be assumed to change accordingly and also to reach a degree of complexity that is likely to make it not only more *spurious, vulnerable and self-reflexive*, but also, in some cases, more *open* to impulses for further change, than habituses embedded in more homogenous and less composite contexts².

How does the local youth cope with the increased variety which has occurred since the first fieldwork?

A heterogeneity of backgrounds – but a coherence of cultural expressions?

One could argue that such a complex and composite landscape of various backgrounds should in itself be taken as an argument for the likelihood of a corresponding *lack* of any communality at all. But judged from the cultural practices observable among the youngsters, this seems tentatively not to be the case.

Is it possible to detect some sort of coherence in the cultural expressions of the actual actors, the youth in Rudenga? In the following chapters I will argue that such relative coherence, at least to some extent, in fact can be discerned.

Bourdieu suggests that:

¹ In Appadurai's words: “*culture becomes less what Pierre Bourdieu would have called a habitus (a tacit realm of reproducible practices and dispositions) and more an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation, the latter often to multiple and spatially dislocated audiences.*” (1995:44)

² Such a situation may also foster the opposite, a more encapsulating attitude, underlining the very complexity involved.

The coherence that is observed in all the products of the application of the same habitus has no other basis than the coherence that the generative principles constituting that habitus derive from the social structures (Bourdieu 1990:95)

The grand question will, therefore, be: *in such a composite and heterogeneous picture (in such an “ethnoscape”, in Appadurai’s term) – where the habitus of the dwellers (stemming from their wide variety of origins) seems so disparate – are there yet some elements in the overall life conditions of these young actors that can be discerned as being of special importance in the sense of forming a more overarching habitus and that will be reachable/readable through the analysis of a relative coherence (pattern) in its cultural expressions?*

If Bourdieu’s assumption is right, it indicates that if we are able to discern a relative coherence in the cultural expressions of these youth, then it should be possible to sketch the relative coherence in the conditions for existence and the accompanying habitus that generate these expressions – as filtered through the subjectivities of the actors.

A main purpose for the following pages and chapters will thus be *to explore if and in what ways the local youth cultural expressions can be seen as creative constructions and responses (interpretants) to central characteristics of their lives.*

To do this, an approach using some central concepts from Peircean semiotics seems promising.

The semiotics of the external “fact” – the experienced resistance of “reality”

The centre of the habitus, the core around which it is developed – like the (irregular and irritating) grain of sand in the centre of the growing pearl, so to speak – is the “reality” of what we may term the external “fact”. As a system of dispositions it can be understood as *tendencies to act and react in certain ways as a result of what is more or less loosely suggested by previously sedimented reactions – that is experiences creating interpretants – to the facts of certain conditions of existence.* I suggest that the understanding of such processes may be further enhanced by Peirce’s basic triad of categories consisting of what he terms *firstness*, *secondness* and *thirdness*. In the Peircean framework these categories are of fundamental importance and encapsulate a large range of phenomena. They encircle ideas:

“... so broad that they may be looked upon rather as moods or tones of thought, than as definite notions, but which have great significance for all that.” (Peirce 1992:247)

In one of their senses these terms can be understood as designed for the analysis of different stages corresponding to different dimensions and as modes of consciousness in the act of interpreting (reacting upon) an experience, as also noticed by Dinesen and Stjernfelt (Dinesen and Stjernfelt in Peirce 1994). Here the subjective interpretation of an experience is conceived as a gradual unfolding of the ability to differentiate, explicate, reflect upon and handle the differences it contains, basically consisting of at least three different stages. Understood in such a sense it is important to underline that, in actual experience, they hardly ever appear in their pure form but will necessarily intermingle with each other to various degrees. For our purposes they can be outlined as follow (see also Colapietro 2001, forthcoming):¹

1. *Firstness* (emotional consciousness, as implied in Peirce 1992:283). In its elementary form this is the first and most immediate and unmediated part of experience. It is associated to pure quality and to emotion. For Peirce, emotion in its first and most characteristic form unfolds in the indiscriminated immediacy of the present. “..that peculiarity of feelings which makes them one of the great branches of mental phenomena is that they form the sum total of all of which we have in immediate and instantaneous consciousness; they are what is present. We cannot be immediately conscious of what is past and gone; we only remember it, though it be past by but the hundredth of a second. No more can we be immediately conscious of what is yet to come, however close at hand it may be. We can only infer it. Of nothing but the fleeting instant can (we) have absolute immediate consciousness, or feeling, whether much or little (...)” (Peirce 1992:259). In such a state of consciousness there is no discrimination between subject and object (Ibid:282). It is an experiential state of immediate, undifferentiated unity/wholeness, of unreflected being-in-itself (see Dinesen &Stjernfelt 1994:38). We may interpret Firstness as what is going on before an experience reaches the brink of reflexivity, manifesting perhaps as glimpse of something, a

¹ The possibility to convey the potentials of these categories will be unevenly distributed throughout the following chapters. In the present chapter, the concept of Secondness will be especially central. Here, the story of Tahar’s first encounters with the external facts of his new place of dwelling as an immigrant will perhaps be the part where the most complete glimpse of their potential in sequence will be sketched.

hunch, but the moment it is reflexively related to something else it enters secondness (below). “*Stop to think of it, and it has flown! What the world was to Adam on the day he opened his eyes to it, before he had drawn any distinctions, or had become conscious of his own experience, – that is first, present, immediate, fresh, new, initiative, original, spontaneous, free, vivid, conscious and evanescent.*” (Peirce 1992:248) On the level of the phenomenology of logic (reasoning) firstness is associated to intuition and “*abduction*”, another Peircean concept which can initially be understood as a loose version of “*hypothesis*” (also explained as “*the qualified guess*”; Dinesen and Stjernfelt 1994:20; see also the chapter on gender). Firstness also appears as fantasy and imagination in the sense that these phenomena represent the future and the possible and are not necessarily corrected by external “*reality*”, which belongs to secondness.¹

2. *Secondness* (energetic consciousness; see Peirce 1992:283). This is the phase of subjective encounter (the “*struggle*” as Peirce terms it; Dinesen and Stjernfelt 1994) with the resistance of the external world, its events and “*brute facts*”. It is associated to will and to external (physical) as well as internal action (for example, the act of thinking). “*We find secondness in occurrence, because an occurrence is something whose existence consists in our knocking up against it. A hard fact is of the same sort; that is to say, it is something which is there, and which I cannot think away, but am forced to acknowledge as an object or second beside myself, the subject or number one, and which forms material for the exercise of my will.*” (Peirce 1992:249) As a further differentiation of feelings it is associated to the discrimination of pain and pleasure. On the level of logic, it is associated to “*induction*”.
3. *Thirdness* (“*synthetic consciousness*”; Peirce 1992:283). This is the “*conclusion*” – the synthesis/the judgement/the law/the categorising or settling of what has been going on in the two previous steps. Experientially it implies something decision like, emotionally a provisional period of relative *calmness* when the arousal of the two previous steps/stages reaches an outcome, and is in its last steps transformed physically or mentally as habits. “*A judgement is the mental act by which the judger seeks to impress upon himself the truth of a proposition.*” (Peirce 1998:292) On the level of logic it is associated to “*deduction*”.

¹ Firstness in the sense of imagination may perhaps be seen as related to Winnicott’s notion of the “*transitional object*”, understood as a possible substitution for lack of power and lack of access to real sources for satisfaction (Winnicott 1990 (1971)).

Peirce illuminates the understanding of the categories in their most basic version by presenting the following example:

“I am soundly asleep and my bed-clothes take fire. At first, the warmth merely tinges my consciousness, so to speak; that is pure Feeling; then I become energetically conscious of something and start up without knowing what it is; that is Dual consciousness, Sense with Will; then I begin to collect myself, I am aware of a process of learning, I put things together; that is Perception and Synthetic consciousness, which collects present and absent into a whole.” (Peirce 1992:283)

Experience is here, thus presented as a gradual development (we may perhaps say a general “awakening”) from a state of the nondiscriminating immediacy of the very first reaction (merely “tinging” on the consciousness), towards a growing reflexivity, based on gradual discovery of further differentiation throughout the encounter with the external fact. Then consciousness and its corresponding initial arousal gradually calm down as the relevant features of the event are brought to light, and judgement drawing on previous experiences, makes a state of conclusion, thus bringing it (emotionally and cognitively) into contact with habits, in the Peircean sense. This last step may be reached by relating (placing) the two previous stages within cognitive/emotional frames based on previously existing interpretants/conclusions. These may take various forms; from undergoing an optimal differentiation (analytical dissection) by being scrutinized according to the ideals of scientific logic (as an ideally maximal form of reflexivity on the levels that at that historical instance are regarded as relevant, we must add), at the one extreme – or from being crudely placed in the sack of the more prosaic and trivial versions, at the other. Both outcomes nevertheless result in a temporary *closing of reflexivity*; they are pulled back into the less active parts of consciousness (pre- or sub-consciousness, a sort of sleep/rest, to continue the metaphor), and from that point the sediments of the interpretation of the original experience reach the status of being “potential”, to be activated (as something like a “resonance chamber”, that is as dispositions) in future events.

Understood in terms of these categories, *the conditions of existence*, in the Bourdieuan sense, *must be understood as manifestations of Secondness*. They are more or less the given facts that the subject has interacted with in the past; these have offered various degrees of resistance in the subject’s ongoing struggle to realise the flow of concerns, rising from the opportunities and limitations of his/her life situation(s)/social position(s). Habitus is thus to be seen as the result (the temporary conclusions, Peircean Thirdness) of the ongoing encounter with the external facts of Secondness,

that are both modifying (structuring) consciousness and its dispositions and being modified (structured) by its very outcome. The triad also strongly emphasizes that the given facts of Secondness do *not determine* either human experience or action in any straightforward way (as the most caricatured versions of the Marxist theory of base and superstructure seemed to propose, for example as criticized by Sahlins 1976). If Thirdness is the outcome of the encounter with Secondness, it will, as an experiential sediment, work as a pool that may become activated when new versions of facts that in one way or another *resemble* the original situation are encountered (Secondness 1, thus generating response on the basis of *similarity*, as previously concluded), which can be seen as a case of *repetition*. Thus, it becomes a source for building immediate analogies (that is for undertaking acts of improvisations, in line with Bourdieu's proposal) in the awakenings of new stages of Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness and so on. The cycle/pattern starts all over again, exemplifying exactly the lack of purity of these categories. As also Peirce put it:

“In whatever manner the mind has reacted under a given sensation, in that manner it is more likely to react again; were this, however, an absolute necessity, habits would become wooden and ineradicable, and no room being left for formation of new habits, intellectual life would come to a speedy close.” (Peirce 1992:329)

This, of course, matches the concept of habitus understood as dispositions; *the presence of the past, oriented towards the future*, so to say.

The necessary lack of purity within the Peircean framework is perhaps most obvious with regard to the idea of Firstness. To imagine an experience that does not in any way compare or relate to something else, that necessarily has to be past experiences, is hardly possible. Nevertheless, the category of Firstness, as the quotation from Peirce also seems to imply, invites us to emphasize that *the genuinely new and even creative must have some position*, at least to some degree, in this phenomenology. If experience is to be regarded as a subject's encounter with the external world, the immediacy of the new is not to be dismissed, simply because neither events nor their interpretations, are entirely predictable or recognizable on the basis of the previously known/experienced. If this were so, the improvisational and transformative qualities of social life, as Bourdieu so strongly emphasized, would, of course, not be possible.

A focus that includes the category of Firstness is not least of importance when investigating the life world of immigrants who, in many cases, remember very well their first encounter with their new host country;

at least for some, this very “first time” experience, had a decisive impact. Immigrants must often handle several different frames of meaning simultaneously (which may be understood as Thirdness). When compared to the situation of the natives, immigrants are likely to experience stronger contrasts to the situations they encounter. The distance between challenges in the situations they encounter, and the frames of meaning they have to use as guidance for such encounters makes their situation more demanding, as the amount of unfamiliarity and newness (that is, Firstness) in many ways may be larger, as we soon shall see.

Firstness, as manifested in the flux of experience, must, in other words, be strongly mixed with the sediments – the outcomes, in the shape of Thirdness – of previous experiences/semiotic processes. And in the versions of Thirdness that are becoming ultimate interpretants, that is, outcomes of semiotic processes that are sedimented as habits (in Peirce’s sense), they become in their patterned form, a *habitus*.

When salient parts of an individual’s experiences are *shared* with others in some sort of pattern, resulting from past encounters with a “*particular class of conditions of existence*”, the corresponding habitus will be shared, and the cultural expressions of individuals belonging to such groups, as the above quotation from Bourdieu points to, will tend to have strong similarities (Bourdieu 1990:58). It is also likely to assume that such sharing will also imply some *patterning* in the concerns of such groups. And as we saw in the analysis of Omar’s relations to various youth cultural communities he identified with, subjective concerns may cover a wide continuum from the unconscious to the conscious.

According to Bourdieu, the connections between cultural expressions, habitus and the class of conditions of existence tend to be mostly *unconscious* to the actors involved; their relations and connections belong to doxa, the non-discursive dimension of social life. While this, of course, must be assumed as basically true, I am inclined to propose that it nevertheless may be possible to find some *traces* at least of such connections in the subjective consciousness of some actors. This may be done through investigation of the subjective interpretations manifesting in their very concerns, and the ways they are able to communicate about the cultural expressions in which they are involved.

The possibility to discern such traces among the youngsters in Rudenga is probably even more likely to exist due to the recency of the changes in the cultural expressions in this specific context. The youth attending the club in 1998 constitute, more precisely, *the first group of members of which the majority are of immigrant background*. This implies that there is *no assumed*

pre-existing set of local cultural expressions among this age group that are likely to reflect this change in the composition of the members (which must be regarded as one of the components in their conditions of existence). With the possibility for comparison with the situation five years earlier, the project is in the unique situation to illuminate what such a change may imply.

Towards the end of the chapter, drawing upon the analysis of the processes of identification in chapter 4 (“Subjectivity, self and identification...”), I will briefly attempt to sketch *what these changes seem to imply for the handling of identity and “self”* among the members.

Moreover, the fact that these changes have occurred so recently makes it possible (at least to some degree) to *trace some of the sources – the “stuff”, the building material, so to speak – from which these new cultural expressions are built*, as previously mentioned.

With this background it is possible to formulate the purpose of the following pages as an attempt to outline those features of the life conditions of the composite and multicultural youth milieu in Rudenga that can be discerned as most important through an analysis of its most salient cultural expressions.

Such an analysis will, in other words, attempt to trace lines of connections from the collectivity of the present cultural expressions – as mirrored in *subjective reflection* upon these practices – to some central aspects of the conditions of living, embedded in what have been termed the “brute facts” (of Peircean Secondness).

Here it is important to notice – also as suggested by Bourdieu – that habitus has two basic aspects: one individual, generated by the peculiarities of individual history on the one hand, and one collective, generated by the aspects of the life-situation that is shared:

“Though it is impossible for all (or even two members) of the same class to have had the same experiences, in the same order, it is certain that each member of the same class is more likely than any member of another class to have been confronted with the situations most frequent for members of that class.(...) Each individual system of dispositions is a structural variant of the others, expressing the singularity of its position within its class and its trajectory. ‘Personal style’, the particular stamp marking all the products of the same habitus, whether practices or works, is never more than a deviation in relation to the style of a period or class, so that it relates back to the common style, not only by its conformity (...) but also by the difference that makes the ‘manner’.” (Bourdieu 1990:60)

Even if Bourdieu here emphasises the experiences that are common, it nevertheless points in the direction of recognizing that habitus does also have an individual aspect. While I would emphasize that this aspect may distance itself relatively far from its pool of commonality, our main focus through out the chapters of part II, will be mostly upon the collective practices – that is the cultural expressions – of the Rudenga youngsters.

With these questions, purposes and theoretical concepts in mind, the analysis of the most salient of the new cultural expressions will be the core from which to start our exploration. In this chapter, two of the most immediate examples of such expressions will be considered, in the shape of *greeting rituals*, and *language related practises*. Further examples will also be examined in the subsequent chapters.

Greeting rituals

The very first strikingly new trait I encountered in my first meeting with the Rudenga club in 1998 was the importance and frequency of elaborate rituals for greeting among the members – especially amongst the boys. This was also characterized by the staff as a salient and important expression of the relationships and ways of being in their overall milieu.

When the male members, regardless of cultural background (youth of Norwegian born parents included), of the club arrive, they shake hands both with each other and with the leaders. Different degrees of familiarity and attention may be expressed in several ways. The handshake may be accompanied by a ‘how is it goin?’ if they have not met for some time. The second hand may be used to cover the hand of the person one is greeting if one wishes to show more attention, or one touches ones heart before (or after) shaking hands, to underline that the greeting is more “heartfelt”, for example, when leaving after having had a more personal conversation. Maximum attention and involvement may be shown by combining touching ones heart before greeting with two hands and at the same time expressing engagement verbally.

If one meets someone one knows, that are surrounded with people the ego does not know, one should greet everyone in the immediate closeness of the known person to show attention and respect (see below) to the friends and acquaintances of that person. One greets every time one meets at the club and every time one leaves. There is also the custom of slapping hands against each other when toughness or humour are the most appropriate

things to communicate. If one arrives at or leaves the club or a group of persons where one knows someone, one greets everyone who physically occupies a position where this is natural. If it concerns good friends one moves willingly further and through more difficult microgeographic landscapes to be able to greet.

This is how the boys behave. The girls, on their part, are giving hugs or kisses on the cheek, but they are not at all as insistant and eager on greeting each other as are the boys. The boys never greet the girls by shaking hands. The elder male members do not greet members that are considerable younger than themselves. The persons among the staff that know the members the best, and who correspondingly enjoy much respect, are always greeted. Those members of the staff also often greet both the girls and the younger members to show an including attitude, as especially younger male members consider it prestigious to be greeted by an older person.

According to teachers in the local school as well as from other schools in the Grorud Valley, these ways of greeting among the boys have become increasingly popular during the last two or three years. This is also confirmed by the staff working at the club.

For the anthropologist this was a practice that seemed very far from the codes of behaviour at the club five years earlier. At that time such explicit and formal greeting was out of the question. Handshaking was very infrequent, and when one arrived it seemed to be important to greet informally to be as “loose” as possible, with just a small nod, a short glance, raising ones eyebrows a little bit, etcetera. Eventually there was a “hi” or some less pronounced sounds whose verbal content was often difficult to identify. The recent importance of greeting can also be observed in the interaction among youth of immigrant background (including their all-Norwegian friends) in the city of Oslo.

In Rudenga five years earlier, such explicit greeting was neither considered “cool” nor necessary and was in no way part of the ways of behaving among the youngsters themselves.

This lack of formalised politeness among these youth can probably be understood on the background of larger historical processes that were evolving especially in western parts of Europe and North America from the 1950s and on. Through an interplay of several factors such as the lengthening of the educational process and the increase of material wealth that developed after World War II, youth acquired resources and attitudes that soon grew into what is often referred to as “the youth rebellion”, where the gap between the generations became a salient trait (see, for example, Berger, Berger and Kellner 1973; Willis 1978). In this rebellion against the

older generation, the deliberate neglect of formal politeness, such as promoted and associated with the elders, played an important role for the youthful (often middle class) countercultures that developed. Such formalities tended to be considered as “empty rituals”, associated with the established societal order, and as expression of false, inauthentic and artificial behaviour, to which the young middle class youth (especially the specialist elite of the “counterculture”) wanted to mark their distance. These attitudes, and the quest for “the authentic”, “the natural” and for “self realization” manifesting in the youth rebellion of the 60s and 70s were also part of larger processes of what Richard Sennett has termed “intimisation”, and developed this scepticism against formal rituals of politeness even further (Sennett 1992). The processes that Weber termed “the disenchantment of the world” (that probably found its most extreme expression in some of the Western industrial/post industrial capitalist societies, as well as the communist experiments in Eastern Europe, we may add), can be seen as earlier stages in this development (Weber 1991/1930). Accordingly, scepticism towards rituals of the past and dismissal of “old fashioned politeness” seemed to have reached larger social groups. As different groups of youth have been important exponents of these tendencies (also spreading to the working class), it is no surprise that practices reflecting these developments were also to be found echoed in this suburb in Oslo. Norwegian newspapers have reported, not infrequently, about projects, run by eager teachers in various primary and secondary schools, whose purpose is “to teach the pupils elementary politeness” of various kinds, including a renewed emphasis upon exactly greeting rituals, to reverse such manifestations of these developments.

It is therefore not without a certain touch of irony we may notice that such a strong emphasis upon greeting rituals is found in this lower class, stigmatized suburb anno 1998.

How come?

Tommy, a boy of solely Norwegian background, tells me that he has learnt the importance of greeting behaviour from his friends with immigrant background. *‘It’s to show respect. It’s the same as you grown ups do when you greet people you don’t know’*, he says. In other words, these ways of greeting – that did not exist five years earlier – are seen as a way of showing respect and acceptance. There is also strong consensus among the members that these greeting rituals have their origin among the youth of immigrant background.

This is further underlined when I ask Imre (16) from a Kurdish family why the members are so insistant on greeting each other:

In the Kurdic areas, in Pakistan (Imre has a close friend of Pakistani background) and in all Muslim areas you greet each other like that. It is the Muslim way. But now it has been more broadly spread. Earlier one did not greet at the youth club. But it has always been usual among the foreigners. And now several of the Norwegians do it too. They think it is a good thing. They get acquainted with people that way. You do not separate people; you greet everyone. Everybody is included, no matter how they look, or where they're from.

While Imre is emphasizing what he held to be the Muslim origin of this practice (at least partly true in the case of Rudenga), this ritual of inclusion seems also to have gotten nourishment from other sources.

Anoar (23) , who has Moroccan parents, and is one of the staff members at the club, tells me that the staff also have tried to stimulate this practice. This was done as part of a strategy undertaken to split and counteract a gang of youngsters with Pakistani background that previously was active in the area, and to which several of the club's recent core members were associated. Anoar lived through a turbulent youth himself, being a former "city stroller" of the rougher kind. He straightened himself up after some years in these milieus and now works as a social worker. Because of his well known reputation as an ex-member of one of the hard core city stroller groups and his inside knowledge from these mileus, he has often been asked to act as a mediator in conflicts with problematic youth groups in various areas, both by the local police, and by social workers. I ask him why the staff used the greeting as an element to improve the situation at the time:

When I was part of the groups in town, we always greeted each other like the kids here do now. It is usual among most of the foreigners I know, and this sure is something that people with foreign background have brought with them. Some years ago the staff at the club had problems with the gang of mostly Pakistanis.¹ It was a lot of trouble, but we managed to split it and make it all calm down. One thing we did was deciding that the members of the club should greet us by shaking hands when they entered the club and when they left. It was part of a larger package where we did several things, you know. But we wanted to underline that we wouldn't take no shit from the members, at the same time as we sort of emphasized that we saw them, that they were showed respect. And it was also sort of hinting a little bit at the gangster movies they all love, where such a greeting often occurs. This was considered a little tough, you know, among some of the kids. And it succeeded very

¹ The story of the rise and fall of this gang will be presented in detail in chapter 9 ("The power of dissonance.Pt. I...").

well. Some of them were used to it before. Then it became a tradition at the club.

Even if these new greeting practices at the club must be seen as partly stimulated and amplified by this intervention by the staff in a precarious period, they seemed to have struck a strongly responding chord among the Rudenga youngsters themselves, judging from the eagerness and devotion the various members seem to put into this practice. A similar weight put on greeting rituals are reported in interviews with youngsters and staff with experiences from other youth clubs in areas where immigrant families are many underlines this resonance. One of the staff members who had recently worked several years in a youth club on the west side of Oslo, with few youths with immigrant background, and a majority of wealthy families, expressed great surprise at the importance laid on greeting each other at the Rudenga club, as this was absent at the West side club. All this indicates that such a practice tends to be an important trait in several areas in Oslo where the numbers of youth of immigrant background is high.

Several of the members themselves confirm noticing that such handshaking also occurs in gangster movies, as well as in the practices associated with the Gangsta Rap genre within the Hip Hop tradition, and that this behaviour “looks cool”. In this way the reception of such popular cultural expressions of the current mediascape also interact with and to some extent amplify these practices. (We will return to the importance of related sign continua later).

Summing up: greeting rituals as responses, messages and their semiotic sources

The development of these practice can be seen in several ways as a response to certain central features (conditions of existence, that is, Peircean Secondness), in the area. These responses, the semiotic building materials they put into use, and the overall messages that these practices seem to convey, can be summed up as follows:

1. The development of the practices of greeting may in part be seen as stimulated by the concrete *response introduced by the staff to cope with the problems with the gang of youngsters of Pakistani background*. The staff thus worked as creative agents who assumed that such a practice would resonate with at least three different sources/semiotic fields (see below) to which the members had some affinity. Judged by the success of their intervention, this assumption seemed to be correct.

2. The resonance felt by the members must be seen as a *response to the overall local situation characterized by the presence of a large number of immigrant families of a wide variety of backgrounds* – the composition of the local ethnoscape – to their the need for some overarching way of marking inclusion (see below). The indication that this is a salient practice in other areas with a large immigrant population seems to point in the same direction.
3. *The semiotic stuff/the building materials* for the practice seem to be: A) The previous existing of such greeting-practices in several immigrant families themselves, especially among those of Muslim background; B) The practices associated with the transnational genre of Gangsta Rap, as well as popular gangster movies; C) The practices associated with various “city stroller” groups. (Several of these will be referred to in other parts of the following chapters, as important sources for attitudes, aesthetics and fascination for the Rudenga youngsters.)
4. *The semiotic content (the messages)* of the practice can be summed up as follows. The handshake (or other forms of physical greeting behaviour) may be seen as both a materialization and a symbolic expression of the message that a common meeting ground/contact point actually exists for the people involved. The interpretants that this sign-behaviour seems to release are thus primarily inclusion, in a double sense. On the one hand, it is largely agreed upon among the members – regardless of background – that this kind of behaviour has its origin among the immigrants. By incorporating a practice associated by the immigrant families in the common ways of behaving among the youth of the area, one communicates respect and inclusion for the codes of behaviour in these families. From the standpoint of the youth whose background does not include such practice (for example youth of Norwegian born parents), their participation shows acceptance for one of the differences associated with the immigrant groups. In these ways the ritual brings attention to and communicates acceptance for the differences represented. For the immigrant groups already engaged in this greeting practice, this behaviour is thus lifted up as a positively valued practice, giving prestige and recognition to their background. On the other hand, the greeting codes themselves and their physical realization can be interpreted as an underlining of *community, equality and sameness*. It becomes a concrete and literally shared point of contact acting as a bridge for resonance, for bringing people together in a direct and physical way through formalized bodily contact. Through engaging in, sharing and practising these common codes one also

underlines inclusion in the group as “we”. (At the same time, it is a very effective way of excluding persons by deliberately neglecting this behaviour.)

Again we see a similar doubleness as the one we noticed in the analysis of the musical conversation between Omar and Ola. On the one hand Ola shows respect, acceptance and even enjoyment for difference (the Arabian music line) by incorporating it into the repertoire of his band. This may be seen as a parallel to the acceptance and enjoyment of difference (the practice of greeting among the immigrants) reflected in the inclusion of this practice into the common stock of rituals for politeness (like the Arabian line as incorporated into the tune in the repertoire of Olas’ band). On the other hand, the ritual is itself underlining a mutual equality and sameness for the persons that are included; this is a parallel to the experience of the community of the breakdance era, in which Omar and Ola were main exponents and in which the larger collective of Rudenga youth took part.

Differences, that represented the foreign background of some of the youth at the club, were *undercommunicated or counteracted* in various ways on the collective level, in 93–94, especially as shown by the fact that music of immigrant background could not be played at the disco. This was the time where the members of Norwegian background had hegemony at the club. When Ola takes up, deals with, and enjoys the Arabian line presented by Omar, his accept for this indexical sign (see chapter 6 “The message of dress...”) associated with difference referring to Omars Iraquian background, is something that goes on in a relatively private sphere among the two friends. The behaviour of these two friends was in contrast to the more collective (hegemonic) mentality, where signs pointing to the differences of the members of immigrant background, to a noticeable extent were ignored or disregarded.

In 1998 youth of Norwegian background no longer represented the hegemonic group at the club, but have become a minority among other minorities. The non-hyphenated Norwegians, of course, still make up the majority in society at large. But, for the youngsters in the Rudenga area, this is turned upside down, as youths of various immigrant backgrounds are now in majority. Nevertheless, it is hard to find any of these groups dominating the club, as we will see in the following chapters, and if such a hegemonial group should be pointed out, it could not be done on criteria of geographical background, but of age.

Such opening up towards a recognition of all the different origins represented, in this *community of differences*, so to speak, that the greeting

rituals in this description seem to be the first indication of, can thus be interpreted as a *creative answer* to a central feature of the conditions of life in the area in the shape of the *demographical changes* Rudenga has been going through in recent years, where the amount of immigrant youngsters have grown decisively.

The development of collective cultural practices may, therefore, at least to some extent, be regarded as process whereby signs, in the shape of objects or actions, are *selected* in aggregates as responses to salient features (external facts) in the actor's life situation. Such a selection seems to occur on the basis of their relevance to the actor's experience of this situation, through the activation of what Bourdieu terms "practical sense":

"Practical sense 'selects' certain objects or actions, and consequently certain of their aspects, in relation to 'the matter in hand', an implicit and practical principle of pertinence; and by fixing on those with which there is something to be done or those that determine what is to be done in the given situation, or by treating different objects or situations as equivalent, it distinguishes properties that are pertinent from those that are not." (Bourdieu 1990:90, my underlinings)

This selection of the pertinent from the not-pertinent is, in other words, nothing else than a collective manifestation of the phenomenon of *resonance* (previously proposed, supported and made more precise by the semiotics of Peirce), a concept that emphasizes the experiential (and subjective) basis of practice.

The greeting practices convey a message that probably is of special importance in such an area, where the possibilities for experiencing community are accordingly precarious. Through the basic experience of the differences present in their common situation, the flexible answer (the interpretant, Thirdness) manifested in the practices of greeting, reflects the doubleness that both consist of an *accept for difference* and of the celebration of *community and sameness*. This theme will be as a red thread in several empirical examples below.

Our next thematical examples are practices of language.

Language: "Kebab Norwegian"...

The anthropologist is sitting "at the door" (that is, in the entrance of the club) together with Farukh of Pakistani origin. Tommy arrives and starts talking to Farukh in something that sounds like Punjabi. As Tommy presents one – to an unskilled listener – odd-languaged utterance after another, Farukh nods, smiles and says something back as if confirming,

being surprised at Tommy's skill, replying and somehow seeming to test out how much his friend is able to master or understand. Sometimes they both laugh loudly after certain expressions, leaving the anthropologist with an even more puzzled feeling of not having a chance to understand their conversation, as they speak in several minutes. Afterwards they explain that it was words and expressions that Tommy had picked up from Punjabi, even though they both admit that he probably would not be able to keep a longer conversation in the language. "But he is not bad, though", Farukh remarked with a friendly grin.

Several of the youth of immigrant background tell about friends (including girlfriends) of Norwegian or other backgrounds, who have learnt parts of the languages of their buddies. This is explained as an act of "coolness" and /or friendship: "*It is cool to know some of the language that your friends are speaking.*" Friendship can thus be regarded as a special manifestation of the outcome of ones encounter with the Secondness of the other, where one builds positive emotional ties to an other, as an expression of the elicitation of mutual interpretants charged with favourable emotions. The learning of the foreign language of a friend can thus be seen as one such series of interpretants (that is as reactions to the sign of the other), temporarily settling (as Thirdness) as a personal habit.

A similar practice, on a more collective level, manifested on several occasions when I overheard a series of incomprehensible words and expressions that the youngsters use among themselves.

In the Norwegian film "*Schpaa*" that was shown in 1998, many of the same expressions were used by the multicultural group of young delinquents figuring in the film. While watching it together with some of the club members, several of them said that it was considered "cool" to hear the language they used themselves in the film. I asked a group of members to write down these words, in the spelling they thought correct, to add from which language they considered the words to have originated, and to guess the approximate frequency of their use. The criteria for including a word on the list was that it should be known and used by most of the members of the club.

The result of this request was a list of around thirty five words and expressions that primarily turned out to be words from the main languages represented among the youth club members themselves, that is Berber, Arabic, Urdu, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish and Turkish:¹

¹ The list was written down in April 1999

Table 1. The common stock of words and expressions of immigrant background

Words and expressions (local orthography)	Which means? (Norwegian words in parentheses)	Language (if you know)	Common use	Some times used	Rarely used
Schpaa	Good, nice (bra, fin)	Berber	X		
Lø	Bad, to hell with it (drit i det)	Berber	X		
Bauch	The cops (purken)	Berber	X		
Chofer	Look at it, beware (se på den..., pass på)	Berber	X		
Ischbit	Steal (stjæle)	Berber	X		
Schpaa kahba	Nice chick (fin dame)	Berber	X		
Kahba	Whore (hore)	Berber	X		
Akko/aschgo	Fuck (pule)	Berber	X		
Zemel/zemer	Gay (homo)	Berber		X	
Tyscha	Brat (drittunge)	Arabian	X		
Ouallah/volla	I swear it's true (jeg sverger det er sant)	Arabian	X		
Avor	Let's run (vi stikker)	Arabian	X		
Kasjof	Get caught (bli tatt)	Arabian	X		
Garro	Cigarette (røyk)	Arabian	X		
Kasme	I swear (jeg sverger)	Punjabi	X		
Sortta	Cigarette (røyk)	Punjabi	X		
Baja	Brother (bror)	Punjabi	X		
Gandou	Gay (homse)	Punjabi	?		
Kotta	Dog, hound (bikkje)	Punjabi	?		
Kanjiri	Whore (hore)	Punjabi	X		
Madj	Cow (ku)	Punjabi			X
Bængshot	Sisterfucker (søsterpuler)	Punjabi			X
Wari wari	Hashish (hasj)	Urdu	?		
Kiali	How is it goin'?' (går det bra?)	Urdu	X		
Tært	Good (bra)	Urdu		X	
Sna	How is it goin'?' (går det bra?)	Urdu	X		
Tig tag	I'm fine (det går bra)	Urdu	X		
Waria	Hey you (hei du)	Somalian	X		
Kalab	Idiot (idiot)	Somalian			X
Firi firi	Look (se)	Somalian	?		
Næs	Dope/you are a fool (dop/du er dum)	Somalian	?		
Hoiowas	Fuck you/motherfucker (morpuler)	Somalian			X
It	Bastard (kjøter)	Turkish	?		
Kardash	Comrade (kamerat)	Turkish	?		
Loco	Nuthead, a crazy, he's nuts (gærning)	Spanish	X		

Again, elder informants, including Anoar, that participated in the groups of city strollers in the late 80s, insist that the use of such a language, including many of the expressions used by the Rudenga youth in 1998, originated from these milieus where it was partly a secret language used for tricking the

staff in the shops in the Oslo City mall/shopping center, when the various groups were out shoplifting (see also Andersson 2000; Krangle and Strandbu 1996). It is said that the language soon lost this kind of usefulness when the staff in the shops and other authorities in the shopping center learnt most of it themselves.

Many of these words have later become part of the linguistic practices of several milieus of youth in Oslo, where social ties between youth of different backgrounds are likely to have been frequent (see, for example, Aasheim 1995). The research that has revealed this phenomenon in Oslo has also been given some media space, terming the practice as "Kebab Norwegian" (*Aftenposten* 1997 :18). This is a transposed emic expression originally registered by the Swedish linguist Ulla Britt Kotsinas who found that similar use of foreign words among Swedish youths were jestfully termed "Kebab language", as is shown in her research among multicultural youth from the suburbs outside Stocholm (Kotsinas in Palmgren et.al (eds.) 1992).¹

One of the elder informants (Malou, 24, of Moroccan background) who returned to Norway in 1992 after having spent four years in Morocco by his family, tells about his puzzlement at hearing words of his own language (Arabic) when he returned to Oslo:

"I didn't have a clue. I was walking inside Oslo City and a Norwegian chap came to me and asked if I had a "garro" (which means a cigarette in Arabic) !! It was completely nuts. And nowadays I hear 5-6 year olds in Rudenga who have started to speak that way. Saying "lø" and so on... Its kinda cool hearing your own language that way. But it's quite comical too".

The Rudenga youngsters tell me that those words are still useful when they need to communicate without wanting the people around them to understand as, for example, when in trouble with the police or at school trying to exclude "nosy" teachers. Nevertheless, the language has long been used as a part of more normal communicative situations, as when the boys tell about a "schpaa khabe" they just saw, ask for a "garro" or say "sna" while meeting their mates, answering with a hasty "tig tag".

The repeated appreciations of "*hearing other people using words from your own language*" among the youth in Rudenga, underlines that this practice may be seen as another expression of the mutual appreciation and acceptance of the differences represented in their various backgrounds. This

¹ Another humorous term registered by Kotsinas was "Spaggsvenska" which means "spaggetti Swedish" (1992).

is in line with Kotsinas interpretation of the similar use of language in multicultural suburbs in Sweden:

”As far as vocabulary is concerned, slang words, greetings and such like are used, not only by those from whose languages they are borrowed, but by all the adolescents in the area. ’It is mixed words from different languages’ as one boy puts it. This ’mixture’ can be interpreted both as a sign of multicultural background and as proof of respect and politeness towards friends of other ethnic groups, rather than ignorance of Swedish words.” (Kotsinas 1992:56)

In addition and as something not to be forgotten, we may add, such practices must also be understood as being strongly intertwined with the joys of friendship.

Similar examples of mixing of languages (as well as musical genres) as ways of showing mutual respect and openness towards the backgrounds of the involved are also shown in Les Back’s fascinating analysis of the collaboration between two young British artists of immigrant background respectively called “Apache Indian” and “Maxi Priest”. Steven Kapur, alias “Apache indian”, was born of Hindu Punjabi parents in Birmingham. Back characterizes his performances as follows:

”He performs and expresses himself through snatches of Jamaican patois, Punjabi and a unique form of English that is being generated by groups of young people who are growing up alongside each other in Birmingham.” (Back 1996:220)

Apache Indian is working within a genre called ”bhangramuffin”¹ (as opposed to so called ”raggamuffin”, see chapter on music below), where a marked reverence for reggae (of Jamaican origin) is strongly present (see also Gilroy 1999:82). In 1992 Apache Indian collaborated with a black reggae singer from South London, who called himself Maxi Priest on a song named ”Fe Real”. Back describes attending a concert by the duo – in the context of a primarily white disco scene, but where around 40 percent of the audience were black or Asian dance-hall goers – as something experienced as what he terms ”a new transcultural congregation” (Back 1996:223). He writes:

¹ ”Bhangra” is originally a folk-dance from Punjab. In the mid 70s London-based youngsters of immigrant background from Punjab electrified and developed bhangra into a genre of much popularity among a variety of groups of youngsters with Asian background (see Back 1996; DJ Ritu, in Broughton, Ellingham, Trillo (eds.) 1999:83; see also chapter 10 “Music: threads of continuity...”).

”This constitutes powerful moments where social and musical conventions are being played with and transgressed: an Afro-Caribbean performer singing in Punjabi to a South Asian audience, and an African Caribbean audience singing in Punjabi with an Asian artist. The result is an exciting tangle of rhizomorphous connection, a sound block that no longer has a point of origin but forms a conjunction. (...) The culture I have tried to describe in this chapter refuses to be located within the either/or ism of ”identity”. This music manifests itself in a connective supplementarity – ragga plus bhangra plus England plus Indian plus Kingston plus Birmingham.” (Back 1996:225)

In other words: pointing to, incorporating, enjoying and using signs associated with the differences represented in the great variety of backgrounds found in such composite social groups – as here in the shape of language (or, in the case above, in addition with musical genres) – underlines the complex semiotic processes and patterns of interpretative reactions manifested in the social relations of such groups of youth, as the examples from Stockholm and London respectively also show.

And when Tommy and Farukh are sitting there talking Punjabi to each other, smiling and laughing as Tommy progresses, it is not unlike the community of laughter we witnessed when Ola and Omar exchanged the Arabian line 5 years earlier. This emphasizes once more that such phenomena we here are exploring must be seen as connected to more basic social processes in which the dimensions of friendship seem to play a decisive role.

If the family background is a basic element in the experiences sedimented as habits in their matrix selves, the semiotic impulses stemming from this source are also exposable and recognised by others, on the level of the focal self. This represents a considerable change from the situation in 1993/94, when such exposure was hardly possible.

...and plain Norwegian

But there is one more characteristic feature concerning the use of language among the Rudenga youth, more specifically, the weight put upon speaking Norwegian. This is not least noticeable and experienced directly when new immigrant families arrive at Rudenga.

The refugee families from Somalia are the ones who have arrived most recently in the area. According to several of the youngsters from these families they experienced strong pressure, from the local youth of both Norwegian and immigrant background, to learn to communicate in Norwegian as fast as possible when they arrived. For newcomers of various

origins this strong demand to learn Norwegian has nevertheless also caused much frustration, as examples of physical threats and other episodes of more direct harassment have been reported.

The experiences of the first meetings with the new country will show great variation among different actors. Speaking in Peircean terms, these meetings with the often very unfamiliar external facts of Secondness – that especially characterize the situation of being a newly arrived immigrant – will be based on previous experience and acquired habits conceptualised as Thirdness; in addition comes the possible shock, uncomfortableness and creativity represented by Firstness, increasing in difficulty as the new situation is experienced to be more *discontinuous*. In this chapter the story of Tahar will serve as a medium to explore some central aspects of this phenomenology.

Tahar's story: Learning to walk on ice. The pain of conflicting habituses.

The frustration accompanying the felt necessity of learning a new language, Norwegian, is strongly reflected in Tahar's story – a twenty year old youth of Moroccan background who arrived when he was fourteen. His father came to Norway in 1967 as an eighteen year old, as one of the first Moroccan immigrants in Norway. But as his father wanted his wife and children to know Moroccan ways, they spent most of their time there, getting visits and, of course, money from Tahar's father as he grew up. High unemployment and social insecurity were his fathers primary reasons for moving to Norway, to seek work and better living conditions for himself and his family. According to Tahar, his father had not planned to stay for long, but as the years passed he found himself still living in Norway. Fourteen years after his first child was born, his wife and children moved to Norway too. When I ask Tahar what it was like to meet Norway for the first time, he tells a story where the lack of mastery of the Norwegian language was experienced as point of fundamental importance in meeting the otherness and unfamiliarity of the new country:

It was so strange. Like being thrown into a very different part of the world. You have to learn almost everything anew. (...) We had a long journey by car. Through Spain, France, Germany, then we took the ferry from Kiel. We arrived by boat. It was winter. We came in to the Oslo fjord. Everything was so strange, so white, dark and cold. No human beings could be seen anywhere. I didn't know then that the summer would turn out to be so nice, so very nice. It was so much snow, ice... We were stopped immediately by the police who wanted to control our

passports. My little sister was so absorbed with everything that was so new, so she stumbled on the ice. “You have to learn how to walk on the ice”, he said, the police officer that helped her up. I remember that very well.

Tahar’s encounter with the very unfamiliar externality (Secondness) of the new country seems to have been almost on the brink of a shock. It is, of course, probably likely that both his father and other relatives who already lived in Norway had tried to convey some impressions of what it was like. Nevertheless, as may be argued from an immense variety of sources – and not least as explicitly stated in the referred Peircean triad – *the experienced encounter with “the real thing”, so to speak, is always different from the experience of its representations.* In the immediacy of the first stages in encounters with the new (Firstness), the emotional reactions (interpretants) may be highly intense and excited – not yet calmed down by the differentiations created by familiarity (based on the repetitions, conclusions, habits, that is interpretants/Thirdness) with the experiences to come. The phenomenological absorption in the immediacy of the new (Firstness) is underlined by the reactions of his little sister who, dizzy and confused by the overall situation, is probably even more likely to slip on the ice, an event Tahar seems to perceive as a metaphor for the unfamiliarity of the situation as a whole. It is perhaps the sensitivity generated in the very moments of these first encounters with the new that makes this memory so vividly present, as if he understood the policeman’s encouragement/demand for the newcomers to “learn to walk on ice”, as a metaphor for getting adjusted to living in the new country. If this interpretation is right, it underlines the immediacy of the creativity embedded in the category of Peircean Firstness. As in poetry, Tahar’s taking up a phrase meant at some practical purpose, and seeing it (interpreting it, transforming it) as a metaphor for the larger situation, exemplifies this creative aspect.

The further series of encounters with the new situation – that is the process of creating *familiarity*, which is building up a pool of Thirdness, a slowly growing feeling of assuredness and the mastery of what Tahar, from his position, felt as necessary – was far from easy. And for a fourteen-year-old, especially the struggle to learn the foreign language was perceived as of definite importance. The pain of the first steps of this struggle, and the seemingly overwhelming experience of otherness and discontinuity, for Tahar resulted in a temporary withdrawal from the new, external world, and a corresponding longing for the familiarities of his past:

For a long period I stayed more at home than outside. I was so embarrassed because I couldn’t talk. I saw people from all over the

world, whom I never had seen before. It was Asians, Vietnamese, Pakistanis... blacks we already had in Morocco. Everything was so changed. The buildings were completely different... You start to think. You want to go back, be together with your family, your friends, your country. I thought about what it had been like there, the day we left.

I felt so homesick. And it was so difficult to get to know people. It is not easy when you are fourteen and you arrive from a foreign country. I felt strongly that I was always on the outside, at first. I was the only Moroccan in the Arrival-class. I felt it was so important to learn Norwegian. I had gone mad without it, I think. The language means everything.

I did not know any of the other Moroccans in Rudenga, I didn't want to. I didn't care to try. Because they all knew how to speak Norwegian. They knew the Norwegian ways. We didn't know any of them. I didn't know that Salim and his brother (see below) lived here until later.

The confusion arising from the encounter with these harsh facts of Secondness and the sheer otherness of this experience, especially as manifested in this subjective experience as a newly arrived immigrant, was too strong. Points of relevant familiarity were in other words hard to find. Tahar seems to feel language to be the crucial tool for mastering the new world. Even the possibility for building a bridge between himself and the new world that was represented by the other youngsters from Moroccan families who knew both the place and the language, was refused by Tahar because his self esteem and confidence were so low as a result of his reaction to his own lack of mastery over the language. Only gradually was such bridging built. In this process some of his relatives, and the starting of a new friendship with another young immigrant in a similar situation seemed to play decisive roles:

Luckily I had my cousins who had lived here for fifteen years. They taught me how to take the autobus, and they played football with me. I learned much from them. Then I got to know Henry who was from Ghana and the same age as me. He became my first and my best friend. Still is. He had just arrived too and didn't know any Norwegian himself neither. We got to know each other when my father asked him to show me the way to school. No one of us understood the language of the other. We just talked with our hands. We never forget that time when we had it so difficult together. (...)

His cousins thus became important mediums to help him through the initial steps towards a mingling with his new environment. But in the immediacy of the concrete locality of his new life-world, the meeting with a fellow

Rudenga dweller in the shape of Henry seemed to become a *critical event* that solidified the foundations of such a bridge. Once more, and not surprisingly, *the development of friendship seemed to play a key role in the processes of integration and the acquiring of familiarity with the new place.*

And once more the search for and finding of *similarities* (another expression for the seeking/creating of *continuity*) in this new situation seemed to be the more abstract principle hidden in the practical knowledge. Tahar and his cousins were all Moroccans; they were kin, and they all played football (see also the chapter on expressive practices, 6 “The Messages of dress...”). Through these similarities (and probably through a couple of other things as well), which mean nothing else than confirmation of the known (making possible the temporary rest of Thirdness), he could calm down and relax his until then almost overwhelming uncomfortableness with the situation.

But this process seemed to reach even further after meeting Henry who also had a difficult time. Here the similarities could be assumed to be mutually experienced even more intensely: neither boy possessed enough mastery over common verbal language to be able to communicate with the other, starting by “*talking by their hands*”, both were newly arrived immigrants, and both felt strongly the difficulties of their respective encounters with their new country. Exactly through the subjective recognition (in whatever degree of consciousness) of these similarities, could the phenomenon of *resonance* unfold, once again somehow “beyond the words”, at least in the beginning.

But the process of acquiring what Tahar felt as a sufficient mastery over the language, at least for basic purposes, took its time. He had been living in Rudenga for 3 years before he dared enter the youth club:

I didn't dare to go to the youth club because I spoke so bad Norwegian. I didn't attend the club until I was seventeen, three years ago. It was when I got better in speaking Norwegian I started to go to the club. (...) After a while I joined the other boys at Rudenga when they played football. That was a good thing. I learned much about the language by playing football.

After entering into the community of the youth club he soon was invited to engage in an activity of great popularity within the members, namely playing football. As will be explored in chapter 11 (“Identity in the multicultural...”), the prominence of football, can be seen as one more result of the need to develop simple activities for inclusion. Football seem to serve this purpose very well, as a type of activity that does not require what many of the newcomers of immigrant background lack – that is, mastery over a

common language. This seems to be an almost ideal medium for a good start, not least to develop further competence in language, as Tahar's last remark implies, as practiced amongst the Rudenga youngsters. Once more a basic *medium for resonance* was searched for, found and used in the processes of building relationships and familiarity/similarity, just like break-dance and practices associated with the Hip Hop continuum of signs had been such a medium for the development of the friendship between Ola and Omar.

Tahar was, in fact, very eager to go to school and has on several occasions expressed a special interest in history, both Moroccan and Norwegian. He tells me he tried to read several Norwegian books to learn the words. But, despite his good will and much effort, when he started to go to college (in Norwegian: "videregående") he felt that his mastery of the language was so poor, that he dropped out of school. He then got a job as a window cleaner in a small firm, a job that he still keeps.

Of all my informants, Tahar was one of the very few who asked me not to use the tape recorder while doing his interviews. The reason he gave was that he considered his Norwegian to be so bad, but as far as I can judge, his mastery of Norwegian was far better than that of several of the other youngsters I got to know in this context. This remarkable discrepancy between his own self-judgement and his actual abilities can probably be seen as a result of the importance he put upon mastering Norwegian as a young Rudenga dweller.

The semiotics of any new experience – especially as it unfolds over longer time spans, as in situations of recent immigration – imply a process of gradually acquiring mastery, through understanding and ability to interact with the varieties of information (differences) that is culturally relevant. It may be seen as a process through which the actors gain familiarity by searching for and generating *similarities* in one way or another; this gradually makes possible an increasing series of provisional semiotic *rests*, so to speak, in line with Peircean phenomenology. Through this process one gradually builds up a subjective sense of *continuity*, between things already known and experienced, on the one hand, and the series of events encountered in the new environment on the other. This makes a clear parallel to our analysis of the various manifestations of the phenomenon of *resonance* in previous chapters, as this phenomenon occurs exactly at the point where such continuity is experienced. Through this process, the actors generate and continually expand their pool of the known, that gradually

becomes exactly dispositions. In the ever growing series of last instances – that is as ultimate interpretants – and when shared, these become nothing else than their subjective versions of a growing habitus, with which to meet the continual fluxus of events in an adequate way. The struggle to master the language of the new setting could here be seen as a concrete expression of the difficulties and their interpretative solutions generated by the radical shift of habitus that the situation of immigration often implies.

In so far as verbal language can be regarded as a most basic, flexible and immediate creative medium for the enabling of an actor to live in, handle and act in a life-world – and especially in an immigrant situation – the processes of recognition and of finding similarities/resemblances between the contexts of origin and the new situation, may find one of their most complex and fundamental expressions in the struggle to learn the new language.

This can, more precisely, be seen as learning a great number of the “differences that makes a difference” in the new context; these enables the actor to master the situations he /she is likely to encounter. In such a way the acquisition of the language of the host country can be seen as an especially forceful manifestation of the *gradual mastering of the relevant differences* of the series of experiences in question; this is in line with Peirce’s understanding of experience through his analytical triad, as *a process of gradually increasing interpretation/sorting out/reflecting upon and mastering of the complex of differences it contains* (that, nevertheless, may stop at each moment in such a process, when reaching a possible temporary completion in the various phases of Thirdness it passes through).

In experiential terms, Firstness is necessarily accompanied by Thirdness in the shape of images, hunches, knowledge, expectations stemming from the past. In encounters with what is new in the Secondness one is exposed to (eliciting genuine Firstness), the person and habits (habitus) are transformed and modified into new Thirdness. Then the process can start once more. What is important to notice is that, without the existence of the new of Firstness, no shock, no change, no difference that makes a new difference can occur; this is especially seen in the transformations that Tahar went through. The Peircean triad thereby emphasizes that without the flexibility of Firstness, no development, no creativity, no adaption would be possible.

As we have seen, Tahar’s concerns according to his perception of his situation, were embedded in what must be considered basic human needs. Specifically these were the *need to be included* in the local communities, to make personal relations of resonance in the shape of friendship, to be able to

make sense of the situation, especially through acquisition of the new language, and the need for *being made sense of* (to be recognized by) –from his social environment, that is, to get positive confirmation from his new significant others, including his peers.

The need to develop communication-skills in a common language among the youngsters also seemed to be recognized by the staff at the youth club. As a response to this need, for a short period of time, they tried out a rule that permitted only Norwegian to be spoken within the localities of the club. But such a rule was soon dismissed by both staff and members as "unnatural" and not suitable for the milieu in Rudenga. And in line with the experiences reported by the newcomers above, it seemed that the youngsters of the place acknowledged this a necessity themselves, not unlike the interaction between the staff's emphasis upon greeting, and the resonance this seemed to strike among the youngsters themselves.

The weight put upon speaking Norwegian was reflected on several occasions observed within the locality of the club. When groups of members of the same background were talking to each other in their common language, they were remarkably quick to switch their language into Norwegian when a member with a different background and mother tongue entered the room or approached the space they were occupying. Such an act underlines the inclusion that the use of the Norwegian communicates to their fellow members (see also the chapter 11 "Identification in the multicultural...").

Language use outside the club

There are strong examples of the emphasis upon speaking Norwegian in contexts outside such intimate and peer-related arenas as the club, also. This becomes clear while speaking to three older youths of North African background, of whom one (Salim) has grown up in Rudenga, and who also put much importance on such practices. This is especially emphasized as a preferred way of behaving in their common workplace (as a different manifestation of Peircean Secondness). One of them got the job through Omar, who was one of the first youths of immigrant background employed where these three friends now are working. We are talking about the relationships between those with immigrant background and the other employees at their job:

Salim: I think the boss is quite proud of succeeding so well with having both Norwegians and foreigners employed...

Rahim: They got a good impression from Omar who behaved very Norwegian. Then Salim began, who was also a very clever worker, and who speaks very well Norwegian.

Salim: Much of these things have to do with the language. It is much easier to be accepted when you speak Norwegian well, but of course you must be a good worker too. I mean, more recently they have employed some Moroccans who always sit by themselves in the canteen, speaking Berber all the time. They have lived in Norway 5-6 years, having only contact with other Moroccans... We try to make them understand the importance of speaking Norwegian. But they don't seem to understand it when we tell them...

Rahim: We try to say that it's OK if they speak Berber on the tube, or while walking in the streets or such places, but that it is not wise to do it at the job... You got to have a flexible attitude, and some go-ahead spirit. Then you may go far, I think. Experience is not the most important thing...

Salim's family was one of the very first Moroccan families to settle in Rudenga. And, while he was growing up he was one of the core members at the Rudenga club in the first part of the 90s (where I met him during the first fieldwork). As he grew older the need for finding other youth with the same background as himself was evolving. He then got acquainted with Rahim and Malou who lived in a suburb nearby. The three friends spend much time together, and their background as Moroccans seems to be present in several aspects of their social life (as we also will see in later chapters dealing with music, sport and love-relationships). Nevertheless, the quotations above show strong sensitivity for avoiding a behaviour where the Moroccan part of their identity is accentuated too strongly, in situations where they consider it as inappropriate, as, for example, in their working place. This concern to renounce behaviour that is associated with difference and exclusion (here in the shape of speaking the language of their country of origin), and instead to put weight upon language-behaviour that communicates sameness and inclusion, is one more example of the weight put on speaking Norwegian, among the former club members in Rudenga.

As one of the first Moroccan families settling here, as in Omar's case, the lack of other children of Moroccan background was probably an important factor working against an encapsulating and exclusion of people and impulses of different backgrounds. In addition, Salim soon became well known for his skills in football and for several years has played on relatively high-ranked teams in Oslo. He was also a committed breakdancer in the period described in chapter 2 ("Inclusion, resonance and semiosis..."), even

though he did not reach the level of Ola and Omar. Nevertheless, these assets gave Salim broad contacts and relations to milieus of different backgrounds than himself; these provided him with an openness that seems to manifest itself in several ways, of which language related practices, expressing attitudes of inclusion play an important role. This agrees well with the role Norwegian has played as the common language among the young members of a great variety of backgrounds in the Rudenga club in 1998.

It is perfectly possible for various groups of youngsters of the same background instead to live their lives through ways and practises where others are primarily excluded, as indicated by Salim and Rahim when criticizing their fellow workers for speaking too much Berber at their work place. In chapter 9 (“The power of dissonance. Pt. I..”) we will present the story of a gang of youth of exclusively Pakistani background that for one period was active among the Rudenga youngsters; this story strongly points towards this possibility of encapsulation.

As the language of the majority population and, consequently, of the institutions that these youths will have to relate to as they grow up, Norwegian will, of course, be the most suitable as a lingua franca, just like the role Swedish is reported to play in the similar milieus studied by Kotsinas (see Kotsinas 1992). Nevertheless, Norwegian, as the language of the majority in their new country, is also to some degree the language of the group in hegemony (even if this is not immediately replicated in the social composition in the localities of Rudenga itself). The widespread knowledge and use of the common “kebab-language”, manifested in the club in 1998-99, as well as a series of communicative gestures that in one way or another express respect and reverence for impulses and manners from the varieties of backgrounds represented, can perhaps at least to some degree, also be seen as a response that somehow counteracts this asymmetry.

Summing up: language practices as responses and messages, and their semiotic sources

1. The cultural expressions of the hybrid language, on the one hand, and the weight put upon speaking Norwegian, on the other, may both be seen as *responses to the situation of cultural diversity and compositeness in the local ethnoscape of Rudenga*. This situation seems to create a need for recognition of the varieties of cultural origin represented by the immigrant families, as well as the need to subordinate the related differences under an overarching common practice, enhancing communicative possibilities across the original language of each family. This implies, simply, that the weight put upon speaking Norwegian, in

addition, can be seen as a response to the basic need, of special relevance in such a situation, to understand and take part in whatever is going on through the medium of language. When subjects carrying such attitudes are exposed to new situations, such as being in a workplace, the continuation of similar practices can be seen as a creative response to this new context (of Secondness).

2. *The semiotic building materials* for these practices seem to be: A) Some diffusion of impulses from the milieu of city strollers. B) The language used in the various immigrant families. C) The language of the majority of the host country.
3. *The semiotic content (the messages)* of these practices can be summed up as follows: The messages of the practice of kebab-Norwegian seem to reflect a basic concern, circling around a wish to incorporate – to receive (accept) and use “the gift”, so to speak – in the shape of the utterance of the other. This is done especially in the form of word-signs that represent the very otherness/difference, thereby pointing directly to the background of the utterer (like Olas reception and use of the Arabian musical line described in previous chapters). In this way, these word-signs represent the varieties of differences associated to the varieties of origins, that through this practice have become incorporated into the collective levels of the local community – in the shape of habits becoming conventions -, and that communicates respect, accept and tolerance for these differences.

On the other hand, the core message reflected in the weight put upon speaking Norwegian seems to be both the underlining of sameness and community and the flexible subordination of the differences connected to the varieties of origin, under an “umbrella” of a common language. This can also be interpreted as a message of willingness to include the youth to whom Norwegian is their mother tongue, into the communities of those who share another primary language.

These messages are intertwined in the practical purposes of providing a common verbal medium for communication in a situation where the extreme variety of mother tongues otherwise would have been an important barrier to communication.

The primary concern arising from a common situation (their shared life conditions, understood as Peircean Secondness) behind these expressions, seems to be the actor’s urge to satisfy basic needs for inclusion, relations providing positive confirmations of the self and the need for basic social joys.

Summing up: greeting rituals and language practices – selective responses to salient common conditions of living?

According to our analysis, the greeting rituals and the language practices, as two important parts of the salient cultural practices among the youth of Rudenga, both seem to express the following message: *“We who engage in this action recognise, acknowledge and respect the differences represented in the social and cultural backgrounds of our families, at the same time we basically agree to put more weight upon what we have in common than what separates, at least in the contexts of the activities we share.”*

At first glance, the relative consensus and homogeneity that these messages communicate, seem to contradict the extreme heterogeneity represented in the variety of backgrounds of the youngsters who are taking them into practice. If the messages are to be understood as expressions of a shared habitus, they also seem to contradict Bourdieu's emphasis upon the homogeneity of the histories required for a habitus to be shared. He writes:

“The habitus is precisely this immanent law, *lex insita*, inscribed in the bodies by identical histories, which is the precondition not only for the co-ordination of practices but also for the practices of co-ordination.”
(Bourdieu 1990:59, my underlinings)

The problem here, especially seen in a situation in which immigrants from different backgrounds are living in the same area, is that the histories of the various families – contrary to Bourdieu's requirement – to a large degree are very different.

On the collective level, the differences are without doubts obvious. The Somalian refugee families, who arrived in Norway in the early nineties, not uncommonly include family members who have had violent war experiences, are one example. Some of the youngsters have actually seen close family members or friends killed right in front of them. Similar experiences of war are also to be found among the Kurdic refugees. On the other hand, there are the Pakistani or Moroccan families who mostly arrived in Oslo in the middle of the seventies; and their primary reasons to migrate were the need for work and material betterment of their conditions of life. In addition, one finds huge differences on the individual level, where experiences can be just as diverse. Tahar's frustrating encounter with the new country at the age of fourteen, is fundamentally different from the experiences of Salim who has been raised in Norway since he was two years old, even though both are coming from Moroccan families. And the situation of some informants who lack possibilities for friends of similar backgrounds due to the absence of families of similar backgrounds, is, of course, in that

respect very different from the youngsters of Pakistani background who have had access to several boys and girls of the same age, even from families coming from the same areas in Punjab. Several of the actual differences will also reflect sediments stemming from the past when their families were dispersed in an extreme variety of areas of origin, or from the *fantasies* about the ways of these areas of origin, as imagined by significant others in the present (in accordance with B. Anderson's famous term "imagined communities", 1991). All these differences in collective and individual histories would necessarily create profound differences in the habituses of the individuals, if the dispositions created by the histories of their families are to be regarded as dominant.

But despite the large variation in the length of time our actors have been living in Norway, it nevertheless seems that the attention of the youngsters from these families is directed more towards what they share in their present situation than to the remnants from the pasts of their families that may separate them. In other words: *what the differences and dispersity of their habituses of origin would separate, their sharing of a habitus in the present time and space seems to unite.* And, in this sense, Bourdieu's demand for "identical histories" to some extent, seems justified.

While reading the interviews done by Bourdieu himself, of the two friends that both have grown up in the same suburb, "Francois", of solely French background, and "Ali", son of immigrants from Morocco, it is easy to recognize the importance of having shared the relatively similar circumstances of living (Bourdieu 1999:64-76).

The most obvious and salient features of their present life-conditions that the Rudenga youngsters do seem to share – that makes up their particular "class of conditions of existence" (and that will be further fleshed out in the following chapters) – can be listed as follows:

- The majority have grown up in immigrant families whose geographical and cultural origins are extremely varied and they speak a wide variety of mother tongues.
- Although the main motives for immigration cover a wide range, from the need to escape the atrocities of war, the wish for repatriation with other family members, for work, for education, etcetera, the overarching motive may nevertheless be summed up as being the need for some betterment of their overall life conditions.
- Several members of their families have, to varying degrees, experienced negative labeling and xenophobia (sometimes in the shape of more explicit racism) from various Norwegian groups, ranging from

“men in the streets”, neighbours, employers, to attendants in various institutions, policemen, the media and politicians.

- Being youngsters, most of them have spent a smaller amount of time in their country of origin than their parents. Correspondingly, they have had a larger number of their experiences, relative to their age, spent in the new country to which their families have immigrated.
- They all live in an area that throughout its history has been stigmatized in various ways as a “problem area”, previously being labeled “the slum”, more recently spoke of as “the negro area”, due to the number of immigrant families now living here.
- Most of them attend the same local schools, at least including the upper secondary level.
- Some have also attended the same kindergarten.
- They all attend the same youth club.
- Most of the members have also attended the same junior club, at an earlier age.
- They more or less find themselves in the same phase of life. As youth on their way towards an adult state, about to liberate themselves to various degrees from the authority of their parents, and facing expectations of finding a job and a life partner, they are likely to exhibit a larger sensitivity to influences stemming from the social and cultural processes outside the spheres of their families; thus they are more receptive for influences from the youth groups of the host country.

From the *sharing of these conditions of life* – as they are experienced by the various actors – arise the concerns (a the provisional conclusions of a series of interpretants, becoming *habits* in the Peircean sense, and making up a common *habitus* in the Bourdieuan sense) that move the actors into practices (the “social game”, so to speak, with the spell of its corresponding “*illusio*”); these revolve around the cultural expressions (signs) of which the greeting rituals and the language practices are two salient parts. These concerns evolve from basic human needs: to be included and to be respected. And in this situation, in this composite ethnoscape, the cultural expressions in use are those that somehow *resonate* with the collective concerns of the majority of the individuals of this age-group, at this time and in these circumstances. They are, in other words, “selected” on the basis of “*an implicit and practical principle of pertinence*”, in accordance with Bourdieu’s suggestions (1996,1998).

We have seen several examples of how these concerns manifest through the *subjectivities* (expressions of various degrees of explicitness, in the shape of statements, inclinations, hunches etcetera) of the actors: Tommy, of solely Norwegian background who emphasizes that the greeting rituals, learnt from the youngsters of immigrant background, express the need to show respect; Imre, from a Kurdic family, who underlined both the will to inclusion they express, and what he sees as their Muslim origin; Tommy, who learns Punjabi from his friend Farukh of Pakistani background; Malou, from a Moroccan family, who expresses the puzzled joy of being addressed with a word in Berber by an all-Norwegian boy; the frustration and pain of Tahar, of Moroccan parents, who feels an intense need to learn Norwegian, born from the shock of otherness in encountering Norway; Salim, Rahim and Malou, all of Moroccan origin, who strongly emphasize what they see as the importance of speaking Norwegian at their work-place. *All these concerns are expressions of subjective experience, that must be considered the bridge between the experience of the conditions of existence and the cultural expressions which arise at a certain historical and contextual configuration.* These cultural expressions can be regarded as *creative (new, that is; tinged with Peircean Firstness) interpretative responses (Thirdness) to this shared set of conditions of existence (Secondness).*

This argument is further supported if we compare this picture with the situation at the club, no more than five years earlier, where the situation and its cultural expressions were very different, especially regarding the possibility for the members of immigrant background to handle and exhibit “the immigrant aspect” of their identity and their selves.

Habitus, identification and the levels of the self

For Omar, in the earlier configurations at the Rudenga club, his relation to his Iraqi background and to the Norwegian was primarily a matter of *either or*; he declares himself to be overarchingly Norwegian. Traces of his Iraqi identification are hardly discernible in his stories (as told at various points in time) about his relationships to a whole range of different youth cultural traditions, emphasizing that he “just did what the Norwegians did”. As suggested in chapter 4 (“Subjectivity, self and identification...”), these could primarily be regarded as expressions engaged in on the level of *the focal self*. At the beginning of his twenties, elicited by a series of negative encounters with the external world (Secondness), labeling him negatively as “other”, the Iraqi seems to get renewed attention on this focal level, and it

is now experienced in relatively strong contrast to his perception of the Norwegian ways. This distance seemed to bring forth some feeling of conflict between these two components of his *matrix self*.

Within the more collective (cultural) ethos stemming from the habitus at the time when Omar was one of the club's core members, it was barely possible to make public and share items (signs) stemming from an immigrant background (for example, practices regarding music, language, clothing, greeting rituals), that is, to bring them forth from the shades of the matrix self, to a shared focal level.

All this contrasted strongly with the practical habits discernible among the club members anno 1998, just starting to be sketched in this chapter. Now, various signs representing the various backgrounds of the members are displayed openly on the focal level in the activities of the club. From being exiled to a secret, unmentionable existence, these signs are now shown and related to by most members of the community and they are also recognized with positive emotional value and pride.

These practices are strongly mixed with impulses from both Norwegian in a narrow sense, primarily exemplified by the weight put upon speaking Norwegian, and transnational popular culture, as well as more local variants of these (the city strollers). Such practices no longer implies an "either or" attitude towards the immigrant origin versus the Norwegian; on the contrary, they express an attitude of "*both and*" (as the further chapters also will reveal).

The socio-cultural climate (as reflected in the habitus, also discernible from the cultural expressions it produces) for the handling of identity in the activities of the Rudenga youngsters has changed greatly within the last five years. *This change can be understood as consisting largely in the sharing of practices which reflect openness, permitting connections and signs to flow between what have been termed the matrix self and the focal self.* While the practices at the club five years earlier reflected a barrier separating the level of the focal self of the youth of immigrant background from their matrix self, these barriers seem now to be considerably weaker; it is no longer impossible to bridge the two levels in the public sphere of the club. The overall ethos is, in other words, one of inclusion and openness towards a relatively wide range of impulses which can be used in the handling of identity among the members.

This is manifest in the open accept and respect for the *differences* represented, as well as in a stronger emphasis upon *sameness, similarity and community*. On the one hand, strong feelings of *continuity* with ones fellow youngsters have been created, but at the same time it is possible to maintain an experiential continuity between ones family's identity, as part of the

matrix self, and one's feeling and display of identity, as exposed through the focal self, among the club members (there are, of course, important exceptions to this; this will be dealt with in forthcoming chapters). This continuity manifested especially through *the medium of friendship* among the members *across* the possible cultural barriers stemming from the differences represented by their families, through practices where such differences, in fact, are held forth, exposed and referred to in a variety of ways, for example, and, especially, through the practices of language.

Throughout the process of creating these cultural practices, one chooses the building blocks that are at hand (perhaps best described as being in the spirit of Levi-Strauss' old time "*bricoleur*", 1966), creating further interpretants for the relevant purposes, in line with "practical sense" (Bourdieu 1990:90). In this case the use of impulses from one's family, from companions, signs of transnational traditions figuring in the media, and the available repertoire of local stories, develop a variety of what Bourdieu termed "*hybrid compromises*" (in the quote that introduced this chapter); implying the mixing/blending of impulses and practices that in other situations would have been more or less alien to each other. In Peircean terms this can be understood as an outcome of the ongoing processes of semiosis in the encounter with the external facts of Secondness, whose result/temporary conclusion (Thirdness) indicates that the "softness" of human meaning always develops in interaction with an external core of "hard facts", the actual conditions of life. "Meaning" is thus a result of their social position, the uneven distribution of access to material resources and the contradictions, frictions and power embedded in the meanings (the "semiosphere", so to speak) of the external social environment (contrary to more orthodox Marxist assumptions of "base and superstructure"; see Sahlin's critique, 1976).

This Weberian web of meaning necessarily has emotional, cognitive and material aspects, *all coming together in the phenomenology of subjective experience*. In such creative interaction with the external world, the semiotic horizon and practices of the individual will be modified and shaped. At the same time, ever present interweaving webs of meaning, in turn, will modify these very facts (exemplified in the processes whereby Tahar learns Norwegian, or Tommy learns Punjabi from his friend, Farukh). This suggestion is far from being something new. As Berger and Luckman wrote in their famous dictum several decades ago:

"...the relationship between man, the producer, and the social world, his product, is and remains a dialectical one. That is, man (not of course, in isolation but in his collectivities) and his social world interact with each

other. The product acts back on its producer. (...) It is (...) possible to see the fundamental relationship of these three dialectical moments in social reality. Each of them corresponds to an essential characterisation of the social world. Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product.” (Berger & Luckman 1987 (1966), italics by the authors).

In the process of making further spirals from the basis of this triangle, it becomes clear that the community of youth in the multicultural area of Rudenga, must be regarded as a striking example of the “*unclean*” state of culture. The composition of their cultural expressions, results from the *blurring and blending* of a variety of impulses stemming from their origins, from transnational impulses as conveyed by the media, and from more local sources of varying distance to Rudenga. These are selected creatively on the basis of their pertinence to their shared conditions of living, and make the social life among the youths at Rudenga a true *community of differences*. This will be further explored in the following chapters.

6 The message of dress: expressivity, habitus and identification in clothing

“Like the habitus, identities are at once individual and social; they are the affective intersection of life experiences variably salient in any given instance. Identity is comprised of what we know best about our relations to self, others and the world, and yet is often constituted of the things we are least able to talk about. Identity is grounded in multiple ways of knowledge with affective and direct experiential knowledge often being paramount. The crucial link between identity formation and arts like music lies in the specific semiotic character of these activities which make them particularly affective and direct ways of knowing. (...) It seems to me that the challenge for the next generation is to develop a theory of music in relation to what is usually called “emotion” – our inadequate gloss for that mammoth realm of human consciousness that falls outside language –based thinking and communication.” (Turino 1999:221)

Identity and identity-related processes in everyday life among the youth in Rudenga are only rarely spontaneously manifested through the reflexivity of verbal discussions. On the contrary, such processes, like the manifestations of a collective habitus, seem to be mainly a matter of more submerged semiotic practices; at first glance they seem to pivot on (or mostly below) the level of what we usually call “consciousness”, where the reasons and grounds for their direction tend to be exiled well outside the realms of verbal articulation. As the musicologist, Thomas Turino underlines in the above quotation, in spite of it often being imbued with strong and deeply emotional content, identity is often constituted of, and evolves around “the things we are least able to talk about”. I will in the following strongly suggest that there are other ways of both communicating and reflecting about such things than through verbal expressions. Thus a theory about such *alternative mediums for explication* (in the sense of: making explicit/articulate) will be sought for.

Turino is attempting to use Peircean semiotics to develop a theory about the power of music to speak of “these things”, that is about the dimensions of identity and identity related processes that are especially linked to emotions. Perhaps, more precisely, these are occurring in the twilight (and, in line with Peircean theory, probably continuous) zones

between the conscious (the explicable) and the sub/un-conscious (the immersed), as emotions seem to be the very transitional “stuff” that links these two levels.

The exploration of the relationships of various musical forms to the processes of identification among the Rudenga youngsters will be more frontally addressed in the subsequent chapter, where also some of Turino’s insights will be applied in the analysis.

Musical practices are, of course, not the only ones related to the emotional aspects of identity. I will therefore suggest that parts of Turino’s analysis of music-related semiotics, may be used to throw light on other expressive (emotionally and aesthetically oriented) practices dealing with the more emotional/intuitive sides of identity. *In this chapter the expressive practices related to dressing among the Rudenga youngsters will be explored.* We will further attempt clarify the type of messages that may be regarded as more or less *specific for such a medium for expression.*

As a starting point for analysis, Turino suggests we direct our attention to Peirce’s best known triad, that is his trichotomy of sign – object relations. It consists of the following three fundamental concepts that represent three different ways through which the sign is related to its object in a perceiver (see also the previous chapter on the Peircean categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness):

1. *The icons* “which serve to represent their objects only in so far as they resemble them in themselves” (Peirce 1998:461). Associated to Firstness, quality, oneness, possibility, emotions, hypothesis, fantasy (Turino 1999).
2. *The indexes* “which represent their objects independently of any resemblance to them, only by virtue of real connections with them” (Peirce 1998:461). “... or because it forces the mind to attend to that object” (Peirce 1998:14). Associated to Secondness, relations, force, dependence, the concrete, actual events, reality (Turino 1999).
3. *The symbols* “which represent their objects, independently of any resemblance or real connection, because dispositions or factitious habits of their interpreters insure their being so understood” (Peirce 1998:461). Associated to Thirdness, language, abstraction, combination, argument, judgement, conventions (Peirce 1998:307; Turino 1999).

Although Peirce developed a complex system for categorizing various combinations of sign types, as also Turino points to and tries to use, these three remain the most basic ones, and will therefore work as our starting point (ibid.). It is important to notice that these basic sign types, according to Peirce, hardly ever exist as pure types (see also Eco 1985; Colapietro 2001). They usually cluster in combinations with each other, even though one or the other may be the dominant. It is in this sense they are referred to in the following analysis.

An example of an icon (in a complex, wide and inclusive sense) could be the Hip Hop film *Beat Street*, as analyzed in previous chapters. It pictured a social milieu in which the Rudenga youngsters (as discussed in the chapters on Omar and Ola) saw strong resemblances to their own situation and home. By seeing such resemblances (iconicities) in the film and using them as impulses for creatively imitating the stories and ways of being (for example breakdancing), the youngsters used iconic signs in their practices of identification and self-presentation. In these iconicities (working as bridges, mechanisms of resonance) they saw something of themselves in the film; these were taken over, acted on and transformed in local versions. For the interpreting subject, an icon thus creates *continuity through resemblance*.

An example of an index could be the *greeting rituals* – representing (among other things) the immigrant families – described earlier. It is likely that these ways of greeting have been experienced concretely several times by the Rudenga youngsters, who have seen them practised by members of the immigrant families. The greetings are therefore likely to be experienced as a *parts* of their object (the immigrant families) in so far as they stem/ emerge from it, like smoke emerging from fire. Their relation to their object is through *contact or closeness*; many youngsters of immigrant background have family members who use these greetings. (In so far as similar greeting rituals are seen in, for example, gangster movies, they must be regarded as iconic signs. Of course, seeing a movie may also be ascribed the status of “an experience”, but there is a demarcation line between experiencing the filmatic presentation of an event, and the experiencing of such an event in the “real” and external world.) Indexes are also in some sense found in the variety of *words* known from the various languages in use in so far as they have been experienced as uttered by members (thus stemming from them) of the various immigrant families. Peirce distinguishes between two main classes of indexes. One is termed “*reactional*” in its relation to its object, such as smoke as a “reaction” stemming from its concrete connection to fire. Here the sign stems from its object (Peirce 1998:163). The second may be called “*designational*”, or “*indicational*” in the sense that it forces attention

towards its object, such as the pointing finger (Peirce 1998:14). Here the connection to the object stems from the sign itself. We may say that both classes of indexes create *continuity through the principle of contact /contiguity* to an interpreting subject; the sign is either emerging from its object, or pointing to it and thereby directing attention to it by the means of constructing an imaginary (directed) closeness to the object in a concrete, and experiential way¹. However, imitating practices experienced while seeing members of immigrant families engaged in them, also implies the phenomenon of iconicity through such mimesis. This clearly demonstrates the difficulty in separating these relationships as pure types. It is, nevertheless, in accordance with Peirce's proposal that each sign type is contained in the sign type of the next semiotic level: the icon will be part of the index, and both the icon and the index will be part of the symbol.

A *name* is an example of a symbol, in so far as it represents the named through some sort of social convention or habit; in this sense the symbol is "arbitrary" (or "digital"), that is *without any morphological or real continuation between the sign and the object*. As such it differs from the icon, that has such continuity in the shape of resemblance with the object, as well as from the index, that has some real connection to it, as it is experienced by the interpreter. (One may note that a name may also be understood as an index in so far as it is experienced in co-occurrence – that is as being in some sort of closeness – with the named. Once more we see an example of the intertwining of the sign types.)

Nevertheless, we may say that in so far as a symbol is able to bring forth some special reaction in an interpreting subject (such as when a name evokes the memory of the person whose name it is), it may be regarded as *creating continuity through convention or habit*, the core mechanisms through which the connection between sign and object is created.

In line with our earlier discussion of the content of the three basic categories – Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness – Turino also emphasises that the system of Peircean trichotomies in fact suggests a *semiotic hierarchy*. Experience is understood as unfolding in a continuum between the ultimate immersion in the most immediate (un-mediated) emotional qualities, on the one end, and as the most reflexive, mediated, calm and language-oriented thought (a mode that in its ultimate forms may be represented by the ideal of scientific reflexivity), on the other. On the latter, the symbol – the conventionalized sign, often in the shape of language,

¹ It can be argued that a metonym, operating in the mode of "parts-for-whole", can in some sense be seen as an index. This will be also touched upon in chapter 11 (see also Arieti 1976).

associated to argument, generality and abstraction – will dominate, whilst the iconic – associated to metaphor, analogy, emotions and pure quality – will dominate the other end.

According to Turino, music is especially fitted for generating deep emotional effects, and he is especially interested in the “*instances in which the semiotic chaining is halted before reaching the level of Thirdness.*” (Turino 1999:232), – that is symbol, argument, linguistic-based interpretants; in other words the relative top of the hierarchy. But while Turino recognizes that all semiotic processes (“the sign and object brought together by a perceiver” *ibid.*) include Thirdness (as the relationship between the object and the perceiver is mediated by the sign), the processes he focuses upon must be regarded as instances of semiosis where Thirdness in its more advanced forms, (that is language-based and strictly argumentative) is relatively absent. These are instances existing only on the lower, more emotionally tinged levels. Consequently, Turino focuses especially on the role of iconicity and indexicality (associated to Firstness and Secondness) to illuminate the semiotics of musical “knowledge”.

When I here use the term “expressive practices”, I reserve it to practices where the emotional and the aesthetical aspects, understood as “messages”, seem to be of special importance to the interpretants of the signs in use.

With these tools in mind we approach the following questions:

1. In what ways are the themes of identity handled through the expressive practices of dressing among the Rudenga youngsters?
2. Which messages do such practices convey?
3. Which roles do the low-leveled semiotic dimensions of experience have in the handling of identity in such a multicultural milieu?

Dressing codes in 1993 – the importance of not dressing like the Westenders

In 1993 the more spectacular styles of clothing among the club members largely followed the music based youth cultures that were represented. The fans of the various metal genres used black, denim, leather and nails; the Grunge fans used big, knitted caps and slim 70s coats bought at the flea markets, often combined with old worn-out sportswear. The Hip Hop’ers used their obligatory caps with a brim and the usual sports brands like Adidas and Nike. When I asked why these dressing styles were so closely connected to the various musical genres, it was said that they were simply “*parts of the package*” (they were regarded as signs associated to the

continuum of signs, on the basis of how these were intuited to be condensed in the position of the orthodoxies). They could, in other words, be regarded as indexical signs elicited as reactions/interpretants in the interpreters when exposed to other signs in the same “package”; they mutually pointed to each other because they were experienced together and thus formed a larger, identifiable and overarching continuum of signs, as earlier suggested.

Most of the club members, however, were only moderately interested in clothes, picking elements more from here and there – including the “packages” referred to above – than dressing according to the homologies that characterized the experts (see chapter on music). Clothes were seldom commented upon except on occasions when they were seen as spectacularly different from what the mainstream of the members were wearing, or when they caught special attention.

A scene that I witnessed in 1994 illustrate several fundamental parts of the ethos (the affective climate/emotional tone) that surrounded clothing at the time:

I am standing in the kitchen talking with sixteen year-old William and Jan (both of Norwegian born parents) when two boys of visibly immigrant background arrive, who have not visited the club before. For some minutes they just stand by the kitchen door, exchanging a word or two with each other, while sending some discreet investigating glances at their surroundings. Their looks are very uncommon. Both wear long coats, silky shirts, hair minutiously combed and styled with hair gel and with several (probably faked) gold rings on their fingers. One of them also wears a golden necklace hanging loosely over his shirt. Black shoes and an intense smell of cheap perfume underline their overall appearance as unquestionably at odds with both the weary locality of the club and the looks of its members. William and Jan seem to struggle to withhold their reactions. After some tense minutes, one of the newcomers, who obviously sensed the thick, suspicious resistance in the atmosphere, exited while uttering with a forced ironic smile: “I think we’ll leave now. Good bye everybody.” With this the two immediately left the club, never to be seen again. William and Jan immediately after turned around in disgust, commenting on the looks and overall appearance of the two, leaving no doubt about what they thought of their visual appearance.

Jan and William both played in a band whose music they illustratively labeled “non-straight heavypopfunkrock” and exhibited a clothing style correspondingly characterized by roughness and combination of relatively disperse elements (touching the style of the grunge-fans). They represented a style in deliberate opposition to the sight they here had experienced, and

their reactions nevertheless exemplify a tendency representative for most of the members, to whom the appearance of the two unidentified newcomers must be experienced as truly “matter out of place”.

But the observation may also be interpreted as pointing to an experimentation with clothes and styles, in milieus of youth with immigrant background, that were more invisible and unknown to most Rudenga youngsters at that time. In the afore mentioned groups of city strollers it is well known that style and fashion played an important role, in line with what several older informants also suggest (see also Andersson 2000). It is therefore not unlikely that the two newcomers in one way or another were connected to or in some ways influenced by these milieus.

At the club in this period, in contrast, one thing was of noticeable importance: *one should not dress expensively*. Levis jeans were accepted, being attractive to some, but not considered of special importance. The salient argument proposed for not wearing expensive brands was the members expression of themselves as having an Eastend identity; expensive brands were for the 'soss' (Norwegian jargon meaning high class people) from the Westend. Whether the clothes of the two newcomers were really expensive, or whether the golden jewellery was fake or not, is hard to decide. Nevertheless their appearance seemed to exhibit at least a longing for the expensive, a sort of “wannabe” richness, that must be regarded as the very opposite of the ethos of the members at that time, as explicitly expressed in the facial contortions of disgust in Jan's and William's interpretation of such a truly *dissonating* sign behaviour.

But note: the reactions (the interpretants) of the boys are something that was more *felt* than argued. As being the opposite of what the boys (and the club members) valued, it may , on the basis of the Peircean terms, be characterized as exhibiting something we may call a *reverse iconicity* to the style that the boys themselves identified with. Or, to put it differently: their style of dressing *resonated* very well with a style that *dissonated* strongly with the *concerns* of the two boys.

Exactly this negative/reverse resemblance seems to be the core relation that causes the boys strong emotional reactions. In addition are the sense impressions manifested and incorporated in the Secondness (the external facts) of the experience, in the perfume, the shininess of the hairstyle, the golden rings and necklaces, the clothes, as well as the gestures and bodily postures; all this in line with the popular proverb, is saying “more than a thousand words”, and therefore is also speaking more directly to the emotional and multisensuous parts of perception. This demonstrates exactly Turino's point that iconicity and indexicality, as prime features of lower

level semiosis, have a special ability to arouse and communicate with “the unspeakable”. As Turino proposes:

“My theory of musical affectivity is based on the hypothesis that the affective potential of signs is inversely proportional to the degree of mediation, generality and abstraction. To reiterate, lower level signs are more likely to create emotional and energetic interpretants, whereas signs involving symbols are more likely to generate language based responses and reasoning – effects often described as “rational” or “conscious” responses.” (Turino 1999:234)

Whether Turino’s hypothesis is right also for expressive signs other than music, and in the last analysis as well, is probably questionable, as I will discuss more explicitly below. But it surely seems to illuminate both the emotional as well as the energetic interpretants here observable in the reactions of the two boys.

But if expensive and Westend flavoured dressing styles were the opposite part of the dressing codes of the preferred Eastend identity of the Rudenga club in 1993, five years later this picture was all different.

Dressing codes in 1998 – the importance of dressing expensive

In 1998 clothes were considered of great importance for most of the members, especially for the males, and should be of rather expensive brands. The most popular of these were: Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren Polo Sport, Tommy Hilfiger, Marlboro Classics, Napapijri, Peak Performance, Chevignon and Gant. In addition came more moderately priced brands such as Diesel, Levis, Russell Athletics, Adidas and Nike.¹ Shoes were of great importance, and the brands should be either Buffalo or Art, both very expensive. The female members, by comparison, seemed not at all as interested in these or other expensive brands.

Many of these brands, including perhaps the most popular, the Italian Napapijri, were originally sold in some of Oslo’s traditionally most expensive stores, for example *Ferner-Jacobsen*, whose owners are closely related to the Norwegian royal family.

Several of the youngsters have small jobs in addition to school, to finance their outfits. But I was also told that they could get this clothing much cheaper through “contacts”, who sold stolen items.

¹ A list of prices of at least some of these brands are presented in Appendix 1.

Confronted with such a radical change in the dressing codes of the Rudenga club, one naturally will have to ask:

- Why have these changes occurred?
- What social processes lie behind these developments?

The following statement from 1998, by Amjat, of Pakistani origin, gives us a point of departure to explore this phenomenon:

Earlier I felt that I was looked down upon because I was badly dressed. I was quarrelling with my parents to get money to buy better clothes. You are excluded from certain groups of people if you're wearing bad clothes. I think that's very important for folks at the club.

As the quotation from Amjat indicates, these practices of dressing seem to reflect a general change, from the times when the children of the immigrants (and, according to Amjat, especially those with Pakistan background) were badly clothed.

Such a statement seems to be supported when Anoar also insists that style was of utmost importance in the milieu of citystrollers he earlier frequented. While being in a mixed gang himself, he provides us with a glimpse into these “style wars”, while characterizing a competitive gang that consisted solely of youth with Pakistani background from that time:

They were older than us and were almost always only socializing with themselves. We thought they were stupid. They didn't know how to dress. They smelled of sweat, dancing only in their singlets. They never had any girlfriends and were bad dancers. Just a bunch of monkeys, if you ask me. It was we that were the cool ones (chuckles ironically). We were multinational, we had cool clothes, and were the best dancers. You could ask anybody. We were more concerned with partying, dancing, discos, having ladies, that was our kinda thing...

Knowing how to dress, being clever dancers, having ladies; these were the main ingredients of the package of style that Anoar's gang among the city strollers was pursuing (see also Andersson 2000). And in several ways it seems possible to regard the various milieus of city strollers, in some respects at least, as something like an *avant garde* (an elite/a core of expertise within the domain of style; see the chapter on music) to the larger milieu of youth of immigrant background. Not only greeting practices and language use, as analysed in the previous chapter, but also important impulses regarding how to dress were spearheaded by these groups (of course in dialogue with the various fashion trends of the actual periods). The

new trait that was introduced, the opposite of “the bad clothing” that until then prevailed among youth of the lower class immigrant families, was exactly the *expensiveness* and the street level attraction of the clothes they preferred. For sons of the early immigrant families who arrived in Norway in the seventies (there were not many *daughters* of immigrant background in these milieus), money was scarce. As most parents neither could afford nor were willing to supply money for such purposes, the clothes were often stolen (for a more in depth focus upon related issues in a later milieu of city strollers, see Mokthar’s story in chapter 10 “The power of dissonance. Pt.II...”). In accordance with the motives of the early working immigrants in Norway – the wish for a betterment of life conditions and the search for good fortune – it is no wonder that the young offspring also wanted to have their “piece of the cake”. As well, they were probably somehow fed up with the low-class status ascribed to themselves and their families, and this was mixed with the need for inclusion, with having experienced racial discrimination and outsider-status in various ways, and with the desire for some compensatory prestige in an environment where parental control was likely to diminish (points that Mokthar’s story will further illuminate). Several of these motivational threads seem to collect in the need for spectacular consumption, of which expensive clothing was a central ingredient, and where the prospects for satisfying these needs were the interpretants created in the youngsters while being exposed to these signs.

This can, of course, partly be seen as an act of semiotic *mimesis*, of copying the dress and the style of the more affluent, thus operating on the level of iconicity. And while actually getting hold of, “owning” (though not necessary in the legal sense) and wearing the clothes, they are worn/shown as indexes, pointing very directly to the interpretants of lifestyle and prestige that these signs were meant to produce in their social surroundings. Again, no argument was needed; the *act of wearing*, of literally bearing the signs was sufficient. (This was supplemented by the *ways* of wearing, by bodily postures, dancing abilities, the skills in getting “ladies” – the intricate details of style as practice),.

As the city strollers were well known in Norwegian newspapers and media, and as some of the youngsters in Rudenga had elder brothers in these milieus, the impulses from these groups, as previously argued, are likely to have been a central influence on the club members of 1998, again through the practice of *mimesis*, especially as the number of members of immigrant background had increased.

But if the youth of Pakistani background at that period were not the most successful in mastering these codes – Anoar’s characteristics may as

well reflect pure boasting on his part – it is, as indicated above, far from being the case at the club today. Hair styles of most male members are not infrequently carefully arranged with hair gel, often cut in minutious precision. The smell of perfume and after shave is not uncommon. Spotted, dirty clothes or clothes with holes are seldom seen. And there does not seem to be any group of youth, regardless of background, that is more or less competent in such practices, compared to the others. Any of the members, especially the males, in other words, will confirm the importance of having “style”.

Westend style for Eastend youngsters?

Especially as compared to the importance put on avoiding clothes associated with Westend youth in 1994, this new style is remarkable. And when I ask the members to name brands that are associated with the ‘soss’ at the affluent West side of Oslo, they mention several of the same brands that were the most popular among themselves. Foday (17), a dedicated Hip Hop’er of Gambian origin, nevertheless insists that the differences are still decisive. With the sense of an expert for significant details he remarks:

You can see it on their clothes and their whole style. They have more expensive and more decent clothes, but it’s also something about the way they sag their trousers. They don’t sag their trousers as much as on the Eastend.

Trine, one of the girls (of Norwegian born parents), attended a Westend school for some period. I ask her about possible differences in dressing-style between East and West:

Yes, there are differences. They use different brands, more expensive, like Polo Sport, Gant, Napapijri, the most ‘sossete’ is Peak Performance. On the East side it’s more Hilfiger, and Hip Hop clothes like Flava and Southpole.

I then confront her with the fact that all the brands she mention here are also among the most popular brands at the club, like Napapijri, Polo Sport, even Peak Performance, that several members openly admit are very ‘sossete’?

(hesitatingly...) Well, yes. You are right in a way... But still there are some differences... You know they talk ‘finer’; they are more arrogant (...) I don’t know... They have a lot more money. I can see immediately when people are from the West side, but... The clothes are less worn. We use the clothes longer here on the East side. The Buffalo shoes here at the club are more worn, you know. And there are far fewer foreigners

at the West side. ...But yes, there are also some other things. The boys use much more scarfs and headbands (Norwegian: “pannebånd”) around their heads. And the collars, of course. They used to wear their collars pointing upwards. I think that’s the most typical things. The scarfs and the collars. Yes!

The new and explicitly recognized similarities between West and East concerning dressing codes is striking. At least some differences do seem to persist, as the West siders have more clothes (and the ones they wear are not as worn as on the East side); they use headscarfs, and (eventually) collars pointing upwards. These are some of the signs that comprise the elements in a package of signs (that is, indexes in so far as they tend to be experienced together) that identify the differences between Eastenders and Westenders, as perceived in this Eastend milieu in the late nineties.

Nevertheless, as also recognized by the informants, the Eastend has approached towards the Westend regarding clothing style, in so far as the Eastenders have assimilated the appreciation of both the expensiveness and a series of brands that earlier have been strongly associated with the West. This, of course, further amplifies our interpretations of the changes in the clothing styles as low level semiotic expressions of the wish for social prestige through spectacular consumption, a wish that seems to have a special resonance among the youth of immigrant background, and that was spearheaded by the City strollers from the late 80s and onwards.

But even if such an interpretation is close to suggesting a wish for “upward mobility” as the main motive and end goal of these semiotic practices, it seems much too simplistic. There are still some important signs demarking the differences between Eastenders and Westenders, even if the dressing codes of the East have approached the West to a strong and remarkable degree.

This may be clarified while investigating a third, (in addition to the City strollers and the Westend style) central influence upon the dress codes of urban youngsters – including the Rudenga youth – namely the more recent development, at the more international level, of street fashion. More precisely, it points to the recent developments within Hip Hop, in the shape of the increasing popularity of the so called “Gangsta rap” genre originating from the American West coast.

Gangsta rap – as ethos and street fashion

In the beginning of the 90s a new genre developed from the Hip Hop tradition. This time its creative centre was the West Coast, more specifically

Los Angeles. This new genre is characterized by the romanticism of the modern gangster ideal, for whom expensive clothes, cars, jewelry and general outfit play an important role (see also Holmes Smith 1997; George 1998). In line with the literature on this subject, the rise of the whole genre of Gangsta rap (or “reality rap”, as it is sometimes called) and its accompanying aesthetics could be seen as the stylistic expressions of youngsters of black or immigrant background from the poor American inner city areas, no longer satisfied with the early Hip Hop’ers more altruistic-laden attempts to solve tensions and acting in a more or less politically conscious way against gangs, crime and drugs by “battles” within purely aesthetic genres such as breakdance, rapping, dj-ing or grafitti (as referred in earlier chapters about Ola and Omar). Instead, they are held by observers and participants to have developed a mentality that in Hip Hop jargon is spoken of as being “criminal minded”.¹ This points to a mentality where the youngsters of the American black or multicultural inner-city areas, who feel a fundamental distrust towards the lack of possibilities that their environment is seen to offer, deliberately use *what is at hand* (in line with Bourdieu’s notion of “practical sense”) to make the best of their situation, even if it implies breaking the law. Despite (and perhaps exactly because of) the absence of attractive goods and life styles reflected in their life situation and lack of resources, they nevertheless seem to idolize the most conspicuous consumption, which is spectacularly born forth by those who nevertheless do succeed. These are the great rap stars, the heroes that still are held to have some “credibility”, that is who have at least some contact with “the street”.²

And from the introduction of Gangsta rap in the early nineties, the genre became the core in a new wave of Hip Hop-based fashion with extreme commercial success. Ralph Lauren Polo Sports, Hilfiger, and Calvin Klein were already-existing designer brands that were taken into use by the Gangsta rappers; FUBU, Southpole and Carl Kani are brands that represent young black designers who made a breakthrough through Hip Hop’s renewed interest for spectacular clothing (see, for example, George 1998).

¹ This was also a title on a well known pre-Gangsta rap album by KRS-One from 1987, characterized as “*the first albumlength exploration of the crack-fueled criminality of Reagan’s America.*” (George 1998:45).

² These stars are represented by artists like, for example, Ice-Cube, Dr. Dre, Snoop Doggy Dog, as well as Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls who both were killed by shooting in the early nineties, to further underline the “reality” aspect mythologized by the new genre, among others. The stars include Hip Hop heroes as well as well known basket-players that also often have strong affinities to Hip Hop (see George 1998).

In other words, there are some striking *resemblances* (again) between these inner city American youth, and the city strollers of Oslo. While the life situation of the young Americans must be assumed to be more characterized by direct poverty, with a far more limited range of opportunities for work and education, they are, like the groups of city strollers, youngsters who are trying to part take in what they conceive of as the good life in a situation where they are young, low class “others”, struggling against racist attitudes, often feeling like outsiders or “misfits” in the schooling system, having bad relationships to the police and so on. In addition, they find themselves living in a society where spectacular consumption and expensive fashion trends seem to be an integrated part of the demand on perhaps especially young individuals to craft their own “image” and to show in their very *appearance* that they are somehow masters of their “life projects” as held to be of such an importance in much literature on the high-, post-, late- or liquid-modernity (for example in the works of Giddens 1992, Beck 1998 and Bauman 2000). There are, in other words, some fundamental *iconicities* in the life situation (as the basis for their habitus) of these two groups. The popularity of Hip Hop, as well as the emerging new Gangsta rap related genres among the city strollers, must be regarded as an expression of the recognition of these similarities, along much the same lines as iconicities were also recognized in the early expressions (the first wave) of Hip Hop by the Rudenga youngsters, described in earlier chapters. Similar appropriations and use of the Hip Hop sign(s) among multicultural youngsters in other stigmatized areas are, for example, also shown in Sernhede’s fascinating study of suburbs outside Gothenburg in Sweden (2001).

While letting these more recent iconicities work as a background for the following, let us now return to one more manifestation of such related semiotics within the Rudenga club.

For some of the members the overall climate of signs, presented above, especially as related to the Gangsta rap images, clearly interact with more local sources for clothing style and attitude, both in the shape of the city strollers, and in the shape of the criminal underworld of Oslo, the torpedoes and the gangs (where also some of the first generation of city strollers have ended up) that are well known from periods of strong media exposure. This is clearly reflected in the following scene:

I am sitting in the sun, outside the dingy locals of the club, together with some of the boys who tell me, in an irritated manner, about being chased by the police out of a small park they use to frequent on the summer evenings, just because they are under eighteen. Ali (of Pakistani background) suggests jokingly that they should start a new MC gang – “to continue the tradition from the heydays of the old Young Guns gang,

when they were photographed sitting on Harley Davidson bikes all together. Now, that would stir up something by the cops”, he adds. The chat continues around mafia and gang related themes, like guns and jewelry. I comment on Ali’s thin gold necklace as a good start for a more mafioso-like look (he used to comment on the anthropologist’s deep blue sunglasses for being in the same vein). He smiles, telling about the very cheap gold prices in Pakistan. The gold they sell is of 24 carats, instead of just 22 carats in Norway. Maybe it will be a good business, buying gold in Pakistan and then selling it with good profit in Norway? Marius (17, Norwegian born parents) tells eagerly that if he ever travels abroad, it is gold necklaces that will be the first thing he would like to buy. All the five boys nod in agreement.

Being young males, “chased” by the police (even if only from their favourite park), living in a stigmatized, multicultural area like Rudenga, known for the high number of “foreigners” (that many, helped by the media, regard as dangerous); all these traits, of course, resonate (working on the level of iconicity) with the images of Gangsta rap, further amplified by the embroidered fantasies of young, working class boys. They toy with these images, telling “heroic” stories of the times when the famous Young Guns gang of young immigrants of mostly Pakistani background, were “ruling the streets” on their attractive Harleys. This wish to see themselves – and for others to see them – in these signs, speaks, of course, more to the hearts and the more emotionally tinged receptivity, – to the feelings of being “tough guys from a tough place” – thus reaching more to the string/tone capable of arousing emotion, than to the calmness of reason.

Some months later, Ali really seems to have taken his mafioso-style some steps further, wearing several big gold-like rings (he insists that at least one of them is real), some with small precious stones, which he proudly displays. Wearing his black shirt in real silk (bought in Pakistan), black leather jacket and black trousers, gold necklace on his chest, his fancy look is strongly reminiscent of the old scene from five years earlier: the two odd newcomers that were too much for indie-rockers William and Jan in 1994.

The overall mafioso look, with significant details like the rings and the necklaces, and the romanticism around gold and fast money, is not at all a straightforward copy of the affluent Westenders, nor are the Gangsta rappers. As an overall expressive sign (including verbal and bodily messages) it reflects an idolized and boasting kind of toughness that instead points in a direction of “hitting back” at them (the rich) on several levels; these cultural assets (the symbolic capital, including the hinted willingness to neglect the law to “get what he want”) communicate a possible act of power against the affluent Westenders, or at least at the potentiality for such an act.

In the media of this period, there were reports of Eastend youngsters of immigrant background robbing Westend youngsters (usually on trains and tubes) for attractive items such as mobile phones and expensive clothing (see also *Aftenposten* 4th of March 2003). Such reports, in so far as they are sufficiently reliable further underline such an interpretation. To Eastender youths, the Westend youngsters are especially “relevant others” in the attempts of the Eastenders to relate to the overall flow of power.

None of the members have taken this direction of style as far as Ali, who seems to have an increasing fascination for the gangster-sign. Nevertheless, his style and aesthetics are somehow approved of by several of the other members, perhaps more as a possibility than as something they would do themselves. (As far as I can judge, it is unlikely that more than a few of the Rudenga youngsters in fact would realize the sign by, for example, actually becoming involved in robberies of the kind mentioned above.)

Sources for such fascination are also provided by the national media. One of the most famous images along these lines is presented by the newspaper *Dagbladet* in August 23rd 1999. Here two prominent boys of Pakistani background, both associated with one of the most well-known gangs in Oslo, are pictured sitting nonchalantly, in Hip Hop style trousers and caps, and with thick gold necklaces around their necks, on the front of their red 1991 Ferrari 348. Several other Ferraris, as well as BMWs, have become central signs for these gangs, and they are often spectacularly pictured in the main papers of Oslo, when dealing with stories about gang related crime and fighting. As seen in a youth cultural landscape, where Gangsta rap and its related “world view” are prominent, these media “show offs” seem to play a significant role as sources for ambivalent fascination and reflection for, among others, the Rudenga boys.

But such an exercise of power, including wearing the signs of the rich as Ali does, is not the power of real affluence, in the sense of having the education, the parents, the ways of speaking and behaving, the money or the overall resources to compete on middle- or upper class markets for prestigious jobs and social positions of more decisive influence. On the contrary, Ali’s and related versions (like the Ferrari-presentation described above), are a more a transformed, quite exaggerated and aesthetized caricature of real richness, in which some of the more spectacular and superficial items of affluence are appropriated in an attempt to use them as a kind of *distorted* symbolic capital. This distortion is further underlined by the hints of the will to exercise, and sometimes really use, physical power, thereby revealing its very lack of middle class “correctness”, its “lack of manners”, so to speak. All this seems to celebrate – with the deeply

embedded ambivalence of lower class identity admiration – envy and wishing for it, on the one hand, and aggression towards the inequality and injustice that produce it, on the other, – in this dubious and somehow curious street level fascination for the “coolness of being rich”.

These clothing styles can, in other words, be interpreted as partly *imitation* of the affluent, and partly a way of *criticising* such affluence, in the shape of specific changes: wearing clothing in other ways (avoiding collars pointing upwards, sagging the trousers a little further down, not wearing headscarfs, different ways of speaking, etcetera); having a different and more aggressive attitude; using an alternative cultural “capital” of physical strength, probably reflecting an inclination to refuse intellectualism and the cerebral (the bourgeois disciplining and subordination of the body to the intellect); occasional hinting of something resembling what Bakhtin would term “carnevalesque” exaggeration, and, thereby, in part ridiculing the very order (hierarchy, class differences) that such richness represents (Bakhtin 1984).

In such semiotics, the apparently simple use of iconicity in the shape of imitating the dressing codes of the affluent, is mingled with another iconicity pointing in a quite different direction, that is to the more self conscious, aggressive and exaggerated styles of Gangsta rap, the influences from the more local city stroller groups, as well as the real criminal underworld. All this seem to revolve around the quite subtle use, not only of dress, but also of *ways of wearing*, exposing the interpenetrability of all these different but mutually related sign complexes that are manifested in this local practice.

There are nevertheless some further differentiations to be analysed, as Gangsta rap is far from the only spectacular and transnational youth cultural influence in the club in the late 90s.

Some further complexities

Clothing preferences in 1998 were, if not to such a degree as in 1995, at least to some extent effected by the *musical tastes* of the Rudenga youngsters (see chapter on music). And although Hip Hop was one central influence, there was also another musical genre and youth cultural continuum of signs that various members adhered to, namely the previously mentioned House & Techno tradition.

To the extent that there exist some discernible connections between geographical background and tastes for different styles at the club in 1998, the members of African backgrounds tended to prefer Hip Hop. The youth with this preference were also the ones that most frequently wore the most

explicit Hip Hop related clothes brands, such as Tommy Hilfiger, Nike, Adidas and Helly Hansen, as well as more underground-tinged brands like FUBU, Carl Kani, Flava and Southpole. The most salient style element of the Hip Hop fans at the club, was, perhaps, their preference for wide (“baggy”) trousers. The most committed of them wore them in the style known as “sagged”, that is hanging far down on their bottoms.

The visual styles, reflecting the recent developments within Hip Hop, can be seen as showing at least two identifiable expressions. On the one hand there is a style of clothing discussed before, pointing to the more recent Gangsta rap developments, characterized by designer brands, expensiveness and mafioso references. On the other, we find a style of clothing that seems to be closer to earlier periods when breakdancing was a core activity, where large clothes appropriate for movements, often with connotations to sport (especially basketball), were characteristic. Also here the preoccupation with expensive brands and gangsta-influenced items have been developed (not least in the concern with heavy necklaces and rings), even though the attitudes towards size (megaloose, baggy, etcetera) and sports are upheld.

Most of the members of various Asian backgrounds, on the other hand, tended to prefer Techno; and correspondingly, the clothes brands preferred showed a tendency to exclude the brands that had the closest association to Hip Hop. Perhaps the most characteristic single feature of the clothing style of these Techno-associated members was the preference for relatively slim trousers, as opposed to the “baggy” or “megaloose” wide trousers of the Hip Hop’ers.

The most salient of these Techno-associated members were, more specifically, the youths of Pakistani background (although they had been enjoying Hip Hop earlier on, as we will see in the chapter on music). The Techno-fans, regardless of background, also shared the Hip Hop’ers overall preference for expensiveness in dress. This requires some further clarification.

The clothing styles usually associated with the House & Techno tradition, that became a huge music-based sign complex during the 90s, have little of the recent Gangsta rappers’ obsession with expensive clothes, jewellery and designer brands; as such conspicuous consumption has never been any significant part of the House & Techno tradition. This, of course, does not mean that this tradition has a tendency to avoid spectacular clothing. On the contrary, the raves and House parties, both the obviously commercial as well as the more exclusive varieties, show highly developed manifestations in this direction (see Reynolds 1998; Tegner in Fornas mfl. 1994). And at the giant, commercialised arrangement such as the so called “Hyperstate” party that is arranged annually in the city of Oslo, the clothing

style of many of the visitors can be regarded as an extremely spectacular, colourful, and erotized youth cultural manifestation of the “carnevalesque” (Bakhtin 1984). Nevertheless, the *expensiveness* of the clothing and the use of established designer brands, as recently incorporated into the Hip Hop tradition, has never been a part of the clothing styles associated with House & Techno.¹

The clothing style of the House & Techno associated members of the Rudenga club, not least the youngsters of Pakistani background, nevertheless seem to point in quite a different direction. Several of the preferred brands were actually *shared* with the Hip Hop’ers. These were, for example, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren Polo Sport, and to some extent Tommy Hilfiger, that clearly belong to the new tradition of clothing within the recent developments in Hip Hop (the clothes brands that were not shared, tended to be the brands created by young black designers *originating* from within the Hip Hop milieu, in the shape of Southpole, FUBU, Carl Kani, see George 1998:156-164). And as earlier described, Ali, who has taken the mafioso pole of the gangsta look the furthest among the club members, is not at all a Hip Hop fan as his styling should imply; on the contrary he prefers Techno. So while a youth cultural tradition may provide quite definite semiotic messages in their areas of origin or among their cultural elites, they can as well always be *changed or modified* in relatively deviant directions in local use. And in addition to these examples, many of the club members, regardless of musical preference, held Gant, Marlboro Classics, Peak Performance and Chevignon, which have no clear associations to any transnational youth cultural tradition – but on the contrary to the Westend practices of dress – in high esteem. As all these brands clearly stand out as expensive, and therefore seem to be in *opposition* or at least curious to the overall clothing style of the House & Techno traditions, this displacement needs some further explanation.

But before we attempt a clarification of these complexities, let us have a look at one more central feature of the clothing style of the Rudenga Technofans. The most “catchy” of the clothing of the House & Techno associated members of the Rudenga club, especially preferred among the youngsters of Pakistani background at the club, was the Italian brand called “Napapijri”, which deserves some special attention.

¹ Even if Reynolds mention that both Hilfiger, Polo Sport and some similar “preppy” gear in some period was popular among some rave scenes in the US, such orientations have not in any way been part of the practices characterizing the way House & Techno fans have presented themselves in Norway (Reynolds 1998:148)

Producers and users: “Napapijri – geographic” and the Norwegian flag.

An especially salient trait of the Napapijri brand is that its producers have chosen no less than the *Norwegian flag* as its brand symbol, a curious fact in itself. And in so far as this is the most spectacular sign of one of the most frequently used clothes brands among youth with immigrant background in multicultural areas in Oslo in general, and in this local suburb especially, these semiotics require further analysis.

It is a well-known truth within Peircean semiotics and communication studies that a sign may be incorporated in practices (use) that can take directions quite different from the intentions of the original sign producers (see, for example, Willis 1990; Fiske 1989). To analyze such a salient sign as use of clothes branded with the Norwegian flag by youth of various backgrounds, of both immigrant and solely Norwegian background, in this Norwegian suburb, it may be useful to contrast an analysis of the possible intentions of the *producers*, with the those of the *users* respectively, to reveal the possible messages of the practices of the latter.

The first question that springs to mind is of course how come the very Norwegian flag is being applied as the brand logo by an Italian producer of clothes?

The producers...

An advertising brochure from the Napapijri company,¹ available at the period of the fieldwork in 1998, is a peculiar item that nevertheless may provide some sort of answer to our questions (“*Napapijri-geographic Bulletin*”, not dated). It consists of two pamphlets inside an all-white cardboard container with the brand name heading over an exclusive looking, slightly three dimensional print of what is supposed to be an old wooden Alaskan Inuit mask (they refer to the Canadian Museum of Civilization collection, *ibid.*).

The first of the two pamphlets presents various models of jackets, anoraks, sweatshirts, sacks, backpacks and shoes of the (at that time) latest Napapijri collection. On its front cover is an apparent reproduction of old black and white photography; it shows something that looks like two polar expeditions, with flags and accessories, meeting each other (two persons

¹ According to an introductory text from the Napapijri company on the Internet: “*Napapijri is a Finnish word that means “Arctic Polar Circle” and the Norwegian flag stands as a tribute to the many men from that country who took part in polar expedition.*” (from w.w.w.Napapijri.it/check.cfm).

assumed to be their respective leaders are *shaking hands* – keep in mind the last chapter on greeting rituals) in an environment of an endless snowclad arctic landscape.

The next two pages contain a text dealing with the symbolism of the mask on the front cover, providing us with some hints about what kind of profile this company is trying to “brand” in to their products. The text reads:

“The Arctic: the mask is its memory. The memory of its real and supernatural values, the memory of its people, the Inuit, the memory of the harmonious cycle of life and death for all the elements within it, men included, the memory of all those foreigners who crossed its borders, called by its powerful attraction. The mask: its staring suggests stability and eternity.” (ibid)

The focus on the mask, as an item supposed to convey the memory of the past and different ways of living, the large series of black and white photographs of old polar expeditions in both pamphlets, and the pictures of old books about the old polar expeditions as a series of signs, underline the focus on the *past* in two senses. First, the mask seems to be chosen to represent the authenticity of an unspecified “Arctic” past ascribed to the Inuits, who are supposed to have lived in some more or less timeless (“cyclical”) mode of being, characterized by words like “*harmony*”, “*stability and eternity*”. This again reflects the romantic image of the “noble savage”, the natural man living in harmony with natural forces, in contrast to all the “foreigners”, that nevertheless were “*called by its powerful attractions*”. The past in this sense seems to represent the timeless, the natural, the original, the spiritual, the hidden, the mysterious, the authentic, etcetera. The second sense of past we are exposed to is the references to the historical polar expeditions of the past, carried out by “*the foreigners who crossed its borders*”.

The protagonist of the brochure is gradually becoming recognizable as *the western adventurous conqueror*, seeking, not only power and riches but also the exploration of his own limits, as well as something mysteriously labelled as “*knowledge*”. This strongly hints to at an inner, more metaphysically tinged insight, suitably matching with the so-called New Age undercurrents characteristic in western public sphere in the recent decades:

“What pushed man towards the arduous Northern goals and brought him to face unknown difficulties, was not only the will to tame forces that eluded his will power, or to conquer ever wider areas of power and riches, but also to wish to get to know his own limits or to come closer to “*knowledge*. (...) (ibid)”

If the New Age phenomenon originally grew out of the anti-authoritarian and existentially oriented countercultures rooted in the youth rebellion of the sixties and seventies, seeking “alternatives” to the “materialist” and “hypocritical” ways of living of the older generation, these tendencies seem to undergo a certain twist, if this interpretation of the brochure as a transformed manifestation in the nineties-version of this phenomenon, is correct. The text may be seen as describing a strange fusion of the New Age-flavoured knowledge seeker with the conquering Occidental masculine heroes (who in a widened sense were exactly what the youth rebels of the sixties were reacting against); it is also explicitly fused with what may be termed a strangely post-modern ambivalence in this nineties version of this mythical, orientalist construct of the Other: on the one hand “*the thirst to dominate*” it, and on the other, “*to give in to it*” (see below). Such an attitude may reflect an inclination that also could be experienced by many of the original polar expedition members. But as a contemporary phenomenon, the more explicit weight put upon fascination and attraction for the exotic Other, should be regarded as especially in tune with the New Age-metaphysics of the late modern times.

After the pathos-laden, literary ambitious quasi-historical (some would call it “New Age kitchy”) introduction (that contains many more of the kind of messages presented here), the pamphlet continues to show the various Napapijri models in various forms of highly aesthetically calculated collages. Clothes and accessoires are presented on a background made up of photographs of people and vehicles; old steam-driven, ice breaker boats; propeller aeroplanes; sleighs; tents and skis half-buried in snow; groups of men supposed to be expedition members, playing chess in a primitive hut; pilots looking at a compass with the globe in the background. These images in one way or another all refer to snow, ice, manliness and the heroic toil of the past polar expeditions:

“This unknown, far-away and unreachable Arctic world aroused in the Occidental man of the XVIIth century, just like the modern man, an array of emotions, positive or negative, refusal, enthusiasm, contempt, exaltation, thirst to dominate the so-called “primitive” essence of the place or to give in to it. (...) (ibid)”

Here the heroes of the past polar expeditions are dug up and held forth as signifying vehicles, reflecting ideals and attitudes for the present buyers of the brand to identify with, on the basis of what we could term “wished for iconicity”. It seems to be first and foremost a version of the “*men*” of the nineties that this modern commercial myth-making seems to be addressing,

appealing to a version of the masculine in the shape of the dominating, courageous, adventure-seeking individualist explorer in an endless search for the kick of the new.

The second pamphlet consists simply of photographs of old books written about the old polar expeditions, giving some selected facts about the most relevant of these. In addition to several lesser known Italian expeditions, the Norwegian ones are given special attention, making the Norwegian national hero, Fridtjof Nansen, the key figure subsuming all the desired attitudes and stories in this sign.

On the one hand, Nansen can be seen as an index, in the sense that he has “been there” and thus experienced the hardships directly. On the other, the iconic picturing him in the brochure, is presenting further possibility for iconicity to the potential users (buyers) of the clothes. He is strongly associated to the flag, which is a symbol (in the Peircean sense) of Norway and Norwegianness. The interplay and relatedness of these various sign types once more demonstrate the complexity of the interpretants of this use.

The Norwegian flag seem to be chosen as the most visual “catcher” of the brand, because it represents the nationality of the most successful and well known of the old expeditions, as the sign producers seem to see it. It is simply this sign complex (this story) that is considered the most suitable to convey the attitudes and ethos the producers seem to wish to be attached (like an index) to the strongest to their products.

Even more references to Norway are found in the names of some of the models presented in the first pamphlets: one of the anoraks is called “Norske” (meaning “Norwegian”, curiously spelled in the plural); two different bags are called respectively “Norqway” and “Narwik” (both names are misspelled, if this is to be understood as attempts to give them names in Norwegian) ; lastly there is a sweater named “Challenge”, that figures on several combinations. The sweater has a smaller Norwegian flag, strategically placed over the solar plexus, under which the name “Telemark” appears (this time spelled in correctly Norwegian); this is the name of a small commune in the middle of south eastern Norway. These names emphasize the symbolic (in the Peircean sense) element in these signs.

But even though Norway and in the second pamphlet, to some extent Italy, are the main geographical references that dominate the overall profile, they are not the only ones. A series of models have names like “Stockholm”, “Vermont”, “Tyrol”, “Colombia”, “Baikal”, “Equator”, “Magnetic”, “Transantarctica”, “Siberian”, “Russian”, “Bering”, “Falkland”, “Asia” and “Tibet”. Thus, several other areas are referred to, presenting a more internationally coloured cluster of signs. If one looks closely at the smaller logos

and badges on many of the mentioned models, one finds the words “*International team*”, which, of course, may refer to the fact that several of the expeditions consisted of members from several different countries.

The message and the associations the producers seem to wish to attach to their products can thus be summed up as follows:

First, there is the message of the masculine hero searching for adventure, kicks, dominance and mystery – be it in the shape of tough unspoiled nature, or the areas of the mysterious “men of nature” living in this environment; these are summed up in the image of Nansen, the old-time Norwegian hero struggling for the honour of his country, represented by his country’s flag. Such indexing thereby “explains” the logo-function of this sign.

Second, this hero (and the clothing he is used to profilate) is also supposed to be strongly associated to an “international team” of adventurers of similar kind, comprising a variety of people with origins in a whole range of different countries.¹ The items of clothing are thus suggested as signs in which all these elements are condensed – as the messages the producers seem to wish to be conveyed in their products – as a suitable “bait” to appeal to potential buyers.

... and the users

“A variety of people with origins in a large range of different countries”, are, in fact, found among some of the most faithful users of these clothing (signs), in the youth milieu of Rudenga, suggesting some rough iconicity with the life world of this small group of users. Here the

¹ The most famous Italian company known to have created an especially eye-catching and creative advertising campaigns covering such a theme is, of course, Benetton. One of these campaigns is the well-known “United Colors of Benetton”, often showing a group of people (presumably buyers) covering a wide range of skin colours and assumedly “racial” features. In this way Benetton are able both to exploit and point to a core characteristic of the situation in many contemporary Western countries: the presence of large groups of people with a variety of different backgrounds – supposedly “united” in the wearing and buying of Benetton’s clothing. As Robins writes: “*Through its ‘United Colors of Benetton’ slogan, the company has actively promoted the idea of ‘the global village’, associated with global consumer citizenship. What is advocated is the ideal of a new ‘universal’ identity that transcends old, particularistic attachments. But transcendence is through incorporation rather than through dissolution. (...) What the example of Benetton makes clear is the resourcefulness of global advertising, both incorporating and effacing cultural difference in its endeavours to put in place the new global acumen.*” (Robins, in Held and McGrew 2000:198-199). In so far as this is a trend/or tradition in Italian marketing “style”, it seems that the Napapijrii brand are attempting to strike some similar “chords”.

Techno-oriented youngsters especially of Pakistani, but also some of Spanish, Chilean, and solely Norwegian background, have as their favourite clothing this Italian brand using the Norwegian flag as its core sign, hinting explicitly at past Norwegian polar expedition heroes with Fritjof Nansen in the front.

Especially for the youth of Pakistani background, the Napapijri brand seemed to have been incorporated in a clearly distinguishable “package” of style. Thick-soled Buffalo or Art shoes, slim white Levis jeans, thick metal necklaces, the preference for Techno, and the extreme popularity of the Napapijri brand comprise the core elements that unite in an overall style that in certain milieus – at least after the fieldwork period – are recognized as the so called “*wolla style*”, fittingly named after one of the most popular Arabian words on our list in the previous chapter, namely *wolla* which was held to mean “I swear by Allah”/“I swear it’s true”. This term was not, however, used by the Rudenga youngsters themselves to name this clothing style during the fieldwork period (see Arnesen 2000:18). This may perhaps indicate that the style at that time was too early in the making for it to have achieved such a generalized term. Another reason may be that the term, in some milieus, seem to be perceived as to some degree disparaging.

It is also perhaps interesting to mention here that there were also other contexts in which “Pakistaniness” was connected to Norwegian national symbols. On May the 17th, 1999, the day celebrating the national constitution, a female labour politician of Pakistani origin was requested – as a symbolic gesture towards the largest immigrant population – to make a speech during the official arrangement in Oslo, something that was widely commented upon in the media (see also chapter 11 “Identification in the multicultural area of Rudenga...”).

A second event where such closeness occurred happened in 2000, one year after the first fieldwork was ended. Here, a now nationally famous female comedian of Pakistani origin, Shabana Rehman, shocked the Muslim milieu in Norway by posing naked in one of Norway’s largest newspapers, with nothing but the Norwegian flag painted on her body (*Dagbladet* 15th of January 2000, see also the chapter on “Love and gender...”, as well as Gullestad 2002). In 2002 she was portrayed in the same paper, sitting on a primitive outdoor toilet, another core symbol of Norwegianness, referring to the popularity among Norwegian families of having primitive cottages in the woods (*Dagbladet* 2002, November 9th).

In other words, interactions involving core symbols of Norwegianness and various actors that may be seen as representing the largest group of immigrants in Norway – the Pakistanis – have occurred on several well

known public occasions. Seen in such a wider context we may return to the occurrence of the Norwegian flag on the Napapijri clothing popular among the Rudenga boys of Pakistani origin, and ask once more: how are such semiotics to be understood?

Is there any connection between the content/the messages of the sign, – as we have discerned it from the brochure from the Napapijri producers – and the interpretations of the sign discernable in some level of utterance (not necessarily verbal) of their young users?

When I asked some of the youngsters if they felt their wearing of these clothes – where the Norwegian flag is so salient – was somehow in some ways related to their situation of being immigrants in Norway, they denied it, mumbling something about the quality represented by the Norwegian flag, and that the harshness of Nordic and Norwegian nature demand clothes of high quality; this is in agreement with at least part of the advertising message of the Napapijri company itself. At least one of the informants possessed a copy of the brochure, though in an Italian version, as he complained. It is, therefore, not unlikely that at least some of the users (for example some of his friends) had been exposed to the messages and not least the *images*, that the producers attempted to convey. However, the informants I asked did not seem to be able to convey a more explicit verbal explanation for their "choice", apart from these clothes being "cool" and of "high quality".

The anthropologist's suggestions

On the other hand, the anthropologist, with the help of some theoretical assumptions anchored in Peircean semiotics, could suggest some interpretations of their use along the following lines:

When Turino analyzes the famous Woodstock performance of "The Star Spangled banner" (in 1968) of Afro-American rock guitar legend, Jimi Hendrix, he sees the guitarist's use of the American national anthem (that was played as a solo on an electric guitar using an extremely wide range of the musical language of rock, including heavy use of both manually and electronically produced sound effects, distortions and the like, imitating attacking planes, exploding bombs, machineguns, roars of motors, screams, and so on) as a primary example of "*how musical meaning and affect are created through icons and indices*" (Turino 1999:242). According to Turino the core of creativity of Hendrix' astounding performance is especially characterized by the juxtaposition of several indexes (indices) in such a way that the original meaning (that is interpretants) of the signs (the components of the national anthem) are "played off" or changed and surely "distorted", we may add (ibid).

I suggest that a similar play with such juxtapositions happens when the youngsters of immigrant background wear their Napapijri clothings with the Norwegian flag being their most salient "logo". This can be regarded as a parallel to the Hendrix' use of the American national anthem (like the flag a symbol of the nation and the people). The use of the Norwegian flag by, for example, the youth of Pakistani background can be interpreted as a statement commenting upon racist-related attitudes stating the fear, as well as the dismissal of the Otherness of the immigrants, of something "foreign" and odd intruding into the country of Norway. While combining the flag, as a symbol of Norwegianness, with their own physical appearance, they index themselves visibly as having roots in other parts of the world, and they juxtapose elements that people with racist attitudes would reject as alien ("as foreign 'races' cannot be Norwegian", they would say). In line with such an interpretation, the practices can as well be seen as a carnivalesque and ironic "kidding" with racist-tinged attitudes, turning the hierarchy/roles of the "Norwegians" as a majority and themselves as minority, somehow upside down. Acquiring the flag – that they almost literally stick to themselves – suggests that the "foreigners" now become (or act like; that is emphasizing iconicity with) the natives. Through this combination they create a new index, as the flag and the body (of visible difference, expressing "foreignness") now can be experienced by their "audience" as attached to each other. To go even further in this direction points to the tinge of "conquest" that was so heavily suggested in the Napapijri brochure. As Nansen, representing "occidental man", "conquered" the pole and its "foreign" inhabitants (that is the Others), the "foreigners"/Others now hit back by hinting at the reverse process; the "foreigners" act as "conquerors" of Norway, thus symbolically reversing the direction of *the power flow*: of the occidental "domestication" of "natural man"; of colonialism; as well as of the more recent processes of globalisation, and so on. This is, in other words, one more example of the use of *distorted iconicity*, similar to the use of the images of "being rich", discussed above. Moreover, there is a whole "international team" – according to the producers' profiling of the product – engaged in this "semiotic guerilla war", as Hebdige – with a reference to Umberto Eco – could have put it, expressing various nuances in these ongoing contests of identity (Hebdige 1993:105). Here the iconicity between the "international teams" of people from a variety of backgrounds in the old polar expeditions, and the variety of backgrounds represented in the multicultural milieu in Rudenga, is played upon.

A more straight forward interpretation of these practices is, of course, seeing them simply as expressions of the users' insistence that they are

Norwegians too, despite the otherness ascribed to themselves and to the origins of their families by more or less racist or xenophobic representatives of the surrounding majority.

But the group of Napapijri users also includes the youth of solely Norwegian background. In agreement with our interpretation of the overall emphasis upon the use of the Norwegian language, the simultaneity of the use of the Napapijri sign by both groups can thus be seen to underline that an overall aspect of community here in fact does manifest in the shape of Norwegianness. The use of these clothes by the non-hyphenated Norwegian youngsters, along with and in the same and intimate social contexts such as the club, can thus be seen as expressing a confirmation and an accept that also their friends of immigrant background have the right to an identity as "Norwegian", just as they do themselves.

All these semiotic "*hues*" and interweaving connections seem nevertheless also to be heavily infused with a more overall "style"; the Napapijri clothing are presented in tableaux of heavy *masculinity* in the shape of the polar expeditions. This could as well be seen as being in an iconic relation to the obsession with macho-like masculinity that is also a prime characteristic of Gangsta rap. In addition, as the Napapijri-users of Pakistani background primarily are Techno fans, this indicates *a more complex combination of signs*, as we will return to below.

Nevertheless, the problem with all the interpretations suggested above, is, the same as mentioned in the last chapter of Omar's story; it is hard to find *verbal* explications from the informants themselves that confirm their contents.

This can be seen as a parallel to the discussion (in chapter 4 "Subjectivity, self and identification") of Omar's reactions when I asked him about his motives for joining the Hip Hop- and the skateboard-traditions. He denied explicitly that his motivation for joining these had anything to do with their traditions for including youngsters of a variety of backgrounds. Not until he was well in his twenties was he able to see the possibility for such motivations (that is; interpretants generating expressive action and choice). Only when he admitted that the sign complex of the purely "white" tradition of black metal, *dissonated* with his own background, did these connections seem to become accessible to more explicitly verbal levels of consciousness.

This leaves us with some important puzzles concerning *the nature of such different kinds (levels) of knowledge*. But before we attempt to follow these directions of our discussion further, let us present a last feature of the dressing codes among these youngsters; this time it concerns traditional clothing.

Attitudes towards traditional clothing

In 1993 there was a tendency to disregard especially Pakistani traditional garments. As there were no youth club members of Pakistani background in this period (although several at the junior level), this was a group that was especially vulnerable for disparaging comments, for example, terming the shalwar k'mise "sheet clothes" (in Norwegian "laken klær"), underlining such clothing as looking strange or stupid. These Pakistani clothes are still the most salient clothes of foreign origin used and seen in the areas with a high percentage of immigrant families in Oslo.

In 1998 the situation is quite different. Informants with Pakistani background emphasize that their more traditional garments, like the shalwar k'mise, in no way are ridiculed among their fellow youth at the club. "*It's noone here that do not respect these clothes*", Mohamed says, referring to his fellow members at the club. Anita, his girlfriend (Norwegian born parents) nods in confirmation, and tells that she has tried the Pakistani women's clothes several times and that she finds them very comfortable to wear. School teachers tell of several examples of young girls with boyfriends of Pakistani background who have wore traditional Pakistani female clothes in school.

For the informants – in so far as this clothing also is used by the parents of the youngsters, as well as by the youngsters themselves – such clothing, in a very concrete way, may be seen as *indexical* signs, pointing directly to their homes, their families, the areas to which they are associated and to the larger tradition to which they relate to and have some conception of. For Anita the clothes are of course somehow indexically associated with her boyfriend and his family's ways. "*Respect for these clothes*", thus also implies respect for these ways and the tradition from which they stem.

One evening the club was arranging a so called "Evening of culture" (in Norwegian "kulturkveld"), at the initiative of some of the members of Pakistani background, where the youngsters of various origins were given the opportunity to show "something from their culture", such as food, dances, clothing, music etcetera, to their fellow members. The only ones that at last contributed to the "cultural" part of this arrangement turned out to be some of the boys of Pakistani background. In addition to the serving of home-made Pakistani samosas (meat and vegetables cooked and wrapped in dough), in fact made by some of the male members, two of the boys were to show and teach, a traditional stick-dance from Punjab for whoever wanted to join. They were both dressed in traditional costumes. It soon became clear (illustratingly enough) that neither of the boys remembered exactly the steps of the dance, after several attempts. And the only ones who showed up to learn

it turned out to be some female members of the staff. After their somehow not exactly successful attempts as teachers, the boys instead ended up putting on some popular Bhangra remixes at the disco, inviting everybody to dance in the more usual “free” disco style. The two boys were still wearing their costumes while participating in the dancing, without this being commented in any negative way by those present, of whom the majority were of non-Pakistani background.

Another example, at first glance appearing to question the “*respect for these clothes*”, is an event that occurred some months before the second fieldwork, when the club was arranging a so called “bad taste party”, where the participants are invited to show up in costumes they consider to be examples of “bad taste” in one way or another. According to members of the staff, most of the boys of Pakistani background showed up on this occasion wearing traditional Pakistani clothes. One of the staff members complained that he thought this was a pity, showing such disrespect for the traditional clothes; he compared it to wearing the Norwegian national costumes – the “*bunad*” – on such occasions, which he would find not suitable. While discussing this with some of the participating boys of Pakistani background, it was underlined that this behaviour was not intended to show disrespect. As Sardar said:

“Oh no, it was just trying to make some fun. And we just wore the trousers. You know, many people think those trousers are strange, like we wear womens dress or something. The old people are wearing those clothes all the time. But we wore t-shirts cut up with scissors and painted with different colours combined with the trousers. It did not mean that we think these clothes to be silly, or something like that. Well, some Pakistani boys do think they are really “bad taste”, but most of them do not. And many of us use those clothes at home. All the youth here at Rudenga are used to them.”

In other words, clothes of foreign origin, as here exemplified with the most spectacular Pakistani dress of rural origin, pointing indexically to the background of this group of youngsters, seem to cause little problems for the youths associated with them. This contrasts with attitudes shown by the youth members of the club five years earlier. Even though being far from considered “cool”, they nevertheless seem to be respected and tolerated as one sign, among several others, of the immigrant origin of the families represented.

I did not observe or hear mentioned use of traditional dress from the other groups of members with a foreign origin. This absence may be due to some sort of dominance or rivalizing in favour of those of Pakistani

background; nevertheless, judged from the overall picture of peacefulness and friendship that characterized the relations between the members of the groups of a wide variety of origins, such relations regarding the use of traditional clothing, seem to be quite unlikely.

Dressing style – temporarily summing up

We started our analysis by stating that, in contrast to the dismissal of expensive and Westend influenced dressing codes five years earlier, the club members of 1998, held several brands associated with the Westend (the more affluent parts of Oslo and surrounding areas), as well as other expensive brands, in high esteem. A series of sources and social processes seem to provide important influences for these changes.

Mainly, a strong need to be included and to gain some sort of prestige seems to have developed among various groups of youngsters of immigrant background in Oslo, during the last decade. Such a need seemed especially to be spearheaded by the various groups of “city strollers” in the late 80s and early 90s, where youth of immigrant background played an important part. During the first half of the 90s, these processes were further amplified by the growth and commercial success of the new, evolving Hip Hop genre, named Gangsta rap, that originated from the multicultural and Afro-American youth mileus in the inner city areas of Los Angeles and other large American cities. This genre mirrored a mentality where the youngsters tended to feel a fundamental distrust towards the life-possibilities offered by their environment; at the same time, they seemed to idolize conspicuous consumption represented by, among other signs, clothes of expensive designer brands. As Gangsta rap achieved increased popularity, these clothing styles (or imitations of them) gained a large, young audience; they were also adopted by groups of city strollers, who further seemed to have influenced more “moderate” groups of immigrant- and also several of solely Norwegian background. The popularity of Hip Hop in general seems to be strongly connected to the recognition of similarities between the situation reflected in the Gangsta rap aesthetics and the situation of the youngsters of immigrant families. The interpretation of the popularity of the Hip Hop sign complex on the basis of such iconicity also agrees with Sernhede’s studies of the use of Hip Hop among multicultural youngsters in the “Angered” suburbs in Sweden (Sernhede 2001).¹ Even though the use of expensive clothing to

¹ To underline their affinity to Gangsta rap, some of his informants even gave their area the name “Los Angered”, as a word play on “Los Angeles”, the area where West Coast/Gangsta rap is held to have its origin (Sernhede 2001).

some degree could be seen as an imitation of the affluent, the Gangsta rap-influenced styles, especially the more extreme varieties, must be seen as a more or less distorted and twisted exaggeration of the dressing codes of the affluent. The extent of such distortion may perhaps be interpreted as proportional with the symbolic (implicit), almost caricatured *critique* of the rich and of the social injustice lying behind the noticeable class differences, making the idolizing of expensiveness a practice characterized by a salient *ambivalence* from the position of these youths.

“Gangsta” expensiveness for House music fans?

This picture, this *semiotic landscape* so to speak, is further complicated with the relative splitting of the Rudenga youngsters into Hip Hop associated members (with members of African origin as its central axis) on the one hand, and House & Techno fans, with members of Asian origin as its core, on the other (the reasons for such a patterning will be discussed further in the section on music). What is especially noticeable here is that, even though the weight on expensive clothing and the use of well-known designer brands have never played any salient role in the House & Techno tradition, the Rudenga fans of these latter musical traditions nevertheless held such stylistic elements in high esteem.

Moreover, the House & Techno fans (especially those of Pakistani origin) also have a strong preference for clothes of the Italian brand Napapijri, whose most salient feature is the use of the Norwegian flag as interpreted above. In addition, the brand and its visual appearance refer to the international aspect of these expeditions. Such clothing practices have been interpreted as ways of commenting on, distorting and turning racist tinged statements in which people of immigrant background from more distant countries are denied the possibility to see themselves as “Norwegian”. As Napapijri is a brand well known for its expensiveness (being introduced and still sold in the most well known “high class” store in Oslo), this may be seen as one more link to the Gangsta rap aesthetics, here transformed and adapted in a local version and acquired by local House/Techno fans.¹ I will argue below that several disparate stylistic elements are synthesized in the previously mentioned wolla style in which Napapijri clothing plays a salient part.

¹ I interviewed the manager in one of Oslos most successful stores for Hip Hop clothing who dismissed Napapijri clothing as something he would “*never even think of selling*” in his store (interview 1999).

This overall dominance of expensive clothing, whose elements of distortion have been supported by styles of the Gangsta rap tradition, and have been fused with the preference for House & Techno in the wolla -style, can (paradoxically) be interpreted as further underlining the overall Eastend identity of the Rudenga youngsters. This area, traditionally dominated by working class Households (as well as single parent families and people on welfare), has experienced a population shift in the last three decades. Gradually large numbers immigrant families, from a large variety of origins, have replaced the original inhabitants; its overall low class identity has been strengthened and provided with a new dimension. For these families (many from relatively poor, often rural districts in their country of origin as, for example the Pakistani families from the district of Punjab), the affluence of Western, well-off countries like Norway is likely to elicit strong desires (interpretants) for material wealth in various manifestations. The strong weight put upon expensive clothing may thus be seen as reflecting this position, as well as the more distinct social need for inclusion and prestige experienced by the offspring of these families.

On masculinity and dress: Hip Hop versus Techno attitudes of dressing

There is also a strong element of masculinity in both the Gangsta rap tradition as well as the more specific features associated with the Napapijri brand. As we will see in a subsequent chapter (8 “Gender relations...”), the dominance of more traditionally tinged masculinity (as well as the overall absence of girls of Muslim background at the club), must be seen as an expression of the gender roles present in several of the family traditions to which the youngsters belong. Masculinity, in related versions, has also been a central element in the traditional working class ethos (as, for example, shown in an English context by Willis 1988). Such iconicities, of course, adds even more elements in the life situation shared among these youth.

During my work with a research project exploring the roles of drugs in various youth cultural traditions among youth in Oslo, I had the opportunity to interview two young friends who had been working with arranging Houseparties in Oslo for some time – one of Norwegian (N, 17), the other of Chilean (C, 17) background – about the affinity to various youth cultural traditions. Here the gender theme was soon brought to the surface of our conversation, while asking them if they had any impression of special musical genres that youngsters of immigrant background tended to prefer:

N: Most immigrants are digging Hip Hop. Very few foreigners prefer Techno. I have never seen any Pakistanis or Chileans using these pink clothes and so on. That's not in accordance with their culture. Techno is too much like a carnival, I think.

C: I like both forms of music. But as a style I surely prefer Hip Hop. In Hip Hop it is important to be a man. Techno is more feminine. As a Chilean I have not been raised that way. At Chilean parties you won't be admitted entrance if you wear pink hair or trousers, as you do on a Techno party. We are more after being men. But you know Latinos and Muslims are very different and can't be compared. We Latinos can date girls and they can't. And besides we immigrants have to behave decent at parties. We should wear more decent clothes. Here in Norway it is more like screaming and freaking out, like at the Techno parties. If you visit a Latino-party with lots of Hip Hop'ers, they will send you bad glances if you behave that way. (Addressing his friend) You should know, you have visited several Chilean parties...?

N: Yes, that's right. And to many foreigners it is important to show that you are rich. It also has to do with showing that you have power. That matches far better with Hip Hop. Many see the link to the Muslims in Hip Hop.

According to these boys, even though they both enjoy Techno music, the corresponding clothing style is considered too feminine (carnivalistic, indecent, freaky) and thus not appropriate for youth of immigrant background. In so far these general impressions can be relied upon, they point to the importance of masculinity in considering codes of dressing among male youth of immigrant background. Regarding the Rudenga milieu, the boys are wrong in stating that few youngsters of immigrant background enjoy Techno music. Also the anthropologist's observations of the afore mentioned giant House & Techno arrangement Hyperstate in 1999 contradict this statement, as several groups of males of such background could be observed in the audience.

Their statements, nevertheless, do support the suggestion that the use of such (transformed) Hip Hop related clothing style by the Techno fans among the Rudenga youngsters may be seen as a *creative adaption based (among other things) upon the need to present codes of masculinity that the dressing styles of House/Techno otherwise would not provide*. In this way, an assumed recognition (conscious or sub-conscious) of the *iconicity* between the masculinity in *rap* and the masculinity from their *traditions of cultural origin*, and with the masculinity associated with the *working class* character

of Rudenga, can be assumed to have influenced the creative juxtaposition of these various sources as seen in the previously mentioned wolla style.

A synthesis: the “wolla style”

The preferences of the wolla style for expensive clothes, spectacular necklaces and tough, macho-like attitudes can be seen as clear references, and in fact strong iconicities to similar expressions within Hip Hop and Gangsta rap. The most noticeable adherents to the style, were, as mentioned, a group of young males of Pakistani background, who earlier were considered badly clothed. As we will see in the chapter on music, the connection to Gangsta rap is also underlined by the fact that these boys were earlier rap music fans for a short period. At the same time some of them were also involved in a gang, whose name – “the Mafia Gang” – provides further references to the aesthetics and ethos of Gangsta rap.¹ As this gang achieved a certain reputation, they soon changed their preferences to House & Techno. This must be seen as related to the fact that Hip Hop had long had its main group of fans among youngsters of various African backgrounds.² Thus, Hip Hop was a sign that was *already in use* by other groups of Rudenga youngsters (even though friendships, as we have seen, were developed across such ethnic belongings). In the middle of the 90s, House & Techno were musical genres that were rising in popularity and were, therefore, suitable signs for a group of youngsters in search of style and prestige. In clear contrast to the Hip Hop’ers affinity for wide, “megaloose” trousers, the wolla style adherents point to House & Techno associated ways of dressing through their use of slim trousers. Together with the Buffalo shoes (and similar brands), geled hairstyles and Napapijri clothing – including the attention drawn to both the Norwegian flag and to the notion of “an international team”; this clothing style may be seen as a local (at least Oslo-based) and condensed *synthesis* of all these elements. Here, impulses from relatively disparate and even oppositional transnational youth cultural traditions like House and Hip Hop – including the weight the latter puts upon masculinity and expensiveness – are juxtaposed with a spectacular reference to Norwegianness and the international. The style is then provided

¹ These developments will be further examined in chapter 9: “The Power of Dissonance”.

² A further exploration of the motivations between the relative splitting between the club members into Hip Hop’fans on the one hand, and House & Techno fans on the other, as well as the ethnic components related to this question will be undertaken in the chapter on music.

with further aesthetical character and profiled through their use of the big-soled and oversized shoe fashion.

The references of the signs of the wolla -style to Hip Hop, may thus be seen as a synthesizing and *creative answer* to the set of experiences emerging from the situation as young men of immigrant background. Their situation, from the low class families living in a stigmatized suburban area on the East side of Oslo, in several ways resembles the situation from which the Hip Hop traditions have emerged. Both the popularity of Hip Hop and some of the most salient characteristics of the wolla-style can thus be understood as resonating with their overall life situation. The elements that separate the wolla style from Hip Hop dressing, seem to be selected by its adherents on the basis of their needs to distinguish themselves from groups that already had appropriated the Hip Hop sign.

We can also see these practices as a parallel to our analytic conclusions in the previous chapter: the dressing practices – both the wolla-style and the more transnational dressing codes of Hip Hop – underline the sharing of a community that overarch differences represented by different origins in so far as both these styles are agreed upon as “cool” despite their relative oppositions. Along this dimension of their dressing codes, the youths underline some degree of sameness. On the other hand, the perception of an overall “respect for these clothes” of foreign origin exposes the tolerance and inclusive attitudes towards central emblematic signs stemming from their varieties of origins, thus underlining the accept for difference.

The riddle not yet answered

Nevertheless, a question *still* remains: only a few aspects of the above interpretations are supported by *verbal explications* uttered by the informants themselves.

This problem will be addressed more directly below: *Can our interpretations somehow be supported through a theory that enables us to relate the messages of their dressing practices to some level of subjectivity among their practitioners? And in so far as these messages are not explicated verbally, why are they expressed through the medium of dressing?*

To track an answer to these questions we need to return to the semiotic theories of Peirce and Turino.

The message of dress – non-verbal explicitness and low leveled semiosis

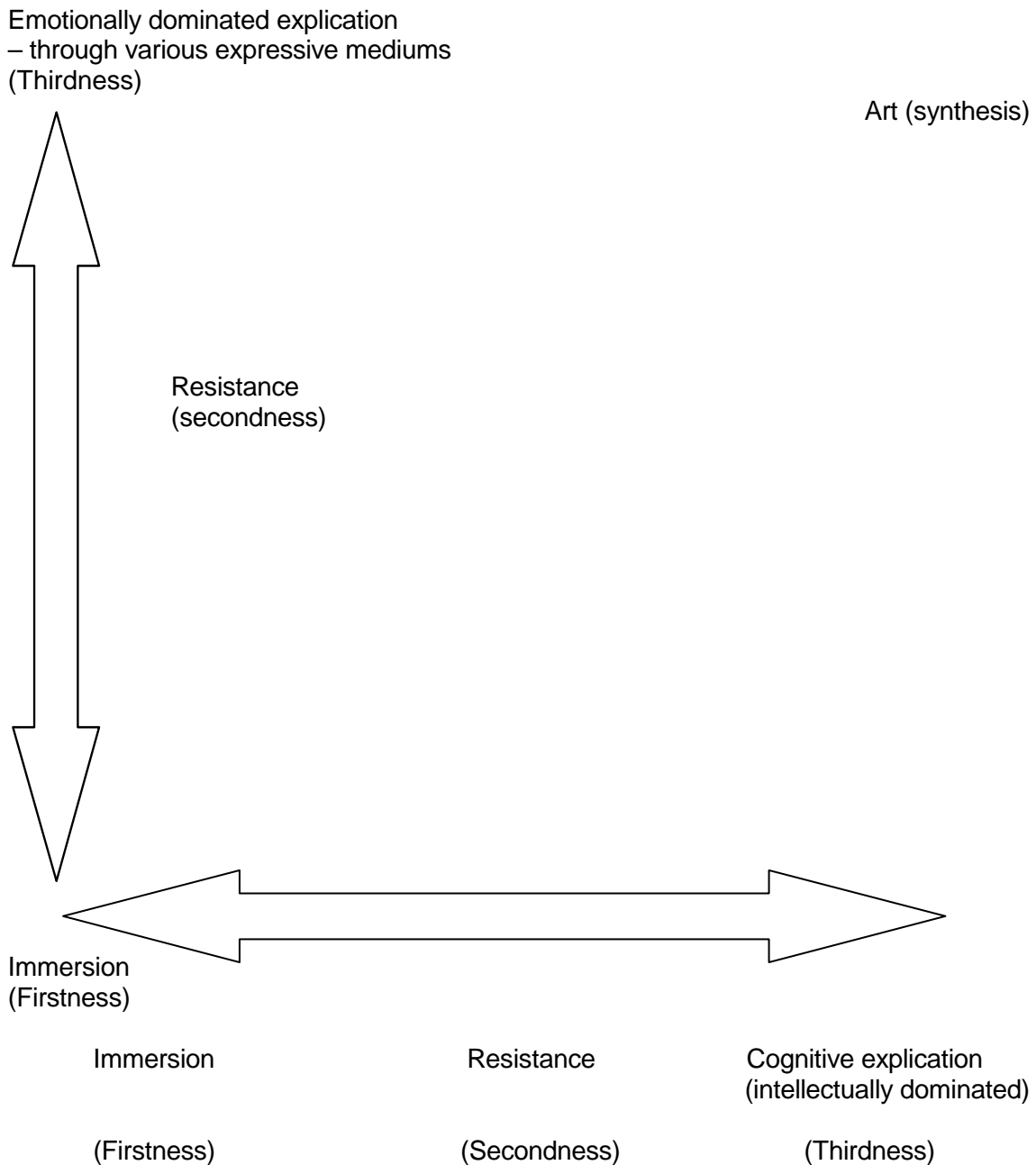
We have analysed several examples of the use of indexes, icons and symbols (as well as some aspects of their interplay and simultaneity) in the semiotics of the dressing codes among the Rudenga youngsters. Such sign-object relations are here primarily activated through use on a non-verbal level; they must be understood as something one *does*, rather than something one talks about, at least not on other levels than discussions about what is “cool” and what is not.

The crucial question is therefore: to what extent can these semiotic connections, as pointed to by this author, be understood as present on some levels/aspects of consciousness, in the interpretants of the informants themselves? As they are seldom expressed verbally by the informants, the more bluntly posed question may be asked: *are these connections all more or less invented by the anthropologist?* Or, alternatively, are they simply to be regarded as “unconscious”?

To address such questions we need to explore more closely some of the conceptualisations hitherto used.

In accordance with Turinos arguments, we may regard Peirce’s categories (Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness) as analytical terms pointing to the interpretation of experience as a semiotic process in which the reactions (interpretants) of the subject have the potential to reach gradually higher degrees of explication. These range from immersion, intuitive, unreflected and hardly describable oneness with the (ideally) pure quality of feeling (Firstness), on the one end, to the culmination in the most advanced, thoroughly reflected, logically precise and explicit statement (Thirdness, on the other). This probably reaches its highest manifestation in the ultimate ideals of science where it is refined through the filter of formal logic, approaching the ideal of the purest and most abstract of the sciences, in the shape of mathematics. In the middle of these extremes we find the encounter with the (resistance, struggle, and irritation of the) external world in the shape of Secondness. I suggest that this continuum be augmented by a vertical axis (a continuum) designed to further emphasize also the emotional pole of such processes, in addition to the cognitive. This may be visualized as in figure 3.

Figure 3. A semiotics of experience – a continuum of degrees of explication



When Turino concentrates on the use of icons and (especially) indexes in his analyses of music, he contrasts these “modes” comprising the lower levels of semiotics with the higher ones, as manifested in verbal/symbolic modes (of explication), that is of Thirdness. But though he admits that any semiotic process must contain at least some element of Thirdness (in so far as it implies one element of *mediation* between an object and an interpretant, see Peirce 1998:183), he claims to be primarily interested in focusing upon the

dimensions of knowledge that exist *before* reaching a level where Thirdness dominates.

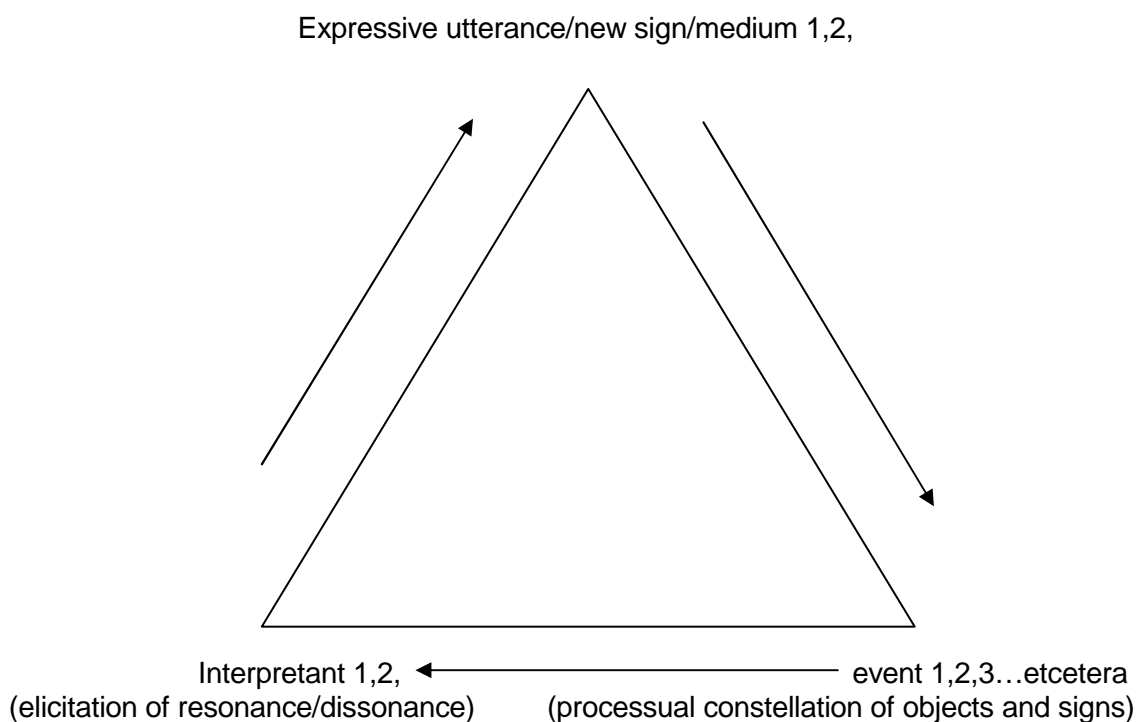
Here it seems that Turino somehow dismisses the possibility to reach a more developed level of Thirdness on the non-verbal (emotionally dominated) levels of semiosis. But if Thirdness, as Peirce suggests, is accompanied by some sort of emotional and intellectual “*rest*” (calm) when what he terms “*belief*” is reached (see also the previous chapter), it seems reasonable that such a rest nevertheless may be reached in several ways that do not necessarily imply a language/abstraction-based (that is cognition-dominated) argument/habit (Peirce 1992:129). And, of course, in so far as something is expressed (transmitted/communicated) by an utterer through some medium – which simply means it is an instance of semiosis – it implies at least some aspect of Thirdness (see Turino 1999; Colapietro 2001). A subject’s encounter with an external event that elicits a reaction in that subject, and that the subject in one way or another *express* in one form or another – be it verbally or otherwise, in the shape of inner activity or in a more externalized form- ; these expressions will, in one way or another, regardless of their medium, *represent* these subjective reactions of the subject (and sometimes, indeed *present* them to the external world of other subjects through an utterance). In other words: the interpretants elicited in an interpreter in encounter with a sign-event, and then somehow *uttered* may be seen more or less as subjective *transformations* (commenting upon it, colouring it with both emotions as well as more cognitive modifications, and thus impregnating them with the *subjectivity* of the utterer) of that external event. And when such utterances contain a strong element of emotion and sensuousness in one form or the other, I regard them as “expressive”. *Expressive Thirdness may thus be understood as the reaction to a sign-event, manifested through a subjective transformative utterance, that is especially coloured by the emotional investment of the utterer.*

I suggest that any such utterance – being verbal or not – will be accompanied by some (provisional) subjective experience of rest (of conclusion, judgement). This is, of course, just another way of saying that the urge to express – with all the dimensions of emotion, sensation and as well as cognition (intellect) that this implies – must not only be regarded as a basic element in human phenomenology; it is also accompanied by some provisional satisfaction (rest, belief, that is, Thirdness) that is likely to be proportional to the degree of *resonance* or *dissonance* that the event in question elicits in the interpreter/utterer, on the basis of his or her life

situation, including personal history.¹ Such “Thirdness of expressivity” may be illustrated in figure 4.

The optimal results of this urge to express, in the sense that it combines both analytical abilities of utmost precision, on the one hand, with high emotional expressivity on the other, are especially manifested in the highlights of art – visual, auditive/musical, performative or literary – as indicated in the position (of art) in the right hand corner of figure 3.

Figure 4. The thirdness of expressivity



The arrows indicate the chronology of influences in time.

1. A subject experiences an *event* (1.) The event elicits:
2. ...an *interpretant* (1.) on the basis of resonance or dissonance according to past experiences of the subject. This reaction (the subject) then may seek an appropriate:
3. ...*medium/sign* (1) through which to express his/her utterance.
4. This utterance may then, in turn, work back upon and influence:
5. ...the event (2), and thus transform it so that the process may start anew. Event 2 now elicits a similar process, etcetera.

¹ In various kinds of psychotherapy, it is well known that making a problem (complex, trauma etcetera) explicit, through words or through other expressive media, may be a first step towards some relief or solving of psychological knots; this may “solve” or “conclude” the tensions created. This is surely in line with the idea of seeing Thirdness as a mode able to manifest in more emotionally dominated expressions.

When the youngsters in Rudenga seem to find their strongest connections to the messages and styles that stem from Gangsta rap and the recent developments in the Hip Hop tradition, I have suggested that this appeal must be seen as an instance of *relative iconicity* (creating resonance) between the messages in these traditions and several traits in their life-situation that are somehow felt to be of importance. It may thus be seen as a creative appropriation of a sign continuum (a medium) to identify with, to apply, and through which they may creatively *express* some messages about themselves and their situation. This follows along the connective lines indicated above, and is similar to Sernhede's account of the use of Hip Hop in the multicultural suburb in Sweden (Sernhede 2001:40).

And in so far we may see the practices here analyzed as expressions of the interpretants to their life-situation, that is as mediums (appropriated signs for expression), they represent conclusiveness and judgement of this very situation, and may thereby be regarded as manifestations of Thirdness. In addition, understood as *collective phenomena*, the dressing practices analysed, may be seen as exemplifying *shared habits*, the outcome of these expressive conclusive reactions, again acting as *sediments* that reflect that sharing of a habitus (a relative system of habits in the shape of dispositions to act in certain ways).

In other words, all this indicates that these non-verbal practices (that the informants are hardly able to verbalize about), may be understood as instances of Thirdness. And in so far as these practices are commensurable with Turino's analyses of the use of icons and indexes in the semiotics of music, they seem to be in opposition to his insistence that such phenomena halt "*before reaching the level of Thirdness*". While his article and its analyses must be regarded as an extremely rewarding example of the vast potentials of using Peircean analysis in the study of art and expressive behaviour, especially the role played by icons and indexes in such processes, Turino nevertheless seems to downplay the strong element of Thirdness (in the sense of rest, conclusion, judgement, and not least a feeling of satisfaction) that must also be present in such cases (that is, non-verbal/language based expressions). This illustrates the model in figure 4: an event elicits a reaction in an interpreter that then is modulated with the help of the available signs as manifested in an expressive – that is, emotion-laden – utterance. This utterance, that provisionally *concludes* the interpretation, may or may not influence the continuation of that event in some way or respect.¹

¹ This model is further developed and integrated in the model of figure 6 (in the chapter on music).

When, for example, Omar and Ola confirm each others odd note, summing up their musical conversation (as discussed in a previous chapter) and probably important aspects of their friendship and shared experiences of the past as well, this sort of non-verbal conclusion seemed highly satisfactory and indeed as an act that put their dialogic “talk” to a provisional end, thus demonstrating the phenomenon of Thirdness of a non-verbal kind. In fact, according to our analysis, their whole conversation alternated between modes of building tension and expectations, and modes of relief, of rest, and of provisional “belief”, in Peircean terms. And when Jimi Hendrix in his Woodstock version of The Star Spangled Banner, that Turino analyzes, appropriates, distorts, twists and re-creates the American national anthem, he fuses it with his own interpretation of the horrors of the American war in Vietnam. His version – the *utterance that subjectively transformed that external event by impregnating it with additional signs of his personal position*, more precisely – may surely be regarded as conclusive/summing up/judging. It addressed not only his own experience (or imagination) of the Vietnam war, but also, – through the interpretants of his audience (in a much wider sense than the specific audience at the festival of Woodstock) – the experience that young people of his generation and its influenced geographical areas, had of that war. That special incident of musical performance had, in other words, also a strong *collective* resonance. So even if Turino seems convincingly right in asserting that the modes of iconicity and indexicality are dominant in musical semiotics and other expressive practices, he can hardly be held to be right to the extent that he proposes that the element of Thirdness is absent from these non-verbal modes.¹

The “Thirdness of living”

But regarding this point also Peirce seems to be unclear. As we remember, the categories are not to be regarded as pure, and each succeeding category contains the former (meaning that Secondness contains Firstness and that

¹ The model can be illustrated as exemplified in the story of Omar and Ola: 1. They have a series of experiences related to living in a stigmatized suburb (the first event). 2. This evokes interpretants (reactions) seeking mediums of expression. (...) 3. They experience the film *Beat Street* (a second event). 4. It elicits interpretants of resemblance and “coolness” and, thus, identification. 5. They appropriate the aesthetical expressions that they repeatedly utter as breakdancers and youth cultural experts. 6. These utterances to some degree work back upon the place (the first event) that is now somehow transformed.

Thirdness thus contains both Firstness and Secondness). Nevertheless, if rest, judgement, conclusion as well as symbols, abstraction, language and convention (among other things) are all manifestations of Thirdness, how can the first three aspects (rest, judgement, conclusion) be so prominent also in mediums and modes of non-verbal semiosis? As Peirce himself writes in one of his few remarks on art:

(...) and ignorant as I am of Art, I have a fair share of capacity for esthetic enjoyment, and it seems to me that while in esthetic enjoyment we attend to the totality of Feeling. (...) yet it is a sort of intellectual sympathy, a sense that here is a feeling that one can comprehend, a reasonable feeling. I do not succeed in saying exactly what it is, but it is a consciousness belonging to the category of Representation though representing something in the Category of Quality of Feeling. (Peirce 1998:190)

In other words, this quotation indicates that Peirce – even if he felt he did not succeed in pinpointing it precisely enough – was well aware of the existence of modes of representation (Thirdness) and, thus, modes of consciousness where *feeling (Firstness) may function as a conclusive medium*, providing a sense of comprehension and of reasonableness and thus bringing the interpreter into a state of provisional and concluding rest.

This should imply, in other words, that non-verbal (or subjectively non-verbalizable) expressions in the modes of both Firstness and Secondness (as reflected in both iconicity and indexicality), nevertheless may contain a strong element of Thirdness. In another article Peirce distinguishes between two sorts of conclusions. One regards “*theoretical matters*” where he “*refuse to allow sentiment any weight*” (Peirce 1998:33). The other he labels “*vital matters*”:

“In vital matters, it is quite otherwise. We must act in such matters; and the principle upon which we are willing to act is a belief. (...) Matters of vital importance must be left to sentiment, that is, to instinct.” (ibid)

In other words, both the scientific modes and modes regarding matters of vital importance reflect Thirdness. The scientific modes are characterized primarily (or should we say ideally) by an absence of sentiments. On the contrary, in the “*Thirdness of living*” – if we may term it so – sentiments are required in the shape of a more encompassing “belief”. And in such “belief” representation through “The Category of Quality of Feeling” seems to play a vital role, as opposed to representation by the categories of logic, law and

abstraction that are the cardinal characteristics of the perhaps highest levels of Peircean Thirdness.¹

The connections I have sketched out above can be seen as adding to the expressive aspects of the dressing codes of the Rudenga youngsters, a “*reasonableness*” where both comprehension and feeling are united, but here on a non-verbal level, as in Peirce’s own remarks on the characteristics of the semiotics of art.

On the basis of the above argument, it seems reasonable that consciousness can be regarded as a continuum between high reflexivity and explicitness at one pole, and subconscious, unreflexive immersion at another pole, and thus as synonymous with degrees of explication. But it seems clear that *the capacity for reflexive explication should not be understood as limited to verbal- or symbol-based mediums alone. More emotion-addressing and sensuously oriented mediums should also be ascribed an important ability to indeed express, “reason” with, and conclude in the continuous flux of semiosis, especially concerning the more “lived” and existential dimensions of experience* (of which “identity” is only one dimension among several others), in line with figures 3 and 4.

As we remember, in the Peircean conceptualisation of the phenomenon of “belief” has the function of calming irritation and tension stirred up by events and action (inner or external) and has primarily three properties:

“First, it is something that we are aware of; second, it appeases the irritation of doubt; and third, it involves the establishment in our nature of a rule of action, or, say for short, a habit.” (Peirce 1992:129)

Addressing the first of these points, the question we are still discussing is whether our informants in any way can be said to be to some degree aware of *the connections* we have suggested. I suggest that at least *according to the theoretical arguments* referred to above, *such an awareness may be possible*, manifesting on an extraverbal level, as when one in popular expressions says that one has a strong hunch or intuition about something, but is unable to express more precisely and verbally its accurate content. Such a mode of consciousness seems to be especially actualized on the levels of iconicity and indexicality, as here exemplified in the practices of

¹ The doubleness that the quote from Peirce indicates regarding the understanding of art points in the same direction as Wikan’s conceptualisation of “feeling-thought”, as previously discussed, also pointing to the possibility for a unity of these two phenomena (Wikan 1990). In a paragraph following the above quotation, Peirce underlines that, of course, reason may also be an important aid to sentiment in such matters.

dress. With the help of our musical examples, we may state that the message of Hendrix' version of Star Spangled Banner, as well as the "messages" exchanged and commented by Ola and Omar in their musical dialogue, are primarily felt and experienced. Only a small proportion of such experience could be "explained" verbally without reducing the power and the quality of the experience of the message itself.¹

Napapijri and the "wolla style": semiotic creativity or an anthropological fantasy?

Especially our interpretations of the use of the signs and messages related to the use of Napapijri-brand clothes among the youths of Pakistani background may perhaps seem somehow far fetched. The suggestion that the message of "*the conquering of the poles by the masculine and tough occidental men and their international teams*" – in the brochure that few seemed to have seen, – could be interpreted as a metaphoric transformation where "*the masculine and tough ("oriental") boys of Pakistani background were conquering Norway with their international team of fellow club members of multicultural background*" may be seen as especially questionable.

Even if the intricacies of my interpretation of what is supposed to be their interpretation, and all the threads of the semioscape relating to inclusion/exclusion – in the shape of Norwegianess, Hip Hop, Techno, city strollers, the masculinities of their areas of origin, class, the variety of local sources etcetera – may seem to fit relatively well, I nevertheless suggest that the correctness of my interpretation can not be stated more strongly than represented by a "*maybe*".

A primary reservation concerns, of course, the obvious fact that those who have not to a sufficient degree been exposed to images related to the polar-setting, could not be ascribed the interpretations relating to these references. The number of the users who have been exposed to these advertisements I have not been able to estimate.

But *if* and in so far as our interpretations of the practices of dressing are correct, the next crucial question will be *what is the nature of the eventual tensions and sources of "irritation" that the youngsters may be seen as*

¹ Ways of describing experience with a smaller amount of "information loss", so to speak, may perhaps be more likely to succeed for the great writers in the art of literature. Dissecting and analysing it according to the ethos and rules of science - as this author attempts to do - will always fail to render it with its main experiential dimensions intact, in agreement with this part of Turinos argument.

“appeasing”, that is, putting into some provisional rest through engaging in these dressing practices?

The answers have already been indicated: it is the tensions and struggles of their common life-situation – as offspring of immigrants, arriving in Norway as workmigrants or refugees struggling to achieve better conditions of life; experiencing the sometimes tense relationship with parts of the majority in the shape of negative labelling and xenophobia (sometimes open racism); struggling with ascription of otherness in various ways; living in an area that for a long time has been stigmatized in several ways; in a society where the importance and weight put upon self-presentation, not least through visible markers in the shape of clothes and other material signs, seem to be a hallmark of the times (post-high, late- or liquid-modernity; see the characteristics of the particular *“class of conditions of existence”* in the previous chapter): all this suggest indeed that a true example of *“a Thirdness of living”* – seem to be reflected in these practices of dressing.

Just like Omar and Ola used the Hip Hop sign and their acquired skills as breakdancers to comment upon both themselves and their place of living, so the youngsters of the club, five years later, use the wolla style – including the expensive Napapijri clothing with its salient Norwegian flag – to express and comment upon their situation as young men of immigrant background living in their still stigmatized suburb in Oslo in the late nineties.

On the allocation of knowledge and expressivity

It is important to notice, that the ability, sensitivity and knowledge that is required to express these conditions and not least to intuit these connections – verbally or otherwise (as here in the case of dressing) – is *unevenly allocated* among the different actors. *For some*, an intuition may be behind the initiating urge to engage in these practices, using the available signs from the available sources such as Gangsta rap, city strollers, the Westenders, the various versions of masculinities, etcetera. *For others*, the engagement in these practices is of course more a matter of *imitating their friends and “the cool”*, and for whom the most important motive is found in the need to be included in a more direct and straightforward way. And even if one youngster at some point could really see/feel/intuit some of these interpretational lines and the semiotic power in their poetical messages, thus motivating his/her acquisition and desire for such clothing – as similar entrepreneuristic mechanisms may be the start of such practices (like Barths famous tomato-man from Darfur, 1977) – this possible *glimpse* of their

semiotic connections may soon be lost to the increasing number of users that eventually followed. And for some it surely may be completely absent. But according to our theory of intuition – which is what I think the Peirce-based theory has provided us with – such connections of resonance may surely be possible to perceive, even if the levels of detail and the complexity of aspects implied may vary. At least the play with Norwegianness (not to mention the expensiveness) that especially our Napapijri example contains may be speaking to such a more widespread sensitivity among its young users.

But the variation in the engagement in these practices, is strikingly exemplified in the variation according to *gender*. Even though, as previously mentioned, the number of female members is definitely small (probably mostly due to the absence of the girls from Muslim families; see the chapter on gender), it is also a salient feature that they do not at all seem to engage in these dressing practices with such intensity as the boys. The girls neither seem to pay much attention to the expensiveness of their clothes nor the brands they wear, and they were in many ways more moderate than the boys. Perhaps the emphasis upon clothing among the boys may be seen as an arena for self-presentation, where a spectacular “coolness” was closely connected to a more or less common masculinity, in ways different from the girls’ media for presenting their femininity. If this interpretation is correct, it represents a breach with the traditional orientation in Western areas where concern with clothing is seen as primarily a domain of the feminine. Perhaps the very spectacularity of the boys’ dressing styles is the element that is especially fit to promote their version of masculinity – along with the ethos of boasting and exaggeration that are prominent features of the Hip Hop ethos in general – supplied with the flavour of distorted richness of Gangsta rap, more specifically.

As conclusive comments (although provisional) to their situation, the dressing practices seem to represent messages (interpretants) that are expressively *acted out/performed* rather than verbalised. And if our discussion anchored in the Peircean theory of knowledge and its various degrees of explication is right, such practices may – in some cases – be seen as representing *knowledge of high expressive precision*, despite the informants’ difficulties in translating it into words. This may be partly a result of individual variations in the ability to master such verbal translation.

There is also another possibility; once again we may recall Isadora Duncans statement (“*if I could talk about it, it would be no point in dancing*”

it”),) that so strongly points to modes of knowledge capable of carrying messages that in some instances are *highly specific to that actual mode*. The messages conveyed through the dressing codes among the Rudenga youth, as well as through the codes for presenting them, can probably be seen as examples of what we may term *medium-specific* messages (at least to a large extent), for which attempts to mere verbal translation would fail.

Thus Turino may be at least partly right in his hypothesis stating that the

“...lower level signs are more likely to create emotional and energetic interpretants, whereas signs involving symbols are more likely to generate language based responses and reasoning – often described as “rational” or “conscious” responses” (Turino 1999:234, as earlier quoted)

It seems nevertheless unlikely to reserve terms like “rational” or “conscious” solely to language based responses and reasoning. I have here argued for the existence of *levels of consciousness outside the verbal domain, a more emotionally and sensuous-based reasoning, that are fully capable (probably far better than the more ‘scientific-tinged’ modes) of creating powerful, convincing and not least expressive conclusions to the subjective interpretations of the external world*. Dealing with such matters as the handling and exploration of identity and processes of *identification*, practices revolving around such abilities and qualities (as in art) should be especially appropriate.

Regarding the third point on the characteristics of “belief”, the very commonality of the dressing practices and their establishment as a *shared and patterned way of acting, understood as an establishment in these youngsters as “a rule of action”*, definitely qualifies as a “*habit*”, in the Peircean sense, at least temporarily (underlining the provisional nature of such phenomenon). Even if their semiotic content is hard to talk about for the youngsters themselves, temporary “habits”, such as dressing practices, nevertheless, and in line with the core of our arguments, seem to acquire their primary semiotic usefulness from their power, first of all to “*feel right*”!

Why dress? Sketches of the medium specific

Our final question is, as previously mentioned: *why has the medium of dress been drawn into use for the various expressions of identification?*

I suggest that the dressing practices among the Rudenga youngsters are especially fit to convey the proposed messages and attitudes for the following reasons that may be seen as specific for the medium of dress (see also a similar point in the chapter on music):

1. It is often held that Western societies put strong weight upon the visual. In so far as this applies to dressing, it may be held that the *visual quality of dressing has a certain immediacy* attached, that makes it especially fit for conveying and creating an important “*first impression*”. This is of special actuality in a society where self-presentation and self-centredness are salient expressions of the individualist turn in the condition known as high-, post-, late- or liquid-modernity.
2. In so far as a garment can be seen as a sign, it is a *sign that “never sleeps”*, so to speak, in so far as it is attached to its bearer even if he or she is at rest or doing other things. Thus dress has a *continuity* that may represent especially sought for qualities in public areas where it is important to stress “who you are”. It is also, of course, a signal dependent on the economic ability of the age group, that is not yet able to have their own Houses, or cars that otherwise might signal identity and status. In addition, youngsters are often on the move, shifting and exploring different contexts. This makes the continuity of identification-communicating signs more appropriate. Dress follows the body whenever and wherever it moves. If the home tells something about the dweller, then dress can be regarded as something like a “moving” home.
3. The ways of dressing have a special ability to *point to the body beneath*. For the boys at the club, who are almost without exception heavily engaged in sport and training in one way or another, the concern for the body is striking (see chapter 11 “Identity in the multicultural...”). Strength and, not least, muscles are often demonstrated and commented upon in various ways. For example, wearing a T-shirt that exposes the muscles seem to be a sought for effect. Thus, clothes that in one way or another direct attention towards the body seem to be a popular choice. Buffalo shoes – with their heavy, nearly 2 cm high soles – make small boys look taller, and the oversized Hip Hop jackets may have similar effects (even if they may also work the other way around, drowning their bearers).
4. As indicated above, dress also *points (very) immediately to gender*. While the girls, with few exceptions, wore clothes that were tight to their bodies, the boys seemed to prefer the loose and oversized.
5. As we have seen in a long row of examples, clothes *point (easily) to group affiliation*, from Hip Hop, megaloose, sagging trousers or the more slim white Levis jeans of the Techno fans of Pakistani background (the “wolla style”). Here both affinity to youth cultures as well

as to the origins of one's family can be indicated at will (the shalwar k'mise represents Pakistaniness).

6. Clothes *stage the person* and his/her personality as *actors in a certain story*. This is underlined in advertisements over and over, and it seems to work very well. For example: the hip gangster of Hip Hop whose degrees of success are marked by the size of his golden necklaces; the freaky Techno fan that dances all night at his endless parties; the heroic postures of the Black Metal fan, all dressed in black and with shiny spikes, nails and upside down crosses to underline his evilness; or, for that matter, clothing that does not at all refer to any such extremities and that indicates its bearer as "quite normal", as the youngsters themselves often express it. Here the oddness of the Napapijri-clad Techno fans, of course, underline the not-for-grantedness that the local semiotics of dressing may exemplify.
7. Clothes may, of course, *point to the money required for their acquisition*. As we have seen this seems to have played an important role for the Rudenga youngsters at the time of the second fieldwork, while, five years earlier, the important thing was to point to the opposite, in this way underlining their identity as Eastenders. In this way, *clothes also point to the class* and social position of their bearers, as well as the direction of their aspiration.

The last time I saw Farukh, he had his *collars pointing upwards*, Westend style. The question of why, at this stage of development, this may somehow *feel right* for a young man of Pakistani background, even in a low class area such as Rudenga with its Eastend pride, I will pass for the moment, leaving it as one more example of how the semiotics of living – even in their tiniest, most curious and peculiar details – must be seen as an ongoing, vaguely flickering, low determined and, not least, creative process.

7 Music: threads of continuity, identification and stories of motivation

“The majority of men commune with themselves in words. The physicist, however, thinks of experimenting, of doing something and awaiting the result. The artist, again, thinks about pictures and visual images, and largely in pictured bits; while the musician thinks about, and in, tones. Finally, the mathematician clothes his thought in mental diagrams, which exhibit regularities and analogies of abstract forms almost quite free from the feelings that would accompany real perceptions.” (Peirce quoted in Colapietro 1989:xiv)

While in his overall philosophy Peirce seems to associate thinking (and Thirdness) primarily with words, the above quotation, in line with our analysis of dressing practices above, make this assertion more nuanced. Here the medium for thinking is closely embedded in what we may term the “*lifeworlds*” associated to various groups of activities and subjects, more specifically; to the very use of it from a certain social position, we may say. Moreover, a distinction is drawn between activities and positions where thinking is held to be “*almost quite free from the feelings that would accompany real perceptions*” and more implicitly, activities and positions where the opposite is held to be the case.

I have argued that the Rudenga youngsters “*clothe*” at least some of their “thinking” concerning the multifaceted phenomenon of identity – covering a wide range of its emotional and sensuous dimensions – in the medium of dress, literally speaking.

In the following we will explore another medium through which they think, intuit, move, feel, dance, reflect, express and wonder about themselves and their lifeworlds – a medium we already have touched upon and almost discussed explicitly in several of the above chapters – in the shape of music.

In accordance with the analysis of the previous chapter and Turino’s theories about musical expression, we will here continue to focus upon the mechanisms of low-level semiotic processes through which continuity (on various levels) is primarily created through iconicity and indexicality, and how these mechanisms also take part in more concluding, reflexive and expressive semiotics (utterances/practices) that necessarily also include the symbol and comprise what we have termed, building on Peirce’s

categorisation of the interpretational aspects of experience, an "*expressive Thirdness*".

According to Bourdieu, the preference of a wide range of signs (in his term "distinctions"), may be seen as a reflection of the social group that the subject feels that he or she belongs to (Bourdieu 1992:171). In other words, taste/preference reflects basic processes of identification. To explore the signs of distinction that the musical practices of the Rudenga youngsters seem to express, we will seek to *illuminate the motives behind the selection of signs: that is, to clarify the concerns in which the actors' use of these signs seem to be rooted*. In the case of the young Rudenga dwellers we have earlier (see chapter 4 "Subjectivity, self and identification...") suggested that concerns (motivations) can be typologized in four different levels,:

- I). The immediate level of hedonistic pleasure.
- II). The deeper, individual psychological level.
- III). The level of the local community.
- IV). The level of social and cultural origin.

All these levels will be somehow touched upon below, but our main focus will be upon the concerns related to level IV, *social and cultural origin*.

We will here seek to explore the relatively simple assumption that *the musical preferences among the Rudenga youngsters seem to reflect and be motivated by some sort of continuity (that may or may not be registered on some level of consciousness) between the musical traditions preferred, and the concerns rooted in their lifeworlds and situation (for example as youths of immigrant families)*. We will therefore seek to explore if and in what ways our actors can be said to generate such *threads of continuity* in their music-related practices. This implies that we will attempt to encircle the most salient motivations behind these practices, in so far as these may be discernible through our interpretations of the subjective statements of the actors.

These threads of continuity will, in line with our previous analysis, represent the points of resonance through which one may associate oneself to the larger continuum of signs that these musical forms may represent. The exploration of these points will, therefore, also be crucial to further our understanding of the mechanisms for such associations.

In contrast to the previous chapter on dressing practices, where informants supplied very little verbal evidence to support our analysis, music-related issues seemed to be much easier to speak about. These articulations do not so much relate to the *strictly musical aspects per se*, as

to *the wider associative connections* that are elicited. We will therefore rely heavily upon the verbal utterances about the informants relations towards the actual musical signs in the following.

Nevertheless, as music is definitely a medium in its own right that may be brought into use in expressive practices, some questions of the more *medium specific* semiotics of music at use among the Rudenga youngsters will be addressed at the end of the chapter, in line with our previous suggestions regarding the medium specific aspects of the "messages of dress".

As this will be the quantitatively largest of all our chapters, and also a chapter that contains *considerable amounts of information about musical genres and artists that are likely to be relatively unfamiliar to many readers*, we will present the following guide for its contents and subsections:

We will continue this introduction by presenting a small sketch of some salient aspects of the musical practices five years earlier. Then the situation in 1998 will be described, providing us with a rough *typology* of the musical categories characteristic of the overall landscape. The chapter then continues with an exploration of several actors' relations to these categories, one by one. We will then use our analysis of the subjectively drawn connections between the musical genres and the lifeworlds of the actors to suggest a *model* for the overall understanding of semiotic creativity, as it relates to actual habitus(es) from which it stems.

The chapter will therefore be divided into the following subsections that will start at the end of this introduction:

- I. Older traditions from the areas of origin.
- II. Recent popular music associated with the areas of origin
- III. Music associated with youth cultural traditions of Western origin
- IV. Music: summing up.
- V. Six suggested steps of semiotic creativity.
- VI. Illustrating the model: Amjat's case.
- VII. Why music? Sketches of the medium specific.

To start our exploration of the musical practices among the Rudenga youngsters, and to see them in a larger perspective of time, let us investigate a scene that occurred at the Rudenga club five years earlier.

Music and identity in 1993: the secret life of “the foreigners”

The club is arranging a concert where several of the local bands, who use the locale of the Rudenga club for practicing, are playing. The majority of the members are inside the disco listening to them, having a good time. At the same time, some of the members with Turkish, Kurdish and Moroccan background have visitors, and are all sitting in the kitchen, just accross from the disco. On this day the famous Algerian Rai artist Cheb Khaled was giving a concert in Oslo.¹ This fact is loudly and enthusiastically commented on by the boys in the kitchen.

Then someone opens the door and asks if the boys sitting there would not join the concert in the disco? As a response they shake their heads almost in unison while screaming and shouting: “Khaled, Khaled” , thus refusing explicitly to mingle with the others. All this took place while Ola and his band were playing, among other tunes, the one with the Arabian line in front, in the concert going on in the other room.

As we remember from previous chapters, Omar denied that the multi-ethnic content of both breakdance and the hip-hop tradition, as well as the openness of the skateboard communities, played any part in his motivation for participating in these cultural traditions. The only time his background as an immigrant is mentioned, is when we discussed his relationship to Heavy Metal; this is primarily a ‘white’ tradition, and in some extreme versions of Black Metal promotes a racist ideology, thus dissonating with Omar’s status as a “foreigner”. He insists on being ‘Norwegian’, ‘having integrated myself’ and the like since his early days in Norway. In such (and other) ways his background was held *invisible*, somehow contrary to the exposure of his Arabian background while playing with Ola in the more ‘private’ conversation previously described in the kitchen scene.

As previously stated, in 1993 such downplaying of cultural background was in some respect a common characteristic of most of the youth with immigrant background in the club.

For most of them, music nevertheless seemed to play an important part in their lives. I discovered that almost every one listened to music from the areas of their families’ origin – popular or traditional – in the earphones of their walkmans (this was before the age of the minidisks), smiling a little shyly at me when I asked to hear it and nodding confirmingly when I exposed my rudimentary knowledge about some of the artists they enjoyed. But note: even if the overall atmosphere in the club was generally positive

¹ This genre will be more thoroughly presented below.

and including – also underlined by the fact that there was a strong group of female grunge fans that were explicitly antiracist – the more substantial cultural expressions, for example, in the shape of the music of the different geographical origins that was represented, were never exposed publicly.¹ Music of immigrant background could never be played in the discotheque and had to be kept as something 'private' in the walkman, or played at home with people with similar backgrounds (see also Eva Fock 1999, 2000).

As a sign such music seemed to convey too much *otherness and unfamiliarity* to the non-immigrant members who at that time represented the majority of the youth attending the club.

Such handling of the music-signs pointing to the listeners immigrant origin suggests that a significant part of "the foreigners" musical life had to be *hidden in silence and secrecy* and was more or less refused by the majority of the club members.

The scene described above was, nevertheless, one rare occasion when the tension between the secret and silent music of immigrant background, on the one hand, and the public musical life of of the majority of members, on the other, more directly was manifested. For the male club members of both Turkish, Kurdish and North African background, Khaled and the Rai tradition had a strong element of iconicity and positive connections; and their reactions probably got important support from the visitors (of same origin) present, causing a direct and enthusiastic declaration of their open preference for Khaled, over the more "white" activities in the disco. In one room, a group of young males of immigrant background are expressively celebrating an artist representing/pointing to their immigrant background, thus creating a community that marks this difference from the other club members. In the other room, the members of (mostly) non-immigrant background are celebrating the musical traditions that they strongly associate with, among others represented by the groups rehearsing at their club. At first glance the activities in these two rooms underline the overall distance and difference that existed in this period between the members with and without immigrant background.²

Nevertheless, in the concert going on in the disco, Ola's group plays the tune with the Arabian musical line in front. This represents some of the first steps in the perforation of these walls of separation. At this time the

¹ Grunge denotes the so called 'alternative' rock groups that originated from the record label Sub Pop in Seattle, USA at the end of the 80s. The most well known grunge artists are bands like Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Faith No More, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains among others (see also Vestel 1995, 1999).

² In 1993 there were no members of Pakistani background at the club.

tune including the Arabian line seemed to represent new (at least as concerning Omar and Ola) statements about the experience of “the other”; that line could be seen as a thickly condensed sign, that represents Ola’s expressive version of the year-long friendship between himself and his breakdance companion of Iraqi origin. To the audience of Ola’s group, this Arabian line, of course, sounds somehow “funny” and “unusual”. Nevertheless it represents (perhaps only weakly intuited by that audience) the possibility of entering into a more developed dialogue with friends of foreign background – a dialogue in which signs (here: the Arabian line) of this background in one way or another can be an issue.

Thus the distance between these two rooms – and their respective closedness to each other – may be seen as a metaphor for the relative cultural distance between the groups of persons in those different rooms. On the one hand, there are the majority of members of solely Norwegian backgrounds, who dominated the club thoroughly in 1993-94, also in the overall socio-musical climate, represented by the Western transnational genres of indie-pop, grunge, metal and occasionally (at this period) Hip Hop. On the other, there are the members of immigrant background who enjoy the musical signs of their identity in secrecy and silence. This was, in other words, a relation where the power and dominance of the hegemonic group hindered and somehow refused exposure of these signs of the other groups’ immigrant background in the public sphere of the club. This *imbalance in the power flow* between the groups may thereby also have prevented a more deeper and multifaceted social resonance to take place.

Five years later this situation had thoroughly changed. The thin but nevertheless firm line of communication between the two groups of members – through which also messages about the immigrant origins of one of them could be sent and exchanged, and that at this time was almost exclusively represented by that tune with the Arabian line – had been growing and solidifying, letting a new dimension of identity enter and be exposed in the public community of the Rudenga youngsters, as we soon shall see.

Music in 1998: no more “silent lives” – musical genres in a continuum of signs for identification

One manifestation of such transformation can be glimpsed by considering the following scene that took place on a “normal” day (neither a party nor a concert) at the club in 1998:

The anthropologist is sitting at the door, chatting with the members as they pass in and out of the entrance. At the disco one hears the heavy

basslines of the latest compilation of Pakistani songs remixed by young artists of Pakistani background living in London. While I sit there talking to Amjat, we cannot avoid noticing two thirteen year old, all-Norwegian boys coming out from the disco, singing loudly, while walking rhythmically, and in unison with the music, something like: “chakte, chakte e, chakte chakte e, chakte chakte e”. “Yes, the kids sure have learnt something.”, Amjat nods confirmingly, then, addressed to me, ”That is a modern Pakistani popsong”, he explains.

Upon the return to the Rudenga club in 1998, the anthropologist, who bore in mind the musical ambience from five years earlier, had to confirm that things had changed, also in this respect. Gone were the previously important metal- and rock-based musical genres. Gone was Rudengas strong aura of being “*a guitar land*”, as one of the youngsters put it during the first fieldwork. Gone were the days of bands like Kiss, Pantera, Metallica, the pop of Four Non Blondes, the grunge-music of Nirvana, L7, Hole and Babes in Toyland, the horror-rock of the Black Metalers, and, for that matter, the sophisticated funk-pop of Prince (and remember Omar’s lamenting in 1999 that “*Nowadays noone of the club members have even heard of Led Zeppelins classic ”Stairway to heaven”, that everyone knew in the old days*”).

The landscapes of music and music-based youth cultural communities change rapidly, and especially those based on commercial media broadcasting. As the dominance of “white” guitar-based genres perhaps reflects the majority of youngsters of Norwegian-born parents, the scene we just described surely reflects the demographical changes at the club. Now, the majority group of non-immigrant background from five years earlier has become just one “minority” group among others. When even thirteen year old boys of solely Norwegian background (who used to be the strongest “purists” in imitating the preferences of the older members) are able singers of choruses from popular Pakistani popsongs, the evidence for such change could be considered rather obvious. This is further emphasized by the tinge of pride in the utterance of Amjat, commenting that the kids “*sure have learnt something*”. In other words: five years later, the secret and silent musical (or other) lives of the members of immigrant background have transformed into rather loud exposure!

The musical tastes among the club members in 1998-99 revolve especially around the following three (but very crude) categories:¹

¹ All these genres will be presented more thoroughly below.

1. *Older musical traditions from the areas of origin.* For example, Qawwali from Pakistan, Gnawa from Morocco, Flamenco from Spain (Norwegian traditional music was not represented.¹) These musical traditions tend to be more or less devoid of Western influences, or are so strongly associated to their areas of origins that such eventual influences are held to be of minor importance.
2. *Recent popular music from/pointing to the areas of origin.* For example, Pakistani pop (remixes, Bhangra, film music, etcetera), Rai, and Gnawa-flavoured Chaabi from Morocco, Pop-Arabesque from Turkey, various genres from Latin America, Flamenco-pop from Spain. In these genres several signs associated with contemporary Western popular musics are also clearly recognised.
3. *Music associated with recent youth cultural traditions of Western origin.* For example, Hip Hop, House & Techno, mainstream pop. (Heavy rock, Grunge and rock in all varieties are considered “out”.)

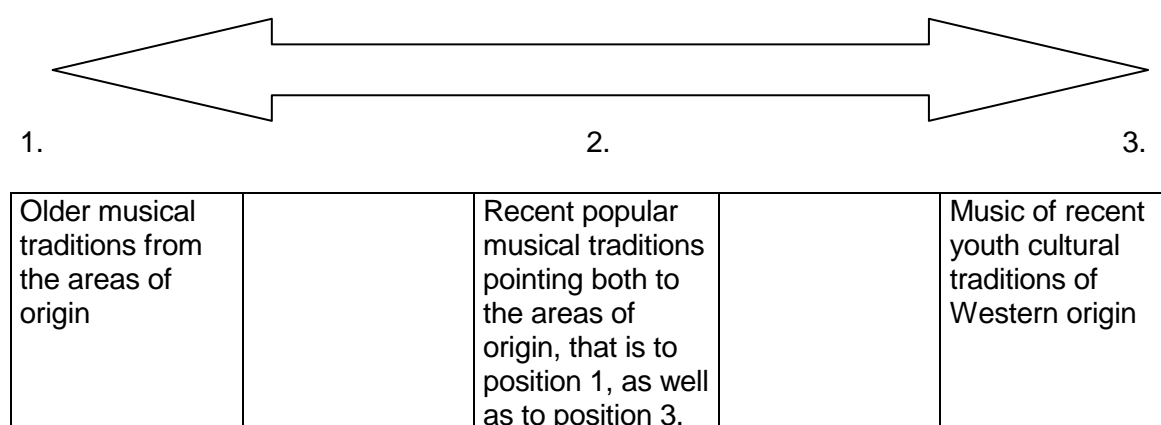
In addition to the varieties of joys stemming from the experiences peculiar to each of the various genres and categories sketched above, they are also *sign-vehicles to be analysed for their ability to be activated in the handling and commenting upon identity*, where indexicality and iconicity are primary modes, in accordance with Turino’s suggestions. Thus our core question will be:

In what ways are the musical practices among the Rudenga youngsters – centring roughly around the above categories – interwoven in their semiotics of identity?

¹ One of the very best Norwegian players (Anders Røine) of one of the most archaic instruments of the Norwegian folk tradition, the jews harp, has in fact grown up in the Grorud valley. As a young man in his 20s, and winner of several of the most prestigious folk music competitions (so-called “kappleik”), he underlined being an old fan of the Heavy Metal group, Iron Maiden, in a recent program on Norwegian radio (NRK Program 2, “Folkemusikktimen”, October 2001). This shows that such relatively surprising combinations are definitely possible. Nevertheless there were no traces of similar affinity to Norwegian traditional music among the youth of solely Norwegian background in the Rudenga club of the second fieldwork. Five years earlier, though, interest for Norwegian folk music was growing within some parts of the Black Metal milieu; such music was considered important traces to the roots of Norwegian culture and the historical epochs of heathendom (see, for example, Vestel 1999; Bossius 1998). As what is interpreted to be jews harps are found in Viking graves, such connections are of course reasonable. The strong importance of Norwegian folk music - as well as old traditional handicrafts such as woodcarving and decorative painting in the shape of the so called “rosemaling” - that function as sign-vehicles for the creation and maintenance of semiotic continuity to the country of origin among Norwegian immigrants in USA, is also strongly accentuated by Lovoll (1998).

Understood as vehicles for identification, it may be argued, that these various musical genres, in their use and enjoyment, can be seen as mediums for building continuities between the individual and the various sign-complexes he/she feels or wishes to be identified with. According to the categories suggested above, such *threads of continuity* seem to be drawn from two different directions: one is from the music most strongly rooted in and associated to the *areas of origin of the families* (1); the other from recent *popular music of Western origin* (3). These two directions can be seen as *synthesized, modified and knit together in a "middle" category* (2.). This seems to be the complex of signs that is especially fit to express the identification with a position characterised as a *"both-and-"* rather than an *"either-or"*-relationship to these poles. I will argue that, semiotically, these varieties of musical forms can in various ways – and to actors in various positions – be understood as *signs of identification* situated on a larger continuum, as visualised in the following figure:

Figure 5. The continuum of musical signs and its positioned genres



In the space of continuity between these two semiotic poles, the musical life and practices of the Rudenga youngsters unfold and move.

In the three next following subchapters we will explore these categories one by one and analyse their relationships to a number of actors. The structure of these subchapters consists of two parts. The first will contain a short presentation of the musical tradition in question, that is, the history and context of the sign, so to speak. The second will give an analysis of its use among some of the Rudenga youngsters.

I. Older musical traditions from the areas of origin

Let us start this exploration with a presentation and an analysis of the use of the category that can be considered as the furthest from the aesthetics of Western popular music, namely older musical traditions from the areas of origin (an etic term).

Genres from the various areas of origin of the immigrant families in Rudenga were mainly mentioned while the youngsters referred to the musical tastes of their parents. Such musical forms seem largely to be part of the repertoires of signs that several of the parents were using in the enjoyment and maintaining of connections to their various areas of origin. This is not unlike the ways Norwegian immigrants in the USA relate to older Norwegian traditional music (see Lovoll 1998). Though this music was sometimes mixed with the enjoyment of other and more recent musical forms (approaching position 2. above), it seemed to play an important role in colouring much of the ambience of sound that the youngsters (through such indexicality) associated with their physical homes.

When I, for example, asked Foday (seventeen, of Gambian origin) – who is also a devoted Hip Hop’er – if he ever listens to older and more traditional music of Gambian origin, he emphasises that he is personally not so interested in “*such music*”. Nevertheless, he states that “*Gambian music is always with me*”, because his parents have been listening to it “almost every day” while he has been growing up. (It is hard to decide if the music his parents listen to really match the genres of the position 1 above. The point is that there seems to exist a musical form that Foday strongly associates with both Gambia and his parents, that provides a level of precision at least sufficient to our argument.) So even if Foday himself seemingly is oriented in other directions, as we shall see below, “*such music*” nevertheless seems to be something like a backbone, a reference point associated with his parents, who in turn are associated with what he considers to be his country of origin. He says:

Maybe I have become more concerned with Gambia as I have grown older. You know that was my first land, although I was born in Norway. It is the land of my parents. It is nice there. The warmth, the beaches, the sea, the climate, lots of acquaintances. It is very different from Norway. They talk your language. It is not a big country. But there you can feel really at home.

For Foday (as for several other youngsters) a relationship to the older traditional music of his country of origin seems to be one link in a chain of indexes: older traditional music – his parents – his home – his (parents’,

family's', acquaintances') area of origin – his (mother tongue) language – and a series of other sensuous impressions (the warmth, the beaches, the sea, the climate). So even if the orientation of several of the Rudenga youngsters, to varying degrees, points somehow away from their parents ways, and is mainly concerned with the communities of their fellow youth, for some there exist musical forms that are more exclusively associated with their parents, their families and their countries of origin.

For a child the experience of their parents (or significant others) listening to a special kind of music, perhaps surrounded by expressions of reverence, devotion and strong feelings concerning the areas of origin, is likely to impregnate these musical signs with a series of emotions and memories that will be strongly attached to them, and that will evolve and probably change according to the flux of experiences that the child has during its development. Such *charging of the sign along a continuum of resonance – dissonance* will vary according to the nature of these experiences, to the transformations in the relationship to the parents during the various phases of life, and to transformations within the traditions of such musical signs themselves.

Pakistan: Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan and the Qawwali tradition

For the youth of Pakistani background at the club, the so-called Qawwali music seems to have such a role. For these youth and probably to the majority of Pakistanis, no matter where in the world they may live, it would assumedly be no exaggeration to say that there is one single artist that they all know about, strongly admire and associate with their country of origin: the late Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan (1947 – 1997, see also Fock 2000).

As a sign of great importance to both the youngsters and their families, also in matters of identity and prestige, both this artist and the tradition (and not least Nusrath's way of relating to that tradition and mixing it with modern music, see below), need some further presentation.

Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan is the most well known recent artist within the Qawwali musical tradition, that historically has been closely anchored to

Islamic Sufi-mysticism (see, for example, Siddiqi and Culshaw in Broughton, et al. Vol. 2. 2000).¹

Although there have been examples of attempts to use Qawwali music in versions more stripped from devotional content in popular films, Nusrath's own orientation is held to be true to its religious anchoring. Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan and his group called "Qawwal party" have visited Oslo at least four times. He was born in what is now called Faisalabad in Punjab and performs the songs of the tradition – usually based on texts of old and famous Sufi mystics and poets – in Punjabi, Urdu and Farsi, in line with the historical influences of the tradition. At the same time improvisation, both musical and textual, is a core element in Qawwali. The Punjab area of today is considered one of Qawwali's many strongholds, not least as the birth place of Nusrath, who must be considered a national hero in Pakistan (Hunt in *FolkRoots* no 125 1993). In other words, both the Qawwali tradition itself, and Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan in particular as its foremost representative, are firmly anchored to a strong tradition of religious devotional songs several hundred years old. As the most well-known Qawwali star, Nusrath is thus of wide importance to the identity of Pakistan as a whole, and especially to Punjab, from which the majority of the Pakistani families in Oslo have their origin, we may add.

Such importance is even further augmented and amplified by Nusrath's growing fame in the world music scene of Western Europe and USA (see,

¹ It is known as a devotional musical form and is held to have originated from a disciple of the Indian Sufi master Hazrat Nizamuddin Awliya from Dehli, named Amir Kushrau (1253-1325), who was of mixed Indian and Turk-Persian parentage. The tradition is held to be heavily influenced by the spiritual practices of the earliest of the four most important Sufi orders, the so-called Chistya order, founded around 1236 (Siddiqi in *Songlines* summer/autumn 2000:29, see also Qureshi 1995). It is said to have its most ancient influences from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, as well as the Gulf area and Turkey (Hunt in *FolkRoots* no 125 1993:38). Nusrath himself is the child of a several hundred year long family history of famous Qawwals (Qawwali singers), of whom Nusrath's father, Ustad Fateh Ali Khan was previously one of the best known. The latter artist is also said to be the first Qawwal to use and compose Qawwali songs for the poetry of Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1933) who is considered one of the greatest national poets of Pakistan (ibid.). In Qawwali music singing is the core. A Qawwali group consists of up to 15-16 men (there are no female Qawwals) of whom one leader sings a lead voice, a second sings a counterpoint voice, while the others function as a chorus that respond and support the lead singer (Hunt 1993). The music is usually accompanied by a small harmonium (an organ-like one-handed instrument, originally brought from the West by the Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century, strongly demonstrating the relative "impurity" of even very old traditions). This replaced the so called sarangi, an upright fiddle often used in classical Indian music, tabla drums and handclapping (ibid.).

for example, Ashwai Sharma, in Sharma et al. 1996). This process was initiated when Nusrath and other prominent Qawwals were introduced to a Western audience in the early 1980s by former “progressive rock” group “Genesis” member, Peter Gabriel, founder of the English world music festival (WOMAD).

... *the fans*

An example of the use of this sign among the Rudenga Youngsters shows up while discussing two documentary programs about Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan that were shown on Norwegian television in 1999, with Amjat of Pakistani origin. He says:

Yes, Qawwali is good music. And there is noone as big as Nusrath. He is the only Pakistani singer that has become well known in the West. He has done much for Pakistan. He has really made Pakistan known abroad. He’s been on MTV; his music has been used in several films and... They call him the Pavarotti of Pakistan you know...(smiles)¹

Comparing Nusrath with Pavarotti is, of course, an underlining of his prestige. The sharing and appreciation of various musical forms that have originated in the geographical areas these youth are coming from, is one more way of expressing respect, acceptance and even celebration of the differences present. In other words, the prestige of Nusrath in the West is seen by Amjat as bringing positive prestige and image to Pakistan, and probably to Punjab as a region as well. Punjab’s importance to Amjat also stems from the fact that both he and his family have their origin in this region. As a sign for Amjat, Nusrath and Qawwali music seem to elicit a chain of indexes similar to that of Foday, that starts with emphasising important aspects of Amjat’s own identity in a chain of positive and favourable connections.

But like the Gambian music that Foday’s parents listened to, traditional Qawwali music, as represented by Nusrath, is seldom exposed directly among the Rudenga youngsters.

Nevertheless it sometimes does happen, as the following example shows:

¹ Siddiqi describes Nusrath as “The Pavarotti of the Sufi world, forging previously unimaginable links between Islamic devotional ceremony, ‘world fusion’ and film soundtracks.” (Siddiqi, in Broughton et al. Vol 2. 2000:203).

I am sitting in the club's kitchen discussing Nusrath with some of the youngsters of Pakistani background. Few of them listen to Qawwali music except at home with their parents, but some of them do. In comes Kudsi (18) of Turkish origin, who enters the discussion, telling eagerly "Oh, don't you remember..." (addressed to one of his classmates of Pakistani background) "...in the gymnastics class last Friday, one from the class we have gym with played this Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan song again and again all through the whole lesson while we were training." "Yeah, it was called Jhole, jhole lal dam Mast", his classmate adds, smiling.

For most young people, school and classmates represent an arena where it is important to be perceived as "cool" and thus to be included and accepted into the community of fellow pupils and peers (in accordance with "III. The level of local community", as previously suggested). When a classmate brings this Nusrath song into an arena that must be considered as especially sensitive for "items" (signs) that are not considered "cool" or acceptable, this may lower or even spoil the prestige of the "messenger". Thus a song, belonging to a several hundred year old tradition, originating very far from a Norwegian context, performed acoustically and completely devoid of modern instruments, and with an aesthetics that several Westerners tend to find very difficult and strange – especially in a time held by many to be entirely dominated by a megalomaniac Anglo-American media industry – not least in the shape of MTV; in such circumstances it is remarkable that such an item is exposed and played even insistently (over and over again) by one of the pupils in no less than a gymnastic class in a secondary school in one of Oslo's more or less stigmatised working class based suburbs. Moreover, this exposure did not seem to cause any lack of prestige for the pupil being associated with this sign. Even if, admittedly, it is seen as a little "curious" thing to listen to – it does not seem to be considered as especially problematic from any point of view. In other words, while, on the surface, the messenger seems to have considerable courage, on the one hand, to expose such a sign, this is partly balanced by his classmates' (covering a wide range of immigrant backgrounds) reactions (expressed interpretants). They seem to have considerable willingness to accept exposure to what we might assume to be perceived as a relatively odd and unfamiliar musical sign. The message of such a semiotic practice is to be seen, once again, as one of acceptance and tolerance for difference associated to the various areas of origin (in line with our analysis of the exchange of the Arabian line between Omar and Ola, as a parallel to a "Maussian gift"), here represented by this Qawwali tune.

Some of the youngsters also have a deeper personal relationship to what the Qawwali tradition represents (“II. The deeper, individual psychological level”; see above). The ability of music to touch important aspects of the identity of its audiences, and to intertwine in complex ways into human relationships, becomes clear when the anthropologist and Amjat, both as Qawwali “fans”, discuss this tradition further. Amjat tells about his first meeting with the tradition:

Yes, Qawwali is very good. I especially remember once when I was a small boy. You see, I am the one with the blackest skin in my family. People were teasing me a little bit because I am so black. And in Pakistan white skin is regarded as the nicest. So I was a little sorry for that when I was a child. This my father noticed. Then one day he brought me with him to a Qawwali concert. I don’t remember which artist it was because I was too young. But then I got to know what the colour black really means. I got shivers all down my spine, it was totally fantastic. It is difficult to explain because it also has to do with the way the words were sung. But so much was said about that colour.

He sung that the Kaaba in Mecca is black; the night is black...and without the night, there would be no day. And he sang about a person who wanted to give a white rose to his beloved (which has to do with white skin being regarded as the finest). But he sang: ”But your hair is so black” ... And the words say that the reason why there are no black flowers is because it is an especially holy colour. So God did not want it to be on any of the flowers because he did not want people to step on them on the ground... All this the Qawwali singer sang. And this was the very first time I heard Qawwali. It was fantastic, a very good experience.

In a context where the light skin is revered, being the child with the darkest skin in his family was felt like a burden, tending to lower Amjat’s self esteem; it dissonated with the ideals of his social context and probably with his own internalisation of that ideal. It was all the more important when his father, who seemed to understand his son’s problem, brought him to a context where Amjat was exposed to an experience whose message was felt to address both this dissonance thus created in his relationship to himself, and his “teasers”. And as the *medium* for this counteracting message was Qawwali, it is no wonder Amjat seems to have preserved a specially positive relationship – in the shape of the reactions/interpretants from this early event that here are elicited – while exposed to the Qawwali song. On this occasion a series of signs dealing with what was felt as the root of the problem – the black colour – was presented. They had strongly countering positive

connotations, transforming the child's burden to its diametric opposite in a new version of the "black is beautiful" slogan. The words of the Qawwal, heavily laden with poetic expressions anchored in central religious symbols (the Kaaba, God) and their accompanying world view, speaking about the relationship of the colour black to natural phenomena such as the night, the flowers, and the hair of a beloved; all this was sung and performed in accentuating "ways" that embedded and supported the messages, as we intuit, in the ornaments and tides of Qawwali music. This made up a totalizing and *critical event* colouring the young Amjat's relationship to this musical form, weaving it together with matters of deep personal resonance regarding his own as well as others relationships to himself. In such powerful ways this event added and emphasised, with all the multifaceted messages of this art form, strong *personal interpretants* to Amjat's relationship to this collective sign. For him, Qawwali is not only as a sign, through the fame and reverence ascribed to Nusrath, strongly connected to the identity and esteem of the nation of Pakistan as known in the West. Through his personal experience, this musical form is also indexically connected to a critical event in a life phase where matters of his own personal self esteem were strongly at stake.

This clearly demonstrates the *double nature of a sign*; on the one hand it has a strong *collective dimension*, while on the other it is highly charged with important idiosyncrasies deriving from *personal experience*. In this case, the extra-verbal, polysemic and multisensuous qualities of music seem to be ideal to support these relational processes. The powerful emotions impregnated into the sign, both on the collective as well as the personal level, make the enjoyment of Qawwali from Amjat's subjective position, a truly expressive sign-action, in line with the model suggested in the previous chapter. In so far as it may be understood as a statement regarded as *concluding judgements*; this sign-action may also be seen as an instance of *expressive Thirdness*. It sums up this complex bundle of threads of continuity to his life world and his past experiences on a multitude of different levels, touching the prestige of both the Punjab area, of Pakistani expressive culture in general, and as a reminder of the experience providing a concluding reconciliation to Amjat's feeling of being inferior because of his dark skin-colour as a child.

Kurdistan: Sivan Perwer

Another example of how a single musical artist may play an important role as a sign representing a large collective (as well as its history, traditions and, not least, its political orientation), is the Kurdish singer and saz-player

Sivan Perwer (see, for example Skalla and Amiri in Broughton et al. (eds.) Vol. 1 1999; Fock 2000). To understand the meaning of this sign, it is necessary to see the role of this artist in a larger historical context.

As a result of complex historical developments, the Kurdish areas was in 1923 divided up amongst its closest neighbours and became incorporated within the national borders of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Republic of Armenia. Since then large groups of people who see themselves as Kurds have experienced many instances of suppression and violence by authorities in the countries in which they became spread. These range from the banning of a wide variety of Kurdish cultural expressions (such as music and language) to direct extinction and genocide (for example, in Iraq). In Turkey, all songs in Kurdish were banned until recently (ibid.). Musicians have been imprisoned, killed or forced into exile, and Kurdish music had few other channels than the underground market where cassettes of forbidden singers were smuggled from one part of Kurdistan to another.

Sivan Perwer was born in Turkish Kurdistan. As a singer he became well known in the 1970s and is today the most popular and famous Kurdish singer. He often performed in illegal Kurdish arrangements while still living in Turkey and had to escape from the country in 1976 for related reasons. He then moved to Germany but is today based in Sweden (ibid.). His status among his Kurdish audience is indicated by Broughton who characterizes Sivan Perwer as no less than “*the mythical minstrel of an entire people.*” (ibid:380)

...the fans:

Nasir (sixteen) who came to Rudenga with his Kurdish family, regards Sivan Perwer the greatest Kurdish artist. Nasir is enthusiastically engaged in the Kurdish struggle, as noticeable in the emotional temperature of his reactions observed at the club when Kurdish leader Öcalan was captured by the Turkish governmental police in 1998. Nasir has seen Perwer several times, as he often plays live at large Kurdish cultural-arrangements that are also held in Oslo. In these arrangements, stands distributing political pamphlets as well as a range of musical cassettes of various Kurdish artists, sale of traditional food, political speeches (where also Norwegian politicians supporting the Kurds are represented), and reading of poetry, are all elements underlining the unity of music and the political and cultural struggle for these traditions (observation Oslo 1999). As an artist, Sivan Perwer alternates between both older traditional music and songs and more

modern influenced compositions. Such alternations can be seen to reflect the very importance of the older traditional expressions as representing the *presence of the historical dimension* for the audience, as well as building continuity to the contemporary struggle for what they regard as their rights.¹ But while both the Pakistani Qawwali (to most Rudenga youngsters of Pakistani background) and the Gambian music, referred to by Foday above, were primarily associated with parents and the older generation, the music and symbol of Sivan Perwer seem to a large extent to transcend generational differences; both Nasir and his parents are united in the celebration of this artist. For Nasir his personal engagement vis a vis this musical index does not seem to be motivationally linked to any special event, as in Amjat's case. For Nasir, Sivan Perwer seems to be primarily regarded as a specially skilled bearer of the collective struggles and pains of his Kurdish people. But whether this sign is invested with more personal reactions (interpretants), for example in so far as Nasir's own family or significant others have been directly involved in these pains and struggles, or whether it is motivated on more abstract or ideological grounds, Nasir's own engagement in these matters exemplifies the resonating match between *the personal and collective interpretants* of this sign.

Sivan Perwer or other traditional Kurdish music were never played publicly in the club, as far as the present writer could observe. Nevertheless, Farukh (16), of Pakistani origin, and Nasir's classmate and best friend, had often listened to Kurdish music, as well as Perwer, while visiting Nasir at home, just as Nasir had listened to various Pakistani music in Farukhs home. The story above about how the Qawwali song by Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan was played in a gymnastic lesson, can nevertheless be regarded as indicating that such an exposure could also be possible for traditional music of other backgrounds, even though it too would run the risk of being regarded as "a little odd".

Once again we may see the enjoyment of a musical artist as an expression that builds (and probably maintains) *continuities (through indexicality) between the individual and the vast amount of signs making up the history and the positions of the collectivity with which the individual identifies*. By sharing music with others, of different background or history

¹ The scope between some related poles could be noticed as two of the youngsters present wore T-shirts with pictures of their respective heroes on their chests: one wore a large picture of the famous Kurdish leader Öcalan with the text "Free Öcalan - free Kurdistan" placed under it, while another youngster wore a large picture of rap artist Tupac Shakur, with his autograph under it.

than oneself, and by receiving such a "gift", mutual respect and acceptance are communicated.

Other examples

There are also a few other youngsters in Rudenga who relate to older traditional musical forms of their families' countries of origin. Manuel (17) from a Spanish family told of sometimes listening to the Flamenco music that his mother enjoyed. The club worker and former city stroller Anoar (23), who also for a period worked as a house-DJ, spoke of how he used to relax from "all this electric and modern music in the weekends", by just listening to some "down to earth, plain acoustic traditional Moroccan music" from his home town, Nadoor.

Summing up

For Amjat, the Qawwali tradition was a medium for the generating of prestige and self reflection on the personal level, especially coloured by a memory from his childhood. On the collective levels, Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan had become a sign-medium with similar messages for those who come from his hometown area as for "being a Pakistani" in general. For Nasir, Sivan Perwer was the artist-sign that summed up the Kurdish struggle for recognition, with which he strongly identified. *Both these young men thus drew important threads of continuity from salient concerns of their life worlds, on the one hand, to the messages and contents of these musical forms, on the other. Here, both personal and collective concerns were united in the subjectivities of the actors. These concerns seemed to arise from the desire to satisfy elementary human needs for recognition, respect and some prestige, as configured in their overall life-situation as immigrants.*

For Amjat and Nasir these signs tended to be primarily associated with their families and their areas of origin; consequently, this music was not much exposed in the more youth-oriented public sphere at the club, as this arena seemed to be reserved for the next two musical types we will present.

Sometimes, however, it is quite difficult to draw a demarcation line between what we here have termed "older musical traditions associated with the countries of origin", and the next category (position 2.) to be considered. Not only the Kurdish Sivan Perwer, but also the artist most deeply embedded in an ancient tradition – Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan – could both engage in musical forms where they *blended old traditions with new and*

modern impulses, technological or other. Perhaps it is exactly this flexibility, openness and will to such alternation that make them so popular and such a good “match”, also to some of the youngsters of the same background in Rudenga. And if the youngsters who really enjoyed these more archaically rooted musical expressions were few and relatively exceptional, the vast majority of youngsters of immigrant background were all the more enthusiastically engaged in the music of our next category, namely:

II. Recent popular music associated with/pointing to the areas of origin

Unlike music referred to earlier, that tends to be weighted towards traditions and the past, “true” pop music tends to be a more light-hearted, youth-oriented celebration of the moment, not designed to last too long, circling around suitable, youthful themes like parties, friendship, longings, style and, most of all, love in a wide range of varieties (although not necessarily excluding more “serious” themes).

In the following we will consider various forms of pop and popular music that are experienced as having musical, thematic and/or aesthetic connections and links to the club member’s various areas of origin, and, as combining this content with salient elements from traditions anchored in Western popular music, thus blending position 1 and 3 on our continuum. These can be seen as examples of the processes of *hybridisation*, as will be more explicitly discussed in chapter 11 (“Identification in the multicultural”).

Pakistan: Bhangra, remixes & “the New Asian scene”

“By the mid-1980s they were working as Djs and running club nights as the Joi Bangla Sound System, fusing Asian sounds and Western dance forms. ‘When we started we would give the crowd a Michael Jackson groove and then we would mix in a traditional Bengali thing very slowly so they hardly noticed,’ Farook recalls. ‘Then we would turn it up and they would wonder what the hell it was, but they would still be dancing to it. I think people saw it as mad, off-the-wall Paki music, but it seemed very natural to us. We wanted to give our own people a sense of musical identity.’ “ (Joi-member Farook Shamsheer about his and his brothers early Dj-ing in London; interviewed by Nigel Williamson in *Songlines Autumn/Winter 2000:28*)

As early as the 1950s, immigrants from former colonies in India and Pakistan settled in industrial cities in Britain. Some of these naturally

brought with them cultural expressions and customs from their areas of origin. In the Punjab region, where several of these immigrants were rooted, there existed a folk dance known as “Bhangra”; originally executed while celebrating the harvest and the New year festival, it had developed into one of the district’s most popular dances. Among the immigrants from these areas there grew a demand for musicians and bands to perform related music at weddings and other important occasions, and, around the 1970s young immigrants of Pakistani and Indian background in Britain started to form bands that added electric instruments (electric guitar, bass and various kinds of keyboards) and other modern impulses to the already existing Bhangra traditions. Through such a transformation – especially as spearheaded by the group “Alaap” formed in the Southall area of West London in 1977 – the new and modernized Bhangra soon became enormously popular, especially among youngsters of similar background (see DJ Ritu, in Broughton et al. (eds.) 1999:84; Baumann 1996; Back 1996; Huq in Sharma et al 1996; Bennett 2001; Huq 2003).

By the mid 1980s Bhangra parties were arranged in London and elsewhere in areas of similar groups of immigrants. They were primarily arranged during daytime because many of the youngsters were too young to be allowed to visit other arrangements at nighttime. For the parents it was regarded as more safe, as these parties occurred in an all-Asian environment. According to Baumann, these parties contributed hugely to the development of feeling of an overarching “Asian” identity among youths from many different countries in the vast continent. The Bhangra fans, in other words, soon came from far more than youngsters of strictly Punjabi background and became the symbolic centre of a youth cultural community where “Asian” was the overarching label. According to Baumann, most parents had:

“...no use for a category of Asian culture, as if Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims, Punjabis, Gujaratis, and Bengalis were ‘the same’. Yet this is precisely what the growing numbers of teenage Southallians wish to see emerge among themselves.” (Baumann 1996:157)

Bauman sees the popularity of Bhangra among the Southall youth as “*providing a symbolic and expressive focus on a new Asian culture in Britain*” (*ibid:191*). This agrees with the statements of long time participant in these socio-musical processes and co-founder of the record company descriptively called “Outcaste Records” – DJ Ritu – who enthusiastically writes:

“Bhangra with a British twist had arrived and the ‘Southall sound’ was born. It appealed right across Britain’s Asian communities. (...) Bhangra

was roots. Bhangra reaffirmed cultural identity – positively” (DJ Ritu, in Broughton et al. (eds.) 1999:84)

The music developed further, and a variety of directions occurred, some also incorporating impulses (samples) from more Western popular genres like Soul, disco and Hip Hop (see Ritu, in Broughton et al. Vol. 1. 1999). And into the 90s new directions and genres occurred from this base of the Bhangra scene, rapidly developing and transforming into mixes with recent popular genres.¹

What most of these more recent artists have in common, apart from having various Asian-immigrant backgrounds and some relationship to Bhangra, seems to be a strong *self-consciousness regarding their back-*

¹ Examples of this development is listed in the following. The artist "Apache Indian", is described by Ritu as "UK's first Asian pop star" (ibid:86), fuses Indian/Bhangra influences with English-Jamaican Reggae. British-Indian artist Bally Sagoo remixes Indian film music in the highly acclaimed CD "Bollywood Flashbacks" (and has also done several celebrated re-mixes of Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan, see below). Tejinder Singh, of British-Indian background, founded indie-rock group "Cornershop" (one of the few rock-oriented groups in this so called "Asian" wave). Haroon and Farook Shamsheer of Bagladeshian origin formed in the 80s the well respected "Joi Bangla Sound System", that later were re-labeled to "Joi", fusing sounds and samples from their families' home area with Western dance (Techno) forms (see *Songlines* Autumn/Winter 2000). Aki Nawaz of Pakistani background founded "Nation Records" in 1989, as well as his Punk-Dub-Techno- Rap- Bhangra-influenced group, ironically named "Fun Da Mental"; from this group some of the members later formed a group with the no less inventive name, "Transglobal Underground", with members of a large variety of backgrounds. The singer, Natacha Atlas, was, for example, born in Bruxelles' Moroccan district and has a father of Egyptian-Moroccan background and a mother from England; this means that that three religions – Islam, Judaism and Christianity are all represented in her family. Speaking of herself as Anglo-Arabian, she sings in Arab, French, English and even some Yiddish. Her second solo album was descriptively named "Diaspora" (*FolkRoots* no.191, 1999). In addition Transglobal Underground include Pakistani, Indian, Sikh, Balkan and African influences – some of which are represented by actual members of the band – in addition to more primarily Western genres like Hip Hop, Techno, Dub, etcetera. The Outcaste label", founded in 1994, has released several important and self-conscious artists like Nitin Sawhney (whose first solo CD was called "Migration") and "Badmarsh & Sri" (mixing Drum & Bass with Indian music). The more politically oriented "Asian Dub Foundation", with most members of British-Indian background, has now had considerable success and has visited the Norwegian "Quart Festival" several times. Talvin Singh, also of British-Indian background, had great success with his London club "Anokha" that for a period was a center for many of the new up-and-coming bands of a variety of Asian backgrounds. Singh has also become well known as an artist, tabla-player and record-producer who, among others has collaborated with well known Icelandic artist "Björk".

ground. They are all more or less part of the overall popular music scene in Britain, and even though some of the artists still seem to be considered as relatively “underground”-tinged (which certainly gives credibility in some milieus), they can be read about in the commercial music press and have, in recent years, come to represent a well- respected scene of artists. In other words the so called “New Asian scene”, created by young artists of Asian background in London, has had considerable success and is now regarded as important in a larger musical landscape, from which music of such immigrant background long had been missing¹.

All these action-signs, where artists of Asian background are exposed in a wide variety of prestigious and highly visible contexts, are, as DJ Ritu (note) is well aware, all examples of such artists moving into both the mainstream of a larger young Western audience – an arena of high prestige not only in the overall public sphere of youth – but also in circles and niches for the narrowly demanding needs of various musical connoisseurs. Seen as a whole, the success of the new Asian music, centred in Britain, and made and performed by young artists of a variety of “Asian” backgrounds (more specifically immigrant families of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladesian origin) gives the strong message that these artists, in fact, produce music that both contains various signs pointing to the backgrounds of its producers; their music is valued as positive and enjoyable and is highly successful to a large publicity. In this way, and probably most of all through the recognised qualities of this music in its own right, it is *providing prestige, recognition and respect to the very signs of difference attached to the artists and the backgrounds they are felt to represent*.

...the fans?

Our crucial question is: if and in what ways can these or similar developments be registered, used and enjoyed among the Rudenga youngsters?

Among the clubmembers of Pakistani background, a wide range of pop-music with strong Pakistani flavours was enjoyed and played at the

¹ This success is well expressed by DJ Ritu: “Asian bands are certainly now an established feature of the rock and World music festival and tour scenes. Anokha has hit New York and WOMAD; the Asian Equation landed at Tribal Gathering; Bally Sagoo supported Michael Jackson in India; Cornershop went on tour with Oasis. Meantime Talvin Singh won the UK’s prestigious Mercury Music Prize in 1999.(...) A postcard from British Asia reading “We’ve landed” is being sent to all corners of the globe.” (DJ Ritu, in Broughton et al. 1999:88)

club's disco. But although it was strongly amplified with Western electric instruments, this was primarily music that seemed to be more heavily anchored in Punjabi or Indian traditions (such as the modernized Bhangra of the British-Punjabi immigrants of earlier decades), rather than the further developed and self-consciously "hybridized" (see later chapters) musical forms in the forefront of much of the recent "Asian beats" referred to above.¹

One of the most popular artists within this segment of the Rudenga club was, for example, Daler Mehndi, who, according to DJ Ritu, may be considered an artist who "*continue to revitalize things*" back on "*the Bhangra circuit*" and that "*hold on to traditional roots, with strong Punjabi emphasis on their music*" (DJ Ritu, in Broughton et al. vol. 1. 1999:88). His "*Best of Daler Mehndi remixes – Kudian shaher diyan*" was especially popular among the Rudenga fans (Music World MWCD-312). Here, under the title of the album's first tune, "Hojayegi Balle Balle", is written "*Bhangra Clubbin mix*", which refers to a similar characterization of mixing types usual on remixes in the House & Techno tradition, further underlining the "modern aura" of the genre. On the song "Na Na Re Na Re", there was also a cut with longer samples of American rap, also in line with these semiotic pointers. Even if Mehndi's music is strongly embedded in the modern Bhangra tradition, there are at least some elements of other more obviously popular Western musical genres. Some of the fans at the club strongly dismiss the Hip Hop samples used by Mehndi as just some "stupid rap", in agreement with the tendency among the youngsters of Pakistani background to dismiss rap in favour of House & Techno (see below).

Series of cassettes of so called "re-mixes" were very popular. They consist of various music of Punjabi/Pakistani/Indian origin that were modified and changed by adding synthesizers, bass, rhythms, samples and electronic treatments of various kinds (which is what re-mixing means) by young artists of immigrant background in London. These genres were also said to have become popular in Pakistan, and were often based on music from popular Pakistani/Indian films. In the remixes this was "toughened" up with a heavy and complex soundscape, lending impulses from other popular genres. An example of this is the song called "O Jan-e-jana", originally sung by the artist "Sanji", from the film "Piyaas Kiya to darna Kya". In a heavily remixed version, this was one of the most frequently heard Pakistani-pop

¹ Rupa Huq, for example, writes about the Outcaste club/record label: "This club was in the smart West End rather than tucked away in east London Asian ghettos.". She indicates that also a class dimension may be relevant in the semiotics of these musical forms in a paragraph descriptively headlined: "Conscious kool: this is where it's at" (Huq, in Sharma et al 1996:74-74).

song played at the club's disco (hear the CD "Sanji. New and Nice songs. Album 20", Megasound CD 130). Most of the youngsters in the Rudenga club, regardless of background, were said to be able to sing some of the hook lines of this tune, even if they did not know the meaning of the words.

Another example of music that was somehow closer to Punjab, so to speak, – than the deliberate and self-reflexive urban-hip mixes of a variety of different traditions in the music of for example Transglobal Underground, or the highly modern and ultra hip Techno sounds of Talvin Singh's Anokha club, – and that several of the members of Pakistani background enjoyed, was nevertheless the no less sophisticated remixes of a range of famous songs by Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan done by the previously mentioned Bally Sagoo¹.

Nevertheless, even if the youngsters of Pakistani background knew well that Nusrath had also released several CDs in collaboration with Western musicians, who added modern instruments and sound effects, and that these had been of strong importance for making Nusrath known in the West, these were never played at the disco, and to my knowledge only few of the members ever listened to or owned any of them. And as mentioned earlier, it was also noticeable that none of the more recent artists or groups of the British "New Asian Beats" scene (as described above) – except the Nusrath remixes by Bally Sagoo – were especially known or enjoyed among the club members. *Is it possible to explain such an aspect of their musical practice? And in what ways can this eventually be seen as related to their handling of identity?*

¹ Here the versatility of Nusrath is strongly demonstrated as his complex improvisational singing (that also is an integral part of traditional Qawwali) is mixed with modern genres such as "Dub" (a studio-based aesthetic characterized by echoes, looping and sound effects pioneered by Jamaican Reggae producers), "Trip Hop" (slower, Techno- and jazz-influenced genre initiated by British group "Massive Attack" who were also famous for having remixed Nusrath's song "Musst, Musst" on his most successful "crossover" album), and far developed Bhangra influences. Here Sagoo remixes (fragments from) a series of Nusrath songs that most Qawwali fans - including the boys of Pakistani background at the club - know well from their more traditional (non electric) versions (for example the previously mentioned "Jhoole Jhoole lal dam mast"). Such re-mixing - which is not entirely re-mixing (often just modifying, adding or subtracting from pre-recorded material) as Nusrath himself was participating in the studio together with Sagoo - (see text on the CD "Magic Touch", published by the Pakistani Birmingham based company Oriental Star 1996) was also used as a base for music-videos. Such video versions also got loud and positive acclaim while I watched a series of pop music videos of Pakistani and Indian background with the related members, also an example of a significant event that would not have been possible five years earlier.

The members of Pakistani background to a large extent seemed to buy their CDs and cassettes primarily in immigrant run shops in Oslo. Here the CDs were considerably cheaper (often more than 50% cheaper than in ordinary shops), costing even less for cassettes of the popular remix-compilations. But these shops did not stock any of the CDs of the frontline of the New Asian Beats mentioned above, that were closer to either the mainstream of the larger Western audiences or the connoisseurs of various subcultural undergrounds. One could wonder if this was because these artists were mainly released or distributed by companies oriented towards the ordinary Western market, and, therefore, that the price-politics would not match. But several of this segment of the members were also buying, for example, their Techno records in ordinary stores where artists of the New Asian Beats were also sold, which they still did not buy.

The members of Pakistani background thus seemed to operate with two relatively distinct musical spheres, reflected in the patterns of their musical shopping habits. On the one hand, the music that in various ways and degrees had *a semiotic flavour of the families' areas of origin was only bought in immigrant-run shops. On the other hand, the music enjoyed that did not have this semiotic connection was bought in ordinary record shops of non-immigrant ownership*, even if they were well aware that, for example, the more Westernized "fusion" records by Nusrath (like "Musst Musst") as well as various artists of the New Asian scene, were only sold here. This suggests an intersection of the following explanations:

1. Getting music of immigrant background cheaper in immigrant run shops, may counteract the buying of such or related music for higher prices in ordinary non-immigrant shops.
2. Many of the artists and music of the New Asian scene may have a tinge of underground, experiment, politics and *urban hip intellectualism* (as indicated by Huq's term "*Conscious Kool*" for this scene, and statements by several young artists within this genre that dismiss Bhangra and contrast it to the new "Asian" music. Huq, in Sharma et al. 1996). There are also more *diffuse, "grown up", middle class-tinged world music associations* (especially for the "fusion" records by Nusrath that are hailed in magazines like the British "*FolkRoots*" and the American "*Songlines*" that seems especially oriented towards such an audience. See also Fock 2000). *Neither of these semiotic pointers seem to resonate with the working class habitus and style of the Rudenga youngsters*. This seems to be further underlined by the preference for more recent explicitly Bhangra oriented artists (for example Daler Mehndi), and music with a more strong Punjab-oriented flavour.

3. Understood as indexes, the preferred musical forms – even in their most modernized versions – tend to be experienced in concrete contexts and presence of their home, family (especially exemplified by Nusrath who are highly revered by both young and old), language and the ways and impressions from the areas of origin of their families. It will therefore tend to be perceived as "out of place" to buy such musical-signs in stores where the distance to these experiences are somehow felt as too large.

In other words: the preference for these musical signs and corresponding shopping practices can be seen as expressions reflecting identification with their habitus as described in the previous chapters. This also "explains" the lack of resonance manifested towards salient aspects of the artists of the "Asian Kool" scene, and the middle-class oriented distinctions of the "world music" audience.

Live groups of Pakistani background seldom performed in Oslo during the last fieldwork. One exception was super rock group "Junoon" which visited Oslo in August 1999, to play at a large cultural event. This was arranged by the Norwegian political party, "Høyre" (moderately right wing), which wanted to state their willingness to communicate with the Pakistani immigrants in Oslo by inviting such a group. Mohamed (19) who was present, comments:

"It was much like rock'n' roll. Heavy guitar solos and so on. Some Bhangra mixed in between. It was really an "East meets West" thing. Not for dancing, but nevertheless heels in the ceiling and full time party. I liked it, but it's not the kind of music I like the most. Too much like heavy rock..."

So, even if the message of the event was in many ways similar to the messages analysed in this section, there was, nevertheless, something that dissonated in Mohammed's experience with Junoon: the heavy use of rock associated musical ingredients. This emphasises the difference between the musical aesthetics among this segment (as well as the others) of the present Rudenga club members, in contrast to the one "ruling" five years earlier, when Rudenga was a "guitar land". In addition, it also indicates that the semiotics of music and musical statements – even those that on the surface seem to match very well with important aspects of the identities of the audiences involved – are strongly interwoven in a wide range of communicative dimensions and preferences in their concrete and particular horizons of meaning.

The controversy over music and music related practices are also shown in the story of the young female artist of Pakistani background that perform under the artist name "Deepika" (see DJ Ritu, in Broughton et al. 1999). Some years ago she was a relatively successful, up-and-coming artist living in Oslo. But according to informants that claim to have more knowledge about her story, her performances, for example, on her music videos, was strongly criticised by some older people. It is said that she escaped to London and continued her musical career there, largely as a consequence of this criticism. This agrees with the views of the Rudenga youngsters of Pakistani background, who see the Pakistani public spheres and the relevant milieus in England as more tolerant and the music scene as wider and more open. This is also supported by the developments of the hip, intellectual and probably more middle-class scene of the "Conscious kool", described by Huq (in Sharma et al. 1996). But the youngsters in Rudenga nevertheless support Deepika as an artists. As Ali said:

She showed too much of her naked skin in her video. The older foreigners couldn't stand that. But now she's back in the music business. I think that's very good. She's singing on the soundtrack of the new Norwegian film called "Schpaa", you know.

As a sign, Deepika thus seems to stand for values and attitudes that resonate with the youngsters of similar background in the club; she is one more example of an artist that combines traditions and elements from her areas of origin, with Western influence.

The importance of music as a sign of identity that one "speaks through", also on larger public occasions, was underlined on a local market day in Rudenga, where invited bands were to play. Food from the various immigrant groups was sold here, as well as lottery tickets for the brassband of the local school; small speeches by representatives for local organisations were made, and there were simple competitions for the children. After having listened to various bands of several genres, Farukh complained to me that music of Pakistani origin was completely lacking from the whole arrangement, even though several Pakistani families are living in the area. He obviously felt that the public exposure of such music on such an occasion would represent an including gesture to the group to which he associates himself. There were no other music of immigrant background presented on the occasion. This is perhaps an indication that, in the more overall public sphere in Rudenga, the exposure of relative "otherness" through such a strong medium as music (see the paragraph on "the medium specific", below), still would be perceived as somehow problematic for the

hegemonic groups among the arrangers. But this may, of course, also be due to some contingency; another element pointing in such a direction is the fact that a group of young girls from Indian families could perform their Indian dance programme and be applauded by the public.

Be this as it may, there were nevertheless no obstacles for playing music of immigrant background openly in the Rudenga club. This attitude was also widened to include the local school that the members attended, as we have previously touched upon. Teachers confirmed that the pupils could very well play popular music with strong Pakistani flavours in their classrooms. It thus seemed far from being considered as "*mad-off-the wall Paki-music*" (unless this should be taken as a positive characteristic), as Farokh Shamsheer of Joi described their assumed audience reactions in London in the 80s, in the introductory quotation. On the contrary – it seemed to be experienced as "quite natural" for most of the Rudenga youngsters, just as it seemed to the Shamsheer brothers.

While most of the youth of Pakistani background have some relationship to the older Qawwali tradition represented by Nusrath, as associated to the home sphere and their parents, the Nusrath they prefer in their own public sphere, is the *remixed and electrified version*, alongside with Daler Mehndi and various heavily remixed versions of film music. In other words they prefer the music that, in addition to having strong anchorage in the sign continua of their areas of origin, is also strongly fused with Western impulses. Nevertheless, on the continuum (covering several sub continua, as we have seen) ranging from the older musical traditions of none or minimal Western influence (1.) to the purely Western originated popular music (3.), they also distinguish themselves from the hip and intellectual "conscious kool"- genres that can be considered as one further step in the direction of being part of a mainstream Western popular musical scene (position 3.). Choosing what Huqs informants perhaps would term a "more old fashioned Bhangra scene", and that the Rudenga youngsters simply term "Pakistani pop music", they place themselves a little "*closer to Punjab*", so to speak, in this semiotic continuum of identification.

Turkey & Kurdistan: Arabesk and pop

An important genre, and the musical base for the pop music that the members of Kurdish and Turkish backgrounds were listening to, is the so called "Arabesk" music that, according to Stokes, has been the dominant

popular music of Turkey for several decades (see also Fock 2000).¹ But this musical genre also addresses problems in Turkish society such as urban-rural migration (ibid.). According to Stokes:

“Arabesk is a working class and to an extent outsiders’ music which addresses everyday realities and the problems of the ‘gariban’, the poor and oppressed” (ibid:403)

...the fans:

One of Arabesk’s greatest stars in recent decades is Ibrahim Tatlis, who also was much enjoyed by the Rudenga youngsters of both Kurd or Turkish background. Nasir (of Kurdish background) was eager in underlining that Tatlis in fact is a Kurd. He and some of the boys of Turkish background had seen Tatlis in concert in Germany and spoke of it as “*almost like a Michael Jackson concert*” (thus emphasising iconicity) in describing the atmosphere and the popularity of this artist for his Turkish/Kurdish audience. And even if Tatlis’ songs, according to my young informants, are predominantly about “*love and such things, you know*”, there are also some overtones of politics, and engagement in social problems, both in the songs of Tatlis and in the larger tradition of Arabesk itself, as clear from Stokes characteristics:

“Tatlis’ poverty stricken life in Urfa in the far southeast of the country, his mixed Arab-Kurdish family background, and his turbulent domestic life, is a matter of public mythology in Turkey today.” (ibid:409)

While emphasising his Kurdish background Nasir also tells about another Kurdish born artist named Ahmet Kaya who, according to Stokes, is well known for his left wing sympathies (ibid:405). Once again we see how Nasir’s reverence for popular artists is strongly interwoven with his engagement in the Kurdish struggle for recognition and respect, emphasising the background of the artist as iconic to his own.

¹ It was introduced in 1940, strongly influenced by Egyptian musicians and traditions in Egyptian film, and is said to be rooted in “*Egyptian ‘Oriental’ dance music - Raks Sarki, or Oriyental, often misleadingly known as ‘belly dancing music’*” (Stokes in Broughton et al. 1999:403). The genre was early characterized by large string orchestras fronted by “*dramatic solo vocals of unrequited love*”, with strong Arabic influences in their vocal style (ibid.). As Turkish nationalism escalated this musical form was not viewed positively by the state, but it had large popular success, often with translated versions of Egyptian hits.

But there is, of course, a range of reasons for enjoying music, and for the ethos of pop, the Turkish artist "Tarkan" is perhaps the best example. In the period of the fieldwork he had a great hit with the song "Simarik" that also reached the hit lists in the main newspapers in Norway (the so called "VG-lista"). The song is also used as the introductory soundtrack for a popular weekly television program about multiethnic Norway called "Migrapolis". Simarik's Arab flavoured sweet and melismatic songlines as a continuation of the Arabesk style, was often played at the club's disco. Its refrain is easily recognised by the rhythmically well-placed loud sounds of kissing, making an enthusiastic and comic effect that fit well with the youthful needs for humour and simply having fun. Stokes identifies Tarkan as an exponent of the most recent directions of Turkish pop where "an attitude of hedonism" is especially characteristic (ibid:405)

Also several of Nasir's friends of Pakistani background played Simarik loudly on their CD players and in their cars. This again points to the *sharing enjoyment of significant signs pointing to the backgrounds*, here in the shape of music rooted in the Turkish and Kurdish areas of origin of the members.

North Africa: Rai, Gnawa, Chaabi

Just as Arabesk was characterized, by Stokes as working class music addressing the problems of the poor and the oppressed, so is the pop music enjoyed by the youngsters of North African background, in the shape of the so called "Rai" music. This musical genre is characterized by Morgan along similar veins, by doing a significant comparisons to modern Rap:

"American rap and Algerian Rai are both styles born out of strong local culture which use the language of the street to express opinions about street life. (...) They antagonize the values of "decent" society and the cultural mainstream. They are the musical styles most favoured by the dispossessed in their respective countries, by those who have little to lose and a lot to say." (Morgan in Broughton et al Vol. 1. 1999:413)

Rai music has its cultural roots and origin in an Algerian seaport town, also known as the "little Paris" of North Africa, more specifically the city of Oran in Western Algeria (ibid:414). The word "Rai" is said to be derived from the phrase "ya rai" or "errai, errai" with which the forerunners of modern Rai are said to have spiced up their singing. According to Schade Poulsen this expression means simply '*This is how I see the world*' (ibid; see also Schade-Poulsen, in Amit Talai and Wulf 1995). As a further parallel to the Hip Hop tradition, we may as well emphasize its resemblance with the meaning of the word "rap" which simply means "talk". Like rap, Rai has

been regarded with much scepticism by Algerian authorities. After independence in 1960, Rai singers were criticising the regime, and, accordingly, some were jailed. But gradually a new pop-variety of Rai appeared, adding electric instruments inspired by both Spanish popular music, jazz and Western rock and Soul. This was taken far by a young artist that is now regarded as the "King of Rai", namely the famous "Cheb" – which means "young" or "charming", originally used to introduce young artists in television programmes, in female version: "chaba" – Khaled. From the middle 70s Khaled has been the most widely known and popular Rai artist. According to Morgan, 1986 could be considered a turning point for Rai, which was in the process of becoming a more international phenomenon. This was especially true after "*...the working class Parisian suburb of Bobigny staged a festival of Rai which showcased the talents of Cheb Khaled, Chaba Fadela and Cheb Sahraoui, Raina Rai, Cheikka Remitti and others to an intrigued and delighted audience of North African immigrants and French journalists. The word was out and the word was Rai.*" (*ibid*:421)

Rai thus became known in wider international milieus, not least in the various immigrant-dense suburbs of Europe. Khaled, who also has had great success in India, but especially in France, is said to be capable of selling out large venues in Paris for several nights in a row (*ibid*:421).¹ Through these developments a musical genre from North Africa has become widely known creating much prestige and acknowledgement for the tradition of origin and its related continuum of signs.

As a musical sign, Rai has historically – though in various degrees – been associated with street level outspokenness, in some cases social critique, a working class position, hedonism, sex, love, romance, alcohol, drugs (for example, hashish, *ibid*) and youth, making the initial comparison with rap seem all the more fit.²

...the fans

Once more we may ask if and how this sign-continuum is used among the Rudenga youngsters?

¹ In 1997 Khaled's song "Aicha" was selected the best song of the year in France (Beck 2000:18).

² In other words: not far from English new wave rocker from the 80s, Ian Dury's famous song title: "Sex'n drugs'n rock'n'roll"!

Sidi (18, Moroccan born parents) speaks warmly of his summers spent in X, a small tourist town in Morocco, where his parents have built a house. Here, the place itself, Rai music and not least “something” with the girls seem to be attractive ingredients of his longed for holidays:

Oh, I really wished I lived there. I surely do not want to miss the summer down in X. The weather, all my friends, my whole family. And not least the girls (laughing). I don't know what it is. I have a girlfriend down there. Just a summerflirt but,... nevertheless. Oh, it's so lovely. So very different from the Norwegian girls. Nothing wrong with them, but... I don't know what it is. You know I have a girlfriend here in Norway too, but it's not the same. With her I meet in X,... we have more common interests. We listen to Rai music, and... She's so clever in singing too. She sings R&B, a little Soul. It's lots of Moroccans living in Europe... from Belgium, Netherlands, France – that have houses in X. For us we are more alike when it comes to music. In Y, where many in my family come from, it is more out in the country, you know, also regarding music and clothing style. It is much more strict and rigorous in the countryside.

The associated chain of indexes, that is signs that are actually parts of a concrete experience, can thus be summed up as: the summer holiday – X – his girlfriend – listening to Rai music – her singing Soul and R&B – experiencing Moroccan families living in Europe in X – feeling more modern (in the sense less strict and rigorous) than the contrasting countryside. Once more, the musical genre preferred is intertwined with the semiotics of the “more modern” position on the suggested continuum.

But there is also another musical genre, even more than Rai, that seems to catch his enthusiasm while speaking of his summers in X, more precisely what is termed “Gnawa-music”. According to Muddyman, Gnawa stemmed from groups of African slaves in Morocco that built their own Sufi brotherhoods, and to whom music was a way to reach trance and union with God (not unlike the Pakistani Qawwali tradition, we may add. See Muddyman, in Broughton et al. Vol. 1. 1999). Gnawa influences were an important, but not the only ingredient in what is termed “Chaabi” (meaning popular) groups that became popular in Morocco around 1970s. Chaabi combined:

“...Arab, African and modern Western influences, combining Berber music with elements taken from Arab *milhun* and Sufi rituals, Gnawa rhythms and the image of European groups. (...) Lyrics dealt with love as well as social issues and occasionally carried messages which got their authors into trouble with the authorities – even jailed.” (ibid.:573)

To understand the place of Gnawa in the musical horizon of Sidi, it may be useful to explore some statements by Salim (23) who, like both Anoar and Sidi, are also from a Berber family. They have known him for a long time, as he also has grown up in Rudenga. Salim's Berber roots are important to him. In his musical semiotics both Berber, Rai, Arab and Gnawa musical influences are important ingredients, as seen from his position in the musical landscape:

Salim: I think it is important not to forget one's roots. I listen a lot to Berber music, old music. They sing a lot about family problems and such things. The family is much more important among the Berber than here, and in Berber music that is an important theme. I really can relate to that. But there is also more modern, pop-like music. More like Techno perhaps. As long as they sing in Berber, it's ok. Of course, I like Rai too, but that is more modern and comes from Oran. Rai is a more recent thing in Morocco. After so many Rai artists have fled from Oran to Morocco because of the political situation, we have listened more to it. But to me Cheb Khaled is too commercial. Everybody knows who he is, just like some Michael Jackson.

Again we see artist Michael Jackson used as a measuring stick and as a sign (icon) for comparison.

(Here Salim's friend Malou, whose family is Berber-Algerian (24) joins our conversation.)

Malou: Yeah, but his words are very important. He sings about what it is like being in a foreign country. I mean he emigrated from Oran to Paris himself. He misses his home country, but he criticises the situation in Oran, that is spoilt by the war between the government and the fundamentalists. They don't like Rai at all, you know. They've been after him several times.

Salim: Yeah, that's bad. (...) But I, and many of my friends in Morocco enjoy the Gnawa-flavoured music better than Rai. Like Nass El Ghiwane or Jil Jilala. Gnawa is the music originally played by the black African slaves that were taken to Morocco. My great grandfather was a postman, and he used to speak about "the dark ones" that were servants and who played Gnawa music. It's just like how black gospel music came to USA from the African slaves. Very good rhythms and lots of drumming. All youngsters in X enjoys Gnawa-music.

In Salim's musical semiotics, the Berber music represents his "roots", his family and the mother tongue. Here it is represented both by an older musical tradition (1.) dealing much with family as a theme, on the one hand,

and more modern pop-like (2.) music, on the other. Further on the pop-scale he places Rai, that in its most pop (commercial) form is represented by Khaled. But here he also seems, at least to some extent, to distance himself from Rai because it is more associated to Oran/Algeria than Morocco. Such *movement in preferences* (that is as expressions of identification) is also underlined when Malou – whose family is from Algeria – on his side, defends Khaled as an artist fleeing from the extreme situation in his homeland, to Paris, where he settles, both criticizing and longing for his homeland in exile. Being from the same area as Malou (in this respect exemplifying both iconicity and indexicality), Khaled as a sign resonates more strongly to Malou’s own Algerian background, than to Salim’s background.

Salim, on his side, with his Moroccan-Berber background (together with fellow Berber Sidi), prefers the “Gnawa-flavoured” music of Nass El Ghiwane and Jil Jilala. Here it is interesting to notice that Salim compares the Gnawa music to black gospel music in USA. Just like much Western popular music is extremely influenced by Afro-American descendants of the slaves of America – due to young Americans’ (as well as young Europeans) fascination with the music and *expressive abilities* of this group – the young Moroccans of Salim’s social circles, as a parallel, are equally fascinated by the music of Gnawa groups that was developed by former black African slaves in Morocco. (A continuation of this *iconicity* is also registered while discussing Salim’s relationship to Hip Hop, R&B and Soul; see below.)

Again, the musical preferences of our two boys of Berber-Moroccan background seem to be closely analogous to what we may assume to be their *feeling of identity*. The first is the more strictly Berber music that Salim associates to the “roots” of his family. Such music is not mentioned by five years younger Sidi. There are indications that interest in the area and ways of origin increases when the youngsters reach their 20s, and this may be another example of this tendency. Sidi feels that Gnawa is very attractive but knows little about it, though he likes to find out more about “*what it is all about*”, seeming to be on the verge of diving deeper into this music. The Chaabi groups that Salim mentions play a more modernized genre that *fuses influences from all the three ethnic groups present*: Arab, Berber and the descendants of the African slaves. In contrast to the Algerian-originated Rai, this Gnawa-flavoured fusion seem to resonate more strongly with the experiences of Sidi and Salim, youngsters coming from Moroccan-Berber families that also have several Arabic friends.

The discussion between these three friends, and the tendency to prefer musical forms that match their respective background and not least age most

closely, exemplify once more how these preferences, in ways of subtle complexity, reflect the *nuances in the relative position of the various subjects*. Once again we see that the more modernized of the musical forms in question (fusing traditions from the areas of origin with Western popular musical traditions) represents a core-theme in their overall choice of genre; this also seems to reflect the nuances of their semiotic interpretational orientations, stemming from both their personal history and their overall life situation.

Other pop-music of immigrant background:

But there were also other popular musical forms that were chosen as they matched the various backgrounds of the members. And sometimes there was hardly any need for any action on part of the youngster him- or herself to expose it to friends. Such was the case for Isabel (17) of Chilean background. She enjoyed salsa a lot and listened to various forms of Latin music together with her friends from the Chilean milieu. In addition, Isabel, listened a lot to artists from the recent so called Latin Wave in American pop music, first and foremost represented by million seller Ricky Martin. His family immigrated to New York from Puerto Rico, and he is especially famous for the great hit from 1999 “Living la Vida Loca” (see the Norwegian magazine ”*Inside*” august 1999). As a pop-artist on the Western market, he is often written about in magazines directed at young girls. And in one of the magazines that Isabel sometimes read, there was an interview where he told about his background as immigrant, his relation to various musical genres and artists, as well as answering several crucially important questions (!) like: “*What part of your body are you most content with?*” “*What is it with girls that turns you on?*”, “*Do you wear boxershorts or underpants?*”, “*Who would you like to be stuck in an elevator with?*” “*How do you like to be called ‘Latin Lover?’*” and so on (ibid.). In 1999, Ricky Martin was declared as being the “world’s most sexy male” (ibid.), and for a long time in 1999 it was almost impossible to turn on a radio or watch MTV without hearing/seeing him singing his mega hit ”Living la Vida Loca.”

As previously argued, when an artist with a background as an immigrant from a certain area achieves such a degree of success (in such a way that his or her background are explicitly related to) and to some degree reaches the large international mainstream market, this give a certain *legitimizing prestige and visibility of that background*, especially to youth of same or similar background. For artists like Ricky Martin (or fellow Latin mega artist Jennifer Lopez, or Julio Iglesias) this success gives exposure and extremely wide coverage in a variety of media. This means not only a

normalisation of the status as immigrant in itself (in so far as this becomes known to the public as part of the story of the artist), it may also show, an identity/background, in this case: as Latin American, as *a resource*. And in this case the sign reaches much farther than, for example, a course in salsa, "belly dance" or "African dance" etcetera for middle age, middle class women, or "African drumming" for the men (as is not uncommon in Oslo). The sign also goes beyond musical genres being attractive only to the relatively narrow World Music public, or to the more exclusive niches of connoisseurs or smaller urban subcultures to which, for example, the mentioned "hipper" parts of the Asian scene, seem to appeal. Such "mass appeal" may in many ways be seen as something like an ultimate recognition of a musical sign of identity. There were probably not more than two musical examples of such a kind, that were celebrated among the club members. The first and obvious is represented by Ricky Martin's *Living la Vida Loca*. The other, but in a lesser degree may possibly be the Turkeyan Tarkans "Simarik" (see above). And even if this may be seen as, to some degree, a two-edged sword, in the sense that pure commercial pop to some members was seen as somehow hollow and superficial (for example, as compared to the 'real stuff' within rap, see below), as far as I could judge, few were likely to go as far as to dismiss an artist of similar background as themselves, just because the music was too commercial.

Isabel has several female friends, both among the members at the club and elsewhere, of a variety of backgrounds (ranging from South Africa, Spain, and also some from Pakistan and Vietnam that did not visit the club). Some of them have also accompanied her on Chilean feasts.

"They did not know so much about the music, but they enjoyed what they heard and they danced. Many of them also listen to Ricky Martin, you know."

Maurizio (16) also of Chilean background, who was well known for enjoying "all latin music" including Colombian cumbia and merengue of the Dominican Republic, was, on his part, more sceptical to such commercial stuff, thus again demonstrating the relative subtlety that may be exemplified in such matters of taste, just like Mohammed's comments about Junoon (above).

There was also Manuel (18) of Spanish parents who was listening to the pop-flamenco group: Gypsy Kings, Nicola (18) of Eritrean parents listened to Eritrean-rooted pop (Tekle, Yemane), but there were also youth that for one reason or another did not listen to music coloured by their area of origin. Among the members of Somalian background, for example, it

seemed that listening to such music was almost absent. This may be due to the possibility that pop music in Somalia or with Somalian background has not had the opportunity to develop because of the difficult situation in the country that have lasted for such a long time.

Summing up:

The musical signs we have analysed above are to be seen as elements in the repertoire of *distinctions* that the various groups and individuals use to communicate the degrees and nuances of identifications and group affiliation. Once again the continuities between the concerns of their life worlds and their musical preferences seem to manifest through the analysis of their subjective statements. And in so far as the older traditions associated with their areas of origin tend not to be exposed in the public sphere of the youth club, the recent popular music associated with these areas of origin surely was. This may be seen as connected to the fact that the latter musical forms to a stronger degree were mirroring their situation of living in a “soundscape” where impulses from transnational musical traditions of Western origin, and not least the associated technologies, are salient, and indeed incorporated, in these musical genres.

In these examples feelings of identification seem to mingle with and enter into an interplay with *sheer pleasure* and the undoubtable *social joys of enjoying music together*. And of course such aspects can, in fact, not be separated in the unity of experience.

III. Music associated with youth cultural traditions of Western origin

In this subchapter we will focus upon the musical practices related to the third source of direction – from which to build threads of continuity to the interpreted conditions of living – that lies in the other extreme of our continuum; more specifically in the shape of some recent genres within Western popular music. The question to be answered is thus:

In what ways are signs that are stemming from the recent and more exclusively Western youth cultural musical traditions used and related to in the handling of identity among the youngsters in Rudenga?

But before we continue our analysis further through this exploration, it is necessary to consider a few remarks on a phenomenon that hitherto has been handled only implicitly.

On the uneven allocation of taste and knowledge in youth cultures: the core, the followers and the mainstream

Taste and knowledge (and, for that matter, also the corresponding dimensions of power) are on several levels unevenly distributed amongst a population and its various social positions. This must be seen as an *implicated and intrinsic feature of all the relationships and semiotics we hitherto have been considering* and, of course, of human relations in general. An example of such unevenness in allocation that is of special salience to youth cultural practices may be shed some light upon through pointing to a set of social positions of what we roughly may term the "core", the "followers" and the "mainstream".¹

These categories form a *model (B)* that can be described as follows:

1. **The core** consists of relatively small milieus of innovators and guardians (artists and others) that develop expert knowledge and skills relating to the tradition in question. They have their attention especially directed towards impulses pouring out from centres of (in this case) the transnational youth cultural streams, and may be in direct contact with their representatives. Impulses from the cores become the starting points for further developments and local innovation, as bore forth by the positions of the followers and the mainstream (see below). These

¹ This simple model was in an earlier version presented in Vestel, et al. 1997, where it was developed as a theoretical tool to understand aspects of the motivation for the use of drugs as a sign-action relating to identification with various cultural traditions. The model is, of course, in no way unique, as it seems to be more or less underlying and implicit in much research on youth cultures, especially the one derivating from the Birmingham school. The conceptualisation of "core", "followers" and "mainstream" may also be seen as an adjusted youth cultural equivalent of the model of the three positional types "orthodoxy-heterodoxy-rejection" presented in the introduction (figure 1). The difference between this (the model A, figure 1) and the "core-follower-mainstream" model (B) is that the latter is designed to conceptualize the positions in youth cultural phenomena that are often much closer to the dynamics of a fashion; while model A is meant to conceptualize cultural traditions of much longer and wider historical origin in which embeddedness is transmitted over large generational spans. Such models may also be seen as reflecting attempts to revise older conceptualisations of youth cultures as clearly bordered and homologous, in line with the critique raised against, for example, the understandings of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, as summed up by Bennett 2001.

groups of innovators can be seen as a creative “underground” (that sometimes surely goes “overground” when their creations reach larger audiences), and that develop the central markers of identity that carry forth the style(s) and the corresponding messages. Hairdos, clothing, music, speech, dancing, values, attitudes and so on may here be developed as such markers that comprise what we have termed a complex of signs associated with the tradition in question. Such complex of signs forms what we may see *as a permeable membrane* that (in line with the model A of figure 1, see note) gradually thickens the closer it gets to the core; its representatives often perform as guardians of the related “cultural capital” and its correct use that “shows who they are” to the surroundings (in a Bourdieuan sense; see also Thornton 1996). Accordingly, the core tends to cultivate a certain exclusiveness.

2. **The followers** are the larger groups of youth that receive, become fascinated by and start to use the most characteristic stylistic features and markers of identity that the groups of innovators/the core have developed, often in a more static and caricatured form, especially in the periphery of the follower position. In an emic expression, they “buy the package”, but only to a lesser degree take part in the development of its central messages. Larger youth cultural traditions are thus created when cultural impulses that are developed by a core reach a breakthrough to larger milieus. It is here important to underline that the followers nevertheless are making active and creative choices while (in various degrees) choosing to identify with a certain youth cultural tradition, among several existing alternatives. Such break-throughs to larger groups will nevertheless often lead to a certain *petrification of the content* as time passes by. When this process has developed far enough and the messages become out of synchronisation with changes in the ongoing social processes in relevant contexts, the communities will disintegrate, – as the messages lose relevance or are somehow rejected – and new (or transformed) forms (traditions) take over.
3. **The mainstreamers** comprise what we may term “the average youth” and are characterized by fetching impulses a little bit from “here” and a little bit from “there” in the overall landscape of signs. They have a much more heterogenous profile than the core and the followers. To a larger degree than the others they pick single elements – for example, some artists, some items of clothing, some verbal expressions, some bodily postures – from the at each time present larger repertoire of identity-markers that *radiate* from the various groups of cores and followers in the overall landscape. The mainstreamers also make

creative choices, among others by explicitly distancing themselves from the more homologous packages of style. Accordingly, they tend to speak of themselves as “ordinary” youngsters, and find themselves at a corresponding distance to the cores of innovators or followers; these are often *rejected* (in line with this position in model of figure 1), either as too extreme or because the tradition in question dissonates with important signs and messages to which the actor positively associates. The mainstreamers comprise the majority of youngsters in the overall landscape of youth cultural traditions.

The cores thus develop a repertoire of identity markers that tend to express a more or less homologous message and ethos (as we have seen in the previous chapters dealing with Hip Hop and Black Metal). Some of these markers (signs) are registered, chosen and taken into use by the followers. Some will then be left to be picked out by the mainstreamers, but will here have reached a stage of being relatively free of the ideological orientations from which they originated. In this way, a *gradual dilution* (in addition to a certain petrification) takes place in the process where a feature of a style passes from the core, via the followers to reach the mainstream groups.

In this way the signs, knowledge and related practices are unevenly allocated between these three positions/groups of actors, as in model A (figure 1).

It is important to underline that the relations between these three groups are mostly a matter of *degree*. Often new cores will develop from the groups of followers, and, when the cores of the day no longer have their audience, they lose their attractive force and disappear from the “scene”. As we will see, there may also be several different cores within a tradition, with a correspondingly differentiated landscape of followers. Likewise, strong “leakages” will occur if the messages have large enough power to appeal or/and to resonate in one way or another with the experiences of a larger audience. The overall picture is, in other words, in a state of *continual change*. The prerequisite for such processes to take place, is exactly that the messages of the core groups (expressed through styles, signs, values, attitudes, practices) have some *appeal* to larger groups of youth and that they contain some threads of continuity to the concerns of a user, that are possible to intuit. The causes behind the developments of such an appeal, is connected to the interplay between larger social processes, such as the histories and the contents of the styles available, developments within technology and economy, etcetera, on the one hand, and the *conscious or unconscious interpretation of the situated position of individuals of a certain*

habitus, on the other. Most often, such processes will be exploited and stimulated in interaction between the above categories within the various traditions and *strong commercial interests*. Such interests (in the shape of firms and corporations) tend to choose and market the characteristic markers to a larger audience of youngsters that thus get access to the packages of style through *consumer goods*. In this way it will be possible for larger groups of young consumers to “buy identity” by choosing the right markers that communicate affinity to the various traditions.

The motives for such an affinity (resonance) are, of course, varied – and may manifest on various levels of consciousness, as we have seen in previous chapters. And in the following, it is more precisely these *motives* we will focus more closely upon.

With this model in mind, let us return to the musical practices of the Rudenga youngsters. As salient features of the following tradition were previously presented, we start more directly on our analysis of the relations of various fans to the musical forms implied.

Rap, Hip Hop, Soul and R & B: the fans

American Rap and Algerian Rai are both styles born out of a strong local culture which uses the language of the street to express opinions about street life. They value lyrical improvisation and ‘borrow’ musical ideas from many sources if and when necessary. (...) Just as folks who live comfortably within the cultural pale in America wince when they hear words like ‘bitch’ and ‘uzi’ coming from the mouth of a Rap artist, so the cultural muftis of the Mahgreb turn red when they hear tales of drunkenness, despair, sex and hedonism from the lips of a teenage cheb (youth).” (Morgan i Broughton et al Vol 1. 1999:413)

Large parts of the music that is popular among Western youngsters of the present day (and surely also of the past!) contain messages that the authorities, in the old days of the countercultural youth rebels called “the establishment” – in the shape of grown ups, parents, teachers and authorities in general – tend to hold to be vulgar, disgusting, immoral and generally “bad” (see also Berger et al 1978). And today’s Rap music, stemming from the Hip Hop tradition, is surely no exception.

...the male fans

So as Salim as well as the younger Sidi, are fans of not only Rai and Gnawa, but also enjoys Rap (as well as Soul and R&B). Their *motivation* is quite likely to be partly founded on the perception (on some level) of some

similarities – in line with Morgans observation – with the aesthetics in Rai and Rap. And, as we remember, Salim has earlier compared Gnawa to (and thus seen similarities with) the Afro-American gospel tradition, to which the present day Rap music also has noticeable historical connections.

But even if much Rap music is well known for outspoken and provocative lyrics, Salim's enjoyment of this music is not necessarily the same thing as identifying with the most outrageous of Rap's messages (there is much controversy also within the cores of the various Rap genres, both in the originating milieus in the US, as well as among some of the Norwegian artists and experts). At age twentyfour, he has "*calmed down*" and prefer "*the more laid back things*" in the tradition, such as Soul and R&B. His example warns us against making too crude generalisations. Salim thus seems to occupy the position of a *moderate follower*.

For Foday (of Gambian origin) continuities are drawn by explicitly stating that he "sees himself" in the music:

I don't like commercial music. I like to listen to music that is more real, music I can see my self in. Like TuPac or Wu Tang Clan. It is mostly blacks that are rappers. That's important to me. They rap about their childhood, about what they do in life, about money, and also sports. When TuPac raps about his life and his experiences, it is not exactly any cake walk. That's the thing. They're singing about how they live. I always listen to the words, and I am always trying to get hold of them.

As a "black" himself, this salient aspect of the Rap-tradition is felt as an important sign for identification. The concern with "blackness" – not surprisingly – is even more salient when I ask him if he has ever experienced something he would term "racism". He answers:

Of course. Through my whole life. If I, for example, have to walk through an all white neighbourhood, I never feel at home; I never feel welcome. I remember once I was bicycling together with a friend homewards from Z. It was around two o'clock at night. Then there came this big, black Mercedes, with blackened windows, you know, driving up behind us. A guy leaned out from the window, yelling: "Hey you god damned negro; we're gonna get you, we're gonna get you", and they started to drive towards us and... It was really scary. But we got away, we got down to Rudenga through some small paths we knew about. That's such things that happens. You must always be careful. You got to have it in the back of your head all the time.

Through experiences (events) like these, and experiences of softer character but along similar veins, Foday is reminded of his otherness, of his *blackness*;

this gives him a strong motive for interest and resonance for this dimension that plays such a prominent role in Rap music.

But also his own engagement in a sport that has been closely connected to the Hip Hop traditions (or reverse?) probably strengthens his inclination toward such identification. Foday started to play basketball when he was in the 6th grade. He tells that all the members of his present basket team are Hip Hop fans. Their backgrounds are varied. They are from Gambia, Nigeria, Morocco, India, Egypt, Norway, Cape Verde, Kenya, The Philippines, exemplifying the openness to a variety of cultural and geographic backgrounds that has been so salient in the Hip Hop tradition. The connection between basketball and Hip Hop is made explicit by Foday:

I think the link to Hip Hop was important for my own motivation to play basketball, and for several others too. I mean all the boys in our team listen to Hip Hop. It's in the cards. It is an American sport and it is mostly blacks that are playing basketball in the NBA. That's where the best teams are.¹

As a skilful player himself (his team has won several important matches), he may be considered a representative of a local core.

But as previously touched upon, there is also a darker side to Hip Hop, especially in varieties of Gangsta Rap, where violence and crime are fused with a terminology dealing with "respect" and "honour".

But Foday explicitly distances himself from these more problematic aspects of modern Rap:

"Respect and honour? That's why there are wars in this world. In conflicts you have to keep the mask. Respect is important for many youngsters. Also within Hip Hop. Especially within Gangsta Rap. Respect that's about owning the street you live in, the neighbourhood

¹ It is widely known that the most successful American basketball players, such as legends like Michael Jordan, "Magic" Johnson, Allen Iverson and some of the best players in the NBA (National Basketball Association) are black. According to information received from The Norwegian Basketball Association (Norges Basketballforbund) it is stated that the relatively recently founded Basket League of Norway (BLNO), works consciously to profile themselves on the following "values": "*Trendy (youthful), international (multicultural), urban (community) responsible (engagement/wholeness), exciting (different/innovative)*" (Moshuus et al. 2002:49). In other words, the "multicultural" (among other things) is consciously accentuated also on the national level by the Norwegian Basketball Association. This is well in agreement with the openness towards players of various backgrounds, as well as the success of the African-American players, that historically have characterized the cores of both the basketball and the Hip Hop tradition in the areas of origin in the USA (see also Moshuus, Rossow and Vestel 2002).

and so on. But there are also more peaceful rappers like this East coast group called Roots. They are also rapping about respect, but in another way. They sing about how the Africans came to USA, about their roots, you know. That's the reason for their name. They rap about human rights, about life and more positive things. Just like reggae. That's positive music. You know Rap is not at all just about guns and such things.

Here the popular clichés of modern Rap as a low brow cult of uzis (advanced machineguns), violence and misunderstood “respect”, primarily associated with the Gangsta Rap of the American West coast tradition, are counteracted by his choice of the different and East coast-associated group – The Roots – as the image of Rap that he identifies with and feels attraction to. In other words, for Foday his blackness, his concern for his Gambian roots, his experiences of racism and his interest for basketball, seem to be the salient similarities (that is points of resonance) in his life world that resonate with the signs and messages put forth in the Hip Hop tradition.

Several other Rudenga youngsters could point to similar chains of motivation linking their personal experiences to their attachment to Rap and Hip Hop.

Jerry (17, of Eritrean origin) sees several such connections; one is the iconicities between Rudenga and the ghetto areas of the Rappers (along the same lines as we saw in our analysis of the reception of *Beat Street* for Omar and Ola). He mentions a local Rap group that sang concretely about the doings of “his” group of youngsters (consisting of youngsters with backgrounds from – in addition to Norway “only” – no fewer areas than Eritrea, Vitetnam, Chile, Spain, France, ex-Yugoslavia. Poland, Colombia and Venezuela!), they expressed the social “noise” that characterize both the places of the rappers and Rudenga itself. In general he also seems to emphasize the rappers’ overall concern with their “living”. This “living” is in many cases highly influenced by the tendency of the Hip Hop traditions to exaggerate and the keenness to make an impression. It focuses upon themes of the everyday life, important events as well as more overall reflections of (at least what is supposed to be) the life of the artist in question, as underlined in the alternative label of Gangsta Rap, that is also sometimes called “*reality Rap*” (see George 1998:48). And like Foday, he also plays basketball, and thereby strengthens his relationship to Rap and the “blackness” of this tradition of sport, through such a participation. Like Foday, he also distances himself from the messages of violence and crime in Gangsta Rap. He may be seen as expressing himself from the position of heterodoxy according to model A. Nevertheless, as a relative expert and a basketball

player, Jerry must himself be considered a part of the local core, at least within this *subfield* of the overall Hip Hop continuum of signs. This illustrates also the complexity that a too simplified understanding of our model may deny us to see.

Then we encounter Enrique (fourteen, Chilean parents), together with two friends of solely Norwegian background, with the Hip Hop cult-film “*Wildstyle*” under his arm. Enrique has been out making graffiti tonight. He tells me enthusiastically that all the greats were there, meaning the most prominent and well-known graffiti artists of the Grorud Valley. Enrique admires these older boys, and his older cousin is one of them. Several of the early graffiti artists in Hip Hop were of Latino background, like himself, and this is also the case with some of the main characters in *Wildstyle* (as was also the case in the *Beat Street* film). This provides an important dimension of iconicity for resonance, as well as credibility-laden inspiration for his graffiti pieces! His involvement in graffiti is also mixed with the wish to become known, to acquire prestige, in addition to the sole excitement of such a forbidden and media-exposed activity, and of, course, the more artistic pleasures it offers.

He refers to the most well-known Swedish Rap artist, “Petter”, who raps about themes of urban and multicultural areas of Stockholm (see also Sernhede 2001). And when Enrique speaks of Petter rapping about his elder brother arriving home with the police, it is most probably rooted in the fact that Enrique has experienced something of the same with his own cousin, providing more points of interpretative resonance. For Enrique also, the community of the multicultural youngsters is something to be defended, in line with the recent rappers’ emphasis upon “fighting back”. Here the explicit dismissal of violence that both Foday and Jerry expressed, is more questionable, as Enrique tells about an occasion where he and some friends beat up “*a drunk Norwegian who was speaking about blackies and pakis and so on*”. In such incidents, the glorification of violence and hitting back at offenders that is prominent in Rap is interwoven with the experience of racist-related behaviours, probably providing two mutually amplifying motives to execute violence. Such action may of course provide further credibility among his fellow Hip Hop’ers, and may be felt as necessary by Enrique, a young “hangaround” to the local core, in the process of acquiring “respect” among the more experienced of the elders.

The positions of Foday, Jerry and Enrique, as relatively devoted fans in the positions between the devoted followers and the local cores, can be contrasted, for example, with the youth of Somalian background at the club. Even if almost all said that they enjoyed Hip Hop, Soul and R&B, none were

declared followers. For some of the youngsters in this group, this moderation seems somehow to be connected with the experiences (surely crucial events) that their families had in Somalia.

This becomes clear when I ask Mahmoud (18), who was twelve when he arrived Norway in 1992, about what he thinks of the connection between TuPac, that he enjoys especially, and the whole gangsta style.

I do not think much about it. I do not think that gangsters are tough. I thought more so when I was younger, but now, as I've grown older I understand more. (...) It is like action films. I liked them before, but not now. They are bad films. Somalis do not like that. You see, my father when he sees such films he thinks about the war in Somalia and all the terrible things that he experienced. And when my father said that, I stopped watching such films. I wanted to show respect for my father.

The motivation behind Mahmoud's dissonating relationship to the more violent and gangsta-related parts of Rap is clearly interwoven with both the orientation of parent-child relationships and, not least, the crucial events his own family and especially his father have experienced during the Somalian war.¹

In this way, Mahmoud's moderation and scepticism to the more extreme versions of Gangsta Rap, as well as his (as well as several other of the youth of Somalian background) dismissal of action films (that I witnessed several times), seem to have strong anchoring in the heavy wartime experiences of his family, as these *crucial events dissonated with elements of similarity in the sign continua of modern Rap*. It is hard to tell to what degree Mahmouds dismissal of these sign is also motivated by his own wartime experiences, that surely may be felt more stronger as he grows up, and to what extent it is more solely motivated by his experiences of his father's reactions. Nevertheless, if Jerrys tales about "Somalis" in town who seemed to represent quite the opposite – and for whom Gangsta Rap possibly may be fuelling asocial behaviour and direct violence – is correct, it

¹ I ask him directly if he had bad experiences when his family escaped Somalia: "We were sleeping. Then they came. It was six o'clock in the morning. That morning the war began. People were running all over in the streets. It was terrible. So many people who were just crying and running. Then we heard shots from the military groups. People didn't have the possibilities to take with them the things they owned. And they started to shoot even more. Some were killed and several were taken as prisoners. I know many people that were... (he stares to the floor). (...) We had to escape to Ethiopia. We just walked for one and a half month together with around 300 others. We slept outside or in our tents, and we did not have much food. But we succeeded in reaching Ethiopia where my family knew several others."

shows that the ways and channels of resonance and dissonance, as related to both “real” personal experience as well as the virtual realities of Rap lyrics and gangster movies, surely may be crooked and complex to trace.

...the female fans: Soul and R&B

While I sit watching the “*Wildstyle*” film on the video with Enrique and some of his friends, he remark about what he sees as an unusual participation of one of the female protagonist in the film: “*Did you see it? “Rose” is making pieces together with the boys. Here in Oslo there are no girls that make pieces. They are not allowed.*”¹

As this clearly points to differences in the gender roles within the Hip Hop traditions, we may appropriately seek to explore some aspects of the role of the girls among the Hip Hop associates in Rudenga.

As the Hip Hop tradition has risen into new heights of commercial success in the late 90s, older African-American musical traditions such as R&B and Soul have also come to be seen more closely associated with Hip Hop (though with quite different aesthetics) and have acquired new popularity in its wake. This seems to have happened at the same time as Rap, strictly spoken, has become even more dominated by an ethos of a macho-masculinity; in its more extreme versions it seems to be increasingly alien to the ethos of femininity, and in some examples containing relatively explicit misogynist messages (see George 1998:78-92).² Thus, like so many of the more spectacular and highly identifiable of the music-based youth cultural traditions, Hip Hop and Rap are first and foremost something for the boys.

¹ “*Wildstyle*” is one of the early cult films for the Hip Hop tradition.

² This tendency seems also to be reflected in the statements of one of the oldtimers among the Norwegian Hip Hop artists - who also enjoys noticeable respect among some American rappers – about why it is so few female Rap stars: “*It was a trend for female rappers in the old days. Like Queen Latifah; she’s still respectable. But now, I don’t know. Maybe girls are thinking of different things. But Rap today is more than ever a culture of boasting, of competing in the most rough and raw expressions. You are expected to boast and speak shit about others, and those kinds of things are more for the boys than for the girls, I guess (...) Girls probably do not have the need for doing such things. I don’t know. I must say that I surely would not like it if my girlfriend started doing that kind of thing. But Rap of course does not have to be that way. There are some female rappers nowadays, but they are more on a sex-thing, playing on extreme femininity, like Lil Kim, Foxy Brown, they’re some real whores, but quite clever I must admit. (...) And you’ve got Rah Digga who states that she does not want to be seen as a girl-rapper. And she’s good. So there are some exceptions. But none of them have done something new, in the sense that some of the real original artists do.*”

And this seems especially to be the case with modern Gangsta Rap (see George 1998).¹

Perhaps this *intensification of the masculine aspect of the Rap ethos*, can paradoxically be seen as the reason for an increasingly closer association to Soul and R&B in the recent decade, in the sense that Rap may be seen as needing some musical expressions to compensate for its' one sided emphasis on such a caricatured masculinity (ibid). The messages of Soul and R&B, are often considerably softer than Rap, and can probably be seen as closer to pop, more centring around love and related subjects. Not surprisingly especially as the boasting masculinity of Rap may become quite tiresome for girls, this has a stronger appeal to the girls in Rudenga. Even if TuPac must be considered the single artist of highest popularity among the Rudenga youngsters, and are also mentioned by most of the girls as a preference, artists from Soul and R&B is most often preferred by the female members of the Rudenga club.

When I ask Nicola (18, born in Italy by Eritrean parents), the focus upon "blackness", as for several of the boys presented above, nevertheless seems important:

For almost all the Eritreans I know it's only Rap and Soul. That's the music I've preferred all the time. I am black myself, and I feel that the blacks are the best in these kinds of music. Like TuPac. When I was younger I liked Michael Jackson and Janet Jackson. Now it's also old Soul like Aretha Franklin and Marvin Gaye. And of course reggae, Bob Marley and so on. I can't stand Techno, to me that's just boom, boom, that silly beat. I can't stand to listen to it.

Nicola seems to have a tough girl-aura at the club, often seen playing billiards with the boys, and with a sharp "don't you mess with me"-comment to anyone who gets too close. She has a boy friend in another part of town,

¹ George writes: "*In contrast to Soul music, which evolved out of the black church, where female sensibility is an essential part of their environment, Rap's sensibility was molded in the street where macho values have always dominated. The competitive nature of Hip Hop has, with few exceptions, excluded women. (...) There is an adolescent quality to Hip Hop culture that makes it clear that most of its expressions are aimed to please teenage boys, and this usually excludes women from the dialogue. The dynamics of adult (original emphasis) relationships are the backbone of Blues and Soul music, in which both women and men tell stories of love, hate, infidelity, and lust. Hip Hop's typical narrator is a young, angry, horny male who is often disdainful of or, at least, uninterested in commitments of any kind. (...) There was, and remains, a homoerotic quality to Hip Hop culture, one nurtured in gangs and jails, that makes women seem, aside from sex, often nonessential.*" (George 1998:184-186)

and visited the club less often as the fieldwork unfolded, as is usual when the “oldtimers” find other social groups outside the club.

Among other female coremembers at the club, there was a group of six close friends consisting of 16–17 year olds: three of solely Norwegian origin, two of Chilean origin, one from a South African family. They all enjoyed some Soul, some R&B, some Hip Hop and even some Techno, and may be considered as being in a more moderate *mainstream position*, picking a little from each of the available musical traditions. Isabel (of Chilean origin), whom we have already presented as a fan of Latin-music, Salsa, and Ricky Martin, is sharing these preferences with her friends. She mentions Soul artists like Maze and Brandy as favourites, in addition to pop-Techno like 666. She emphasises that she prefers calm music (“rolig musikk”). This preference for the “calm” seems to describe the preferences of many of these girls: in contrast to the spectacular, loud and often aggressive music of the boys – not least as represented by the super-masculinity of the Hip Hop’ers – these girls, and probably especially girls in a more mainstream position, seem to appropriate an expressive consumer-statement with a content that is more in tune with a more moderate and “feminine” horizon. In the more or less heterogenic positions of a follower, the Soul music preferred by Nicola, Isabel and her female friends may perhaps reflect stronger affection – hence continuity – to what may be considered a more “mature” ethos, in contrast to what George modestly termed the “*adolescent quality*” of the young, male Hip Hop fans.

House and Techno

As earlier mentioned, the second of the transnational music-based youth cultural traditions of Western origin, that the Rudenga youngsters adhered to, was House/Techno. We have previously summed up the ethos of at least the earlier phases of Techno as being in opposition to the more violent, macho-like attitudes associated with the extreme versions of Hip Hop. In contrast, the ethos of House & Techno is characterised by various expressions of anti-sexism, “love”, tolerance, antiracism and a relatively friendly attitude towards the world, all accompanied by enthusiasm for new technology (musical and visual), the intense involvement in the so called “rave” parties, where hedonist pleasure through drugs, music and ecstatic dancing were salient (see Reynolds 1998).

Simon Reynolds, music critic, rave-historian and a fan, situates pleasure and the experience of immersion at the centre of this socio-musical tradition; he emphasizes this as a contrast to other “cultures” that to a stronger degree are associated with “meaning” in a more conventional sense:

”(...) rave constructs an experience. Bypassing interpretation, the listener is hurled into a vortex of heightened sensation, abstract emotions, and artificial energies. For some, this makes the idea of a ”rave culture” a contradiction in terms. One might define ”culture” as something that tells you where you came from and where you’re going, something that nourishes the spirit and generally makes life habitable. Rave provokes this question: is it possible to base a culture around sensations rather than truths, fascination rather than meaning?” (Reynolds 1998:10)

In other words, the non verbal elements of sensation and emotions are held as the very centre of the rave-tradition.¹

...the fans

Anoar, who when he was sixteen, was a dedicated Hip Hop dancer, tells about how these new aesthetics were received within the milieu of Hip Hop fans located not far from Rudenga. One of his older friends had just discovered this strange new House music that was appearing. And even though Anoar had stuck to Hip Hop since then, he remembers well the first raves he attended. Echoing Omar’s expressions of encountering ”a new world”, Anoar uses exactly the same words to convey the sense of wonder that accompanied his first participation at one of the early rave parties in Oslo at the start of the 90s:

”It was a whole new world. Completely different from the old time disco parties. At the first one I attended, there were car wrecks hanging from the ceiling. Coloured lights everywhere. Hundreds of people from all kind of milieus were dancing, all wondering what this new thing was like. At first the folks I knew were kind of shocked. But several got hooked. It was completely new.”

According to Anoar, the city strollers of Pakistani background soon took up the new music.

¹ For Reynolds the intensity of such experiences ”of the moment” seemed in fact to be the motivating source to write his immensely detailed and informed book about House & Techno: *”Pulsing inside the text, its Raison d’etre, is the incandescent memory of amnesiac moments, dance floor frenzies that propelled me outside time and history. Bliss on”* (ibid :11)

”They were a little late in dealing with the latest within music. For me it has always been Hip Hop; that’s more for the blacks. I rarely saw any hooded sweaters among the Pakistanis, you know. But they liked Techno. I think it must have some connection with the music from their home country. To me it seems like Techno is more trendy, more about fashion, the latest, and the dancing is not as demanding as in Hip Hop.

Among the city strollers that Anoar took part in, the groups of primarily Pakistani background tended to be associated with Techno. In the previous chapter Amjat’s statements that, earlier, youths of Pakistani background were badly clothed earlier on, seem to confirm Anoar’s impression of even the city strollers of such background, as “*a little late*” in dealing with the latest fashions, in music or otherwise. If this is right, it may indicate a situation where the other groups of city strollers – like the one that Anoar was with (with members of a wide variety of backgrounds, including several of African origins) – had already acquired Hip Hop as “their” music. When the groups of Pakistani background then, for some reason, developed the need to participate more strongly in the competition for prestige and hipness, the new music, in the shape of House and Techno, then on its rise, would have been very suitable for such a project (see also chapter 9 “The power of dissonance. Pt.I...”).

Such processes may perhaps be considered crucial elements behind the fact that the largest group of Techno fans among the Rudenga club members were the boys of Pakistani background. But this preference had not always been characteristic. Some of the recent members of Pakistani background remember very well from their period as members of the junior club, that Hip Hop had the overall prestige in the earlier days in Rudenga – as this was the time when Omar and Ola were local “kings”. In this period there were no members of Pakistani background at the youth club, in contrast to a large group on the junior level. When these juniors got older, they at first developed a preference for Rap. The members of non-Pakistani background speak of this as a period when “*the Pakistanis in Rudenga*” kept more to themselves. Around 1996 they formed something both their fellow youth and they themselves saw as a gang; in line with the Gangsta Rap ethos they named it “The Mafia Gang” (the “rise and fall” of this gang will be described in a later chapter). But while this happened, there seemed to have occurred a transformation in musical preferences, from Rap to Techno/House. I thus suggest that this has two motivational sources:

1. The first one was the preference for Techno that was developed among the groups of city strollers of Pakistani background; for them this could be considered as part of their acquiring of a package of signs that was

appropriate to mark their *difference* from other groups of city strollers (for example groups of various African backgrounds who saw the “blackness” of Hip Hop as an important point of resonance). It is very likely that the youth of Pakistani background in Rudenga knew/ intuited this (on various semiotic levels) through direct contact, rumours, media presentations and the like. The city strollers of Pakistani background thus seem to have functioned, at least to some extent, as *role models* to the youngsters of similar background in Rudenga.

2. In a situation such as in Rudenga, where a larger number of youngsters of the same (here: Pakistani) background grow up together, it is likely that they will develop some need to consolidate themselves as a group in one way or another, not least to acquire prestige in the eyes of their surroundings. But Hip Hop was already established as a prestigious complex of signs *already in use* by youngsters from several different backgrounds, with African origins and “blackness” as primary associations; this was likely felt as already occupied by others – a clear parallel to the assumed dynamics of the acquisition of House/Techno by the city strollers of similar background. This is further supported by the fact that Hip Hop had a considerable history in Rudenga, as, for example, manifested in the story of Omar and Ola. Thus the new sign continuum on its rise, such as Techno, was very appropriately *at hand* (in line with Bourdieu’s “practical sense”) to be acquired as a marker of identity for the group of Pakistani background, also on their rise, in age and thus in impact on the overall youth scene. Their name (The Mafia Gang) can be considered both as “reminiscent” of their Hip Hop period, also as an expression of the appeal of the Hip Hop ethos to youngsters who were in a situation as members of immigrant families living in a low class area, sharing that part of their habitus with several others. This agrees with the similar doubleness (with semiotic elements from both Hip Hop and Techno) suggested in the chapter on clothing.¹

In addition to these micro-political processes, it is also important to underline the more purely *hedonist qualities* that Techno-related practices

¹ This *doubleness* is also similarly manifested in the example of Ali, who, with his well developed Gangsta look in his clothing, combines this with being a declared House fan, as previously described.

and events had to offer.¹ But as we remember, Anoar suggested there being some resemblances between Techno and the Pakistani pop music that were played at the club. Such interpretations are also confirmed by some of the informants of Pakistani background². In so far as resemblances to Techno are recognized on some semiotic level, this may thus be one more example of interpretants where iconicity must be considered *the medium for resonance*. One more *thread of continuity* from already charged signs (Pakistani pop music/Bhangra) that already have a place in the life world of the fans on the one hand, are built towards the new musical genre preferred (Techno/House), on the other. Thus the sign to which they had already associated themselves was *pulled*, so to speak, through the *pores of iconicity* with the new sign (Techno) that through such a process, was directed towards the lifeworlds of its young users.

¹ This becomes clear when I discuss the Techno-event Hyperstate with Amjat (Pakistani origin), who enthusiastically declares: “*It was the best Hyperstate ever. I’ve been to two previous ones. This time I danced for several hours. But then DJ Tiesto entered the stage in his spaceship (this refers to an incident at the Hyperstate party where a famous DJ entered the stage in a vehicle designed as a spaceship sliding on a string well above the heads of the audience). Then it really took off. I was completely geared up. I had already danced for a long time, but after that top I danced six more hours. It was incredible.*” Here we catch a glimpse of equivalents to Reynolds experience of “*dance floor frenzies*” and “*incandescent memory of amnesiac moments*” where one feels like dancing far beyond “*time and history*”, reminding us once again of the complexities of motivation, and that the very experiential qualities (in a concrete and narrow way, that is a pure “fun”) of a youth cultural tradition may play a significant role in its appeal.

² I asked Talvin to comment such a relationship: “*Yes, I think Techno would be the music that resembles Pakistani pop music the most. (...) I like Ayla, ATB, 666; that’s cool dance music. (...) But on a Daler Mehndi CD I’ve got there is a remix of the song “Na na re na re”, and that is bad. It is some stupid rapping at the end.*”

While listening to especially that song (and the whole CD he mentions) the similarities to Techno - or perhaps more precisely to House (because of the vocals) - are rather obvious: big pulsing bass drums pumping in 4/4 (time signature), in the intro framed by showers of heavy electronics and sound effects (*Best of Daler Mehndi. Kudian shaher diyen*.Remixes MWCD-312). In comes the voice of Daler Mehndi singing in his hot Bhangra style, interspersed with samples of some Latin American music (!), then back to Bhangra, and so on. Towards the end of the tune, one hears a sudden slowing down in the music as if someone pulled the AC plug. From this musical “hole” appears a new groove in the music, where a heavy looped rapper enters, who in unmistakably Afro-American pronunciation, is declaring “*come on everybody let’s all get down, get down, get down*”, several times, accompanied by shouts and hollers by his “posse”. Then, at the end, Daler Mehndi’s Bhangra vocal reenters and is faded.

But note; none of the young Techno-fans of Pakistani background could be seen as being in anything close to a core-position. Most of them emphasized that their preference for Techno was not motivated by a special interest in the music per se, and the genres they preferred were just "pop-Techno", "dance" and ones with "good melodies" (exemplified by artists like ATB, Ayla and 666), the most commercial forms of this musical tradition that were popular at the time. In other words, they represented a more peripheral group of followers, considerably closer to the mainstream position than to some core, and for whom just having fun, dancing, partying and being "cool" seem to be the main focus.

But there are certainly also other Techno-fans at the club. For one of them, his affection for Techno seems to be even more explicitly connected with the iconicities to music that he feels associated to and that shares his Latin American background. According to Maurizio (15, Chilean parents) he listens a lot to Latin American music:

I have been listening to it all since I was a child because my father has got a lot of such records. I also speak Spanish fluently. And my mother has always been saying: "We live in Norway, but when you are at home with me, we are always in Chile." So I like all music from Latin America. Like Salsa, Merengue, Cumbia, everything. Old and new. It is not important if it is from Chile. It's that Latin-feel that's most important.

To Maurizio it seems sufficient that the music has the required connotations to Latin America, and the related aesthetical expressions. Here the rhythm is pointed to as an element of overall importance, as becomes clear when I ask him why he likes that music so much:

There is so much rhythm in it. That's the reason I also like Techno. It has so much latin music in it. It is fast and with an emphasis on rhythm. Especially the hardtrance thing: DJ Sakin, Hardtrance Mania cd's, DJ Energy, some Goa trance....

In so far as the rhythms in various genres of Latin music are a salient medium for making the music groove to the point of boiling, some of the so called "hardtrance" music Maurizio mentions seems to be designed to create exactly what the name of the genre suggests, a musical trance-like experience that has the possibilities to carry the listener high on the crest of musical groove and rhythmic intensity. This is, of course, well in agreement with the overall ethos of House and Techno, as described by Reynolds. And in so far as such an interpretation is correct, the iconicity is not only felt as residing in the musical ingredients alone but also in the *experiential*

qualities (interpretants) that such iconicity of aesthetics conveyed. Here the similarity of rhythm, as well as the experiential qualities of the genres, became the threads of continuity that connect the lifeworlds and identifications of Maurizio – as a youth of Latin-American background, to the continuum of signs represented by Techno.

Maurizio contrasts the qualities he finds in Latin music and Techno to the aesthetics of Rap:

But in Rap, it is all the same thing all the time. Some fool saying “I’m gonna beat you up.”, “I’m so tough!” And some bad things about someone’s mother, and this and that. Just that stupid mafia style. One of my friends digs Rap. But even if we are close friends he does not have to like the same music as me. He is one of my best friends, but we like different music.

In other words, this may be seen as one more example of the *tolerance and openness for difference* that also these stories of musical preference seem to tell about the youth in Rudenga. There are well known stories about strong antagonisms between groups of youngsters who have relied heavily upon musical preferences as important markers of identity (such as the antagonism between the mods and the rockers of the sixties); also Knuts experience of the straight-jacket imperatives of Black Metal fits well into this history. And though there was a slight tendency to some explicit tension between Hip Hop’ers of Somalian background, on the one hand, and the House fans of Pakistani background, on the other, the ethos of the overall picture, nevertheless seems to point in the direction exemplified by the relation between Technofan Maurizio and his Hip Hop friend, as one more manifestation of such a *community of difference*.

Music: summing up

I have suggested that the signs embedded in the various genres of music brought into use by the members of the Rudenga youth club, may be understood as semiotic pointers that – dependent on the various positions of their interpreters – elicit the phenomenon of resonance/dissonance in so far as they *connect with the central concerns and experiences stemming from the life worlds of the actors*. These points of connection seem to arise in so far they are intuited or more explicitly recognized by the actors, mainly through the *mechanisms of iconicity and indexicality*, in line with Turino’s suggestions. And in so far some of the youngsters feel connected to the various continua of signs just because such are the connections of their significant peers (or significant others), it clearly also exemplifies salient

mechanisms of the *symbol* – the habits of collectivity in the shape of conventions. In the words of Peirce: “because dispositions of factitious habits of their interpreters insure their being so understood” (Peirce 1998:307).

The older musical traditions, originating in/pointing to the areas of origin, where Western influences were more or less lacking, and where the reference to the areas of origin tend to be a central part of their message, were represented by the Qawwali music of Pakistan, the music of Kurdish (political and artistic superstar) Sivan Perwer, and the Berber music and older Gnawa traditions of Morocco. Much of this music is associated with the parents and seems to be part of the musical landscape that has surrounded their sons and daughters, especially in the more intimate sphere of the family, since their birth. These genres are also likely to be salient parts of the experiences stemming from visits to the areas of origin. They thus represent *continuities to the areas of origin* in a somehow intimate and relatively taken-for-granted sense in so far as they are likely to have been a part of the youngster’s lives for a long time. Since these genres tend to be mostly associated with the parents, this may be the reason why they are often regarded as “a little old-fashioned”, by the youngsters, who by far prefer the next category considered to be “more modern” and thus more attractive to this age group.

The *concerns* appealed to by the genres (above), seem to be the need for recognition, respect and prestige for the areas of origin (as in the case of Amjat’s interpretants elicited by Qawwal nr. 1 Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan). In some cases they also seem to meet a “need” of a less intentional/voluntary kind for vehicles carrying important childhood *memories* (Amjat’s first meeting with Qawwali). For Nasir the music/sign of Sivan Perwer seems to have an almost extraordinary capacity to sum up and *condensate* what he feels to be the political struggle of the Kurdish people, their tales of misery and a series of historic incidents of utmost importance to his family and its associated groups. The enjoyment of these genres in general seems especially fit to reflect and express the need, to *revere their parents and what they stand for*, on the one hand, and, on the other, by underlining their old-fashioness (and thus a relative dissonance), to mark the youngsters as *different* from their parents. This last point is, of course, also a parallel to the preferences of Western youth who also tend to dismiss the music of their parents as several generations have done since the rebels of the fifties, to mark the position and “world view” of “the new generation” as correspondingly different.

The more recent popular musical traditions also associated to the areas of origin, containing both strong pointers of continuity to those areas, and strong pointers to contemporary Western popular genres as well, were represented by the re-mixes of older genres. The new Bhangra music re-dressed by youngsters of Pakistani and Indian background in Britain; the band Junoon and the hipper New Asian Kool (that was not played at the club), all relating to the youth of Pakistani background; the Arabesk of Turkish/Kurd Ibrahim Tatlis; the Turkish pop of Tarkan relating to the members of Turkish and Kurdish background; the Gnawa-flavoured pop Chaabi and Rai music relating to members of Moroccan background, as well as various Latin music and the pure pop of Ricky Martin relating to youngsters of Chilean background, are all examples of this category.

It is interesting to notice that several examples of the relative *blurring of national borders* are reflected in these preferences. The youth of Pakistani background could enjoy *both Indian and Pakistani* pop music (as well as the large amount of Indian films); the boys of Moroccan and Algerian background could enjoy *both Algerian Rai and Moroccan Chaabi*; members of Chilean background enjoyed *all Latin music*. All these examples are emphasising their relative *lack of identification with strictly national units as communicated through their musical preferences*.¹ As we remember, such relative lack of interest in national borders as reflected in the musical preferences among the Rudenga youngsters, has its strong parallel in the role reported for both the new Bhangra music, and the hipper “Asian” scene in Britain, where special musical forms were ascribed an *overarching “Asian” identity*. This tends to downplay differences represented by the separate countries, and emphasize instead the continuity between otherwise different geographical, cultural and political areas. This is also a salient feature of the recent genres of Western popular music – like Hip Hop and Techno – in which national anchorage, in several respects, is of less importance.

The *concerns* that these preferences meet thus seem to be the need for an overarching community that are not primarily restricted to countries, but that nevertheless contain a sufficient number of identity markers to satisfy the need for exposing and seeking recognition for some “essence”, or something held to be the “most important” features, of ones background. This need to transcend the more limited aspects of a strictly national identity is also underlined in the salient *doubleness of these signs*. They both draw continuities to the older and perhaps “purer” traditions and markers of the

¹ Even if the youth of Pakistani background often explicitly took Pakistan’s side while commenting on the conflict between India and Pakistan in Kashmir, this polarisation was not present in their musical preferences.

areas of origin, *in addition* to modern popular musical genres of Western origin. In this way the messages these practices convey seem to be something like: *“by enjoying and using these genres we show ourselves as modern and oriented towards the genres and aesthetics of the dominating genres in the larger transnational (and Western dominated) mediascape; at the same time we bring with us important elements (language, instruments, aesthetics, general “feel”) stemming from the areas from where our families have their origin”*.

It is important to notice that the youngsters of Pakistani background tend to avoid the hipper and more urban-intellectual flavoured genres of the new Asian Kool artists, as well as the more diffuse middle-class tinged world music associations to for example some of the “fusion” records by Nusrath, as *neither of these semiotic pointers resonate with the working class habitus and style of the Rudenga youth*.¹

The relative dissonance towards the Pakistani guitar-based super group Junoon, on the other hand, seems to be more closely intertwined with the need for marking a difference vis a vis guitar and rock oriented aesthetics, that played such an important role in the previous “generations” of the Rudenga youth. The popularity of Junoon in Pakistan, on the contrary, may be as positive and signs of “the modern”, in a context eventually devoid of a semiotics where guitar/rock aesthetics are too closely being associated with “white” traditions.

The music associated with youth cultural traditions of Western origin, was represented with two main clearcut genres; Hip Hop/Rap that tended to have the central part of its fans among the youngsters of various African backgrounds, and House/Techno, which had its largest group of fans among the youth of Pakistani background. But as we have seen, youth having backgrounds from Spain, Chile, and Norway solely, were represented among the fans of both genres. In addition, more mainstream flavoured pop was cherished by a wide variety of the members. Combinations of various preferences were also common, especially among youngsters, regardless of background, who felt closer to a mainstream position.

We have suggested that for Salim, of Moroccan background, the noticing of some resemblances (continuities) between the outspokenness and the relative hedonism of both Rai music and Hip Hop, is likely to have occurred. In addition, the explicit noticing of the parallel between the preferences of the Moroccan youngsters for Gnawa impulses, as stemming

¹ The position of the latter - that seems to be somehow “closer to Punjab”, so to speak – resonates more easily with the neo-Bhangra of Daler Mehndi, who was decidedly one of the more popular artists among the youngsters of Pakistani background.

from remnants of the black slaves of the Arabs, and the preference of Western youngsters for musical impulses stemming from the African-American descendants of the black slaves in America, may be important “mechanisms” for Salim’s preference for Hip Hop. But his first meeting with Hip Hop was as a breakdancer in the “first wave” that occurred in Rudenga when Ola and Omar were stars, and where the *concerns* seemed to be the fighting against on the stigma of Rudenga, on the local level.

For Foday, the iconicity between his own “blackness”, his passion for basketball and his concern for what are perceived to be his own “roots”, agreed with the similar focuses within Hip Hop. Such manifestations of Secondness resulting from his concrete experiences (critical events) of racism (our dialogue elicited the memory of his experience where his visible difference as black was eliciting racist-tinged behaviour in his social surroundings, here being an index pointing to such situations), further amplified his concern with blackness, and the iconicity of this theme as dealt with in Hip Hop. His involvement with the basketball tradition may also be seen as a concrete action-sign strengthening this feature of iconicity with such connections within the Hip Hop tradition. The dissonance he expresses towards the more extreme content (violence, crime) associated with Gangsta Rap reflects a moral based concern to “keep on the straight line” and the dismissal of what he considers bad behaviour.

Jerry’s concern with Hip Hop seems to be based on seeing some similarity between Rudenga and the “ghettos” dealt with in Rap. His own experiences of living in a stigmatized area interact with the images conveyed by the sign, connecting these signs as *mutually enforcing interpretants*. In these ways Jerry’s own experiences are stimulated by the images of Rap. Like Foday, he “*sees himself*” in those images (however exaggerated or distorted), and uses them to reflect upon his own life. He also uses his own experiences to reflect upon and “understand” the images of Rap, just like our analysis of Omar’s and Ola’s Hip Hop years suggested.

Enrique, with his Chilean background, sees several similarities between himself and the rappers: he is himself a Latino, and as in the Swedish Rap artist Petter’s song, he is a “nasty” kid who has also an elder relative who has been into trouble with the police, and like the older graffiti artists of the local core, he is “fond of drawing”.

For Mahmoud, his dissonating relationship with the violence of Gangsta Rap and the similar aesthetics of certain action films seems to be motivated partly by his concern for respecting his father (and thus being a good son), whose experiences in the Somalian war make such a content

especially disturbing, and assumedly, it is also partly motivated by Mahmoud's own experiences of similar kinds.

For Nicola, like Foday, her own "blackness" and African origin, seem to motivate her enjoyment of the Hip Hop related genres that convey a more feminine ethos. We have suggested that the boasting, competitive, aggressive and partly misogynist ethos of modern Rap reflects an overall masculine adolescent quality that dissonates with central aspects of femininity. Thus for the girls in Rudenga, the more "grown up" qualities of Soul and R&B (as well as their primary concern with "love" in a wider sense) seem to be more suitable; this is thus reflected in their preferences, again emphasising the role of some *recognized (even if only /intuitive, or subconsciously noticed) aspects of iconicity between the signs in use and aspects of the life world of their users.*

Such an iconicity, interestingly, seems *not* to play the most salient role in the concerns of the youngsters of Pakistani background in their relationship to House & Techno. Although it seems that these musical genres resemble the Pakistani pop music the most, the eventual recognition of such iconicities does not occur often in the informant's utterances about these musical forms. It is primarily the "pop"-qualities, the pleasures of partying and dancing, "the moment" and this sense of "coolness" that are emphasized. Explicit "ideological" aspects, as compared to Rap's emphasis on blackness, the neighbourhoods, social comments, "fighting back" and so on, are not involved. Thus, for these informants, their preference and use of House and Techno seem more to be a question of acquiring (again) *what was at hand* – in this case a sign of prestige, popularity, pleasure and coolness that was *not already in use by other groups* to whom these youth needed to mark some difference. Possible *iconicities between aspects of their life situation and the more ideational content of the sign are not traceable.* In addition, one should not underestimate the quality of pleasure and pure hedonism, that perhaps House & Techno are better fit to provide to their fans – also as compared to Rap – that seem to play a central part in the appeal of these genres.

For Maurizio, of Chilean background, the iconicities between the aesthetics of rhythm in Latin music and the aesthetics of rhythm in Techno, exemplify nevertheless once more the importance of iconicity as a *channel for charging the sign with continuity from the life world of its user.* When we compare this fact to the example of Enrique (above), who saw his Latin background reflected in the Latino background of central rappers, it becomes clear that *very similar cognitive mechanisms may be activated in the motivational processes behind the use of very different complexes of*

signs (These mechanisms will be discussed further in chapter 11 “Identification in the multicultural...”). Also, Maurizio and Enrique know each other very well, and Enrique has several times spoke of Maurizio as “an elder brother to me”. In spite of this declared affective closeness, they nevertheless differ severely in their musical preferences, even in a milieu where identification and group association are relatively strongly reflected in musical preferences, as we just have seen.

Once more, the dimension of *community* in this large ethnoscape of differences seems to be an overarching experience.

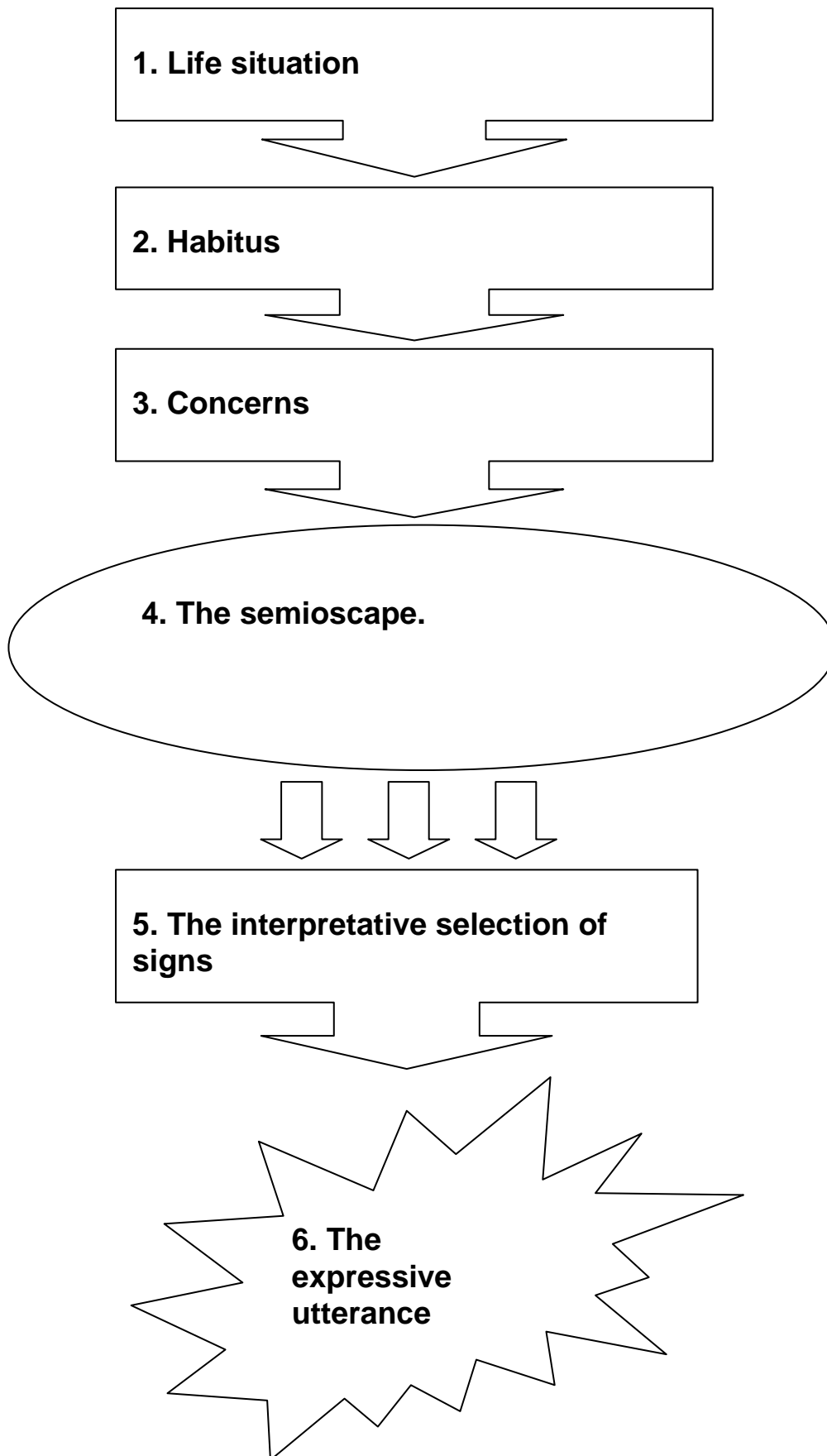
Throughout all these examples, we have seen the mechanisms of both resonance and dissonance actualised in patterns of preferences and relationships towards all these continua of signs (also covering sub-segments within or in the peripheries of the larger traditions).

The dissonance clearly shows that *the various continua of signs may surely dissonate both with each other as well as with the life situation of their potential fans*. These preferences seem to be oriented by the specificities of the positions of the various actors – in the shape of varieties of *age, gender, class, geographical and cultural background, the situations of their present habituses, including, as well, personal experience of more unique character* – in interaction with their creative attempts to *satisfy basic human needs*. The preferences can be understood as *expressive utterances that both reflect, comment upon and merge with concrete practices that, in turn, may re-influence (change, work back upon) the life-situations from which they have grown forth*.

IV. Six suggested steps of semiotic creativity: concerns, resonance and the cognitive mechanics of sign-types

The dynamics of these processes of semiosis, leading to the expressive utterances (expressive Thirdness) of the informants in various positions – here in the shape of their involvement in various music based practices – can be illustrated in figure 6 (below). This model has important similarities with Bourdieu’s model entitled “Conditions of existence, habitus and life style”, but it may be seen as an attempt to improve Bourdieu’s suggestions while focusing more specifically upon subjective creativity (agency) and its experiential dimensions in the process of semiosis (see Bourdieu 1992:171):

Figure 6. The expressive utterance: six steps of subjective semiotic creativity



The content and dynamics of this model can be explained in the following:

1. *Life situation*. In the actor's life situation, experience is oriented by both a collective and a personal/individual dimension. *Collective experiences*: implies, for example, coming from immigrant families; sharing the fact of having different areas of origin; critical events on a collective level (such as being stigmatized/or respected as a group); living in and thus being associated with a relatively low class, stigmatized but specific place such as Rudenga; class belonging; religious belonging; gender; age. *Individual experiences*: implies: critical events; personal history. The sedimentation of semiotic conclusions of past experiences, relating to the various elements in their life situation, and the accompanying *tensions* connected to them (often related to power, varieties in frames of meaning, and so on, on the basis of class, origin, physical features, gender, age, place, religion, etcetera) creates a:
2. *Habitus*. Collective and individual dispositions and habits on the basis of step1. (Bourdieu 1976). This corresponds to what we have referred to as "*the matrix self*" (the logical interpretants of prior semiotic processes; Colapietro 1989). This orients certain:
3. *Concerns*. These are subjectively directed points of focus – changing/flickering/activated in the shifting phases of the present – that are felt to be of special importance to the subjects in their various positions, corresponding to what we have referred to as "*the focal self*" (Colapietro 1988). The concerns are the subjectively charged sensitivities invested with emotions as well as more strictly cognitive relations on the basis of step1. and 2. With these one meets the world and what we may term its "*semioscape*" – its landscape/constellations of signs – in the present. The matrix self and the focal self thus unite the collective and the individual aspects that, as a complex totality, comprise the subjectivity of the actor. On this basis, an actor confronts the semioscape:
4. *The semioscape*. This is the landscape of signs that is encountered by the subject. It comprises a wide variety of signs that are more or less accessible and that, according to the positions of the subject (steps 1, 2, 3), may be activated into use.
5. *The interpretative (active) selection of signs*. The subjects (creatively) chose, combine or refuse signs on the basis of *resonance* or *dissonance* with the concerns and sedimented experiences (stemming from steps 1 and 2) of the subjects. The cognitive mechanisms through which such threads of continuity between the sign and the subject's concerns are

revealed to the subject corresponds to the sign types of Peirce. They are experienced (in a continuum from subconscious to conscious) through the recognition/experience of: I.) Iconicity, II.) Indexicality and III.) the Symbolic. These “mechanisms” comprise the pores/channels/bridges through which an attribute of the sign – by the act of interpretation – is brought into contact with the experiences and the life world of the interpreter. The experience of such connections *may* result in:

6. *The expressive utterance.* This is the expressive (emotionally charged) and concluding use (through creative combination or re-combination) of the signs selected (step 5.); these are fused with the concerns of the subject on the basis of resonance or dissonance. (In this chapter the expressive display of musical tastes exemplifies these processes.) Expressive utterances have a character of temporary conclusion or rest, in so far as they somehow appropriately express or suggest some *temporary relief or solution to the tensions of the interpreted life situation of the utterer.* These connections to the life situation of the utterer may be conscious or unconscious, along a continuum of degrees.

This processual schema may be further illustrated by using Amjats relationship to various musical forms as an example.

V. Illustrating the model: Amjat’s case

I have suggested that Amjats close relationship to Qawwali – as a sign drawn into use from the the semioscape that surrounds him – is motivated along two salient dimensions: one on a *collective level* and the other on a *personal level*.

On the collective level he is a young Muslim boy, living in the stigmatized area of Rudenga, a son in a working class, immigrant family of Pakistani origin, with physical features that to his social environment are usually interpreted as a sign of “foreignness”. These features in his *life situation* imply several tensions in relation to his wider social surroundings. Historically, the area has a bad reputation, that in recent years – as the number of immigrant families has increased – is labeled “a negro area”, with all the racist and xenophobic attitudes such a label implies. His physical features indicate that he is one of “the negroes” (here used as a generalized label for “foreigners”). In a more nuanced sense, he is interpreted as a

Pakistani. As a Muslim, he is likely to be associated with a series of general features focused upon in the media. These include extremely conservative gender relations (sometimes leading to the so called but undeniably real “honour killings” of young women), religious fundamentalism, terrorism (even before the 11th of September 2001), and gang violence. Specifically a group of young males of Pakistani origin, members of various well-known gangs in Oslo and heavily involved in violence and crime, are often given intense attention in certain periods. In addition, his class position, at least as judged from a Norwegian public sphere, marked by the decisively more limited access to the employment marked for immigrants – implies considerably fewer material resources, as compared to for example the growing all-Norwegian middle-class.

Amjat’s situation must be assumed to create some *dispositions* (*habitus*) embedded in these social tensions, where negative labeling and low prestige are salient aspects of the attitudes that tend to be elicited in his wider surroundings. The overall needs reflected in such dispositions are highly likely to be the need for recognition, for dignity and respect, both for himself as an individual, and for the collectivity with which he associates. In other words: such dispositions are likely to be shaped by his possibilities to fulfil basic, elementary and universal human needs, which are limited by his social position and the corresponding life situation.

These needs manifest in various ways and will be channelized, modified, hindered or enhanced depending on the concrete features of the contexts. For Amjat, collectivities are concretely represented by his family of Pakistani origin and his fellow youngsters in Rudenga, etcetera. These dispositions also include the need for reasonable access to the means to live a life according to these needs. As an eighteen year old, he has already had many experiences whose interpretations have become sedimented in his *matrix self*, existing as a pool of semiotic interpretants that may be activated in his encounters and exposures with the world in the present. For example, he has experienced a time when “Pakistani” youth were badly dressed and were looked down upon and excluded from other milieus of youngsters; he has also experienced the development of new practices of dressing in which expensive and cooler clothes were incorporated in this group’s repertoire of conventions. On the *personal level* he has, for example, experienced his fathers guiding him to his first meeting with the Qawwali tradition where the singer sang about the how the colour black is especially prestigious; this provided him with a means to reverse/avoid the shame he felt while being teased for his dark complexion. Such *crucial events* – in addition to an almost infinite amount of others both of more repetitive as well as singular

character – create the layers of interpenetrating habits (in the Peircean sense), that is, dispositions (corresponding to the matrix self), that may be activated in the present.

When his *focal self* (the part of the self activated in the present) is exposed to the Qawwali sign (among a vast number of other signs), a range of interpretants are elicited. Such a sign is the artist Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan, who by his reputation and exposure to a large Western public represents the country of Pakistan, and in Amjat's eyes the area of Punjab. This sign gives prestige to Amjat's own background. In addition, his own personal story of the meeting with the Qawwal, who sang about the colour black, is elicited (as it happened in the event of our conversation). Both these sets of interpretants, one on the *collective level*, the other on the *personal*, are elicited as a reflection of his *concerns* for acquiring respect and recognition for himself, his family and their "Pakistaniness". But these signs are, of course, only available to someone from Amjat's special *position*. To the youngsters who do not know and have not experienced Qawwali or Nusrath, the signs are less important. But in so far as the signs are sufficiently "explained" by their eventual friends of Pakistani background, they may be incorporated into other kinds of use, for example as "gifts", in the Maussian sense, to be accepted as statements of friendship and respect for their fellows (such as Amjat).

When Amjat selects these signs, he does it through the *cognitive mechanisms* suggested by the Peircean sign-types. His experience of Qawwali in the present is connected to his experience of Qawwali in the past, through the *association created by its indexicality*. In that concrete experience in the past, his connection to that special song was mediated by the iconicity between himself (as a youth of an especially black complexion) and the semiotics of the colour black presented by the Qawwal. Seen from the position of the present, this implies that his exposure to the sign *elicits the memory of his prior experience* (the event where the Qawwal sings about the colour black) and that this musical genre was an actual *part of* that particular experience. If this is so, it may be categorized as an index. The statement of Nusrath's prestige, on the other hand, is elicited by comparison (that is association by *iconicity*) to the famous Pavarotti. These examples illustrate thus that the mechanisms, through which relevant aspects of the sedimented experiences of the past are drawn to the signs one is exposed to in the present, are exactly the mechanisms of the Peircean sign types, in the shape of iconicity and indexicality.

But even if Amjat has such a strong, personal relationship to Qawwali, he is not inclined to expose this part of his musical preferences to his fellow

youngsters at the club (even though they accepted such a musical genre during the gymnastic lesson previously mentioned), because he holds Qawwali as an of old-fashioned musical genre that is more for “the old folks” (or interested anthropologists in their 40s!). In other words his enjoyment of the Qawwali tradition seems to be a part of his matrix self that he only selectively allows to enter into the exposure of his focal self, as it unfolds in the context of the club. Amjat is thus concerned to present a different image of himself to his fellow youngsters in the club, than what he may expose for example to his parents at home.

In such a context as the club, he is, in this version of his *focal self*, on the contrary, more inclined to select the pop music of Pakistani origin from the available signs in the semioscape. This musical sign partly refers and points to the ways and aesthetics of the areas of origin, again through resemblance or through indexicality as experienced by Amjat. Its enjoyment thus satisfies his concern for gaining respect and recognition for central aspects of his background. In addition it also points both to Western influences, and to the more urban and modern ways of being, in general. Here the use of instruments and overall aesthetics (heavy electric bass and drums, samples, effects), iconicities pointing to recent genres of Western popular music, creates the experience of such connections. Such signs (within signs) provide a more “updated” flavour to Pakistani pop; for Amjat this seems more in accordance with the image of himself that he seems concerned to convey to his fellow youth, and that he himself seem to feel is more in tune with the position he is identifying with, as communicated on the level of his focal self in this context. In such a way his preference for Pakistani pop represents his expressive utterance in the context of the youth club.

A central aspect of this position also seems to be captured by his exposed preference – that is an utterance – for House & Techno, the genres of more overall Western connotations, as presented in the same context. Also here, we notice at least a weak statement of iconicity with Pakistani pop, as in the suggestions of Talvin. Such a suggestion is nevertheless not part of the interpretants expressed by Amjat, underlining the obvious point that differences in interpretations may strongly reflect both individual *differences in dispositions and sensitivities, as well as possible differences in the access to such processes due to eventual variations in the development of the dialogues between researcher and informants.*

I have suggested that the preference for Techno by the youth of Pakistani background in Rudenga, may be rooted in the acquisition of such music by the city strollers of similar backgrounds. Their concerns seemed to

have been simply a wish to be associated with the most modern and prestigious musical forms, that at that time were on their rise, and was sufficiently fit to mark their difference to other groups who already were associated to Hip Hop. It is possible that the Rudenga youngsters, by doing the same thing, just continued (through mimesis/iconicity) to do what the “cool ones” in the city were doing. However, their motivation for undertaking a shift from Hip Hop to Techno may be anchored to more local processes, although with features similar to those going on in town. More specifically, Hip Hop in Rudenga was already established as a popular genre among most youth; therefore the youngsters of Pakistani background needed to acquire a “suitable” prestigious genre to mark themselves as different as a collectivity. Here the interpretants elicited by Techno did *not* seem to suggest either some obvious iconicity to elements pointing to the areas of origin, or a strong indexicality comparable to Qawwali or the Pakistani pop music that contained qualities (language, musical ornaments, overall aesthetics) that experientially point in that direction. On the contrary, as an index, Techno represents one of the most popular (that is overall prestigious) musical genres of purely Western origin and thus points simply to the coolness of the Techno fan. And when the youth of Pakistani origin in the Rudenga club, including Amjat, take these genres into use, they are *imitating the “first “users*, and, through iconicity in this sense, they acquire the needed “coolness”. Thus both iconicity and indexicality are involved as mechanisms through which this group of the Rudenga youngsters associate themselves to this sign.

But these modes are only activated from the practices *surrounding* the sign (that is the users). In contrast, we saw that, for example, Maurizio had an affinity to Techno that seemed to be motivated by his recognition of a connective iconicity between the rhythmic aesthetics of Latin music to which he, being of Chilean background, associated himself, and the rhythmic aesthetics of Techno. These iconicities were elicited on the basis of *recognition of similar qualities in the interior content* of these two sign complexes. For the youngsters of Pakistani background, and presumably for Amjat as well, no such iconicities or indexicalities (through which to build similar connections) have been notified in the House/Techno sign. Therefore, to the extent that no such interior iconicities nor indexicalities can be detected in the interpretants of these young actors, these signs may be seen, primarily as *symbols* (in the Peircean sense). They are not drawn into *use* by this group primarily on such grounds, but are connected with the genres primarily through *habit/convention* (in the moment they are actually taken into use by this group, however, they will function as indexes pointing to

this group of users). In so far as the youngsters are, as suggested, imitating the “first users”, their acquisition of the sign is based on mimesis, that is, on iconicity. In this way the use of House/Techno-sign by the youngsters of Pakistani background in Rudenga may be seen as exemplifying a way of building threads of continuity between themselves and the sign, through a complex series of cognitive mechanisms.

For Amjat, as we have seen, his musical preferences have not been a question of *either* (in this case) Qawwali, *or* Pakistani pop music *or* House & Techno, even if these musical *points of gravitation* seem to reflect quite different social and semiotic positions. On the contrary Amjat has a strong relationship to all of them. I have suggested that these preferences, of which Amjat’s are only one example, should be seen as *concluding expressive statements that reflects provisional expressive solutions to tensions existing in his life situation*. When Amjat’s musical practices seem to be composed of the multitude of differences that these various genres communicate, such a compositeness in his expressive statements – even if these genres at times are activated in relatively separated contexts – seem to reflect nothing more than the very *compositeness of his situation as a young son from an immigrant family of Pakistani origin, settled in a low-class, stigmatized area in Norway*.

The last time I saw Amjat in 1999, we travelled together to Oslo. Reaching Oslo central station, Amjat asked me if I could do him a favour and follow him to one of the entrance doors. He was planning to go to a House club, but he did not want other “Pakistanis”, as he put it, to notice him going there because the rumours about him going to “such places” would spread so fast. He wanted to hide his destination with the help of the anthropologist. He had to keep his going to a House club a secret from his parents, it turned out.

As we remember, in 1993, the youngsters of foreign background had to keep their enjoyment of music from their backgrounds a secret for their fellow members at the club. In 1999 the secret life of “the foreigners” once again manifested in another version, here in Amjat’s hiding of his enjoyment of “Western” popular music – and his attraction to the lifestyles that go along with it – from his parents...

VI. Why music? – Sketches of the medium-specific

Why have all these “thinking” – expressions and reflections – of the Rudenga youngsters been unfolding in this medium of music?

Some readers may comment that these analyses have neither analysed nor conveyed much experience of the music itself but have mostly been concerned with what our young informants have *said* about the music they prefer to listen to.

It is therefore time to sketch some characteristics that may be seen as more or less specific for this medium, as it is used by the youngsters in Rudenga. I therefore suggest that these musical genres can be seen as especially fit to convey expressions of identity and pleasure on behalf of these youths, for the following reasons.¹

1. Music seems to have a certain capacity to create *space* around itself, with its borders as far as the sound is sufficiently discernable from other sounds. With modern amplification technology, such spatial ambience may be extremely dominating. For instance, the sound level in the disco in the Rudenga club is usually so loud that it is almost impossible to exchange verbal messages within the locality. The music thus occupies the room completely, close to the level of demanding “obedience”. Often the doors and the windows to the disco are opened, and the sound reaches even farther, well outside the locale of the club. It becomes a very strong medium signalling effectively, even to the small Rudenga centre and to some of the surrounding apartment blocks, clues to what is happening at the club and who/which group of fans is in charge of the music. Thus, these identity markers may be sent widely out to the immediate surroundings of the actors. Modern, especially amplified music, in this sense has a certain ability to demand attention. Even if you do not like it, when music is played at such volumes it demands that you somehow relate to it. Its capability to dominate a relatively large space around its source *supplies its users with a special power* over its immediate territory (see also point 6 below). This, of course, may be of special importance for youngsters in need of exploring relations to themselves and others and, not least, *to make an impression*.
2. The strong *rhythmic qualities* that characterize the musical forms here preferred, seem to have a special ability (power) to draw people into

¹ Although some of these features may be mixed with verbal statements in the shape of singing, rapping, and so on, the suggested points are nevertheless proposed to be relatively specific to the medium of music.

their “feel”; in many ways they create expectations about their own repetition. Such rhythmic emphasis (as well as the sheer volume of the music) may be exactly the features that cause other people (for example adults) distance themselves from it. Such aesthetical extremity seems to have the quality to push its interpretants into attitudes of *either or*. Thus it is well suited to make strong lines of demarcation between the outsider and the insider, a quality not unimportant in the struggle of youngsters to search for and profile/create a clear identity. Strong rhythmic quality provides music with an characteristic ability to *arouse bodily movements* and, thus, to create powerful invitations to an actor to *step into its field of relevance/resonance*. One can attempt to show that one does not react; one can react negatively, or one can communicate confirmation with a whole range of nonverbal bodily signs. These may be movements ranging from plain refusal to show any bodily sign of influence, to heavy, expressive, bodily gestures, or just a tiny nod of the head or a small swing of the hips in subtle confirmation. The ability to elicit strong bodily arousal is also well fit to invite and move actors of the opposite sex into “games” (through a musical “illutio”) of *erotic* manifestations, thus speaking to an aspect of being that has crucial actuality for adolescents.

3. The *melodic qualities* deal with aesthetics of scales, harmonies (or lack thereof), ornamentation, as well as a wide variety of sound qualities. In interplay with the other characteristics here presented, they *elicit a seemingly endless range of emotions and expressive statements in their interpreters*. One can speak of the “feel” of the music – for example, the differences in the “feel” of Gangsta Rap, the “feel” of Techno, or the “feel” of a Bach sonata, or a Qawwali tune by Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan. These exemplify the subtleties and wide range of emotional qualities this medium is capable providing and *condensing in just a small amount of time* (see point 6 below). In pop music the role of the “hook line” (a salient and often simple musical line provides the song with an easily recognizable identity) is to condense such qualities (see also below).
4. The hardcore fans will often use larger gestures to show their approval, as well as other signs, such as dressing, language, hairstyle, and so on. Especially while dealing with the musical traditions anchored in some spectacular youth cultures, music is part of a larger package of style (a continuum of signs), as we have shown, involving much more than the strictly musical. And when the strictly musical is exposed, it often evokes the most salient signs of the rest of that package, and vice versa. Thus music seems to have a special ability to *point to signs, and not*

least identity markers, far beyond itself. This may also include personal memories, more diffuse sensual impressions of places, situations and people.

5. Music, in the 21st century, is concentrated and transportable in an easily mobile format (a CD, a mini disc or a cassette); it is also relatively easily available and can be copied in various formats. These qualities makes it especially usable for use by young people, providing the possibilities to change and exchange musical signs very fast. This also gives it a relatively *democratic* dimension, in so far as “everybody” has a fair chance to listen and to be heard.
6. The experience of various musical forms will also have the ability to release social, psychological and bodily tensions. In so far as one is able to give in to a musical experience, one tends to “loosen up”; this is often accompanied by a heightened level of experiential intensity. In such ways music seems especially able to “seduce” its interpreters into states of mind where *relative transcendence and trance-like euphoric experiences* are not unlikely to occur. An example is Amjat’s marathon dancing at the Hyperstate party (according with the ethos of the House & Techno musical tradition). When such intense experiences are shared with others, they are likely to *amplify social relationships* in so far as the concrete experiential resonance to a musical form is agreed upon and mutually communicated among the participants. In some of the genres referred to above, especially the Qawwali of Pakistan and the Gnawa music of Morocco – both linked closely to varieties of Sufi practices – but also in the more profane aesthetics of House & Techno, the generation of transcendence and “communitas” are especially important (Turner 1974).
7. Perhaps most salient (medium specific) feature of music is its ability to *condense the complex moods and messages that it is eliciting* and to give these messages and moods a *concentrated extension for a short period of time*, that is, as long as the “tune” (or genre) is exposed. This implies a capacity to build an *instant, limited but concentrated semiotic place-in time* (an aural processual architecture, so to speak). It is possible to enter (or refuse to enter) this place, within which it is possible to “be”, explore or re-experience artists, memories, histories, images, groups, ethoses, moods, styles. One may enter the place to find a certain emotional quality – or to have and express new experience along these lines. When Amjat hears a line of Nusrath, it evokes his memory of the story of the black colour or elicits his pride of the prestige of that famous Pakistani singer, that in subtle ways also

transmits to himself; when Sidi hears a Rai tune he remembers his summers in Morocco and the sweetness of his girlfriend's kisses; when Foday hears the Rap music of the Roots, he may reflect upon the racism he himself has experienced and his own "roots" in Gambia (or just give in to the pleasures of the slow and heavy rhythms); when Ali nods his head to the pop-Techno of DJ Sakin, he communicates being a modern and up-dated youth from a Pakistani family; and when Jerry exposes his social environment to his preferred Rap he invites you into the very *coolness* of the way TuPac spits out his words, loudly! To be *invited into such a collectively and/or personally charged musical "place"* (in contrast to a "space" that is neutral), is an honour, and to accept it and do what it suggests is, of course, a way of confirming and approving it – not unlike the musical dialogue of Ola and Omar, as previously described.

And that is exactly what most of these Rudenga youngsters do.

Thus music has the ability, both to elicit a whole range of signs, and provide a possibility to *step into their experiential qualities and to immerse oneself in what we may term its "semiotic radiation"*. In such a way, the music may provide a gateway to an experience of low-leveled semiosis, in line with Turino's suggestions, as this seems to characterize the concrete experience of music there and then.

But in so far as the exposure of one's enjoyment of certain musical genres becomes a repeated and collective behaviour, it becomes precisely a *habit* and a *convention* (providing a strong tinge of Peircean Thirdness). Then it must be understood as a provisional conclusion that sums up and expresses concerns, resonance and reflexivity derived from the actors' sharing of a particular being-in-the world. In these respects, the enjoyment of music, as I have elsewhere suggested, may be seen as especially fit to fulfill a function as something like *a projection board for life* (Vestel 1999).

8 Love and gender: ideals, experience, stereotypes and a multitude of positions

Modernity has indeed been liberating. It has liberated human beings from the narrow controls of the family, clan, tribe or small community. It has opened up for the individual previously unheard-of options and avenues of mobility. It has provided enormous power, both in control of nature and in the management of human affairs. (Berger, Berger and Kellner 1973:175)

Consider the following scene:

Ravi (eighteen, Pakistani parents) and his girlfriend Rosa (eighteen, Chilean parents) are standing closely together near the club's billiard board, hugging and kissing in between their drowsy, low voiced small talk in a usual lover's style. His friend Ahmed arrives hastily from the entrance in the other end of the locale, whispering sharply to Ravi that his father is on his way. Ravi is usually a characteristically cool fellow, not at all easily upset. But this time the reaction is like lightning striking. He immediately pulls himself free from Rosa and runs very fast out the main door. Shortly after, his father arrives and ask for his son. The youngsters state that he is not here. His father exchanges a few words with one of the club leaders and walks out.

Some days later I am told that the reasons behind Ravi's behaviour were rooted in the necessity to avoid his father getting to know about his love-relationship to Rosa; no such pre-marital relationships were accepted by his parents, nor was Rosa considered an appropriate spouse for their son.

In this chapter we will attempt to understand and analyse various manifestations of the semiotics of gender relations among the Rudenga youngsters (including the scene described above). To undertake such a task it is necessary to frame these manifestations within a broader historical context, as suggested below.

In the cultural processes leading to the contemporary landscape of ethoses and attitudes of gender relations in Western Europe and USA (perhaps we may extend Appadurai's use of the landscape metaphor and suggest a notion of "genderscapes"), the youth rebellion of the 60s and 70s played a central role. Berger, Berger and Kellner have characterised this as

primarily a rebellion against what the authors term “functional rationality”.¹ The impact of functional rationality is seen by the authors as the outcome of large historical processes whereby older, tradition-anchored ways of life give way for attitudes, metaphors and ethoses stemming from the revolutions in modern science and technology that have especially accelerated in their development and impact in the 20th century (ibid). Thus the attitudes of the typical young rebel (usually of middle-class heritage) of the 60s and 70s are characterised, by the authors in 1973, in the following:

“Unnatural’ control is contrasted with ‘natural’ surrender. Instead of dominating reality one should ‘dig’ it. Instead of manipulating others, one should ‘encounter’ them. Feeling (‘sensitivity’, ‘sensitivity’) is given priority over rational thought. Indeed the youth culture has a generalised hostility to all planning, calculation and systematic projects. (...) The imprecision of language, the gangling looseness of gait, the affinity for unrestrained hair and body odour and ‘unbuttoned’ clothes of every sort, all carry meaning as physical expressions of counterdefinition. (...) ‘Making love’ is posited against ‘making war’ (...). Sexual orgasm, the ecstasies of surrender to rock music and the drug experience have in common the quality of the de-individuation and liberation from rational controls. (...) youth culture is also highly ‘feminised’ – again a characteristic expressed very clearly in its clothing and postures. The youth culture is also antagonistic to the ‘bigger and better’, ‘onward and upward’ thrust of modern consciousness.” (ibid:181, 187)

In so far as these characteristics are right, it becomes clear that the rebellion amongst the Western youth of this period was directed against a large range of phenomena, that to both the older and the younger generation were manifested in wide complexes of signs. This covered everything from general attitudes to war, drug use, relations towards nature, food practices, language use and sexuality to minute details in, for example, clothing and hair style. The author’s mention of “*feminisation*” indicates an aspect that must be considered to be of primary importance, but it is not sufficiently developed in their argument. More specifically, a large part of this phase of that youth rebellion can be considered to be a rebellion against the attitudes and ethos represented first and foremost by the existing role of *the male* in the older generations of that time.

Seen from the present – some thirty years later – the fate of the various issues introduced by these youth based countercultures is complex and

¹ According to the authors this means “*the imposition of rational controls over the material universe, over social relations and finally over the self. The youth culture is in rebellion against all three forms.*” (Ibid:181)

varied. The interest in occultism and existential questions and the critique of the narrowly rationalistic world view seem still alive in the shape of the so called “New Age” movement. The issue of ecology seems to some degree to be recognised, at least in theory, by various governmental authorities, although the original critique of consumption seems largely to be abandoned, on the personal level by both young and old. The importance of expensive clothing among the Rudenga youngsters also underlines this. The pacifist attitudes can not be regarded as especially successful as pacifism is hardly a salient topic among today’s youngsters, or among politicians. The originally anti-authoritarian and liberal attitudes seem somehow to have been transformed in the direction of increasing atomisation and individualism but, significantly enough, without the original weight put on social consciousness and solidarity. And in so far as this individualisation became fused with self-realisation (especially important as a slogan used to as motivation for women who struggled to achieve something “more” than domestic work; see below), the focus upon authenticity and intimacy – as several recent theorists have noticed – has developed into important characteristics of the ethos of the present, (especially the white middle-class of Western societies. Perhaps one of the most successful – in the sense of having an impact or at least creating an *ideal* – messages that arose in the wake of the youth rebellion of the 60s, was probably the one related to the phenomenon of “women’s liberation”. In Faludi’s words, this was the so-called “second wave” of feminism, in contrast to the first wave represented by, for example, the suffragette movement in the nineteenth century (Faludi 2000:600).

In a highly expressive (perhaps even panegyric) celebration of the values of “Western liberal democracy”, Guardian journalist Polly Toynbee in 1999 points to women’s emancipation as one of the most important ideals that “the West” through the processes of globalisation simply *ought* to spread further “across the world”:

“Breaking down the laws and customs that make a woman the virginal possession of a husband is the first great step in women’s rights. (...) It is a revolution still only half-made in the West (...) Our economies have yet to adapt to ensure women have the same ability as men to be breadwinners for their children. (...) But there’s no going back and the world’s women are all being swept up to its path. Cultural globalisation means global feminism, freeing women everywhere. What has been a great unequivocal good for women of the West can’t be denied indefinitely to others in the name of preserving indigenous (male) tradition.” (Toynbee, in Hutton & Giddens 1999:199)

In other words, from being a highly contested part of the rebellion among Western (mainly middle class) youngsters of the 60s and 70s, women's emancipation is by Toynbee declared to be something close to *an emblem* for the "goods" of the liberal Western democracies that they possess and ought to offer – not to say impose on – the non-Western world.

But, of course, no social theorist or observer on the level of elementary common sense, would declare that such an ideal, even in the most politically advanced of the Western democracies, has been realized.

Nevertheless, it has surely lead to decades of *turbulence* within the gender relations in the heart of the public spheres where these ideas, in their original youth cultural anchorage, had their heydays: the USA and Western Europe.¹

The turbulence and transformational possibilities that these ideas created manifested in several ways. They led to a range of social experiments that were especially undertaken by various groups of youth, in the shape of an *exploration* of sexuality, of alternative ways of cohabitation (so called "communes"), of clothing practices, of alternative aesthetics, etcetera; in other words, several of the characteristics that Berger, Berger and Kellner suggested (above) were further developed and transformed in the years to come, even after the crest of that rebellion had calmed down.

As women challenged several of the domains hitherto dominated by men, the old masculinity encountered problems and possibilities for transformations that, for some, were experienced as a crisis (see, for

¹ The ideas of women's emancipation and equality between the sexes were also significant parts of the ideologies of Marxian origin that were attempted realised in the so-called socialist experiments that were undertaken ,for example, in the former Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, in the Cuba of Fidel Castro, the Chile of Salvador Allende, and so on. This fact matches the strong appeal and centrality of these experiments as well as their ideological bases to the youth-based counter-cultures in the West where their influence was most strongly felt. The eventual "liberation", regarding both gender and class, that these experiments actually achieved, can, of course, be highly disputed.

example, Badinter 1994; Faludi 2000). These processes were also reflected in the public spheres of Western youth.¹

In the last half of the 80s and throughout the 90s, House & Techno seem to be the musical genres where this tendency towards gender egalitarianism and gender role experiments to some extent have been continued further, though in more moderate forms. Here a hippie-like message of “love”, an interest in Eastern and new-age flavoured philosophy, and an original colourful and “feminine” aesthetic were salient, at least in its earlier versions (see Tegner, in Fornas et al. 1994; Reynolds 1998). And as we remember from the chapter on dress, these musical genres and the behaviour of the participants in the house parties that accompany them were associated to a carnival-like femininity by our two young party arrangers-informants, of all-Norwegian and Chilean background respectively.

The ethos of female liberation and the potentially transformative exploration of their “opposite” aspects for both genders – to the extent that they reach the street levels of recent youth cultures – find a largely *contrasting* expression in the other grand tradition of today’s youth-based cultural expressions, in the shape of Rap. On the contrary, these musical forms are at times, highly tinged with the super masculine, super macho, and even misogynist attitudes in the more extreme versions of Gangsta rap. And in so far as these genres have their origin in low-class, impoverished areas of the American inner cities, an additional *class dimension* to such attitudes is suggested (we will return to this at the end of this chapter). More “white”

¹ They manifested not least when the androgynous tinge of the 60s was taken further by the male mega-stars of popular music like, for example, David Bowie and the band Roxy Music. In the last part of the 70s and throughout the 80s they shocked the remnants of the 60s counterculture, who celebrated “the natural”, by wearing heavy make-up, glamourising the kitchy, synthetic (fabrics) and vulgar versions of feminine-flavoured clothing, as well as the luxury loving dandy. In the latter part of the 80s the male artist “Prince” reached high popularity. In lace, mascara, garterbelts he promoted a rather sex-fixated public image and even an artistic mythology around his personally invented “concept” of “lovesexy”. On the other side of the gender coin, the American female, million-selling artist Madonna explored the new aspects of a more aggressive femininity in several public performances (through music videos) where she conveys the image of the sexually aggressive women who dominate her well-trained, half-naked and athletic male slaves, while simulating sexual orgasm. It is important to notice that while Madonna is a salient example pointing to a new femininity, in the overall picture of the “greatest” artists in popular music such examples must be considered as relatively rare. These examples nevertheless seem to point in a direction where the old gender roles are at least challenged, reversed and played with, by relatively extreme, but nevertheless popular mainstream artists. Thus the contents of the signs of gender, have been contested - *for some*, that is.

versions of similar masculine chauvinist attitudes are to be found within the Heavy Metal traditions. Here the extreme versions of the small Black Metal milieus, that have enlivened the image of the brutal and violent male Vikings, seem to be the most salient example (although the middle class may be more dominant in these small, definitely more exclusive core milieus, see chapter 3). Nevertheless, in the more “gothic” versions, these traditions have also a noticeable androgynous element. In addition, the recent association of the more “mature” themes of Soul and R&B to the Hip Hop traditions, also points in the direction where the messages of gender within these genres are somehow more complex than a simplified picture of either-or.

Nevertheless, it seems the tensions within the gendered struggle for more equal rights to liberty, power and respect, that involve deep transformations of both the feminine and the masculine positions, are also heavily manifested within these examples of popular culture, to which most youngsters with an access to modern media are exposed.

The gender “issue” is, in other words, far from solved in the very areas from which the strong impulses of feminism and gender equality have sprung: on the contrary it is still very *turbulent and filled with salient tensions*, as not least Faludi’s recent work points out towards (2000).

When the immigrant families from a wide variety of areas settle in the West, it is these tensions they encounter. And it is probably no exaggeration to state that it is their offspring who encounter them most directly, due to the vulnerable situation and not-yet-settled processes of socialisation that most youth in these areas are going through.

The stereotypes¹ that are generated concern all parts involved in such a situation including the all-Norwegian parts of the population. These may be seen at best as expressions of an attempt to create some familiarity and to understand this situation – to calm the shock of difference that is created on several levels of experience. At worst, the stereotypes and the assumed characteristics and attitudes of various ethnic groups, cannot be seen as anything other than expressions of racism, xenophobia or serious prejudice. Whatever their direction, this is perhaps especially relevant in the life worlds of the parents, both of the majority as well as of the different minorities that are present, at least in an area like Rudenga.

To get a better understanding of the gender relations actualised and lived in this situation, as well as how the actualised stereotypes interact with these tensions of the “genderscape”, it is necessary to get a more precise picture of what these tensions imply. To do this, an investigation of some

¹ This notion will be more thoroughly discussed in the last parts of the chapter.

suggested ideals concerning social relationships in some of the “modern” societies of Western Europe and the USA is required.

“The pure relationship” – an ideal on its rise?

The most idealised version of the relations between the genders – is perhaps most strongly manifested in Anthony Giddens’ conceptualisation of what he terms “*the pure relationship*”. His discussion and development of this concept seem to summarise and condense several central threads of large social processes that, according to Giddens, have far reaching consequences beyond the more narrow focus on a couple in love. A brief sketch of this theory may be fruitful as a starting point for our further discussions.

In one of his definitions this concept:

“... refers to a situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it.” (Giddens 1992:58)

According to Giddens such relationships strongly challenge the old gender relations, and are also related both to the ideal of “romantic love”, and to what he terms “plastic sexuality” (Giddens 1992:2). He sees the phenomenon of romantic love, which he claims appeared in the late 18th century, as directing attention closer to the emotional (and thus feminine) aspects of gender relationships. This amplified the tendency to see the loved individual as “special” – and also accompanied changes in parent child relationships, where the child now was seen as more vulnerable, and produced a more explicitly competing ethos to the reigning versions of masculinity. Central aspects of this ideal were also put forth in the emerging *romantic novels*, that appeared at that time and that, in line with the reigning gender roles, had special appeal to women. Here the new role of the female found its popular expression, in so far as the tendency to emphasise a relational space of “mutual affection” is considered an important step towards the ideal of equality implied in Giddens “pure relationship”. But the demand for mutual affection that came to characterise the ideal of romantic love could in many cases, stand in opposition to the institution of marriage – in so far as this was entered for strategic reasons, was continued for the sake of the children, or for the presentation of respectability and so on, when, at the same time, love and passion – often quite spurious phenomena – may have the tendency to whither away.

In societies where the grip of older, more collectively oriented traditions, is strongly challenged by the heated ethos of individualism –

for example as in the demand for self-realisation so often referred to in the youth rebels heydays of the 60s and 70s, and where the obsession with romantic love probably have strongly amplified these processes – the institution of marriage has gradually been reduced in its power. And when the search for “the pure”, “the authentic” and, in perhaps more moderate versions, “the special” in “me” or/and “my partner” reach sufficient heights, the result seems to manifest in what social theorists have labeled “narcissism”, or a “tyranny of intimacy” (see, for example, Ziehe 1989; Sennett 1974)¹. It also points, at least in some versions, towards an ethos of *ego-centeredness* where the amount of experienced care for another or a collectivity tends to be limited by the judgement of “what’s in it for me”. This is clearly reflected in Giddens’ definition of the pure relationship entered and upheld: “...*only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it.*” (Giddens 1992:58)

Even though Giddens strongly underlines that such a relationship, in its ideal form, is highly characterised by negotiation and “democracy” among partners in equal rights, – and as such implies a radical challenge of inequality in the gender relationships – this quality of ego-centeredness can perhaps be seen as the other side of that coin, in so far as the ideal of “the pure relationship” really reflects the processes of social change that Giddens suggests (ibid:184-203). It may also be strongly questioned how “pure” such relationships in fact turns out to be, as the very complexity of human relations surely seems to contradict such an idea²

According to Giddens, when sexuality, liberated from reproduction and its socialisation, becomes available as a pleasure to both sexes, it takes part in a more deep-reaching process of democratisation of the personal, where old ways of inequality are supposed to diminish. It is also worth noticing that such a democratisation of the personal also embraces the relationship

¹ Parts of this development, as Giddens notices, seem intimately connected to the social dynamics developing from the Protestant ethic, as analysed by Weber (Giddens 1992:40). Such connections are not only traced, but also analysed in alternative directions by Sennett (1974), Ziehe (1989) and not least by Campbell (1989).

² For Giddens, a development in such a direction is also closely connected to “plastic sexuality” understood as “*decentered sexuality, freed from the needs of reproduction.*” (Giddens 1992:2) He continues: “*Sexual emancipation, I think, can be the medium of a wide ranging emotional reorganisation of social life. (...) It is more effectively understood in a procedural way, as the possibility of the radical democratisation of the personal. Who says emancipation, in my view, says sexual democracy. It is not only sexuality at stake here. The democratisation of personal life, as a potential, extends in a fundamental way to friendship relations and, crucially, to the relations of parents, children and other kin.*” (ibid:182)

between parent and child. For Giddens, an emphasis on intimacy here *replaces the former emphasis on parental authority* and gives way to an ethos that idealises autonomy and negotiation between parent and child; these are the same values that are supposed to characterise the “pure relationship”, including its sexual aspects (ibid:98).

Through the “opening of oneself to the other” that was developed in the ideal of romantic love, a new ideal that Giddens terms “confluent love” appears:

“ Confluent love for the first time introduces the ars erotica into the core of the conjugal relationship and makes the achievement of reciprocal sexual pleasure a key element in whether the relationship is sustained or dissolved. (...) Confluent love develops as an ideal in a society where almost everyone has a chance to become sexually accomplished.” (ibid: 61-63, original underlining)

Here we may add that the “emancipation” of sexuality also gives room for a more explicit exploitation of sexuality for commercial purposes. In most Scandinavian countries – where Denmark was especially early in legalising explicit pornography in the 60s – hardcore porn is now shown on easily available television channels. Today, it is also widely available on the internet and, to some degree, in ordinary shops. Even if it is questioned whether the (especially female) actors are victims of exploitation or not, it can hardly be denied that the ideals of this industry may be regarded as relatively far from the democratic ideals of “the pure relationship”. In addition, pornography, in general, still seems to bear the message of being primarily oriented towards the male.

In spite of the generally utopian flavour of this overall theory, Giddens also refers to the parallel rise of male violence – possibly indicating a crisis, as Faludi suggests – that admittedly are in opposition to the more ideal qualities of relationships he focuses upon. But this is seen as a reaction to the turbulence and transformations that are going on a larger scale:

“...many men are unable to construct a narrative of self that allows them to come to terms with an increasingly democratised and reordered sphere of personal life.” (Giddens 1992:117)

In so far as the transformations Giddens suggests actually are taking place, it must again be stated that they are occurring in a context of *tension and contestation*. They show at least some resemblances along similar lines as our sketch to the contrast between the radical versions of the gender ethos of

House & Techno on the one hand and the extreme versions of Rap/Hip Hop, on the other.

Giddens’ theory can at best be regarded as an assumption of the emergence of a new complex of ideals for social relationships – as manifested in the ideal of the pure relationship – and the implicit contrast to its more archaic, and declining opposite. These central tensions in the landscape of personal relations in “modern” societies may be schematically presented as follows (based on Giddens 1992, but adapted, modified and schematized by the present author).

Figure 7. Central tensions in the landscape of personal relations in “modern” societies

I. Characteristics of an ideal on its rise	II. Characteristics of an ideal on the decline
1. Pure relationships - motivated by the intrinsic qualities of the relationships only	1. Externally oriented motivation for relationships is held in higher esteem (the family, respectability etcetera)
2. Gender equality - corresponding male adjustment	2. Gender inequality
3. Female emancipation	3. Male dominance - female submission/passivity
4. Sexuality: plastic, experimenting - mutually rewarding	4. Sexuality: phallogentric, male conquering within and outside marriage - female passivity, relative chastity/"innocence" until marriage
5. Love: confluent love, symmetric skills – female gaining sexual expertise (active role) – male gaining emotional expertise	5. Love: romantic love, asymmetric skills – male lack of emotional expertise - female emotional expertise (“trying to melt his heart”)
6. Time dimension: as long as it satisfies “me”	6. Time dimension: “for ever”
7. Not necessarily monogamous	7. Monogamous
8. Anti-authoritarian	8. Authoritarian
9. Democratic	9. Hierarchic (patriarchy)
10. Parent-child: negotiation, autonomy (child centered - youth centered)	10. Parent-child: obedient children (respect for the old)
11. Marriage of declining importance	11. Marriage of high importance
12. Individualisation (ego-centeredness), decline of collective loyalty	12. Collective values and loyalty in higher esteem (the family, respectability)

The content of columns I and II are to be regarded as indications of *orienting messages* that may or may not be reflected in each configuration of social positions in space and time – that is, the actual social practices – of which

the more specific manifestations and details must be empirically discerned. This will be attempted below.

It is important to remark that the content and details of these sets of oppositions are a matter for further discussions, and that they may be questioned, combined and nuanced from several angles. I also suggest that these opposites should be seen as *poles in a larger continuum*. There will be a wide range of *degrees* from one extreme to the other, rather than a qualitative and definite jump. It also implies an opening for practices that take the actual messages *even further to the extremes* in each direction (left or right).

The content of the columns and the continuum of degrees they cover may be seen as exemplifying the tension between *two competing opposite cores of orthodoxies within a larger continuum of signs* (in the sense suggested in our previously presented model) that, very roughly, cover the attitudes of gender for the relevant positions (actors) in core areas of Western Europe and USA.

In so far as further competing sign continua are discernible, for example in the practices of the Rudenga youngsters, this must be shown empirically.

The last chapter in Giddens' book is titled "Intimacy as democracy" and may be seen as reflecting a somehow optimistic understanding of the social processes he attempts to understand. It may be objected that the values and attitudes listed in column I, – in their most positive and "democratic" aspects as suggested by Giddens – could be seen more as expressions of "wishful thinking" than as manifestations of some social reality. A less optimistic and more critical analysis, touching upon similar tendencies, is put forth and condensed in for example Sennett's notion of "The Tyrannies of Intimacy" in his highly acclaimed book *The Fall of Public Man* (1974), indicating that several of these proposals and their implications are highly contestable.¹ Giddens' theory could probably also be criticized for bearing several signs of urban middle-class values; the lack of focus upon the class dimension in much of Giddens' writing, agrees well with the tendency among some theorists of post-, late- or high modernity, to dismiss class dimensions as more or less irrelevant. Nevertheless, as several of the ideas and attitudes conveyed by the youth rebels, the students, feminists, peace activists, environment movements, etcetera of the 60s and 70s clearly had utopian traits, these may surely be manifestations of the present outcome of the somehow crooked paths through which they have been transformed and

¹ These aspects of Sennett's work are surprisingly (or perhaps not, as they seem to run against Giddens' arguments) not referred to by Giddens (1992).

modified by larger social processes. Most readers will, despite this, most likely, recognise most of the messages of column II as still prevailing in many aspects of "modern life" in a variety of countries, and one should not look many decades back in time to find modes of living where the messages in column II were hardly questioned at all.¹

It would, therefore, probably be most just to Giddens to regard the messages and contents of column I as *a complex of ideals possibly on its rise*, and, correspondingly, the content of column II as a complex of ideals possibly on its decline.

The "grounding" of Giddens theory can be seen as unclear in especially three respects:

1. A geographic specification of the areas where it is supposed to be valid is not given, except in vague notions such as "modern societies" and "Western societies". His data material (such as reports of various kinds, research, therapeutic works and self-help manuals, that is what he calls "texts of our time") is mostly from USA and Britain. "Western" thus seem to imply USA and Western Europe.
2. There is hardly any reference to a class-dimension in the topics he discusses.
3. There is hardly any reference to "ethnicity" or related dimensions concerning the growing immigrant population in the areas in question.

Rudenga is characterised by being a (relatively) stigmatised, low class, suburb on the outskirts of a capital of a Scandinavian country, where the number of immigrant families from a variety of non-Western countries is considerable. Its situation, – seen in relation to the tensions implied in the relational landscape suggested above – requires the exploration of (especially) the following questions:

To what extent and in what ways is the handling of these tensions and messages influenced by differences related to the cultural traditions of the families (immigrant as well as solely Norwegian) of these youngsters, as well as to age, class, gender and the specificities of their habitus?

Or put in more general terms:

In what ways are these tensions and messages eventually activated as relevant in the semiotics of gender discernible among the Rudenga youngsters?

¹ A relatively direct criticism of Giddens theory is put forth, not least on the basis of a large range of empirical evidence, by Jamieson (1999).

As will be seen from the following analysis of the empirical examples, it will be asserted that the manifested gender-related practices among the Rudenga youngsters cannot be adequately understood without addressing the phenomenon of *stereotyping*, which to start with, can be defined as *a popular generalised statement (that we perhaps may term “an unqualified guess”, see below) that tends to simplify and reduce variation to such an extent that its proposal and content are likely to be untrue.*

A more direct discussion of this phenomenon will be undertaken in the last parts of this chapter.

The club: the boys and the girls

The gender dimension is manifested in a variety of ways among the boys and girls in Rudenga. The most salient feature, as previously mentioned, is the distinctively lower number of girls, in general, and especially noticeable in the absence of girls of Muslim background. In the following, some possible reasons for this fact will be sought.

Despite this noticeable absence of girls from Muslim families, a variety of love-relationships across a variety of origins exist at the club. In addition to Ravi and Rosa that we have already glimpsed, there are for example: Enrique (14, Chilean family) and Lauryn (14, South Africa), Tommy (17, all Norwegian) and Isabel (16, Chilean family), Nicola (18, Eritrean) and her older boyfriend of Eritrean background (age unknown), Sidi (17, Moroccan background) and Maria (17, Chilean background), and, not least, Anita (16, all Norwegian family) and Mohamed (19, Pakistani family).

We have already met Omar, of Iraqi background, who has had several all-Norwegian girlfriends, and Anoar, of Moroccan background, who also has an all-Norwegian girlfriend. Both have had long term relationships and have now moved together with their partner.

Let us start this exploration of the variety of gender relations among the Rudenga youth by focusing upon some quite conservative young boys of Pakistani origin; these can be seen as exemplifying several attitudes reflected in the stereotypes present in some Western public spheres and mediascapes, of gender relations among what is covered in the crude generalisation as “the Muslims”.

Two decent boys: a conservative position

In the media-based publicity of late 90s Norway, it is a widely spread assumption/image that young females, especially of Muslim background, are

strongly protected by their families and are especially to be shielded from contact with the opposite sex.¹ The fact that virtually no young girls of Muslim background visit the youth club in Rudenga seems to confirm this image. But such shielding is not restricted to the girls.

According to the Norwegian professor in comparative religion, Kari Vogt, who has studied the history of Islam as well as the practices of a large variety of Islamic groups in Norway for several decades, there is here a wide-spread demand for segregation between the sexes; this implies that men and women have limited opportunities to meet a suitable spouse unless family or friends are mobilised (Vogt 2000; see also Wikan 2002; Prieur 2002). According to Vogt, such an orientation is mainly embedded in deep traditional – and not religious – demands about the honour of women and, through this, the honour of the family as a whole (ibid.). This indicates, among other things, that the liberating powers of modernity, that according to Berger, Berger and Kellner implied liberation from “*the narrow controls of the family, clans, tribe or small community*”, definitely have their limitations, as indeed has Giddens’ ideal of “the pure relationship” (above).

So, when Ravi (of Pakistani origin) – in the scene that introduced this chapter – runs like lightning to avoid his father’s finding out about his love-relationship to Rosa (of Chilean origin), it shows that the prohibition of contact between the sexes also has some validity for the boys and, not least, that the hold of tradition still is present among these families. Among the club members this was especially noticeable among the members of Pakistani background.

Several of the Pakistani families in Rudenga have their origins in the small villages of the Kharian district in Punjab. According to Lien’s earlier research, the gender roles in these areas are quite strongly oriented by the so called *pardah-system*.² The *pardah* system strongly emphasises a relative separation between sexes especially for the youth (for a more general discussion of the *pardah* institution in some Pakistani areas, see Weiss, in

¹ It may of course be questioned if this must be considered a stereotype or if it can be regarded as a “truth”. This phenomenon will be more explicitly discussed below.

² This is “...a moral system to create conditions for developing *haya* (chastity, modesty) and *pak* (purity). It has an inner emotional dimension, where the responsibility to control and guide sexual desire mainly are imposed on women. The *Purdah-system* also has an external dimension. This concerns the regulation of the access and area where sexually attractive women are allowed to move and, along similar lines, to guide and regulate the males so that they do not get in contact with attractive young women. This guiding of especially young women and men is held to be the *zummandari* (main responsibility) of the men ” (my translation, Lien 1993: 122-123).

Ahmed and Donnan (eds.) 1994). According to Lien, “purdah” is a Persian word that means “curtain” or “veil” and must be seen as a metaphor for the necessity that there:

“...between men and women is not to be openness or visibility, but something disturbing, something that covers and makes the connections between the sexes difficult and the views between them unclear.” (ibid:118, my translation).

One of the consequences of the segregation in such a system is that it is primarily the mother’s task to find a partner for her son, because no male stranger will have the possibility to acquire sufficient knowledge of young women from other families. As an elderly female herself, the mother is seen especially fit for such a task (Lien 1993). According to Lien, marriage is seen as the only legal frame for sexuality. Girls are expected to be virgins until marriage, and no extramarital sexual relations on the wife’s part are accepted. For the boys, such relations tend to be tolerated to a larger degree. Marriage is usually arranged by the parents on the basis of a variety of criteria.¹

According to Lien there is no expectation of the existence of love or sexual attraction between the partners before the marriage (ibid). It is believed and hoped that this will grow in time, and often this is, in fact, seen to occur. The idea of romantic love, as well as the possible intrinsic qualities of a relationship that exists before marriage (as seen in both columns), is in other words very far from the orientation of this ideal.

Lien’s presentation of the purdah institution, as it is sketched out here, shows several salient features that in many ways relate to the ideals sketched out in figure 7. These relations will be focused further upon while anchoring its messages in the empirical examples below.

It lies outside the framework of this book to explore the extent or the eventual details to which the Pakistani families in Rudenga relate to the purdah system. Nevertheless, this system seems to express a more general *ethos* that may be relevant for some of the Rudenga boys of Pakistani background. This will be focused upon in the analysis of a relatively

¹ Lien presents an example where a mother requires the girl to be: of the right social caste; from a decent family of at least equal wealth as the bridegroom’s; with good contacts; be tall enough; be nice and slim, as light in complexion as he is, etcetera (ibid:131). Marriage to a spouse that has emigrated is also an often used strategy to get access to the resources and general betterment of living, both for families that are leaving and for those who stay behind (ibid).

conservative version of the relationship between the sexes that is discernible in this conversation about marriage with Talvin (18) of a Pakistani family:

Talvin: Soon I will get married. My mother suggests. But I said straight ahead that I want to choose myself. She may suggest someone she thinks is fit, then I can choose.

Every boy that I discussed these matters with strongly emphasised the difference between “forced” marriage and “arranged” marriage. Without exception they clearly rejected the idea of the parents forcing their children into marriage, but most accepted the possibilities for arrangements, that is, for the parents to suggest a partner. But the final decision should be taken by the partners themselves, according to the informants. The role of the mother that “suggests” seems well in accordance with Lien’s findings from the Kharian area (ibid.). A practice where the parents suggest a marriage partner on the basis of a series of reasons that they decide to be of importance, contrasts strongly with the ideal of the pure relationship on two points: 1.) The decision to enter the relationship is heavily influenced by external authority in the shape of the parents, who also enjoy considerable authority because of their age; and 2.) The motivations for entering the relationship do not concern the intrinsic qualities of the relationship itself. The importance put upon marriage, of course, contrasts with the declining role of marriage in column I. The willingness to let the parents decide is, nevertheless, partly reduced by the young informants’ insistence of having the last word. To an extent the importance of the intrinsic qualities of the relationship are possible to regulate by the spouses themselves. This points, of course, to a relationship that at least to some degree is more in tune with some aspects of the ideals in column I.

The emphasis upon the reputation of the girl, as contrasted to the assumed frivolity reflected in the ways of dressing by the girls living in Norway, associates further to column II. This becomes clear when I ask Talvin what would happen if he wanted to marry a different girl than his parents suggested:

Talvin: That’s ok, but they have to check her reputation. There’s some Pakistani girls living here in Norway that wear tight clothes, jeans and so on. They try to be impressing. It is against our religion to wear clothes like that. None of them are virgins any more. They are ruining the reputation of their family. All girls that get raped wear tight clothes like that.

Anthropologist: But don’t you think the boys should be able to control themselves, even if they saw a pair of tight jeans?

Talvin: Yes, ok, but you see what I mean...

The weight on respectability and reputation, as well as on dressing codes that hide the body – in agreement with Lien’s explanation of the need for a veil that distorts and makes the female body invisible and distorted to outsiders – is noticeable here; in addition, there is the demand for virginity, on the girls’ part, to be an eligible marriage partner. The weight put upon reputation also contradicts, at least to some degree, the focus upon intrinsic qualities of the relationship. The emphasis upon chastity and virginity on the part of the girl strongly contradicts the ideal of sexual liberation, “plasticity” and mutual equality, both sexually and otherwise. Nevertheless it is important to note that emphasis upon virginity until marriage for girls, for example in the US, was quite common at least in the 1940s (Giddens 1992:9). Talvin complains that even the girls of Pakistani families living in Norway, dress frivolously; that is, they are dressing according to the common fashion among Western young girls, we may add. He tends to see such dressing practices as something that more or less invites sexual abuse. According to Lien’s research in Kharian, sexuality is here seen as a dangerous force that especially is the responsibility of the female to control (Lien 1993:114). Lien reports also that the women in the district held the men to be even more untamed in their sexual drives (ibid.:115). She also reports that in several rapetrials it is the raped woman that is held responsible and that gets punished. Here it is also important to note that, in some rapetrials in Norway, conservative judges are accused for similar attitudes of blaming the responsibility on the victim. Such attitudes are therefore not as “strange” as one may be inclined to think at first glance; they strongly indicate that such similarities, especially their conservative aspects carry messages associated with extremities to the right of column II. Attention to such similarities may be important to reduce the often taken for granted differences between “us” and “them”. Similar attitudes may lie behind Talvin’s expressions.

On another occasion Talvin tells me he prefers to marry a girl that has grown up in Pakistan, because he thinks girls of Pakistani origin who grow up in Norway are not trustworthy and are likely to have had, or to have in the future, affairs with other men. This can be interpreted as a concern for a lack of virginity. Our conversation continue, and his friend Abdullah (18, Pakistani origin) joins us. Both boys show a certain distance to girls of solely Norwegian background, for whom such dressing practices are quite common, who belong to another religion, and, implicitly, who are used to different ways of behaviour than the girls the boys prefer. The weight put upon sharing religious orientation can also be seen as an element external to the relationship

that contradicts the ideal of a purely intrinsic motivations (column I). I ask if it would be at all possible for them to marry a Norwegian girl?

Talvin: My parents would never accept it. But we wouldn't do it anyway.

Abdullah: They get divorced so quickly. Besides they can't cook, either. We don't eat sausages you know... (smiles). They are unfaithful, they look at other men and chat with them...and I don't want to get divorced.

Talvin: When you live here you may prefer a Norwegian girlfriend, but you don't marry her. But some may convert.

Abdullah: I know a Norwegian girl, she was 15 and the boy was 16, she was willing to convert for her boyfriend. But he broke up. She even wore Pakistani girls clothes for several days, at school. It may be possible, but... I must say I doubt it...

Their parents, it seems, are felt to be important agents who would refuse their son's marriage to a girl of solely Norwegian background. But both boys emphasise that they share this opinion. The autonomy of the potential girls is felt to be threatening, agreeing with the attitudes of column II. Girls are unfaithful and are most likely to demand a divorce. However, the most important feature of their future marriage partner was not that she should come from the same country or area as the boy (although some emphasised this, too), but that she should be a Muslim. To Talvin and Abdullah this is also interwoven with what they held to be the non-Muslim girls' lack of domestic ability, especially concerning the preservation of taboos against eating pork. One also senses that housework is not exactly what the boys themselves seem inclined to undertake, in agreement with attitudes of column II, which oppose the ideal of equality and sharing tasks such as housework.

But it also reveals that non-Muslim girls (including all-Norwegian girls) could be accepted as lovers, but not as future wives, thus indicating a male-as-conqueror role. If marriage should be possible, the girls must convert. A certain scepticism, not only to non-Muslim girls, but also to Muslim girls who have grown up in Norway, can be seen; even if they both held that it could be possible to have a lover of such a category, their scepticism at this point in time seems to exclude even such a possibility.

But such attitudes may change as young boys grow up.

Some years later...

When I meet Talvin some years later, he has had several relationships of various kinds to non-Muslim girls. The first one was a five-month-long relationship to an all Norwegian girl. They never had sex together. He tells me he liked her very much, and strongly underlines that he felt he could trust her, as she was faithful to him all the time it lasted. Later he experienced several relationships where sexuality played an important part, both some “one night stands”, and one relationship to a girl of Philippine background that lasted for six months. According to Talvin she was both pretty and nice, and he admits that he still likes her very much. But now she has a Turkish boyfriend. When I asked him if he could have married her, he says “*I don’t think so. She wasn’t worth it. She was too easy to get. I had sex with her, of course. And if I can get her, then others can get her too.*”¹ In other words, the demand for virginity here seems to be too strong and to weigh too much even against the strong and positive feeling he otherwise had for the girl. Curiously enough, Talvin held the Pakistani girls that have grown up in Norway to be especially untrustworthy. He tells about a young male relative, Dahler, who has had a long row of sexual relationships to girls of Pakistani background that have grown up in Norway:

“They say, for example, they are going to a birthday party to a female friend, and instead they visit some club or something where they meet Dahler. He is very popular. But he has a very bad reputation, you know. He will have a lot of trouble when he wants to marry. He is going steady with a Pakistani girl now, and she knows he is sleeping with others. If some of the girls’ brothers did find that out, they might kill him or beat him heavily up. I mean, it really is his sister’s fault. But it is also an insult when a boy does such things.

Anthropologist: But is it any of the sisters of people you know that he is with?

T: No, I don’t think so. It is someone from town. Because if some girl from Rudenga has seen me there once, they know for sure where they should not go. Because then I say it to my brother, and then he says it to her brother and then Dahler would be in deep trouble.”

It seems especially to be his knowledge of Dahler’s many love relationships to girls of Pakistani background that has coloured Talvin’s negative attitude and distrust towards “such” girls. In fact, he states several times that he

¹ The weight put on marriage, especially in families of Pakistani origin, makes this question relevant, even to a 21-year-old.

trusts “Norwegian” girls much *more* than “the Pakistani” girls living in Norway, because they are less likely to have affairs with others during a relationship. Such an expression must be seen as connected with his own very positive relationship with the all-Norwegian girl. This was also his very first relationship to a girl ever, and as noticed, they never had sexual intercourse. It is therefore not unlikely to assume that it is the experience of chastity, as well as trust that this relationship is associated with, that causes him to generalise this interpretation to cover all/most all-Norwegian girls, just as he generalises his views of girls of Pakistani background in Norway as untrustworthy on the basis of his knowledge of the Casanova-escapades of his older relative Dahler. This underlines again the weight put upon virginity.

It also shows, of course, the role of even relatively recent previous experiences, here in the creation of a more personal semiotics of gender, where the power of personal experience seems to have played a crucial role for the creation of what we may term *personal stereotypes*. If the above interpretation is right, both his own positive experience of the trustworthiness of the all-Norwegian girl he was with, as well as his witnessing of Dahler’s escapades, are used as a basis for generalisations that are not only crude, but that also very obviously contradict the more common stereotypes which say that all-Norwegian girls are “liberal and unfaithful”, whereas girls of Pakistani background are “faithful and strict”.

On the other hand, Talvin further states he is very likely to get married within two years, and to a girl that has grown up in Pakistan. I ask him if he still thinks it is important that the girl is a virgin:

T: Yes, of course.

Anthropologist: But why?

T: I don’t know....I want the honour, you may say (laughs). But it is no good if she has been sleeping with several others, you know

Anthropologist: But you have done exactly that...?

T: Yes, of course...I don’t know. It is not the same thing. You ought to know that...(...) But now I think of an example: if she has been sleeping with another man, and I suddenly run into the guy she has been sleeping with, and he is boasting of it... Of course such things become bad rumours. And that is very important. She must have a good reputation and respect.

Anthropologist: But you have done the same thing, at least in so far as someone knows..?

T: Yes, but I don't think many people know. I am not like Dahler. If he marries, and then suddenly her family knows that he has been sleeping with others, that's bad... That's why I do not like girls of Pakistani background living in Norway.

The asymmetry between the genders is here especially salient: while Talvin himself has had several pre-marital relationships, both strictly sexual but also where stronger emotions were involved, he demands maximal chastity and virginity of the girl he is to marry. This exemplifies the inequality regarding sexual experience and access in a rather explicit version (even if he emphasises that he in fact has not slept with that many). *“It is very important that the girls are worthy of respect. It is much more strict for them. Boys, they are just boys. They have more freedom,”* as he said. When he remarks that I (the interviewer) “ought to know”, he is perhaps addressing me as a fellow male who is assumed to have some understanding and accept for a certain “naturalness” in these differences between the sexes, where the man – to a much stronger degree – is allowed to have sexual adventures, in contrast to the women. But Talvin strongly contrasted such a practice by the men, to the stricter moral codes that the parents demand:

My parents do not know a thing. And I do not think they'd like to know either. They don't know if I have slept with someone or not. And that's good. They ought not to. If they knew, I would probably have lost much of their respect, I think...

Nevertheless, we can guess at a possibility for the parents to know about the behaviour of their son. In other words, even if this prohibition against sex before marriage is also valid for the boys, there may be some inclination to allow it – although not publicly – by the parents. It thus clearly demonstrates the difference between what is held as an ideal for behaviour, and what is in fact realized in social practice.¹

But there is also, not surprisingly, at least some ambivalence. When the boys speak of the possibility that the all-Norwegian girls may *convert* to Islam, they seem to express some longing for such behaviour. When I speak to Talvin some years later he says he actually knows of such concrete examples from a wedding he has attended. Also, despite the overall tendency among several of the club members of Pakistani background to emphasise

¹ Here an interesting question is: at which point and under which circumstances will a social practice that deviates from an ideal have the possibilities to become incorporated as a part of such an ideal, and thus to change it?

that they do not think that being in love is necessary for a relationship to work or to be initiated, Talvin seem to be somehow open for this to happen:

T: I am not that “falling-in-love-type”. I never fall in love, to be completely honest. Of course, one never knows, but...

Anthropologist:...so, you do not think that is especially important, that you should be in love?

T: No. One must have a girl. And marry her. And get further. But of course maybe it just suddenly happens that I fall in love.

The phenomena of falling in love, and romantic love, according to Lien, are also recognized in the Kharian villages, but they are not held to be especially important (Lien 1993). In this quotation Talvin seems to confirm the view that this is not required for a marriage. But his last remark also seems to indicate that he at least is open for this to happen. How much weight he will ascribe to it is, of course, not possible to know at present.

This relatively explicit refusal of the importance “love”, both on Talvin’s part and as reflected in the practices described by Lien from the Kharian district, may nevertheless be seen as strongly contrasted to the relatively extreme cult of romantic love exposed in the highly popular *Hindi-films* that both youngsters and parents, in Kharian as well as Oslo, enjoy. Here it may be asked if the main content of these films could be seen as an equivalent to the messages and focus put forth in the romantic novels that Giddens refers to (1992:44-46). If Giddens is right in his emphasis of the role of romantic love as a central ingredient in the development towards an ideal of a “pure relationship”, then perhaps these popular stories in the Hindi films may play a similar role in leading the audiences in a similar direction and, thus, to question their acceptance of the narrow external motivations and the corresponding downplaying of the importance of the intrinsic qualities of the relationship.

On the basis of the analysis above, the centre of gravity of the attitudes that Talvin and Abdullah communicate seems to be closer to the orientations of column II than column I. In so far as the values and attitudes in the columns may be taken further in the directions they indicate, the boy’s attitudes on some points seem to be even further to “the right”. Related to the messages of the columns in figure 7, they can be summed up as follows:

1. The attitudes reflect on the one hand a strong willingness to accept external criteria decided by the parents as a motivation for marriage. This is a clear contrast to the idea of the Pure relationship. On the other hand, this willingness is to a considerable degree counterweighted by the insistence on having the final word in the choice of their spouse, thus pointing away from the “externality” represented by their parents. It is here possible to detect orientations in both directions of the suggested columns.
2. The attitudes reflect a stronger willingness to accept responsibility to a collectivity, here the family, in the choice of marriage partners – as opposed to the extreme individualism of column I.
3. The absolute requirement of marriage is not questioned, and marriage is expected relatively early in life. This is in strong contrast to the tendency among many Western youngsters to reduce the importance of marriage and to postpone it. This is decidedly closer to the attitudes of column I.
4. The dismissal of the idea of divorce implies that, ideally, marriage is held to last “for ever”, in accordance with column II. This is in strong contrast to the immense increase in divorces in the West, implied in column I.
5. Virginity for girls at marriage is demanded. This points even further to the right of column II, and represents an orientation that is especially in contrast to the practices that prevail among mainstream youth in many Western contexts (see below).
6. The demand on the marriage partners to be of the same religion strongly contrasts the tendency to secularisation and the diminishing weight upon conformity to religious demands in many Western societies. It is also in contrast to the relative openness and tolerance for a wide range of religious beliefs that the countercultures of the so called “New Age Movements” seem to display.
7. The modest weight (or even dismissal) put upon love as a prerequisite for marriage, is in strong contrast to the immense importance put upon love in both columns, both in the romantic version, and something like Giddens’ “confluent love” in column I.
8. The strong tendency to accept and revere the parents’ authority and “right” to decide in matters concerning love and marriage strongly contrasts with the tendency for the offspring in many Western societies to hold personal autonomy and the “rights” to decide, especially in “personal matters”, in high esteem.
9. The authority of the males and the brothers over the girls strongly contrast with the weight put on equality in gender relations in the complex of messages of column I.

In other words, several of the attitudes and messages here discerned must be considered even some steps further in a conservative direction than the values of column II.

We may conclude that on several points Talvin seemed to conform to the orientations reflected in the orthodoxies of the purdah institution, as described in Lien's Kharian research. His deviation from this is, of course, exemplified in his own sexual adventures. But such behaviour – even if it deviated from the ideal – was often accepted for boys, also in Kharian.

If our two columns represent competing orthodoxies in the sign continuum of gender in relevant parts of Western Europe, the sign continuum that Talvin's practices seem to point to, will have several points of overlap, especially with the orthodoxies of column II. There are, nevertheless, several references to "love" in his story, as well as some reflection on the possibilities for increased autonomy that may indicate a tendency to move in new and more individual centered directions.

The next question to be posed is:

How do the other groups of Rudenga youngsters relate to the attitudes referred to above? In what ways do these views match with other versions of gender semiotics in the milieu of the club?

Alternative positions: some contrasting views from a near distance

Our next example shows that the strict prohibitions and rules, especially for the girls of Pakistani background, do seem to be noticed by some of Talvin's fellow members. In an interview with Maurizio (16, Chilean parents) similar characteristics were presented as typical for Muslims in a more generalised sense (expressing what is likely to be a stereotype, see below), making up a behaviour that he distances himself from on several points:

I prefer non-Muslim girls. It's so much stress with those Muslim people about getting married and stuff like that. And if you just look at them you have their brothers hanging around you at once. You can't take the those girls with you just any place; you have to take care of them wherever you go, they have to marry when they reach a certain age, and if you are not a Muslim you can't be lovers. They have to help their mothers at home, always be home and take care of their smaller siblings; they have to be home too early. That's too much stress. My mother agrees it's too much fuzz (in Norwegian: "bråk") and stress with Muslim girls. She's much freer regarding religion and all that.

Everything is so strict with the Muslims. I would choose a non-Muslim girl because of all that.

Here Maurizio, who himself has grown up in a catholic home in Rudenga, severely criticizes several of the attitudes towards gender relations that were expressed in our previous example, especially as this is seen to limit his own possibilities to date a Muslim girl to virtually nil. It is only rarely that these attitudes are criticized by a fellow member in such an explicit and articulated way. When asked he states that he means especially the Muslims of the Pakistani families, but that his impression covers girls from other Muslim families of different geographic origin as well. Implicitly in these distancing expressions lay a preferred ideal of larger freedom in the relationships between the sexes. How far this freedom is actualised in Maurizio's own life I do not know. Maurizio himself is a calm guy, who has not had many dates (love affairs) behind him (as far as I know). But even in such a position he has at least decided that Muslim girls are not for him, based on the impressions referred here.

But there are also young female members whose interpretations have been elicited along similar lines. For example Isabel (17, also Chilean parents):

I know several Pakistani girls from my class. I am not often with them. It is all so strict for them at home. They must come home very early; they have so many duties to take care of at home. They are afraid that Pakistani boys will notice if they are outside with other boys, that the boys will tell about it to their families so that they get bad reputation and so on. You only see them in the daytime. They are never at the club. It is silly. Quite sad actually. It is so important that they shall not get a bad reputation. I understand why, but it is really unfair, I think.

But it is not only the younger women from some of the Muslim families that seem to have a strict everyday regime. A mother (Norwegian, ca. 45) of one of the male club members, who now has moved to an adjacent area, tells about her impression of her neighbours in Rudenga just a little younger than herself:

We got to know some Muslim families too. We had for example a good Moroccan neighbour. During the daytime, when I didn't work, it often happened that the wife came down to me, often only in her dressing gown. We could sit for several hours just talking, drinking some cups of coffee and having a nice time. But each time, as soon as it reached the time when her husband would return from work, then she put on her clothes and her veil (meaning a scarf). Then it was all over. And she was

not the one who had it most strict. My impression is there were several Muslim women that only moved back and forth from their flat to the shops. It must be a difficult life.

This is also an example that sheds light over the fact that positive relationships between people of different backgrounds were not restricted to youngsters only, even if this was probably more common among this latter category. Nevertheless, differences in gender relations and attitudes were clearly noticed in the older age groups too.

Trine, a young female club leader (20, of solely Norwegian origin), who worked in the club for some months and had grown up in an adjacent area, tells this story:

I had a good female school friend of Pakistani background. She said she felt Norwegian from quite an early age. I remember she changed clothes on her way to school. She took off her Pakistani clothes and put on something more fashionable, you know. She had a Pakistani boyfriend and they both lived just next to me. She said she was visiting me when she saw her boyfriend (laughs). She is so tough. She sees herself as completely Norwegian, and would like to make a centre for Pakistani girls who resist forced marriage. I haven't seen her for awhile, though. But I remember her older sister. She worked in a clothes shop and was so cool, so good looking. I idolised her a bit. She had such cool clothes, lovely long, black hair and had a Norwegian boyfriend. But then she got married to one guy from Pakistan. And suddenly she had to put on those Pakistani clothes, and all the usual stuff; she got fat, the whole package...

In so far as Trine's account is correct, it shows that also female members of conservative Muslim families may rebel against the *strictness* imposed by the orthodoxies of family and tradition. Even apparently small issues like *refusing to wear* the traditional clothing may be seen as a sign to express opposition pointing towards the ideal of larger autonomy. This is similar for the Western "youth rebels" who wore feminized clothing styles to signify subjective and collective resistance against the male dominance of that period. The "Westernized" sister, who was married to a boy fetched from Pakistan and who then had to change her dressing style, indicates the use of authority by parents and her spouse, to direct, or perhaps even force, *their rebellious offspring/wife to return to values more in accordance with the ways of their areas of origin*. This is not unlike the young boys of the sixties who were forced to cut their hair (or to destroy other signs of resistance) by their parents, by military authorities and the like.

These critical comments upon the strictness imposed on these girls of Muslim background (and especially girls of Pakistani background), from both the youngsters as well as the all-Norwegian mother, also communicate that these utterers emphasize more liberal attitudes in these issues, somehow closer to the attitudes associated to column I.

Aisha: freedom and ambivalence – more alternative positions

But there are also further examples of positions where impulses from a more liberal ethos of gender relations have become incorporated in aspects of everyday life, in this case by a young married couple of Pakistani background in Rudenga. Here both the enjoyment of larger freedom, as well as quite explicit ambivalence towards some of its possible consequences seem to be manifested: Aisha, (28 years, married, originally from a village in the Kharian district,) has been living the last fifteen years in Norway. She says:

I feel it is Norway that is my country now, I feel Norwegian. And I will not live the way they do in Pakistan here in Norway. It is so much freer here. If I had been growing up in Pakistan, I would have had to do housework at home all the time, I would not be allowed to go to work or to go to the shop all by myself. I would probably have been married to someone when I was 16 or 17, got 6 children, and looked like an old woman (“ei kjerring”) when I got as old as I am now. Life passes so much faster there. You’ll get older a lot faster in Pakistan. I do not look like an old woman now, I feel.

Aisha lives alone with her husband and two kids in their own flat. Often young wives, on the contrary, move into the household of the boy’s parents and have to help their mother-in-law with domestic work. The lesser burden of domestic work, the lesser strictness concerning her ability to move and, not least, work outside the house, as well as later entrance into marriage seem to be what Aisha sees as some main assets in her experience of living in Norway. Her impression of people growing older faster in Pakistan may perhaps indicate that what she perceives as the strictness of the traditional gender roles in her area of origin to a stronger degree fix the limits for experimentation with age-based signs and behaviours, compared to what she feels is possible in Norway.

The realisation of a more liberal lifestyle may also be manifested in the situation of this interview itself. I had no difficulty in getting an appointment for the interview with Aisha. Her husband took the phone and passed it to his wife without any special reactions discernible to my knowledge there

and then. When I arrived to the flat at noon time, while her husband was on work, I was immediately welcomed in. She said that her sister was on her way to attend the interview. But it took at least one hour until her sister arrived, which means that I as a 44 year old male could interview a 28 year old wife of Pakistani background, get served a cup of tea and be alone with her without any reactions, neither from her husband, her sister, who finally arrived, nor from anyone else, at least to my knowledge. The whole atmosphere was remarkably relaxed and gave not impression of giving rise to something like fear for being “discovered”. This is surely quite far from the orthodoxies of the purdah-institution described by Lien, as well as from the strictness and controlled life of the female in actual areas in Pakistan that Aisha herself describes above.¹

In accordance with Giddens’ proposition that the new developments and liberalisation within social relations also bring forth a larger relaxation in the relationships between parents and children, such a possibility also seems noticeable in Aishas experiences and images of a more liberal ethos in child-raising in Norway. This shows when her 4 year old son, who is present and playing on the floor, makes some noise. Aisha comments:

My children are allowed to do many things here that children in Pakistan are not allowed to do. If, for example, a man... or grown-ups were talking, they would never be allowed to make such noise in Pakistan. I want my children to be Norwegian, follow Norwegian rules, speak Norwegian.

Anthropologist:: Would you allow them to marry Norwegian girls, too?

Yes, that’s quite ok.

Here Aisha directly points to her experience of a more authoritarian (as well as male dominated) attitude towards children, associated to her reference areas in Pakistan. This is contrasted to the sign continuum of gender relations that she associates to the ”Norwegian” and that she finds more liberal and permissive in a positive sense, in line with these aspects of the attitudes of column I. As a mother she is also willing to accept the idea of her boy marrying an all Norwegian girl, without mentioning the necessity for her to convert to Islam. This may, of course, be implied (unfortunately I forgot to ask!), but in so far it is not, it expresses messages that in several ways are relatively far from the attitudes of Talvin, as well as from several of the other boys of Pakistani background at the club.

¹ A similar situation was experienced in an interview with another young mother, also of Pakistani background, indicating that this was not just a special case.

Nevertheless, there are limits to her liberal attitudes. This becomes clear when I ask her if even her daughter would be allowed to marry an all Norwegian boy:

That would have been different. No, I do not want my daughter to marry a Norwegian boy. ...We are Muslims, so... And there were so many things that I couldn't do when I grew up... I feel that ... well, since I did not get that freedom myself, I won't allow my daughter to do it either. It's so difficult to explain... I am not that Norwegian yet... No I think girls ought to find a Pakistani man. But the boys are allowed so much more. Girls are more at home, they can't go to discos, not drink, not smoke, that's more for the boys. Even if we say no to the boys, they do it anyway!

The experienced need to control the girls, according to the attitudes she has been growing up with, seems to sit very tight and be deep-seated in her *matrix self*. If her *focal self* may be discerned as the aspect that hitherto has been activated in our conversation, the unease and reluctance she shows when this last question is brought up may be an indication of a conflict in herself. The weight of the parts of her past that are farther from the present are now entering our attentional field, making her somehow puzzled. Her reference to the role of the boys in a sense matches Talvin's "boys will be boys" expression and seems to express a certain passive acceptance of such behaviour; on the other hand, she resists this for her daughter. This element of passiveness that seems to be evoked probably underlines these interpretations as being part of a more "mechanical" and autonomous repertoire of meaning that here is elicited, in line with the slower, resistant and less easily changeable nature of the matrix self (representing the habitus). This shows clearly her ambivalence vis à vis the positive experiences of freedom, on the one hand, and the orienting power of the sediments from her earlier experiences, when she was growing up, on the other.

Aisha has several female friends of a variety of backgrounds – such as Sri Lanka, Turkey, Morocco, Norway – that she sometimes visits. It is not unlikely that the processes of reflexivity that her expressions communicate may be amplified by such a variety of contacts, not unlike the reflexivity created by the variety of backgrounds that the youngsters in the Rudenga club are exposed to.

Several of the boys of various Muslim backgrounds, with less conservative positions than Talvins, nevertheless mention that both their own and other's parents, adopt more liberal attitudes, for example, towards the dress allowed for their daughters than earlier; they see this as a step in a positive direction that they assume is likely to comprise far more issues than

just clothing practices. Many have held recent developments among the Pakistani population in Britain as an example of more liberal attitudes and relationships between parents and children, and they expect to see similar developments in Norway as well.

As we shall see below, there are several more examples of different positions concerning gender related attitudes also among Muslim youth of immigrant background, that in several ways are breaking with the more strict and conservative stereotypes, as well as the orthodoxies that to some extent are echoed in Talvin's case. Nevertheless, the *activating of stereotypes* is a powerful phenomena that seems to be in almost continual encounter with the new and alternative relationships *in the making* in a multicultural situation such as Rudenga's. This will be further exemplified in the following case.

Mohamed and Anita : love as a possible bridge – versus stereotypes and critical events

The Turkish-Danish sociologist Mehmet Necef, who is also an immigrant to Denmark, suggests that love relationships between partners of different cultural origin may have the potential to function like a bridge between the families in a process of mutual negotiation and adaptations (see Necef, referred in Prieur 2002). *Are similar processes possible to spot among the youngsters in Rudenga? And if so, what is the nature of the most obvious obstacles to such a process?*

The story of Mohamed and Anita may help us approach these questions.

Mohamed (nineteen, Pakistani family) and Anita (sixteen, Norwegian family) met each other at the club three years before my second fieldwork. Even though they have broken up a couple of times, these breaks never lasted long. They have been together almost ever since. Anita says (in a later interview when Mohamed is not present):

I lost some of my friends who said they did not understand that I wanted to be dating a Pakistani. They thought that all Muslims are looking down upon their women. (...) I also got bad remarks from some of the boys. I got to know that someone called me "Paki whore" and so on. There were so many rumours about me. I mean I was just thirteen and got "Paki whore" thrown right in my face. So I broke up. It was difficult. But after a week we saw each other again. Now we have been together for three years, and everyone knows that we have treated each other well. We have experienced so much together. We have had a relationship that others have envied. They see that we are having a good relationship and "that's what matters", they say.

Generalisations, built partly upon the noticing of the undoubtedly conservative attitudes of some boys of Pakistani background, and further amplified by not least the examples highlighted in the press that in its most extreme manifest in the cases of so called honour killings, do not make it easy for Anita to become involved in the relationship to Mohamed. The notion of “Paki whore” may also hint at envy and competition between local males, who fear that “the Pakistanis” might succeed in “taking their girls” away from them. I never registered these attitudes in the year I did my fieldwork in the club. Anita tells me that it was someone who does not attend the club any more that had used such terms. During my stay in the club, Mohamed and Anita were often present, and to judge from their looks and behaviour they were deeply in love. So Anita’s account of the transformation of the scepticism she had felt from her surroundings seems not surprising. Moreover, in contrast to Talvin’s scepticism towards the importance of love, Mohamed’s expressions towards his girlfriend (in addition to the glances that accompany them) seem strongly to underline that her emotions are returned. This becomes clear, for example, when I ask him about his feeling of identity:

Anthropologist: I wonder how it feels to grow up here in Norway, Mohamed. Do you feel that you are Pakistani, Norwegian, something in the middle, none of the kind or...something else?

Mohamed: I think something in between. When I visit Pakistan it is like going on a holiday. It is nice and warm, but it is not tempting to live there. It is difficult to explain. I dream in Norwegian. I speak Urdu with my parents, Punjabi with my Pakistani friends, Norwegian with Anita. I do not think of “Pakistanis” or “Norwegians”. It is the single person that matters. But I love a Norwegian, then... (sending love-laden glances to his girlfriend)¹

The old songline “love is in the air” is something that easily pops up while being in the presence of Anita and Mohamed. If this may be considered in accordance with the phenomenon of love – in whatever version – Mohamed exemplifies a position that differs from both the attitudes expressed by Talvin, and the orientation Lien reports from Kharian. It is important to mention that similar exceptions and deviations from the ideals also existed in this area, according to Lien (1993).

Anita tells that her parents have known Mohamed almost since their first days together. But it was more difficult the other way around:

¹ The theme of identity and hybridisation will be considered more directly in chapter 11.

“He knows all my family, even grandparents and some aunts and uncles. But I think it is difficult that I can never come home to his family, because they are not allowed to have girlfriends. I know his brother though, but he keeps silent.”

Anita has on several occasions expressed a wish to get to know Mohamed’s parents, as if desiring to create a relation to them as a symmetry to the relationship she felt her family had to him.

Also Mohamed regrets that this is not possible.

“My parents are not very typical Pakistani parents, I think. But they are strict anyway. For my sister it is quite strict. But she understands that there are things she just can’t do. It would have been a big problem if she was with a boy, whether Pakistani or Norwegian. There are so many rules, and I think its almost impossible to change them, unfortunately. I would have had it quite strict myself if my father or my mother had known about me and Anita. Had I been with a Pakistani girl, that would have been alright at least for my father. It is most important that she is a Muslim. But for a Pakistani girls father it would probably not be alright.

Mohamed’s father is not very religious and settled in Norway when he was quite young. He got an academic education and has now a job as a leader in a large technical firm. He is quite “modern”, according to Mohamed. In contrast, he says *“My mother is praying five times a day and is very religious. She is the most difficult one of my parents.”*

This remark, indicating that the fate of the girl would especially be a problem for the girl’s father, is in accordance with Lien’s presentation of the male role according to the purdah system as practiced in Kharian; it also matches strongly with the patriarchic values of column II.

For Mohamed and Anita, speaking seriously about marriage at this point, does not seem to be a concern, in accordance with the characteristics as seen in column I. To the anthropologist in retrospect, their youthful love story seems all too innocent in such matters, and a contrast to the harsh interventions from their surroundings that soon were to come.

The couple are often seen walking hand-in-hand between the blocks in the Rudenga area. I ask them if they are not afraid of being discovered by Mohamed’s family which, according to Mohamed, would not accept their relationship? Mohamed states that yes, it is a problem. But he says he thinks his father and probably his uncle too know about Anita, but that neither of them say anything about it. But if his mother got suspicious it would be much more problematic.

In other words, the willingness to let their son experiment with relationships to the opposite sex, not surprisingly, may vary considerably even among the parents.

Compared to the other youngsters at the club, their relationship has in fact up to the present been the one that has lasted the longest among the Rudenga youngsters.

But as my fieldwork period approached its end, some serious changes occur.

Inadvertently Mohamed is involved in a gangfight in town, where he is shot in his shoulder by a young boy of Vietnamese background (see also the next chapter). (His claim of innocence is thoroughly checked by talking to various actors – some eyewitnesses – that know the involved quite intimately. He is accordingly never accused of any offence by the police.) He has to spend several weeks in hospital, and it takes months until he recovers.

Anita tells that some members of her family reacted badly about Mohamed being involved, and think he is not as innocent as he claimed to be. She feels this as expressions of racist attitudes among people she trusted and is severely disappointed. At this time, the newspapers often presented reports of violence and fighting, especially between two well known gangs whose members have Pakistani background. It is not unlikely to assume that the reaction of Anita's relatives may be nothing more than generalisations dealing with "the Pakistanis" in the gangs in the city, that here was activated. The climax of the story comes when she experiences that one of her relatives simply stated that "*He deserved it.*" She claims that several others in her family, who apparently were quite positive towards Mohamed before, now have become considerably more sceptical¹ For Anita this has been especially painful; first, the shock of having her boyfriend over several years being shot and seriously hurt; and then experiencing that several of her significant others dismiss him and suspect him to be causing the trouble himself. It is, of course, difficult to know more exact the mechanisms through which her family members transformed their attitudes (and it is also possible that their relationship to Mohamed was not as good as the young couple sensed or communicated to me beforehand). But if our assumptions about the role of the media-anchored generalisations are true, this may be seen as a clear example of the *complexity of the channels of interpretation*

¹ One may also try to see this from the parent's point of view, that may be motivated by the wish to protect their daughter. For them the fact that Mohamed got shot may have been experienced as so shocking that their ability to reflect on more reasonable grounds may have become severely distorted. A combination of several factors – including the popular stereotypes – are probably the most likely to have occurred.

(sources and reactions) that may be activated, in this case of the images and interpretations of young boys of Pakistani background.

But the generalized images of all young men of immigrant background as gang members and trouble-makers, may also orient actors, even those who have been inadvertently involved, towards bad company.

Anita complains:

“Mohamed now is often getting drunk when he is seeing his new comrades in the city, something he promised me not to do. I think he is playing the tough guy, more macho than earlier. He was more together with us at Rudenga before he was shot. Now it is suddenly so important to go to the city with his new friends and visit places where I am not allowed.”

She complains that he earlier had very good exams, but in the last grade (before he was shot) he got bad ones so he has to apply for taking them again.

“I wanted him to get his exams, go to the university and have a good job. Now he has got a job in a hamburger bar instead. He seems not to care.”

After he was shot Mohamed got more prestige, not least in some of the rougher milieus in the city. Several of his old friends, that is, members of the Rudenga club, did warn him against mingling too much with them because of their bad reputation. Anita states:

“Those guys, his new friends – some of them are ok, but they are from the city and they are quite tough. He gets a lot of prestige because he has been shot, and then he has to live up to it. And when he is in the city he also has to pretend he is tough or else there is much more chance that the Vietnamese will get him.”

In other words, the messages of these generalisations, that no doubt build on some very real examples but are severely exaggerated by the press and then spread in public opinion, also have some *attractive resonance*, as previously remarked while dealing with the ethos of Gangsta Rap. And the toughness required in the real criminal milieus also seems to be activated on Mohamed's own part, for whom this critical event (of harsh secondness) became an important point of pain and confusion. He had good exams originally and had planned to study law in the university, but this event (as well as lack of effort during the last year of secondary school) oriented his life in a quite different direction. His relationship with Anita started to go sour. He seemed to be torn between the attractiveness of his new friends and his girlfriend. This is, of course, far from being a surprising situation for a young boy. But it was felt as a difficult asymmetry to Anita, who longed for

the old days when they both shared more of their lives together. And in their relationship, his being a Muslim seemed to have been quite unproblematic:

He is a Muslim, you know. It is not true that they look down on their women as far as I have experienced it. On the contrary they idolize them and they want to take care of them. But then I think we should be together too. He seems to think that it is ok if he goes out with his friends, and I just sit at home or at the club. But I would like to have a life too.

This split seemed gradually to widen. Some months later their relationship seemed slowly to fade away.

Nevertheless, their relationship was, by themselves as well as their fellow club members, characterised as (especially in this context) long lasting, as harmonic and as featured by mutual respect. In other words, the characteristics of their relationship seemed in several senses to contradict the generalisations that Anita herself refers to – of “Muslims” (and especially the “Pakistani”) as those “*who look down on their women*” (thus possibly indicating the ideals of column I.). In that sense, Anita and Mohamed seemed to be oriented more towards some of the values in column I, that is the pure relationship – but also the phenomenon of love in whatever version – as well as an implied relative equality, in an implicit sense. It was nevertheless the experience of a *lack* of equality that fuelled Anita’s dissonance towards her boyfriend in the later stages of their relationship. This inequality seemed to be a result of *the complex interrelationship between a critical event, the corresponding, activated generalisations of their social environment, Mohamed’s own attraction the image of “the tough guy”, as well as his more age-related inclinations to choose the community of “the boys” in contrast to the intimacy of his girlfriend.* At the same time, the influence of the dimension of “culture” – the orthodoxies of the area of origin, seemed on the contrary to be *relatively weak*, at least concerning events in the aftermath of the critical event.

If we return to Necef’s suggestion that love may function as a bridge between families and offspring of different backgrounds the story of Mohamed and Anita shows several hindrances on both sides. On the one hand the attitude of Mohamed’s family towards gender relations, where boys and girls are not to have any love-relationships before marriage (in line with traditional orientations); their demand that the girl had to be a Muslim, and a suspicion of Western girls, are others. On the other hand, Anita’s friends’ view of Muslims and Pakistanis as someone who “look down upon women”, their possible racism (as well as envy) expressed by saying “Paki whore”, and her family’s inclination to activate negative generalisations about

violence and crime when Mohamed was shot: all these examples show that both cultural practices and popular stereotypes (of which racism is one) are involved. In addition, the interpretants elicited by a critical event – serious violence – seemed to have played a significant role stopping the development and continuation of their relationship.

In their story, the phenomenon of stereotyping, not surprisingly, thus seemed to have played a central role. This theme, and some further examples will be explored further below.

Some salient signs for generalisations: food taboos, popular stories and physical appearance

In the following we will briefly explore how food taboos, elements from popular culture (in this case a film), or physical appearance may be referred to and used to shape and amplify stereotyped “understandings” of young boys of Muslim and, in this case, Moroccan background.

I am sitting in a cafe speaking to Salim (twentyone) and his two comrades (one from a Moroccan-Arabian, the other from a Berber-Algerian immigrant family) about their experiences with girls. Salim has had several girlfriends, both of Moroccan-European (that is Moroccan-Belgian, -French, -Norwegian) and one of solely Norwegian origin. He concludes that he would prefer a girl of Muslim background, as he sees her religious orientation as an imperative criterion for her being a potential marriage partner:

I would prefer a girl from Morocco. It would be difficult for me to be accepted by a Norwegian family, and it would not be easy the other way around either. (...) It would be difficult for me as a Muslim to marry a Christian. I would like to raise the kids as Muslims. She would probably say that so and so will not do; they have to get their sausages and so on (laughing). Not that it has to be big things, but... I think there ought to be some discipline in childraising. Not very strict, but more with common sense (“sunn fornuff”), in the Muslim way. No alcohol, no pork... such things. (...) Religion is important here. Even though I educate myself as a physician, science has never given me any answers to the questions I have asked. Something is missing. There must be something behind it all, something supernatural. My parents have always said that. And I have it in my system, so to speak... But it is more important that she is a Muslim than that she is Moroccan.

Agreement on *childraising* upon a common religious foundation, as well as some basic common sense, “the “Muslim way”, is the most important for Salim. He half-jokingly also introduces the Islamic food prohibitions against

eating pork as a possible source for conflict if his spouse should be a Christian.

But some of the prevailing images around these *food taboos*, despite the humouristic tone with which the boys refer to these incidents, can nevertheless be seen as a *vehicle through which attributes of their identity as “Others” are being constructed*. The very *saliency of such taboos* tend to make them especially inviting for use by actors that associate to a different cultural tradition.

In the experiences of these youngsters, this manifested especially clearly in the attitudes expressed by the parents of their girlfriends, as becomes clear in the following. Here also the comic aspect in this almost caricature-like behaviour of these parents is highlighted:

Rahim (twenty, of Moroccan-Arabian background) and Malou (twenty three, of Berber-Algerian background) who both have Norwegian girlfriends and who have been listening to our conversation, comment:

Rahim: Lots of older people, like my girlfriend’s parents, for example, are quite hung up in those pork things, especially those sausage-things. They come to me and say: “it is not dangerous; there is no bacteria in them.” (sighs and shakes his head). As if I do not know that people have eaten swine for hundreds of years!

Malou: When I am at home with my Norwegian friends, it’s so often they’re saying that “No, you do not eat pork, do you?”. It gives me such a....(shakes his head)

Both Malou and Rahim consider themselves as Muslims, even if they are not especially religious. They try to avoid eating pork according to the prohibitions, but it is my impression that they, like many youngsters in the same situation, are not overtly consistent in these matters. When their girlfriend’s parents focus so strongly upon this food prohibition, it is not this theme in itself that Malou and Rahim experience as difficult. Rather it is the *intensity in their focusing upon these features* that becomes a *vehicle* for emphasizing these boys as different, that is as being “the Others” in contrast to “Us”. The parents stress one feature – that they experience as odd and peculiar compared to the familiar food practices in Norway. In their interpretation, this seems to be especially important in the constitution of what a Muslim is. But even if Rahim and Malou recognize this prohibition as a part of their religion, there are obviously other qualities they consider more important; their food-prohibition was not the theme they felt as the most urgent in their relationship to their girlfriends. This discrepancy seems to be the reason for their complaints vis a vis the messages that these parents convey.

In addition, the parent's underlining that there are not bacteria in the meat seems to suggest that "the Muslims" are assumed to have some strange belief that the meat is dangerous to eat because of bacteria and that this is the assumptions that lies behind the prohibitions of the religion. This seems to imply an assumption that Muslims are underdeveloped and that the knowledge of modern (and presumably Western) science has not yet reached these "primitives". In other words, heavy stereotypes are hereby invoked, elicited by the very saliency of the food taboo against pork that works as an index pointing to these assumed characteristics.

These are further augmented and amplified with the help of reference to a film that seems to have become what we may term "a popular story" about the attitudes and ways of "the Muslims":

Rahim: And if you have a Norwegian girlfriend, then in 80% of the cases the parents react upon you're being a foreigner. The very first thing they say is "have you seen "Not Without My Daughter"?"

This film from 1994 is built upon a book of the same title written by the American writer Betty Mahmoody and is presented as being based upon a true story. It has become very popular, not least because it addresses a theme that often occurs in the tabloid press. Malou sketches its central contents along with his own comments:

Malou: My girlfriend's mother gave that book to her daughter at once when she got to know about us. It is about a couple where she is American and he is from Iran. Then they visit his family in Iran, where the guy starts getting more problematic; he beats her and refuses to let her take the kid back to the States, and insists of settling down in Iran – of all the most exotic places in the world! And the story is all about the struggle of the mother to get herself and the daughter back to the US. I will put it as strongly as saying: in my whole lovelife until now that very film has been the biggest problem. My girlfriend's mother said: "Please do not misunderstand me, but it is so interesting!" Then I have to sit there and explain about this wife and that Iranian, and you have to excuse them and... That's what happened on my first date.

The film – as a virtual experience – thus elicits, supports and contributes to the creation of a generalised image (as interpreted by the girl's parents); it implies that a Muslim male who is married in the West, to a Western girl, is highly likely to become violent and to kidnap their children to bring them "home" to his country as soon as the relationship develops in a more problematic direction. It is highly likely that the mother of Malou's girlfriend was motivated by her care for her daughter on the basis of seeing the

film and her other general impressions (whatever their source). We may see the film as once more exemplifying the use of “what was at hand” as an available sign in the overall semioscape – a salient vehicle – that is felt to have some relevance to the parent’s situation facing their daughter’s relationship to a Muslim boy. In other words, it underlines strongly the power of *the virtual experiences* (in such popular stories) as a medium to “think with”, create and amplify assumptions about the Other in everyday life in a multicultural situation.

But for a young boy on his first date with a girl he is “*plainly in love with*”, it is no wonder that being presented to such generalisations by his girlfriend’s mother are felt as a burden:

She was the very first girl I dated! I did not even think about having kids or anything else. I was just plainly in love. Then she comes up with this film at once. It is quite sick! It’s that media thing. That film has been shown three or four times on TV3 (one of the most commercial television channels in Norway). A girl at my workplace used it against another girl, even. And I had to sit there and explain to my girlfriend’s parents again and again that I am not from Iran, and that that’s really for sure! It is that film, and this sausage-thing!

Salim: Just think about the children’s birthday parties here in Norway (laughing). How are they all going to be if the kids don’t get their sausages! They are completely hung up in the “right to eat sausages”, sort of... Such minor things pop up all the time.

In other words, the sign – a boy of Muslim/Moroccan background who dates with the ego’s daughter – here elicits the interpretants that imply a wide range of rather far fetched generalisations.

In Edward Said’s famous term, such stereotypes are nothing more than an expression of “orientalism”.

In these examples the generalisations have been charged with primarily *negative* attributes evoking fear, feelings of peculiarity and difference. But such stereotypes may also invoke attributes that are considered *attractive*. As Foday stated: “*Some girls are really concerned with my black skin. They think Negroes are so sexy. It’s ok by me, but...*”. Foday himself held that he did not consider this as problematic. Nevertheless this did not seem quite self evident to him, as he remarks that he know others of African background and looks that did not find such attitudes especially flattering. In an interview with a boy of African background, who was also a successful football player from the Grorud valley, he stated this as a problem; he felt he was reduced to “being just a Negro”, that is to the categorising of himself as nothing but a representative for a collectivity on the basis of his physical

appearance. There is also an all black rap group from this area that has acquired the descriptive name “So Called Negroes”; it seems to be an attempt to problematize such collective notions and stereotypes. In all these examples, the salient signs revolve around *physical appearance* as a vehicle for generalisations.

But such attitudes, where, for example, girls may positively idealise boys of different backgrounds on the basis of a generalized view of their looks and features, were also *ridiculed* by two of the Rudenga girls. Monica (17, Norwegian born parents) has had boyfriends of Pakistani, Turkish as well as solely Norwegian background. She was joking about boys together with her friend, Lise. Monica says in a parodying voice: “*Lise only likes Moroccans and Africans. I only like Turks and Pakistanis. Miriam (from South Africa) likes Norwegians best. The way they look is most important, don’t you think?*” (They both laugh)

In this way both Monica and Lise ridicule girls who are likely only to date boys according to their backgrounds and physical looks – both salient signs for generalisations – ,with no regard for “inner qualities”, and for whom stereotypes, based on such collective criteria, play a primary role.

In all these examples, the sign vehicles that seemed to be especially fit for generating generalisations and stereotypes, tended to be characterised by *saliency* in one way or other. The food taboos, the popular stories of assumed “culture”- based gender-related practices, the skin colour and geographic background of the actor are all, in one way or another, “*signs of salience*”. Whether stemming concretely from their objects (the immigrants themselves) or from the landscape of stories and comments available in the sphere of popular culture; they are signs that in the most salient ways seem to elicit assumptions of the difference of the Other in the interpretants of their actors.¹ In these examples we have seen how they have been thoroughly intertwined in the social processes relating to gender in the lives of some of the Rudenga youngsters.

The use of stereotypes – reasoning with a “disqualified guess”

Above we have seen a number of examples that involve stereotypes, understood as a special type of interpretants elicited when exposed to a certain sign or complex of signs:

¹ In some sense these signs seems related to abilities of the phenomenon of dissonance to generate what we have termed “semiotic attention”. This concept and its related phenomenology will be further explored in chapter 9.

There was Talvin, who at first tended to dismiss non-hyphenated Norwegian girls as promiscuous, well in line with the liberal aspects of column I. But after personal experience, he changed diametrically and then expressed a generalized view of the same category girls as the most trustworthy. At the same time, he dismissed girls of Pakistani background who have grown up in Norway as not-trustworthy, and girls growing up in Pakistan as the ideal in these matters, that is, representing positions that in several aspects must be seen as “to the right” of some of the messages of column II. It is of course difficult to judge the range of experiences, impressions and sayings that these generalisations may be built upon. But it became clear that at least some of them were strongly built upon his own, quite personal, subjective experiences that, to a large degree, were generalized to imply more or less “all” or “most” within the actual categories. In this way his personal experiences were used to put an *interpretative stamp* upon relevant collectivities encountered from his unique/personal position. It is also important to notice that several of these generalisations run *counter* to more wide-spread, popular generalisations – in one case as held by Talvin himself some years earlier.

Maurizio generalizes his impressions of Muslim girls with whom “*it is too much stress*”, concerning marriage, religion, their guarding brothers and so on. The experiential groundings for this generalisation are somehow unclear but are likely to be at least partly anchored in his knowledge of the practices and attitudes among his Muslim friends, clubmembers (such as, for example, Talvin) and classmates. Maurizio himself thus represents a position closer to the liberal values of column I, at least in some respects.

In the story of Anita and Mohamed, Anita, on her part, had to struggle against at least four popular generalisations in her relationship to Mohamed. The first she met when some fellow youth in her close surroundings labeled her “Paki whore”, and where one of the assumptions that seem to be invoked is that “Norwegian” girls who dates – in this case – a boy of Pakistani background, are likely to be promiscuous. It is difficult to judge exactly whether this proposal should be understood as a critique against the girl or against the male “Pakistani”; it may be interpreted either as an offensive criticism of a girl who dates “a paki”, or as criticizing “the paki” for stealing one of “our” girls, referring to the collectivity to which the utterer associates himself. The second is that “foreigners”, especially those of Pakistani background, are likely to get involved in ganglife and crime. The third is that “Muslims look down upon their women”. The fourth, of which we have little information, is the possibility that Mohamed’s mother would be inclined to see “Norwegians” (and perhaps “non-Muslim” girls in general)

as promiscuous and therefore dishonourable and not suited for her son; his father might occupy a more open position.

The generalisations that Salim and his friends Rahim and Malou encountered while dating all-Norwegian girls were expressed by the girl's parents who tended to see the boys as curious "Others", wondering if their refusal to eat pork was caused by a lack of "modern" knowledge of its nutritional content and thus suggesting a generalized "primitiveness" of Muslims. The semiotic processes that this meeting seemed to provoke in the parents elicited assumptions built on stereotypes presented in a popular movie, according to which it is assumed that Muslim men married to non-Muslim girls – when problems in their relationships – are likely to kidnap their offspring, bring them back to the fathers country of origin, and develop the most extreme patriarchic attitudes, including the use of violence, as soon as he is in contexts where "Muslim values" are allowed to dominate – as exemplified by the atrocities committed in the most fundamentalist areas, such as the Iran of the late Ayatollah Khomeiny.

This row of generalisations from a variety of positions could easily be developed further. For example, Suleyman (eighteen, Somalian background, came in 1993) says that "*Norwegian girls are very nice. But they behave like boys!*"; this may refer to what he interprets as non-submissive and self-confident behaviour among girls of all-Norwegian background that he has met (pointing to the ideals of column I). Similarly, when Amjat (eighteen, Pakistani background) says: "*Norwegian girls? With them you can do anything.*", he expresses his general impression of what he perceives (and may have actually experienced) as a liberal and experimenting attitude to sexual behaviour, more or less in agreement with Talvin's assumptions of promiscuity.

In all these examples there is an inclination to generalize crude assumptions about large social groups – here especially related to their gender dimensions – on the basis of what may often be assumed to be a relatively narrow range of experiences/knowledge. The phenomenon of generalisation – which, of course, is important and crucial to all human behaviour – is intrinsically dependent on the ability to recognize (again) *iconicity*, in this case, even if this iconicity is limited to extremely few features or only one, such as membership in a larger collectivity such as "Muslims", "Pakistanis", "foreigners", or the like.

To understand the phenomenon of stereotyping, it may be useful to compare it to the mode of reasoning that Peirce has termed "*abduction*". This concept is often used interchangeably with "hypothesis" and can be defined as an assumption or a "theory" about the nature of some phenomenon based on previously noticed information. According to Peirce:

“Abduction makes its start from the facts, without, at the outset, having any particular theory in view, though it is motivated by the feeling that a theory is needed to explain the surprising facts. (...) The mode of suggestion by which, in abduction, the facts suggest the hypothesis is by resemblance, – the resemblance of the facts to the consequences of the hypothesis.” (Peirce 1998:106).

Abduction is considered to be, among other things, the first step of scientific reasoning. Likewise, he also states that ultimately “*abduction is, after all nothing but guessing.*” (*ibid:107*). This is often described as “*a qualified guess*” (see Dinesen and Stjernefelt 1994). It is seen as a form of inference that he explains as follows:

- (1) *The surprising fact, C, is observed.*
- (2) *But if A were true, C would be a matter of course.*
- (3) *Hence, there is reason to suspect that A is true (Peirce 1998:231. Numbers added by the present author).*

When Talvin, after having a successful relationship to an all-Norwegian girl whom he judged as “trustworthy”, changes his generalisations from “all/most – all-Norwegian girls are likely to be untrustworthy/promiscuous” to “all/most all-Norwegian girls are likely to be trustworthy”, he seems to be generalising on the basis of solely one personal experience (that probably was experienced as somehow surprising, granted his earlier assumptions about this category of girls), and this exemplifies the following “syllogism”¹ (the numbers refers to the new sequencing of the positions of the syllogism referred above):

- (1) Talvin discovers (surprisingly) that the Norwegian girl he has a love relation to is trustworthy
- (2) He is thereby inclined to suppose (that is, he builds a “hypothesis”) that if it were true that all Norwegian girls are trustworthy, then this would fit his discovery.
- (3) Hence, he assumes that all/most all-Norwegian girls are trustworthy.

That is: on the basis of one example, he guesses/assumes that most girls with at least one such feature – that is (sharing the iconicity of) Norwegianess – in common with the girl he experienced as “trustworthy”, will be in fact

¹ More on syllogisms in chapter 11.

“trustworthy”¹; (at least in so far as his statements can be taken at face value). If abduction is to be considered to be a “qualified guess”, then stereotyping, as a term for what Talvin’s utterances here exemplify, may perhaps be regarded as “*a disqualified guess*”, in the sense that his guessing is based on facts or evidence that obviously are far from sufficient to assert the “truth” in his generalisation² Nevertheless what abduction and stereotyping seem to have in common is a strong reliance upon iconicity, that is, an inclination to see and recognise resemblances as a basis for creating assumptions/theories about a phenomenon, based on a smaller – almost next to nothing on the one extreme – or a larger number of “facts” (perhaps sufficient) on the other. But while a sound hypothesis is open to future confrontations with relevant facts (Secondness), *the stereotype is likely to be either: 1.) upheld in spite of contradictory evidence, or 2.) revised on a very thin contradictive evidence (as for example in Talvin’s case). In both cases the experiential basis of such generalisations must be regarded as largely insufficient.*

As we have seen, a stereotype may have at least some root in some sort of “facts” (in line with Peirce’s notion of abduction), as, for example, when Talvin generalises from his own experience with an all Norwegian girl, when the parents of Anita assumedly generalise from the newspaper headlines about youngsters of Pakistani background heavily involved in crime and violence (at best building on some real examples), when Maurizio characterises the problems he is likely to encounter with “Muslim girls”, etcetera: In all these examples the generalisations have occurred on the basis of some experiential recognition of resemblance (iconicity). The problem is that this core of truth – that may be discerned – may be very small or very large. For example: Maurizio, who has grown up in an area like Rudenga together with a significant number of Muslim youngsters from several traditions and geographical backgrounds – and who has several Muslim friends and classmates, will necessarily have a much wider range of experiences and examples upon which to build his generalisations, than for example, the parents of Anita who to my knowledge have very little direct experience upon which to build or possibly revise their assumptions of young Muslim boys as generally criminal and violent gang members, or the parents of

¹ It is, of course, important to notice that Talvin’s experience of all-Norwegian girls may also comprise impressions from a much wider range of sources, such as his peers’ experiences, sayings, media-promoted messages, literature, and so on.

² This seems to be similar to what other theorists have termed “predicative thinking” (Arieti 1976). These connections will be discussed more frontally in chapter 11 (“Identification in the multicultural”).

Rahim's girlfriend who seem to have based their assumptions on the film "Not without my daughter".

Nevertheless, despite such differences regarding the "grounds" upon which interpretants are build, generalizing may also be so strong and powerful that even close neighbours may refuse to adjust their views after experiences with "facts" (Secondness) that otherwise would be likely to make them change.

Moreover, and curiously enough, *even lack of generalisations* may counteract the possibility for good relationships; for example, when informants who were some of the first "foreigners" who arrived at Rudenga tell about all-Norwegian neighbours with whom they had very good relationships who emphasised that: "*you and your family that we know are ok, but all the others (for example, Pakistanis) are bad people*". In such examples the interpreters dismiss the opening that the experience creates; they dismiss *the wedge that the countermesssage of experience could have exerted on the stereotype, which still is upheld*.

In other words, the dynamics of generalisations and the social force of stereotyping may occur in a wide variety of social processes (of which all the examples here referred probably comprise only a surface). To discover the nature of the truth or the lack thereof in such assumptions – that in its essence is a matter of *plain quantity* – one needs methods of investigation that are able to capture such quantifications without too much violation of their qualitative content. In some cases, there is obviously a crucial need for *survey* research. In a group where stereotypes and crude generalisations are about to acquire their destructive hegemony, quantitative research could help correct and contest such hegemony thereby orienting public attention in the direction of something that is closer to the "truth".

Gender relations, media images and a variety of positions: an innocence of experience – versus the insensitivity of stereotypes

In this chapter we have seen a variety of different positions from which a variety of subjects relate to the phenomenon of gender. In contexts such as Rudenga, where a variety of cultural backgrounds are found amongst the families and where such a variety is relatively recent, the ways the individuals of the various positions relate to gender and gender related issues are challenged and under pressure to change, not least as the boys and girls are growing up and moving towards the experiences of the grown-up world, a world that is quite different form the world and situations in which the parents grew up. In this process of socialisation, that tends to accelerate in

adolescence, the relations towards gender that we here have seen exemplified on several levels of *experience* are often accompanied by an element of relative *innocence*, of creativity and of experiment that may be regarded as a contrast to the insensitivity and the harshness of the stereotypes that are mobilised, and to the imperative of certain cultural orientations that these youngsters encounter.

The stereotypes are *strongly fuelled by the influence of the media* (the film “*Not without My Daughter*” is but one example). In one of the monthly magazines that attempt to appeal more directly to the life-worlds of the young girls living in Norway at the end of the nineties, some central aspects of the two columns based on Giddens’s theories about social relations in the “Western” world presented earlier are reflected. The magazine – called “*Det Nye*” (meaning “The New”) – one of Norway’s largest and oldest in its kind – is often read by some of the Rudenga girls and has often contained articles on sexual practices that must surely be considered to reflect the high degree of liberalism of both its young buyers as well as its producers. Headlines like “Sexy to be someone’s lover” (November 1999) and “Single and horny? Try sex with a friend” (September 1999), both appeared at the time of the field-work and indicate the interests and ethos they are appealing to, along with articles on, for example, feminism.

In January 2002 one could find an article entitled “TV-inspired sex games” suggesting sex games inspired by popular television programs such as *Chicago Hope*: the nurse and her patient; *NYPD Blue*: sex with handcuffs; *Jamie Oliver: The Naked Chef*: sex with a naked cook; *Ally McBeal*: lesbian sex; *Sex and Single Life*: shoe fetishes; *Dawson’s Creek*: sex with seventeen year olds; *Baywatch*: sex and parody, (all translations from these magazines by the present author). Even if the content of these articles, on closer readings, must be judged as relatively innocent, they nevertheless indicate a definite *aura of liberalism*; as articles on such themes are a repeated feature of this magazine (as well as several others), they must be assumed to appeal to their young buyers. Such examples are also referred to by Jamieson:

“Greater acceptance of gender equality is typified by the shift in magazines aimed at women and girls. Where once their content retained coy silence on sex and a strong emphasis on romance, readers now receive acceptance or encouragement of active sexuality and sexual desire (...)” (Jamieson 1999:483)

In the same issue of the Norwegian magazine referred to above, is an article about young male “Muslims” and “Hindus” under the heading: “Norwegian

girlfriends, no thanks!” (page 60-63). Here Vimalam (32, from Sri Lanka), Abid (26, Pakistani parents) and Hamad (25, Pakistani parents) all refuse the thought both of marrying or dating a “Norwegian” girl for several reasons. They all criticize the tendency to equality between the genders in Norwegian society. Abid is quoted as saying: *“I carry all the bags and open the doors. I am creating romantic surprises and take more initiative; she is the one that is following. To her the kitchen is sacred, and it is natural that she has the main responsibility for the children.”* Vimalam: *“I hate Norwegian female bosses. I cannot respect them, for they try to be like men.”* (For Abid, however, female bosses are no problem.). All the interviewed idolize chastity before marriage, etcetera.

In other words, both articles may be regarded as providing strong confirmation of the generalisations concerning both the liberal attitudes and frivolity of the “Norwegian” girls (and probably of “Western” youth in general), matching central messages of column I, on the one hand, and the patriarchic and conservative attitudes, of “the foreigners”(here Muslims of Pakistani background and Hindus of Sri Lankan background), matching or to the right of the messages in column II. on the other.

It is important to notice that there seems to be a tendency to associate several of the messages of column I to the “Western” ways, while the attitudes of column II, especially in the more extreme versions, are often one-sidedly associated to “the immigrants”. Through this process in which the landscape of gender relations is made into something either black or white, the non-immigrants seem to forget, or not to be willing to see, that several of the attitudes of column II are actually adhered to by conservative agents among the “Westerners” themselves. In this way such semiotic polarisation – where “we” represent the “good” and “the immigrants”, that is the “Others”, represent the “bad” – hides the nuances and the complexities in the various positions along the continua of the scales of greys between these opposites; it also contributes further hindrances to the developments of the relationships between the immigrant families and their majority surroundings, so that *resonance* might occur.

This tendency of polarisation is also strongly reflected in Toynbee’s previously mentioned rhetoric:

“Even if we don’t like to admit it, we are all missionaries and believers that our own way is the best when it comes to things that really matter – freedom, democracy, liberation, tolerance, justice and pluralism. Our culture is the culture of universal human rights and there is no compromise possible.” (Toynbee, in Giddens and Hutton 2000 :200)

One can agree with Toynbee that freedom, democracy, liberation, tolerance, justice and pluralism are all worthy ideals, but her tone is boasting, self-admiring and devoid of the self criticism and humbleness required for understanding the difficulties that attempts to realize these ideals would entail, even if she elsewhere recognizes that the struggle for gender equality is “only half made”. To simplify such struggle to be an emblem for the “West” struggling against “the rest” creates a parody of misunderstood imperialism. Along similar lines of criticism, Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad comments that what (here) the Norwegians criticize the most amongst the immigrants are the very things that comprise “our” own sore spots (Gullestad 2002).

The occasional violence against women of immigrant background, exemplified by the horrors of so called “honour killings” –most recently in a Scandinavian context of Fadime, a young Kurdish-Swedish woman who was killed by her father after having had a relationship to an all-Swedish man – makes it easier to forget that such violence also occurs among “Western” men (see, for example, Wikan 2002). As Giddens writes:

The sexual control of women by men is much more than an incidental feature of modern life. As that control starts to break down, we see the compulsive character of male sexuality more plainly revealed – and this declining control also generates a rising tide of male violence towards women. (Giddens 1994:3)

In other words, not only Muslim men, brothers or fathers – who in tragedies of the most extreme versions murder their daughters/sisters who attempt to live their lives in a freer mode, outside their control – are possibly facing deep crisis. *In the hunt for examples that confirm the worst stereotypes of the Other, Western opinion forgets to see the gender related problems in their own societies.*

We have already referred to the assumed crisis among Western males as a possible result of the turbulent changes relating to gender. According to Weiss, similar developments are also detectable in the Muslim world, here in the case of Lahore:

“Because of womens’ increased competencies, men are also realizing that women do not need them as much as in the past, and that it is possible for women to be self-reliant. Needless to say this creates ample confusion in a society where social norms still revolve around honour and respect as there is a discernible increase in mens’ fear of what uncontrolled, qualified women might do.” (Weiss, in Ahmed and Donnan (eds.)1994:135)

She continues:

In the past, rape was comparatively rare and generally effected as retribution against the property of an enemy. This has changed given the current level of frustration (political and economic) that many men experience in the larger society. The materialism which has pervaded most sensibilities stresses status, the assertion that one is powerful. Does the rise in violent crimes against women indicate that men perceive this as a way of being powerful, or that they are punishing women who are acting outside of traditional norms which emphasise limited mobility?" (ibid:138)

The critique that has been uttered in Western societies (which is of course in several respects correct, necessary and understandable) of the patriarchic and, at times, extreme gender inequality among conservative immigrant families must be seen as situated in the existing semioscape of gender relations where an ideal of greater gender equality, female emancipation and pure relationships is on its rise. This is probably especially salient among the intellectual middle-class (supported and stimulated by experts such as psychologists, therapists and so on); whereas an ideal of patriarchy, inequality and older notions of romantic love that perhaps has a stronger hold within other societal layers, is on the decline. The varieties of facts, showing that gender inequality is still alive and well in Western societies, are especially manifested in structural relations like gendered labour markets, gendered distributions of income and wealth, gendered divisions of domestic labour and gendered divisions of caretaking for children (see also Jamieson 1999). This already existing tension, between these two orthodoxies of the larger continuum of attitudes towards gender and corresponding chains of messages seem to play an important role in *fuelling the stereotypes* (as well as more reasonable criticism) among non-immigrant actors towards gender in immigrant milieus. Through these dynamics of stereotyping it tends to *cement the Other in a fixed position* and, thereby, to undercommunicate and ignore the eventual agencies of change. In such ways the Other tends to become a *scapegoat for the political ideals that the non-immigrant population have not (yet?) been able to achieve in the shortcomings of their own project of liberation*.

The other side of that coin is, of course, the tendency to avoid criticism of the patriarchy of conservative immigrant milieus, out of fear of being accused of racist attitudes (see, for example, Wikan 2002). Of course, both xenophobia and racism, in some degree, may be exactly the underlying motivational force behind such criticism, especially when it is uttered by actors that never before have preached female liberation, for example the

right wing politicians. This makes the attitudes among the discussants in these matters a complex issue.

More alternative voices

Nevertheless, there are certainly alternate positions to the oversimplified polarisations in the public life of multicultural Norway; these may play an important role in counteracting and breaking down both stereotyped polarisations and the patriarchy of the conservative agents. One of the most expressive examples of this is the young female stand-up comedian and debatant of Pakistani background, Shabana Rehman. She shocked conservative Muslim milieus in Norway by posing naked in one of Norways largest newspaper, with no less than the Norwegian flag painted on her body (see *Dagbladet* 15th of January 2000). At present she has a regular column for comments in the same paper. After the article presenting the three young boys of immigrant background in “*Det Nye*” referred to above, she responded to what she saw as their male chauvinist attitudes. Under the heading “The hypocrites” she writes:

“How can young men that have all grown up in our society expose such insightful points of view, elegantly hidden behind a religious, traditional and apparently caring image of reality in which the religiously oriented man apparently is a protector and caretaker? (...) The gender roles that these boys idealize make the girls into coquetting dolls and the men into authoritarian god figures. What these boys do not see is that it is exactly this mentality that allows men to commit injustices.” (Dagbladet 5th of January 2002, my translation)

Rehman has on several occasions severely criticized and ridiculed what she sees as antiquated, authoritarian and male chauvinist attitudes among various immigrant milieus in Norway. Even if she also receives considerable support it is reported that she receives several letters and e-mails from both young and old persons of immigrant background who complain that her controversial behaviour and outspokenness make more conservative parents so scared that she is accused of being a hindrance to the change she attempts to stimulate. When their offspring express the wish to decide for themselves, parents are reported to reply that they do not want their children “*to become like this Shabana*” (*Aftenposten* 11th of March 2002). Such a critique has also been put forth by high-profiled politicians of immigrant background. In a recent article the well-known Norwegian historian and novelist, Karsten Alnæs, compares her to no other than the Norwegian female writer and feminist, Camilla Collett, who died in 1895. He writes:

“Camilla Collett fought against the arranged marriages that were usual among the class of civil servants (“embedsstanden”, in Norwegian, remark by V.V.) in the 19th century. At that time marriage was a union between two families, more than between two individuals. Collett fought for the right of the women to choose love – just like Shabana Rehman does today. She is the Camilla Collett of our time.” (Aftenposten 13th of March 2002, my translation).

Rehman, in other words, seems to be highly controversial, especially amongst conservative immigrant families. Her colourful public persona may tend to make the public overlook other and more “silent” ways of counteracting the extreme versions of patriarchal attitudes in some immigrant milieus.

On the 9th of February 2002 close to 1000 Muslims of both sexes demonstrated in Oslo against suppression of women, honour killings and forced marriages. Here twenty-one year-old Masoome Sobut, who is of Somalian origin and second leader in an organisation called Muslim youth of Norway, was one of the main speakers. According to the journalist Wasim Raz, himself a Muslim of Pakistani background, Sobut can be seen as an alternative position to the young women who more loudly (like Shabana Rehman) criticize the conservative Muslim ways of being :

“Masoome Sobut yesterday told us that there are also young Norwegian-Muslim women that wear hijab and follow Islam without feeling that they are forced to it.” (Aftenposten 10 February 2002, my translation).

In other words, as the variety of cases presented in this chapter indicate, these more public examples emphasize that the stereotypes about gender relations amongst the “Muslims” (although obviously true in some extreme cases) must be seen as an oversimplification, covering a much more complex reality. As if stressing exactly this point, the demonstration where Sobut spoke, staged by the so-called “Council of Islam” – an organisational umbrella that covers twenty-six different Muslim congregations – had as its main slogan “*Against generalisations*” (ibid)!

Only when the relative innocence of the experiences of these youngsters, to a sufficient degree may be allowed something like “a room of their own”, so to speak, maximally free of the pressures and inadequacies of the mobilized stereotypes that exist among both the all Norwegian majority as well as among the immigrant families themselves, may their experiments towards new relationships – whether in love or in friendships – have a real possibility to fulfil themselves on their own internal premises: to be rejected or celebrated; to reach a wide range of possible conclusions in between these poles, and to follow their own direction and to be negotiated first and

foremost by the subjectivities involved. In other words: youngsters are growing up within the intersecting pressures of populist stereotypes, for example, as presented in the media or through the cultural orientations of the older generations, whether in the versions of the hegemonic majority or in the versions of the various immigrant families themselves. To have an optimal chance to develop their relationships according to the possibility for “the new” that lies inside these relational processes, one could only wish for the pressures of such stereotypes to be eliminated. If and to what degree such a possibility could have a chance to be developed as a matter of fact, is, of course, a different question.

Nevertheless, in some places, at some times and within some social constellations, such possibilities do seem to manifest, as the following example indicates:

Two new female leaders (both twenty years old) were telling me about how frightened they were when they got the job at the Rudenga club. “We thought we would get words like ‘fucking whore’ thrown after us all the time. We were so sure that immigrant boys and female leaders would mean trouble. And Rudenga did not exactly have a good reputation. I had even got myself a book where I planned to report all such incidences. But it remained empty!”¹

¹ In a recent article Lien reports gender-related practices among youngsters of immigrant background attending a secondary school in Oslo that strongly contrast with this picture. There exactly the extreme and boasting masculine chauvinism were seen among a small number of young boys that seemed to dominate a larger milieu in a city area (Lien 2002). This illustrates the large variation that may be observed regarding these issues.

9 The power of dissonance. Part I. Semiotic attention, emotional arousal and “standing up for your place”

In the previous chapters the phenomenon of *resonance* has been illuminated from a large variety of angles.¹

In part I, we investigated social resonance in the tiny details of social dynamics on the micro level in the musical conversation of Ola and Omar. Then some of its more cognitive aspects were traced in the ways the youngsters of Rudenga could see themselves in the signs of Hip Hop and in the various manifestations of resonance in Omar’s use of and relationship to a series of youth cultural traditions on a more personal level.

In part II, we have seen the creative force of resonance as manifested in what we have termed “a community of differences” among the Rudenga youngsters, where new practices of greeting rituals, language use, dress and music were developed and taken into use, in so far as they resonated with the habitus of their users. In the chapter on gender relations we have discussed from various angles another most basic manifestation of resonance in human relations: the phenomenon of love.

With the exception of the chapter on Omar’s relationship to Black Metal, our analysis and descriptions point to resonance as a salient quality of the social relations among these Rudenga youngsters. The overall judgement in the case of Rudenga is that this milieu of multicultural youngsters is characterised by friendship, inclusion, mutual respect and a strong feeling of community. Differences stemming from the wide varieties of cultural origins are exposed, tolerated, recognised and even celebrated; at the same time an overarching community is built, with the help of a wide variety of sources that include impulses from the immigrant families represented, from popular culture, from the all-Norwegian majority as well as from more local sources. In other words, resonance in its most relational and interactional sense seems to be the dominating social mode and it plays a foremost role in the selection

¹ Resonance/dissonance have earlier been defined as primary qualities of affective and cognitive connectivity in acts of interpretation that are especially invested with personal concerns. See also the article by Wikan, entitled “The power of resonance” that is paraphrased in the title of the present chapter.

of signs from the actual semioscapes that is put into use in the most salient local practices.

The picture of the social relations among the Rudenga youngsters so far thus seems to be relatively idyllic.

The purpose of this chapter will be to question this picture and to investigate and explore some cases and critical events – especially (though not solely) concerning the Rudenga youngsters' encounters with the outside world – where the opposite quality of social relations were manifested, in the shape of various aspects of what we have termed dissonance.

This phenomenon has been present all along in our descriptions, mainly as a continuous possibility. As we remember from chapter 1, we suggested that *dissonance should be seen as a possibility that accompanies (all) social relations*: if there were no possibility for *rejection of confirmation* in a wide range of possible manifestations, then the opposite phenomenon (resonance) could not occur. Resonance/dissonance must therefore be seen as truly complementary phenomena. The *uncertainty* that the ever present possibility for dissonance creates must be seen as an intrinsic condition for the necessary emotional investment in human relations, that is, for such relations to be experienced as meaningful.

In the following I will argue that when dissonance manifest or is experienced as a more direct or seriously threatening phenomenon, under certain conditions it may be involved in the creation of certain meaning-generating practices in which the activation of games of power and of heightened emotional investment of complex qualities are intrinsically emerging characteristics. The phenomenon of dissonance thus seems to possess a certain *power* that is strongly related to the generation of meaning.

To elaborate these points, a few remarks upon some basic terms in communication theory are required.

Dissonance, probability, semiosis and the concept of information

The concept of information has for several decades been the subject of much controversy (see, for example, Qvortrup 1993).¹ As a starting point for his

¹ Qvortrup distinguishes four different definitions of information: 1. Information as a difference in reality. 2. Information as a difference that makes a difference, i.e. a difference in reality which causes a mental difference. 3. Information is a difference which finds a difference, i.e. a conceptual difference which finds or which is confirmed (or triggered) by something in the outer world. 4. A cognitive difference which brings forth (an idea about) an external world. (Qvortrup 1993:3-4)

discussion Qvortrup refers to Shannon's and Weaver's highly influential article entitled "The Mathematical Theory of Communication" (1949), where the authors especially focus upon the phenomenon of *probability* and its implication for the understanding of what information is. The authors use the theory of probability to differentiate between varying *amounts* of information (see, for example, Wiener quoted in Qvortrup 1993:7).

Qvortrup quotes Shannon who states that :

"What must be transmitted is a specification of the particular message which was chosen by the information source. The original message can be reconstructed at the receiving point only if such an unambiguous specification is transmitted. Thus in information theory, information is thought of as a choice of one message from a set of possible messages." (Shannon, in Qvortrup 1993:5).

In his discussion Qvortrup emphasizes that this notion of *choice* more specifically points to an understanding of information as a "*subjective phenomenon*" (ibid.), (even if, as he remarks, this probably had such wide-reaching implications that Shannon did not seem fully to realise this logical fact, ibid). Qvortrup notices, however, that Shannon's and Weaver's information theory, is emphasized by its authors to have nothing to do with the *content* of communication or with what we usually speak of as "meaning" (ibid.); their main interest was held to be the *engineering* of information – the transmitting of signals through technical devices and unreliable channels such as a telephone (Shannon was working at the Bell Telephone Laboratories, ibid). As Qvortrup remarks, this seems to be a point of definite ambivalence for the authors, and these connections seem to comprise a riddle (the role of content/meaning in the transmittance of information) that has fascinated a long series of later information theorists. Weaver himself emphasizes that he sees the application of probability theory to semantic studies as "*a promising lead*" (Weaver, in Smith 1966:24).

As Qvortrup states, starting with the theory of Shannon and Weaver, we may discern the contours of a concept of information as something that makes a difference *for someone* (that originally in Shannon's project meant for some *thing* in the shape of a technical device); that is, we are close to Peirces notion of the sign as something that for someone stands for something else in some respect or capacity: information must accordingly be approached as a difference that is *interpreted* (that is: *that makes a difference* to someone, following Bateson's famous definition) by a (human) agent.

The other central proposal that Qvortrup highlights in the theory of Shannon and Weaver is that "*information is inversely proportional to probability*" (ibid:7); this implies that the amount of information is held to

be heightened in so far as it *deviates* from the order imposed by probability. The implications of this assumption we will return to below.

To make things even more cryptic, this core assumption in Shannon's and Weaver's theory is then compared with another theorist, Norbert Wiener, who on the contrary states that the "*Amount of information is a measure of the degree of order which is peculiarly associated with those patterns which are distributed as messages in time.*" (Wiener in Qvortrup 1993:7)

Qvortrup, in his discussion, counterpoints Shannon's and Weaver's theory of information with Wiener's theory, when he sums up:

"Wiener's theory of information is not the same but the opposite of Shannon's theory. While to Shannon information is inversely proportional to probability, to Wiener it is directly proportional to probability. To Shannon, information and order are opposed; to Wiener, they are closely related." (Qvortrup 1993:7)

For our purposes the question is: what does this riddle imply for the understanding of the creation of meaning? *How can this theory be transmitted, applied to and made relevant for the understanding of human semiosis?*

Let us start by asking one of the implied questions more precisely: what would be the subjective *experiential* equivalent to probability?

As a pointer to a possible answer to this question, Qvortrup – who criticises both Shannon/Weaver as well as Wiener for not having sufficiently recognised that information is necessarily related to an observer's idea of order (that is, to an *interpretant*) – states that:

"...meaning and probability are related concepts. Firstly probability is probability to somebody. Thus an interpretant is implied. Secondly, probability is probability in relation to a set of expectations, that is a semantics – a system of meanings." (Qvortrup 1993:7)

Expectations, in a variety of social forms, seem to play a crucial role in social life; for example, this was seen in the analysis of a basic human activity, such as in the musical conversation between Omar and Ola, and later in the analysis of their relationship as friends and breakdance partners.

Expectations are found on the *interpersonal level* in the most basic social needs, in the sense that any successful relation between two human beings implies the building up of an encompassing web of interpersonal expectations and a corresponding and mutual trust (likelihood, expectation) of experiencing the *confirmation* of those expectations in one form or the

other (the relation between parents and child, and of close friendship can serve as primary examples). On an even more *existential level*, the experience of something threatening the subject in various ways – the ultimate being the continual presence of the possibility of death – is also a cause of some measure of probability in our daily lives. And in so far as one tends to expect a life cycle according to the social context one inhabits, uncertainty is elicited when the more collectively shared expectations about the course of one's life are unfulfilled or broken. This points to a *communal level* where basic expectations concerning ontological, aesthetical and ethical matters are core elements that make up *social norms*; these confirm and strengthen (through sanctioning) ways of being and behaving that are defined, preferred and sanctioned by the various communities to which one adheres. These are, in some cases, even “harder” institutionalised in various forms of public laws. Such phenomena may be seen as devices of high orienting power that make *order* through the establishment of various directioning fields of expectations that are voluntarily or involuntarily both imposed and generated by the members of their corresponding communities. In other words: *every social game (understood as a field of relevance) – which Bourdieu's “illusio” invites into or imposes upon those who have the required sense of distinction – may be seen as a field of expectations with its own assumptions (according to the habitus) of the probabilities for their confirmation.*

This means that the confirmation of the socially channelled expectations tends to be experienced as some sort of *order*, while the deviation from these expectations tends to be experienced as *disorder*, in the sense that *expectations imply a mental attunement in the present to some sort of future repetition of something that has been experienced in the past.* When encountering a difference, order will be experienced if it is possible to place or understand that difference by relating it to a pattern of differences that is already established on the basis of past experience (in the shape of Peircean Thirdness – habits, judgements, matching the phenomenon of the habitus). An expectation can thus be understood as *a preconceived judgement (or inclination to judge, along all degrees of consciousness from the vaguest hunch to the most distanced calculation) of the probability for something to occur; it is an assumption that seeks its own fulfilment.*

The contours of the key experiential aspect that relates to the riddle of probability in information theory therefore seems to be revealed in the answer to a seemingly innocent question: what will occur when expectations (at one of the different levels mentioned above) is *not* confirmed – including events where the *unexpected* suddenly intrudes on the attentional field?

The answer is that it will tend to lead to a *heightening of* (what we may term) *semiotic attention, that is of the emotional and attentional investment in the subjective focus directed at the difference in question.*

Or put in other words: a violation/disruption of an expectation, which may be regarded as an instance of dissonance in one way or another, – whether in social relations, existential assumptions or communal norms – will lead to an emotional and attentional arousal; this seems to provide the difference in question with a correspondingly heightened amount of semiotic attention proportional to the concerns invested. This also seems to be in accordance with Colapietro’s statements about the interpretants elicited when will/effort/intentions are thwarted:

“When the organism actually or even just imaginatively is thwarted in the realization of a purpose, consciousness ordinarily becomes heightened; consciousness, in effect, sounds an alarm informing the organism that its actions are at odds with its purposes. Consciousness in this context is the focus of conflict between the exertions and the expectations of the organism; the more intense the conflict, the more heightened the consciousness.” (Colapietro 1989:57)

In agreement with this quote, expectations may be seen as an internalised orientation towards a certain outcome that, in its most sharpened form, may manifest as a deliberate purpose.

I therefore suggest that the work of this *arousal* can be regarded as a possible translation of the doctrine of probability from the mathematical conceptualisation of information deriving from Shannon and Weaver, to the phenomenon of human semiosis. This assumption is also in tune with Rapoport, who adheres to their theory when he suggests the application of their insight to human communication, for example in the following statement:

“A manner of expression full of clichès is, of course, high in redundancy. It turns out in the mathematical theory of information that messages from a clichè-ridden source (such as the oratorical repertoire of a run-of-the-mill politician) are also poor in information.” (Rapoport in Smith 1966:51)

In other words: clichès, because of their repetitious and foreseeable nature, will according to this theory be reduced in meaning because of their *lack of dissonance/disorder* that is implied in their all too smooth resonance with the past, that therefore causes them to stir up/elicit less semiotic attention accordingly (see also Lyons 1971; Larsen 1987).

But such an understanding is not at all unproblematic in so far as it strongly seems to contradict our previous conclusions that the opposite phenomenon, resonance (that is confirmation of expectancies), in fact plays a crucial and necessary role in, for example, the development of successful and harmonious relations between people. And no one would deny that – seemingly in contradiction to this assumption – it is exactly predictability that is a necessary condition for a wide range of social interactions (as indeed for “culture” in the sense of what is being shared) to exist at all.

Such objections lead us therefore and on the contrary towards Norbert Wiener’s position who states that the amount of information is heightened proportional to the order the messages (the difference) are associated to. This is in accordance to, for example, the well-known story of some of the passengers’ behaviour while experiencing the sinking of Titanic. As a response to this extremely threatening situation – of being a passenger on a sinking ship held to be unsinkable – they started to sing an old psalm (called “Jesus blood never failed me yet”). This may be regarded as representing both the desperate urge for the known as well as for the ultimate order, also in the shape of the order of God, in such an existentially chaotic situation. This is, of course, the diametrically opposed to the quest for chaos and disorder in a situation characterised by relative safety, routine and predictability.

At this point it may be interesting to notice the theory of the experience of what the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls “flow”. This may be understood as denoting a state close to being an ultimate meaningful and rewarding experience (a so-called “peak experience”). It is argued that such an experiential state can only be reached in a position “*beyond boredom and anxiety*” (which is also the title of his book from 1975). The core of his theory implies that to reach this attractive experiential quality the actor must be experiencing an amount of disorder that is relatively close to the limits for his/her own competence and tolerance but that, on the one hand, does not exceed these limits. If that happens, the resulting experiential quality will be *anxiety and fear*. On the other hand, the amount of disorder must not be so low that no or too little effort/attention is required to the task/action in question. If that is the case, the result will be the experiential quality of *boredom*. Thus the ultimate rewarding experience will lie *beyond* these two poles; more precisely it will occur if one finds the required balance between order and chaos; this necessarily must vary according to the nature of the subjectively perceived situation, we may add (ibid.).

In line with such a phenomenology, I suggest that the answer to this riddle of the nature of the relation between meaning and probability is highly connected to the *subjective (mood, state of mind depending on the)*

interpretation of the context and situation in which the information occurs. This may be summed up as follows:

In a situation subjectively perceived as being of a high degree of order, repetition, routine, predictability etcetera, semiotic attention (implying a high degree of “meaningfulness”/relevance) will increase as this orderliness is challenged in one way or another; when the clichè is broken; when the norm is violated; when irregularities occur, and when things start to seem different from the normal. Correspondingly, in a situation subjectively perceived as disordered, chaotic, irregular, unusual, threatening, unpredictable etcetera, semiotic attention (meaning/information) will increase while spotting/creating/activating signs that are held to represent a possibility to achieve, create or reinstall order. In other words: the search for *order* and the search for *disorder* seem to be the two sides of the same coin: the phenomenon of meaning. This underlines once again that this phenomenon cannot be adequately understood without its interpreting subject, well in line with Peirce’s theory of signs.

But such a theory seems to be inadequate without somehow relating it to the role of the phenomenon of *power*.

On the collective level, power will be used by the corresponding authorities in the project of re-installing the previous order when norms or social ontology are violated or threatened, or, on the personal level, in the case of conflicts or competition. It will also tend to be activated when the corresponding order is attempted changed, avoided or used in alternative or unusual ways or somehow related to in accordance with alternative or conflicting interests. In both cases there will be an increase in semiotic attention as the signs and messages put into use, in accordance with our argument above, will be increasingly charged with meaning and relevance. If the use of power signals a threat to the persons and the associated order/disorder, semiotic attention (that is, investment/relevance) will be heightened, resulting in a corresponding charging of the sign that represents this threat (including its associated user) – in the shape of social attention and ascription of (positive or negative) importance. In some cases – and this is of special relevance for understanding the semiotics of youth – such importance (semiotic attention) is sometimes sought for more in its own right, for example in the quest for social prestige (as we will exemplify below).

Related phenomena are especially evident in the case of the phenomenon of *play*. In an article criticizing Jean Piaget’s understanding of play, John Sutton-Smith argues that Piaget tends to see play primarily as characterised by lack of ability to handle “reality” (Sutton-Smith 1982). On

the contrary, he argues that the core quality of play is the search for what he terms *temporary disequilibrium*, not primarily the search for a resolution about how the world “is”. As he writes about play:

“... it is disequibrial on purpose – not by mistake, by cognitive deficit, or by affective deficiency. Like festivals and Mardi Gras, like mountaineering and tight-rope walking, it is tension enhancing (...) The players are inclined to insist that their intent is not the ultimate resolution but the momentary imbalance. In short, to study play structurally is to study the character of disequilibrium or novelty.”
(Sutton-Smith 1982:342)

When, for example, children declare the carpet to be a pond filled with frightening crocodiles, or the chair to be a racer car, they transform the conventional function of these objects into something more desirable. Through this double glance – where they see the carpet both as a carpet (a fact they of course are perfectly able to know) – and as a pond of crocodiles, this doubleness seems to be associated with a certain joy; that is the joy and the heightening of attention (arousal) elicited by things that temporarily are transformed to something else than what they use to be, so to speak, that is, when they are *freed from the habits of convention*. Implicit in such a transformation lies the potential for questioning the world as it is; for challenging the order of the normal. In the kindergarten where I did my first anthropological fieldwork, the staff spoke of the necessity of handling what they emically termed “*the fear of chaos*” which was nothing but the fear and unease aroused in the grown-ups when they witnessed too much disorder created by the children (see Vestel 1992). In accordance with Wiener’s emphasis in his theory of information, this example demonstrates the need and the meaningfulness of order when the amount of chaos becomes too much. The fear of chaos seemed to be produced when the arousal – what we here have termed the semiotic attention created by the questioning of the norms – became too strong and reached the limits of tolerance of the grown-up actors. For the children, on the contrary, this arousal seemed to be exactly the “stuff” that the phenomenon of “fun” (in play) was made of, touching similarly on the original weight put upon chaos in the generation of information by Shannon and Weaver. These conflicting interests between the children and the adults – who clearly viewed the situation as subjectively different in such a setting – also demonstrate the potential for mobilising games of power that such transgressions imply, as when, for example, the staff of the kindergarten demanded calm and order after the most expressive excesses of the playing children.

With these theoretical assumptions in mind we will continue our explorations of the theme of *dissonance* among the Rudenga youngsters.

The rise and fall of “The Mafia Gang”: announcing one’s existence to the world

The most eye-catching visual signs one encounters while entering the Grorud Valley – not least along the line of the subway number 5, from the central station of Oslo and to the end point at Vestli, and along the train stations in the southern part of the valley – are the large number of “tags” (the initials of their authors) and pieces of graffiti (larger, more or less thoroughly worked and colourful spray paintings) in a variety of shapes and sizes. In primitive, not-yet finished versions, as well as in minutely detailed compositions, we spot combinations of letters that after further investigation become recognizable. My fourteen year- old expert informant explain these abbreviations for me: FLC (Five Line Crew – an older and locally legendary group of youngsters who took their name from the number of their subway train); CIA (Combat In Action), KMA (Kiss My Ass); COL (Crime Of Latinos); EST (in Norwegian “Europas Små Taggere” – the Small Taggers of Europe); ESH (in Norwegian: “Elleville Super Helter” – the Enthusiastic Super Heroes); ESL (East Side Locos); NRL (New Rudenga Locos); TMG (The Mafia Gang,) etcetera, and a long range of initials whose content my informants do not know, or whose letters are simply a name, such as ALL, HETS, GOOFY, NINJAS. New crews and tags are appearing continually, and old ones disappear. Both single persons and groups may hide between these curious and intentionally public visual signs.

They all have in common that they have grown out of the original Hip Hop tradition, and must be seen as one more example of impulses from this tradition that have been acquired by local young users growing up in a wide range of milieus around the world, of which the Grorud Valley is only one. Hip Hop historian Nelson George labels these visual expressions “a guerilla art” (George 1998:11). In the heydays of graffiti these initials were made into pieces that covered whole subway cars, being made into huge super signs that carried the name, knowledge and reputation of their young authors all around the urban milieus to which they belonged. This inventive act created instant attention and fame for low-class youngsters from often stigmatized areas in the large American cities of its origin (*ibid.*). If pop music is about the “three minutes of fame” (in the famous expression of pop-art artist Andy Warhol) for their artists, then graffiti is the equivalent for any young person with the required nerve, spray boxes and knowledge to

undertake it, including the role of being at times a very prominent figure in the nightmares of the police and the public authorities, as well, with all the consequences this implies.¹ As George writes in 1998:

“Grafitti’s wonderful subway-car long pieces can now look as dated as unlaced Adidas. Yet there is a youthful integrity and humour to them that reminds us in the jaded ‘90s that Hip Hop didn’t start as a career move but as a way of announcing one’s existence to the world.” (ibid:14)

As previously described, within the Hip Hop tradition in the recent decade, the emergence of gangsta-rap has introduced the modern gangster and mafioso figures into its mythology. The renewal of the fascination for old and new gangster films, as well as combat movies – of heroes like Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Jean-Claude van Damme, and the more esoteric directors like John Woo – that have accompanied this development, have all become central ingredients in the lifeworlds and fantasies of even the most slightly Hip Hop influenced milieus, including the youngsters in the Rudenga club. The criminal, the gangster and the gang are all mythological figures whose main characteristics are their willingness to cross the societal border of unacceptable behaviour, of law in a wide range of senses, and, by doing this, creating strong dissonance and semiotic attention (arousal) in the law-abiding members of society and its authorities. The deviations from societal norms that such figures represent, according to our arguments above, thus create attention (in both their own as well as the eyes of their surroundings) that seems to be especially attractive and sought for among various groups of youth, in situations where such attention is held as especially relevant – where it is of special importance to *announce ones existence to the world*, as we soon shall see.

Around the spring of 1996, one could spot a large number of tags that read “TMG” in a variety of locations around the weary blocks of the Rudenga area. Behind these initials one found a group of youngsters, primarily of Pakistani background, that named themselves “The Mafia Gang”.

In November 1996 a female leader at the Rudenga club expressed concern for what she saw as a highly problematic development. According to her TMG was spreading threats to other youngsters and to the personel at

¹ For a thorough study of the recent Norwegian milieu of graffittimakers in Oslo, as well as the practices of justice related to their trials, see Høigård 2002.

the club; they were heavily involved in tagging, in extortion and they cut up seats in the subway trains; two or three of the members were involved in more serious crime, and were well known by the police. Most of the members – who were estimated to be around fifty persons at its heights – all wore scarfs with the TMG initials of “the crew” and were said to be very visible to their surroundings. As this developed the staff at the club found it necessary to initiate close cooperation with the child care institutions, the school and the police to counteract the problems. And the club leader made no secret that she found the situation highly problematic. She quit her job some months after our meeting.

In 1998, I asked Sardar, who two years earlier was one of the founders of the “gang”, how it all started:

TMG, that were us the Pakistanis in Rudenga. We all started as a group of friends. It was I, Ravi, Mohamed and a couple of other guys. Most of us were between fourteen and sixteen. At that time we just wanted to be tough guys, so we invented the name and started to write our tags all around in Rudenga so that we would get known. Then it all started to grow. Several others wanted to join us. We got our own scarfs. In a shop where they sold football gear we bought letters we could glue to the scarfs so that the name TMG could be seen on them. We wanted to look a little scary, you know. When we got the letters, we became better known. I have many friends that wanted to borrow that scarf (smiles).

Anthropologist: The gangs that were known from the papers, Young Guns, the A-gang and the B-gang, were they something you related to?

Oh yes; you know we were in the last classes of secondary modern school (in Norwegian “ungdomsskolen”), and at that time you want to be tough. Those gangs were tough and well known, and that’s exactly what we wanted to be also. We wanted everyone to know about TMG. We went to other clubs to become known, to show ourselves, did a little fighting, you know (laughs), but never with people from Rudenga.

According to some of the core members of the period, it was all about being tough, smoking, going to parties, dating girls and listening to Techno – the musical form that in this period was on its way into the milieu of “the Pakistanis” – but also Pakistani pop music and Bhangra. Speaking to the members two years later, it is somehow hard to get their own more precise descriptions of what they did and how serious their actions were in terms of crime and delinquency.

But TMG was certainly also characterized by playing and having fun, in the ambivalence of the twilight zone between the world of the child and

the young adolescent, as becomes clear in the descriptions by some of the few female members, the girlfriends of some of the boys. Anita, who at that time had just met Mohamed (whom we have already met in previous chapters), says:

Anita: We all had names like King, Queen, Boss, Tiger, Princess and so on. I and Trine were girlfriends with some of the boys. Trine was called Cat Woman. I was Chanta Devi, a name for some god I think. We, the girls, were called the Gang group. I guess we were some small, nasty devils, back then (smiles). The Pakistanis were more a separate group those days. They were proud of being Pakistanis, sort of, and wanted to have power, to become known and to be the tough guys. All the first TMG members visited me at home those days. I remember we all ate macaroni for breakfast at one occasion while my mother was out working. Once we camped at a small lake during the summer; we ate carrots and sweets and had a nice time. Older people were afraid of them and complained to the police. But I knew them and got quite another picture. They did some tagging and some fighting at some of the other clubs. Perhaps they did other things too, but they didn't tell me about everything either. One of them did some stealing, and he is real troublesome, much worse now, but... They were looking at combat films. I remember they practiced kicking on the lawn (laughs).

The distance from the child's playing cops and robbers (in Norwegian: "politi og røver") and the more real stuff, in other words, did not seem very far. And in the retrospect it seems easy to look back at it in more nostalgic ways:

Trine: We hid behind the big strong Pakistanis. When the police came we said we knew nothing. We hid all the weapons that the boys had, knives and batons . I and Anita had our socks and sweaters full of weapons on a couple of occasions. But they were never used as far as I know. It was more that "Hey, I have a weapon – you just be careful" kind of thing. I was with Ravi. I think we went on and off for around twelve times. But it was fun.

Only solely-Norwegian girls were girlfriends of the members, well in agreement with their more liberal gender roles, as noticed in the previous chapter.

Whatever the relationship between the more innocent aspects of play as an ingredient of their "gang" and the acts that really crossed the limits of the law and socially unacceptable behaviour as perceived in their surroundings, the more problematic behaviour escalated. As previously mentioned, several authorities – such as the police, some of the involved schools, the clubs and the child-care institutions, as well as the staff of the club were cooperating

closely to quench what they afterwards characterized as “a grass fire”. Several actions were taken to stop it from developing further. The scarfs were all banned at the clubs and schools. The strengthened emphasis on politeness at the club, for example in the shape of greeting rituals, as previously described, was undertaken. Some of the more problematic and criminal members were placed in special institutions. Some parents were involved. And through this cooperation by several of the salient actors and representatives of the adult world, TMG was finally dissolved. A central part of this multiplex strategy was also serious talks with the members about the consequences this behaviour could have for their future lives. Especially the involvement of some of their parents also seemed to have been effective.

Several of the core members that I interviewed around a year later tell that they finally came to know that they had gone too far. The concern for their families several times was mentioned as a most important argument to dissolve the gang:

Sardar: We had to quit because there were too many rumours. The police were after us. They asked Pakistanis at the centre if they knew about us. Some of our parents came to know something about some of us. We also encountered plain clothes police coming to our secondary school who tried to find out things. They believed we were making noise and trouble. So when someone in my family got to know about it, we just quit.

For most of the former members, this was the end of their career as delinquents. For some, unfortunately, it was just the start of an escalating career as young criminals that still unfolds at the time of writing. This fact underlines clearly the very potentialities for destructive behaviour that TMG contained.

How is such a case to be understood?

I suggest that the processes leading to the formation of TMG can be understood by briefly relating it to the steps of the model described in figure 6 (in the chapter on music). This necessitates some comments on the situation at the local level in which these events unfolded.

While discussing the pre-TMG situation with the various club members of non-Pakistani background, it is often remarked that “the Pakistanis” kept more to themselves at that time; that is, there were less contact and interaction between this group of youngsters and the others. We have earlier seen evidence that at that time the youth of Pakistani origin were ascribed little prestige; they tended to be badly clothed and with little competence in mastering relevant styles. This probably matched the similar situation among youth of Pakistani background in the city, who later formed the city stroller

groups. It seems that in so far as the future actions of the budding TMG members were resonating with such a situation (that included the semiotic conclusions of their overall *life-situation* as youngsters of immigrant families, that had already been sedimented from past experiences in the shape of *the habitus/the matrix self*) – the youngsters of Pakistani background in Rudenga at this point seemed to be experiencing a strongly felt need *to announce themselves to the world* – in George’s words (above). In Sardar’s words: “*to become known*”; that is, more precisely, to acquire prestige and recognition in the public sphere of the youngsters in Rudenga and its relevant surroundings.

With such *concerns* being felt – making up the search-lights, so to speak, of their *focal selves* – they approached the existing *semioscape*. Here the signs of the most salient appeals were manifested as the mythology of the gangsters; the style-conscious gangs and the “cool-criminals” of the gangsta-rap traditions; the heroes of the combat and gangster films along with the more local manifestations of similar figures in the shape of the gang-members of Pakistani background (now associated to Techno), with expensive cars and carefully styled attitudes that were featured in the headlines of the tabloid press, and that some of the youngsters in Rudenga “knew someone who knew” or to whom they in some cases were even direct relatives.¹

From this constellation of signs in the relevant semioscape the young Rudenga youngsters of Pakistani background acquired (*selected* on the basis of experiences of resonance/dissonance) parts of the semiotic building material at hand that resonated most directly to their habitus and their interpretation of their present situation. These materials were then creatively clustered together in the concluding *expressive utterances*, of which the formation of TMG and the associated sign complexes can be seen as a provisional end result of their interpretative fluxus of acts and statements (once more exemplifying an expressive Thirdness) in this period of time.

As we know from the chapters on clothes and on music, the young “Pakistanis” in Rudenga, had already had their period as fans of Hip Hop – at that time to be the most popular musical form at the club – and were now publicly acquiring House and Techno as “their” musical sign, along with the

¹ At any time the existing semioscape is immensely complex and characterized by the coexistence of a wide range of signs of which several are mutually exclusive or contradictory. At the same time, the repertoire of signs that are felt to be available and possibly useful to a concrete subject is, of course, highly dependent on the position and habitus of that subject; the ability to read, to use and to understand the various parts of such landscapes of signs requires socially produced skills anchored to the corresponding habitus.

Pakistani pop music. In other words, they choose to associate themselves with a sign that to some extent differed from the preferences of the hegemony at the club and not least from the youngsters of various African origins. The act of profiling themselves as House-fans, at the same time as communicating strong group identity through their name imprinted and materialized on their scarfs, their tags and verbal rumours seem to have spread very fast and successfully; through all these creative semiotic actions – that may be regarded as continuations of the provisional conclusions to their life situation (including their fighting, some members involvement in more direct criminal acts, quarrelling and intentionally fright-inducing appearance) – they were eagerly building up the *referents* (the possible *interpretants*) of the TMG sign, announcing themselves as tough, young, and not least as “Pakistani”. But as we remember from the chapters on dress and on music, this included a creative use of what may be termed *a collage of seemingly disparate signs that were recombined in a new constellation or package*, making up the previously described “wolla-style”.

And as their renown grew and expanded – and which in this respect must be considered highly successful, not least as judged by the numbers of youngsters who wanted to join the TMG – they were all gaining the prestige and fashionable “respect” in accordance with their intentions; through its formation the TMG members became the “tough” “Pakistanis” from Rudenga. By doing this they were breaking loose from their former relative anonymity and lack of profile and prestige. In Anita’s words: they were concerned about being “*proud Pakistanis*” at that time, consolidated by the thrills and prestige drawing on the available signs related to the popular gangster figure.

Breaking the norm – gaining semiotic attention – charging the sign by deviance

This building up of prestige and reputation – thus charging the sign with semiotic attention, according to our previous arguments – was closely connected to the phenomenon of *dissonance* to the norms that their actions were violating. By associating themselves (as signs) – in various ways and degrees – to crime, fighting and so on, and thus to the crossing of the borders of the socially acceptable, the norms and the law (that may be seen as expressions of the accumulated habits of sedimented judgements from the past of the larger society), they were charging themselves, in their own eyes as well as those of their surroundings, with an emotional aura of “*power*” ; in several senses this seemed to play a salient role for those involved in such

semiotic acts (as the quotes from Sardar and Anita implies). Through their behaviour strong *arousal* – probably including the well known thrilling kick of adrenaline, as, for example, while facing danger on the existential level – are elicited, both in the members themselves and in their social surroundings. From boys growing long hair in the 60s to drinking alcohol for youngsters from conservative Muslim families; from the breaking of norms within art – for example, as seen in the reactions to Dada, the cubist paintings of Picasso and Braque, or the saxophone playing of jazz innovator Ornette Coleman – to the encounter with odd customs and behaviour while meeting representatives of different cultural traditions, and more recently to the so called “satanism” and aesthetics of “evil” of the Norwegian Black Metallers of the early 90s; all these examples can be regarded as instances of similar ways of *stirring attention, thrill and general arousal by the power of dissonance*.¹ And in several Western societies where liberalism is highly celebrated, such behaviour paradoxically almost tends to be *expected* as part of the role of Western youngsters, especially after the youth “rebellion” of the sixties.

Here, TMG also seemed to be playing on the media-stereotypes – youth of immigrant background as violent gang members – to be activated in the interpretants of their surroundings. In the case of TMG, the risk that their highly dissonant behaviour could develop into more settled forms and patterns of crime was soon recognized by the local authorities, as we have seen, who finally succeeded in disbanding the group. The thrills of fear, crime and danger that TMG successfully induced in its surroundings met its end, at least for most of its members. The attractive semiotic attention created by the power of dissonance was generated – seemingly with a high degree of intention, as we have seen – but was then successfully quenched with interventions, that implied the mobilisation of techniques of power, by the representatives of societal authorities.

For the fellow youngsters of TMG, on the other hand, the resonance on the attractive side of their ambivalence was stronger, well in line with their (almost expected) tendency to push and celebrate the crossings of the limits of the accepted (as in children’s play), not least because of the potential for including pure “*thrill*” (an intrinsic quality in the phenomenon of *flow*, according to Csikszentmihalyi 1975). In this case – and for most of the TMG members – the quest and strategy (though not necessarily explicitly reflected

¹ There are also examples where more involuntary stirring up of such attention can become a heavy burden for the ones who *involuntarily* elicit such reactions in their surroundings (strongly touching, for example, in the phenomenon of racism). This will be dealt with more explicitly in “Mokhtar’s story” in the next chapter.

upon) for gaining this semiotic attention, respect and prestige for “the Pakistanis” can nevertheless be regarded as somehow successful. They achieved to elicit the experience of respect and recognition in their surroundings through dissonance, that is, by fighting, threatening, creating fear, asymmetry and thus the involvement in games of power.¹

But such a way of gaining attention had its price in the shape of the threats of being further and forcedly marginalized as societal sanctions are mobilized. Such deliberate and societal enforced marking (or threatening to do so) directed towards the delinquents that threatens to exclude them from collectivities of relevance, is, of course, more or less deliberately designed to *punish*; to elicit interpretants of anxiety, fear and shame in the youngsters, intended to prevent them from going further. Society thus uses its power to create what we may term a *counter dissonance* directed towards actors of unaccepted behaviours, who thereby – in so far such an operation is successful – are *forced* to change and to behave more in accordance with society’s norms.

After TMG: increasing integration

If integration means something like the naturalisation of widespread positive interaction, then the aftermath of the story of TMG was nevertheless characterised by a noticeable increase in such interaction between the boys of Pakistani background and the other youngsters in Rudenga. Most informants, including the ex-TMG members themselves, seem to agree in this, even though no single informant has been able to give a more thorough verbal explanation of why this happened. Jerry (of Eritrean background) stated: “*Maybe they just found out that we were cool and that we were having a a nice time. We went to lots of parties, had lots of girls and such things. Earlier they were not allowed by their parents to be out after twelve at night.*” Such a statement indicates that also differences in upbringing and parental practices may have played a role, keeping the “Pakistanis” more to themselves when they were younger.

As a supplemental interpretation we may suggest that the youngsters of Pakistani background at some point found themselves in a situation where they felt the need to consolidate themselves as a more prestigious group. After announcing themselves as TMG, and through the various accompanying ways of acquiring the needed prestige and the corresponding arousal

¹ It may be discussed if “respect” and “recognition” are the right words here. Nevertheless, they imply a basic ability to defend ones borders, and to have some form of prestige among their fellow youth.

of semiotic attention, they succeeded in reaching a stage where the goal had somehow been achieved. After this achievement it became possible to calm down, as if the semiotic power of dissonance created by the TMG-sign was no longer needed. In addition, it was still definitely possible to enjoy the prestige of *having been* members under that sign, and after such an acquired “respect”, it seemed perhaps easier to *open themselves to the world*, so to speak, allowing themselves to build friendships to others to a larger degree, and thus blend themselves into the more general milieu of the Rudenga youngsters. Through this development the overall milieu seemed to become more harmonious and integrated, without such a large group somehow existing on the sidelines, as the relative exclusiveness of the youths of Pakistani background earlier had exemplified.

The rise and fall of TMG can thus be seen as a process that, at least in the end – despite its dissonating and asocial character – finally consolidated and even strengthened the community among the Rudenga youngsters as a larger group.

On the role of the staff

It also seems that in these processes the interventions of the staff of the club had an important impact. Especially the club worker “Simon”, who became the head of its staff later and who had known most of the members of TMG since they attended the junior club (covering children from ten to thirteen, played an important role in talking and discussing with the members. As previously mentioned, one of his core arguments against their behaviour was the warning of the consequences such behaviour might have for their future. The confidence that several of the members (both of TMG and the members in general) had in him is illustrated by the following scene that took place some years after the story of TMG:

Sardar had been involved in some fighting with a group of youngsters of Vietnamese background in the city. The police had evidence on him and were now chasing Sardar. He arrives in a hurry at the club, accompanied by a group of five – six fellow youngsters of Pakistani background, more specifically, “bad guys” from the City; they eagerly and loudly present suggestions like “Now you are on the run. You must escape the police. We know good places to hide”, and so on, being visibly aroused by the situation. Sardar immediately asks to speak to Simon. And with the anthropologist as well as several of the other club members present in the club’s kitchen, he explains the situation to Simon and asks for advice. Simon emphasizes calmly that Sardar, despite having been a prominent TMG member, does not have anything criminal “on him”. He

makes clear that if Sardar continues to run away from the police, such actions are highly likely to be interpreted as admitting his guilt, and it is much more likely that he would be better off in the eyes of the police if he reports himself voluntarily. His “bad guy” companions protest loudly. But nevertheless, even if the atmosphere and temperature in the room is dense with pressure on Sardar to do the opposite, he finally decides to report himself to the police.

The scene may be seen as a clear demonstration of the *confidence* and trust the members felt vis a vis Simon. In times of “heavy weather” such adults may play an indispensable role to youngsters in such vulnerable situations that may easily result in very destructive consequences if the wrong decisions are made.

In addition to working hard on maintaining such trust, the renewed emphasis on the greeting rituals (as we have previously seen), and a general policy of letting the members know that they were “seen” on various levels seemed to be some of the salient ingredients in the guiding lines of the work of the staff. This implies that the successful development of a harmonious atmosphere at the club can not be properly understood without such contextualisation.

Further events of dissonance: shooting

But there are also incidents where strong dissonance is created in less voluntary fashions.

In 1999 there was a fight in the city between a gang of youngsters of Vietnamese background and a gang of youngsters of Pakistani background, where also some youth from Somalian families were involved on the side of the “Vietnamese”. During a series of events those with Vietnamese background were beaten and were, after having recovered, chasing the ones of Pakistani background. On this occasion some of the Rudenga youngsters appeared in the landscape without knowing what was going on. The “Vietnamese” chasers along with some supporting youth of Somalian origin mistook Mohamed (who we have already presented in the story of Mohamed and Anita) for one of the “Pakistanis” of the other gang. They got into a short fight and shot him in the shoulder, creating great despair and confusion among the group of Rudenga youngsters. He lost much blood and ended in hospital for several weeks. To the milieu at the club this event was naturally highly shocking, especially since Mohamed did not even know any of the individuals involved (the impact of this event on the relationship between Mohamed and Anita has been described in the chapter on gender relations).

After such a critical (and highly unexpected) event – densely packed with semiotic attention – it would be not unlikely to expect heavy tensions and even open hostility between the youngsters of Somalian background and the other groups of members at the club, especially the ones of Pakistani background and their friends; the horror and the despair felt during such incidents may be seen as highly conducive to strong emotion-laden generalisations (stereotypes). Therefore I did a series of interviews with a wide range of the members, especially among some of the youth of Somalian background who actually knew people involved in the party of the attacking group, to get further information about such relationships almost immediately after the event. Several of the youth of Somalian background expressed a certain nervousness about bad things happening at the club in the days immediately after the event. Also according to the youth of Pakistani background, it took some time to settle their emotions towards their fellow club members of Somalian background. But while being invited to reflect on this highly precarious question by the anthropologist, the answer that repeated again and again was that:

“the Somalis in the city are different people from the Somalis at the club.” “It was not the Somalis here that had done it. They are our friends. It was the ones in town that did it.”

In other words, the milieu in Rudenga stood through the “acid test” – of one of their own being severely attacked by a group including youths of an ethnic group in their own milieu – *without giving in to generalisations* and thereby losing the ability to separate the level of collectivity from the level of the individuals involved. In such a case – involving strong emotions *whose intensity and force make them very likely to “spill over” into adjacent semiotic fields*, clouding and muddling the possibility for a correct understanding of the situation – the Rudenga youngsters were competent enough *not* to give in to what might easily develop into an escalation of exclusion and violence – that is counter-dissonance – within their own milieu at least. They managed to separate the individuals from the collectives of which they might be perceived to be members. Here the destructive attitudes of easy *stereotyping* (see the discussion of the previous chapter) were, remarkably enough, avoided – even in a case where the semiotic attention was so heavily tinged with emotional arousal, that in other contexts, it would be highly likely to orient the actor’s attitudes in exactly such a generalising direction. Once again the expression: “*It’s what people do that matters, not where they come from!*” showed its salient truth among these youngsters. The power of this harsh and existentially threatening manifestation of

dissonance, to generate the most shocking and deep felt emotions, was nevertheless handled in ways in which emphasized their ability to separate the collective and the personal. It can be argued that this ability assumedly has grown not least as a result of sharing a habitus where the reality of individual difference has been a salient experiential presence from the actor's early age.¹

For Mohamed and Anita, and for their fellow friends and club members, an involvement in such an unexpected, threatening and far reaching event did, of course, definitely heighten semiotic attention, clearly *trespassing the border of fear and anxiety*. And even if some of them were strongly fascinated with the gangster and other signs and figures that challenge and trespass the borders of societal norms – not least dealing with violence and death (as in the myriads of video films where these issues are primary) – the definite *reality* (Peircean Secondness) of these themes that the shooting of Mohamed introduced – in so far as it was in fact life-threatening – induced a dimension of seriousness that was highly noticeable among the members.

For Mohamed himself the event, not surprisingly, became a personal trauma that sedimented literally in his body. It manifested itself as a strong inclination to become nervous and tense in situations that bore some *iconicity* to the original traumatic situation, that is, where people were moving close to his back.²

In such a situation, the phenomenon of revenge is of course easily evoked. For various reasons, however, I can not pursue this theme further here. Some of the dynamics of this phenomenon will nevertheless be focused closer upon in our next example.

”Foreigners” versus racists: standing up for your friends and the primacy of the place

Being physically attacked may be seen as a classic situation of social dissonance. In such a situation, the attacked part will be inclined to defence,

¹ Les Back and Gerd Bauman both write about the tendency to generalise on a collective basis while, almost in the same instance, emphasizing the individual differences. Such examples call for a more thorough research on the reasons and conditions for these differences in the ways of interpreting the actions of the other (Back 1996; Bauman 1996)

² Other aspects of this event - where the semiotic attention elicited by Mohamed as a bearer of the sign of “having been shot” generated considerable prestige – have been discussed in the previous chapter.

due to the need to restore some of the symmetry of dignity (or relative equalness) that such an attack has violated.

In the following, such an event will be analysed. Several of the Rudenga youngsters were involved, and the attack may be seen as partly motivated by racist attitudes. The incident was, therefore, augmented with one more dimension that was utterly semiotically charged with relevance. This motivation (that according to informants was clearly displayed by the attackers) may also be seen as an attack on the guidelines (norms) for social relations that were characteristic for the community itself among the Rudenga youngsters.

An extremely violent event took place when some of the Rudenga youngsters were invited to a party held by some acquaintances in a different part of town,. (The following is a *not* an excerpt from a group interview, but quotes put together from separate interviews with various informants who all were present, to illustrate approximately the sequences of the event.)

Tommy (all Norwegian family): I and Jerry (Eritrean family) were up in the House playing loud music. We were drinking and having fun. Some of the others were down on the beach. Then these two Norwegian guys show up.

Jerry: They were around twenty years old and wanted to sell us some liquor. You see, at that time I had a small injury to my leg at that time, so I walked a little special. They noticed that and started calling me "gangsta"; they said I walked like a stupid gangsta. They started to push me and telling me shit.

Tommy: They started to speak shit about Pakis and Blackies and such racist things.

Bengt (all Norwegian family): They looked upon us all as if we were a gang of foreigners, all of us, including me and Tommy.

Tommy: So I quarrelled with them and they started to fight. They seemed like nazis. Then one of them hit my head pretty hard a huge plank. I fell down, and they just continued to kick me. I guess I fainted for some time.

Jerry: I kicked at one of them and hit him in his forehead and in his mouth.

(The further details about what is happening here is unclear. It seemed that Jerry somehow managed to run away.)

Maurizio (Chilean family): We were down on the beach, partying and having a good time. Then we heard something was happening up by the House. We came up and found Tommy lying there with blood all over and a hole in his head. Everyone got quite hysterical and started to pick up stones and sticks to hit back. The nazis then started to call people for help. I think the two of them had taken amphetamine or something. They seemed quite drugged...

Tommy: They were about to fight with the parents too. That's when it was too much for the boys. You know the foreigners have much more respect for parents.

Maurizio: We saw Tommy lying there. Then we just beat up the two who had done it. I was holding one and my buddy tried to use the knife. But then the parents came, then we had to give it up.

Anthropologist: You mean you were trying to stab him...Wasn't that going too far?

Maurizio: Of course! But you do not think that reasonably in such a situation. We didn't know how bad it was with Tommy. If I had had the chance I had done it, I must say. I was so mad!

With the parents arrival the situation dissolved. The two intruders managed to get away. Tommy was driven to the hospital by a friend who got his car partly damaged by the other group as they were about to leave. Tommy tells me that according to the doctor, he could not have taken much more from his attackers. So the incident could easily ended in a much worse situation for Tommy, and probably for the others involved on both sides too.

The story is simple and dramatic, but its message is nevertheless important: the small group of Rudenga youngsters (from families of origins such as Chile, Eritrea, Turkey as well as Norway) are attending a party in a place quite distant from their home area. Some of them are deeply insulted in racist terms by the two newcomers. Tommy – of an all Norwegian family – stands up on behalf of his friends of foreign origins, and he is drawn into a quarrel that ends up in a violent fight where he is physically attacked and injured. All the Rudenga youngsters present are then mobilised, and it ends in a situation where even more serious violence could have been the result.

The story may be seen as an illustration of the message uttered by the informants again and again on various occasions; the club members declare their willingness to stand up for other Rudenga youngsters, no matter background, if they are threatened in one way or another, or get into trouble with the outside world.

This becomes especially clear while discussing the reputation of Rudenga with Maurizio:

Anthropologist: But why does the fact that you are living here mean so much?

Maurizio: I don't know... Everyone has known each other since we were kids. You have seen them from when they wore diapers until they got hair on their chests. Everybody know everybody; they know who you are and what you stand for. When I was small I looked up to my elder cousin, and when you hear from you are quite small that you have to stand up for your neighbourhood, then you just continue that attitude. You must stand up for your neighbourhood, for your comrades, no matter where they come from. But it's not always a good thing. Of course it may go too far. You may hit a person wrongly, and he may in fact die or end in hospital. And there may always be someone who is faster than you, who is more crazy and stronger than you; you never know. But if there are someone who makes trouble, we won't turn away. You must stand up for your area, for Rudenga.

While doing fieldwork in 1994, I also got in contact with a group of older boys (then in their 20s) who then were seen and spoken of as “The Rudenga gang”; several were involved in petty crime and general delinquency. Here statements almost identical to Maurizio's were made: *“It does not matter what you are like or where you come from. As long as you are living in Rudenga we will support you no matter what.”* (see Vestel 1995). But contrary to the Rudenga youngsters of 1998, the group represented by that quotation consisted solely of all-Norwegian working-class boys. This suggests that a feeling for the place, and the corresponding loyalty on the strict basis of local habitance, may be seen as something like a *local tradition* that has been continued despite the deep transformation that Rudenga has been going through in the last decade where the majority of all-Norwegian working class families has increasingly been replaced by immigrant families from a wide range of geographic origins.

As indicated above, the Rudenga youngsters surely had a reputation for being tough and for not avoiding a fight if they saw it as necessary. Also earlier, according to informants, they have been known to have started fights and quarrels with parties outside their home area. There were incidents where the Rudenga youngsters were involved in various forms of violence, either as attackers or as victims. An example of carrying weapons – as reported in the discussion of TMG – was also seen when one of the boys of Pakistani background told me he felt it was necessary to carry a bag with two axes to frighten a group of Vietnamese who was after him for some reason. Incidents

of fighting with neo-Nazis were reported, for example when an all-Norwegian girl was hit on the head with a bottle because she was the girlfriend of “a foreigner”. Some of the Rudenga boys attempted to revenge this. One female club member of African origin was, for no identifiable reason, attacked by a group of male Pakistanis in the City, and so on.

The place itself, in addition to its stigma, has a story that reflects the toughness of its young inhabitants. As a large number of people are living in a very small geographic area, it is obvious that individuals with problematic behaviour, as well as of more explicit criminal reputation, are known to the youngsters while they grow up. Also, events resulting from personal tragedies, such as suicides, grave accidents and the like, more likely to happen among amount of inhabitants concentrated on such a small area, are known to the young inhabitants. All these elements co-acts to provide the place with its’ negative stamp, as much of it is also well known or intuited by the outside world. There are also strong local traditions among the local youth of bad relationship to the police for related reasons.

The shared fate of living in such a stigmatised area – a *primary common sign* that is easily applied to them when they encounter the external world – is clearly charged with semiotic dissonance, as seen by their surroundings. “*To stand up for you place*”, under such circumstances, implies a will to counteract such a stigma, as well as trying to turn it into something like an asset. This bears strong similarities to the experiences of Omar and Ola, who played on the ambivalence of being from a stigmatised area, as well as being tough guys mastering prestigious youth cultural skills (as breakdancers). Through their time of growing up together they had experienced a wide range of activities where “things were at stake”; thereby, they shared the accompanying uncertainty, tension and temporary disequilibriums, including the exciting tension that ended in the satisfaction of having won prestigious breakdance competitions as the “boys from the slum”. As we have seen, similar experiences of sharing uncertainties, and incidents of dissonance seem to have been gone through by the club members five years later. They also draw upon the dissonance of the stigma of the place to create respect for themselves in their relations to the outside world. They have shared experiences of the uncertainties of struggles against external attacks, condescending attitudes and tendencies among others to see Rudenga as a bad place, “a negro-area”, “the slum” and so on; all these attributes of dissonance seem to have played important roles as primary experiences in the process of generating internal loyalty and resonance; these manifest in an ability to upheld a *sense of community*, despite the large range of differences that are contained in the group. The incident of the racist-tinged attack described above, exemplifies exactly this point.

In other words, also in these stories, the phenomenon of dissonance has played a prominent part, and despite the harsh experiences they contain, even here has had the *power* to elicit a strong feeling of community and loyalty among these youngsters.

Further details of the nature and extent of possible events of dissonance (including violence) between the youngsters and the outside world, I do not know.

Nevertheless, the evidence described here, in my opinion, will not force us to revise our picture of the youth milieu of Rudenga as characterised by relatively positive internal relations, but it surely adds nuances: especially in emphasizing that the Rudenga youngsters can be rather tough in their encounters with representatives from the outside world, and also that the outside world may be strongly threatening to the Rudenga youngsters, both as a group and as individuals.

Three ways of gaining social respect and recognition

On a more theoretical level, our analysis points to at least three fundamentally different ways of gaining social respect and recognition:

1. An experience of “respect” and recognition from the surroundings of the actors is based upon the creation of *dissonance* by challenging a large range of social and societal expectations. This is happening along a continuum from where the lighter breaking of norms, or the mild exhibiting of force are created on the one hand, and to more explicit and serious threats, violence and actions which create strong fear or ultimately extinction of the other part, are generated on the other. Respect is thus created by inducing various regimes of disturbance, *asymmetry* and power games.
2. The experience of respect and recognition is created on the basis of *resonance*, that is on the positive emotions of community – on the basis of sharing and of gaining confidence and perhaps vulnerability among those involved – and, thus, of creating relative *equality* and symmetry.
3. Respect is based on the recognition of the mastery of especially *attractive skills and competences*, more or less in accordance with certain approved norms. This is perhaps more a case for the especially gifted or well-trained individuals, as exemplified by Omar and Ola through their exceptional competences in breakdance. This may perhaps be seen as being based upon special abilities to act in resonance with widely held ideals or wished-for capacities on the part of a larger group.

The Rudenga youngsters thus seem to have their internal relations dominated by the second mode (resonance), while some of their encounters with the external world surely could be seen as a manifestation of the first. And, as we have seen, there were also examples of individuals representing the third mode. In our next chapter we will describe some considerably more extreme versions of the first mode, that seem to be to some extent generated as a result of the lack of access to the second and the third.

10 The power of dissonance. Part II:

Exclusion – Mokthar's story

The main question that is posed by the overall picture of community, inclusion, tolerance and social resonance among the Rudenga youngsters, even confirmed through the stories of violence and loyalty as analysed in the previous chapter, nevertheless and necessarily will be: *Are there no exceptions ? Are there no stories where actors growing up in this place experienced it as problematic, excluding and dissonating to the primary concerns of their life worlds?*

This simple question will be addressed more directly in the analysis of the following case.

I interpret it primarily as a story about the experience of exclusion; about being marked as different, that is as *dissonating* from the normal, from the signs and messages associated to the sign continuum of the majority, of the “Norwegian”. The power of dissonance in one of the empirical examples of the previous chapter was somehow deliberately used, among several purposes, to achieve a heightening of semiotic attention that, to some of the informants, implied the generating of social prestige. This is, on the contrary, *a story of the need to avoid the involuntary heightening of semiotic attention that results from its’ main character being marked as different, thereby creating social exclusion*. If inclusion and exclusion should be seen as two poles at each end of a continuum, the dominant mode of this story is on its’ latter half, from the small and subtle hints, on the one pole, to the explicit attitudes and actions (of which racism is a special alternative), on the other. It is also a story about how the repeated experience of such exclusion generates strategies of *counter-dissonance*, here as manifested, among other things, in the escalation of subjective rage and violence.

I met Mokthar during the first fieldwork. He was often at the club. I asked him several times for an interview, but he refused. As this story will show he had his reasons.

Five years later, in the second fieldwork, I meet Mokthar once again. This time he agrees to do an interview. In fact he says that he has a story that he really wants to tell – “*to help you with your research*” as he puts it. He is now in his twenties, acquiring a university degree after a very turbulent youth.

He enters the cafe with a discreet but distinct *uprightness* seldom noticed among young people at his age.¹ His clothes and shoes are well within the frames of the current fashions, but without the usual spectacular logos that so many are eager to show. The design of the black, metal mounted shoes and the light, dark jacket shows that famous tiny difference that communicates that the owner is mainly concerned with "doing his own thing". I notice a friendly but somehow tense reserve as he approaches the table where I sit, asking if I want something to drink. Style might express several subtle messages, I think, while we greet each other with the usual handshake.

A necessary question throughout his account is: does he tell the "truth"? Let us have this question in the back of our heads when we listen to his story and return to it at the end.

Mokthar arrived in Norway when he was eight years old, after his family escaped from Eritrea to Italy, where they lived for several years.

He has never been to his country of origin after being born there. His family soon escaped the country as refugees and led a restless life in several African countries. He does not remember much from this period. "*Either our persecutors wanted my father because he had opposed the Eritrean State, or the people didn't like us. We were never safe until we reached Italy*", he says.

Italy

In Italy the family was well received by relatives that already had settled there. A returning theme during the interviews is the good relationship to Italy:

Italy was the country my parents belonged to and knew all Eritreans moved to. It was the best place to be from our perspective. You might say we felt related to the Italians, also in their ways of thinking. In Eritrea we do not speak of "white people". Instead, all Europeans are labelled "Italians". That is for sure something to surprise outsiders. We say "That's an Italian" and then we mean, "It's a white man" (laughs), no matter if it's a German or an Englishman. (...) We lived as Italians. They did not see any difference between them and us because we had

¹ As his story unfolds, it will become clear that this bodily posture may be seen as a metaphor for an achieved "result" that it has taken a series of dramatic and deep reaching experiences and efforts to acquire.

grown up together since we were kids. We went to kindergarten together and in primary school. The teachers and our neighbours treated us as equals. We were known as "the six siblings that lived together". Our mother was travelling all the time, back and forth to be with daddy who worked in Sudan or Saudi Arabia to make a living for us. I don't know all details concerning this because I was too young. It was our older sister who was the head of the family when our mother was away. She taught us most things. (...) We were the only black young people in the whole town and in our neighbourhood. We were the only ones they ever saw. But they accepted us as we were. We were easily integrated in the Italian milieu. And we taught ourselves the language.

But the family were illegal immigrants. Exactly how they managed to stay that long in Italy in such a situation I have never been able to find out. But the situation gradually became untenable, and after five years the family moved to Norway.

To Norway

Mokthar was then eight years old. When I ask if there is something he remembers especially well, it is revealed that this travel, and all it implied, was an experience that made a strong impression, even though after so many years, the veil of memory might be clouded:

It is there, somehow foggy, far back in my memory. If I scrutinise it thoroughly, it's coming back...It is an experience you'll never forget (...) I remember I was so ...tired. The day before we left they held a party for us. We couldn't sleep. We had to leave very early in the morning. We had to rise around four. Maybe we slept two or three hours. I was so sad because we should move away from everything... from everybody in a way. It was a strange experience. It felt like it was a dream. Then I remember we were sitting in the plane. The first who came was a brother and a sister and me (...) we never realized the seriousness in what we were doing, sort of. My sister, the oldest, she understood probably, and my mother understood – she was the main character, so to speak, who accompanied us. But the thing I remember the best was...that my brother had to travel on another passport. He was told not to be part of our family. Then, at the airport (in Italy) the police stopped him because they understood the passport was false. That was... a terrible shock... reality was flung straight in my face... everything felt so ... unreal, just like in a movie... you try to get out of the country with illegal papers. But if you check our archives in Norway, they will say that we came straight from Eritrea. (...) If the Norwegian authorities knew we came from Italy, then they would have

sent us back. We were illegal immigrants in Italy. It was... everything was in camouflage in a way. Then we arrived in Norway. I remember a man that accompanied us. He carried me all the way to the police where we were interrogated. He said: "Look at him, he is ill, he does not manage to keep himself upright!" I was so thin, you see, and... (...) it was like in a dream, but I remember it very well. Then they gave us some milk; that was the only thing we got to eat until we went to bed.

Anthropologist: It must have felt difficult to go through such experiences...

You didn't think about it then, but... it will always be inside your head...it will influence your days to come, even if you do not notice it. It makes you change the ways you think about the world, sort of... I think all foreigners think this way, at least a little bit. Many of them have had such experiences...

In other words, Mokthar's early childhood has not been without drama. Even if the period "on the run" in his early years probably left nothing but vague traces of memories for the twenty four year old today, we nevertheless get some glimpses of the fundamental uncertainty and insecurity that must have marked this early period for him and his family. As a contrast to this new and strange, the stay in Italy – especially for a small child – became perceived as a safe harbour. Even if that is so we intuit that the knowledge that they resided illegally in the country must have been felt as an underlying threat; at least for the older children. But also the smaller children must have had some experience of this, at least as an emotional undertone in the life of the family. Perhaps it was this undertone that broke through, and amplified the shock that came when Mokthar, as an eight year old at the airport, became aware that his brother had to pretend not to be part of the family and when he later on is caught with a false passport. I never got to know how his brother managed to get to Norway. But all this only underlines the role of such secrets to Mokthar and his family. Living with such secrets, and to exist in the tension between the child's experience of a safe existence in a friendly Italian neighbourhood and the brutal seriousness (with all the shock of the encounter with such a Peircean Secondness) that reveals itself to Mokthar when his brother at first is separated from the family, and is later caught with a false passport later; all this seem to influence his feeling of the situation as "unreal", as "in a dream", "as in a film", "in camouflage"... It was as if the sheer force of this encounter with reality – that is, the situations and actions that were highly contributing to the signs that would slowly build up to cluster around the notion of "Norway" – was too shocking to

absorb. This difficulty then seems to be reflected in exactly the feeling of “unreality” in the interpretants that were elicited.

“The walls”

What did they meet in Norway?

To Mokthar this released a growing feeling of there being a difference between what he spoke of as “me and my family” and “the others”, possibly beginning with his experiences at the airport in Italy. I asked him to explain more about this:

The first thing we noticed when we entered this society was... the separation... We had to go to a special class at school (in Norwegian “en mottaksklasse”) to learn the language. At the same time, I mean, there was created a wall between them and us. We were completely separated. It created a wall that made it very hard to get closer to the other kids. Both in the breaks and at the lessons it was impossible to get in contact with the others, because we were “the strange folks” that had to learn Norwegian. It created huge problems. It led to the forming of different groups; it became “us” and “them”. I remember it very clearly. We were totally against it; we felt completely excluded...

Anthropologist: You mean it would have been better if you were permitted to attend an ordinary class?

Yes, because then we could pass through the process gradually, learn the language easier. It might have taken more time, but... They could have taught us language after school time, or somewhere else instead of doing it at the same place where all the other kids were, and thus separating us. We got into a system that meant that even in the breaks we were not together with them because the teachers taught the kids that we were “the foreign languaged” (in Norwegian “de fremmedspråklige”). To us it created in a way... fear... and ... aggression after a while; those things go hand in hand. We did not find any solution on how to get into contact with them, so we only entertained ourselves. And because we did not master the language, no matter what they said, we thought they insulted us because we were “the strange (queer?) ones”, so that they misinterpreted everything we said too. It created huge problems.

The feeling of being on the outside repeats itself in the interviews with Mokthar. It has to be seen as connected with the background as refugees, the long illegal stay in Italy, and the feeling of having to carry the heavy secrets of the family. All of this contributes to give Mokthar and his family a certain sensitivity to the conception of them by their new social environment as “the

others”; they are repeatedly stamped semiotically as different, as *signs dissonating from the norms of the hegemony*, that is from the core signs that represent “us”. The feeling of being separated as “others” by being placed in such an institutional creation as a so called “reception class” (in Norwegian “mottaksklasse”, a special class for youngsters who have just arrived the country), was just the start of a long series of such semiotic marking. In sharp contrast to the story of TMG, where dissonance and the breaking of societal norms were central ingredients in the semiotic attention the youngsters of Pakistani background sought to create to announce themselves to the world, the story that Mokthar tells about himself and his family, expresses the need to become included and accepted with as little semiotic attention towards their various “differences” as possible; in other words to be accepted as “alike” instead of being marked as “different”.

But Mokthar's sensitivity in these matters can hardly be seen as a sufficient explanation of the gradually increasing presence of his feeling of being apart. All reduction or amplification of this feeling of being “the other” will necessarily have to unfold in the interplay with both external frames (like the laws, the school system and other relevant institutions in the country) as well as the more directly experienced social aspirations that he and his family at any given time experienced. The semiotic dynamics of being stamped as different were apparent over and over, and amplified Mokthar's sensitivity for such attitudes in his social environment. An inner pressure gradually built up and exploded in practices of literally hitting back, in the shape of direct, physical violence.

Soon the family moved into a flat in Rudenga, but since the special class was in a different part of the town, the feeling of being separated was greatly amplified. As a pupil in the such a class Mokthar experienced one more wall between him and the ones he terms “the ordinaries” (in Norwegian “de vanlige”).

There were ten to fifteen Eritreans, perhaps some Somalians in my class ... no Pakistanis, I remember well. They were allowed to attend the ordinary classes; they were regarded as “the ordinary/normal”. That's how we interpreted it; they were more part of “the ordinaries”. We did not know them.

As we will see later on, Mokthar has expressed on several occasions that he does not have a good relationship with youth of Pakistani background. Perhaps this is connected with what he perceived as unfair treatment right from the early period in the special class. To him this became one more layer

of bricks that took part in the forming of “the walls”, the fences between “us” and “the others”.

We never felt that we were part of the Norwegian society. It was always “we” and “you”. When the teachers asked questions of the Norwegian kids, they always addressed us as a group: “What about you, what do you want”? We were in a way put aside. Probably it was not intended to hurt us or do us harm or evaluate us, but nevertheless it created automatically this separation, creating groups: them and “you”. No matter what we did, we felt that they did not understand our thoughts, that they did not appreciate us; we were always some “other” in their picture.

Anthropologist: That seems bad, especially since you were that young...

Yes, especially then. You just adapt and try to do your best (at school). But you get this inferiority complex. You don’t know it until you’ve managed to get over it. We used to say to ourselves: “Yes they have tried to help us as well as they could”, but in certain ways they did more harm than good. And the attitudes of the teachers were transmitted to the other pupils. When I think of it, it was the teachers that pulled us down, sort of. They always tried to be kind and... but at the same time we felt we were not good enough or able enough to do the simplest things.

Showing consideration may, in other words, become a double-edged message. One may feel much sympathy for the teachers’ will to show regard for newcomers, based on an assumption that they may need time to orient themselves and no matter what, they will have difficulties with getting into both school and neighbourhood. But at the same time, this display of regard may be stigmatising – stamping the “other” with negatively charged signs of deviance – to the those concerned, and this stigmatising glance Mokthar also felt was transmitted to the other pupils and, thus, to their relationships to him.

The repeated feeling of not being good enough could, at least to a certain degree, be compensated by the knowledge and abilities the young Eritreans had from Italy; these might work as a counter-sign, so to speak. But as the background from Italy had to be kept secret, this could not be immediately converted to the school situation in Norway:

The school here did not know what we could do. Instead they came to us and said “It’s ok if you take it a little easy, if it’s too difficult”. Then our class regarded us as the stupid ones that did not understand, sort of. But we were better than the others (...) The only things we had problems with were Norwegian, English and Norwegian history. We were far better in religion; we were better in math. The history of Europe we

knew much better, because in Italy they teach European history right from the start, and you have religion from second grade. But we were told by our parents to keep it secret, and when we attended school they looked upon us as stupid because we couldn't share this knowledge with them. Our parents were so afraid that it would reveal that we had stayed in Italy. At home we were forbidden to speak Italian, and we were not at all allowed to reveal that we had lived in Italy. And outside we had to pretend – “if you do not understand just take it easy” you know – because we couldn't reveal our knowledge (...). You get so frustrated, because... “Who do you think I am”, you think... you are a child and you have this childish attitude that everyone else at your age has; you have to boast so you say you are able to speak Italian”. “Where did you learn that?”, they ask. I say: I learnt it in an Italian school in Eritrea. And it's a lie; you've lived in Europe. You know how that is, how the buildings look and... Such things you had to keep secret, you know...

As a youngster in a foreign country, where it is very understandable that one has a special need to get recognition for every tiny trace of knowledge and mastering one might possess, Mokthar and his brothers and sisters instead felt obliged to pretend that their knowledge did not exist, to keep their secret about their stay in the transit country. I ask how long they had to continue this:

We have always kept it as a secret. But now I feel that no one can harm us. Then it is easier to reveal your identity. But I've never told anyone until they really got to know me. There are not many Norwegians who know this, maybe two or three. The rest are those who have the same secret as me.

The harshness of the past has taught the family to hide these things. Having to carry such secrets, of course, contributes to the amplification of the differences, “the walls” and the semiotic dissonance between this Eritrean family and their social environment. Mokthar and his siblings feel that walls of separation are being erected by the repeated marking of their differentness, and they feel they are living under the continual expressions of such markings from the majority. Should their secret (of having lived in Italy) be revealed, a much more formal and heavily institutionalised power would be invoked: the bureaucracy of the state, or in the last instance, the police, that would be most likely to send them out of the country. Such a possibility would, of course, magnify the ever returning experience of being the weak part, the Others, the Different, with all the psychological pressure and threatening of their self confidence that this implies.

Rudenga

But the isolation was also felt in the neighbourhood. I ask how he experienced the milieu in Rudenga at that time?

I felt (...) I was all alone here. I never felt that I was a part of either the foreigners or the Norwegians that stayed here. I never did, I have never been a part of the Rudenga folks. I did take part in some community work when I was small, but that was hardly anything.

Anthropologist: But did you feel like an outsider at the youth club too?

I was never self assured, I was always afraid of being harassed, or that they would make a fool out of me. That was the worst thing that could happen. I never felt it was safe to say what I really meant. I would always be the foreigner that couldn't speak Norwegian, who people made a fool of, sort of. That's how I regarded myself. But the foundation of all that was the separation we experienced right from our entrance to the country, I think. It has always been there, no matter what. Even now it's there...

Mokthar's life in the early period was coloured by the contrast between the demands by his parents and the orientations put forth among the youth, for example, as they were actualised at school. Here the demand for "style" and "cool" clothes – the signs of youthful prestige – was salient. I ask Mokthar if he had the feeling of living some sort of double life?

When we were at home we were entirely different persons. At school we were just "those stupid foreigners that didn't understand anything". We did not have any cool clothes, because we did not know what was cool at that time. We arrived with the big "afros" (hair) that they had never seen before; we brought smells from food they had never smelled, ... the smell of curry in our clothes and from our books... for all this we were harassed. We were ashamed to eat our national food. But later on we got problems because it really is their (the parents') food, it is their culture, their tradition. So at home we couldn't say that we were regarded as madmen if we enjoyed that kind of food. Our parents could never understand that. "Here it is. Just eat it!" And, in the culture from which we come, it is not usual to consider the children's opinion. There are adults and there are children. That's two different things, and you can't go against a grown-up, you see.

Mokthar's story shows that Rudenga was far from being as including as one may think, judging the story of Omar, Knut and Ola, and from the more overall impressions from the first fieldwork in 1994. And Rudenga seemed

even more including as a multicultural community five years later in 1998. This may of course also be interpreted as a result of Mokthar's development of a special sensitivity for small and large signs of the environment's perception of him and his family as different. Nevertheless, this feeling seemed to be founded on concrete experiences with people in the area, where humiliation and being laughed at was also associated with a package of style that included hairstyle, clothes, language and so on:

I remember very well the faces of the people that laughed at me during that period. If you see such a face on a quite different person... that reminds you of the original glance or smile. Then you end up hating him, and you dislike him no matter what, without him having said a single word, his attitude, the way he talks... because of those old things that's in the back of your head. I'll never get rid of them no matter how hard I try. It's sort of... people who use snuff, typical Norwegian, short haired, bowlegged, high water trousers, a little bit too high; that's typically what I remember from that period when I attended secondary school. They tried to be tough with me. I dislike them to this day, even if they haven't done anything to me. But.. the episodes I experienced with such guys in that period when I was younger have created... you know, if I meet someone like that on the street nowadays, then I can't avoid feeling aggression, especially if he says something to me.

Anthropologist: Because they were harassing you?

Yes. And at that time it was the so-called "cool ones" that gave me problems. They probably did not feel they did anything harmful to me, but I felt they created situations that made people laugh at me and that created the humiliation I experienced. I can't stand them today, anyhow!

Clothes, hairstyle, using snuff and so on were the signs of a whole style that to Mokthar is closely connected with the exclusion and the harassment he experienced from a certain group of the Rudenga youngsters. These experiences seem to have become signs that marked his relationship with the place as a whole:

We were never accepted in Rudenga at all. X's big brother, for example. He chased me several times, he and his buddy; they hit me all the time. Those boys gave me scars for the rest of my life...The situation was so bad that when I arrived from school I stayed at home the rest of the day. I was afraid of going outside, because I knew I would be exposed to so many things. Even if I greet them when I'm meeting them today, I don't give a damn about hurting them if they start doing anything to me. There is so much aggression buried inside of me, so much revenge I'd like to wreak. I'll wait until they do something. But now they fear me because

they know what I'm capable of doing. They know what I can make them undergo. And I feel no mercy for such persons; I'll have no mercy at all for anyone who resembles them at all. They have to be taught to respect me and everybody else that is below me and who have the same colour as me. And if that means that they have to visit the hospital to get that into their skulls, I'll surely let them. X I beat without hesitating; he was my age and represented no problem. But those older guys I didn't have a chance against them at that time. They terrorised me for two years. It was funny to them, but for me it meant not daring to go outside. You might say it like this...Norwegian kids would probably get help, "My kid is being harassed", you know. He would probably get newspaper publicity and all such things... But our parents did not know a shit. You just had to hit them back hard, then away with it!

Here Mokthar himself is orienting himself via a *personal stereotype* based on the visual signs typical of the boys who harassed him; the snuff, the hairstyle, the clothing and so on became icons reminding him of those past situations of humiliation and threats. And the emotional sediments from such situations are evoked (from his matrix self) when such signs are visible in the present, reminding him of one more manifestation of the distinction between "us" and "them". As in the Peircean phenomenology of abduction, the resemblance to the original situation elicits a "theory" that fits: "boys of such looks are likely to show those attitudes".

As we know, there were at that time several youths with foreign background in Rudenga. But even among these Mokthar felt like an outsider, among other reasons because he perceived them as much more "Norwegian" than he was, both because they mastered the language very well and because they were clever in sport.

Compared to me they were Norwegian. Of the ones I knew when we got here there were Salim (from Morocco) and G (from Chile). But they were fluent in speaking Norwegian and knew how to behave properly. They were cool guys because they were clever in sports. I felt they had a life here, while I had nothing when I came. I tried to get into contact with the Norwegians but that was completely impossible. I didn't make friends with Salim and G until much later. They tried... but perhaps it was I who did not permit it. I wasn't exactly the person people wanted to make friends with at that time, I felt. I did not really understand what was needed for them to become friends with me. The only folks I knew were the Eritrean people I had met at school; they were the only ones we had from outside our family.

The problematic experiences he had been exposed to and the lack of what he perceived as attractive skills (signs) within the local youth community, all

seemed to contribute to give Mokthar a feeling of “having nothing”; these made it difficult for him to develop the strong attachment to the place that we can register in most of the other young informants. And even as he did attend the club in 1993/94 and definitely had to be counted as a part of this milieu, although to some extent peripheral, Mokthar instead frequented different clubs closer to the city of Oslo.

At school – fighting and being ridiculed

The weak feeling for the place must also be seen in connection with the problems he experienced at school, that lead to a gradual toughening of his appearance; violence also played an increasingly important role in gaining respect and acceptance, as a reaction to the negative labeling and the dissonating stamping he had experienced:

We did not understand how we should achieve contact with the others at school. But we understood that – when we were ridiculed and harassed – if we hit the ones that did it, they would stop doing it. And if we showed that we could hit a person hard, they would respect us. We experienced that once we hit a person, the others came running to us from fear. Then we didn't really understand that they did it from fear. We thought they thought we were cool, we were tough, sort of. That lead to us becoming harder and tougher even if we were not that way at home. But outside home we had to adapt that attitude. We kinda lived on that. We found some ways of being accepted... if not accepted, then at least respected. Something that could keep the others away so we didn't need to be harassed each day. Maybe people believe it's only one person harassing you, but it's different when you experience that let's say ten persons harass you independently of each other, commenting on your hair, for example. The first one may be funny, but when you get ten persons telling you jokes about your hair on the same day, then you get so fed up that the tenth gets a fist in his face to make him shut up. And even if you think the joke was a good one, then you just have to beat the first one who opens his mouth, cause then the others are stopped as well and at the same time. It was no use trying to discuss with them, because they were better in speaking their language than us. Why should we try that when that only led them to think we were afraid of them? Then we understood that the only thing that really does it is to beat'em right down. Then they would understand that we don't take such things!

As mirrored in these reflections, Mokthar seems to be at least partly aware of the two different ways (strategies) and mechanisms through which it is

possible to gain some sort of “respect” and recognition, as presented in the previous chapter.

According to the first type, the experience of “respect” and recognition are based upon the *dissonance* created by exhibiting sheer force, threats, actions undertaken to create fear and, thus, of a regime of disturbance, asymmetry and power games.

According to the second the experience of respect and acceptance is created on the basis of *resonance*, the positive emotions of community – on the basis of sharing – and of relative equality.

In Mokthar's case, it seems that the lack of success in the search for the qualities of the second version have lead him to the first strategy, with all the problems such path implies, as we soon shall see.

Language problems, the feeling of being isolated, the ridiculing of their clothes, hair, language, smell of food, and appearance in general – their surroundings which communicated the dissonating qualities of these signs – seemed to be central ingredients and reasons why Mokthar and his brothers developed an aggressive behaviour at school. This became the “solution” through which they encountered the problems in the situation they experienced. And it started to escalate:

It happened at primary school, in secondary school, at college. The older you became, the more you knew that it was not the right thing to do... but you didn't have any other solutions to keep people away from you. After a while even minor events developed into fighting. It is not that we didn't try; we tried for several years, but it just reached the stage where there was no use in trying to avoid it any longer. Then it was only beating the shit out of them. This is such things that are labelled “blind violence”. And in some instances it surely is. But I am sure that many have their reasons to do that. (...) I was into fighting since I was twelve, that's the time when I really started to beat people...(...) It was then the frustrations started to gnaw...it was at that time I felt most lonely. Maybe because of puberty, but...I felt everyone was against me in that period, from I was twelve until...until I started my recent education, when I was nineteen.

“Like-minded folks”

But not everyone was against Mokthar. After some time he felt he met and experienced the sought for social resonance while meeting more like-minded persons. They were young, angry and frustrated, as he says, in a situation that in many ways resembled his own, and they soon developed into a group. They were young boys that were after what most youngsters want – having fun, and being “cool”:

For me, I couldn't laugh anywhere except at home. Then you at last find someone that can put words to what you have felt and thought for several years, something that was not possible to find among Norwegians, nor at school. That gave us a feeling of togetherness, loyalty; we felt we were the only ones that could understand. Our parents did not understand at all... and the teachers at school did not know anything about what was going on. Our fellow pupils were to train and play soccer... we tried to do it together with them, but we didn't get anywhere. Was it because of our lack of skills or all the other things we have talked about? All this created so much aggression. After some time I met one person that I felt could really understand me. I did not need to say a single word for him to understand that I was angry or sad, or that I was desperate to visit someone and to talk to someone. Ok, we had to hide some things from each other. We had to hide our weaknesses and to show that we were tough and such things. We took something from the Norwegian and something from the Eritrean that we mixed, and we probably lost some parts of the wholeness of the picture, but... Then we made up our own world; we were to be hard, and we were not to cry because men don't cry. We should be honest, but how honest we did not know, because we couldn't talk about the feelings we had in the back of our heads that everybody were struggling with. We were angry and frustrated, but we did not have words for it. We thought "It's not that serious; it will pass away", because that's what our parents told us. "Try to take it easy, it will all pass away after you have finished your studies". But how far should we allow it to happen? How much do you have to accept? How much are you willing to do? So we became a group. Later we got more courageous, and then we got more popular.

Anthropologist: You felt that, because these were people that had felt like outsiders in the Norwegian society a long time, you could understand each other better... no matter where their families came from?

Yes. We could make jokes about things we had told the Norwegians that we made them believe, things that were just lies that no foreigner would ever believe. We were sitting making fun of the ways they spoke, for example, the way old women talk when we saw how afraid they were when we passed them. Do you know how exhausting it is to sit beside an old woman on the tram and she is keeping her hands so desperately on her bag, just in case you were a thief? I am experiencing things like that all the time. They rise up from their seats and go somewhere else just because you are a foreigner. Do I smell bad?, you think. Is it because I am ugly? You start getting inferiority complexes. But your buddies pull you up! They make you feel you are a human being. They embrace you, sleep beside you, and eat together with you, and laugh together with you; do you understand? You feel you are becoming a whole person again. And if you don't have any fun at all, what kind of

life is that? No matter what people say. You might be able to laugh at home, but you can't share everything with your family. You can share much, but you can't be with your family all the time. You can't get a girl and take her to town together with your daddy, you know. And you want girls; you want to become popular; everybody wants to be popular with the girls, you know. It is hard to explain, but the way we were we needed someone to lean on. Then, occasionally, there was someone that was a little more criminal than the others, or someone was more OK... But one thing we did have in common: **we were all foreigners!** Noone could take that from us. We understood each other, why people did what they did.

In other words, Mokthar found at last a community. But one of the primary things they had in common – that may be seen as a result of the hunch of such a common habitus – and that seemed to become the core sign of their experience of such resonance, was the repeated experiences of being declared as dissonant (different in a negative way) by the majority of those around them. All the signs were heightened by the semiotic attention stirred up by their difference as it was emphasised and elicited in their surroundings. The scared old ladies holding firmly to their bags on the public transport when a “foreigner” sits down beside them, the short-haired, snuff-chewing harassers, the ridiculing fellow pupils at school, the structural separation in the special class, the incidents of explicit and implicit racism – all these experiences became central ingredients in the “stuff” that their community was built upon; these were somehow concluded (as Thirdness) in their highly expressive utterances, here in the cases of (“styled”, see below) violence and what we may term “*expressive crime*”.

“The gap” between the young and the old

So Mokthar found his community among other young “foreigners” that represented something else than what his parents could offer. Generational differences here reveal themselves to the full. While Mokthar and his buddies are oriented around their common experience of the problems of being treated as “foreigners” by a majority – with all the experiences of exclusion this implies – the parents find themselves in another position, where the centre of gravity is more influenced by cultural orientations stemming from the areas of origin. This contrast revealed itself in several areas, especially concerning the need for money, “cool clothes” and “girls” – that is, the usual signs of prestige in the communities of youth:

They said I was too young to deal with girls, for example. They thought more about serious stuff like schooling, training and jobs. They did not understand that here in Norway – you know about Maslow’s hierarchy – you have food, money and social status like I had. But they were on a quite different level. They lacked security in Norway. They thought: do not seek problems. But a human has got to have problems to feel that he is alive. We threw away food. Mother said, “Why do you throw away food?” They were used to the ways of their childhood about not throwing food away. We do not. You don’t eat a chicken that is three days old; you throw it away! We had quite different values concerning those things. If our parents had tried to place themselves in our situation then maybe we could have developed something. But most parents, they are just human, they try just the same ways as their parents did. But now they are living in a very different society, with new ways of thinking... We the youngsters absorb so many things that are quite different from the society they lived in. They are living according to the old ways. Then you have this wide gap that can never be bridged.

Mokthar might seem somehow absolute in his utterances when he says that “the gap” between him and his parents “never can be bridged”. To decide in what degree he is right is hard to do. The most important thing is probably to notice that this was the way he experienced it, and that this “gap” was painful to handle. It was obviously difficult for his parents to recognise his need to be accepted, to be considered “cool” and not least that this *cost money* (as even further underlined in the emphasis upon expensiveness among the Rudenga youngsters at the club in 1998-99):

We could never ask our parents for money. Many parents did not give money to their kids at all, because they were used to a society where kids did not need money. But in Norway kids need money. And if you can’t get it from your parents, then from where are you to get it? Collecting bottles will not do, because it is not respectable. You have to do it in a way that you will be respected for. Steal them, that’s one possibility. Earn them, that’s another. But if you are to earn money you have to have work, and if you are working there is no time for partying. The easiest way is stealing them. (...) I think all the gangs developed that way. (...) We were not seeing it as clearly at that time. But when I look back at it, I see that in the beginning we were together because we needed something from each other. We needed friendship, clothes, money... Alone you were nobody, but together we were somebody. We had to protect the things we had. We had to behave in such ways that noone dared to mess with us. We had to learn how to live with each other. If we were to be considered cool we had to have the right clothes. And where to get them? Your parents do not understand anything. When you come from a very different culture and your son needs 600 kroner to

buy a pair of trousers, they refuse to pay for something like that. If you have to pay 2000 for a jacket, they have never even thought about it, because...2000 in Africa that would have equalled a month's wage, no, two monthly wages to an Eritrean. (...) The parents of many of my friends they did not work at that time. Many took lessons in Norwegian and tried to integrate as best as they could. And when welfare paid let's say 2000 each month for survival, then you definitely won't spend 2000 on your child just to buy him a jacket, you know. (...) It was completely unthinkable for them to pay that much for those clothes. Then we just had to do what we could do; take it, steal it, or get money to buy the trousers, because then you'll become cool. If you got cool clothes, cool shoes then people will think you're cool. Like you remarked earlier; them shoes were cool, you said. (I – the anthropologist – had earlier complimented Mokthar on his shoes). The change is that I, in fact, paid for the shoes I wear today. (...) Had I been younger I had got someone to steal them and paid very little money for them, or I had supported him in some way or another. But at that time you just did it quite innocently, just because you thought they were cool, or just to have something to say. (...) Such things that you remarked about my shoes were just the things we wanted to hear when we were young, but our parents were never willing to pay that much. (...) We did not dare to ask them, even if we needed it to be accepted. (...) Everything had its meaning; it was not just for fun! But noone wanted to admit it; nobody wanted to sit down and tell you, sort of...

In other words, "being cool" cost money. And since the youngsters could not expect much understanding for such need from their parents due to their situation, and there was no probability that their parents could achieve the economic ability actually to pay these clothes, the step into theft and petty crime was not big to Mokthar and his buddies. He underlines that, even though far from all "foreigners" took this step, the need to be accepted and win respect, on the one hand, and consideration for the parents, on the other, is a very painful position, which many of the young "foreigners" could recognise; it is experienced as especially humiliating that the parents' situation (which may well be the result of exclusion from the labour market, including racist attitudes) causes inaccessibility to the markers of prestige and accept that the youth group demands:

It doesn't hold for all foreigners, of course. And if you ask them, many will deny it, because accepting it is so humiliating, because ... respect is everything. And you can't let your parents be dragged down into the mud, because they... are supposed to be someone to be looked up to. That's the way it still is. **There are so many things that collide**, if you see it as a whole.

Mokthar seems to have been torn between the ways and attitudes of his parents and the corresponding layers of the matrix self that they were associated to, on the one hand, and the here and now of his focal self that was strongly concerned with the need for coolness, on the other, to a large extent this seemed to have been amplified by the feeling of the self as seen by others, whose glance emphasised difference in the wide variety of forms we have here described.

Dilemmas of identity – the labelling of difference

While I'm doing the first interview with Mokthar, he underlines strongly that he now feels that he is an Eritrean. This is the identity he has chosen to associate with, after several years of uncertainty and doubt. I meet him a second time some months after and ask him to say something more about this:

Anthropologist: You say in the interview that there was a time when you did not feel fully as an Eritrean but that now you do. I wonder when was this; how did you slip away and how did you return?

OK, I'll tell it to you straight... the way... I tell it to a foreigner. You are fooled into the system; we are fooled into thinking that we are Norwegians. They say we all get treated equally, just as everybody else. We are all treated as equal. We are just the same as Norwegians, they say. Then, "There is no difference, I am a Norwegian", you think when you are thirteen-fourteen years old. You don't think you are a foreigner. But then the day arrives when you suddenly have to choose... Here your name is very important for what you choose. All this I started to feel when I was sixteen-seventeen years old. Especially when I was eighteen. Small acts mean very much. For example, the following question: "You are Norwegian, are you not? But originally you are from a different country?" It is so stupid. They are placing me at a distance automatically by saying such things. They try to be polite instead of saying "We see you are a foreigner, so where do you come from?" This also holds for friends. Maybe I have eaten and slept in the same room as the person that says this for weeks. But this question will come up sooner or later anyhow, because he doesn't see me as a Norwegian. And then you sort of feel like ... you're kind of stabbed in the back because...

Anthropologist: You feel let down... fooled...?

Yes. You believed you were alike until you see yourself in the mirror together with the one beside you, and you see that he is white and that you are brown. I got shocked each time it happened. Because in that age (13-14) you believed you were all the same. But every time I looked into

the mirror I saw a strange person. It was like "that is not me, or is it?" I never liked seeing myself in a mirror together with other Norwegians, because I felt so ... different!

When Mokthar says that he as a thirteen-fourteen year old "believed we were equal and that there was no difference", he seems to contradict himself, as he has just said that, since he was twelve he has been increasingly involved in fights, as a consequence of the humiliating and ridiculing remarks and attitudes by those around him marking such differences. This contradiction probably expresses the ambivalence between his wish to be perceived as equal, not different, and actually being perceived as different and, after some time, starting to accept himself as different:

After a while I understood my situation, and in fact I started being able to love the person I actually was. Because everybody wants to be like everybody else, even if you are different. And on positive occasions you will not notice it, but on negative occasions you will. And then there are stupid remarks like "Oh you'll probably get every girl you want, cause you are a Negro", you see. Just because you are black you will get every girl. That is... it hurts even if they do not notice it. They see it as something positive, but... they are distancing themselves automatically.

Stories about all-Norwegian girls that only like "Negroes" – or such girls that can only be "turned on by foreigners" are not few and may be seen as an example of "positive" stereotyping (as we also touched upon in the case of Foday in the chapter on gender relations). This has to be seen as a paradox, a form of positive discrimination, that nevertheless is experienced as discrimination by most informants I have discussed this subject with; in this way one is reduced – through stereotyping – to a characteristic within a collective identity, however attractive, where one is not seen as the individual one needs to be. One is "Negro", "foreigner", in this case "African"; as these are traits connect with your collective identity that makes you attractive, and not as you are as an individual. It is this that seems to be experienced as so painful.

Mokthar continues:

And your teacher comes, asking you in a friendly way: "Mokthar, what is the culture like in the country you are from. Can't you just tell us something about it?" And automatically when she says so, she says to the whole class "Mokthar is not from Norway." At the same time she says that Mokthar is just as Norwegian as everyone else is. Why does she want me to believe that I am Norwegian, while in the next sentence she tells me that I'm not Norwegian, the way she does when she ask me to tell about my culture? And if you know your own culture, then you

somehow get this indirect message that you are not to be what your own culture tells you to be, because you are supposed to be Norwegian, to behave like a Norwegian. At the same time Norwegians are very keen on knowing what your culture is like... So they contradict themselves all the time. Such things make you totally confused! Therefore you have to choose one or the other, and stick to it and rather take the negative things afterwards. You have to go the hard way all along before you will be able to really know where to stand. It was such things that made us distance ourselves.

Here Mokthar is experiencing a situation where each message contradicts the other. He is told that he is Norwegian at the same time as those around him in several ways mark him as a foreigner, as being different. And if he behaves like a foreigner, his teacher tries to tell him that he is Norwegian. In other words it is very easy to understand that "such things make you totally confused". The situation as it is experienced may in other words be seen as a classical example of what Bateson has termed a "double bind" (see Bateson 1978:206-207).

Frustration – striking back – violence and revenge

As we have seen, the marking of his difference is something he feels more conscious about as he gets older – not least as elicited by more direct experiences of exclusion. He says:

Then you start noticing it even more. For example, if we wanted to go to a discotheque, it was demanded that we show identity cards, or membership cards, while other people younger than us could walk right in. Such things tell you quite straight that "you are not one of us!" You can't put it much clearer. Imagine, you are twenty two years-old and every time you enter a disco you fear being stopped by someone. Imagine how stupid that is. How far must this proceed until we are able to enter a club or a restaurant without expecting that sooner or later you will be refused entrance? We can't be any more that four dark skinned people to enter a place. This makes it quite clear that this is not my country. Had it been in Eritrea, in my country, we would sure not have had to plan how to get in to a disco! How to do that has become a strategic problem! You want to have just plain fun and... think about it! And when we are on a "vorspiel" then we have this problem in figuring where to go, because we are too many blacks. Do you then understand ... how aggression slowly grows from within?

To Mokthar it seems that all these small daily episodes where people around him communicate his difference are amplified when he experiences more

deliberate hindrances, something that creates huge difficulties just to lead a normal, joyful life as a youth – here in the form of wanting to do the town with his buddies just to have some fun. Naturally this creates frustration:

Then it becomes like... you just simply give up. You give in to this frustration because... you are only human... You're not any God or something like a superhuman that is to provide solutions for the rest of the world. You only think for yourself, and then...when someone utters some stupid remark, you just beat him to the ground. Away with it; then you have let out your aggression on someone. Maybe you regret ten minutes after, but there and then you **dug** (in anaglo-Norwegian: "digga") the blow you gave so much that it could not be replaced by billions of kroner... (...) And then it's the one "When you are in Norway you have to learn Norwegian ways". Every foreigner hates that one; that's the worst one. It makes a foreigner break down completely. Or if you just say "you"... you do not even have to say "foreigner". Just say "someone like you", then a foreigner will explode... a Norwegian saying "people like you have to learn"... Many of those that say it know that too. And when we beat them then, we become the scapegoats. I do not defend people that hit but I try to make it clear how much anger there are behind that blow, how many years of aggression that are behind it.

The physical act of hitting/beating someone that rightfully or not is perceived as a harasser, seems to become a sign-act that is infused with the *condensation* of a large amount of semiotic sediments from past experiences of humiliation, harassment and ridicule. And through the imposition of an extreme variety of Secondness (also in the sense of causing considerable amounts of pain), the victim is at least presumably meant to notice at least some of the emotional interpretants that had lead to such an expressive utterance/act. In that way, the humiliation of the victim becomes partly symmetrical to Mokthar's own humiliation.

Several years of dammed up frustration as a result of ridicule and exclusion also give his feeling for his mother tongue – as a master sign of his identity, and not least of the semiotic continuum associated with the Eritrean – a special position:

The worst people are those who... when I speak Tigrinja, they try to act funny to their buddies and begin "abliabliabliablia", ridiculing it, that's the worst. I tell them each time "If you ridicule my language one more time, you will soon lie flat on the ground!" It may sound dangerous and aggressive, but...it' s my language, it's my mother tongue... and they act like it was a joke. It is not fun...you are not respected as a human being. For example, when you speak Norwegian and they try to copy the way

you speak just for the hell of it. They show they don't respect you. It may be funny to them, but it's sure not funny to you because that's the way you speak; it isn't something you're just inventing.

Mokthar raises "respect" as an important concept. Well knowing that this word is a part of what the media held to be part of the "culture" of different immigrant groups, he parries this myth by saying:

Respect is very important in all societies. There are just different ways of demanding it. All Norwegians demand just as much respect as foreigners (...) All this leads to reacting very fast to such things... You hit before you even care to... cause you've experienced it so many times. It's no use talking to them. If they want something, then it's just to hit them. Away with it. Hell, you think. Then all the other problems pop up, like the police and so forth. And you don't expect much support from them. You don't even care to say anything to defend yourself, unless you have a good point to argue with. You may just as well expect being beat up by them too. I mean they are not any better than anyone else is...

After a while it all just went wrong, and violence and *expressive crime* became an increasingly larger part of Mokthar's daily life:

I gradually became one of those "dangerous foreigners", both among the foreigners and among people of my own age. I had the reputation of being one who could knock down people who were against you. I became harder and harder, even if I did not want to. I acted the tough guy, you know. Even if I only wished I could be with someone talking, sort of...just talk about the way you felt and ... about my daily life. Then I just had to act like I was the one who did not take any shit; I had to protect myself against everybody else. I got that role where I had to be the first one to hit; then the others came after me and they hit too. I had to be an example for all the others. That was the only thing people wanted me to live up to. And if they did not have me as a protector, I thought, then they would be alone, you see, or ... It put me under heavy pressure. It was kind of a competition about who was the most dangerous. Then you gradually misunderstood the point in hitting. You just started to hit... When people passed us and tried... The moment they tried to say something, we just knocked them down, beat them, they deserve it, we thought, sort of... It becomes a part of your daily life...

Being one of those "dangerous foreigners" Mokthar enters and somehow realises one of the popular stereotypes put forth in the tabloid papers. Through entering such a dissonant sign he also charges himself deliberately with the corresponding *semiotic attention*. In addition he undertakes the role of the *revenger*.

It seemed like Mokthar at first felt he had to be ahead, being an example for the others, being the one who really revenged over all the bad treatment "the foreigners" had experienced, thus symbolically restoring their dignity. After that it developed into more extremes. It became easier to "explode". The thresholds for what triggered it became even lower until they almost disappeared. It became something like an *intoxication* that also gave a strong feeling of *power* – no doubt at least partly seeking compensation for the powerlessness he had felt earlier himself. The power of dissonance in these extreme actions infused him with a more general feeling of power that lead Mokthar into the darker realms of the mind:

It became easier just to knock people down; you could knock him down without him having done anything. That was strange. I never thought I could knock down a guy that was...ten years older than me, make him feel afraid... that I had got that much power over him...We felt we had so much power that we hardly knew what to do. Then it just took off. Because...give a sixteen year old the power (...) to master another person... when a thirty year old guy is down to his knees and it is the sixteen year old that makes him do it, then it goes straight to your head. Hit a guy and make him cry; it makes you feel like you're in a hundred miles an hour, sort of. You became... intoxicated by it; you develop dependency after awhile...

Anthropologist: ...it became like...intoxication?

Yes, because it was so surprising; it was something new. And we were to stretch it as far as possible to find out... where the limits were for them, how far they were willing to go until we got something back, consequences... It stretched quite far until someone reacted... Then we felt we got revenge for all the years we had been living like...shit, sort of...being "those", "the foreign languaged", "the foreigners that don't understand", "the stupid foreigners". All that is lying in the back of your head. And when folks that have experienced the same things as you, people that... have been down in that shit, and you know how they feel, then it automatically becomes togetherness, community, you'll never let any of the others take any shit.

At this stage it seemed like the process he was going through was acquiring a life of its own; violence also became autotelic – a goal in itself – but with an internal moving force that was out of control. That it now had become much more than revenging the exclusion related to him being a "foreigner", is perhaps also indicated by the fact that also all-Norwegian members participated in the actions of these groups. (It is of course hard to know the exact motives of the various participants.)

The frontlines became harder. Who was into it, I ask. Mostly it was young people that shared the experiences as "foreigners", even if youth with Norwegian born parents also participated:

There were Iranians, Philipinos, Vietnamese, Norwegians, Turks, Iraqians, Somalians, and all the nations of the worlds from the start. Not many Pakistanis though; they have never been a part of us. But some we liked. After a while we became quite many and some formed their own groups with people from their own countries. And everyone we were with became in many ways leaders and models for them. We were some of the first in our age to be that rude, sort of. We could read about our actions in the papers the next day, and that was fucking cool, sort of. We never met our victims the day after we had beaten them. That was unthinkable; we thought it was some kind of joke... when one person lost his eye... it was like "so what?". He lost his eye...that's it...

Anthropologist: It really happened...?

Yes. There have also been people lying in coma, but... we never took it seriously... Everything became like some game to us. We never learned the consequences of what we did, of our attitudes. We allowed ourselves to go further each time. And every time we fought, the violence grew ruder, harsher.

Stimulated by the semiotic attention received and widely spread through the headlines of the media, the violent extremes were further continued.

Connection points: Gangsta Rap and films

These processes also seem to be stimulated and understood with the help of elements from popular culture, from gangster movies and from the Hip Hop traditions in the shape of Gangsta Rap. He answers in this way when I ask him what role music played:

Yes, music became gradually more important to us. (...) We felt we had something in common with that music. They were saying that policemen were just assholes; we felt it really was that way. We are black, the police mistreat us, therefore we have to take revenge in our way. We saw those connections. Then they started singing of "white folks that don't understand us", then we felt the connection there also. "I'm a black muthafucker", we liked to sing too because "I'm mad, and I'll do anything to get what I want and...", "I just want peace and quiet; I just wanna have respect; I want people to respect me for what I am," sort of. Then we felt like we were part of that music, you know. Maybe not as rude as the things going on in the USA, but to some extent we saw a

connection between our life and the music. And when you hear some words that were good... the words are really important... if you read the words they might teach you a lot about what is going on in the streets. (...) After some time it became like every song that was about gangsters was good, you know. You associated yourself with the music, and we felt especially that the police were our biggest problem. If someone saw you speaking to the police then you were in big trouble, you were a squealer (Norwegian: “tyster”), one that informs on others. Then you would have been automatically suspected if something happened. (...) We felt we were above the ones who made the rules. We could ignore them without being caught, because we were always in the grey zone. Grown ups had no authority, if they got too close we could just scare them a little bit. Other youth admired us because we had things; the girls enjoyed that. You felt like a gangster from the TV. You could do things and get away with it. You knew you could do the things you liked without anyone daring to say anything. (...) I think that’s something everyone wishes for, at least when you’re young...

Once more we see how expressions from popular culture like Hip Hop and gangster films can become a *medium for semiotic articulation* and amplification of “concerns” in different social practices (see also Moshuus, unpublished). Messages and aesthetics that are available through the media resonate and are used in local projects. Once more it is the *iconicities*, between the actor and his lifeworld, and the actors and lifeworlds of these signs of popular culture, that become the incitements for the selection from the semioscape: the *resonance* with the lifeworlds of the actor creates the connection points that attract the signs through the *pores of iconicity*, in line with the arguments of the model presented in the chapter on music.

Such impulses may also orient such practices in different directions, for example with regard to gender roles. The attitude towards women in Gangsta Rap for example, has never been especially progressive (see Rose 1994; George 1998, as well as the chapter on gender relations and the chapter on music.). The cult of violence and feelings of power were, in other words, transmitted to the way Mokthar and his buddies related to women at that time:

I remember when TuPac was on the streets; then it was like “I wanna be a gangsta, and all the girls are whores” (in English), and Snoop (Snoop Doggy Dog another gangsta artist) we liked him, and... It was sort of the times when we were at our worst and they were at their highest crest of popularity...

Anthropologist: Real Gangsta Rap, sort of...?

Yes, and ... they were idealising the things that made up our world. It was cool saying “Yes I fucked her and then I threw her right away afterwards”. And if a girl said anything to you, then you just hit her, and afterwards it was like “Oh, cool, you beat a girl, you’re real tough, man!” “No bitch is gonna say that to me” (in English) and so on. We thought about those things right from those words. You had to be as hard as possible, you know. And women and everything that was around us were to pay. Noone was allowed to do anything against us; noone should say anything to us... We knew those words by heart. You’ll get sort of brainwashed when you hear that music so many times; that aggression just reaches you and grows within you. And it seeks relief in many different ways. I had buddies that got completely mad when they had drunk alcohol. They really believed they were gangsters. They stood there with their guns and...”Hey, no bitch is gonna” (in English)...Then you start thinking: “Yes that’s the boys”. But it’s just a fantasy about what they wish to be, and on alcohol then all worked out so very perfect, sort of. We had parties, you’d grab a bitch and... everything was... I don’t know...

Anthropologist: Any special songs by TuPac or Snoop you liked?

We liked everything TuPac did. From Snoop’s tunes it was one called “A Doggy Dog” and.”Bitches ain’t nothing to me but hungry whores” (in English), and things like that. It’s words like that you remember. And if you check out all their CD’s then they are the same things that repeat themselves; drugs, alcohol and girls (...). But to us this was impressing. They were our idols. And if you got a gangster as an idol, then you are obliged to become a gangster too...

Mokthar is probably overdoing things here when he says that you are “obliged” to follow your idols. But whether he is right or wrong, one can hardly doubt that such role models do not exactly pull youth in a more “positive” direction. And as the fascination for this sign to a large degree was motivated by more complex connections to a specific situation in life, where both personal and collective experiences play salient parts, things got muddled.

The parents sensing danger

Where are the parents in this part of Mokthar's life, one may ask. How much did they know about what was going on, I asked him:

As things developed, Eritreans they knew were knocked down. They knew that people I went out with ended up in hospital. Or they didn’t know where I was because I was hiding from the police or from other

gangs or groups. They started to sense the danger, sensing what was going on. But they were apart from both the Norwegian milieu and the people I was with, so they did not know either whom I was with, where I was, or when I would come home. I could tell them I went to the cinema, but I went to town raising hell and came home as if nothing had happened. And then they would ask me “What did you do today?” “Oh, I was together with X watching a movie”, I used to say. Or I said I went to a buddy they did not know, did not know his phone number or his parents. I could do anything because they did not know what I was doing. But after some time they started to guess what was going on, because something did not fit... “One of the boys Mokthar went out with ... he is at the hospital”. Then they started to find out that their son was not at all the angel he pretended to be. Maybe he is clever at home, doing his homework, maybe even clever at school. But there is another side of that medal. They started to understand, because the police caught a friend of mine. I was never caught. Maybe that was lucky, but maybe it was unlucky, because it made it possible to keep on living that way. Every day I was with people that sooner or later got caught, and that were often sent to the hospital. I said it was the others that did such things, not me. And they believed it!

Turning points – being in limbo

Gradually the parents understood that their son was on thin ice. But the situation developed so that Mokthar himself felt he was up against the wall in a more introspective form; this time it was as a direct result of the need continually to transgress thresholds of aggression that his lifestyle had lead him into:

Soon you got sort of beyond that rage. You reach a stage where you no longer know what “being angry” is. It is a hopeless stage that can not be described properly in words. That’s where the feelings are... I felt completely devoid of feeling. That was the worst feeling I’d ever had, not feeling anything, being completely unconcerned regardless of situation. I lost... It was then I really saw what I was doing, when I was devoid of feelings. Then I got angry, wanting to smash everything that was left. But no result came. I became... empty, sort of. That’s the worst feeling I’ve ever had.

Discovering himself in such no man’s land seemed to have been a strong experience. At the same time this was the beginning of the process that would lead him to make a settlement concerning the lifestyle that had lead him to this state of mind. But one more *critical event* was to happen that

would amplify his experience of being at a turning point. A completely innocent person in Mokthar's close family was a hairbreadth from being stabbed, because one of Mokthar's enemies confused the two:

They thought he was me (...) Then I understood that even if I am surviving, maybe my cousin one day won't, even if he survives today. That was the main reason for pulling myself away from it. That was the revelation I got. I understood that ...I had to give up that way of living because, as I said earlier, we have strong ties in our family, ...and my cousin was in pain because I wanted to be cool out on the street...

He was thinking about running away from it all:

I could have left Norway the very same day with a false passport like we did when we travelled from Italy to Norway, I could have gone other places. Norway wasn't the entire world to me. It was a country I could leave any time. I was not dependent on living here. If people were used to see me as a maniac I could just leave, go away. Like in Italy; no one knew where we were or where we were heading; we did not tell the school or anyone else. It was reported because a whole family was suddenly gone, but... The same thing we could have done in Norway, you know... But my parents were smart enough to send me abroad. I was allowed to leave...

But his stay abroad did not become an escape from his problems. On the contrary it became one more critical event leading to his transformation. It became something that gave Mokthar the experience of emptiness once more; it revealed itself while he was somewhere where no one knew about his tough image from Norway and where he was able to get a distance to his lifestyle and milieu:

My parents wanted me to get away from the milieu I was a part of... In fact it helped a lot. (...) That was the smartest thing they could do to rehabilitate a person. Separate him from his milieu. Let him see the difference. He immediately understands that he is not indispensable, people manage quite well without him. Then you'll automatically feel: they have no need for me. Then why sacrifice your life when they forget you as easy as that, forget that I was one of their buddies? Then you understand that what you do is just nonsense, because if you die today, the only ones that will be missing you are your parents, no one else. (...) I got to understand that you are nothing without education or money. And as long as you are a foreigner in this world ... I understood that in a foreign country it doesn't mean a shit how cool you are in Norway. (...) You might be the toughest guy in the world, but you are nothing in other people's eyes if you do not have anything solid, sort of...

In other words, Mokthar returned with a new and enforced conviction that the life he had lead was not worth the price, and that the prestige he had as a tough guy had very obvious shortcomings. The distance he achieved while being away (the temporary release from the habitual ways of his ordinary habitat) made him see himself in a new light. He felt in pain when he understood the problems this had created for his family:

After a while I understood that what I was doing was so hard. It was difficult, and the reward was too small... And I saw how my life had made huge problems to my mother and father. Every time they saw me coming, I sensed their fear: for me being stabbed each time I went out; that one day I wouldn't be coming home at all. And quite often it happened that someone they knew ended up in hospital. They waited for me every night. (...) They feared each day that I should encounter the folks that I owed money, or who owed me money. Their fear for me being knocked down just because I 'd said something to another foreigner. The love of my family... I didn't want my family to grieve. Especially not the ones who had done so much for me. They had got to Norway, that long distance just to give me a future. Then I sort of discovered that my other so-called friends they just disappeared each time problems arose. They were not worth fighting for any more. It wasn't worth being cool when they just disappeared at the very first sign of trouble, you see. Those who were left were my family. The need to be accepted by my parents and the adults more than among the teenagers became ... (...) important. It was not how you were dressed and what you had that mattered... it was more what you did that became the most important thing, if I attended school or if I had a job. And the more I was integrated in the Norwegian mileus, the more I was accepted among Norwegians – I learnt the language and how Norwegians think – then I was more able to understand what Norwegians are after; that if you manage and are clever at school, or you manage to get clever at sports, if you work and ... are independent, sort of... if you manage those kind of things, then... Now that's easy, I thought, you just work hard, get results, get an education...

In the *subjectively experienced chaos* and ontological insecurity that Mokthar was going through, the need for *order* is highly understandable as the most semiotically relevant; from the chaos of these stormy events he needs to return to order on the inside of societal norms (here on Wiener's side of the argument; see the previous chapter). This meant acceptance of the firm values of his family; education, good behaviour, hard work and not least the emotional security and support his family was willing to offer. Such a conclusion accords with the previously suggested solution to our discussion of the riddle of the relationship between information and meaning; *in a situation*

subjectively perceived as dominated by chaos and insecurity, order is sought, and perceived as the most semiotically relevant, and vice versa.

Even if the feeling of community and loyalty was strong in the beginning, Mokthar recognised that his “friends” in his gang could not be trusted in the long run and that only his family was left as persons to trust. And to his family, education was very important. And now, for Mokthar himself also, education became the new source for solid ground beneath his feet.

Education – a way out

For Mokthar getting an education became a way out. This was possible because even in the middle of his turbulent life, surprisingly enough, he had managed quite well at school. He had good grades, and despite doing very little schoolwork as he grew up, he tells that he could also work hard if it really mattered, something that resulted in good exams. And as he was distanced from the milieu he had frequented, his effort at school became more conscious. In this process, not least his family played an important part:

It was my family who put pressure on me to become a student. They were always there in the background saying “Do what you like, but always keep up with school. You may party and do whatever you like, but your job is to do your studies until you have passed your exams”. That has always been one of the main points within our family. So it was transmitted to me. I felt “I’ll have to go further; I have to get further than where I am now”. And every time I felt I couldn’t make it anymore, then my parents or my brothers and sisters were there in the background saying “You can manage just a little bit extra; it’s only a few weeks more”, you see...

The support and the pressure from parents and siblings (among whom several have acquired higher education) seemed to be of considerable importance, especially seen in connection with the lifestyle Mokthar led in this phase of transformation: a peculiar shifting between school and exams, on the one side, and partying and youthful excesses on the other.

It was quite comical... Let’s say I was out partying on a Wednesday. I brought my books and put them at Oslo C (Oslo Central Station, close to Oslo City). I was partying all Wednesday, and then, without sleeping, or maybe just an hour’s sleep, I went to Oslo C, took up my bag and went to school. And in the lessons that demanded verbal participation, I was active. The ones that demanded something written, I slept through or managed to hide. That way I managed to surf through the whole situation. It went ok...

Anthropologist: You managed to combine those things?

Some things were excluded by such a way of life. Such as sports. That didn't fit in. I felt no interest for it. Either it was girls, or school or doing something wrong. That's what everything was about. I had to have as many girls as possible. Schoolwork I did on my own. To all of the folks in my circle of friends, school was something one did not talk about. Everyone knew I attended school. But they did not understand how I could manage, because they saw me partying at all hours together with them, and at the same time they knew I managed to get grades that I really did not deserve. Sometimes I cheated to get good grades. I was not that much of a genius to manage anything, but ninety percent of my studies I managed in honest ways.

Anthropologist: But your buddies were not on that school thing?

Most of them were not. Maybe one or two tried to keep it going, but we drifted apart because I continued partying. And the more they studied, the more they spent their time at home, and I didn't manage to do that. I was in a way hung up on going out each time, not to miss any "action" (in English), almost like an addiction...

This at times extreme shifting between different spheres, between partying with the boys, the school and his home, demanded deliberate planning, almost as planning a convincing piece of theatre:

I had my clothes at Oslo C to be able to cover everything. Everything was planned. At Oslo C there were showers, you know for the tourists, that I used all the time. I could change clothes there or I could change at my girlfriends' houses or by my friends. I spoke English and pretended to be a tourist. Oslo C was the central physical point in my life at that time. My second home. I spent as little time there as possible, but all the important things were there; those lockers were perfect places to keep your things. (...) I managed to do all the things I had to, because I rose early anyway, and I managed to sleep when I got home.

But after some years such a lifestyle was enough, even to Mokthar:

You had to calm down after a while, you know. I continued right until the second year of studying at the university. It's surprising that I managed to complete it. I quit in my third year. The spark disappeared a little then. Then came better times. I started training the second year. Did boxing for a while. Now it's only spare time football and weight lifting left, just to keep the contact so I don't disappear completely from the life of sport...

This new understanding of what problems he had created for his family – something that culminated when his cousin was really stabbed, the new perspectives on education, his not unconvincing good exams, and the strong support he got from his family to stick to schooling and complete his education seem to be the central ingredients in the process. At last it was possible for Mokthar to find a more acceptable way of living his life.

Rediscovering the Eritrean: back to the starting point?

But it was also a last, decisive “choice” that was to give Mokthar a greater calm and direction in his life, the choice of whom he wanted to be. I once more ask him to explore this theme. His answers provide us with a glimpse into the experience of unsettledness where he tries to associate with and master the semiotic continuum of Norwegianness without feeling that he was able to succeed:

Anthropologist: Somewhere you say that Norwegian boys and girls do not know what it means to be without identity. Was that what you were feeling... that you were lacking identity?

Yes, because... I did not know if I was Norwegian or foreigner. Until I was eighteen I was uncertain if I was Norwegian or Eritrean. The more I tried to be Norwegian – because I wished to be integrated – the more I felt there were things that attracted me to the Eritrean. Firstly it was my skin colour; secondly it was the language; thirdly it was... things that were such as ...no matter how hard I tried I could not learn it because I did not have a Norwegian family. I taught myself anything that had to be learnt to adapt, but nevertheless there were always those small things that... I didn't know what meatballs were until I started to come home to Norwegian families, not until I was seventeen years old. I didn't know what Norwegian dinner was until I was seventeen-eighteen. And “Akevitt” (the name is a transformation of Aqua Vita, and is a famous Norwegian alcohol made of potatoes and spiced with caraway seeds), I remember the first time I drank akevitt; every Norwegian knows what that means...such small things... explains sort of...that you are apart... And you always get such questions that you expect to come...”Please tell me something about your home country”. Well that's in a way fair enough, but why do they have to try to convince us that we are Norwegian when we always are reminded that we are not? Those things are seated very deeply. I asked myself: why did you fool yourself into thinking that you are a Norwegian when you obviously are not? At last I did not know who I should blame – whether it was them or myself that had made that mistake.

Mokthar is now nuancing the story he has described earlier on. While he earlier on put much weight on a solution by taking revenge in the form of violence and crime, he now poses the question if there were other directions to go. The knot he found himself in is now unlocked by trying to settle the question of identity, of which he chooses the Eritrean as his answer. This becomes a process that is also nourished by the role his family has played in this very critical phase, and perhaps especially the meaning the family acquired after Mokthar started the struggle to quit his former lifestyle. He especially underlines the role of his mother in the history of his family:

Without my mother I don't think we would have been a family today. She is the one that really has kept the family together. She is the one who has fought for ... getting me and my father to communicate, sort of, to sit down and talk about the problems.

Anthropologist: You have had conflicts with your father?

I nearly ran away from home. But my mother said if you leave you'd spoil a whole family. "Don't be that selfish", sort of, "Let me try to help you". She supported me "at the backstage". "Officially" it was my father who was the judge. She pressed him to accept my ways in certain areas, and she pressed me to accept him in certain areas. I understood how much she had done for me in this world. I had seen it with my own eyes; how she managed to get us a place to stay in Italy; how she managed to get us into school in Italy; how much she had to lie for us to be able to manage life in Italy; how she had to sell things she had got from her parents so that we could manage ourselves when our father wasn't there. I wonder how afraid she must have been when she had to go through all that, travelling alone without daddy. People see her in the streets thinking; "It's just another third world mother; she doesn't understand anything. She's so stupid; she probably doesn't know how to add two plus two."

Here too, Mokthar refers to what he feels are humiliating attitudes in his surroundings, this time directed against his mother. They make a big contrast to the feelings of her son:

But when I see her, I see the strongest person I've ever seen. Not physically. But they can't see her and know that she has gone against a government to give her children a good life. "Motherly love" you might say. In spite of all hindrances, in spite of the police...my mother was always there. She met the situations with calmness; she coped with them so very good. To Norwegian eyes she's an illiterate, but to me she is a person I admire strongly. I get somehow carried away when I think of my mother.

And for his parents, the Eritrean was the most important. In the situation Mokthar now was in both these parts – the family and the Eritrean – were acting together to give his life new directions:

Anthropologist: It seems like it has been a development in the shape of a bow, sort of. You have been quite far out and then you have got back again?

Yes, I was pulled back by my family...

Anthropologist: But does it also mean that you're now more concerned with the Eritrean... you said you were fooled...?

Yes. Because every human got to have faith. You have to stick to something that pulls you back. Some become overreligious, some become... I just became conscious that I am an Eritrean, and that I will manage to get my family out of this. My parents are elderly people, you see, and I do not want them to become pensioners in Norway. I 'll do everything I can to figure a way economically to be able to send them back to Eritrea so that they can live free among their fellow compatriots. Cause what are they to do here when they become seventy-eighty years old? It is one thing I hope and that is that my father will not have to die in Norway. That's what I'm striving for now, sort of, to give something back of what I've got from them (...)

It is probably also his bad experiences in Norway that make Mokthar put so much weight upon getting his parents home to their country of origin, as a gesture from their son, "to give something back". This also reflects the new weight Mokthar places upon "the Eritrean":

Anthropologist: When you speak of Eritrean culture, food, customs and so on...Is there any special things you have in mind? (...) How do you feel... that "the Eritrean" is?

Everybody thinks that their culture is the best. You know, you think it's much more fun dancing to Eritrean music even if it's not very interesting to strangers. You think it's very exciting to hear Eritrean music, pull up our feeling for the nation, and we think it's a ...very special feeling, you see. We are the best, the handsomest, the smartest Africans there are, the most independent, the ones that are most alive in all possible ways (smiling, half-laughing). (...) Then you have the music of our culture; that's the one we use for dancing. We are Eritrean, a tribe, sort of, and that's the music that belongs to it. That is one of the best things in the world. And the language. Some of us think that English is the best, but we are about on the same level. We are very proud of it. It's Tigrinji we listen to and speak of, and when we speak it we are proud, then it

becomes really this Tigrinji spirit, very high spirit. We have this dance where you spin around and around when you dance. Then you dance, and you get really inside the music. I mean, really, if you ask me, it is completely meaningless, just like all other dances, but...then it comes this small part at the end where you stop and dance just on the spot where you are, you just dance... It's very difficult to explain in words... It simply has to be experienced.

After having returned to the Eritrean he enjoys the community and the cultural key signs with friends that now have mostly the same background as himself. This seems to manifest itself almost iconically in his description of his favourite small part at the end of the dance, where he metaphorically finds his place in the world ("*the spot where you are*") after having been spinning around in the outer periphery for so long. Even if this is not necessarily an indication that he associates to the position of an orthodoxy, these action-signs must nevertheless be seen as emblematic for the continuum of signs associated with the Eritrean.

But even if in his most turbulent period he also was motivated from the need for community with like minded people, it nevertheless shows that he even there felt like someone on the outside in many ways:

The first gang was mixed. Then it was only Moroccans. In the end it was only Eritreans. I moved around often. I never had much stability. I was always on the move. I did more of a lonely raid through all mileus, sort of. I was with Vietnamese, with Pakistanis, everyone. (...) But I never felt like I was a part of something. I never felt I was like anyone else, then. Because...going to school made me different from the others in those gangs. And then I was from a different country from the others. And my own countrymen... we were thinking so differently, we never thought the same... I think I was the most Norwegian among all the Eritreans in my group...

But judging from the weight he now puts upon being Eritrean "being Norwegian" now seems to Mokthar to be a stage that is passed. If and to what degree "Norwegianness" despite all this, will represent a point of orientation in Mokthar's view of himself, only the future will show. At this point in time it seems he has had strong experiences of basic *unrest*, from his long exploration of himself and the communities he has been participating in, in his contradictive and "lonely raid" through the kaleidoscope of youth mileus he has been through. After this journey, it seems that now, at last – and as long as it lasts –, he has found at least some peace, and some calming of that unrest, through his deliberate return (in his version of an expressive Thirdness) to what he feels and conceives as his cultural origin. He reached

a *conviction*, in its Peircean sense, of provisionally calming the unrest, confusion and despair of the struggle for identity and community that he had been living through in his young life as an immigrant in Norway.

Summing up: the quest for community – finding inclusion among the excluded

In the story of Mokthar we can identify at least five developmental stages:

I. Exclusion

It starts, of course, with the political developments in Eritrea that make it impossible for various reasons as interpreted by his parents to continue living in the country. After finding some temporary inclusion in Italy – at least as felt by the young Mokthar – the trauma caused by the experience of danger and seriousness while travelling to Norway, where his brother was caught bearing a false passport; the grave necessity of keeping the stay in Italy secret (as a consequence of Norwegian immigration law); the walls he felt were built by being placed in a special class (a consequence of Norwegian system for handling refugees); these were first of a series of incidents of exclusion. It continued with his experience with (apparently well-meaning but insensitive) teachers that addressed Mokthar and his siblings as “you” separated from the “we” (the school, the other pupils) or showed too much consideration if the lessons “were too difficult”, perceived by Mokthar as marking him as “stupid”. He was harassed by some older youngsters in Rudenga; he felt frustration for his lack of mastering attractive skills for example in sport and in the Norwegian language. This lack as well as differences in clothes, hair, skin colour, smells of unfamiliar food etcetera was also noticed and remarked on as a sign of difference by his fellow pupils. Underlying all this is his struggle with his contradictory feelings of identity. According to Mokthar he tried hard to feel and look at himself as Norwegian – as he was told to do by well-meaning teachers – who, in the next round, marked him as different when they asked him to tell the class about his “culture”. In Mokthar's words he was “*fooled into thinking*” he was Norwegian. He tried to associate to the sign continuum of the Norwegian in several ways but repeatedly experienced that those around him marked him as different.

II. Fighting back

At some point the frustration of being marked negatively as different (dissonant) on so many levels lead him to fighting back – that is generating a

counter-dissonance – in the shape of physical violence. He met a group of “*like-minded folks*” whose primary feature, and grounds for communality, was that they all were “foreigners” (at least in the beginning) that had all gone through similar experiences of being excluded and marked as different. Through physical violence and petty crime they acquired expensive stylish items (especially clothes) and thus created “respect” and prestige, which were emphasized and primarily supported by their creation of fear, threats, and social dissonance in relations to others. Here both impulses from the media stereotypes of youngsters of immigrant background as “dangerous foreigners” and the idealising of crime and gangsterism in, for example, Hip Hop and popular culture became supporting building bricks and media for orientation and legitimisation for their behaviour, that soon escalated to a level where violence got out of control and became an end in itself.

III. Reaching limbo

This process reached its top when Mokthar entered a stage where he experienced himself as being devoid of feelings and emptied of “meaning” in a deep and existential sense; in addition one of his cousins was almost stabbed because he was mistaken for Mokthar. These two incidents seem to have been critical events that played a crucial role leading to his recognition of the need to get out of the destructive track and to start something new.

IV. Restoration

This development was further supported by his parents’ intervention when they sent him abroad. Here the process of reflexivity was strengthened, leading him to acknowledge that he was “*nothing without education and money*” acquired by hard work and within the frames of the legal. He recognised the pain his way of living had caused for his parents, who now were seen positively by Mokthar and who actively supported their son. Education thus became a way out, and his family clearly became a highly important resource in support of this development.

V. Finding/choosing a new life/new identity

His struggle to be included among the “Norwegians” had repeatedly been counteracted. In a wide variety of ways those around him had marked him as different, as being one of “them” instead of being of “us”, and, increasingly, he felt more explicitly *discriminated* as he grew older. A gradual rediscovery of his identity as an Eritrean accompanied his restoration from the extreme aggressive lifestyle he had lead. The struggle thus ended, paradoxically, in giving up his attempt to “become Norwegian” and instead joining the exclu-

ded group (“them”, that is non-Norwegians”), by “becoming Eritrean”. In this process the elementary signs of Eritreanness, such as food, language, music and dance are highly celebrated by Mokthar (as signs of a concluding expressive Thirdness), serving as items of great affection, calming his long and painful journey. In this way, paradoxically and deliberately he accepted his *inclusion in the excluded*, so to speak, thus fulfilling the message of exclusion from his surroundings that had been felt as so painful as he grew up.

His story leads us to several further questions and comments.

Is not this just a more extreme story of a delinquent youngster who finally manages to straighten up as he approaches maturity? Many youngsters experience a stormy youth which, in lucky cases, ends in a return to a more acceptable life and to family values. But for Mokthar this process – in so far as such a resemblance should be taken seriously – was severely *complicated by him being an immigrant – or more precisely: by reactions of those in his social environment to Mokthar as an immigrant*. The core theme all along the stages of his story is, as we have seen, his continual feeling of being marked as different and, thus, of being excluded from communities he really wanted to be included into.

The phenomenon of racism is, of course, at the bottom of this pattern. I must, nevertheless, defend the avoidance of that word. If racism is to be seen as an act of discrimination motivated by an explicit declaration of the racial inferiority of the victim, this does *not* match this story precisely. We may perhaps better see the messages of his social surroundings as operating along a *continuum between inclusion and exclusion*. Here the direct and declared exclusion and denial, as, for example, the racism in the spirit of for example Neo-Nazis makes up one end; and the experience of heartfelt resonance and inclusion is at the other. In the half where exclusion dominates, there exists a large range of subtle mechanisms and marking of difference that increases and culminates in an ideologically and emotionally supported exclusion (of which the motivation anchored in racism is just one possibility), on the other. It seems primarily to be the mechanisms on the half of the continuum that hardly or very seldom reaches its ultimate extreme, that Mokthar has encountered, and these are, of course, more subtle and lower in profile than declared racism. But as Mokthar's tale testifies (in so far as they convey a sufficient degree of truth), they are highly efficient. And after experiencing these tiny drops repeatedly in everyday life, – without being able to find or to be brought into an alternative, including and resonating community – the pressure of frustration is likely to increase to a degree where rational reflection seems to wither away, possibly giving way to extreme aggression, as in this case.

His story must therefore be regarded primarily as a story of exclusion; of being marked, separated, discriminated, humiliated and stamped as different by his social environment. Once more this underlines that the use of the term “racism” may be misleading; that attitudes towards “racial” and cultural differences may manifest along the low-key end of the continuum, as well as in the more easily discernible manifestations of explicit race-based discrimination. It also seems to be problematic to label his acceptance of an identity as Eritrean as a “choice”. It should probably rather be understood as the outcome of a process; after several attempts to become “Norwegian” – *despite exclusions and refusals to let him achieve such an identity* – he gives up, expresses his frustrations to the utmost and extreme degree in the use of extreme violence. He finally gives in to the most reasonable alternative in his situation (and that can hardly be termed a “choice”), which is the identity of his family. After such a series of experiences of extreme polarisation between “us” and “them”, it is hardly surprising that he was not able or willing to choose a position that was more in the middle, that is a “both-and” stand, which is much more the choice of the Rudenga youngsters of the club five years later (their handling of identity will be discussed more explicitly in chapter 11).

But, in so far as Mokthar's story is “true enough” (see below) and my interpretation is sufficiently acceptable, can his behaviour be understood as an example of “rightful rage”, an instant of an “understandable violence”, so to speak? One thing is to understand. Another thing is to accept. We must not forget the pain and the trauma of his victims. Even if Mokthar himself, in the beginning, held them to be primarily persons who flung discriminating remarks in his face, who threatened or ridiculed him, or who directly attacked him, he seems well aware that also several innocent victims could be found; these were instances where the notion of *blind violence* surely is appropriate. The comprehensibility of violence (touching on the problem of evil) at this degree is obviously insufficient and has been focused upon as a challenge for the researchers, as Daniel has clearly remarked in his analysis of cases from the Sri Lankan civil war (see, for example, Daniel in Dirks (ed.)1998). But Mokthar’s ability and willingness to admit such a separation is at least one argument for us to trust what he has to say.

Was Mokthar aware of his own role in his problems?

If such a question regards the ability of his own violence to create even stronger fear of “the dangerous foreigners” in his non-immigrant surroundings – and thus to stimulate this popular stereotype – I think the answer is that he gradually got so blinded by his own need and urge to strike back that this question seemed irrelevant.

How “true” is Mokthar's story?

A possible answer to such a question may be suggested by posing it in another way: *How true can such a story be?* It is a story told to me by its main character some years after the most problematic events have occurred, with all the reasons for doubt as well as belief that such a situation implies. It is not unlikely that Mokthar, in the process of reflecting of his actions, also is inclined to twist the content so that its author is put in a more advantageous light than was actually the case. This is of course a possibility. But the harshness and the highly problematic image of its author that it conveys seems at least to contradict this. To decide the truth of the story, or the degree to which it is true is very hard. To me, as a listener and a dialogue partner, his gestures, his emotional tone, the pain it seemed to express and the general impression he gave suggest that I should believe him; both the content and the *way* he tells about it seem to me to be convincing. His position, as one who has been through so much trouble and yet have managed to straighten himself up – to become *upright*, so to speak – suggests that he had less to lose at the time when I saw him than when he was in the ethically most problematic parts of his story. The fact that he refused to talk or be interviewed when I first met him, five years earlier, indicated that at that point, the time was not ripe. I have not been able to verify his story sufficiently by speaking to other sources. But at least one person who knew him as a fellow Rudenga habitant, a friend in certain periods and of approximately the same age and “generation”, indicated that he knew that Mokthar had been quite “far out” earlier. Further details of what that meant were not given.

With these questions and comments in mind, I tend to regard his story, as it here is told, at least as sufficiently true.

Revising the image of Rudenga?

Does his story force us to revise the image of Rudenga, as it until now has been told?

An understanding of at least some of the conditional frames for this story may be suggested in the following.

1. At the time when Mokthar was in the age of youth club membership (that is during my first fieldwork), there were considerably fewer immigrant families in Rudenga. At the club the all Norwegian youth were in majority, as previously noticed. The ethos where youth of immigrant background also enjoyed being on approximately equal foot with each other as well as the all-Norwegians, and even were in majority at the

club (as was the case five years later) had not yet developed; however, it seemed that the relationship between the members of solely Norwegian background and the youth of immigrant background, even at that time, was in several ways harmonious. The harassers that Mokthar refers to are groups of older youth that I have little knowledge about.

2. Mokthar had no salient assets, that is skills in for example sports or breakdance, that seemed to have played an important role as bridges for resonance and inclusion between other members of immigrant background and the all-Norwegian youngsters at that time – as is shown in the story of Omar and Ola, and that also played an important role, for example, for Salim.
3. Mokthar also seemed to have developed an almost extreme sensitivity to the marking by his surrounding others that he was different. This was caused by the interplay between certain experiences in his and his family's personal history, on the one hand (the secret of Italy, the conditions of being refugees, his experiences in the special class, etcetera), and the repeated marking of him as different, and the strong experience of exclusion that this lead to, on the other. This may also to some degree be due to the fact that his skin colour is very black and that, therefore, becomes a sign of special salience for practices of exclusion.

One may rightfully doubt if these three points, as well as the analysis above, should be regarded as *sufficient* to explain the development of his story. Human relations contain such elements of the unpredictable that make any overall explanation is likely to fall short.

Mokthar's story nevertheless does change the overall picture of the youth milieu in Rudenga that I have conveyed in the earlier chapters. It strongly exemplifies that there indeed have existed exceptions to the relatively harmonious overall picture I have otherwise attempted to portray.

11 Identification in the multicultural area of Rudenga: reativity, hybridity and anti-schismogenesis

Improvisations are the sort of impromptu actions that occur when our past, brought to the present as habitus, meets with a particular combination of circumstances and conditions for which we have no set response. Such improvisations are the openings by which change comes about from generation to generation. They constitute the environment or landscape in which the experiences of the next generation “sediments”, falls out, into expectation and disposition. The improvisations of the parental generation are the beginning of a new habitus for the next generation. (...) In our view, improvisations, from a cultural base and in response to the subject position offered in situ, are, when taken up as symbol, potential beginnings of an altered subjectivity, an altered identity (Holland et al. 1998:17-18)

One of the core phenomena that we have seen exemplified and activated in the variety of practices discussed throughout this book, and that may be said to sum up the central and concluding aspects of the previous chapters in several ways is the processes and incidents whereby actors of a wide variety of backgrounds associate themselves and feel attached to collectivities, individuals, histories, areas, ways of being, objects, musical forms, codes of dancing, of dressing, of greeting, of language use, of behaving towards the opposite gender etcetera. More precisely, the phenomenon of *identification – of identifying with someone or something* – has played a salient part in these manifestations.

In several of the cases, I will argue, the attachment felt towards these varieties of signs (and sign continua) may be seen as an expression of the building of *connective emotions* from one continuum of signs, associated to a collectivity (or an imagined collectivity), to another such continuum. The phenomenology of identification that is created through the experience of such connectivity may exemplify – in so far as it brings together two or more relatively different identities more or less *simultaneously* – a manifestation of a *hybridisation* of identity.

In this chapter we will address in more explicit ways the phenomenologies of such processes of identification and hybridisation in the

multicultural situation of Rudenga. More precisely, we will relate them to the following questions:

To what extent is it justified to regard the identifications of these youngsters as true examples of hybridisation?

What is the nature of the cognitive and emotional processes of connectivity – relating to the phenomenon of resonance – that are activated in the development of such identities?

In what ways can such “mechanisms” of connectivity be seen as active in the processes of creativity that are manifested in the social practices of the Rudenga youngsters?

First we will explore the varieties of subjective identification among the youngsters in Rudenga and our findings will be related to the recent discussions on the questions of how to understand the phenomenon of cultural hybridity.

Secondly we will discuss and illuminate more directly the emotional-cognitive mechanisms of resonance (and dissonance). We will argue that those mechanisms must be regarded as fundamental in a wide range of more specific mental phenomena – such as the interpretation of dreams, schizophrenia, memory, creativity and magic – that are not usually dealt with in semiotic analysis. I will suggest that, in so far as this is correct, it strongly underlines that especially the principles of the iconic and the indexical – as identified by Peirce as basic types of interpretants – in fact reflects emotional-cognitive mechanisms that must be regarded as most basic to the human mind. These mechanisms must be regarded as playing a salient part in the development of new subjectivities that handle, select and connect to the complexities of the semioscapes of the multicultural situation; they can be seen as the mechanisms through which attachments are built subjectively from one continuum of signs to another.

On hybridity: critiques and potentials

In the present situation of globalization, and the corresponding and accelerating flow of information, people and commodities, the most optimistic view on the processes of identification has been to see them as phenomena constituted by creativity, by fascinating flow and a loose, bordercrossing bricolage in the presumed, liminal grey zones created in the wake of these developments. Such a situation is often held to bring forth identity first and foremost as a phenomenon of hybridity, of various degrees

of blending; it may be hard to decide when and how one “tradition”/ “culture”/ “stream”/ “tradition of knowledge” (that is, collectivities, and their related continua of signs) ends and the other(s) begin (see Bhaba 1997; Werbner & Modood (eds) 1997; Hylland Eriksen 1994; Joseph 1999; Joseph and Fink 1999; Mørck 1998; Pietersee in Featherstone et al. 1995; Ålund 1997; Moore in Moore (ed.) 1999; Pietersee 2001).

Nevertheless, the concept of hybridity has also been severely criticized and surrounded by considerable controversy over the last decades (for an overview see, for example, Pietersee 2001). Pietersee lists a series of critiques that he argues against in a recent article (*ibid*). Some of them will be addressed more directly below.

The first point of these critiques that we will address here is represented by sociologist Dick Pels and social anthropologist Jonathan Friedman (Pels 1999; Friedman 1997,1999).

Both hold the view that the celebration of hybridity, “nomadism” and the often assumed corresponding creativity is exclusively represented by *cultural elites*, that is intellectuals, cultural specialists, researchers and the like; for the rest, especially lower-class immigrants, it is only “business as usual”, which implies essentialism, ethnification, fence-building and nostalgia for the place left behind (*ibid*). Pels, for instance, writes about:

“..the painful paradox that underclass strangers are often attracted to virtually the opposite of what nomadic intellectuals so enthusiastically propagate. They tend to embrace an essentialist politics of identity which banks on cultural traditionalism, social enclosure and ethnic fundamentalism, in which the redemptive dream of a return to the homeland and the eternal roots is kept vigorously alive. (...) From this perspective, the ghettoized immigrant poor are easily caught in a debilitating localism which affords little room for the hybrid and cosmopolitan identifications which are pleaded by the cultural elites (...).” (Pels 1999:76)

In addition, Friedman postulates – and here I tend to agree – that without something that may be discerned as a *subjective experience* of hybridity, the term is without ‘social significance’ (Friedman 1999:249). He does, however, exemplify what he terms ‘real existing hybridity’ by referring to Canclini’s research among ‘journalists, artists and other cultural workers’ in Tijuana and San Diego. One of these claims to be:

Post-Mexican, pre-Chicano, pan-Latino, land crossed, Art American...it depends on the day of the week or the project in question. (Canclini, quoted in Friedman 1999:250)

This only underlines Friedmans assumption of hybridity being a phenomenon reserved for the elite.

Our first question, relating to these two primary postulates, thus will be: *in so far as the area and inhabitants of Rudenga are to be regarded as primarily low/under class – is it possible to detect a subjectively expressed experience of hybrid identity among these young people?*

A second critique against the conceptualisation of hybridity is that it presupposes the existence of identifiable identities characterized by fixed boundaries and is, therefore, not suited to capture the fluxus and changes in the phenomenon of identity (Friedman 1999). Against such criticism we may agree with Pietersee that “*the importance of hybridity is that it problematizes boundaries.*” (2001:220). More specifically, I will argue that the phenomenon and conceptualisation of hybridity – provided some adjustment to make it more precise – is especially helpful to problematize and understand the phenomenology of activities going on in the grey zones between two or more identifiable cultural traditions. In a multicultural situation, as exemplified in Rudenga, a more explicit look at the handling of differences in the processes of identification among the youngsters, should be especially suited for such problematizing. This will be attempted below.

Rudenga: tools of identity, hybridisation, desire and the multitude of subjective identification

Holland et al., drawing on an early work of Hannerz, use the expression “*tools of identity*” to characterize phenomena that are used in various processes of identification (1998, Hannerz 1983). The authors refer, for example, to Skinner who reports that young girls living in a certain area in Nepal, asked to tell about themselves and their lives, often replied with lines from various folksongs. Both girls and older women, according to the authors, sing songs among themselves as a means to objectify their sense of who they are and the kinds of lives they lead (Holland et al. 1998:43) Holland et al. give various examples of such tools of identity, from plain physical objects – such as a mirror – to more complex constructions, such as a lexicon of types from the world of romance (“fox”, “loose woman”, etc.), categories of gender, various story genres and so on. We may here define “*tools of identity*” as *various forms of media that an actor or his/her social surroundings draw into use to reflect, intuit or relate to issues of identification*. These tools are somehow related to experiences of the concrete situation (as well as past experiences) of its users; their “conclusions” (the dominant interpretative Thirdness according to the subjectivities involved)

will vary according to their situation. In the following we will look more systematically at some of the most salient tools of identification that are activated among the Rudenga youngsters. These include a wide range of media such as remembered childhood experiences, music, films, love, language, food, clothing, practices of gender, situational features, physical attributes, sports and religion. Most of these media and their corresponding practices among the Rudenga youngsters have been more thoroughly presented earlier, and will therefore only be referred to briefly here.

Tools of identification: the memorizing of childhood experiences?

For some, childhood experiences are used to express and explain a feeling of identity. This is, for example, presented on a general level by **Nicola** (18, Eritrean parents), who arrived in Norway when she was seven years old, after the family had lived in Italy for several years. Like Mokthar (see chapter 10) she reveals strong feelings for Italy when I ask if she now feels Norwegian in one way or another:

Nicola: No,... I feel Italian. I have never been in Eritrea. But I was born in Italy. I have so many feelings for Italy. When someone speaks about Italy, I feel I become quite... One should believe I was from Italy, sort of. You protect it immediately... It's like "ohhh, Italy". But you are from Eritrea, you are not from Italy. I usually say I am from Eritrea when people ask. But I have very strong feelings from Italy. It's most about feelings.

Nicola had her primary socialisation in Italy. She does not give concrete examples or further specification of her experiences here, but it seems that, as did Mokthar (chapter 10), she felt included, as these early experiences represent some positive indexicality in her life. Nevertheless, she underlines that she in fact is from Eritrea. I guess an inclination to resist this, when she speaks, as if her positive feelings were most strongly elicited while talking about Italy; at the same time she feels she has to underline, more as a matter of fact, that she is from Eritrea, in the sense that it was here her parents came from. Here the dimension of reality (Secondness) of her stay and experiences from Italy, seems at least emotionally to be stronger than the more "virtual" quality she subjectively feels, vis a vis the fact that her parents are refugees from Eritrea. This seems to point to the *primacy of childhood experience* in generating a direction for identification, also in the sense that the importance of such experience seems to be recognized subjectively. But, as our next example will show, such an assumption is not at all self-evident.

Maria (17, born in Chile of Chilean parents, but who arrived in Rudenga when she was very young) says:

I feel mostly Norwegian. I believe it's because of my Norwegian friends. We went to kindergarten together, and they were the first friends I got when I arrived. But at home, I feel more Chilean. We speak Spanish at home and when we are together with the friends of my family. And when I am out with Chileans, then I am more Chilean. That's the way it is for many people I know.

Here we see a reference to two different “worlds”: the one existing at home with her parents and in situations where she is together with other persons of Chilean origin and the social sphere when she is together with “Norwegian” friends; it is not clear if she means persons of solely Norwegian background or if she also includes others with more or less hyphenated identities like herself. Once more we see that the primacy of experiences of inclusion and social resonance, of making friends and positive relationships are strongly felt to play a salient part in the colouring of her identification. Nevertheless, her feeling of identity is modified by situational variations.

In our next example, the power of childhood experiences does *not* seem to have been strong enough to become the main point of identification. **Maurizio** (16) actually was born in Norway to Chilean parents but the experiences of being born and growing in Norway have not been caused him to see himself as primarily Norwegian, as was the case with Maria's or with Nicola's experiences of growing up in Italy.

I am Chilean. I feel Chilean, but a little bit Norwegian too, because I have my comrades here, I have grown up here, I am used to how it is here, to the customs and so on.

Thus for Maurizio having primary childhood experiences in Norway, only have been sufficient to make him feel “a little bit Norwegian too”. It seems therefore, to be problematic to propose that there is a one to one relationship of the experience of growing up in a certain area, to the identification with that area.

Nevertheless, in so far as their subjective statements imply a combination of at least two different “identities”, both Maria and Maurizio must be regarded as youngsters who can be seen as exemplifying hybrid identities. Nicola, unlike the others, here dismisses a feeling of being “Norwegian”, even if she has lived in Norway for eleven years. Our three cases may therefore serve to show the *fragility and unpredictability* that

accompany the question of identification, as also several of the cases below will reveal.

Tools of identification: music

As we remember from the chapter on music, Maurizio was dedicated to “all Latin music”; one of his expressed motivations for enjoying Techno were the similarities between the emphasis on rhythm in Latin music and the similar rhythmic emphasis in Techno. Thus for Maurizio, these musical genres are used as tools of identification; his recognising of such similarity – as a point of resonance – seems to build an *emotional bridge*, a feeling of connection, from one genre to the other, through which his identification (a part of himself, so to speak, in the manner of the Maussian “*hau*”) with these two genres seem to flow (for more on “mechanisms of connectivity”, see below). For Nicola her stated reasons for enjoying the musical forms of Soul and R&B, was, as we remember, among other things, that they were performed by artists that were black like herself. Like Maurizio, she was building *affective connections* to the genre through the mode of similarity. Our chapter on music, as we remember, provided numerous examples of music being used and drawn upon as such a tool for identifications. Here, subjectively recognized iconicities, between the lifeworlds and concerns of the various actors, and some sort of iconicity with the messages of the music (or genre) preferred, could repeatedly be discerned as the connective points of resonance; through these the feelings of identification found their ways to build emotional attachment.

Tools of identification: films¹

For a wide range of youngsters films were in many ways used as a medium through which they reflected upon their lives and related to in terms of identity. We have already seen, for example in chapter 2, how the Hip Hop film “*Beat Street*” was used by the Rudenga youngsters to identify with and to reflect upon their situation on the basis of the subjective recognitions of similarities.

For Maurizio, in agreement with his preference for various musical genres, films that deal with Latin identities are strongly preferred:

¹ On the basis of the empirical material available, it could also be possible and indeed interesting to write a larger chapter about films, as an often-used popular medium for identification among the Rudenga youths. Unfortunately, such a project will therefore only be touched upon briefly here.

Maurizio: I prefer films with Latin Americans. Like “Blood in, blood out” (in Norwegian “Blodets bånd”). It’s about three boys. One of them is being severely beaten up by a gang so that he almost gets lame. His friends try to beat up those who did it. Then it is a story about how life becomes for those three. One becomes a lawyer; one becomes a junkie; the other joins a gang. It is a good story. I’ve seen it ten times, I think. Because it is about Latin Americans. That’s important. Had it been about blacks, I’d probably have thrown it away after two times

As the salient motivation for enjoying the film is subjectively declared to be that the film deals with main figures (roles) of “Latin” origin like his own, the film can be said to be used as a tool/a medium for Maurizio’s “work of identity”; this feature makes it especially appropriate to be used to reflect upon himself as being of Latin identity. The recognition of similarity can be seen as the mechanism through which emotional connections (resonance) were established.

It is a recurrent fact that the most popular films among the Rudenga youngsters – films that have been seen by one or more actors a considerable number of times – have contained themes and elements where the identity of the role figures have been salient, or which have characteristics similar to those of their audience; these elements are especially related to by their young users as vehicles for identification.¹

Tools of identification: love, language and the attributes of the individual

It is difficult to predict more specifically which aspects of an experiential repertoire that may serve as tools of identification. For Mohamed (19, Pakistani parents, born in Pakistan, also quoted in chapter 8) language seemed to be such a tool. This is clearly expressed when I asked him how it feels to grow up here in Norway, and whether he feels that he is Pakistani, Norwegian, something in the middle, none of the kind or...perhaps something else?

Mohamed: I think something in between. ...When I visit Pakistan it is like going on a holiday. It is nice and warm, but it is not tempting to live

¹ Some of the most important film titles in this respect, and that some of the member had close relationships towards were: *Beat Street*, *White men can’t jump*, “*Blood in, blood out*”, “*Scarface*”, “*American history X*”, “*Rush Hour I*”, as well as several action films with Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan or Jean Claude van Damme. Also John Woo has figured as a favourite filmmaker. In addition the Norwegian film “*Schpaa*” got some attention among the youngsters.

there. It is difficult to explain. I dream in Norwegian. I speak Urdu with my parents, Punjabi with my Pakistani friends, Norwegian with Anita. ... I do not think of “Pakistanis” or “Norwegians”. It is the single person that *matters*. *But I love a Norwegian, then... (sending love laden glances to his girlfriend)*

We remember that Anita, his then girlfriend characterized the members of TMG-gang (of which Mohamed was one of the “founding fathers”) as concerned with being “proud Pakistanis”. According to our analysis in chapter 9, the very formation of that gang seemed to express an attempt to raise the status of “the Pakistani” members. While interviewing Mohamed some years after the rise and fall of TMG, it is therefore noteworthy that he states that he feels he is something “in between”. In other words, he seems reluctant to state clearly the one identity (Pakistani) or the other (Norwegian). We have earlier suggested that the success TMG achieved in generating respect and renown (largely based on the phenomenon of social dissonance), seemed to have made it easier for the ex-members to mix more freely with the other youngsters in Rudenga, as if their self esteem was now strong enough to make this possible. Maybe it is his participation in these processes, among other things, that lies behind Mohamed’s present statement. He here seems to be able to accept this *unclearness* in his mode of identification. And this unclarity he expresses primarily in terms of language, underlining the situational aspect of his possible identifications.

But he also mentions his love for Anita as something we may interpret as a medium for a loosening up his identificational direction, as if “loving a Norwegian” is somehow leading to a softening of his feelings of identity, more towards the area of being “in between”. Such a situation, where love may be seen as a medium for identification, helps us to further underline the role of *desire* in this phenomenology of identification.

This is, of course, not limited to dimensions of interpersonal relations. A consideration of the desire and fascination directed to, for example, music, dance and a phenomenon like Hip Hop (as presented in chapter 2) points to the role of desire in identificational processes related to a wide range of phenomena. A salient characteristic of love relations is probably that it strongly emphasize a very literal mode of indexicality, that is the desire of physical contact; this becomes the concrete and physical channel for transporting emotional connectivity (resonance).

For Mohamed, a way of handling his “in betweenness” seems to be his inclination to avoid “thinking” in terms of “Norwegians” versus “Pakistanis”; instead, he emphasizes the *individual identity of each person*. Thereby, he somehow de-emphasizes the importance of collective identity,

which, as will be seen exemplified below, is a recurrent theme among the Rudenga youngsters.

The importance of language as a way of expressing respect and belonging shows in the importance Sardar (18, Pakistani parents) puts upon the mastering of Norwegian as expressed in his complaints about a female Pakistani politician (of the Norwegian Labour Party), who was requested – as a symbolic gesture – to make a speech on May the 17th. This is the national day of Norway, a traditional event of considerable importance in Norway that has been celebrated on a large scale all over the country since the constitution of the country was established in 1814. Sardar’s demand for a better mastering of the Norwegian language from this representative of the Norwegian Pakistani immigrants becomes clear in the following:

The anthropologist and several of the club members are sitting together in the sunlight outside the club on May the 18th, watching the trampoline jumpers (the club has a large trampoline for use outdoors when the weather allows it). We are talking about what the youngsters did on May the 17th. I ask what they thought of the fact that a female Pakistani politician – Rubina Rana – from the Norwegian Labour Party held a speech during the large official arrangement in Oslo? Sardar complains about her language skills. According to him she spoke Norwegian so badly that it was hardly possible to understand what she said. He agrees that it is very good that a person with foreign background did lead the procession and gave the speech on such an occasion, but someone who mastered the Norwegian language better should be chosen. Ashlan (eighteen, Pakistani parents) who listens to our conversation, agrees, but he also complains that there was too little culture of foreign origin in the arrangement. When so many foreigners are living in Norway, they ought to have something cultural from those too, on a day like May the 17th.

Sardar’s remark seems to express the demand for what he sees as some basic requirements for a Pakistani to speak on such occasions. He and his fellow club members put emphasis upon speaking Norwegian among the members and the role of their abilities to know fragments of the language of their friends, as a gesture of expressing respect and recognition (and friendship) towards the “owner”. His utterances may be interpreted as a critique of the politician (and official representative of the families of Pakistani origin in Norway) for not being able to perform appropriately on such an occasion as the Constitution Day of the country to which she or her family had immigrated. Once more we see a clear demonstration of the view of a Rudenga youngster upon the role of language as a tool to express, not only the utterer’s own identity but also *the utterer’s attitudes towards the identity*

of the other (here in a prominent Pakistani's public relation to the nation of Norwegians). In this medium of identification, the building of the desired points of connections seems to be dominated by iconicity, in so far as learning of language may be seen as an exchange of similarities (mastering the same skills, the same words).

Tools of identification: clothes and food – and a little more about language

As described in chapter 6, when the club, on the initiative of some of the members, arranged a “cultural evening”; some of the boys of Pakistani background, both wearing traditional clothing, the shalwar and k'mise, served food (home cooked Pakistani samosas), while they later tried to teach traditional stick dances from Punjab (which they both had unfortunately forgot). These items are also referred to when I ask Ravi (eighteen, Pakistani parents. Born in Pakistan, eight years in Norway) about his feelings of identity. He states he feels mostly Pakistani, but also a bit Norwegian. I ask him further if he thinks there are some differences between Norwegians and Pakistanis that he feels are especially important:

Earlier it was differences regarding food and clothes, and so on. But now there is not much difference. Well still, food is a difference. But I have several Norwegian friends that have been to my home and eaten dinner, for instance. We go out together, and we speak almost the same language.

Food and clothing are, in other words, seen as objects that are infused with identity. Sharing these objects (eating the same food together), and using the approximately similar clothes, based upon a common agreement of what is cool and “good clothing” (as seen in detail in chapter 6), are considered acts of sharing identity (combining both indexicality and iconicity) and of reducing former differences.

But Ravi seems to see these as only single aspects which express such a message; these are included in a larger whole, where also the sharing of language plays a prominent part:

There are a few differences. But some of my Norwegian friends can almost talk Punjabi. They know lots of words. Long sentences. They understand the most. And we have our own language of youth with all the words you wrote down, you know (referring to the registration of the common repertoire of words and expressions from the various areas of origins represented, as described in chapter 5).

Ravi strongly underlines the use and knowledge of his mother tongue among his friends as an expression of the reduction of differences between himself and the “Norwegians”. Indeed, this subjective statement underlines the perception that the experience of the reduced relevance of cultural differences is felt widely in the overall social milieu in Rudenga. He associates himself in the direction of a hybrid identity (where differences are still relatively discernible), and also attributes it to the wider milieu, as social unit where the various differences are subsumed in an overarching commonality. One may question how deep and how encompassing such an experience may be. It is both possible and even likely that, despite his opinions at the moment these utterances were made, there will occur situations where Ravi will experience that differences associated to his area of origin are made or perceived as relevant. Nevertheless, his expressions indicate strongly that he, at least temporarily, perceives such a situation as unlikely in the circles he frequents in Rudenga, and that such perceptions of commonality is subjectively felt as *shared* among his fellow youth.

Tools of identification: single aspects – gender relations

For some, more specific and single aspects of behaviour may be picked up as a tool of identification.

Ali (seventeen, Pakistani parents, born in Pakistan, arrived in Norway as a small child): I feel mostly Pakistani. But I feel more Norwegian regarding girls. In Pakistan and according to Islamic religion a man shall not go for girls – at least not before marriage. So in that respect I am probably more European. In the Pakistani milieus the men have to protect the girls. But in Norway there is more equal treatment. In Pakistan the girls must stay inside and do Housework, while the man shall do all work outside, get the money. Simple rules. That’s probably what it was like in Norway earlier too. Some 100 years ago or something. Things are changing in Pakistan too. But it takes some time.

Here practices of more liberal gender relations, for Ali, seem to be subjectively felt as one aspect for identification, perhaps also including a grain of irony, as he likes to promote an impression of himself as someone who enjoys "getting" girls. To Ali this is a sign of “Norwegianness” and “Europeanness” that is desirable. But as we remember from chapter 8, in cases such as Talvin’s – who at first held “Norwegian girls” to be the most treacherous, then saw them as the most faithful – such semiotics may change rapidly on the basis of stereotypes built on, for example, personal experience. And for Maurizio (also discussed in chapter 8), the extreme

strictness and limitations of action put on Muslim girls in this area were clearly seen as a sign of “Muslimhood”.

Nevertheless, when Ali picks up and associates himself with the more liberal practices towards the opposite gender that he also associates with the “Norwegian/European” – on the basis of a felt similarity – this may be seen as one more expression of a hybridisation of identity, as subjectively experienced.

Tools of identity: situational frames, physical attributes and friendship among former “enemies”:

A salient characteristic of the example of hybrid identity that Friedman quoted from Canclini’s research, points to the experience of identity that varied according to the situation. This has already been indicated in the cases of Maria and Mohamed and is even more clearly stated below in the conversation with Salim (21, Moroccan-Berber parents, born in Morocco), his friends Rahim (23, Moroccan-Arabian parents) and Malou (21, Algerian-Berber parents). Again we discuss the issue of identity:

Salim: Difficult to answer. I feel mostly Moroccan, but some Norwegian too. It is important not to forget ones roots. (...)

Rahim: ...it depends on the situation. Like here in Norway on New Years eve, you do not think of yourself as Moroccan. But when it is ID – the feast at the end of Ramadan – then you are Moroccan. You get the feeling that it is here you belong, together with the ones who celebrate it like you do.

Malou: When I am going to Algeria and I get stopped in the customs, they say “Oh, yes, you are Norwegian, that’s right”. They call me “European”. But I would rather be called Malou than “the Algerian”.

Malous statements underlines that identity is also something that is *imposed* on him from the outside (exemplified by the official customs), who, in the situation when he is about to cross a national border, defines him as Norwegian or European. Perhaps in such situations, where the dissonance of being the object of such an execution of power is felt, it is even more important to insist on being treated as an individual (represented by his personal name) rather than being forcibly treated as a representative of a collectivity.

According to our three friends, there is a relatively problematic relationship in Morocco between Berbers, who are the original inhabitants of the area, and the Arabs who invaded the areas in a later historical period. But

when Salim and his family visit Morocco now, they stay in an area (where they have also built a House) where many Arabs are living. Moreover, Rahim, as one of the three close friends, is an Arab. This is also a difference that to Salim makes him question his own identity:

Salim: I am in between everything. When I am in Morocco, I am a Berber together with Arabs. And here in Norway, an Arab is one of my best friends. Sometimes I ask myself where do I belong? When you are Berber and you move to live together with Arabs, it could be quite difficult. But I got quite another impression regarding Arabs. Now I do not see any differences between Berbers and Arabs. Well, many places Berbers are usually more conservative than Arabs, especially in cities like Nador. The women should wear long skirts and use a veil. Arabs are more liberal, like Europeans. But for me, personally, it is no problem (the other boys confirm).

This tendency to experience a reduced importance of old enmity – that is of enmities usual in the various countries of origin – was also underlined by the members of Somalian background in the club; they stated that despite the fighting between the clans in Somalia (for example, the Faqash clan versus the Isaaq clan): *“Here in Norway, we are all Somalians, and we can well be friends with each other.”*

It seems that, at least for these actors, the importance of enmity among antagonistic groups from the areas of origin is reduced. Possibly it is the situation of being immigrant that may have had the effect of reducing such antagonisms. Are differences in identity least important where also former “enemies” in the area of origin are included in their community? Here the sharing the same country of origin seems to be the important mode, reducing the felt relevance of former internal antagonism.

I ask Salim if he feels it has been a problem that he feels puzzled by the question of who he is?

Salim: No, but who am I, sort of? It is not that I think about it all the time, but sometimes I think “What the hell am I doing? What is it? Where do I feel my home is?”

Malou: Home? Where is home? When we are in Rudenga together with the boys perhaps...?

Rahim: Of course it is a problem when you do not know where “home” is. I have younger brothers who were born in Norway but who live in Morocco where they have grown up. They feel completely Moroccan. Then there is me who was born in Morocco but who has grown up here. I will never be accepted as Norwegian. I think when you look this way,

then you can become Moroccan. When I was in France, there they called me Norwegian. But I do not feel Norwegian. For example, a Negro in England, he says he's English. But that's too new in Norway. But it has too do with the way you look. I can always become Moroccan because I look that way. I can never become 100% Norwegian because of my looks. My father came in 1960, and he is still seen as a Moroccan in Norway.

Rahim points to a simple feature that seems to play an important role, as it is an extremely immediate and visible sign of differentness: *skin colour and the physical appearance*. For him, as well as for other informants, this is underlined as an almost *inescapable mark* that prevents the inclusion of its bearer in a collectivity where such a mark is not shared. In chapter 10 we saw that this played a salient role also for Mokthar, who stressed the pain and disturbance he felt when he saw himself in the mirror beside some of his non-black friends; this feature was obviously pointing to and representing the whole issue of difference that he was trying so hard to escape. Similarly, also for Omar, as we saw in chapter 4, this “gaze of the mirror” was seen as an almost inescapable reminder of his “foreignness”. Appearance and skin colour, of cause, basically operates through the mode of indexicality.

After our talk, Salim, Rahim and Malou were going to see the movie titled “*Rush Hour*” in which the companionship (friendship) between two main characters of different background, represented by actors Jackie Chan (Chinese) and Chris Tucker (African American), is a salient characteristic of the action-comedy. Once more this shows the role of popular film as a tool of identity, often in combinations where the obvious qualities of having fun, that is desire, play a foremost role.

Tools of identity: football and fighting

Competitive sports in which two teams compete with each other may be seen as an example of highly formalised opposition between two different identities. No wonder that sports have been used so extensively to display nationhood. When Norwegian football supporters paint Norwegian flags in their faces, dress up in plastic caricatures of Viking helmets and arm themselves with various “gear” with strong carnivalesque flavour reflecting their national belonging, this may be seen as a ritual caricature (that sometimes may become quite serious) of the competition between nations, about being the best (see also Klausen, et al. 1998 about various aspects of sports and identity – of nationality and not least gender- at the Olympic level). Sports, and in this case football, may be used as a powerful medium/tool, not only to

display (and even play with) identity but also to get *included* into an attractive collectivity, among the Rudenga youngsters

Salim, Rahim and Malou are all dedicated football fans. Salim started “*as the only black guy*”, as he put it, on his first football team in 1984 and is still active. And as they all were working at the same workplace in June 1997, when Norway played against Morocco, the collective watching of this match on the firm’s TV set became a memorable event to them all:

Salim: Oh, yes, all the ones who were working that evening arranged a real party. The three of us had all shaved our heads. We brought Moroccan handdrums and wore towels on our heads, to look like sheiks, or desert nomads or something, you know. We all sang and yelled in Arabic, and we sure made a lot of noise. I mean, they were fifty and we were just four Moroccans. When we came in dressed up like that, everyone became silent. They just sat there with their beers and they just did not know what to do... And we came sneaking in with towels on our heads, drumming and screaming like hell...

Rahim: That was a nice evening...(laughs)

At their workplace, where all-Norwegians were in a decisive majority, the three boys of Moroccan background made what we may term a “frontal stunt” by dressing up with towels on their heads, drums in hand and yelling in Arabic – displaying the clichés of being “mad Arabs”; agreeing with the fake Viking helmets, signifying the “wild Vikings”, in a Norwegian version. Being a dedicated supporter is, at least in its more humouristic and carnivalesque versions, about exaggeration. Here it is all displayed right in front of their puzzled workmates:

Malou: One of them was quite confused. It started to get a little tense, and one of the Norwegians gave us some shit, but we just continued as if nothing had happened. We yelled in Arabic when El Haji (the most well known Moroccan player) was close to scoring. Now that was a very good match.

Salim: Then, in the pause, one of the Norwegians fetched a plastic bucket so that he could drum too. I do think we inspired them a bit.

It turned out to be a memorable and enjoyable match, according to our three friends, also to the all-Norwegians, after the first shock of the “Arab attack”. In a humorous way they displayed themselves as “Moroccans” (even while including “an Algerian”!), while deliberately projecting their own identities towards the Moroccan team as a suitable vehicle for identification (activated through the mode of similarity).

For these boys, the homeland of their families seemed to be a primary identification (even to the point that the “Algerian” Malou did join his two Moroccan friends in this joint celebration of a Moroccan team). But they also expressed themselves being Norwegian to varying degrees. Moreover they felt that their identification varied according to the situation and, not least, that a possible answer to the question of identity often was experienced as quite difficult and unclear.

Similar difficulties are felt by Mahmoud (17, Somalian parents, who came to Norway when he was eight years old):

I feel like I am both Somalian and Norwegian. I am a Norwegian citizen. I feel like I am the culture that I am, and that depends on what the day is like. It is difficult to answer. It varies.

All the other members of Somalian background were, on the contrary, quite clear in declaring themselves to be all Somalian. The reason behind the exception of Mahmoud may be complex and composite, and I will not here speculate further on this issue. But one *critical event* nevertheless seems to have played an important role in his feelings for the area of Rudenga. This becomes clear when he is telling about his childhood; he, his mother and his siblings at first lived five years in Granvollen, another East end suburb outside Oslo:

It took quite some time to get to know people. But after the special class, when I started to attend the normal classes, it went better. I started to visit a youth club at Granvollen and, especially when I started to play football outside in the summertime, I got to know several others of my age: Pakistanis, other Somalians, Eritreans, people from other African countries. We played a lot of football, everybody participated in our own tournaments. Football is the best of sports. I'd really like to be a professional player.

They moved to Rudenga in 1996, when Mahmoud was fifteen. I ask him what it was like:

You know, I was a little shy when we moved in here. But then came the Pakistani boys, Ravi, Mohammed and Sardar, and said to me: “Hey, you have just moved in. We can show you the place!” They were very polite and nice to me. They showed me the whole place, and introduced me to the ones who lived here. It was during the summer, and they all asked me if I would join them playing football. You know everybody plays lots of football here in Rudenga. So I did.

At that time the class I attended in Granvollen (he had not yet started to attend the Rudenga school) participated in the school tournament and, later, the quarter finals in the Oslo Cup. I remember one especially tough match. We were leading, then they scored; then there had to be a penalty goal (“straffespark” in Norwegian) – the first score wins, you know, and I was picked to do it. And we won. But there’s even more to this story. You see, the team we beat was from the Rudenga school. And when I moved to the Rudenga school, some of the pupils said: you are not welcome here. I did not understand... And they said: Wasn’t it you who scored for Granvollen in the penalty goal? I said, yes, of course. After that I really got to know them. That was a real funny thing to have experienced. And it was so strange, you know, the first time I visited the new class, the teacher said he guessed that I would score on the next match. Then I really did (laughing)! We got to the semifinals! That was really great!

For Mahmoud both his reputation and his proved skills became important assets that lead him to be readily accepted and included in the milieu in Rudenga, both in his class and outside. In this way his skills in sports – as exemplifying the indexical mode – became a bridge that provided a direct access to the new collectivity and to an identity as one of the Rudenga boys.

Yasir (sixteen, Kurdish parents, born in Turkey) is one of the most active football players in the area, whose schoolteam from Rudenga has won several important matches. He started to play football almost straight from the moment he arrived in the country in 1989:

I have played football since I was five. And when my family arrived in Norway, and to Rudenga we played all the time. Almost every Saturday when we were free from school. We played against folks from other areas too and got to know them; everybody wanted to play against us in Rudenga. And just after we had arrived, when my brothers and I still went to the special class, we got our own team of just Kurds, and two Turks too.¹ For a period we played almost everyday against different people. Sport is very important. When everyone knows the rules and what it is all about, then you get to know each other better.

The famous arrangement “Norway Cup” is said to be *the worlds largest football* event for children and youth. Yasir’s comment reflects the idea of that arrangement: that basic knowledge about the rules functions as a

¹ Yasir also tells tales about how old antagonisms existing in the areas of origin, here between Kurds and Turks, (in this case also) are reduced in a situation where both are members of immigrant families in Norway.

common denominator that makes it possible for youth from very different backgrounds from all over the world to interact and play.

Yasir is not fond of school, as few of the Rudenga boys are. He often quarrelled with the teachers and several times was sent to the headmaster's office for a reprimand. But, in accordance with the interest for and role of sport among the Rudenga youngsters, there was especially one teacher that most of them, including Yasir, strongly appreciated – the gym teacher.

“Tore” has been a teacher in gymnastics and math since 1973. The school at Rudenga is well known to have put a special emphasis on sports. I ask him why:

First, everybody needs something more than books and homework. They need to feel well, that's good for the overall motivation. Secondly, sports, especially when they are played in teams, are well suited to bring the pupils together, to make them accept each other, get them to know each other, and each others' strengths and weaknesses. But it's also more egoistic on my behalf. I like to get to know the pupils better outside the classroom. I feel that's really rewarding personally. We do several different tournaments that are organized by the pupils. They get responsibility and manage very well, I think. There seems to be lots of interest in sports in this area. Among the foreign-languaged there are many that are especially talented. Many of them are struggling hard with their schoolwork. One of the greatest stars last year unfortunately had very bad results in his academic subjects, and he was quite difficult in many ways. But never in sports. He had responsibility for the football team and was an unbelievable teamplayer. He was so clever with the team in all ways. A true talent. In that way sports may be so important for many youngsters that have trouble with the subjects, and maybe in other areas of life too. With sports they get the opportunity to develop strength and skills in a different way. That is not least important when you're running a school where almost fifty percent of the pupils have foreign background.

Tore's statements harmonize very well with, for instance, Yasir's relationship to both sports and his gym-teacher. Yasir became one of the best players on the school team and contributed strongly to the winning of several important matches.

But there was also another kind of physical skill that, according to Yasir, played an important role in getting to know each other; this must be considered a more informal and direct way of displaying skills, suitable for the newly arrived, namely fighting:

When you're a newcomer you have to fight. When we attended the special class, there were several people in that school that were

quarrelling. It also happened to other foreigners I know. They bullied us because we did not master the language. Especially the Norwegians. They wanted to fight. Once there were several of them that challenged us. And we all went down into a small forest. Then they came against us, and we fought one by one. But we, the Kurds, beat them all. We went against them all the time. We never retreated; we were not afraid. The Norwegians could talk but not act. But afterwards we became friends. That's how it always is with the Norwegians. They get beaten, then they behave ok. We got acquainted with everyone of them. You got to fight to show who you are, you know, either in football or in other ways. Football and fighting, that's what it takes to make friends, I believe!

Like the competition of sport, for Yasir the more informal interaction of fighting, that in more "positive" versions may be seen as a dialogue of physical contact, was experienced as a bridge – where indexicality is the dominant mode – for friendship and getting to know each other. I doubt that this may be held to be representative for all the members, and fighting, of course, includes an element of dissonance that may easily turn into real and explicit antagonism, depending on the subjective investment of the involved. Nevertheless, a football match is also a form of formalized and more or less distanced way of fighting, of displaying skills and showing your abilities to use them to achieve a goal.

But the risk of open conflict is also present in the aroused feelings that often are stirred up in competitive sport events.

Tools of identity: religion versus football

The risk inherent in a sportevent to transgress itself into real antagonisms is also concretely referred to in Yasir's stories. In this example, an appeal to the sharing of religion is creatively used to avoid a more troublesome situation:

Anthropologist: But when someone loses, don't they get angry...?

Yasir: Well no, but...yes, once it was quite close. We played against some Pakistanis we didn't know from another area. They were older and more people than us. I was only seven, the youngest. And we won, you know. Then they got angry. They all came slowly walking against us. They were maybe fifteen persons. And they were clearly up to something. There's gonna be trouble, we all thought on our team. It was quite tense. What should we do? Then we, I think it was my older brother who said: "But we are also Muslims. We shouldn't fight against each other. It's so bad if other people should get a bad impression of us." You

know, when we came to Norway we thought that we who were Muslims, we had to behave well; we must not quarrel with other people. If we did people in the new country would think badly about the Muslims. So we thought this was important. And you know what? The Pakistanis all calmed down. Because being Muslims, you know, that was what we all had in common!

In this story the appeal to an overarching commonality, here in the shape of Islam – invoking the mode of similarity – seemed to work to calm down the antagonisms that were about to erupt.

Religion has a unifying function, as these examples show; it becomes one more medium of identity through which the Rudenga dwellers think and reflect upon themselves.

According to teachers in the local school, the level of knowledge among the pupils about religion has definitely been raised after the latest increase in the number of pupils with foreign backgrounds and knowledge of those pupils is held to have been an important resource for the school. There was also told a story about two all-Norwegian boys who tried to participate in the fast (without really succeeding!) during Ramadan, because they considered it “cool” to be Muslim. This may be seen as an expression of respect and fascination that are exhibited in the handling of differences of identity in this milieu, here in the medium of religion.

Hybridity and the multitude of identificational positions

A wide range of levels of identification, overarching the identity derived from the area of origin, are available (to various degrees), activated and not least experienced by the Rudenga youngsters: they are childhood friends, football players, lovers, Muslims, “foreigners”, Norwegians, Hip Hop’ers, Techno-fans and, not least, Rudenga dwellers. For some, we have discerned a tendency (to some extent) to *deny* the importance of where people come from: I ask Juanita (sixteen, parents from Honduras, born in Honduras, moved to Norway at age one) about her feelings of who she is:

I am a Norwegian citizen. But I do not think about if I am Norwegian or not. I know where I am from, and I do not forget that, but I do not feel different from the other Norwegians. I have experienced almost the same as the Norwegians. I think Norwegians are not much different from people in Honduras or Guatemala.

Juanita feels that people are mostly the same. Again we see her own emphasis upon the sharing of experience – thus pointing to the dominance of

the mode of similarity – with her fellow youth as a medium for reducing the importance of difference.

A more elaborate version of this theme is expressed by Manuel (sixteen, Spanish parents, born in Spain, came to Norway at age three):

When I am in Spain, I do not want to move back to Norway. But when I am here, I feel it's best here and that I do not want to move to Spain. It is two different worlds, sort of... I felt I fit in when I was there, so that's not the question... but I feel I fit in better here. It probably has to do with that childhood feeling.... We speak Spanish at home, but there you speak Spanish twenty four hours a day. So, I don't know. It is difficult to answer. It's that feeling. I am Spanish, but I have lived here for so many years. I'm thinking that I am Spanish, but... The Norwegian part has to do with how I behave, how I talk and... but I feel Spanish because that's where I come from.

We notice the ambivalence and unclearness that surrounds the experience of identity. When I ask Manuel what, to his mind, are the most Spanish things he knows, he answers language and the music, like Gipsy Kings and various small Spanish groups whose names he does not remember. Like Maurizio he enjoys Latin music. He plays Gipsy Kings for his friends, but he also listens to Turkish music together with one of his best friends, Kemal, who is of Turkish origin. They exchange items of identity, as we have seen exemplified so many times, and, not least, they *share the experience of these items*. He continues:

Several people have asked if I was Turkish when I am with Kemal... But when someone mentions me as Spanish I become proud. When I write applications for work, I write that I am Spanish, but that I have grown up in Norway. And in discussions about if we should have all different kinds of races in Norway, and so on, then I feel like a Spaniard. We, the Spanish, are not mentioned in such discussions because we have not made any trouble; we haven't brought shame over our people. I often think that I must respect Norway when I am living here. Norway gives me schooling, its land,... but when someone asks, then I am Spanish. (...) I and Kemal do not discuss if Spain is better than Turkey or such things. But often we forget where people come from. We do not think about if people are African or Pakistani or... and I think about them as if they are Spanish, like myself. You know, he speaks a different language, I speak another language; we communicate in Norwegian; he is from another place. But I often, almost always, in fact, forget where they are from. (...) We feel just as strong for our countries. I say Spain is best, the others have their country.

Manuel's utterances, as those of most of the informants referred to above, thus take *three directions*. Along the *first* he states that he feels strongly for the area where his family has its origin, as do most of his fellow youngsters from immigrant families; *this matters*, in other words.

In the *second* direction of identification, he also expresses the feeling that the fact that his fellow youngsters in Rudenga have a wide range of different origins (and the differences that these facts imply) *does not matter* in regard to his relationship to them. The difference between his identification with the Spanish and their identification with whatever area they come from – and thus the differences between himself and the others in this respect – is not felt as relevant for their relationships vis a vis each other. In other words, he emphasises that he is Spanish, but he also emphasises the lack of differences between his fellow youngsters – whether from Turkey, Africa or Pakistan – when he says he experiences them as Spanish, his own preferred identity. When a person of such background (Spanish), who has lived most of his life in Norway, describes how he sees his fellow youngsters of decisively different backgrounds “as Spanish” – and not as “Norwegian” as we might have been inclined to expect – this word may be seen to an even stronger degree to underline the message that “*there are no difference between us*”. It seems to refer to the sharing of the situation of being all from various immigrant families, as something that makes them all alike, so to speak.

In the *third* direction he points to *the Norwegian* – as represented by the language they all communicate in as well as the area/country where they all live – as the “stamp” of the overarching frame where their common lives unfold. Manuel seems to feel a resistance against labelling himself as “Norwegian”. But he surely is quite close: as he reflects on my question, he holds forth the fact that he has grown up here and shared experiences with his Rudenga companions. It is “*that childhood feeling*”, as he puts it, that is in the way he behaves, the way he talks, and surely many other things. And it is in Norway he feels he fits in better. The discrepancy between the impact acknowledged of his past experiences acquired while growing up in Rudenga, on the one hand, and his own insistence of himself being Spanish, on the other, seem to puzzle him in ways he does not seem to be able to solve. Once more we may interpret this as an example indicating *the subtlety of the trajectories through which the emotions of identification may flow*.

All these examples, and the whole range of feelings, intuitions, doubts and nuances that we here have seen as subjectively expressed, may be regarded as manifestations of the wide variety of identificational positions that are represented among these youths: *some identify themselves as mostly Norwegian; some as mostly Pakistani (or whatever the home area of their parents); some as something in between; some as neither the one nor the other, but as something else (represented by the transit country); some say that the question does not matter; some say that it is a problem; some that it only sometimes is a problem; some that they do not exactly know; some that it all depends on the situation; and some – those who have lived here the shortest – that they feel that they are only what their parents are.*

On the basis of such a range of empirical evidence, it is hard to take heed of the border insistent, mono-identified, homogenizing, in-tolerant immigrant whose only concern is to defend his borders and to long for the ways of the areas of origin.

This empirical evidence thus seems to contradict the assumptions of Friedman (as well as Pels), who writes:

In a world of multiplying diasporas, one of the things that is not happening is that boundaries are disappearing. Rather, they seem to be erected on every new street corner of every declining neighbourhood of our world. It is true that a little bit of this and a little bit of that are flowing across all sorts of boundaries, but they are not being used to celebrate hybridity. On the contrary, they are incorporated and naturalized by group formation that strives to homogenize and maintain social order within its own boundaries. (Friedman in Featherstone & Lash 1999:241)

In all our empirical examples – that also on the premises of Friedman and Pels, may rightfully be termed “hybrid” identities – it is, in other words, quite the opposite is the case. *The practices of the youngsters are all questioning the assumption of the neat and the tidy borders of identity and, not least, the assumed inclinations to insist upon the necessity of the perpetuation of such borders; they abstain from insisting on the homogeneity of the group to which they associate.*

The *second criticism* concerns Friedman’s and Pels’ question of class, that to these writers is crucially connected to the phenomenon of hybridity, in so far as only the cultural elites are ascribed such a characteristic. Here we may state that, in this formerly stigmatized suburb that traditionally has been inhabited by working class families, single mother families, people on welfare and, more recently, an increase of immigrant families because of low prices and low status, there is little that reminds us of the ‘cultural elites’

postulated by Pels and Friedman. It is true that it is not always easy to identify to which class some of the immigrant families belong, as their occupation in the area of origin often differ a lot from their occupations as immigrants in Norway. But if, instead, we speak of social position, in a wider sense, there is little evidence of the families of these youths being in any ways connected to something deserving the term cultural elites. (In appendix 2, the class background of my primary informants are sketched.)

As described in chapter 9, on the occasion when some of the Rudenga youngsters were attacked by two older racist boys, we remember Bjørn (sixteen, all-Norwegian born parents) who commented on that situation by stating that: “*They saw us all as foreigners*”. This indicates that it is not only internally that the Rudenga youngsters see themselves as a community – as sharing a common identity despite the differences represented; there are situations when they are also seen this way by the outside world and when the notion of “being a foreigner”, is also transmitted (probably by interpretants in the mode of contiguity, see below) to the youth of solely Norwegian parents.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that their more particular aspects of identity, deriving from the areas of the origins of the families, are forgotten or dismissed. On the contrary, all evidence point in the direction that these “roots” (or whatever one wishes to call such points of reference), are something that is cultivated, recognized and referred to. However, I have never seen examples where they are allowed to dominate to the point where they threaten the overarching community of youth in which their bearers all participate, although there surely have occurred situations where it would have been reasonable to assume that the emphasis on such differences would be likely to arise (see chapter 9).

On the contrary, it seems to be the youngsters’ *ability to build connective points*, manifesting in affective social relations to each other, that dominates; at the same time, to various degrees they manifest a need to maintain some sort of anchoring to the differences represented by their families and their areas of origin. Through these connective processes, messages, statements, desires, expectations, aesthetics, attitudes, world views and tensions are exchanged and handled in interpersonal relationships on the basis of a sharing of salient aspects of a common habitus, or even an exchange of its more unique, singular and individual aspects. In such a situation, the *flows of identifications* find new directions in which new identities, new subjectivities, new “ethnicities” are created through the appropriative use of what is at hand in the available semioscape. This means that elements from their respective areas of origin, from popular culture,

from the configurations of the Norwegian hegemony, as well as from more locally coloured traditions are taken into use in this *creative bricolage of everyday life* (see also Østberg's conceptualisations of an "integrated, plural identity", 2000).

The most salient *exceptions* from this in the community of youngsters in Rudenga – at least as manifested within the localities of the club – are, as noticed, the Muslim girls.

The mechanisms of resonance/dissonance: points of connectivity and the "syllogisms of practice"

In the previous pages, as well as in most of our chapters, the basic principles of the first two foundational sign types in Peircean semiotics – the iconic and the indexical – have been referred to and detected in a wide variety of cases.

In the following these principles will be further illuminated by relating them to a larger frame of understanding with the purpose of suggesting further aspects of their role in human cognition, especially as they can be discerned as activated in the salient social practices of relevance in a multicultural situation.

We may start this attempt by directing our attention to the theories of Gregory Bateson, who in several of his writings searching for the "ecologies" of mind, has drawn attention to two rather different kinds of "logic" within the realms of human reasoning (Bateson 1979, 1989, 1991). They are both exemplified with the help of a formula – a so called "syllogism" – that is said to have its origin in Aristotle who used it to demonstrate the main principles of sound reasoning in what he saw as the pursuit of "truth". The syllogism can thus be regarded as a small row of arguments – some premises by which a conclusion is supported – often presented in the form of a simplified formula of a few essential sentences (premises) with a conclusion at the end. The most well known of these Aristotelian syllogisms appears under the name "syllogism in Barbara", and goes like this:

Men die;

Socrates is a man;

Socrates will die.

Here, according to Bateson, the predicate ("will die") is attached to Socrates by identifying him as a member of a class whose members share the same predicate (1989:26). Bateson contrasts this to a syllogism he has constructed

for the purpose of illuminating a quite different way of thinking to which he ascribes immense importance, and that he has humorously nicknamed “syllogism in grass”:

Grass dies:

Men die;

Men are grass.

As Bateson says:

“... the Socrates syllogism identifies Socrates as a member of a class, and neatly places him in the class of those who will die, whereas the grass syllogism is not really concerned with classification in the same way. The grass syllogism is concerned with the equation of predicates, not of classes and subjects of sentences, but with the identification of predicates. Dies – dies, that which dies is equal to that other thing which dies.” (Bateson 1991:241)

In other words, compared to the strictness of Aristotelian logic which has long since become the basis of formal logic in a scientific sense, the syllogism in grass demonstrates a way of thinking that is quite far from the former. It is looser and may probably be seen as a more immediate, spontaneous, intuitive, non-systematic and, in its extreme form (as the syllogism in grass exemplifies), erroneous way of thinking more in line with what Peirce has termed Firstness than with the reflexive explicitness of more developed forms of Thirdness.¹

The logicians of science will, as Bateson also remarks, accordingly describe the syllogism in grass in considerably less flattering terms; it is in deed a “sloppy” logic, seen from such a position. While theorising about its logic Bateson, as well as the psychoanalytically-oriented psychologist Silvano Arieti, refers to the psychiatrist Eilhard von Domarus who is said to have identified extreme examples of such ways of thinking in his study of cognition among schizophrenics (ibid, Arieti 1976; see also von Domarus, in Kasanin (ed.) 1964; Bateson 1989). Arieti illustrates von Domarus’ findings with several cases, such as the following two:

A patient thought she was the Virgin Mary. When asked why she thought so, she replied – in fact in the perfect form of the syllogism in grass, we may add -: “*I am a virgin. The Virgin Mary was a virgin; I am the Virgin Mary*” (Arieti 1976:68). Here the common predicate – both being virgins –

¹ Nevertheless, the attention towards the predicate is also a part of the syllogism in Barbara, well in line with Peircean semiotics where the categories of Firstness and Secondness are also parts of Thirdness.

made such an identification possible in a subjectively real and literal sense. In another example, a red-haired young woman in schizophrenic psychosis developed an infection in her finger that became swollen and red. She told her therapist that “This finger is me.” Here the common predicate was the colour red (her hair, the swollen, red finger). In both examples this kind of “*predicative thinking*” (or “paleologic thinking”, as Arieti terms it)¹, in accordance with Bateson’s syllogism in grass, was presented as the logic behind this distorted, but nevertheless motivated, subjective identification.² Anchored in von Domarus’ study, Arieti terms the predicate that leads to the identification “*the identifying link*”. From a semiotic point of view we may see this as the link that connects two different phenomena to each other, in the act of interpretation done by the subjects in question. It is, in other words, identical to what we have termed the *points of resonance*, here exemplified by connections drawn by the medium of similarities.

But the cases concerning “the specific laws of logic in schizophrenia” (which is the title of one of von Domarus’ articles), as exemplified here, must be regarded as extreme cases, of practices informed by predicative thinking.

According to Arieti, it was Freud who in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (chapter 7, 1901) took some of the first steps towards the encircling of these laws of association through his theory of what he termed “*primary process*” thinking. Freud became interested in them primarily as abnormal phenomena or as carriers of unconscious motivations, and Arieti remarks that Freud did not seem to be particularly interested in them as cognitive structures (Arieti 1976:13).³ But in the psychoanalytic practice of the interpretation of *dreams*, the laws of association are obviously salient. When, for example, a man, who feels that his wife repeatedly criticizes him for no real reasons in their daily life, dreams of an evil witch who is trying to poison him, it is not difficult to

¹ This term is meant to indicate it as a way of thinking that is “old”, both in the development of human kind, and as being of paramount presence in young children’s ways of thinking. As both Bateson and Arieti mention, it is also present in the learning of animals, as exemplified in the famous dogs of Pavlov, where the ringing of a bell causes a dog to salivate, after the same sound has been repeatedly experienced as ringing when the dog’s food has been served (Bateson 1989; Arieti 1976).

² In therapy in the psychoanalytic tradition, the project will be to reveal the original experiences and *concerns* behind such identificational directions and, through such an understanding, reach a therapeutical catharsis.

³ Arieti’s own work may of course be seen as an attempt to explore and develop the understanding of these principles. He also mentions the psychologist Ernst Kris and his view on creativity as “*regression in the service of the ego*” as an important attempt to focus on the role of the primary processes in the phenomenology of creativity, (Arieti 1976:24).

see it as a metaphoric transformation of the way he perceives his life-situation (perhaps indicating the possibility for also seeing his dream as a manifestation of what we have termed “expressive Thirdness”). And like the schizophrenic who experiences herself literally as the real Virgin Mary, the dreamer interprets the content of his dream as frighteningly real while he is dreaming.¹ Nevertheless, in both cases it is the same cognitive principles that are activated. Such “logic” of dreams also tends to be activated in artistic phenomena, such as in the creative use of imagery, the use of metaphors, etcetera, as we will touch upon more explicitly below. In the following we will see a wide range of examples where such “sloppy” logic – especially as seen from a logician of science’s point of view – plays a foremost role.

But as “every schoolboy knows”, the everyday practices of human beings usually (at least) operate in modes where their primary concerns are definitely grazing elsewhere than in the fields of attention of the learned logician (even though these practices may turn out to be less different than a superficial gaze suggests, something that not least the theories of Peirce himself can reveal – see below). In the following I will argue that these insights may be helpful to illuminate more closely the emotional-cognitive *mechanisms of resonance* activated in the practices of everyday life, for example as it unfolds in the multicultural milieu among the Rudenga youngsters. To be able to bring forth these mechanisms we may sum up some central aspects of the examples we have presented more thoroughly in the previous chapters, with the help of some (quasi-) syllogisms – which I will argue can be seen as exemplifying what may be termed “syllogisms of practice”.

Some elementary syllogisms of practice

It is important to underline that the mechanisms of resonance, as we have seen, are part of complex social relations that operates in intricate and almost inexhaustible webs of semiotic chains. The syllogisms in the following must therefore be seen as extreme simplifications of these processes – that may be perceived as even crossing the border of banality – for the sake of the argument.

Our core examples in the early chapters of this book revolved around some basic principles of the phenomenology of the social relations – as in the resonance generated between two close friends – , exemplified in the relationship between Ola and Omar, and not least their use of practices derived from the Hip Hop tradition as central ingredients in the stuff around

¹ Indeed, the ability to separate the metaphoric from the real - at least while being awake - may probably be seen as a crucial criterion of mental sanity.

which they built their community. At some stage in their relationship, its' logic could be summed up as follows:

Ola enjoys Hip Hop

Omar enjoys Hip Hop

Ola enjoys Omar (and vice versa)

Here we may say that Ola in several respects identifies with Omar, not in the literal sense – as in the case of the schizophrenics – but in the looser sense of enjoying each others' company and identifying with the interests and central concerns of the other, through the sharing of a salient common predicate; the interest in Hip Hop. In addition, this sharing also seems to be amplified and supported by the sharing of a wide number of experiences and the corresponding situations (that may be seen as further predicates) such as both being boys, being of the same age, coming from the same stigmatized area of Rudenga, having attended the same kindergarten, school, youth club, and so on, in other words, sharing salient elements of their habitus. As we remember, some of these aspects of their situation of living seemed to be recognized in Hip Hop as a basis for identification with that sign. I suggest that these modes of connecting match what Arieti – on the basis of his analysis of the importance of *similarities* of predicates in, among other phenomena, schizophrenic cognition – sees as the core principle in what he terms the second Law of Association, which reads:¹

“...if two mental operations resemble each other, that is, if they have one or more characteristics in common – the occurrence of one of them tends to elicit the other” (ibid:96)

Translated into the practical logic of human relations it means that when two or more persons have one or more subjectively important and recognized interests or features (a predicate) in common, they will (under sufficiently favourable circumstances) tend to associate with each other. Ola's subjectively invested interest in Hip Hop is elicited when he encounters Omar, and vice versa, because they both share this interest. Hip Hop thus

¹ Using Freud's theories of what he termed “the primary process” (see above) as starting point, Arieti discerns three Laws of Association as expressions of what he suggests as the three basic modes of operation in cognitive processes, in his attempt to bring forth a general and unifying theory of cognition. He hereby puts forth these as general principles that apply to “*such different levels as perception, recognition, memory, learning, simple ideation, language, conceptual thinking, arithmetic and so forth*” (ibid: 94, 13).

becomes the identifying link (surely in close interplay with some other links) - a medium - that connects the two boys. They become associated with each other through what we may term *resonance in the mode of similarity* that manifested through the recognition of this common predicate - both as seen from their own respective positions, and from the position of those around them, for whom they became local heroes as successful breakdancers which is subsumed under the larger sign of Hip Hop.

Dissonance in the mode of similarity may, on the other hand, be seen as exemplified in Omar's relationship to heavy metal, and especially its' more extreme genres. These were complexes of signs that in several ways (historically, and finally also to Omar himself, as seen in chapter 3 and 4) were associated with "the white" that dissonated with Omar, who associated himself with "blackness", being "a foreigner" and so on. Here we probably see the contours of the binary oppositions referred to by Levi-Strauss, in the shape of such a dissonating pair (here "black": "white"; Levi-Strauss 1966).¹ But, as we remember, both Ola and Knut, Omar's close friends, continued their explorations further into the extreme genres of metal. They both frequented the "black leather jacket" places, where Omar - because of his "blackness" and the dissonating character of these two signs - refused to follow them. Knut, as we remember, continued far into the musical genre of black metal, until he finally more or less withdraw from it for the explicitly stated reason that he dismissed the racist attitudes of that genre; he referred to, among other things, his friendship with Omar and others of immigrant background. This demonstrates the subtlety in the patterns of preferences among these three boys, where the acceptance or refusal of invested sign complexes interweave and in many cases directly refer to and represent the relationship of their users; the signs brought into use (or refused) are thus in several ways perceived as infused with the identity of their users, along a continuum of resonance and dissonance. Here the conceptualisation of dissonance helps us to take heed of (among other things) the dimensions of *power* that are invoked in the semiotic processes. The role of *binary oppositions* in human cognition may probably be seen as related to this phenomenon, conceptualised as dissonance in the mode of similarity.

In our close analysis of the basic relational activity - the musical conversation between Ola and Omar (chapter 1) - as well as in their shared past experiences - as kindergarten buddies, schoolmates, breakdance partners, metal fans etcetera (chapter 2, 3 and 4) - we argued that the experience of

¹ It is interesting to notice that Arieti also discusses the possibility for what he terms "the Law of Contrast" - as mentioned in earlier books of psychology, according to Arieti - to be included in his basic modes of cognitive operations (ibid:97).

resonance was built up in the processes of mutual exchange of messages (where each message was somehow infused with the identity of the other, in line with the Maussian analysis of the gift). Relations of friendship were somehow confirmed and transformed by the two interlocutors, each taking their turns, in such a way that the experience of confirmation became attached to the other, building up mutual interpretants of *trust*. Here another mode of connecting seems to dominate; the experiences of confirmation (and, of course, incidents of refusal) are more precisely associated to the other through the mechanisms of *contiguity*. This exemplifies what Arieti calls the first Law of Association, which reads:

“...when two mental processes have been active simultaneously or in immediate succession, the recurrence of one of them tends to elicit the recurrence of the other.” (Arieti 1976:95)

As manifested in social relations, this implies the seemingly simple truth that the utterances, messages and actions of a living person tend to be experienced as contiguous to that person; they will be associated to that person by those in his/her social surroundings who have been exposed to those messages. These messages that have “poured out”, so to speak, from that person will tend to be associated to him or her (even as they are also transformed or distorted by their surrounding interpreters), who thereby must be understood literally as a “living sign”, well in accordance with Peirces’ understanding of the person. Through these experiential mechanisms the person, as time passes, generates *expectations* in his/her social milieu. These expectations will, of course, also interact with the already existing set of collective expectations/norms/world views - that is, cultural expressions - derived from previously sedimented experiences and histories. In relations of friendship these expectations will be based upon the mutual experience of positive confirmation over time; these become sedimented as mutual interpretants of *trust*. Such trust may be seen as the result of repeated experiences of *resonance in the mode of contiguity* in the realm of human relations; the other, seen in such a perspective, can literally be seen as a “*living index*” pointing to the messages he/she has conveyed which thereby have become associated with that person. In other words: to each other, Ola and Omar, stand for the experiences they have gone through together. These mechanisms are clearly related further to what Arieti suggests as the third Law of Association, based on the principle *pars pro toto*, which reads:

“The perception of a part has an effect upon the organism that is equivalent to that of the perception of the whole.” (ibid)

In our analysis of the relations of Omar and Ola, this principle is already indicated; in the sense that they both stand for the experiences the one has gone through with the other; the person may be seen as a part that stands for a whole. This may also be regarded as the equivalent to the Law of Contiguity. One of the often-used examples of an index is smoke which stands for fire; both phenomena are physically connected, in the same sense that the actions of a person are physically connected to that person. Arieti sees a connection/overlap between the principle of contiguity and the principle of pars pro toto, but for several reasons he prefers to treat pars pro toto as a mode of operation separate from the mode of contiguity. The further discussion of the difference between these two modes I will not pursue further here. Thus for our purposes we will treat the mode of contiguity and the mode of pars pro toto as equivalent.

In the realm of social relations, *dissonance in the mode of contiguity*, may occur if the person one has been exposed to has manifested messages that one disagrees with, that are experienced as refusals or attacks, that one does not understand (which may be more neutral) or that threaten or indicate disrespect in some way or another. When, for example, Mokhtar associates people who are characterised with “*taking snuff, being short-haired and bowlegged, using high water trousers a little bit too tight*” as people he cannot stand, this happens because such was the appearance of what he sees as a category of people who “*created situations that made people laugh at me, and that in several ways created the humiliation I experienced*” (see chapter 10). In the original situation these were the physical/visual features of (by contact/contiguity) the harassers; through this mechanism these features became associated to them and, thereby, became salient signs of dissonance, seen from Mokhtar’s position. When he afterwards was exposed to people that resembled them - thus activating the mode of similarity - the similar interpretants of dissonance were activated. These examples show how the interweaving of both modes (of similarity/contiguity) make them at times difficult to separate, well in line with Peircean theory.

Another obvious example of the role of the mode of contiguity in human relations among the Rudenga youngsters is the *greeting rituals* where physical contact may be seen as marking a possibility for further contact with the person one shakes hands with. A refusal to do this will, of course, exemplify an expression of dissonance. The same holds for *language practices*, in which words from the languages of the persons one feels attached to and wants to communicate respect and inclusion towards are words uttered by that person, thereby, these are experienced as attached to him or her, by the mechanism of contiguity. When these words are learnt and

repeated, the mode thus activated is, again the mode of similarity. If some words are refused (just like Mokthar's gangs who never used words of Pakistani origin because they did not like "Pakistanis), this manifests as dissonance. The most extreme example of dissonance in the mode of contiguity is the physical attack or even killing of a person (several related examples of extreme dissonance in this mode we have discussed in chapter 9).

The activation of these laws of association in the development of social relations also seems to play a major role in the phenomenon of *stereotyping*, as we have seen in the example of Talvin's generation of personal stereotypes in his relation to girls (see chapter 8). The following syllogism may illustrate his actualized mode of thinking:

Talvin's Norwegian girlfriend, A, is experienced as trustworthy

X,Y and Z are Norwegian girls

Talvin assumes X,Y and Z to be trustworthy

Here, the common predicate for his girlfriend on the one hand, and X,Y and Z on the other, is "being Norwegian". Through the sharing of this predicative link (that is a similarity) , X,Y and Z are assumed to be trustworthy, as A. This implies, in other words, that predicative thinking also seems fundamental to the phenomenon of stereotyping, which may be regarded as a somehow distorted example of what Peirce has termed "abduction."¹ *Stereotyping in a more dissonant mode* may be exemplified in a possible syllogism that illuminates Maurizio's relations to "Muslim girls":

Maurizio dates girls (or wishes to promote such an impression of himself)

Maurizio has noticed that some Muslim girls are severely restricted in their ability to interact with boys before marriage, and that such behaviour runs the risk of being heavily sanctioned

Maurizio dismisses Muslim girls as possible to date

In contrast to Talvin, Maurizio's "theory" about Muslim girls is based upon much larger "evidence" - having grown up as close friends with boys of Muslim families, experiencing Muslim girls at school, hearing stories from his own sisters, and also, drawing upon actual public stereotypes (for

¹ It is interesting to notice that for Bateson, the concept of abduction - which he admits to having borrowed from Peirce - plays a key role as a conceptualizing of a phenomenon that he sees, among other things, as "*the glue that holds all science (and all religion?) together*", Bateson & Bateson 1988:175; see also Bateson 1991:186, Bateson 1979:142-144). What he, more specifically, mean by such a statement, is nevertheless relatively unclear.

example, from the media); while Talvin had only *one* positive experience with an all-Norwegian girl referred to above. Nevertheless, the common predicate of being a Muslim girl has become the core also in his stereotype. His “logic” must thereby be seen as somehow closer to a more “scientific” mode of reasoning, that, on the other extreme, separates from the phenomenon of stereotyping in so far as one is willing to revise conclusions when confronted with contradictive evidence and to test its hypothesis in more systematic ways. This indicates that the syllogisms of practice and the sloppy logic and thin evidences they exhibit, (in some aspects at least) may be seen as a reasoning that, in more developed forms, surely forms a central part on the area of the continuum of explication that covers the Thirdness of science. Once more this agrees with Peirce, who states that abduction plays a crucial role, especially in the early stages of the development of a scientific hypothesis (see also Bateson 1979). This is also in agreement with Arieti’s term “paleologic thinking”, denoting a mode of thinking that has “archaic” roots but also plays a crucial role in more advanced creative processes (see below).

Beyond the realms of the more immediate aspects of social relations, we have also seen a great number of examples of the sloppy logic of practice. In the human interpretations of the semiotic messages of signs that are not human beings, and that only indirectly refer to human relations, the laws of associations and the syllogisms of practice are perhaps even more obvious, for example in Nicola’s relationship towards Soul music (see chapter 7):

Nicola is black

Soul music is a black musical tradition

Nicola enjoys Soul

Here the predicative link is of course blackness, that becomes a central predicate for Nicolas identification with that musical tradition. Or, there is the case of Maurizio’s affinity to House & Techno music (as seen in chapter 7):

Maurizio is a Latin American

To Maurizio the characterising element of Latin music is rhythm

Maurizio enjoys Latin Music and its rhythm

To Maurizio the characterising element of House & Techno music is rhythm

The rhythm in House & Techno in several ways resembles the rhythm in Latin Music

Maurizio enjoys House & Techno music

Here the syllogism is a little more complex; in its first part the common predicate is Latin; as a boy who identifies himself as Latin he enjoys Latin music. But Latin music is also equated by the predicate of being rhythmic (in a certain way). This weight put upon the rhythmic works as the common predicate that it shares with House & Techno, that then becomes the connecting link for Maurizio to identify with (and enjoy) House & Techno.

An example of *dissonance towards signs of similarity* we have already seen while discussing Omar's relationship to heavy metal. This may be illustrated in the following syllogism:

Omar sees himself as black

Heavy metal is white, and in its most extreme forms hostile towards blacks

Omar tends to dismiss heavy metal (especially its most extreme and racist-tinged genres) when he realizes this)

Here the “whiteness”, and also racism in the extreme forms of metal, dissonates (in the mode of what we may term “contrasting similarity” – or: binary oppositions) with the blackness Omar associates himself with and causes him to refuse the sign. It is important to note that Omar initially enjoyed Heavy Metal, together with his friends Ola and Knut. This underlines clearly that such sign complexes (here represented) as musical genres contain aesthetic qualities that may be a source for joy and fascination in themselves (just like skateboarding, opera, driving, horror films, hunting, etcetera) and that may be seen as highly rewarding autotelic activities. But it also points to the fact that these activities may be stamped semiotically (unwillingly or willingly) with messages that cause them to generate dissonance in related unfavourable positions, such as Omar's in the case of the extreme genres of Metal of the 90s.

In all these syllogisms, derived from the variety of everyday practices among the Rudenga youngsters, the principles of iconicity and of indexicality - in line with both Peirce's as well as Arieti's proposed Laws of Association - have played a salient role.

Moreover, they seem to be core mechanisms in a row of more specified mental phenomena we will consider below.

Further examples: memory, creativity, metaphor and magic

The activations of these Laws of Association also become salient while dealing with the phenomenon of *memory*, as the following case will show:

Mahmoud (seventeen, of Somalian background) has as homework in his Norwegian lessons a project that requires interviewing people about

their favourite books. He asks me if I would like to say something about my favourite books. I mention Marcel Proust's "Remembrance of things past" which I have been enjoying for several years. I tell Mahmoud about the famous scene from the first volume, where Proust is tasting the so-called "madeleine" cake that he dips into a cup of limeleaf tea; all of a sudden this causes him to remember the situation in his childhood when, on Sunday mornings, while he and his family lived in the area of Combray during the summers, he always was served madeleine cakes to dip in limeleaf tea while visiting his aunt Leonie. Proust describes this experience of feeling that, from this moment of recognition, a series of memories of his early childhood were "rising from his tiny cup of tea".

As Mahmoud eagerly listens and writes down this story, he seems to become thoughtful, then eager, and then a little sad. He says that this story made him remember once, during the war in Somalia, when he and his grandmother had escaped into the woods, where he got a thorn in his eye. He tells me he still has bad sight on that eye and that it hurts when he strains it. He also says that many bad things happened when they escaped. He witnessed several people, also relatives, being shot. It was terrible, and he tries to forget it. (We both became silent for a while, as I became somehow puzzled by the emergence of this story and its content.) Then I say, in a clumsy attempt to continue our dialogue: "That was quite the opposite of Proust, who was thinking of the good things he remembered..." Mahmoud replies that yes, he also feels that it is better to think about the good things.

The story about Proust experiencing his madeleine cake in the limeleaf tea is a core example of the role of similarity as an element of utmost importance in the phenomenon of memory: the similarity between the sense impressions in the present and the sense impressions in the past must be considered the link that moves, so to speak, the past into the present. This underlines clearly that the principle of similarity (as well as both Arieti's Laws of Association) may well operate *outside the domain of the verbal* and, in fact, be activated by *any sense impression* that is capable of carrying such resemblance/or contiguous connection. But for Mahmoud it seems to be both the overall similarities in the structure of that story and the similarity of two salient elements in it that elicit the memory of his own story. As he was eight years old when he arrived Norway, he must have had these experiences before that age). Proust's story is about a young boy and a close female relative (his aunt). Mahmoud's story is also about a young boy and a close female relative (his grandmother). But whereas these two elements elicit a chain of predominantly positive memories accompanied by a feeling of great satisfaction when he gets access to them, in Proust's story, the equivalents in

Mahmoud's story are exactly opposite; he remembers the painful and fear-inducing experiences of seeing close relatives killed in front of him. Thus, the *cognitive resonance* (created through the similarity of the theme of the young boy and the close female relative) elicits a story that is characterised by strong *emotional dissonance*, to the point that he expresses a wish to forget it. This conflict between the cognitive resonance (the mechanisms that draws the memory into the present) and the emotional dissonance - the subjective investment of the memory thus elicited - illustrates the subtle interaction between these phenomena. As a continuation of this, the equivalent to the activity of the young boy and his close female relative in the story of Proust's (the drinking of tea and eating the cakes) is, in Mahmoud's story, trying to escape a fearful fate and getting a thorn in his eye in the accompanying turmoil. The resulting pain he still feels under certain circumstances in the present - just as the taste (the resonance point) in the story of Proust's - is also possible to experience in the present. And while Proust used twelve (in the Norwegian edition) extremely detailed volumes to explore the further associations of this primary experience, presented as initiating the project of his "grand oeuvre" and reflecting a noticeable longing for his own past, Mahmoud's experiences in this period of his early childhood were such that he tries hard to forget them. Once again the interaction of resonance and dissonance is underlined. Nevertheless the two stories clearly have a similar structure on certain points, and these similarities seem to have been the points (the mechanisms) of resonance that elicited the memories from Mahmoud's childhood and made them available for the present. The syllogism reads:

Mahmoud is exposed to a story where a young boy and his close female relative share a positive experience in the boy's distant past

Mahmoud remembers a situation where he, as a young boy, and a close female relative share a terrible experience in his distant past

The above stories exemplify the role of the laws of association, as formulated by Arieti, in the processes of memory.

We notice that Mahmoud's memory of this past critical event seems to be brought up to the surface of the present almost *involuntarily* (just as Proust struggles hard through the first sixty pages of his book to grasp what it was that the combined taste of limeleaf tea and petite madeleines was reminding him of), underlining that such mechanisms of memory at times work relatively independently of will. It further underlines the tendency of these laws of associations to be activated as instances of Firstness; characterised by being something that "*springs to mind*" almost as driven by an

autonomous force, creating a state of subjective arousal, that may be experienced as bad or good depending of the memory in question.

According to Arieti, these laws of association also play a salient role in processes of *creativity*, where the joining of two or more phenomena, ideas, fields of attention, aesthetics, etcetera, seems to play a crucial role in the generating of the new (1976). But while Arieti pinpoints the laws of association as activated in the creativity of “great” scientists and artists - such as Einstein, Poincarè, Galileo, Newton, Dali, Chagall, Shelley, Blake or Shakespeare - , the challenge for an anthropologist will be to track the same phenomena activated on the level of the everyday life of more “common” people. And indeed the phenomenon of creativity seems to be of great importance in ordinary social life. This is implied in the various attempts to incorporate it as a crucial aspect for the understanding of cultural processes, especially by theorists focusing on what has been labeled the “perspective of practice” (see, for example, Ortner 1984; Bourdieu 1989, 1990; Barth 1987; Wagner 1981).¹

The creative aspect in the practices of the Rudenga youngsters is clearly manifested, for example, in their appropriation of the aesthetics of Hip Hop, initiated when they *recognised the similarities* between their home area and the similarly stigmatized, low class, multicultural milieus of the early Hip Hop’ers, as presented in the *Beat Street* film (as analysed in chapter 2). Here the recognition of these similarities (as salient predicates), transformed them into channels through which the social milieu in Rudenga could become more firmly connected to that sign and then used creatively in their local projects: of making impressions towards the outside world; challenging the social stigma of the place; generating prestige, and, of course, using it as a medium for having sheer fun.

Another salient example of striking creativity amongst the Rudenga youngsters is the use of the Italian brand Napapijri, which has the Norwegian flag as its main logo, and had the youngsters of Pakistani background as its primary users (as analysed in chapter 6). Here their example may be simplified and extracted in the following syllogism - that is *if* our analysis is right:

The advertisement for the Napapijri brand of clothing tells about the tough and masculine Norwegian explorer (Nansen, symbolized by the Norwegian flag) who conquered the far north of the Arctic and its foreign Others, with his international team.

¹ Barth ascribes primary importance to primary process thinking- via the use of theory from psychoanalyst Pinchas Noy - in creative processes, and this is the core theme for investigation in his book *Cosmologies in the making* (1987).

The Rudenga youngsters of various immigrant background (primarily Pakistani) see themselves somehow as the tough and masculine youngsters of foreign background, that wish to “conquer” the country of Norway in the far north of Europe (in the sense of wishing to be recognized as Norwegians) with their international team (of fellow youngsters of immigrant background).

The Rudenga youngsters of foreign background (primarily Pakistani) wear Napapijri clothing

Here, the salient common predicates (similarities) seem to be being tough and masculine, coming from one country and “conquering” another, being members of an “international team”, while undergoing challenging hardships (even if the mythology of Nansen is poorly known, see below). So far, the interpretative statement exhibited by the youngsters - as interpreted by the anthropologist - seems to be built upon these similarities. And as discussed in chapter 6, if and in so far as such similarities in fact *are* recognized, they seem to have been operating on the mental levels of the unconscious or the hunch (understood as a kind of “implicit recognition”); none of the informants seemed able to formulate these connections verbally.¹ Nevertheless the creative moment must be understood as the moment when these connections - made by noticing the similarities - have become known somewhere on the area on the continuum (from immersion to explication) that covers the first steps of explication in the twilight zone between the unconsciousness and the hunch. *It is at this moment that the initiating connections between the two, until then unconnected, semiotic units are drawn, thereby exemplifying a true instance of creativity.*

The appropriation of the Norwegian flag may be seen as a second instance of creativity in these processes of expressive Thirdness (ibid). Here the Napapijri-using youngsters develop a statement that clearly differs from the story of Nansen (as transmitted by the Napapijri company). Speaking in terms referring to Zygmunt Bauman’s famous article: Nansen and all the members (the international teams) of the polar expeditions of the past, “heroic” occidental men, may be seen as “*strangers that come today but leave tomorrow*” and therefore do not need or wish to appropriate an identification with the areas they enter (conquer, explore, exploit) for the sons (and, of course, daughters) of the immigrant families in Norway, on the other hand, the *concern for inclusion* and being identified as citizens of

¹ This fact underlines, admittedly, the need to question our interpretations and to explicitly admit the possibility that the example rather should be seen as exemplifying the creativity of the anthropologist rather than of the actors under study!

equal status as the native-born all-Norwegians, is much more urgent. They surely fit Bauman's expression of being "*strangers that come today and stay tomorrow*" (Bauman, in Werbner and Modood (eds.) 1997; Bauman, in Hall and du Gay 1996). In so far as the subjective experience of Pakistan, to the youth of Pakistani background, may be seen as being like that of the members of the old North Pole expeditions to Norway, the poetics in their expressive practice seem to be clear. When they appropriate the primary symbol of the nation to which their families have immigrated, the flag – although this is tinged with irony and the accompanying critique of xenophobia - they take a highly creative step that is strongly charged with expressive poetic and artistic force.

The statement created by these youth - as reflected in the syllogism presented above - may also be seen as standing in a metaphoric relationship to the story of Nansen; they are (or wish to be) *like* the tough and masculine Norwegian explorer Nansen (symbolized by the Norwegian flag), who conquered the far North of the Arctic and its foreign Others with his international team. This surely indicates, well in line with Bateson's and Arieti's statements, that the role of predicative thinking (and all associative thinking, we may add) is crucial in the creation of *metaphors* (Arieti 1976; see also Bateson 1989,1991).¹

Further, Arieti also directs attention towards the role that the laws of association play in the activities of *magic*. The principles that James Frazer long ago formulated as the foundations of magic are almost identical to Arieti's laws of association, as seen in a famous passage in *the Golden Bough*:

"Analysis shows that magic rests everywhere on two fundamental principles; first, that like produces like, effect resembling cause; second, that things which have once been in contact continue afterwards to act on each other. The former principle may be called the Law of Similarity; the latter that of Contact or Contagion. From the one the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it in advance; from the other, that whatever he does to a material object will automatically affect the person with whom it was in contact. Practices based on the Law of Similarity may be termed Homeopathic Magic; those based on the Law of Contact or Contagion, Contagious Magic." (Frazer 1959:87)

¹ There is also a considerable bulk of literature based on Peircean theory that investigates the role of similarity and its implications to the phenomenon of the metaphoric, see Colapietro and Olszewsky (eds.) 1996 .

Our list and analysis of the various fields and phenomena where the laws of association seem to play a crucial role could probably be much longer. In the last pages I have tried to sketch out some glimpses, with the help of theorists like Bateson and Arieti, that show them as cognitive mechanisms that are activated in a wide range of human phenomena, from schizophrenia, the interpretation of dreams to the processes of memory, the phenomenon of creativity, and the practices of magic.

But most of all - and that observation must be considered Peirce's great illumination - these principles seem to be activated *continually and manifest in the fluxus of human semiosis*. This we have seen exemplified in most of the chapters of this book: in the micro dynamics of social relations; in the generation of trust and friendship; in the reasoning of social stereotypes, and in various aspects of the handling of identity. It is especially in the processes of developing new connective points to the varieties of phenomena and items (tools of identification) existing in the available semioscape, here in a multicultural situation, that such connections become capable of carrying central aspects of the identificational directions of their users. In a multicultural situation, such as the one we have explored in Rudenga, these new points of connection seem to play an especially important role, as they provide possibilities to connect to a wide range of "cultural stuff", selected on the basis of its ability to *match the urgency and concerns*, especially from young people's positions, that are felt on the basis of their shared experiences of a life situation: as sons and daughters of immigrant background living in a locality such as Rudenga and also as youngsters of non-hyphenated all-Norwegian origin also living in such a multicultural area.

The basic mechanisms that hide behind Peirce's concept of the interpretant, and that, with the help of Arieti's suggestions, we may regard as nothing less than the most primary laws of association, may also be understood as basic mental principles; the various logics of practice seem to be manifested through them, as we have seen in our simplified "syllogisms" presented above. If we agree with Bourdieu's suggestion, that: "*Practical sense 'selects' certain objects or actions, and consequently certain of their aspects, in relation to 'the matter in hand'...*" on the basis of *pertinence*, we have seen that the youngsters in Rudenga seem to have done exactly that (Bourdieu 1990:90; see also chapter 5).

On the basis of their relevance to an extremely wide range of mental phenomena suggested by the analyses above, it seems possible to conclude that these cognitive-emotional mechanisms - fundamentals in what we have termed resonance/dissonance and clearly activated in the types of signs that Peirce discerned, and Arieti showed as the principles of his suggested laws

of association- these mechanisms thus must be understood as reflecting nothing less than the *most basic and elementary principles in the processes and workings of the human mind*.

This also implies that if habitus, as Bourdieu suggests, should be understood as mental dispositions to act upon and interpret the world in certain ways, in accordance with the arguments presented above, we may specify the conceptualisation of these dispositions and see them as *associational patterns*: that is, as patterned tendencies to associate A with B, and to act accordingly. Seeing the concept of habitus in such a way, we may understand this aspect of human life as agreeing with Pavlov's findings concerning his dogs: *when certain associational links are repeated a sufficient number of times, they tend to settle as habits* (habitus - dispositions) in the individuals to whom they are exposed. This emphasizes strongly that the basic cognitive-emotional mechanisms of association are provided with a clearly *reproductional aspect*; one tends to reproduce the more or less explicated conclusions (Thirdness) of the past, *especially those that are the most emotionally invested* (along the continuum of resonance and dissonance).

But our investigation of the phenomenon of memory also teaches us, that associational links may be manifested as something that suddenly, perhaps *involuntarily*, springs to mind. The repertoire of a person's experience (and thus the potential associational links) is so vast that it is impossible to predict exactly which connections these mechanisms will elicit (bring to mind) in the subjects.¹

This, in other words, also provides social life with an *aspect of intrinsic creativity, relative indeterminacy and openness* that, not least, are manifested in the examples we here have presented from the youth milieu in Rudenga. Thus, the interaction between the reproductive aspects of the associational patterns, on the one hand, and the opening, receptive and transformative aspects of creativity, on the other, seems to play a prominent role in what we, at this point, may speak of as processes of *improvisation* (as defined by Holland, et al., in the introduction of this chapter). This may be seen as a useful concept to sum up our comprehension of the activities of the Rudenga youngsters, as dealt with throughout the chapters.

The understanding of these practices will be summed up in our last and closing chapter.

¹ This quality of involuntariness plays a foremost role in the grand oeuvre of Proust who, in turn, was highly influenced by Bergson. According to Arieti, Bergson “...advocated abandoning conceptual thinking and reverting to intuitional forms of knowledge that correspond to our endoceptual and paleologic level of cognition.” (Arieti 1976:91).

12 Summing up and concluding remarks: subjectivity, experience and culture – the anti-schismogenesis of the Rudenga youngsters

Change in every tradition of knowledge surely arises from within it, through idle speculation, and by transposing models and mixing metaphors, as well as from the external feedbacks from the world that are interpreted in experience. (Barth 2002:11)

In this our last chapter we will sum up and conclude the findings of the project and relate the various chapters more explicitly to our initially presented model where the focus upon *a semiotics of experience* is seen as the key phenomenon and as a primary tool to enable us to comprehend the fluxus of cultural processes in a multicultural situation, here on a micro social level.

We started this attempt to understand the multicultural situation in Rudenga by exploring a pair of phenomena that we suggested represent some basic mechanisms in social life, respectively termed *resonance* and *dissonance*. In social dialogue, a core aspect of resonance is the phenomenon that makes such dialogue emotionally attractive; it represents the *moments of community*, understanding, confirmation and of seeing the other in an emotionally positive way. It represents, in other words, the most basic *meeting* in human relations, a *communitas* (in Victor Turner's term) on a micro level (see Turner 1966). Resonance is thus the point where *connections* between the partners of the dialogue are created, and without some degree of resonance, dialogue is not possible. As our goal for the project was to explore how cultural differences were handled in the ongoing construction of identity, in the life phase and, not least, in social relations among youth in a multicultural milieu, a focus upon mechanisms for the creation of connections between people – especially in their *emotional* aspects (the other being its' *cognitive aspects*) – seemed to be a necessary point of departure.

We concluded that the phenomenon of resonance could not be seen to exist without the tension, subjective investment, emotional arousal and uncertainty created by the continual potentialities for its opposite –

dissonance – to occur. Dissonance was suggested to represent the absence of meeting, understanding, confirmation, connection and community, and, in its extreme, a fundamental rejection of the other. If the resonance of a social meeting implies a mutual and successful exchange of messages of high subjective investment for the participants, the possibility for the other to *refuse* those messages is what makes investment and thus emotional meaning possible: without a possibility for *losing* the “invested” (recognition, wish for agreement, accept, emotional confirmation, “face”, dignity, prestige and the like) that is, exposing one’s vulnerability to the other by exposing the importance of the message for the utterer, such meaning would not exist.

The continual possibility for dissonance thus supplies human relations with their intrinsic and necessary dimension of a continual presence of the precarious.

This means that in any social situation, including the multicultural, one can not take for granted that such connecting points of resonance have, in fact, developed among its participants. The presence of a wide span of cultural differences – that may mean greater difficulties in developing such points of connection – could therefore be likely to make social life in the multicultural even more precarious.¹

Nevertheless, the finding and creating of such points of connection have seemed to be a characteristic feature of the social life of the Rudenga youngsters. The friendship between Omar, of Iraqi background, and Ola, of solely Norwegian background, was our first example to illustrate this fact.

In Part I, we followed one single informant (Omar) and some of his most central social relations, through various phases of life, with a special focus upon the processes and events through which the phenomena of resonance and dissonance were manifested. Throughout the chapters, both phenomena have gradually been seen to be strongly anchored to his *life situation and position* in the sense that this situation, in the interplay with the furthering of *basic human needs* for inclusion and dignity, generate *concerns* that give direction to the actions and shape the corresponding *dispositions* for resonance/dissonance of the actors in question, all in line with Bourdieus conceptualisation of a *habitus*.

To see this we were helped by the Peircean approach to semiosis in which any act of interpretation is centred around an *interpretant* that, as we here have used his theory, is intrinsically anchored to a human subject. By

¹ This does not suggest that the presence of cultural differences necessarily implies an increased likelihood for difficulties in finding such connective points.

constantly directing attention to the *use* of the sign, as well as the relation of any sign to an interpreting “someone” (related to human semiosis) – as implied in the Peircean definition of a sign – the *subjective dimensions of experience* have been put in the centre of our analysis. This I hold to be the most important aspect of the approach here suggested, also because the dimension of subjectivity may be seen as crucial for understanding of the mechanisms of resonance and dissonance.

In Omars case we saw that the directioning force (we may perhaps even speak of an “arousal”) released by the connections created by the resonance phenomena could be understood as the mechanism that drew him away from his association to the continuum of signs and messages of his Iraqi family and into the continuum of signs and messages of the rising youth cultural tradition in the shape of Hip Hop. Omar’s association to that sign complex, emerging in the semioscape, as experienced from his position as a youngster in Rudenga, may be seen as an *instance of creative improvisation*: he took *what was at hand*, to enjoy and to identify with on the basis of the concerns generated by his concrete life situation as a young boy from an immigrant family living in this suburb in Oslo.

The fact that the mechanisms of resonance were elicited in his relation towards this sign was thus *not arbitrary*. On the contrary, I have suggested that it was thoroughly motivated (somewhere on a continuum from the conscious to the unconscious, as our Peircean-anchored analysis has helped us to see) by his noticing of the basic *iconicity* between the social milieu of multicultural youngsters living in the stigmatized suburb of Rudenga, and the social milieu of multicultural youngsters living in similar milieus in the United States. Here the Hip Hop tradition originated, and these milieus were presented in versions made available through the media of popular culture. The practices he and his fellow Rudenga youngsters took up and internalised by such a *realisation of the sign* could thus be seen as exemplifying how that sign complex became *a medium for expression and self-reflection*: an *expressive utterance* for announcing themselves to the world, again motivated on the basis of their life situation and the corresponding habitus that this generated. This happened, of course, in an interplay with the pure joys, the youthful “coolness” and the aesthetic pleasure connected with the practices of the Hip Hop sign; these were greatly strengthened by the prestige of participating in a youth cultural tradition being on its rise, not least as mirrored in the media.

Correspondingly, Omar’s ambivalence and, finally, dissonance towards the signs associated with the racist tinged cult of the Nordic within Black Metal, can be seen as exemplifying a similar frame for the understanding of

motivation. He could not go further in his association to this sign continuum because the messages it contained (at least in its more extreme and “orthodox” versions) dissonated with the facts of his immigrant background. These examples therefore illustrate a core phenomenon in any improvisation, in so far as it always implies some sort of *selection of the available possibilities*. Some of the signs are *selected* on the basis of resonance, while others are *rejected* on the basis of dissonance. In addition some are simply *not available* as a consequence of structural relations such as the divisions of social class, gender and formal or informal competence.

The improvisations exemplified in these practices of the Rudenga youngsters could be seen to take place in a semiotic situation that was summed up in the model and the corresponding theoretical proposals put forth in the introduction, as well as in the theoretical discussions that have been developed in the analyses throughout the chapters.

In this model I proposed to approach the multicultural situation as a *landscape of various clusters of signs and messages*, where each cluster is associated to a cultural tradition, large or small, that is associated to some community, real or imagined. These clusters have been seen to contain various cores of *orthodoxy* in which the imperatives of the associated signs are especially strong; they are defended (and at times contested) by certain *guardians*, who may or may not compete over which version is to be judged as correct at each point in time. This has been illustrated by the various centra drawn in figure 1, where each is surrounded by a corresponding number of relatively identifiable signs and messages that gradually *radiate* from the centres. These signs and messages become more and more diluted as they become mixed with other signs (from different surrounding traditions) – representing various positions of *heterodoxy* – and thereby are distanced from the “correctness” of the cores. In the last instance they face the possibility of becoming more or less *neutralised* (that is devoid of their original association); they may evaporate and dissolve in the overall “semiosphere” or they may be deliberately *rejected* by the actors, who then choose to associate with something else, some other continuum of signs.

The story of Omar shows how gradually, as he grows up, and through his experiences of some crucial events, he moves away from the sign continuum of the Iraqi. This was represented by his father, in particular, who wanted his son to live according to some orthodoxies of the Arabian and who thereby became something like a guardian of these positions. To Omar, the concerns arising from the new situation of his family, as he experienced it, tended to dissonate with the ways of his father. The forces of attraction, on the other hand, seemed to be represented by the possibilities

found in his participations in the social milieu of youngsters outside the reach of Islam; this seemed to be even further stimulated by the resonance (and joy) he felt at the point in time when the sign continuum of Hip Hop was exposed to him. As he moved towards this sign complex he acquired a central position locally as a skilled breakdancer, together with Ola. They both then became collectively “owned” signs of prestige that were felt to be transferred to the place itself and the overall milieu of youngsters. Omar afterwards discovered both the skateboard traditions as well as House & Techno; both represented more youth cultural continua of signs to which he successively associated and where he surfed at times, high upon the crests of youth cultural enthusiasm and prestige.

But as Omar grew older he experienced several instances of discrimination from the surrounding majority, and he experienced his all-Norwegian acquaintances to be more self-centred and less loyal than his friends of “foreign” background. Once more the *focus upon subjective experience* is revealed as necessary to understand the movement of this individual in the multicultural landscape. These experiences seemed to have been crucial for him in reaching a point where he, to some degree, *returned* to the Iraqi sign continuum represented by his family. He experienced being marked by people around him as different, in a discriminatory way; at the same time, he was coming to feel himself as somehow different from the representatives of the majority, especially regarding their lesser loyalty to a community. *Both these experiential processes seemed to change and direct his attention, and not least his feeling of identity, to a larger degree towards the semiotic continuum associated with the Iraqi/Arabian.*

This process was seen as an evolving conflict between some sedimented layers from the semiotic processes of the past in what we have termed his *matrix self* (with the concepts suggested by the Peircean philosopher Vincent Colapietro); these were interacting with the correspondingly termed aspect termed the *focal self* (that is, the aspect active in the attentional flickering of the present). The layers sedimented from his identificational periods as breakdancer, skateboarder, Techno fan and the like, as well as an overall feeling of being “Norwegian”, were suggested to be existing side by side with his more or less “slumbering” identity of being an Iraqi, in the layers of the matrix self. When his focal self in more recent times increasingly has experiences of being marked as different by social environment, in addition to the repeated experiences of ego-centeredness among the all-Norwegians; these experiences seemed to have elicited and “wakened”, so to speak, the Iraqi as a re-vitalized continuum of signs for

identification, that in the context of the intensification caused by these recent experiences was increasingly felt to be *affectively right*.

This underlines strongly that the *forces that move* the individuals both from one position to another within each continuum of signs, as well as from one continuum to another, must be seen as stemming from the ongoing attempt to realize basic needs for inclusion, dignity and for making sense of the world. In the continual fluxus of shifting circumstances, these needs are being *shaped, limited and grounded* in the actual life situation and not least *the past* of the actor, in continual interplay with the ever changing present. From this situation the positioned subject then approaches and experiences his or her surroundings, and, from this interplay the salient concerns of the actors arise.

When Omar and Ola – in what we have termed the “kitchen scene” – exchange and mix an Arabian musical scale with lines and riffs from Western rock, only to end in the laughter at their odd note (that I have suggested to represent the alternative “*third*” and “*hybrid*” space), community is built beyond the identities of the Iraqi and the Norwegian. This must be seen, since it happened in 1994, as an *exception* to the overall ethos of the club of this time, where differences associated to the families of the members of immigrant background – for example in their music – could not be exposed in public.

Nevertheless, this “kitchen scene”, that we used as an introduction to our analysis of the series of points of resonance and dissonance in Omar’s life, seemed to contain the *germ* of a more collective ethos that did not fully unfold until the situation five years later. And from the single-actor and highly process-oriented chapters of Part I, a more narrow focus upon the present and a stronger focus upon the wider collectivity of the Rudenga youngsters have been our overall orientations in Part II. Here the general *secrecy* of the differences associated to “the foreigners” was no longer actual.

Throughout the chapters we have seen several examples that illustrate this. But they also illustrate that the impulses associated to the immigrant families were only *one source among several others* that in sum seemed to be the composite basis for the practices of the Rudenga youngsters. The *greeting rituals* were acknowledged not only to stem from the practices from the immigrant families; they were also found to point to gangsta rap, as well as to the more local “city strollers” as their sources. In *language practices*, all the languages spoken by club members were represented in their common hybridized stock of words and expressions, while Norwegian, as the language of the majority, was the overarching common medium. The

dressing practices showed an emphasis on the coolness of the clothing styles stemming from the traditions of Hip Hop, Techno and transnational street fashion; at the same time, the clothes of the traditions associated to their families' areas of origin were to be respected (and used in the sphere of their homes). In addition, a relatively distinguishable *new style* was developed especially among the youngsters of Pakistani background. Some milieus in Oslo recognize it as the so called "wolla" style (even if this was not a term the Rudenga youngsters themselves used at the time of the second fieldwork, see also Arnesen 2000:18). In this style weight was put upon, for example, expensiveness and metal (preferably gold) necklaces, both features associated to the style of Gangsta Rap; this was combined with thick-soled Buffalo/Art shoes, slim trousers, the expensive and spectacular Italian brand Napapijri that has the Norwegian flag as its core logo, and the preference for House and Techno music (as well as Pakistani pop, such as neo-Bhangra). The *musical preferences* were also characterized by a similar blend: on one end of the continuum we found the preference for older traditions associated to the various areas of origin. In its middle we found an association towards and enjoyment of various types of pop music of immigrant background blended with strong impulses from transnational genres of Western origin. These latter genres (primarily house & techno, Hip Hop, Soul and R&B, mainstream pop) themselves then comprised the other end of the continuum.

By investigating utterances from a relatively large variety of positioned subjects (club members) we could detect that subjectively motivated *points of connection* in each case were being linked to the various genres. This demonstrated that the association and affinity towards various music-related continua of signs were motivated to the extent that central aspects of these continua resonated – through the mechanisms of iconicities/indexicality – and connected (through being seen, registered, heard, felt/imagined) to the lifeworlds of the subjects in question: Foday, of Gambian background, connects to the concern with blackness, suppression and African roots of certain Hip Hop artists, through the similarities and relevance of such themes to his own concerns – his situation of coming from an African immigrant family in Norway. Maurizio, of Chilean origin, connects to Techno music by seeing similarities between the rhythm orientation in Latin music, on the one hand, and the emphasis on rhythm in Techno on the other. Amjat, of Pakistani origin, connects to Pakistani Qawwali master Nusrath Fateh Ali Khan and his prestige in the West as the "Pavarotti of Pakistan", simply through sharing the fact that this musical artist comes from Pakistan, like himself. In addition, several important aspects that we have suggested as *specific to the medium of music* must be seen as important motivating factors

for the saliency and importance that music seemed to have in the lives of these youngsters.

Through the inspection of some salient, experiential aspects of the various subjectivities that comprise the club members, we were able to discover what they have in common and, thus, the mechanisms behind their sharing of certain salient cultural practices.

In all their cultural – that is *truly collective* – expressions of community (though also slightly sub-segmented) of the Rudenga youngsters (practices of greeting, language use, dress and music), we have seen an almost *systematic blending of a wide range of differences* (that is, of corresponding and central signs) from the large varieties of origins represented among the members, on the one hand, and an emphasis upon an overarching community where these differences are *both subordinated and recognised*, on the other. This blending of impulses from these three sources – ranging from the traditions associated to the immigrant families, from the transnational popular cultures available in the mediascape, and from the all-Norwegian majority – seems to represent a *truly hybrid youth cultural community* on the microlocal level.

All these practices, in so far as they are shared, may be seen as collective, expressive utterances – representing what we have termed “expressive Thirdness”, in accordance with Peircean terminology. This reflects the *similarities in their sedimented experiences stemming from past interpretations* (in an interplay with group-oriented social mechanisms of being mutual models for each other) that have originated from the sharing of approximately the same life-situation: they all live together in the same stigmatised suburb; the majority come from families of immigrant origin; the working members of the families have approximately the same kinds of jobs (for example, factory work, cleaning, small shopkeeping, taxi driving for the men while the majority of the immigrant mothers tend to be housewives or do cleaning; see appendix 1); they have all experienced or know someone who has experienced some sort of discrimination; they are all of approximately the same age. Stemming from the relative sharing of the experiences of growing up in this situation, the commonality of their cultural practices may thus be seen as expressions of the development of common *habits* (in the Peircean sense: as ultimate logical interpretants of past semiotic processes; Colapietro 1989:58), whereas the relative homology of their cultural expressions – as outcomes of the actual processes of improvisations – tend to mirror the relative homology of their shared life situation and its corresponding habitus, of which these habits are parts.

The aspects of their living that may be seen to have the strongest potentials for creating *conflicts* seem to concern the issue of *gender and love relations*. Here the most salient cultural differences are represented by the more conservative Muslim families; they tend to insist on a separation between the males and females of certain age groups (representing a position of orthodoxy on the actual continuum of signs) to such an extent the sisters of the male club members do not attend the same youth-based activities as their brothers, including the youth club (thus making it a largely male-dominated arena). The general protection of the girls from contact with the opposite sex, that also to some extent applies to the boys, the weight put upon the authority of age and of the male, the orientation towards arranged marriages, and thus the more collective centred motivations for marriage, and so on, seem partly to match with similar attitudes that are on decline in some Western areas, partly to represent the continuation of such attitudes even further in the same directions, especially in the strict demand for chastity before marriage, held to be especially important for the girls. These attitudes are especially dissonant to the more extreme liberalism concerning issues of gender, sexual liberation and not least *gender equality* (comprising an alternative orthodoxy) in some Western public spheres; this is clearly mirrored in the reactions against the attitudes sketched above by some of the non-Muslim members of the club. Nevertheless, the project revealed a wide range of *different positions* regarding these matters, also among the youngsters from the Muslim families. *The focus upon personal experience* again seemed to direct us to see the potentials of such experiences to cut through some of the most central “obviousnesses” in these matters. There seemed to exist much tension between the relative openness and willingness to experiment among the youngsters and the occurrence of gender-oriented *stereotypes*, both among the youngsters themselves, and not least, among the parents, of immigrant as well as of solely Norwegian families. Conflicts around gender-related issues were nevertheless not salient among the club members; it seemed to be more or less limited to the action of the non-Muslim boys, who *abstained* from initiating dates with Muslim girls, as even trying to date them was perceived as implying “trouble”.

The semiotic potential of the phenomenon of dissonance, and not least its fundamental role for the *understanding of relations of power* was explored further in the attempt to see it as related to earlier information theory, and it was “tested” against empirical evidence in our analyses of the rise and fall of a gang consisting of members of predominantly Pakistani background. These youngsters had, until the point when the gang was formed, been noticeably more self-contained and were to a larger extent

perceived as an encapsulated group in the overall milieu. Through their gang formation the potentials of the phenomenon of dissonance to arouse both strong emotions (of fear and power-based “respect”) as well as cognitive disturbance – in so far as it challenged the societal norms – were seen as exemplifying the ability of the dissonance phenomenon to generate what we have termed a *heightened semiotic attention*. After the gang was dissolved, its former members seemed to have succeeded in realizing their wish for attention and “respect” in the youth-based environment (although this happened in a highly problematic way as seen from a societal point of view). This seemed to have been important for the developments of the following period, when the former members of the gang to a considerably larger extent were intermingling now with the others youngsters in the milieu in Rudenga. *The existential dimensions* and the corresponding arousal of emotions that extreme incidents of dissonance may create were also salient in some dramatic events that the Rudenga youngsters experienced when they, on one occasion, were physically attacked by neo-nazi youth, and, on another occasion, when one club member was shot in his shoulder when he inadvertently got drawn into a gang fight. In the case of the forming of the gang, the potentials of dissonance to heighten semiotic attention were *exploited more or less intentionally* by the members. On the contrary, in the second two events, dissonance was *imposed involuntarily* upon the youngsters. This distinction must thus be seen as crucial.

A more extended example of experiencing dissonance as being *imposed* oneself by the external social surroundings we find in the story of Mokthar, a refugee from Eritrea. Through our focus upon subjective experience he was seen to have gone through a series of repeated incidents where his social environment marked his difference in a wide range of ways, from the most subtle and trivial to open discrimination, throughout the different phases as he grew up. Mokthar reacted to what he felt as continual negative marking by developing attitudes and actions reflecting what we have termed *counter-dissonance*, in practices that gradually escalated into extreme incidents of violence. Such practices, through which he *charged himself as a sign* (as becoming a “dangerous foreigner”), reached their top in a critical event that became a turning point for Mokthar. Through his reactions to this incident, and the personal crisis that followed, he at last managed to change his course and start the toilsome process of straightening up his life; this implied, among other things, breaking with his former milieu of violent youngsters, returning to his family, and completing an education. The pain of this repeatedly induced dissonance was interwoven with conflicts of identity and the double-bind tinged situations created by those

who *marked him repeatedly as different*, at the same time as they also emphasized that he was *not* different, in the sense that he was “Norwegian”. After having “tried to be Norwegian” for several years, experiencing repeated failure as a consequence of the attitudes in his social environment, and taking out his anger in escalating hard violence, the turning point also implied a return to what he perceived as “the Eritrean”. This was thoroughly amplified by the crucial support he felt from his family. Through such processes the Eritrean surely became a central *resource* and an anchor that came to play an important role as a re-discovered and firm base in his new situation of trying to straighten up his life. It nevertheless implied a strong distancing to the Norwegian, and may thus be seen as exemplifying a process of “*ethnification*” as a counter strategy to fight back the negative marking. This in itself may be also seen as expressing an ethnification on the part of his “Norwegian” environment and solving his problems of identity as experienced from his position. This solution seemed to be crucial in making sense of the repeated experiences of being marked as different, as these had sedimented in his matrix self, and its ongoing conflict with his focal self who tried to be Norwegian and who acted out this frustration of not succeeding through violence. By choosing explicitly to give in to the Eritrean, the internal conflict between these two layers of the self was partly resolved, in so far as the one came to match the other, through the interpretative conclusions (reaching the relative calm of such Thirdness) of this experiential turning point.

In the variety of cases of *identifications* among the Rudenga youngsters, we have seen a large variety of positions. As concluded above: some identify themselves as mostly Norwegian; some as mostly Pakistani (or whatever the home area of their parents); some as something in between; some as neither the one nor the other, but as something else (represented by the transit country), some say that the question does not matter, some that it is a problem, some that it only sometimes is a problem; some that they do not exactly know; some that it all depends on the situation, and some – the ones who have lived here the shortest – that they feel that they are only what their parents are. The overall picture is, nevertheless, that the overwhelming majority of the youngsters do join elements of two or more larger identificational sources – that is continua of signs – in the subjective experience of “who they are”. Hence their subjective identificational stances must be characterised as representing hybrid positions.

The last chain of arguments put forth in these pages, concerned the nature of the cognitive mechanisms, as focused upon by Peirce in the principles of the first two types of signs in his most basic triad; the icon, the

index and the symbol. I have tried to show that the mechanisms of these first two types of sign have been activated in a large range of *connective* phenomena throughout most of the chapters, as detected in the subjective experiences registered and expressed among the Rudenga youngsters. Through a modest investigation of a row of different mental phenomena, such as schizophrenia, the interpretation of dreams, magic, memory, and not least creativity – in addition to our main focus upon semiosis – we concluded that these principles must be seen as nothing less than *the most basic and elementary principles in the processes and workings of the human mind* that not least are detectable in the processes of *creativity* and *improvisation*. Such competences are perhaps especially demanded of youngsters that are growing up in the complexity of a relatively recent multicultural situation, where a decisive part of the actual situation can *not* be granted an easy match with the already existing knowledge and attitudes possessed by and transmitted from the parents. In such a situation the creativity made possible by these mechanisms/cognitive abilities, as manifesting in the phenomena of resonance and dissonance, seems to be of crucial importance in the *generating of the new*; they are of primary importance in the “sloppy logic” which is manifested in what we have termed *the syllogisms of practice*.

The last type in Peirce’s basic triad of signs, as mentioned, is the sign known as *the symbol*. Throughout the thesis the bias towards a somewhat one-sided focus upon the icon and the index has been at the cost of turning our attention away from the symbol. According to Peirce, the symbol is characterised as a sign in which the points of connections between the sign and its object are brought together in an interpretant by *conventions or by habits* (that have become conventions), in the sense that they have become collectively shared (see, for example, Peirce 1998:274). In such a sense, *the symbol may be seen as the dominating mode in the conventions and sharedness that make up the phenomenon of culture*. Thus all the shared conventions and similarities in the practices of the Rudenga youngsters – be they practices of greeting, language use, dress codes or music – may be seen as expressions of their common culture. And in so far as they join several signs and messages from continua of signs that at the same time are considered as belonging to different cultural traditions, their practices must be seen as reflecting a *cultural community of hybridisation*.

In the pages above we have focused primarily upon the *subjective motivations behind the use of signs*, especially as such motivations vary according to differences in the actual positions of the actor in question (related both to individual and collective history). But as we have seen

exemplified over and over, many of the individual motivations that have been explored have shown to be repeated in certain patterns. The cultural expressions that are shared among the overall community of the Rudenga youngsters may thus be seen as *growing from the similarities in the various personal interpretative conclusions that have been drawn* on various stances on the continuum between the conscious and the unconscious comprising their habitus, that in turn stems from the *extent of sharing approximately the same situation of living*, in accordance with Bourdieu's suggestions. In the "pure" version of such dynamics, the motivating connections resulting in identifications with these signs are *drawn on the basis of personal recognition/experience (conscious or unconscious) of similarity or indexicality*: the resonance between the signs and the life worlds of their users; or, it may manifest in the subjective creation of new signs that somehow match the interpretations of these conditions.

On the other hand, we may find a position where – in their purer version – practices, attitudes or signification are developed solely as a result of being *modeled from the behaviour and the semiotic flow from significant others (including being consciously or unconsciously agreed upon)*, and where, *no personal "seeing" of such connections seems likely to have occurred*.

Thus, on the one hand, we find the symbolic based upon the *sharing of the same habits which have stemmed from similarities in personal/individual experience*; on the other, we find the symbolic based more or less on *pure convention*. An interaction between these two modes may be seen when conclusions in the first mode may stem from the personal experience and creativity of salient *social entrepreneurs* (that is, the position of the "elites", in our model of youth cultural dynamics) and the second mode where these conclusions from the first are simply repeated/accepted/imitated by other individuals or a group (that is, in the position of the "followers" in the same model), or that somehow are associated with the entrepreneurs who are seen to have prestige. For example: in the first wave of Hip Hop in Rudenga, we may suggest that it is likely that only *some* initially saw the similarities between the situation of their own homestead and the situation and habitat of the Hip Hop'ers and that the rest simply followed the first ones, thus accepting the connections drawn by the first entrepreneurs (models) as a rule, without necessarily seeing these connections themselves.

I suggest that the processes behind the development of the cultural practices among the Rudenga youngsters are highly likely to have developed in the *interplay* between both these modes of symbol-generating Thirdness, to speak in Peircean terminology: the one based primarily on *experience*; the

other based primarily on *convention*, that on its part surely has a strong experiential aspect as well. For a convention to be adhered to, it must be somehow subjectively experienced as “working” over some time span and as having pragmatic relevance in the continual confrontation with the fluxus of the external realities that is going on in the practices of which it is a part. If not, it must change; otherwise it will be likely to evaporate and cease to exist – even though such developments may take considerable amounts of time. *The experiential aspect, as a basis for cultural practices, – perhaps needless to say – must therefore be seen as being of crucial importance (see Hylland Eriksen 2000).*

In the youth club in Rudenga, the cultural practices, as well as their related conventions, in fact did change very rapidly, as clearly demonstrated by the comparison of cultural practices in 1993/94 with the changes that had occurred only five years later. The experiential basis for those changes is, of course, rooted in the interplay of the complexities of individual histories from which new cultural expressions have grown forth; this was not least as a result of the considerable increase in members of various immigrant backgrounds, in part due to structural processes related to prices in the housing market, and so on.

In the heightened precariousness of such an increasingly composite situation as this version of the multicultural, the practices of the Rudenga youngsters seem first and foremost to have become oriented towards a *search for points of resonance*, for what they all have in common: their origins in different areas far outside their community; the fact that they all live in that same place, sharing its bad reputation, its low-class status; growing up in the approximately same situation, where they are associated with the stigma of otherness in addition to the stigma of class. In this situation they have tended to *avoid* cultivating difference in the often destructive ways of building fences, playing the usual power games, or insisting on emphasizing internal hierarchies. Instead, they have been more inclined to develop practices reflecting what we have termed *anti-schismogenesis*; they have created and participated in an overall community, where differences, signs and messages related to their respective backgrounds are both *recognized*, and to some extent *integrated*, at the same time as they are *subordinated* in that overarching community. The building blocks for this community consist of a multitude of impulses from the complex landscape of signs available to the respective positions of the youngsters, in the shape of the different continua of signs pointing to their backgrounds, signs and messages from music, clothes, films, and sports anchored in popular culture,

as well as from the all-Norwegian majority. These are all put together and blended in their shared practices.

In the quote that introduced these conclusions, Barth mentions three sources for societal creativity. The first of these, “idle speculations”, has not been the most salient in the processes leading to the cultural expressions among the Rudenga youngsters. But the second, “*mixing metaphors*”, surely has. According to Peirce, a metaphor is a sign that represents “*a parallelism in something else*” (1998:274). And to the extent that the Rudenga youngsters “see themselves” in a wide variety of signs, they surely see the parallel between their own life worlds and the life worlds or aspects pointed to in the complexes of signs they draw into use through such similarity. But, most of all, their cultural creativity seems to be anchored in the specificities of their “*external feedbacks from the world that are interpreted in experience*”, in so far as experience makes up the totality of human perception, where both “reality” and “representation” – in the shape of the “virtual” – comprise the basis for its interpretations (Barth 2002:11). In the situation in Rudenga, we do not encounter a single tradition from within which – in line with that quote – change would occur. Instead, we have seen a situation where a multitude of traditions encounter each other more or less simultaneously. In such a situation, the dynamics of a “change from within” probably to a degree give way to impulses for change that are strongly anchored to the demands of the *experiences of the new*; the competencies internal to the traditions are not sufficiently developed to meet these demands. For that reason, an emphasis upon experience seems to provide a special advantage to understand the multicultural situation.

The *exceptions* from those included in the community of the Rudenga youngsters are, as we repeatedly have seen, the girls from the conservative Muslim families.

This raises questions concerning both the possible *future development* for such hybrid communities, as well as if and how long such attitudes of inclusion, openness and hybridization may last. *Will these attitudes, derived from their experiences of being a hybridized milieu of youngsters, be carried over into new life phases when the Rudenga youngsters are to marry, get further education, jobs and so on?* This last question may be a natural extension of the project and represent a core question for further research.

The full nature of the social processes behind the developments of such communities as we have seen exemplified here – of which we have only scratched the surface – is of course too complex to enable us to predict the future in these matters. Some obvious primary factors that may disturb or

hinder the relative autonomy of the processes that may lead to such communities may nevertheless be mentioned.

The first of these hindrances may be an overdeveloped *ethnification of the immigrant groups*. This may manifest in demands for orthodoxy by the guardians of each cultural core (rooted in xenophobia, racism, stereotypes; fear of losing privileges, power and control; too much reverence for “roots”, religious-based fear, doxic as well as conscious and reflexive judgements), and will tend to increase the insistence on the difference of the Other – in the majority, or other groups than the one to which one is associated. (This is, of course, not the same as denying that the experience of belonging to an ethnic group may also be an important resource!)

On the other hand, a schismogenesis may be created by an overdeveloped *ethnification of the majority*, which, in principle, may reflect the processes and motivations similar to those described above. But in so far as the majority per definition also represents the power of the hegemonic group, such processes may in addition lead to the increased execution of suppressive power in the shape of *discrimination* of its’ Other. Such processes are also *intertwined with the existing class structure*. In so far as being an immigrant of certain ethnic background will correspond to class, – here in the sense that only a limited number of low prestige-jobs may be available, for example as a result of discrimination – the execution of the power of the hegemony may be amplified by the directions of power executed on the basis of already existing hierarchies in the class structure. And in the condition of post-, high-, late- or liquid (sic!) modernity, where social prestige is perhaps even more associated with wages, consumption and spectacular self-presentation than in some earlier time periods, the distinctions of the hierarchy of classes may very well intensify into sad and inhuman proportions, where the success of the wealthy is the sole societal concern. If the vast number of immigrants in the age of globalization, to an even further extent than what their migration already implies, should become the victims of such an “ethnification of wealth”, the future seems far from promising. To the extent that this is already the case, the confusing of class-related problems with what are assumed to be “ethnic” orientations may cause even stronger escalating tendencies in the directions of schismogenesis.

In other words, the possibilities that both real as well as incorrectly assumed ethnic differences may be mobilized in destructive directions are definitely present, not least while facing the declining ethos of the ideal of social equality that for a long time has been salient in the Nordic social

democracies, including Norway; this now seems to be losing its grip in the seemingly expanding cult of non-questioned, ego-centred neo-liberalism.

The Rudenga youngsters, in contrast, seemed to have developed a certain *competence* for the handling of the cultural differences among themselves through their practices of anti-schismogenesis. One of the grand questions for the future will be if the relevant keepers of power (including both minority and majority), in the situations from which such competence may spring forth, will be willing to let the young actors within their realm of power have sufficient autonomy to be able to succeed in this a practical task, that is for developing the necessary competence required to be able to live together – *decently* – in a globalized world.

APPENDIX 1. Clothing prizes per 6/9 1999, from the shops “Ferner Jacobsen” (F.J.), “Paragon”, “Flava”

1 US dollar = 7,49 Nok, 1 English pound = 12,37 Nok (Aftenposten 24/10 1998).
All prizes in Norwegian kroner.

Brand	sweatshirt	autumn jacket	winter jacket	t-shirt	shirt	trousers	sweater
Napapijri (F.J.)	895	1 995	3 999				1 295
	1 095	995 (fleece)	3 495				
Gant (F.J.)		1 298			898		
		998			798		
Hilfiger (Paragon)	793		1 999	299	649	799	899
			1 299				
Diesel (Paragon)	649 (hooded)			399 (long arm)		799	899
						699	499
Polo Sport (Paragon)	895			399			
				595 (pique)			
Fubu (Flava)	799	949	1 549	599			
		899		549			
South Pole (Flava)	799	599				699	599
Levis (Paragon)		2 299		299	599	799	
						599	

APPENDIX 2: Some statistics. Core members of the club 1998-99 – and some older informants

Core members:

53 informants

8 all Norwegian boys + 35 boys of immigrant background. Total: 43 boys

5 all Norwegian girls + 5 girls of immigrant background. Total: 10 girls

Boys	Girls	Parents born in	Fathers occupation	Mothers occupation	Future plans	Sport & training	Musical preferences
(18)		Pakistan	Factory worker	Housewife	Businessman	strength	Techno, Pak. pop, Qawwali
(17)		Pakistan	Factory Worker	Housewife	Engineer	strength, sports of combat	Techno, Pak. pop
(19)		Pakistan	Data engineer	Housewife	Lawyer	-	Techno, Pak. pop
(16)		Pakistan	Data engineer	Housewife			Techno, Pak. pop
(15)		Pakistan	Restaurant-owner	Housewife	Construction worker		Techno, some Rap, Pak. pop
(18)		Pakistan	Hospital orderly (the marine)	Housewife	Electrician	basket, football	Techno, Pak. pop
(18)		Pakistan	Factory worker	Housewife	Mechanic	lifting weights,	Techno, Pak. pop
(18)		Pakistan	Factory worker	Doctor		football	Not modern music, Qawwali
(18)		Pakistan	snackbar	Housewife			Techno, Pak. pop
(15)		Pakistan	brewery	Housewife			Techno, Pak. pop
(18)		Morocco	Factory worker	Housewife	Mechanic	football	Rap, R&B, Soul, Gnawa, Rai
(20)		Morocco	Factory worker	Housewife (sowing)		football	-
(18)		Kurd – Iraq	Unemployed (crane operator)	Housewife	Machine driver	football	Rap, Kurdic, R&B
(16)		Kurd-Turkey	"Some-thing in a hospital"	On welfare		football	Kurdic, Turkish pop

(20)		Turkey	House painter (car spray-worker)	Cleaner		training strength, hunting	Before: techno Now: Rap
(17)		Norway	Union worker	Kindergarten head-master		football	Rap & Techno
(16)		Norway	Milieu therapist	Official		football, basket	Rap & techno
(14)		Norway	unclear	Shop assistant			Rap
(17)		Norway	Taxiowner	On welfare		street-basket & football	Rap, R&B, some Techno
(15)		Norway	Truckdriver	Youth club worker		football, break-dance	Rap, some Techno
(17)		Norway	unclear	welfare	Mason	basket	Techno, Pak. pop
(15)		Norway	unclear	Housewife			
(14)		Norway	House-painter	Something within IT		Gymnastics break dance	Rap
	(14)	Norway	Fisherman	Under education		basket	Techno & Rap
	(15)	Norway	Fireman	Kindergarten		basket	Techno & Rap
	(22)	Norway	chauffeur	Cleaner		dancing	pop
	(17)	Norway	taxiowner	Waitress	Social care		Techno, R&B, Tarkan
	(16)	Norway	unclear		Childrens nurse		
(17)		Spain	carfirm (sailor)	Cleaner		football, swimming	Rap, Spanish
(16)		Somalia	Unclear, grandfather: hotel owner	Housewife	Mechanic	basket & football	Rap, Reggae, Soul, Techno
(15)		Somalia	Teacher (first language)	Housewife		football	Rap, some Techno, Bondhirsi
(16)br		Somalia	Teacher (first language)	Housewife		football, basket	Rap, some Techno
(17)		Somalia	Chauffeur (public service)	Factory worker	Construction worker	football	Soft Rap

(16)		Gambia	Accountant	On welfare		basket, football	Rap
	(14)	Norway/ Gambia	Office worker	Nurse			Rap & Techno
	(16)	South Africa					
	(15)	Honduras	Second mate	Office		swimming	Reggae, Ballads, Techno
(14)		Chile		Cleaner		football, basket	Rap
(16)		Chile	Teacher (first language)	welfare	Plumber	football, strength	Techno, Latin, Pak. pop
	(17)	Chile	Cleaner (mechanic)	Cleaner (secretary)		indoor bandy	Soul, Salsa, Chilean Some Techno
(17)		Pakistan/Eritrea	Restaurant owner	Office		basket, football, weights	Rap
	(18)	Eritrea	Hospital worker	Housewife			Rap

Some other youth informants, former club members, friends etcetera:

	(20)	Norge	Chemist	Kinder-garten	Social worker		Dance (commercial Techno)
	(19)	Norge	Typographer	Housewife	Social worker		dance
(23)		Norge	Tinker				Rap. Metal, m.m.
(23)		Eritrea	Mechanic, unclear	Housewife			Rap
(23)		Iraq	Teacher, first language (academic)	Nurse			Rap & Techno
(23)		Morocco	Cook	Housewife			Rap & Techno, rai
(21)		Morocco	Factory worker	Housewife	Engineer	Football	Rap, R&B, Gnawa, Rai
(23)		Morocco	welfare	Housewife		Football	Rap, Rai
(21)		Algerie	Restaurant - worker	Housewife		Football	Rap, Rai

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